

May 2022



NIFCA News

"RIB Training with our Environmental Officers"

NIFCA News

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NATIONAL IFCA VISION:

"Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities will lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries, by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry."

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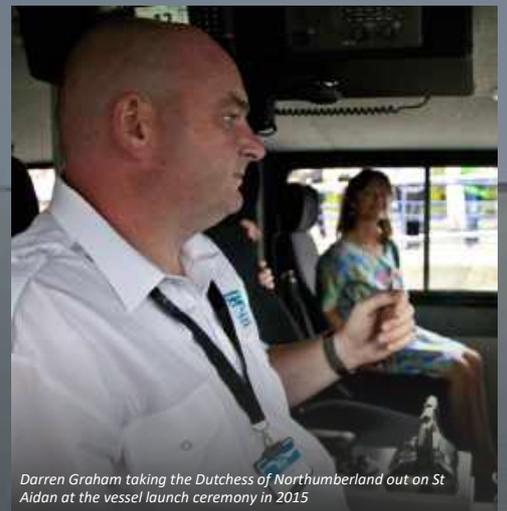
CEO Mike Hardy writes: Welcome to the Spring edition of NIFCA news. I am delighted to extend a warm welcome to new NIFCA members Steven Moss, Amelia Henderson and Paul Dent. Steven and Paul are both working fishermen, Steven from Blyth and Paul from Newbiggin. Amelia is from Blyth and an enthusiastic recreational sea angler. Together with our other Officers and Members, I look forward to working with Amelia, Paul and Steven.

I am also pleased to confirm that the Marine Management Organisation who deal with the recruitment of NIFCA General Members, have also confirmed the continuation of memberships of Steve Lowe as well as for the Authority Chair Les Weller and Jim Stephenson, both of whom have been members since IFCA inception and indeed both Jim and Les were members of the Northumberland Sea Fisheries Committee prior to the IFCA.

We now have a full complement of members with an excellent balance of interests. IFCA members cannot represent any sector or group in fulfilling the terms of their membership, but they bring their experience and knowledge to the table to enable the Authority to make balanced decision in a constructive and proactive way and we are now in an extremely strong position to move forward to policy development and oversight of the work of the authority officers by the membership.

If you are interested in becoming a member of NIFCA in the future, then please contact NIFCA or the MMO during the next round of recruitment, details of which will be widely advertised, including on the NIFCA website.

In other news, Skipper/IFCO Darren Graham brought his career with NIFCA to an end last month, retiring after nearly 15 years of dedicated service to the work of the Authority. Darren was a popular and well-respected member of the



Darren Graham taking the Dutchess of Northumberland out on St Aidan at the vessel launch ceremony in 2015

NIFCA team, joining the Authority as an IFCO then progressing with his career using his previous skills and background to become skipper of the Authority's vessels, St Oswald and latterly St Aidan.

Darren will be a huge miss to the team with his sheer presence, safe hands and good humour. Darren is a joy to be around and will be missed by stakeholders throughout the district. The Authority wish Darren and his wife Annette all the very best for their future.

Mike Hardy
Chief Executive

With thanks to Mark Southerton for his kind reflections on Darren

NIFCA Byelaws Update



DREDGING: The Authority's members voted in favour at the October 2021 quarterly meeting for the revocation of the current NIFCA Dredges byelaw and a complete prohibition of scallop dredging within the entire NIFCA district. This was after serious and detailed consideration, looking at a range of possible management options, as well as evidence collected and feedback from the three public consultations that were run from 2019 to 2021.

At the time of writing, the Authority awaits final word from the MMO and then Defra to complete the legal process regarding the new prohibition before the byelaw comes into legal effect; when that happens, it will be publicised and any affected parties notified.

FIXED ENGINES: As part of the Authority's duty to keep all of its byelaws under review, the NIFCA Fixed Engine Byelaw will be reviewed over the coming months. This will be the opportunity for Officers and stakeholders to engage and share information on how netting is carried out within the NIFCA district.

The Fixed Engine Byelaw is quite complex with several seasonal and water depth restrictions as well as areas where netting is prohibited. Although fixed net fishing has declined in the district in recent years, this will be the opportunity where fishers can have their say on how they see netting being managed in the future within the NIFCA district.

