

ANNEX B

Officer comments on Vessel size restrictions byelaw

Steve Brown

We certainly do need a vessel size Byelaw. Our aim should be 15 meters OAL on the 6 mile limit and 221KW on all fishing vessels other than angling vessels and mussel dredgers.

The under 10 meter sector plays a significant role in the District but not in the context of the proposed vessel length Byelaw. When under 10 meter vessels from the South Coast were brought here to fish the Liverpool bay sole fishery, several were lost with all hands in passage to and from our area. I have experience of fishing the more exposed parts of the District in 12 meters reg length vessels, that was bad enough. 10 meter OAL is too small, even on the 3 mile limit and in my opinion poses a threat to life. The modern 15 meter 221KW is a powerful and sea worthy vessel more than adequate for any (other than mussel gathering) fishery within the District.

I do not agree with the comments on static gear. Vessel size and power is a means of controlling these fisheries we only need to look back at the problems we had in Wales a few years ago. Poorly attended static gear caused significant damage to skate and ray fisheries. Small fast boats put out more gear than they could work or tend effectively during periods of poor weather. Large amounts of fish went to waste and in some parts of the District and still does. KW power is a means of controlling static gear effort. You either work a small fast boat and tend gear properly or lose it to the weather or work a big old boat and tend your gear more efficiently. There must be some science on this somewhere. We must take a longer term view and look to the fishery at least a decade ahead. Because of the growth of wind farms the use static nets will develop. We cannot effectively measure the amount of net in use so we have no option but to restrict the vessel.

Mussel dredgers: We are the guardians of what are some of the most prolific areas of seed mussel production in Europe. The artisanal hand gathered fishery is something we need to preserve but is in reality totally subservient to the demands of the greater market. Good science matched to realistic quotas is what is needed to manage the seed mussel fishery. If you restrict the size of vessel you end up with overloaded vessels. Permit the number of mussel dredgers and the tonnage they take off. The size of the vessel increases the safety of crew and the ability to work to schedules. There should be no need to limit the size of mussel dredgers. If the quotas are economic the operators will work here, if they aren't they won't.

Angling: I see no need to impose length or power restrictions on vessels used for angling. If a person who has a large yacht wishes to anchor up and do a bit of angling what harm are they going to do to the fishery.. Considering the effort involved angling must be about the most inefficient method of catching your dinner there is. Yes as in the N Sea there is the potential for larger vessels to go into charter work such as wreck fishing. Again the social economic and financial effort put in bears no semblance to the amount of fish taken which in most cases is of little consequence.

NWSFC Byelaw 9 removed Eurocutter type beam trawlers from working a large part of Liverpool Bay. By restricting trade in second hand tonnage it was one of the many factors that sealed Fleetwood's fate as a fishing port. A sunset clause provide that the only vessels effected by the new restrictions are those built after the date of the Byelaw. All existing vessels are given a permit to work under the present Byelaw regime.

Gear restrictions: The twin trawl Cumbria Byelaw 13 should be incorporated into an NWIFCA Byelaw or left as a stand-alone; it is an important technical provision.

Steve Brown.