

## **NORTHUMBERLAND INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY CHIEF INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION OFFICER A.B.BROWNE QUARTERLY REPORT ENDING 30 SEPT 2016**

May I take this opportunity on behalf of the CEO and myself to give all the IFCOs a pat on the back for all their hard work throughout the busy summer months, carrying out numerous enforcement duties, surveys, sea patrols and many other tasks in a professional and friendly manner. The IFCOs divide their time between carrying out shore inspections, visiting ports and carrying out vessel landings, checks, recreational fishers, shore gatherers, anglers and divers as well as visiting wholesalers, angling and dive shops. Whilst carrying out these duties, IFCOs are liaising with fishermen and the general public. All IFCOs take their turns crewing the Authority's vessels, St Aidan, RIB(TT St Aidan) and Bravo 1. Most officers are now qualified to RYA Level 'Advanced Power Boat' Commercially Endorsed.

Throughout the quarter the enforcement team have been concentrating on targeted, intelligence led enforcement both at sea and whilst ashore. As was felt to be necessary, additional joint working with the MMO has taken place and on these occasions some excellent joint enforcement has been executed.

The environmental team have been very busy out on the shore carrying out a multitude of tasks these include the Aln Fish Survey, Beadnell Fish Survey, Long Nanny Fish Survey, Bird Surveys, V. Notching and starting this quarter the Escape Gap Survey to name a few. Sad news this quarter was the Authority receiving confirmation from Environmental IFCO Sally Stewart-Moore that she wouldn't be returning to work, Sally has been a valuable and essential part of not only the environmental team but to the whole NIFCA. She is a very happy, professional, knowledgeable young lady who will be a miss to the Authority and I'm sure the Authority its members and the staff wish her well. Fortunately, since Sally's unfortunate illness and her decision to leave, the Authority have been lucky enough to be able to offer Natalie Wallace (who had been working for the NIFCA for the last 6 months) a full-time position as an environmental officer, meaning the environmental team is now back up to full strength.

The Authority has continued to receive applications from both Trawlers, Dredges and Commercial Potters throughout the quarter and to date the Authority have issued (since the start of 2016) approximately 97 Commercial Shellfish Permits(£180), 168 Recreational Shellfish Permits(£10), 36 Trawl Permits(£50) and 11 Dredge Permits(£150). There has been an increase in dredging activity throughout the summer months, all dredging permit holders have been given NIFCA Byelaw Booklets and been made aware of the regulations especially within the restricted areas and have been reminded to speak with the local potting fishermen with regards to where their pots are set, to try and minimise gear conflict.

Please see below the quarterly reports from IFCOs Graham and Docherty which give a very good overview of what has been happening throughout the Authority's District this quarter. By the sounds of things the Drift and Beach Net Fishery has been very good this year, mainly due to the high prices the fishermen were getting for their fish. Most said that the last couple of weeks in August leading to the season ending

weren't as good, with some finishing early. Some thought this was due to too much freshwater attracting the fish to go straight up the rivers. The season is as follows, Beach Nets between 26th March - 31st May Sea Trout only, then for both Drift and Beach Nets 1st June - 31st August, Monday - Friday.

The lobster season didn't really start till mid-July and by then most of the potting fishermen had their pots set ready. By all accounts it has been a good season with fishermen happy with the strong price they were receiving for their lobsters. Some local fishermen have been working some or all their gear further offshore, up to 30 miles offshore, targeting brown crab with some very good landings being recorded.

Checks have been carried out on both shore and boat anglers this quarter with some good Codling and Ling being caught, mainly by charter vessels fishing on the hard rocky grounds or wrecks. There have been some good signs of Mackerel this quarter, however sometimes they have been seen and caught close inshore then next they are further offshore. Regular inspections and checks have been carried out on all the known bait digging sites and records are being collected and given to the environmental team. Numerous shore patrols (both weekdays and weekends) have been organised to visit and check all the known hot spots for shore gatherers. Surprisingly there hasn't seemed to be as many this year as previous years. Regular checks have also been carried out on divers this quarter with very little or no shellfish being seen. All pieces of intelligence received regarding divers as well as shore gatherers have been followed up, including joint patrols with the MMO.