BYELAW BOOKLET: To view our byelaws, please visit www.nifca.gov.uk and select "Byelaws" from our top menu.

To request a hard copy of our byelaws booklet, please contact the NIFCA office by email at nifca@nifca.gov.uk or by telephone on 01670 797 676 to arrange for a member of the team to send it to you by post.

If you have any queries about the NIFCA byelaws, please do not hesitate to contact the team or speak to an Officer whilst out on the coast.

Mark Southerton,
Chief IFCO

Seaspyder Camera



NIFCA have taken delivery of a Seaspyder camera system following accidental damage to our previous camera. This allows us to take high quality photos of subtidal habitats and species. The camera system is made up of a digital single lens reflex (DSLR) camera, and a video camera housed within a water-tight bottle, a light system, a flash, and a set of lasers from which you can scale

the photos taken. The system also has a depth sensor to accurately record the depth where photos are taken. This equipment means NIFCA can take pictures of the seabed to get a better understanding of the whereabouts and extent of seabed habitats and species. We have used the previous camera in projects with Newcastle University and Natural England which have increased

the information we have and our understanding of what's on the seabed. We are looking forward to using this equipment more in the future to monitor our marine area.

Alex Aitken
Lead Environmental Officer

Angling Trust Visit January 2022

In January, representatives from the Angling Trust joined Northumberland IFCA staff on a sea patrol. It was a beautiful day to provide a whistle-stop tour of the district and an opportunity to talk about the work we do as well as share ideas for future work. The aim of increasing dialogue with recreational sea anglers and representatives is in line with the NIFCA Recreational Sea Angling Strategy and the socio-economic importance this activity produces to our coastal communities.

Katy Smart
Environmental IFCO



Visit to Cramlington Village Primary School



Environmental IFCO's Alex and Beth had a different type of working day when they accepted an invitation to visit Cramlington Village Primary School to chat to the Year 1 and 2's! They talked about animals in the sea, the local fishing communities, and the problems with plastic in the marine environment.

They also played some fun games including 'Guess how long this lasts' and another



er involving a wet wipe, a tissue, two water bottles and a lot of shaking. Spoilers: plastic can last up to 600 years in the sea, and wet wipes don't disappear as fast as we would like them to.

The children were very interested in touching the live lobsters and were fascinated by the one without a claw, and on learning lobsters can regrow their claws and antennae if lost. A lot of them had

family members in the fishing industry or who had fished in the past and had some interesting stories – although we're not sure whether to believe the one about the manta ray in the North Sea!

For such a young age they were really engaged and knew a lot about marine life and plastic pollution, which is encouraging.

It is the children who will become our fishers, consumers or marine scientists of the future and it seems they're off to a good start. It has been a while since this type of engagement has been possible so it was great to be able to do face-to-face events once again.

