



CODE OF GOOD CONDUCT

INSHORE FISHERIES & CONSERVATION OFFICERS (IFCOs)

This Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with all other statutory and policy requirements.

RESPONSIBILITY DURING INSPECTIONS

All Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Officers (IFCOs) are employed by Northumberland Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (NIFCA) to carry out duties with regard to enforcement of NIFCA byelaws including inspections of marine organisms, fishing equipment, fishing vessels and their landings, recreational vessels, fish wholesalers, premises, vehicles, shore gatherers, anglers, any person collecting marine organisms, and to monitor compliance with NIFCA byelaws, EU and environmental legislation both ashore and within estuaries and out to 6 nautical miles from the coastline. NIFCO officers may also jointly work with other statutory bodies such as Environment Agency (EA), Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and the Tweed Commission.

During inspections, IFCOs must endeavour in all such instances to behave in a proper professional and courteous manner, act fairly and without prejudice to promote a professional image on behalf of the IFCA and confirm if requested the legal powers under which they are acting.

IFCOs carry warrant/id cards, must always prove their identity, and in particular they will make their warrant/id cards available for inspection upon request or when it is practicable to do so. IFCOs must also state their intentions during all inspections and may ask for assistance in order to carry out their duties. Those being subject to inspections are expected to show a level of cooperation and courtesy to allow the IFCOs to carry out their duties without fear of reprisal, harassment or abuse and to avoid any action which would amount to obstruction of the IFCO.

To comply with Health and Safety regulations, all persons being inspected, particularly those in charge of a vessel, must alert IFCOs about possible hazards and it is expected that IFCOs, masters/skipper of vessels, or any other person being inspected, will maintain good communication in order to ensure health and safety of personnel is not compromised.

At the conclusion of inspections, IFCOs will inform those present of their findings, possibly resulting in a verbal or a written warning being issued or a Financial Administrative Penalty or a Caution being given or a Court Summons issued to those suspected of not complying with relevant legislation. If it is necessary to seize marine organisms or any equipment during an inspection, the IFCO will issue a receipt for such seizure.

BOARDING VESSELS

The lead IFCO will introduce him/herself to the skipper of the vessel being inspected and will explain why the IFCO(s) is/are on board and what it is they wish to inspect

and confirm if required the legal powers under which they are operating. The presence of the skipper can be requested for all or some of the elements of the inspection process. The assistance of the skipper and/or crew must be provided if requested. In order to facilitate an inspection, it is expected that the master/skipper of vessel maintain a proper listening watch on Channel 16 (VHF) and cooperate and respond when hailed.

In the interests of Health and Safety the master/skipper will be asked to facilitate a safe boarding for IFCOs who are carrying out inspections and to cooperate and comply with specific instructions to aid a safe boarding and compliance with legislation. Similar actions will be necessary when disembarking from the vessel. Examples of such requests may be to slow down, to offer a lee, or to haul gear and even to supply a suitable boarding ladder. Each individual inspection will dictate the nature of the request made. It is the intention of the Northumberland IFCA/IFCOs to conduct each boarding and inspection so far as possible with the minimum of interference.

SHORE INSPECTIONS

The lead IFCO will introduce him/herself to the person they are going to inspect. Officers will explain why and what they wish to inspect. The presence of the person/persons being inspected can be requested for all or some of the elements of the inspection process. Assistance of the said person/persons must be provided if it is requested.

It is the intention of Northumberland IFCA/IFCOs to conduct each shore inspection so far as possible with the minimum of interference.

INVESTIGATIONS

Northumberland IFCA will endeavour to carry out any necessary further investigations leading from inspections in a timely manner.

DRESS

Northumberland IFCOs will not always be in uniform when carrying out their duties, but should always produce their warrant cards when identifying themselves.

CONTACTS FOR ENQUIRIES

Any questions about this document, the carrying out of inspections either at sea, within estuaries, or on land, or any subsequent investigations or anyone expressing dissatisfaction during any of these processes can send their concerns in writing to the Northumberland IFCA Chief Executive. The time for responding may depend on the nature or the concerns highlighted but where possible such concerns will be addressed in a timely manner.