

MARINE PLASTICS AND LITTER POLICY

Northumberland Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (NIFCA) recognises that plastics in the marine environment is a serious situation. NIFCA will endeavour to do everything which is reasonably possible to reduce the impact of plastic pollution on the marine environment.

NIFCA Plastic Usage

In line with Defra's 25-year plan NIFCA plan to "make sure resources are used more efficiently and kept in use for longer to minimise waste and reduce its environmental impacts by promoting reuse, remanufacturing and recycling".

- Where possible NIFCA aim to reduce the use of single use plastic items such as providing a water cooler and encouraging employees to use reusable water bottles.
- Encourage employees to recycle all appropriate materials.

NIFCA Correspondence with the Fishing Industry

NIFCA have produced a series of informational leaflets for people engaged in permitted fisheries including: commercial potting, recreational potting, trawling and dredging. The leaflets include information on permit conditions, other regulations, and on litter associated with the fishing industry. This encourages fishers to dispose of waste responsibly and minimise the chance of it entering the marine environment.

NIFCA will continue to liaise with the local fishing industry on this issue to attempt to build awareness of the issue.

NIFCA Pot Tags

Pot tags are made of plastic material; as they are attached to pots, they can detach and are lost into the environment. While NIFCA recognise this can be a small source of plastic entering the sea, it is important to highlight they are used as an important conservation measure to ensure the sustainability of the commercially important shellfish fishery in Northumberland. To ensure minimal tags are lost NIFCA endeavour to do the following:

- **Encourage fishers to recycle old pot tags**
Pot tags must be replaced every three years, at which time there is a risk of disposal at sea or to landfill. To combat this, NIFCA have implemented a returns scheme. Fishers are invited to return their old tags to the Authority to be entered into a prize draw with the possibility of winning 1 of 5 £100 fuel vouchers. NIFCA will endeavour to recycle all pot tags returned.
- **Produce best practice guide for attaching tags to pots**
To help with the protection of our local environment and to protect the seas for future generations, we encourage all fishers to take care when fixing tags onto pots. This involves making sure they are securely fastened, using the most suitable possible materials, to reduce to a minimum the chance of them coming loose.
- **Record the location of lost tags**
Pot tags are branded with "NIFCA" and the Authority phone number. NIFCA therefore receive phone calls from members of the public reporting tags they have found washed up. NIFCA will record the location and number of tags reported and will contact the owner of any tags which are attached to fishing gear so they can recover it; we will continue to record the location of loose tags which are reported to us and contact any person whose tags are regularly coming off their gear and washing up on the shore to suggest an alternative way of attaching them to their pots.

Beached Pots

Occasionally pots are lost at sea (due to storms or being towed away by anchors or mobile fishing gear). These pots can then be washed ashore hours or even years later. NIFCA receive phone calls from members of the public reporting beached pots throughout the NIFCA district. Where possible NIFCA will:

- Contact the owner of the pots where possible and encourage them to collect the pot(s) themselves.
- Encourage fishers to mend broken pots rather than replace them with new ones.
- If the owner of beached fishing gear has been contacted and has not collected their beached gear, NIFCA will then try to collect the fishing gear provided it does not interfere with NIFCA's daily operations.

Dispose of litter responsibly

NIFCA encourage everyone to help prevent litter entering the marine environment in the first place by disposing of litter responsibly. From commercial fishers at sea, to members of the public spending a day at the beach NIFCA will support and promote efforts made to dispose of litter responsibly, either in the appropriate bin or taken home at the end of the day.

NIFCA also recommends that fishers collect marine litter caught in fishing gear (including angling gear snagged on pots) and dispose of responsibly when back onshore.

Beach Cleans

In recent years, vast quantities of litter have been removed from beaches in Northumberland and North Tyneside by volunteers. In comparison with the national average, the beaches within the NIFCA district are some of the cleanest in the country. However, there is still a significant litter problem and beach cleaning efforts must continue.

- NIFCA officers will participate in scheduled beach cleans (where possible taking into account the time constraints of officers engaged in daily operations).
- Officers will remove litter from the marine environment where possible provided it is safe and practical to do so.

Working with other Organisations

Through partnership working, NIFCA hope to increase public awareness of marine litter. Existing partnerships include:

- Northumberland Coast AONB
- Coast Care

This policy will be kept under review by the NIFCA environmental team and reported annually to the Authority membership.

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