Beth Harvey
Environmental IFCO

Amble Open January 2022

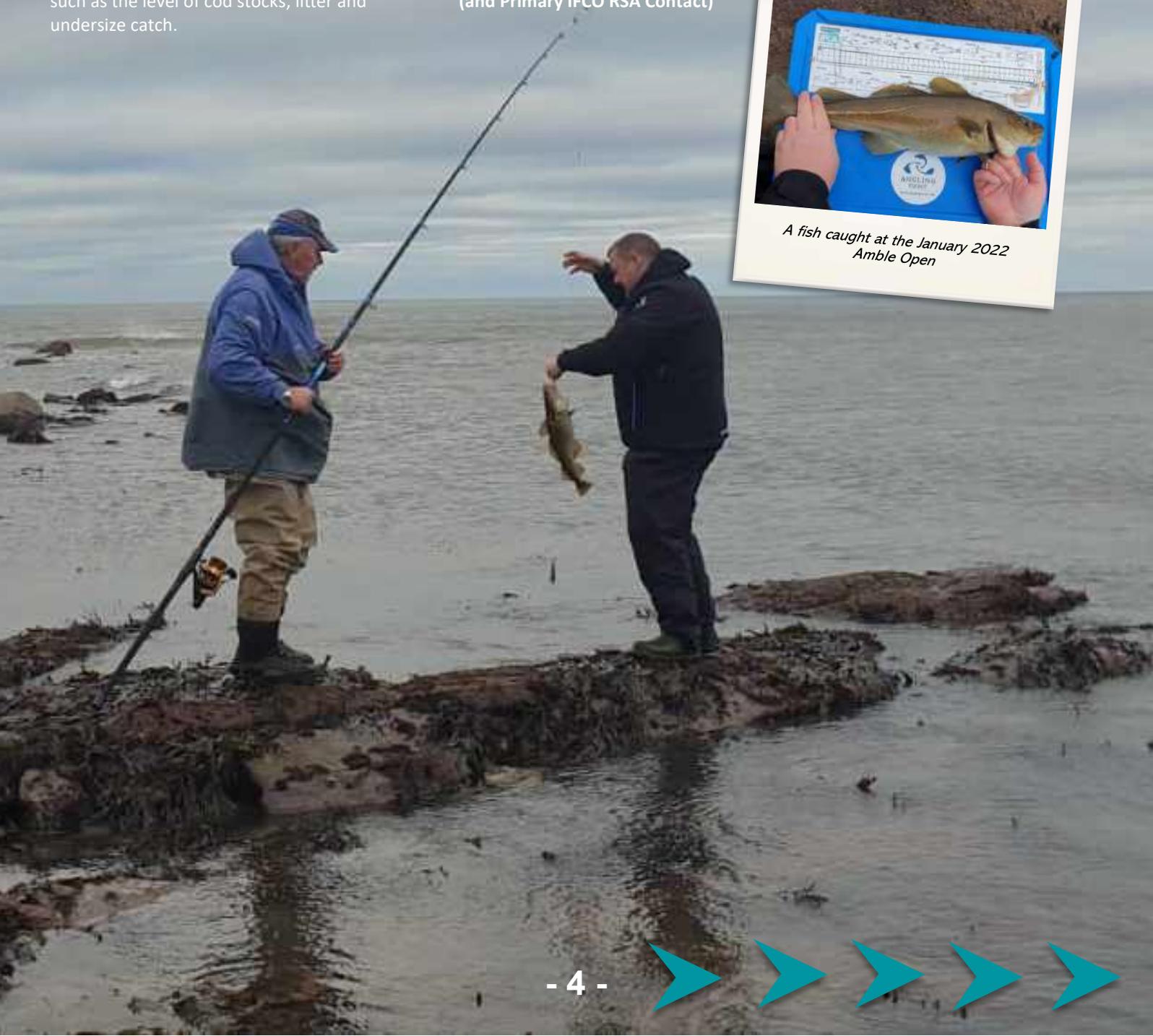
One of the biggest events on the sea angler's calendar returned this year with over 480 entrants! It was the 44th Amble Open organised by the Amble Sea Angling Club with entrants hoping for tight lines between the boundaries of Lynemouth to Seahouses.

It presented the perfect opportunity for Nick Weir (Lead Enforcement IFCO) and Katy Smart (Environmental IFCO) to engage with people from the recreational sea angling (RSA) community and raise awareness of our work. It was a great day meeting a lovely bunch of anglers and understanding the current issues that are most important to them such as the level of cod stocks, litter and undersize catch.

At the end of the day, 138 anglers weighed in with a total of 407 fish, the heaviest fish prize went to Mr Smith for his 11lb 6.2oz catch. All other results can be viewed on the Amble SAC website at www.amblefishing.com.

If you are running a recreational sea angling competition or event, please get in touch. We would love to hear from you. We can attend the event, distribute minimum size tackle box measuring stickers and it is a great way to meet more local sea anglers!

Katy Smart
Environmental IFCO
(and Primary IFCO RSA Contact)



NIFCA Launches New Website

Over the last 12 months, we have been working on the redesign of the NIFCA website with the aim of making it more streamlined, accessible and informative for everyone and we are delighted to confirm that it was launched in March.

Along with an updated design, visitors to the website can now go to our "Recreational Fishing" section in the menu to purchase new pot tags or to the "Commercial Fishing" section to renew their commercial permits (*new*

commercial permits will need to be purchased directly through the office as usual).