## **Miscellaneous**

As mentioned in the Environmental Report the 2016 'V' Notching Scheme was completed on Wednesday 21st September and this year the Authority released 1,176 lobsters within the 5 sectors, on 9 sea patrols, costing £10,692.

On July 2nd whilst carrying out a routine sea patrol with St Aidan and its RIB (TT St Aidan) Skipper Graham responded to a call from Humber Coastguard regarding 3 Kayakers in difficulty off Blyth. Although the Authority's RIB was engaged in other duties nearby Skipper Graham and Engineer Cooke were able to locate and assist in recovering all 3 kayakers onto St Aidan. Thankfully, all 3 males were well, but very tired. St Aidan proceeded to manoeuvre close to Blyth Beach and with the assistance of the Authority's RIB managed to re-launch and safely drop all 3 kayakers back off on the beach. Throughout the incident skipper Graham kept Humber Coastguard up to date regarding the recovery and safe outcome of the incident.

In July the Authority had two young lads for one and two weeks respectively carrying out work experience. Both were able to go out with officers on the shore, help with surveys and go out on-board the Authority's patrol vessel St Aidan, as well as do some work in the office. The feedback I received was that both lads thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

Throughout the quarter NIFCA and MMO Officers have carried out numerous joint patrols both at sea and ashore resulting in detailed inspections of vessels, vehicles and daily vessel landings being carried out. Due to the new Intel Project a number of pieces of intelligence have been flagged up and the appropriate joint action has been taken. On 10th August, Natural England's officer Elaine Young arranged for herself and a couple of her colleagues to come out on-board St Aidan to assist with the 'V' Notching Scheme.

It became apparent that the quality of the dry-suits, undersuits and gloves each

individual IFCO had been previously issued were no longer up to standard and that the Authority needed to look at replacing them with superior custom gear. Northern Divers were approached and one of their reps came to the Authority's Office with some demonstration suits and equipment, (this company supplies suits and equipment to the Fire Service, CoastGuard Service, some IFCA's and other Emergency Services). CEO Hardy, Deputy Chief IFCO Southerton (Health & Safety Officer), and I decided that it would be best for the Officers as well as affordable for the Authority to replace the suits and equipment. Deputy Chief IFCO Southerton and I designed the suits and then each officer was individually measured. The Authority took delivery of the equipment early August and all officers are impressed by the quality and comfort of the new suits and equipment. The old suits are currently being patched up and will be available to members or helpers when they are assisting with surveys.

On the 6th September IFCO Balsdon, Admin Officer Stiles and myself attended an Intel Refresher at the MMO, HQ in Newcastle Upon Tyne. The refresher was an opportunity for all to meet the new MMO appointed co-ordinator Ian James and also to catch up with the other IFCOs from North Eastern IFCA and North Western IFCA. Also at this refresher we were all introduced to the new Intelligence Report Form (IR) and it's 3 x 5 x 2 format. Obviously the Intel Project is just approaching its first year since inception but we can all see it's benefits and very shortly it is going to be run out to the IFCA's in the south east. We are still continuing to have our monthly Rota Meeting which now includes an Intelligence update and a Tasking and Co-ordinating Group (TCG) meeting, which outlines any emerging issues. I and my Deputy Chief IFCO Southerton attend the local MMO TCG which is held every other month.

