

# NWIFCA Quarterly Meeting

## 18<sup>th</sup> September 2015: 11.00 a.m.

**AGENDA  
ITEM NO.  
6**

### HEAD OF ENFORCEMENT REPORT ON THE FISHERIES FOR THE PERIOD 1<sup>ST</sup> MAY TO THE 31<sup>ST</sup> JULY 2015

**Purpose:** To report on fisheries activity and the work of IFCOs during the quarter.

**Recommendation:** Members approve NWIFCAs participation in the Intelligence Management Pilot Project at paragraph 7.

#### 1. Introduction

Full details of fishing activities within the district are as usual provided in officer's area reports. In summary:

- Nephrops fishery: moderate but patchy landings with the majority of fishing activity taking place in hours of darkness
- Crab moderate landings
- Lobster low landings
- Whelk good landings into Whitehaven
- Mussels patchy across the district but a continuous low level of effort
- Bass very poor returns across all sectors

#### 2. Enforcement

Compliance was generally good during the quarter with just 4 warnings issued:

- Verbal warning for breach of Cumbria Byelaw 9 (skate fishery) at Workington
- Two verbal warnings for breach of NWSFC Byelaw 13A (cockle management) at Leasowe (Wirral) during gathering of Razor clams where very small amounts of cockle were taken.
- Verbal warning for breach of Byelaw 19 (Specified fish sizes) where 4 undersize plaice were returned to the seas alive at Leasowe

#### 3. Court Proceedings

There were no hearings during the quarter but two hearings are awaited:

Brian Faulkner	Appeal of sentence for convictions of obstruction (previously reported) was scheduled for 11 <sup>th</sup> June adjourned until the 4 <sup>th</sup> September and again to 30 <sup>th</sup> October.
Byelaw 26 (Cumbria) Permit holder	Case listed for initial hearing/plea at Workington magistrates court on the 22 <sup>nd</sup> Sept concerns alleged breaches on the 17 <sup>th</sup> April 2015 of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Byelaw 26 permit conditions</li> <li>• SI 2029 of 2000 (the Undersized Edible Crabs Order) .</li> </ul>

#### 4. Bass Measures

Since the beginning of the year the EU commission has introduced a “four step” suite of measures in response to the scientific advice on Bass stocks as follows:

- Seasonal closures
- A catch limit for recreational fishermen of three bass per person per day (Regulation 523 of 2015 in force from May 2015)
- Catch restrictions in force from June 2015:
  1. Vessel quota; area VIIa inside UK 12nm limit (Regulation 960/2015)
  2. Complete ban on commercial bass fisheries within Area VIIa outside the 12nm limit (Regulation 960/2015)
- The minimum landing size (MLS) becomes a Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) because commercial Bass activity is now subject to quota restrictions and will be included in landing obligations by 2019 The MCRS is increased from 36cm to 42cm (regulation 1316/15)

The changes were enacted through amendments to EU Technical legislation (Regulation 1316/15 amending 850/98) and will apply to all commercial and recreational fishermen.

There has been no concomitant amendment to mesh size regulations when fishing for Bass (currently 90-99mm mesh with 70% catch composition required) in regulation 850/98. Officers are currently seeking industry responses to the changes.

There is no change to Bass nursery areas at present and Officers are not currently aware of any other areas appropriate for additional protection.

#### 5. Landing Obligations

The IFCA has been engaged in the preparation for the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of the demersal landing obligations that will start in 2016. The principle of the landing obligations is:

- That all commercial vessels must retain and land all quota species
- Specimens below the MCRS must be stowed separately and cannot be used for human consumption.

There are two exemptions that can be incorporated into the discard plan for any specific region:

<i>De Minimis</i>	If either of the following applies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If scientific evidence shows that increasing gear selectivity is very difficult</li><li>• Avoidance of the handling of unwanted catches would be disproportionate</li></ul>
Survivability	Scientific evidence shows high survivability for the species

#### 6. Legislative Changes

Two significant legislative changes have arisen during the quarter which will have an impact on NWIFCA byelaws. These are:

- Amendments to Bass regulations following the increase in the minimum size

- Amendment of IFCA Byelaws which conflict with the demersal landing obligations starting in 2016. The main change is that any IFCA byelaws that contain a requirement to return undersize fish to the sea must now include a clause that exempts any landing obligations

All of the changes to the IFCA byelaws arising from landing obligations are being made by Secretary of State exercising powers to amend IFCA Byelaws under section 159 of MACAA. The changes shown in the table below will be specified and enacted in an amendment order (SI) expected in October.

