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Welcome

to the latest edition of NIFCA News. I hope you find all of this to be of interest and we will welcome your feedback or thoughts on any of these articles. Since our last Newsletter we have welcomed our new IFCO Sally Stewart-Moore who will work with our Operations and Enforcement Team and also assist the Environmental Team. We are also now using Twitter and Facebook to reach an even wider stakeholder audience.

2015 promises to be a very exciting and challenging year for NIFCA. We are particularly ready for the work which will need to be done in respect of the proposed Marine Conservation Zone from Coquet to St. Marys in our district and you can read more in these pages about Stakeholder Events which we will be holding regarding MCZs and other topics.

I am very pleased you are interested in our work and I hope that I may get the opportunity to meet you in 2015.

Mike Hardy, Chief Executive Officer

NIFCA enters the world of social media

We are delighted to announce that Northumberland IFCA has succumbed to the pressures of the 21st century and joined social media! If you would like to be kept up-to-date on our work then you can follow us @N_IFCA on Twitter or 'Northumberland IFCA' on Facebook. You can help us broaden our following by 'liking' our photos and re-tweeting' our posts!

To receive newsletters via email please subscribe by visiting the website!
www.nifca.gov.uk



NIFCA Legacy Byelaw Review

Following the making of our package of 6 new byelaws at our quarterly meeting on 28 October last, our byelaws went to statutory consultation during December and January and we are now forwarding all of the paperwork to the Marine Management Organisation and Defra requesting Ministerial sign off for the new byelaws to bring them into effect and revoke our legacy byelaws numbered 1 to 15. As soon as there is further news on this we will let Stakeholders know, including via our website and twitter.

NB : The current NIFCA byelaws numbered 16 and 17 will not be revoked but will continue in effect once our 6 new byelaws come into force.

HRA Training Day

On Friday 30th January, Mike Quigley and Catherine Scott from Natural England visited the NIFCA HQ in Blyth to provide a workshop for IFCOs and committee members on Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRAs).

In 2012, DEFRA revised its approach to the management of fisheries in European Marine Sites (Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas). The revised approach has been implemented on a risk-prioritised and phased basis, which saw management measures put in place for the highest risk activities ('reds') on sensitive features during the IFCA year 2013-14. In Northumberland two 'red-risk' interactions were identified and corresponding byelaws put in place: "Prohibition of the use of Mobile Fishing Gear" and the "Seagrass Protection" byelaw within the English section of the Berwickshire & North Northumberland Coast SAC.

The next phase of the Revised Approach requires that HRAs are carried out and any necessary measures are put in place for all other fishing activity within EMSs. The deadline for this is 2016. HRAs will account for a significant proportion of NIFCA's work in 2015 and the training from Natural England was invaluable for ensuring that the NIFCA team are up to date on the complex HRA processes.



Amble Lobster Hatchery

NIFCA has sponsored a Newcastle University PhD student, Jessica Duffill Telsnig, in a project looking at the feasibility of a lobster hatchery in Amble as part of the Amble 2020 project. This work is building on Jessica's previous work for the Amble Development Trust, as well as Jessica's MSc assessment of the impact of V-Notching European Lobsters in the Northumberland district.



Juvenile lobster storage at the National Lobster Hatchery in Padstow

Amble received Coastal Community funding in 2014 for the 2020 scheme which is aimed at regenerating the waterfront, delivering the town's potential and creating new jobs through the development of new aquaculture and food industries. In December, Jessica visited the National Lobster Hatchery in Padstow, Cornwall and met with Eddy Derriman from Cornwall IFCA and the NLH Director Dominic Boothroyd to see how the hatchery was developed and assess the feasibility and potential benefits of setting up a hatchery in Amble. The Padstow hatchery is a charity and after 14 years of operation now employs a staff of 12 plus 25-30 volunteers. This year they hope to release 70,000 lobsters.

Jessica presented her initial findings from the visit at the latest meeting of the Amble 2020 project in January attended by NIFCA CEO Mike Hardy. Ideally, a hatchery in Amble will maintain a close working relationship with Padstow and will go down a similar route with a mixture of scientific research, public engagement and the actual production and release of hatchery-reared lobsters.

IFCA Officers attend Amble Open

On Sunday 25th January IFCO's McLoughney and Stewart-Moore attended the Amble Open, Northumberland's largest annual angling competition. A grand total of 515 anglers, including men, women and children, turned out to bask in the winter sunshine, filling the coastline from Seahouses to Lynemouth, all hoping to claim the top prizes for the heaviest bag or heaviest individual fish. This provided a fantastic opportunity for NIFCA to engage with keen anglers and benefit from their valuable knowledge as well as promoting our work in the district. The IFCOs were also invited to observe the weigh-in where a variety of species including Plaice, Turbot, Dab, Cod and even one Seabass were landed. The top prize went to 12 year-old Rebecca Abbott for her bag weighing in at 10lb 14.3oz.