As I'm sure you are all aware Blyth hosted the Tall Ships between 26th - 27th - 28th - 29th August. The NIFCA were involved both on the shore and with their patrol vessel St Aidan. On the Friday, Saturday and Sunday the environmental team manned a stall in the centre of Blyth promoting the NIFCA and its work, thanks to the environmental team and thanks to the enforcement team who provided safety cover, VIP & Media trips on-board St Aidan on all 4 days. The organisation, weather, turnout and atmosphere for all the days was unbelievable and well done not only to the vessels which participated but to Blyth Harbour and especially the Harbour Master for an excellent weekend, it really put Blyth on the map.

A number of Official Written Warnings have been issued this quarter for various reasons. An Official Written Warning means that the Authority, CEO and Chief Officer have carefully considered the offence and deemed it not so serious as to issue a FAP or Court proceedings, but to invite the defendant into the Authority's Office and issue them with an Official Written Warning which will be kept on record and if the offender re-offends it can be taken into consideration. 2 of these warnings were issued for failing to send in their Shellfish Returns on time, 1 for retaining undersized shellfish on-board a vessel and 1 for fishing with pots not displaying the correct NIFCA Tags.

## **CIFCO A B Browne**

**NORTHUMBERLAND INSHORE FISHERIES  
& CONSERVATION AUTHORITY**

**IFCO D GRAHAM**

**SUMMARY FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT  
JULY, AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 2016**

<b>Port</b>	<b>Potting Boats</b>	<b>Trawlers</b>	<b>Approx. no. of crew</b>	<b>Salmon Boats</b>
North of border	10	None	20	
Berwick	4	None	9	
Holy Island	6	None	14	
Seahouses	10	1	20	1
Beadnell	3	None	4	3
Newton	1	None	1	
Craster	2	None	2	
Boulmer	3	None	4	3
Amble	21	4	51	7
Totals	60	5	125	14

**General**

Weather this quarter has been pleasant with light airs, calm seas and high temperatures, enabling the districts fishermen to head to sea. July started with light winds coming from the West, which slowly backed towards the South as the month progressed. With the wind predominantly coming off the land the sea remained fairly calm. This continued throughout August and into the beginning of September, until a period of sustained stronger South Easterly winds brought bigger seas during the middle of the month, easing back to come off the land towards the latter end of September.

**Fishing activity**

After a slow start to the season many of the districts fishermen have commented on how well the season has been for them. Average landings that we saw were between half a box and 2 boxes of lobsters, there were one or two exceptions to this, where we saw landings of four and five boxes of lobsters but these were on a few and far between basis. Lobster prices during the first and second month of the quarter ranged between £8.50 and £10.00, but rose unexpectedly to between £10.40 and £11.00 towards the latter end of the quarter

Brown crab landings seen were between 1 and 2 boxes, a couple of the vessels working further off were seen landing 4 boxes but as with the lobsters this was few and far between. Prices per kilo remained steady between £1

and £1.10. Velvet crab landings have been few in number with only a few skippers choosing to land them. Landings that have been seen were between half a box and 1 box, as with the price for Brown crabs the Velvet crab prices remained steady at approximately £1 per kilo.

This quarter saw the end to the salmon and trout season with many of the license holders saying they had found it a decent year for them.

Salmon seemed to be in abundance at times, although the price per kilo reflected this and dropped. Prices throughout the quarter per kilo were between £6.00 and £7.50 for Grilse. Trout prices averaged between £9.00 and £10.00 throughout the season, with Salmon prices per kilo faring a little better, between £11.00 and £12.50 average throughout the season.

This Quarter has seen an increase in the number of Scallop Dredgers working within the Authorities district. We now have 11 permit holders, with three vessels being seen working on a regular basis from Amble northover up to the border.

**NORTHUMBERLAND INSHORE FISHERIES &  
CONSERVATION AUTHORITY  
IFCO M DOCHERTY**

**SUMMARY FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT  
JULY, AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 2016**

**A comprehensive guide to indigenous vessels, active in Southern District**

Port	Potters	Trawlers
<b>North Shields</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Cullercoats/Seaton Sluice</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Blyth</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Newbiggin</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>37</b>

Overview

As the nights close in and we awake to frost on our windscreens, the dawn chorus fades to silence and we welcome the autumn days. The District has had a mixed summer with varied weather patterns. After a somewhat delayed appearance from the summer sun we were blessed with an Indian summer to ease us into the final quarter.