Bass Legislation	Landing Obligations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Byelaw 19 is being amended to increase the Bass size to 42cm</li> <li>• This is required as EU and secondary legislation cannot conflict</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A standard clause is being inserted into all IFCA byelaws to avoid the conflict alluded to above</li> <li>• This clause states “<i>unless the landing obligation under Article 15 of Regulation (EU) 1380/2013 requires the fish to be landed</i>”</li> </ul> <p>The IFCA byelaws that will be amended are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Byelaw 6 (Shrimp and Prawns)</li> <li>• Byelaw 19 (Specified Fish Sizes)</li> <li>• Byelaw 9 (Skate Fishery)</li> <li>• Byelaw 14 (Shrimps and Prawns)</li> <li>• Byelaw 6 (Foul Hooking Fish)</li> </ul>

In addition SI 1285/89 (The Undersized Bass Order) is being revoked in the amendment order by DEFRA in due in October.

## 7. Intelligence Management Pilot Project

NWIFCA will contribute to a national intelligence management pilot project in cooperation with the MMO and Natural England and other Northern IFCA's.

The aim of pilot will be to develop an IT and procedures system to improve the reporting, collation and utilisation of intelligence to inform enforcement planning and officer tasking.

Basic details of the pilot are as follows:

- The pilot will run from Nov 2015 – April 2016 and will report to the National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group (NIMEG) on which NEIFCA is represented by the Head of Enforcement.
- Experts from MMO will assist with the training of NWIFCA officers in use of the system.
- A NW IFCA will be tasked to collate and report on received intelligence and ensure follow up as required.
- An internal Tasking and Coordination Group (TCG) will be set up. The group will meet regularly and compare progress with MMO and other participating IFCA's.

If successful the project in its final form will be rolled out nationally to all IFCA's.

The HoE has been tasked with requesting the authority's approval for the project.

**Andrew Deary**  
**Head of Enforcement**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> September 2015**

**Master of the “Solway Protector” - H Thinnesen**

**PATROLS, BOARDINGS AND INSPECTIONS**

The weather conditions this quarter have been the worst I have encountered for a number of years, with vessels only putting to sea on the odd occasion. This, along with crew’s leave and general repairs, has resulted in more than the usual number of patrol days at sea, being lost. Patrols, boardings and inspections from both “Solway Protector” and “Protector Bravo” total 10. On the whole compliance with local byelaws and other EU legislation at sea has been good throughout the quarter, with no infringements detected.

**TRAWLING, POTTING, NETTING & ANGLING**

Vessels targeting prawns (*Nephrops*) this quarter have mainly fished through the dark on the local prawn grounds. Fishing through daylight hours has been poor with vessels at times, not even covering their diesel costs. Most of the visiting vessels have enjoyed some good fishing west of the Isle of Man, with only the odd one or two working the eastern Irish Sea grounds, mainly outside the 6 mile limit line. Reports from vessels have been mixed, with vessels towing for approximately 4 hours and have been yielding between 5 - 25 stone per haul. We encountered a good skate fishery earlier on in the quarter, until the price dropped out of the market. Lobster fishing in the district has been moderate, possibly due to the cold weather. There have been good signs of juvenile and small berried (female) lobsters throughout the district, which is positive for future stock recruitment of this species. Brown crab landings have been buoyant this year, with some good numbers being reported. Vessels fishing whelks, although fishing outside the district, have made some steady landings into Whitehaven, ranging from between 5 – 10 tonnes per trip. Offshore netting has been quiet this quarter with only light landings being reported. Both shore and boat anglers have reported a good show of mackerel over the last couple of weeks, along with good numbers of codling and plaice being caught close to the shore.

**SERVICING**

On the whole the “Solway Protector” continues to give a valued service, with only minor running problems to report on this quarter. Repairs and servicing carried out this quarter is as follows:

- New engine room lights fitted
- Replace starboard bilge and fire system line
- Renew port side raw water pump
- Replace fresh water pump in galley
- Repairs to after cooler and housing – starboard engine
- Carry out electrical repairs (too many to list separately)

All planned services and oil changes are up-to-date.

**PROTECTOR BRAVO & PROTECTOR GAMMA**

“Protector Bravo” continues to be an important enforcement asset for carrying out routine inshore patrols and inspections, with only minor repairs being carried out this quarter. A new GPS antenna and cable were fitted along with a new bilge pump.

“Protector Gamma” has had a new VHF antenna and cable fitted. We also replaced all the bearings, brakes and cables on its road trailer.

All the above maintenance on the patrol vessels were carried out by the Authority’s officers.

### **WEATHER**

The weather conditions encountered this quarter are the worst I have seen for many years. From the beginning of May up to the end of May, winds were south west through to north west, fresh to strong. During the first week of June we encountered west south west strong to gale force conditions. The weather settled briefly in the second week of June, where we saw some light and variable conditions. This was short lived, and from the end of June up until the time of writing this report, the weather has remained very unsettled, mainly strong winds with the odd settled day in between.

