

**NORTHUMBERLAND INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION**  
**AUTHORITYCHIEF INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION**  
**OFFICER A.B.BROWNEQUARTERLY REPORT ENDING 30<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

Once again it has been a very busy quarter for all the officers and office staff especially with the introduction of the new NIFCA potting Tags. Letters had to be sent to all commercial and recreational fishermen informing them that they had to renew their existing tags and dates were set in May when NIFCA Officers would be at Berwick, Seahouses, North Shields, Holy Island, Amble and Blyth ports so commercial fishermen could collect their tags. Recreational potters come into the office for theirs. At the time of finalising this report, we have some 97 commercial and approximately 122 recreational potting fishers who have applied and paid for their 2016 Shellfish Permits. Recreational numbers are increasing on a virtually daily basis. The Authority has also had 30 fishermen apply and pay for Trawl Permits and 6 apply and pay for Dredge Permits, increasing the work load in the office. The Authority's IFCOs have been splitting their time from working on the shore carrying out port inspections, checking recreational fishers, anglers, visiting wholesalers, angling and dive shops, talking to fishermen and the general public and they have also been working in the office or being tasked to crew the Authority's vessels at sea. The enforcement team have been concentrating on targeted, intelligence led enforcement as well as educating both commercial and recreational fishers, including anglers and divers. The environmental team have been very busy with a multitude of tasks, including the Aln Fish Survey, Beadnell Fish Survey, Long Nanny Fish Survey to name a few. Unfortunately, Environmental IFCO Sally Stewart-Moore has been on sick leave since the beginning of May, but fortunately, Natalie Wallace who has been working for the NIFCA for the last 6 months, has been able to stay on to help the Environmental Team on a temporary basis until Sally is back.

Please see the attached reports from IFCOs Graham and Docherty which give a very good overview of what has been happening throughout the Authority's District this quarter. As mentioned in last quarters report, a number of our local fishermen have been getting their boats out of the water and carrying out much needed maintenance before the busy spring/summer season begins. By the middle of June and the start of hopefully settled weather, fishermen were able to set their pots close inshore and some have had good landings of lobsters.

The Beach-net fishery for the capture of Sea Trout started on 26<sup>th</sup> March. However, not many licence holders started till the end of May and by all accounts some good landings of sea trout have been either seen or reported. The Drift-net season started on 1<sup>st</sup> June with all drift net licence holders ready and keen to get started. Officers have been speaking to a number of fishermen whilst out at sea and most have said they have had a good start to the season, prices of salmon were very high at the beginning of June but have since slowly dropped. Let's hope all the beach and drift net fishermen have a good season.

Checks have been carried out on both shore and boat anglers this quarter with some good signs of Codling being seen mainly on charter vessels fishing on the hard rocky grounds. By mid-June and the finer weather, large shoals of Mackerel have been

reported throughout the Authority's district. Whilst out on patrol with the Authority's Rigid Inflatable Boats (RIBs), checks have been carried out by officers on recreational anglers. Shore gatherers have been slowly returning to the usual hot spots when there have been big tides, also due to the finer weather more divers have been seen, both at sea and from the shore, regular checks have been carried out on both by officers throughout the district.

### **Miscellaneous**

St Aidan was lifted out off the water at the Royal Quays Marina as planned on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April. On the day, it had been arranged that Richard Blackhurst (Seafish Surveyor) would attend to carry out the 12 month final inspection. Previous to the lift out the Authority's engineer had picked up a couple of minor faults which were reported to Goodchild Marine, who decided to send a person up whilst the vessel was on the hard stand to make good. He arrived on the Thursday and stayed onsite until the Sunday, completing all the repairs. Also it was arranged for MECAL to attend the vessel to carry out the annual MCA Inspection, which I'm pleased to say she passed with flying colours. I had pre-arranged that once St Aidan was out of the water, the officers would prepare and paint the anti-fouling on the hull and the Authority's engineer would check and replace any anodes and any other defects. This work was carried out on time and to a very high standard and a big thank you to both IFCO Cooke and Docherty for their hard work. St Aidan was lifted back into the water on schedule on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> May and was back on station the following day.