**Static Gear**

For the second year running we have seen a distinct lack of part time static gear being set in the south, a possible reaction to the new system of charging for recreational permits.

At present we have had 167 new permits issued for 2016. This would suggest that a maximum of 835 recreational pots could be set over the entire district at any one time – just over the maximum allowance of 1 registered vessel. Of course the total amount of Lobsters the new recreational permit holders would be legally allowed to take would remain at 167 per day.

As with other years the amount of full time gear remains steady with only a handful of vessels in the south working their full 800 pot allowance. The remaining operators tend to work somewhere in the 400 region.

Demersal Nets are scarce to non-existent at this time of year in keeping with the Migratory Species Byelaw that severely restricts inshore netting during the Salmon/Trout season.

## **Catch Reports**

Lobster catches escalated slowly as in keeping with the trend of the past 2 years. However, unusually this was mirrored with higher than average prices with the price set at £10.50 per kilo at the time of this report going to press.

Toward the end of September, vessel operators reported a significant 'take off' (diminishing catch rates) with an average drop of 30% yield in daily fishing.

In the world of Migratory catches, operators have enjoyed what can only be described as a record breaking season with certain vessels grossing up to £9000.00 per day.

This was made possible by a combination of a heavy Salmon presence coupled with a price of £23 per kilo for the first 10 days of the drift net season.

## **Recreational Activity**

The season has at best been patchy for recreational and charter vessels. Mackerel and Sand eel remain abundant in inshore waters and this has been blamed for the lack of fish feeding in traditional wrecks. However, occasional double figure fish have still been reported, although the majority of catch reports concern small Ling in the 4-6lb class.

Cleeking in the District seems to be a forgotten pastime with only a handful of diehard gatherers still partaking in the activity. Perhaps a somewhat sad sign of our times where the Xbox has become the household's Patriarch and traditional family traits are left behind.

## **Mobile Gear**

This summer has been rather unusual in respect of mobile gear. Several visiting as well as local vessels have requested dredging permits and have operated from Alnmouth to the border reporting good catches of Scallops.

Several local vessels made the yearly pilgrimage to Eyemouth to exploit the summer Prawn fishery but an abundance of poor sized Nephrops coupled with a low price made fishing unviable and they were lured back to traditionally winter grounds where they were experiencing a somewhat excellent spell of night fishing. Good sized Prawns mixed with a presence of prime fish meant local small vessels were reaping a higher price for their efforts whilst enjoying the comfort of working from their home Port.

## **Vessel Movements**

It has almost been a case of pass the parcel this quarter with several vessels changing hands or being sold out of the District.

The trawler 'Miley Adelle' was repurchased by its last owner Paul 'Rocky' Wenn and renamed 'Frem W' (a common occurrence in this vessel owner's history). The Miley Adelle was then replaced by Alan Cowie with a Whitehaven registered vessel 'Sea Nymph' WA 70.

This was done in accordance with a desire by skipper Billy 'Bones' Jones to

diversify into potting in the summer months.

The vessel 'Palatine' FY 149 was sold by David McNeill to his Father, fleet Master 'Diamond' Don McNeill and has replaced it with a meatier vessel 'Emma Lou' SN 6 which he will continue to work single handed from north Shields.

The trawler 'Sarah Helen' SN 92 was purchased by Raymond Russel and previous owner Jonathon Jordan has now purchased the potting vessel 'Laura June II' from the estate of the dearly departed John Stocks. Mr Jordan intends to carry on with tradition and work the vessel from its spiritual home of Cullercoats.

Lastly, the traditional Northumberland coble 'Xmas Rose' has been sold from Newbiggin although the destination is at present unknown.