### **OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST**

Patrol boat crew undertook essential training to cover health and safety issues. The crew carried out a two day lifting and slinging course, which was run by local heavy plant company, G & A M Lawson’s.

**H THINNESEN**

28<sup>th</sup> July 2015

## **Appendix 'A'**

### **" Solway Protector "**

#### **DURATION OF PATROLS AND SIGHTINGS**

Date	Area Patrolled	Sightings	Sea time
10/06/2015	South to Fleetwood/prawn pitch	33	10.33
23/06/2015	Outer prawn grounds/Scallop Bank	15	8.00
29/07/2015	Prawn pitch	8	7.42
30/07/2015	Whitehaven/Workington/Silloth	3	6.50

**" Solway Protector "**  
**PATROL STATISTICS**

	<b>1/5/2015 - 31/7/2015</b>		<b>1/2/2015 - 30/4/2015</b>	
Number of patrols and passages	4	patrols	8	patrols
Seatime	32.25		38.27	
Average length of patrol	8.06		4.78	
Total distance covered	289	miles	273	miles
Average distance per patrol	72	miles	34	miles
Fuel used	538	gallons	1012	gallons
Average fuel used per patrol	135	gallons	127	gallons
<b><u>Total identified sightings:</u></b>	59	vessels	65	vessels
Local	56	vessels	51	vessels
Visiting	3	vessels	14	vessels
<b><u>Types of fishing vessels sighted:</u></b>	<b>&lt; 45'</b>	<b>&gt; 45'</b>	<b>&lt; 45'</b>	<b>&gt; 45'</b>
Trawlers	21	0	16	14
Beam Trawlers	0	0	0	0
Twin Rig Trawlers	0	3	0	0
Pair Trawlers	0	0	0	0
Anchor Seiners	0	0	0	0
Fly Draggers	0	0	0	0
Gill Netters	1	0	2	0
Shrimpers	1	0	0	0
Twin Beam Shrimpers	0	0	0	0
Whelk Potters	0	1	0	0
Potting Boats	7	0	11	0
Scallop Dredgers	0	0	0	2
Mussel Dredgers	0	0	0	0
Cockle Dredgers	0	0	0	0
Netters	0	0	0	0
Anglers	25	0	20	0
<b><u>Total:</u></b>	55	4	49	16

**GENERAL**

This reporting period covers the following shore based activities as well as our normal enforcement duties. Prawn trawlers were fishing regularly throughout the night. Shrimp fishing from boats in the district have seen patchy landings this quarter with reports ranging from 50-250 kilos being caught for one tide, some of which were caught in Scottish waters. Licensed potters are active, with inspections seeing 10-100 kilos of Lobsters and 15-525 Kilos of Brown Crab. The whelk boats are making regular landings into Whitehaven of around 5 - 10 tonnes every landing. Anglers fishing from piers are catching Codlings, Plaice and Smooth Hounds. Good catches of Codlings were being caught in the dark hours, anything from 2 – 4 keepers for a tide when fishermen were inspected; this is the norm for this time of year. A couple of verbal warnings were issued for minor Byelaw 26 offences by hobby permit holders. All in all a moderate quarter for the vessels and fishermen. There has been a small boost to the local fishing fleet with the arrival of three vessels, two for potting, and another for scalloping and trawling. A further vessel is to be built soon and this to will be joining the potting fleet. The Maryport Aquarium has now started its Lobster hatching programme with the first batch of berried females having been sourced and delivered by officers. Hopefully the first hatchlings will be ready for resettlement in three to four months' time, best locations to be agreed on by officers nearer to the time of release.

**TRAWLING**

Over the quarter the prawn boats have been active when the weather permitted. Some of the boats out of Whitehaven and Maryport have been targeting Nephrops on the grounds to the West of and south of St Bees Head. Inspections carried out at ports have seen landings for a day's fishing ranging from 10 – 50 stones of Nephrops (Langoustines) or locally known as Prawns, all of the fishing has been carried out throughout the dark hours. Some visiting vessels reported good fishing outside of the six mile limit, some of these vessels are multi rigged vessels, to date no multi rigged vessel has been seen by officers inside of the six mile limit.

**SHRIMP VESSELS – SILLOTH**

Shrimp vessels this quarter have been catching 70-250 kilos for a tide when weather has permitted. Some fishing was carried out in Scottish waters across the Solway Firth, by Maryport vessels, but most of the fishing was undertaken just off Silloth.

**SCALLOPS**

Scallop fishing in the Manx scallop fishery has come to an end. A small number of vessels are still targeting scallops and these vessels have been landing into Silloth, and most of them belonging to T N trawlers from Annan. Two have gone to fish off the east coast near to Whitby, Scarborough and Bridlington, no reports on their fishing activity.