A copy of the Seafish report was sent to Watch Committee Members on 9<sup>th</sup> June last.

The MMO/ IFCAs Intel Project is now fully up and running in the North with IFCO Balsdon and Admin Officer Cosimini gathering all the Intel reports from the IFCOs, processing them and passing all the relevant Intel to the MMO Ops Room in Newcastle. The Ops Room has also sent Intel back which has been gathered from either their officers or other IFCAs. Since the project started NIFCA Officers have really taken to the project and are now seeing the benefits and at each monthly Rota meeting we now have a Tasking and Co-ordinating Group (TCG) meeting which outlines any emerging issues.

On May 12<sup>th</sup> I was contacted by Dr Clare Fitzsimmons of Newcastle University asking if we could help with one of her student's projects as the University vessel Princess Royal was out of action, with Officers to haul and re-bait 12 lobster pots off Blyth. The Authority has also had a young lady Jess Swinbank on work experience at the end of June for a week; she has been out with officers on the coast, on board St Aidan and Bravo 1 and spent some time in the office.

A number of NIFCA Officers assisted MMO & Elaine Young (NE), by hosting an open evening for the Sea Cadets, this is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year NIFCA have been involved and this year hopefully we will be taking a couple of the cadets out on St Aidan. I also attended the annual Whitley Bay Sea Cadets Open Evening, this is an excellent opportunity to speak with the cadets their parents and officers and again we are looking at taking a couple of their keener cadets out on St Aidan. On 30<sup>th</sup> May DCIFCO Southerton and IFCOs Balsdon & Willis attended the Amble Puffin Festival with the Authority's shore RIB Bravo1 and on 31<sup>st</sup> May DCIFCO Green and IFCO Rae attended St Mary's Island Open Day, and by all accounts both days were well attended and there was lots of interest at the NIFCA stalls.

This quarter has seen a number of the Authority's Officers becoming budding actors; ITV contacted the office asking if it would be possible to use Bravo 1 and the Authority's small Zodiac for the TV series "Vera". After negotiating a charter, DCIFO

Southerton (press-ganged) and IFCO Docherty (volunteer) made their debut at Craster and Seahouses on 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> June and DCIFCO Southerton had to attend again on 29<sup>th</sup> June. The officers enjoyed the experience, although they were long days. ITV have promised to inform the Authority when the episode is going to be screened (they are looking at early 2017). Also the local ITV News contacted the office and it was arranged to take one of their reporters out for the day on board St Aidan. On Monday 27<sup>th</sup> reporter Jonny Blair along with one of his camera men came on board, it had been arranged to collect lobsters from Blyth and 'V' notch and release as part of our annual v-notching programme, along with patrolling inshore. The ITV Team brought along a Drone and took some excellent footage of the vessel at sea. The piece was shown on the local evening news on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> June and ITV have promised to send the Authority a copy.

Joint working carried out this quarter saw on 21<sup>st</sup> June the Tweed Commission coming down and going out on board the Authority's shore RIB Bravo1, officers launched at Seahouses and patrolled up to Berwick where they were recovered, a number of potting and salmon boats were inspected. Also on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June the MMO asked if 2 of their MEOs could come out on board St Aidan, whilst at sea the on board RIB TT St Aidan was launched and 21 recreational fishers were boarded and inspected.

**A.B.Browne**  
**Chief IFCO**



**NORTHUMBERLAND INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY**  
**SUMMARY FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT**  
**APRIL MAY & JUNE 2016**

Port	Potting Boats	Trawlers	Approx. No Crew	Salmon Boats
North of border	9		16	
Berwick	4		7	
Holy Island	6		11	1
Seahouses	10	1	22	1
Beadnell	3		4	3
Newton	1		1	
Craster	2		2	
Boulmer	2		3	4
Amble	21	6	53	7
<b>Totals</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>16</b>

### **General**

Weather throughout this quarter has been un-settled with periods of calm followed by strong winds and heavy seas, making fishing opportunities for the district's fisherman a bit restrictive at times.

