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CHIEF INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION OFFICER A.B. BROWNE **QUARTERLY REPORT ENDING 30th SEPT 2018**

Once again, the NIFCA have experienced a very busy summer with all officers working extremely hard, may I take this opportunity on behalf of the CEO and myself to thank all the officers and office staff for their tireless work throughout the summer months, especially covering for fellow members of staff throughout the main holiday season. All the IFCOs including the Environmental team have divided their time between carrying out routine and targeted shore inspections, visiting ports and carrying out vessel landings, checking 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 public. As well as all the above tasks, all IFCOs take their turns crewing the Authority's vessels, St Aidan, TT St Aidan (on-board RIB) and Bravo 1 (shore-based RIB); this involves monitoring the various types of fishing being targeted within the NIFCA district, recording sightings, inspecting fishing gear, boarding fishing boats, carrying out fleet surveys and many more duties. Currently the NIFCA have 7 officers who are qualified to RYA Powerboat Level 'Advanced Power Boat' Commercially Endorsed, the plan is to get the remaining officers up to the above Level over the winter period, meaning additional training has been given to the relevant officers.

Throughout the quarterly Deputy Chief IFCO Mark Southerton (skipper) and IFCO Darren Graham (mate) have been sharing their duties by skippering St Aidan, they have also been carrying out safety drills on-board St Aidan with all the Authority's officers, resulting in all the officers now being trained to a very high level of professionalism, these drills included man-overboard, fire drills, anchoring and emergency steering.

Members can see the quarterly reports attached from IFCO's Darren Graham (Northern Area) and Nick Weir (Southern Area) which give a very good overview of what has been happening throughout the Authority's District this quarter. The lobster season started late, most fishers were poised with their gear set and ready, by mid-August landings started to climb, strong price has made for a good season so far. Some fishers also have gear further offshore targeting the brown crab fishery, due to the calm weather they have been able to fish these pots further afield, strong prices have helped with top money being paid for larger crab which has been cut. Some of the local under 10m trawlers have been fishing up in Scotland mainly around the Firth of Forth targeting the summer prawn fishery, the boats that decided to stay in their home ports have also been doing well, also targeting prawns, earlier in the quarter they were fishing day-light and darkness. By the end of the quarter they changed their fishing patterns and were going out though the day still catching good quality prawns and small amounts of fish bye-catch. By the end of September most of the boats were back or considering coming back to their home ports getting ready for hopefully a good winter on the prawns.

Regular 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. Mackerel have been around throughout the summer but not in great numbers. However anglers fishing on piers throughout the NIFCA district normally early morning and early evening have had some good sport. Good news came through for recreational Bass fishers at the end of the quarter, due to lower

fish mortality from recreational fishers and a higher survival rate from catch and release practice. From 1st Oct to 31st Dec 2018 one Sea Bass may be retained per fisher per day.

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) had been organised to visit and check all the known hot spots for shore gatherers but surprisingly there hasn't seemed to be as many this year as previous years. There have been 2 near miss incidents involving shore gatherers this quarter, one just south of Seaton Sluice, when a known elderly gentleman fell and injured himself as the tide was coming in, thankfully he was rescued in time by the emergency services; the second incident happened near Seahouses, down from the Golf Course, again a shore gatherer slipped and broke his leg in a number of places. Luckily his cry for help was heard by a member of the public who raised the alarm, again the emergency services including the RNLI managed to recover him before the tide turned.

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

On 16th July 2018, Chief IFCO Al Browne along with Deputy Chief IFCO Mark Southerton travelled down to Ribcraft, Yeovil, (using the Ford Ranger), to have the first meeting with the Ribcraft team regarding the build of the Authority's new Cabin RIB. After a tour around the factory, (very impressive) we sat down and discussed the specifications and draft drawings. Since the visit Chief IFCO Al Browne has been in regular contact with Ribcraft and the final specification was agreed early October 2018. Ribcraft are currently moulding the 9.5m hull and the Authority's next visit will be around the end of January 2019 with the estimated completion date being around the end February 2019.

It has been 1 year since the introduction of 'The Lobster and Crawfish (Prohibition of Fishing and Landing) (Amendment) (England) Order 2017, SI No 899, prohibiting any vessels fishing for or landing berried lobsters within the relevant British Fishery limits. This of course created a problem for the NIFCA as we border with Scotland and have several Scottish boats which fish both in our district and in Scotland, as well as recreational activity relating to lobsters. None of this was covered by the SI.