**POTTING**

Over the quarter vessels have been fishing when weather has permitted. Regular landings have ranged from 10-100 kilos of Lobster and 25-525 kilos of Brown Crab mostly from the larger potting boat. Three whelk boats landing into Whitehaven have seen landings ranging from 5-10 tonnes prices around £635 per tonne.

## **OFFSHORE NETTING**

One vessel was observed drift netting off Parton and landed 15 Cod 7 Mullet and 2 Bass for an 18 hour trip, all fish were good size. The skipper was unaware that the bass bag limit applied to him and when he was informed of this he decided to sell his vessel.

## **BEACH NETTING**

With byelaw 10(4) in place, no fixed engines have been seen on any of the beaches within the district. Although reports from one fisherman would suggest that beach drift netting has been on-going (this method of fishing does not come under Byelaw 10 restrictions) with catches of Mullet, Codlings and Sea Bass being reported, fisherman were reminded about the 3 bass rule which is now in place.

## **ANGLING**

This quarter has seen a good number of Codling, Plaice and Smooth Hounds being caught by anglers at the usual stations, with the best of the catches being caught at night with up to 3-4 codlings being kept, all around the 3.5 – 5lb mark. Some of the Plaice caught were above 2lb in weight, and most of the codling have been caught using shore crabs and lug as bait, this is the norm for this time of year. During daylight hours anglers have been seen on piers where some have been reporting good sized Plaice and the odd Codlings. Mackerel have showed up in decent quantities and inspections have seen up to 50 being bagged by anglers, most are caught and released.

## **BAIT DIGGING**

Very little bait gathering has been seen this quarter. Only 10 gatherers have been observed spread between Drigg and Silloth. Between 11-50 Lugs have been seen caught with no commercial bait diggers having been seen this quarter.

## **INTERTIDAL ACTIVITY**

A mussel fishery with mussels sizing up to (65mm) has come on the outer Ellison's scar West of Mawbray, this bed is accessible from Newtown Road End, and is only accessible on good spring tides with a LW of 0.8m or less. No fishing has taken place as of yet. Crab and lobster hookers have been sighted on big tides off Drigg with one group landing 6 Lobsters all of good size.

## **OTHER DUTIES**

Other duties carried out this quarter have been to support enforcement operations with the EA. We also regularly undertake joint enforcement duties with the local constabulary where one of their officers would join us out on our day-to-day activities. This officer is at the moment being put through a quad bike course and basic seamanship course in order to be able to join us on sea and quad patrols. The idea behind this joint working is to work closely with the police and for the police to get a better understanding of the fishing activities and operations in the area.

## **ENFORCEMENT & EDUCATION**

Two verbal warnings have been given to Byelaw 26 hobby permit holders due to minor infringements, and officers gave advice on the byelaws to which the warnings were issued.



## **Officer Statistics for the period 1<sup>st</sup> May - 31<sup>st</sup> July 2015**

Shore Patrols	25
Fishing Locations visited	178
Quad Patrols	8
Locations by quad	37
Anglers seen	287
Bait Diggers seen	8
Inspections all	56
Beach nets inspected	0
Days assisting other areas of district	1
Vessels sighted in ports	1196

### **NORTH MORECAMBE BAY**

### **HAVERIGG POINT TO ARNSIDE**

**IFCO, I. Dixon**

#### **GENERAL**

The majority of this reporting period has been spent undertaking the education and monitoring of the new Bass restrictions, with several patrols undertaken with Marine Management Organisation Officers and Environment Agency Fisheries Officers.

#### **TRAWLING**

During the last quarter I have not observed or had any reports of commercial trawling activity.

#### **POTTING**

Only one licensed vessel has been active regularly during the last quarter, working the Irish Sea in front of Walney from Barrow, with up to 200 pots. Catches have been moderate. Two other vessels have been observed potting occasionally during the quarter, one from the north of my area working a large number of pots and another vessel potting occasionally outside of the IFCA district. No whelk potting has been observed. July has been traditionally quiet on the potting front as the lobsters recover from casting their shells.

There are 3 licensed vessels new to the area which I expect to see working pots in my area in the near future.

#### **SHRIMPING**

Reports from the six fishermen observed from Flookburgh and one fisherman from Baycliff suggested that the shrimp fishing was moderate at best, with enough shrimp caught to justify going out into the Bay.

#### **COCKLES**

During the last quarter I have received no reports of commercial cockling activity on the North Morecambe Bay area. Regular patrols both at night and during the daytime have not identified any illegal cockling activity either.

Several surveys were undertaken in the Leven Island area after reports of a potential commercial fishery stock level were noticed by shrimp fishermen, however this turned out not to be the case, although stock levels do seem to be improving slowly in many areas in the Bay.