Site users will also be interested to view our new interactive MPAs map which shows the designations in the NIFCA district and the environmental features being protected within them. They will also be able to view information about the NIFCA vessels, Authority Members and "Meet the Team" of NIFCA Officers and staff. We also welcome you to visit

our "Contact us" page to ask a question, report a washed up tag or update us on suspicious activity taking place in the district and stay up to date on upcoming NIFCA meetings by checking the meetings section on our Homepage.

We hope that you find the new website easy to use and full of helpful information.

Emma Cosimini
Admin Officer

And the award goes to...



Congratulations Chief IFCO Mark Souther-ton who has been named the winner of this year's Jon Green Award for Excellence! After taking over from Al Browne on his retirement as Chief IFCO at the start of the pandemic, Mark has led the team through a very challenging 18-months with openness and care, as well as going above and beyond the call of duty in his new position, including acting as an IFCA representative on national task groups.

NIFCA Chair, Les Weller, was delighted to pass the award over to Mark who follows last year's winner, Katy Smart, making him the second NIFCA employee to have his name added to the plaque.

This award is dedicated to former Deputy Chief IFCO, Jon Green, who gave many years of service to NIFCA and the Sea Fisheries Committee. Jon sadly passed away in 2020. We are pleased to be able keep his memory alive with this annual award, which is presented to hard-working colleagues, in recognition of their dedication and contribution to our work.

Mike Hardy
Chief Executive

Using Drones to Survey Mussels

Over the past year NIFCA have been a partner in a project using drones (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)) to survey the mussel beds in our district. Prior to this, NIFCA carried out annual on-foot surveys of mussel beds for a number of years, and results have been showing steady declines in mussels at the Blyth Estuary and at Lindisfarne. The on-foot surveys involve going out onto the bed and walking around the perimeter with a GPS, from this we can

get an idea of the size of the mussel bed. However, this can be tricky. It is difficult to tell what is a mussel bed and what isn't by eye sometimes. This makes the surveys quite subjective which can lead to inaccuracies in the area that is measured.

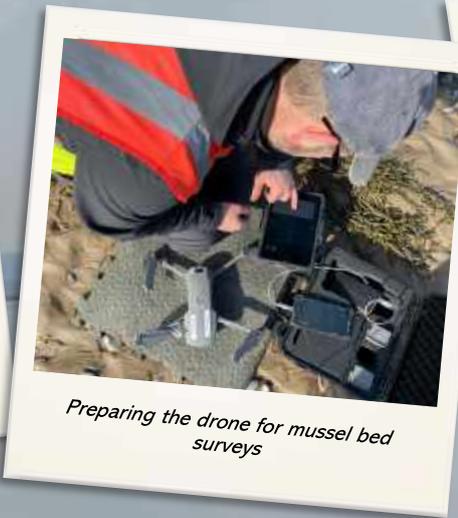
This is where drones or aerial imagery can be really useful! A project at Newcastle University has identified a method for survey and analysis to get the mussel bed area and percentage cover

(ground coverage of mussels). NIFCA plan to use these methods in future surveys to increase the accuracy of our survey results to keep reporting on the health of the districts mussel beds into the future!

Alex Aitken
Lead Environmental Officer



Officers enroute to the mussel bed with the drone



Preparing the drone for mussel bed surveys



Imagery of the mussel bed



NIFCA NEWS SNIIPPETS



Our Work in a Changing Climate

The climate crisis is one of the most pressing challenges of our time, and has huge implications for fisheries due to stocks shifting and populations changing. Both the fishing industry and regulators will need to be adaptable. Northumberland IFCA have recently started to incorporate climate change into research and will include it in future management decisions.

A possible new project in collaboration with fishers aims to put temperature loggers on pots to better understand how changes in temperature on the bottom of the sea impact lobster and crab catches in the district. Investigating this relationship will help us better understand the impacts of climate change here and be more prepared.

We are also taking an internal look at the organisation with the goal of reducing our carbon footprint, bringing us more in line with the government's goal to reach net zero by 2050. We have identified measures to achieve this, from short-term easy wins such as using reusable water bottles and reducing computer energy consumption, to longer-term measures such as changing energy provider or replacing technology and vehicles with greener alternatives. A baseline carbon footprint is being calculated for 2021/22 to measure progress.