The Authority realised that NIFCA had to introduce an Emergency Byelaw prohibiting, any a person from fishing for, removing, taking, retaining or landing a berried lobster, also a person must not store, carry, or transport any berried lobster in the NIFCA district before first point of sale. Since the introduction 29th September 2017 the Authority has constantly worked on getting Byelaw 4 'Crustacea and Molluscs Permitting and Pot Limitation' revised, resulting in the Authority having to apply and successfully getting a 6-month extension on the Emergency Byelaw.

The start of the quarter saw St Aidan out of action due to mechanical problems, this was finally resolved, and the vessel went on sea trials on 2nd August 2018. IFCO J. Cooke the Authority's Engineer/IFCO also discovered a slight anomaly regarding a high reading and corrosion caused by electrolysis and the vessel builder Goodchild Marine was informed. Two engineers attended the St Aidan at Royal Quays Marina, North Shields in August and after test and the vessel being lifted out it was decided to change all the Anodes and for IFCO Cooke to monitor the situation. Thanks for a well done job must be given to IFCO/Engineer, Justin Cooke for all his hard and at times frustrating work he has carried out this quarter, keeping St Aidan operational.

After being with the Authority for over 3 years, finally Emma Stiles managed to have a trip out for the day on-board St Aidan, when thankfully the weather was kind and it was an excellent opportunity for Emma to see firsthand what the Authority's officers' duties and tasks are whilst at sea.

Throughout the quarter NIFCA officers have carried out several joint patrols with the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and Environment Agency (EA), both at sea and on the shore. Senior officers are also in regular contact with the Marine Police, Tweed Commission and Marine Scotland. The Authority's intel officers Eric Balsdon and Ricky Willis carry out monthly Tasking and Co-ordination Group (TCG) meetings, one at the MMO Office North Shields (1st week of every month), and one at the Authority's Office (4th week of every month). These meetings give all officers the opportunity to discuss emerging issues, intelligence and plan future joint targeted inspections. When operational duties allow the Marine Police will try and attend the TCG meeting at the Authority's office. In September after getting a request from the Senior Warden at Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve, (LNNR) officers carried out a night patrol at Holy Island, patrolling all the known carparks and access areas, when there were no sightings of bait diggers.

Publicity events - officers have been busy throughout this quarter either attending or hosting various activities with the public, these included;

- Chief IFCO Al Browne attended the naming ceremony of North Western IFCA's new Patrol Vessel, 'North Western Protector' at Whitehaven Marina, on 25th July 2018. The Naming Ceremony was carried out by HRH Duke of Gloucester. Their replacement vessel is a 20m refurbished aluminum catamaran with an on-board 5m RIB.
- Sea Cadets/Scouts from Trinity House came out on-board St Aidan for ½ day per group, in August,
- Chief IFCO Al Browne was approached by Trinity House, Capt. Nigel Groves with regards to 2 x Sea Cadets carrying out a weeks' work experience with the NIFCA. It was decided on a joint work experience week, with NIFCA, NE, MMO, the NIFCA being the lead. The 2 chosen Cadets started week commencing 30th July and spent 3 days with NIFCA and 1 day with MMO and NE, a copy of the Cadets Diary is available if any member wishes to see them. It has been agreed that hopefully this can become an annual event.
- Chief IFCO Browne and Deputy Chief IFCO Green attended 'Amble & Warkworth Rotary Club', meeting at Warkworth, in September to give a talk on the NIFCA.
- The Authority's Environment team have attended several events throughout the quarter, more information can be found in their report.

It has been a busy quarter for some of the Authority's officers carrying out survey work not only for the Authority, (please see the Environmental report for NIFCA surveys completed), but also for other Organisation's. Officers using both St Aidan and Bravo 1 have been assisting Dr Ashleigh Tinlin-Mackenzie, Newcastle University, with her EMFF Project (MSFD Subtidal Rock and Mud Indicators and Monitoring Protocols) in the North Sea. The charter work involves, 7 rocky sampling days, plus 2 mud sampling days, within the NIFCA district. As well as this St Aidan carried out 1 mud sampling day in North East IFCA's district (as their vessel was out of action). The Authority also agreed to assist Hull University in carrying out a Tyne Estuary Banks Scoping Study using both St Aidan and Bravo 1, in total the vessels were used on 5 individual days, the last 2 involving the use of Drones.