I continue to take Food Hygiene samples from Flookburgh, Leven Island, Newbiggin and Aldingham cockle beds for South Lakeland District Council

## **MUSSELS**

During the quarter mussel fishing activity was observed on the Hard Acre mussel bed in the outer Duddon estuary on every suitable set of spring tides, with up to 20 Byelaw 3 permit holders seen. The mussels there have a high meat yield although during the last quarter the biotoxin levels have risen in the samples causing concerns with the local Council Environmental Health Department and an increase in the frequency of sampling to closely monitor the situation. Effort decreased slightly by the end of the quarter and up to 11 gatherers were seen regularly. In the last few days of July a dense spatfall was reported in the Duddon fishery and some gatherers moved their operation to Foulney mussel bed, where use of a grader was required to remove any undersize mussels from the mixed size stock. No new spatfall was recorded on Foulney or the South America area despite other areas in the Bay recording high levels of mussel spat.

One Byelaw 3 holder from the North East continues to travel to Walney Channel mussel beds to gather 100kg of mussels for angling bait a couple of times a month.

I continue to take mussel samples from Foulney and the Duddon for Barrow Borough Council.

## **NETTING**

During the last quarter a large percentage of my time has been spent monitoring Bass fishing activity following the new EU ruling of a 3 Bass limit per person per day. Observations and catch reports revealed that no large hauls of Bass had been taken, with up to 10 Bass being the average for the 5 local licensed vessels I have observed. Reports of one haul of 80kg were heard but that proved to be the exception. I expect this to change later in the year as is usually the case. Several unlicensed netting vessels have decreased activity after the 3 Bass limit was heavily promoted during May, although reports suggest some are still landing more than the allowed limit on occasions. Catches of mullet have been received although numbers are still below that of 2 years ago.

Beach nets have been checked in the Duddon and Leven Estuaries and in the Newbiggin area, most of these have been set to catch Flounders for pot bait.

The high numbers of jellyfish has proved a major problem for both beach and boat netsmen during the last quarter and has been so severe in some cases that nets have been removed or hung up.

## **ANGLING**

During the last quarter a high percentage of my time has been spent monitoring Bass fishing activity and enforcing the 3 Bass ruling. As usual at this time of year most anglers switch their attention to Bass, although catch reports suggest a slow start to the season. The average size of the Bass seen and reported has definitely increased. Most anglers welcome the new ruling and a lot fish for pleasure only and take an occasional fish for the table. However there are a few anglers who disagree with the restrictions and reportedly carry on as usual, although regular patrols have not uncovered any offences to date. South Walney and Earnse Bay are fishing well for Bass.

Many anglers continue to fish the upper estuaries and Walney Channel for Flounder and Plaice.

One area in which I expected problems with the 3 Bass limit has been long lines, however at the time of writing I have not yet heard of any problems. The reports I have received or observations made suggest that Bass are not present in high enough numbers to cause a problem. In previous years I have heard reports of up to 20 Bass caught on 100 hook long lines on a night tide in the Duddon estuary during the summer months.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

During the last quarter I have noticed an increase in the frequency that a group of 5 people are digging for Clams in the Duddon estuary, when questioned they say that the clams are for personal consumption within their community. They travel to the area from Blackburn several times a month, and remove 5 large bucketful's each time, during inspections I have noticed that the average size of the clams seems to be decreasing.

## **SOUTH MORECAMBE BAY**

## **ARNSIDE TO KNOTT END**

## **SENIOR IFCO, S. J. WAITE**

## **SHRIMPS**

The inshore shrimp continues to prove disappointing with only 2 fishermen working on a commercial basis. I have observed and been informed by the shrimp fishermen that landings of shrimps have improved on the same period the previous year, with landings being fairly consistent around 3 – 4 stone per tide. Although fishermen have been content with their catch, shrimps have been harvested from limited recognised areas. As a result fishermen still have concerns about the future of the inshore shrimp fishery.

During this last quarter I have observed only occasional effort taking place from part time fisherman working their inshore shrimp boats on a hobby basis. In addition, I have continued to observe no activity by fishermen working tractor and tra la la units working from Heysham on the south side of Morecambe Bay. I have observed only occasional activity from fishermen using push nets throughout my area.

## **TRAWLING**

This fishery continues to be extremely low key. I have continued to see no improvement in activity taking place either on a commercial or hobby basis. This fishery continues to prove very disappointing and, as reported in previous reports, no improvement is expected in the foreseeable future on a commercial or hobby basis.

## **COCKLES**

Throughout this last quarter I have received no reports of cockles being removed by either commercial gatherers or from members of the public removing cockles for private consumption. This is due to the almost non-existence of both mature and undersize cockles throughout my area.