Finally, NIFCA have also organised a training course for all employees on climate change which will take place in May, it will increase understanding of the issue and ways in which we can reduce our impact as individuals and as an organisation.

New Trailer

To increase the Authority's inshore sea going capability, survey and sampling programme the St Aidan daughter RIB, TT St Aidan has been coded to also allow independent working at sea away from St Aidan.

The Authority therefore purchased a new Vanclaes stainless-steel trailer after being impressed with the specification and build quality of the trailer. As with so many things during the pandemic, supply chain delays did mean a longer lead time than anticipated, however with the great service from STR trailers the Authority finally took delivery earlier in the year.

The RIB TT St Aidan has temporarily been placed into storage where it has undergone inspection, service and repairs in anticipation of the summer ahead.

Puffin Festival

NIFCA is looking forward to the return of the Puffin Festival in Amble on 4th and 5th of June, after a 2 year absence because of the COVID pandemic. We will be once again delighted to welcome the public to our stall to meet some live shellfish and to learn about the wealth of activity and wildlife along our beautiful coastline, as well as to hear more about the work of NIFCA. Officers will be at the festival on Sunday 5th of June and we look forward to seeing you then.



Partnership Working

Professional working relationships are a vital part of the NIFCA function. Whether it is other agencies, including the MMO, Natural England, Environment Agency and Defra, stakeholders including recreational and commercial fishers and our constituent Councils (amongst others), dialogue and discussion are of huge importance. Good examples include our consultations with stakeholders regarding byelaw changes, regular meetings which we hold with other agencies, and Officers meeting fishers in the district both ashore and at sea.

NIFCA prides itself on being accessible and listening and we welcome any thoughts which people either may wish to send to us via the website or email, by telephoning the office or by approaching our officers for a word in our district. All of this contributes to what is produced by NIFCA to benefit the fishery and the marine environment.

NIFCA Training

Taking advantage of the winter months as well as the fantastic training facilities available locally, Officers have undertaken several training opportunities covering mandatory safety training for offshore operations, including Fire Prevention and Fire Fighting refresher and a full 3-day course at South Tyneside marine college's purpose-built training centre. Officers put their theory skills to good use and had a realistic experience under expert supervision in recovering a casualty to safety, as well as tackling a live fire while in full fire tunic and breathing apparatus set.

Officers have also undertaken progressive personal development training increasing their at sea skills, including RYA powerboat level 2 as well as V.H.F. radio certificate. This was delivered through the Oceanic Sea School based at Royal Quays Marina, which we are fortunate to have so close to our operation area and we have built up a strong professional relationship with this training provider over the years.

Purchase Your Permits Online

We are pleased to announce that you can now purchase your NIFCA Fishing permits online! Recreational fishers can renew existing, or purchase new tags on the NIFCA website by visiting www.nifca.gov.uk/recreational-fishing/permits.

Commercial fishers can renew an existing fishing permit by visiting www.nifca.gov.uk/commercial-fishing/permits. To apply for a new commercial fishing permit (shellfish, dredge or trawl) please contact the office on 01670 767 676.



Are you interested to learn more about the work of NIFCA?

Come along to our next Quarterly Meeting on Monday 25th July 2022 at the East Bedlington Community Centre at 1pm. All of our upcoming public meetings are listed on the homepage of our website at www.nifca.gov.uk. All welcome!



Welcoming Future Marine Scientists

NIFCA was pleased to welcome back, for the first time since the start of the pandemic, students from Newcastle University to undertake a placement with the Authority, including Eoin Broadhurst. As well as being a student at Newcastle University, Eoin is also a keen recreational angler and we were delighted therefore to introduce him during his place-

ment to two of our more prominent anglers, who are representatives of local angling clubs.

NIFCA is delighted to have this long term and fruitful relationship with Newcastle University and we will continue that this summer where a student will be able to join us and work with Officers as part of

their studies. This is both of great benefit to the students and also provides an interesting perspective to the Authority upon our work and the students endeavours whilst with us, so this is definitely a mutually beneficial scheme.

Mike Hardy
Chief Executive