Deputy Chief IFCO Mark Southerton along with Bravo 1 (shore-based RIB) and some of the specialised underwater equipment owned by the NIFCA was all ready to carryout (what has now become an annual charter) a 2 day underwater survey of a discharge outfall off Whitburn, this work is being carried out for Mott McDonald (who are working on behalf of the Coal Authority), unfortunately due to weather it had to be cancelled. Hopefully by the time members read this report it may have been carried out.

SUMMARY FOR THE NORTHERN AREA OF THE DISTRICT
JULY, AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 2018

PORT	POTTING BOATS	TRAWLERS	APPROX. NUM. OF CREW	SALMON
North of border	9	None	16	
Berwick	3	1	4	
Holy Island	6	None	13	
Seahouses	10	1	19	1
Beadnell	3	None	4	3
Newton	1	None	1	
Craster	2	None	3	
Boulmer	3	None	4	4
Amble	22	7	51	7
Totals	59	9	115	15

Weather

July saw a sustained period of high pressure sitting over the UK, with very light winds, calm seas and bright sunshine, which made for a very pleasant month for the NIFCA district's fishermen and stakeholders. The calm and pleasant weather continued into and throughout August, with the odd day of light showers sporadically throughout the month to spoil the British summer. As September drew closer the weather changed noticeably with the start of a period of high winds and rough seas, with a couple of high wind storms Ali and Bronagh hitting the district towards the middle and latter end of September.

Lobsters

Landings seen during the month of July, followed the pattern of previous years which was low numbers to begin with but as the month drew on the numbers increased. With average numbers landed between 15 and 25, with the odd exception of 100 lobsters seen landed by one vessel. August saw a dramatic increase in the average numbers landed seen of between 45 and 80, but again there were exceptions when 7 boxes were seen landed from one vessel in the northern part of the district. This average continued into September with numbers in and around 100 lobsters being seen landed during inspections. These figures as always depended on the size of vessel, number of pots and area/ground where gear was worked. The price per kilo for lobsters has remained consistent for the fishermen during this quarter with prices between £12.50 (start of July) dropping to £11.50 towards the end of September being quoted to ourselves. Another comment to ourselves by various fishermen was the abundance of small lobsters that were just under the gauge, in the pots.

Edible Brown Crabs

As with the lobsters, the Edible brown crab landings that we inspected during this quarter depended on the vessel, ground and the number of pots worked by the skipper. With average landings seen during July of between 1 box and 3 boxes, with the odd exception of 9 boxes being seen landed on a couple of occasions. This number increased slightly during August to between 3 and 4 boxes seen landed with again a couple of vessels landing 11 boxes on a couple of occasions. These averages continued into September but with the fishing vessels working closer to shore seeing

a noticeable reduction in numbers landed. Many of the district's fishermen commented on the quality of the crabs. Prices quoted to ourselves per kilo throughout this quarter were between £2.60 at the start of the quarter, reducing to £1.50 towards the latter end.

Velvet Crabs

Velvet crab landings have followed recent trends in that only a few of the skippers have chosen to land them. Those that have landed and been inspected have seen approximate numbers of between half a box and 1 box and even these inspections have been on a sporadic basis. Prices per kilo quoted to ourselves have been between £3.00 at the beginning of the quarter, reducing to approximately £1.80 per kilo towards the end of the quarter.

Salmon and Trout

This quarter saw the salmon and Trout season end, some of the license holders had returned to their pots early as the landings weren't as good as they hoped. Some of the fishermen who we chatted to said factors for it being poor were, the prolonged periods of very calm weather, the visibility in the water and the amount of seals they had to compete with, if and when a fish was caught in the nets. Numbers seen and quoted to ourselves being landed were all in the single to low double figures. Most of the fish seen landed were salmon with very little trout being caught throughout the whole season. Prices per kilo we were told for Salmon were between £18.00 and £18.50, Trout £8.50 rising to £10 and Grilse £9.50 and £12.50, these prices remained steady throughout the quarter.