During this last quarter, I have seen a slight improvement in stocks of immature cockles and I intend to carry out patrols on all recognised beds in my area. I have observed no improvement in mature stocks. All beds in my area remain closed.

## **MUSSELS**

During this last quarter I have observed and received no reports of mature mussels being gathered from any of the recognised skears in my area.

All skears have been checked within this last quarter and although mature mussel stocks have continued to be extremely low, all recognised beds have seen settlements of seed mussels on all recognised skears. Heysham Flat has proved to be the best with a blanket cover of seed mussels throughout.

During this last quarter I have continued to collect shellfish for Wyre District Council.

## **DRIFT STAKE AND SET NETS**

Effort in the inshore drift net fishery remains low key with fishermen associated with the inshore drift net fishery choosing to concentrate mainly in other seasonal licenced fisheries. Those fishermen who ventured out to sea have landed very few bass with only the occasional reasonable landing being reported. Fish that have been landed have proved to be of good size. Unfortunately, as mentioned in previous reports, this fishery's future is mainly moving towards a part time basis.

Stake and set nets have again been fished although effort remains well down on previous years due to very poor stocks of bass.

During this last quarter I have observed little activity from anglers setting lines. Those anglers that have set their lines have complained about the number of smooth hounds being caught.

## **DINGHY AND SHORE ANGLING**

During this last quarter shore anglers have continued to fish over high and low water tides at the top end of Morecambe Bay, the Stone Jetty at Morecambe, Heysham North Wall, Heysham and Knott End. Dinghy and shore angler effort has, however, proved poor with very few bass being caught although there has been some nice sized plaice caught. Effort from dinghy anglers has proved poor with very few bass being landed. Anglers, however, have been pleased by the occasional landing of sole. Fishermen have also reported occasional skate being landed and they have continued to land plaice and flounder towards the top of Morecambe Bay.

## **CENTRAL AREA**

## **RIVER WYRE TO RIVER ALT**

**SENIOR IFCO, S. Brown**

## **GENERAL**

Erratic and often unseasonable weather conditions have disrupted fishing activity throughout this reporting quarter. In addition with poor market prices for many species of fish and much of last year's shrimp glut still being held in stock many local fishermen are having something of a hard time at present.

Aside from fishing the extremely dynamic nature of the King Scar Bank off Fleetwood has revealed a number of its previously hidden secrets, some of which have certainly not been uncovered for generations. These include the bronze bound rudder of a sailing vessel clearly of some considerable age, the remains of a substantial sailing trawler and most importantly the remains of an Irish Sea Wherry. This ancient type of vessel evolved from the vessels of the dark ages and was used for

fishing and trading within the Irish Sea Basin from the 1600's up until the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This particular vessel was carrying a small cargo of Limestone and is probably more than 200 years old, information has been passed on to the local museum service.

### **TRAWLING**

Fleetwood's two remaining full time inshore trawlers have worked steadily during periods of settled weather. Catches have consisted mostly of plaice, thornback ray and thanks to the whelk potters providing a welcome outlet, lesser spotted dogfish. Modest landings have been made from Lune Deep (from the clear ground not in Byelaw 6 area), Shell Wharf and out to the Point of the Bank, unfortunately fish prices have remained poor leaving the viability of these vessels questionable.

### **SHRIMPING**

There has been very little shrimping activity at all, the tractors at Southport and Marshside have hardly turned a wheel, one boat has made an occasional trip from Lytham.

There are two reasons for this lack of activity; firstly it has been a very poor spring shrimp fishery with predominantly Southerly and Easterly winds encouraging the water to fall clear. Secondly most of the buyers and many fishermen still have large stocks of shrimps frozen back from last autumn's exceptional shrimp fishery so there is little demand.

The Fleetwood shrimp boats report poor catches from the R. Wyre. A few push netters have tried their hand along the North Fylde Coast, catches have not even been sufficient for domestic needs.

### **COCKLES AND MUSSELS**

There has been an exceptional mussel spat fall on the Ribble covering the area from the moorings at Lytham along both walls out to Wall End. Given the nature of the walls the vast majority of this not inconsiderable area is not really suitable for harvesting either by hand or dredge. The few available areas for working should produce sufficient seed or size mussel for local needs but little else.

There was some interest in a bed of mussels that settled last year about the moorings at Lytham, to everyone's surprise the majority of this stock did survive the winter, indeed a small amount was harvested under permit for seed. This area has also been covered by this year's spatfall however as the bed has started to build up the first signs of scouring are beginning to show.

Further north good spatfalls were seen on Rossall Scar, the Neckings and out on King Scar. July's strong winds have already taken their toll on these beds with considerable amounts of seed mussel being scoured out and thrown up onto the N. Wharf.