As April started the light westerly winds carried on from March keeping the sea in a favourable condition. But as April progressed strong Northerly winds came through bringing turbulent seas and weather conditions. As April ended and May began the weather did an about turn with the first half bringing calm seas light winds and bright sunshine, but this only lasted till midway through when again the strong winds and big sea came through from the North. The pattern continued towards the latter end of May and into June. Thick patches of Fog were a problem at the beginning of June, which because of light winds hung to the coast for a few days. As the winds increased towards the middle of the month, the fog and mist disappeared but increasing the sea state, making it a bit more uncomfortable at sea. The wind and sea eased towards the latter end of June

### **Shellfish Prices**

The lobster prices throughout this quarter, started at approximately £14.00 per kilo in April but dropped to approximately £9.00 towards the end of May, and has remained around that price since.

Edible (Brown) Crab prices have remained steady throughout this quarter at approximately £1.10 per kilo.

Velvet Crab prices have also remained steady with the price per kilo being quoted to ourselves as £1.00.

Trout price per kilo quoted to ourselves towards the latter end of this quarter were between £6.00 and £8.00 per kilo.

Salmon price per kilo again quoted to ourselves were £18.00 per kilo to start, but dropping to £9.00 per kilo towards the latter end of the month. Speaking to some of the districts Salmon fishermen, they said there has been an abundance of Salmon

rather than Trout being caught this season.

Average lobster landings seen throughout this quarter have been between half a box and a full box (approximately 40), there were a couple of exceptions to this when two landings were seen of between 150 and 200.

Brown crab landings seen throughout this quarter started at between 1 and 2 boxes then towards the end of this quarter average landings seen were between 2 and 5 boxes. Many of the skippers have said the quality of the crabs were much better.

Velvet crab landings have followed the trend of previous years with only a few skippers choosing to land them, those landings that have been seen were between half a box and 1 box.

Towards the latter end of the quarter shoals of mackerel were around with some vessels opting for a spell of angling, with only a couple of landings sighted of 4 boxes.

The fishing vessel Trust BK8 moved from Berwick to Seahouses during this quarter, with the previous owner having no intentions of replacing her, at the moment. There have been a couple of new additions to the potting fleet at Amble, with the arrival of Dawn Marie BH 80 replacing the Ocean Dawn, Harmony BH527 which replaces Suzanne II. Caberfeidh BH28 has joined the fleet.

**SOUTHERN DISTRICT REPORT FOR SECOND  
QUARTER OF 2016: APRIL - JUNE INCLUSIVE**

**A Comprehensive Guide to Indigenous Vessels, Active in Southern District**

PORT	POTTERS	TRAWLERS	SALMON/TROUT
<b>North Shields</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Cullercoats to Seaton Sluice</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Blyth</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Newbiggin</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Total	19	18	10

Overview:

The end of the spring has been bedraggled by frequent bursts of bad weather, featuring northerly winds and heavy seas. However, recent weeks have seen more settled weather and the summer appears to be taking hold.

**Static Gear:**

Static gear is currently arriving inshore as operators await the start of the lobster season. Skippers have been largely surviving on offshore crab catches and the occasional spell of gill netting.

**Catch Reports:**

Lobster catch reports remain scarce across the District but it is merely a waiting game and operators will soon see increased catch rates of inshore Lobster.

The Migratory sector saw an explosive start to the season with drift net operators reporting landings of 500-600kg of mixed fish per day, consisting mainly of Salmon. One wholesaler reliably informed me that his boats were landing up to £20,000 worth of mixed fish per week.

Prices typically started high, around the £19 mark but have since fallen, in keeping with the trend of past seasons.

**Recreational Activity:**

Recreational gear is starting to appear inshore in the district and shellfish gatherers arrive in the regular hotspots to work the spring tides. Some 160 recreational permit holders have renewed their permits since the start of the year and have all accepted new generation tags with which to mark their gear.

**Mobile Gear:**

Many trawlers from North Shields have made the journey through the Caledonian Canal and are experiencing a successful summer prawn fishery around the West Coast of Scotland, typically landing into Macduff or Oban.

There are also a handful of scallop dredgers working in the District. The majority of these are under 10m in length and are working no more than 10 dredges in accordance with NIFCA Byelaws.