Recreational Angling, Sea and Shore

With the weather being so calm this quarter we have been alongside many angling boats and kayaks. Many of these have been repeat visits, with owners and crew happy to engage with us. We have handed out numerous fish measure stickers, minimum size cards along with Byelaw booklets. Many of the angling vessels we have checked have been successful in catching fish with many having Cod of approximately 3lb in weight. We saw a few vessels who had been successful in catching Pollock, with specimens of approximately 4 and 5lb being seen. Mackerel shoals were sporadic in their appearance throughout this quarter, those that we saw having been caught were all in the 1 to 1.5 lb weight range and were being generally classed by the anglers as good size fish. Commercial fishermen who targeted mackerel during this quarter reported receiving £1.00 per kilo when they were sold onto the market.

Divers

We have engaged with divers on numerous occasions during this quarter, with many of the divers stating that they only want to look at the wildlife in the sea and don't remove it. As with the anglers we have issued Byelaw books and minimum size cards along with our contact details to many of the groups.

Other

We have conducted numerous inter tidal shore checks in the northern district leading to the seizure of several illegally set pots.

Darren Graham
IFCO (Enforcement)

**Quarterly report for the Southern Area of the District
for the months July, August and September 2018
IFCO N. Weir**

A Comprehensive Guide to Indigenous Vessels, Active in the Southern part of the District

<u>PORT</u>	<u>POTTERS</u>	<u>TRAWLERS</u>	<u>Approx Crew</u>	<u>Salmon boats</u>
North Shields	8	20	55	
Cullercoats/Seat on Sluice	1	0	1	
Blyth	9	11	42	
Newbiggin	2	0	3	
Total	20	31	101	8

Report covering the ports of;
North Shields (including Royal Quays Marina), Cullercoats, Seaton Sluice, Blyth and Newbiggin by the Sea.

General

This quarter is generally the busiest time for the vessels of the southern part of the district, with the greatest numbers of lobster being caught, making up much of their annual turnover. It also covers a significant part of the Salmon driftnet season. This leads to fishing vessels spending long hours at sea to maximise their catch.

The weather over the quarter has been relatively good. Starting with very fine weather that continued from the heatwaves of June, with calm seas and fine to moderate winds although temperatures dropped into the high teens and early twenties with an increase of cloud cover as July ended. In mid-September we were visited by Storm Ali with strong southerly gales requiring fisherman to move gear out from the inshore areas.

Potting Activity

The quarter started with some apprehension on the part of most fisherman with catches not initially meeting expectations, and concern shown over the possible lasting effects from the "beast from the east". This eased as August began, with landings increasing, the number of berried hens caught in pots reducing significantly and the price for Lobster staying above £11.50 per kilo and averaging about £12.50 for the period. Most boats have landed 3-4 boxes per day for parts of the quarter. Most fisherman put the delay in the season starting to the low water temperature caused by the poor winter. The District has also seen increased fishing effort for brown crab with some boats working further offshore throughout summer to target the crab with some vessels landing as much as 50 boxes in a day, prices for Brown Crab being approximately £2 - £1.50 per kilo. Velvet Crabs have been getting landed with vessels catching about ½ a box per day, with a value of up to £3 per kilo.

Mobile Fishing

Mobile fishing within the district has been quiet for the quarter, with many of the district's vessels operating from ports in Scotland. What fishing has been taking place has been north of Blyth in the Newbiggin area approximately 4-6 miles out.

Salmon, Sea Trout

Much effort has been spent by Salmon fisherman this year unfortunately it seems for very little result. Catches have generally been poor with most vessels only catching single figures per day with very little trout indeed, with a few notable but infrequent exceptions. Common consensus towards the beginning of the quarter being that the fine weather and flat seas made the nets too visible to the fish coinciding with low

numbers generally. The only saving grace for the fisherman has been value of the catch being very high due to the low catch, with Salmon at between £18 - £18.50 per kilo, Trout £8.50 - £10 and Grilse at £9.50 - £12.50. As the season came to an end several fishermen went back to other fishing activity early as they believed they were losing out by continuing to set nets for minimal return.

Recreational fishing

Recreational activity remained high as the quarter began, with the fine weather emptying marinas of their occupants at every opportunity, although the fish caught seemed to be limited to cod of about 2-3lb with small numbers of pollock also. In August with some heavier seas a showing of Mackerel brought pier fishing to life, with Blyth being the place to be.

Intertidal fishing has remained busy, with checks over spring tides resulting in illegal fishing gear being confiscated over several sites. From conversations with stakeholders at gather sites it seems that there are large numbers of small lobsters in the shallows hopefully meaning that damage to the stocks feared from the storms in February and March may not have been as extensive as originally thought.