Within the R. Wyre the majority of the Black Scar bed has sanded over, a later settlement of mussels has taken on Perch Scar.

No significant amount of cockle spat has been seen within the Ribble estuary at the time of writing.

### **DRIFT NETTING, BEACH NETS AND LINES**

The Lytham and Fleetwood netting boats have worked regularly, catches have been very disappointing. Lytham fishermen have reported disproportionate (considerably more fish than have been landed) losses to seal predation.

Beach nets have been worked along the Sefton Coast from the Penfold Channel down to Formby. Catches reported or observed have been very poor, often individual fish. Following unseasonable weather and an algae bloom most nets have been taken ashore until conditions improve.

Surprisingly codling are still being taken on lines off the Fylde Coast. Reports of Bass landings have been very poor.

## **POTS**

One Fleetwood netting boat has worked pots as an alternative fishery during these dire times. Pots have been set on Rossall Pipe and the North side of Lune. Modest landings of Lobster have been seen and reported.

## **ANGLING**

The introduction of the three Bass limit has generally raised the comment that the individual would be happy if they caught that many Bass in a month never mind a day. This comment is a very good indication of how poor the Bass fishing has been this year. I have received the occasional report of a decent sized Bass being taken but seen very few; and they have all been taken by boat or sea kayak.

Catches by shore anglers have mostly been of Flounder and Dab. Preston Bullnose has fished quite well for flounder but all other locations along the coast have been a little disappointing.

Reports from the beach launched and charter boats have been a bit better with a good number of decent codling hanging around on the stones off the Fylde Coast. As the water temperature increased catches of Smoothhound and the occasional Tope have increased providing some welcome sport.

## **ENFORCEMENT**

Routine patrols have been undertaken both ashore and on intertidal areas. Patrols at sea using 'Zodiac Bravo' have been carried out off Morecambe and the N Fylde Coast. Given the increasing popularity of fishing from sea kayaks 'Zodiac Bravo' has found a new role proving most useful for coming along side these small craft in shallow water.

## **SOUTHERN AREA**

## **MERSEY, WIRRAL AND DEE**

**IFCO, A. Brownrigg**

## **GENERAL**

During this quarter both IFC Officer Capper and I have continued to undertake activities such as enforcement and inspections throughout the southern area. Both officers have also had the chance to undertake routine sea borne patrols on the River Mersey, Liverpool Bay and Dee Estuary with 'Bay Protector' and ATV patrols along the north Wirral coastline.

## **SPECIFIC**

## **COCKLES**

Wirral North cockle bed remains closed, and will continue to do so throughout the rest of 2015. Beach closure notices to cockling remain in place and will do for the foreseeable future. A routine inspection was undertaken in July by NWIFCA and Mersey Port Health Authority (MPHA); at present no spat

was noted on Wirral North cockle bed, however, observations at the Representative Monitoring Point (RMP) site at Harrison Drive East shows a small amount of adult size three year old cockles and very small signs of spat; this will be monitored by both organisations.

## **MUSSEL**

Despite the lack of commercial stock on West Kirby and Caldys Blacks mussel beds both beds will remain open on the Dee Estuary. Both beds still remain patchy and made up largely of dead shell. A closer inspection of both beds will take place during the next quarter. In the river Mersey sampling continues to take place at Mersey mussel North and South with MPHA. As reported in the last quarterly report, all shellfish within the Mersey estuary remain classified as prohibited and are unable to be gathered.

## **RAZOR CLAM**

Surprisingly very little activity has been observed during the last quarter. Again it is mainly Oriental gatherers who have been observed harvesting Razor Clam along the north Wirral coastline. Some fifteen inspections have taken place with no undersize recorded. It is the opinion of both officers that the small amounts of Razor Clam being gathered is for personal consumption. Indeed with the reduction of Razor Clam being noted both officers have observed an increase in the harvesting of Oyster Clams, something that was highlighted in the last report.

## **SHORE ANGLING**

Shore angling throughout this quarter generally has remained quiet. Officers on average have reported numbers between 2 and 10 anglers fishing at once. Seventy anglers have been observed along both sides of the river Mersey and along the north Wirral coastline of which twenty eight byelaw 19 inspections were carried out. It was pleasing to say that no undersize catch was recorded. Kings Parade at New Brighton, Crosby Promenade, 'Alexander Wall' within the Port of Liverpool and Perch Rock has seen the most regular activity. These areas have seen Dab, Flounder, Cod and Plaice being landed.

## **BAIT DIGGERS AND CRABBERS**

Bait diggers remain to be seen predominantly along the north Wirral coastline, with New Brighton, Mockbeggar Wharf and the beach area from Magazine to Tower parade. Numbers still routinely remain between 0 – 3 with bait diggers gathering anywhere between 30 – 80 worms. The area has four main crab tile points three situated in the river Mersey and one along the north Wirral coastline. Made up of plastic piping and old tyres it is not uncommon to see up to 100 'crab tiles' situated in one area. Crabbers are routinely observed over a low water tide gathering, inspections roughly indicate from 2 to 32 Peeler crabs being collected with the odd one Brown crab.