NIFCA's presence at the Amble Open is part of our initiative to further our understanding of recreational sea angling along the Northumberland coastline and strengthen our relationship with the angling community who are an integral part of our coastline and a valuable asset to the local economy. As well as continuing to engage with anglers on the coast, NIFCA will be circulating a questionnaire via angling clubs, tackle shops and our website designed to draw a better picture of recreational sea angling in the district and provide anglers with an opportunity to flag up any issues that they would like to see addressed.



Anglers in the Amble Open at Newton Haven

New environmental survey work undertaken for 2015

In addition to our ongoing environmental work, in January NIFCA officers conducted the first of regular monthly surveys planned for Druridge Bay and the mussel beds in the Blyth estuary. TrAC (Transitional and Coastal monitoring) fish surveys will be conducted at Druridge Bay on a monthly basis using a beach seine net deployed by the NIFCA RIB Bravo 1 and our new onboard hauler. Initial results have been positive with a range of species caught, a large proportion of which were juveniles. The species list from the first survey included Sprat, Turbot, Flounder, Plaice, Sand Goby, Pollack, Herring, Cod and much to our surprise, a Sea Trout! These preliminary results indicate that Druridge Bay may be an important nursery area for important commercial fish species.

The mussel beds at Blyth, which is a popular site for hand gatherers primarily collecting mussels for use as bait for angling, will be surveyed on every other Spring low tide. The aims of these surveys are to map the extent of the mussel bed and monitor mussel density and recruitment.



IFCOs Stewart-Moore and Southerton hauling the beach seine net at Druridge Bay



NIFCA Committee members Ian Thomas and David Herriot assist IFCO Balsdon with mussel sampling at Blyth.

Lobster Stock Assessment Project

Emma Mcloughney writes “Since the project began in May 2014, I have been on 32 day trips on 5 local fishing vessels. The vessels work from Berwick, Holy Island, Seahouses, Amble and North Shields and therefore catches are likely to be representative of what the whole fleet catches. I have measured and assessed a total of 10,072 lobsters. The carapace length measured ranged from the smallest lobster at 40mm and largest measuring 145mm. The smallest berried hen measured was 77mm which may indicate that some lobsters are breeding at least twice before they reach the minimum size. The data collected thus far is showing that 75% of the lobsters measured are under the minimum landing size (MLS) of 87mm.



Adult and juvenile lobster

This large percentage of juveniles (with all lobsters beneath the MLS returned to the sea) is an indicator of future recruitment which has the potential to be good. It is probable that many small lobsters will have entered the pots but due to the pot construction are not able to escape, giving us a good picture of the whole lobster stock. The project is continuing in 2015 with thanks from the Authority to the participating fishermen”

Stakeholder events

NIFCA will be holding these events on the dates below. Central to the events will be the proposed Marine Conservation Zone from Coquet to St. Marys but there will be other topics for discussion and at Morpeth County Hall on 5 March these will be presentations, including guest speakers from the School of Marine Science at Newcastle University. Other topics

for discussion will include the Authority's on-going Lobster Project; our Recreational Sea Angling Strategy and our Strategic Environmental Assessment. At the events in Seahouses and Amble we will also welcome Rebecca Korda, a PhD candidate at Newcastle University, who is carrying out research into the under 10 metre fishing industry and would welcome the opportunity for a discussion with local fishermen. We hope to see as many of you as possible at these interesting events.

The details of these events are as follows:

Friday, 27 February at the NIFCA office in 8 Ennerdale Road, Blyth from 3.00 pm until 7.00 pm.

Monday, 2 March at the Olde Ship Inn, Seahouses from 6.30 pm

Wednesday, 4 March at the Amble Development Trust office at Fourways 2 in Amble from 6.30 pm

Thursday, 5 March at County Hall, Morpeth from 10.30 am until 3.00 pm when there will be a number of talks and presentations.

New NIFCA vessel 'St. Aidan'

The Authority's officers with the support of Committee Member D Herriot and Seafish Senior Surveyor Richard Blackhurst, have been making regular visits to Goodchild Marine in Great Yarmouth, to see the progress being made in the building of the Authority's 16m Catamaran Patrol/Survey Vessel St. Aidan. By the end of January 2015 the hulls were joined together, the deck laid and the wheelhouse lifted on-board. Southern Electronics (commissioned by Goodchild) visited the boatyard with NIFCA Officers and met Goodchild's Project Manager Steve Pierce to decide the layout of the wheelhouse, electronics and navigational package. The delivery date is looking like mid April 2015 following extensive sea trials, with the naming ceremony now due to take place in August, where the Authority is being blessed with the presence of Her Grace the Duchess of Northumberland who has agreed to carry out the Naming Ceremony. Full details of all of the Progress Reports and additional photographs can be seen on the Authority's website www.nifca.gov.uk



Computer image of St. Aidan

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