

PRESS RELEASE

BLYTH FISHERMAN FINED FOR UNDERSIZE LOBSTERS OFFENCE

In a prosecution brought by Northumberland Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority (NIFCA) at North Tyneside Magistrates Court, Mr Paul Todd, the owner/skipper of the fishing vessel “Debbie G” PLN P824 pleaded guilty on 22nd January 2016 to landing 60 lobsters beneath the legal minimum size of 87mm. The NIFCA solicitor Noel Dilks told the court that on Wednesday 18th November 2015, whilst carrying out a routine shore patrol, Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Officers (IFCOs) Michael Docherty and Ricky Willis carried out an inspection of the day’s catch from the fishing vessel “Debbie G” following the landing of a catch. The officers inspected three fish boxes, two of which contained a mixture of fish and the other a number of legal sized lobsters. However, one of the IFCOs then noticed a fourth box which appeared to only contain rags and ropes. On closer inspection the box was in fact found to contain a total of 60 undersize lobsters. Upon being questioned about the offence, Mr Todd admitted his guilt to breaching the regulation prohibiting the landing of lobsters below the legal size of 87mm, saying “it was desperation” which made him do it.

Mr Todd did not appear in court, but after reading a letter from his solicitor the court passed sentence – Mr Todd was fined £3,000 but this was reduced on account of his early guilty plea to £2,000. He was also ordered to pay costs totalling £712 plus a £200 victim surcharge, making a total of £2,912.

Northumberland IFCA’s Chief IFCO Al Browne said “Northumberland IFCA and its officers take the breach of any regulation very seriously, particularly one such as this which is designed to conserve and protect fishing stocks for current and future generations of fishermen, as well as for the benefit of the marine environment. In this case, because of the large number of undersize lobsters discovered, the Authority felt the matter to be so serious that it had to be dealt with by the Magistrates Court. The sentence handed down by the Magistrates hopefully sends out a message as to how seriously an offence of this nature is viewed”.

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