## **NETS**

Presently, four Set nets still remain in the area of East Hoyle Bank. All nets identified are owned by one local commercial fisherman, all of which are correctly marked in accordance with NWIFCA Byelaws. Two Oriental netmen have frequently been sighted netting off Gun site and Crosby Promenade several inspections have been carried out with Mullet, Flounder and Plaice have been observed.

## **POTTING**

Seven pot markers have been observed in Liverpool Bay all markers were marked up and will be monitored by NWIFCA.

## **RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL BOAT ANGLING**

High winds and poor weather have restricted the recreational and commercial fleet within the southern area. The Cod fishery had been eventful with reports of good catches being made right up until June. Presently the area has eight commercial angling vessels and several recreational angling vessels working from Liverpool Marina and moorings at Bromborough, New Brighton, Meols and the Dee Estuary.

## **TRAWLING**

Four commercial shrimp beam trawlers remain moored off Thurstaston slipway. Commercial and recreational trawlers and netters have been observed over low water working on the Dee Estuary. Two recreational trawlers are presently moored at Meols; both have been observed, boarded and inspected while carrying out fishing activity with that area.

## **'BAY PROTECTOR'**

Towards the last part of the quarter high winds and generally poor weather throughout the area restricted any seaborne patrolling; however, during June 'Bay Protector' was returned back to Liverpool having had her Transducer replaced. Straight away she was back at sea and I am pleased to say several boardings and closings have taken place not only in the area but also on and around the Ribble Estuary. Patrols have predominantly been over High Water, this is hoped to be extended to Low Water with the assistance of the Welsh Fisheries protection vessel 'Aegis' who will not only assist in joint enforcement but who will also offer respite over the planned eleven hour patrols.

## **ENFORCEMENT**

Three Verbal Warnings have been issued during this quarter. Two were under Byelaw 13A for attempting to remove cockles from a closed cockle bed; and the third under Byelaw 19 (Specified Fish Sizes) for the removal of undersize fish. Three Offence Detection reports have been raised and sent to the HoE.

## **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

Daily shore patrols along the River Mersey, north Wirral coastline and both sides of the Dee Estuary remain on going as well as assistance to other areas. Both officers have recently attended both Dee Estuary Sea Fisheries Liaison Group meetings at the Theatre Clwyd, Mold. Both officers continue to frequently visit Liverpool Fish Market to offer advice and guidance. All vehicles, clothing and equipment have been inspected and serviced - no other issues remain outstanding within the area.



**NORTH WESTERN INSHORE FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY**

**ENFORCEMENT SUMMARY**

**1<sup>st</sup> MAY TO 31<sup>ST</sup> JULY 2015**

1. ENFORCEMENT BURDEN

1.1 Length of District coastline 878.5 n.m.

2. RESOURCES

2.1 Number of patrol vessels 1 + 4 RIBs + 1 Zodiac

2.2 Number of patrol ATVs (intertidal) 8

2.3 Number of Fishery Officers with other duties 7 f/t, 1 p/t + 3 warranted officers

3. ENFORCEMENT AT SEA

3.1 Number of patrol hours at sea 141

3.2 Number of patrols at sea 21

3.3 Number of nautical miles of patrol 243.80

3.4 Number of closings 0

3.5 Number of inspections 26

3.6 Number of boardings 20

3.7 Number of infringements detected 0

3.8 Number of:-

3.8.1 Prosecutions 0

3.8.2 Home Office Cautions 0

3.8.3 Prosecutions pending 0

3.8.4 Cautions issued 0

3.8.5 Official Warning Letter 0

3.8.6 Advisory Warning Letter 0

3.8.7 Verbal warnings 0

4.	<u>ENFORCEMENT ON LAND</u>	
4.1	Number of inspections	642
4.2	Number of ATV patrols	62
4.3	Number of hours ATV patrols	145.22
4.4	ATV km covered	1,202.60
4.5	Number of infringements detected	0
4.6	Number of:-	
4.6.1	Prosecutions	0
4.6.2	Home Office Cautions	0
4.6.3	Prosecutions pending	1
4.6.4	Fixed Admin Penalty	0
4.6.5	Cautions issued	0
4.6.6	Official Warning Letter	0
4.6.7	Advisory Warning Letter	0
4.6.8	Verbal warnings	4

N.B. Prosecutions pending – are only counted as such after approval is given to take the case forward by the Authority. People under caution who are likely to be prosecuted may therefore not be included in this figure.