



NIFCA News

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June 2023



NIFCA News

Welcome to our latest issue of NIFCA News!

We are delighted to be able to introduce you to our new look design and layout. Inside this new edition, you will find news stories about the work NIFCA is doing nationally, locally and within the community as well as interesting news about the wildlife in our area.

We hope that you enjoy it!



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NIFCA's New Chief Officer

After over 25 years of service with the Northumberland Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (formerly Sea Fisheries Committee), Mark Southern (*pictured above, left*) takes the helm as the newly appointed Chief Officer at NIFCA. This follows the retirement of Mike Hardy (*pictured above, right*), who worked with NIFCA in the position of CEO for over 19 years, bringing his successful career to an end in December 2022.

Upon taking this appointment Mark says: "I feel very fortunate having spent my entire career to date working with the fishing industry in some form, firstly as a commercial fisherman and latterly in fisheries management with the IFCA in such a special part of the country.

We have a fantastic team here at Northumberland with all the operational and admin staff as well as the

Authority's 21 members providing support to ensure we achieve our aims and ensure we maintain healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and viable industries.

We look forward to continuing on the great foundations that Mike has previously overseen, this is a hugely exciting time for the IFCA and we are all looking forward to the challenges ahead."

Coastal Futures

In January, we attended the 2023 Coastal Futures Conference at the Royal Geographical Society in London. Over 600 delegates attended the conference online and in person from over 200 organisations, with high level speakers from industry, academia, NGOs, local community voices, government and advisory bodies over the two days. The theme of the conference this year was "Our Ocean and Coastal Future for the Next Decade", with sessions covering climate change, marine restoration, governing for communities, marine protected areas, spatial prioritisation, and our focus, fisheries management. The conference was opened with a talk from Lord Benyon, Minister of State at Defra, discussing the UK's plans for the future of our seas and setting the tone for a jam-packed couple of days of excellent and insightful talks. The IFCA's were represented by a talk from Tony Tomlinson MBE, Chair of the Association of IFCA's, which covered how IFCA's around the country are making a difference and highlighting our work on the national stage.

HPMA Consultation

Last year, Defra announced plans for Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMA) in English waters. HPMA's are sites where no extractive, destructive, or depositional activities can occur with the aim of returning the site to a more natural state, this includes all fishing activity.

The plans included five candidate sites, two inshore and three offshore with one of the sites a 129km² area around Lindisfarne in Northumberland. The positioning of this site would significantly impact inshore fishers in this area with the potential to put some out of business.

NIFCA worked with the local community (*pictured right*), fishers, Defra, and other stakeholders throughout the consultation process to feedback infor-

mation on the fishing activity in the site and the current fisheries management measures in place which already made this area a well-managed site.

After a consultation period with an excellent level of engagement and responses from the community at Holy Island and the fishermen, the decision that the Lindisfarne site will not be designated is a welcome news. Thank you to all of the fishermen who took the time to respond to this consultation and highlight the importance of the potting fishery to the community and to Northumberland. NIFCA were happy to be able to support submission of responses.





www.nifca.gov.uk/FMP

Fisheries Management Plans and NIFCA/Newcastle University

Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) are a new way to manage fisheries in the UK. They are national 'action plans' for the management of individual fisheries and will be developed collaboratively with the fishing industry and other stakeholders.

The need for FMPs came from the Fisheries Act 2020 which provides the framework to manage our fisheries as an independent coastal state outside of the EU Common Fisheries Policy. The act requires the UK fisheries policy authorities (Defra, and the de-

volved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) to publish FMPs.

Defra and partner organisations have been developing 'front runner' FMPs which pilot the approach for other fisheries. These front runner plans have been drafted and are going through a Question and Answer phase with Defra.

Front runner plans include:

- Crab and lobster
- Whelk

- King scallop
- Bass
- Channel Non-Quota Demersal Stocks
- Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel Mixed Flatfish

NIFCA is supporting the development process by sharing information about the development of the plans, and engagement opportunities with local fishers and other stakeholders, as well as assisting fishers in responding to any consultations and engagement opportunities.

To further this work in relation to the crab and lobster plan, NIFCA have partnered with Sarah Coulthard from Newcastle University on a project to:

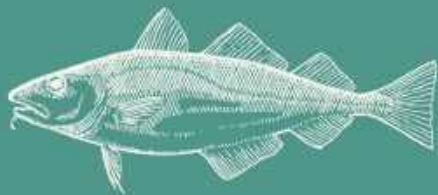
"Evidence the value of inclusive fisher contributions to National Fishery Management Plans through quayside interviews and fisher forums along the Northumberland coast."

This 3-month project, currently underway, will ascertain fisher's views on the following areas:

- Key contributions and priorities for the shellfish FMP content and overall themes within the Joint Fishery Statement
- Insight into making fisher engagement more feasible
- Management concerns relating specifically to the Anglo-Scot border and differences in management/policy across the two Administrations

- Management issues specific to inshore and offshore boundaries. Key concerns and suggested improvements to current management, including national legislation such as berried hen ban and regional NIFCA byelaws. Fisher inputs to the strengthening of resilience of the inshore fishing fleet in Northumberland.

The results of this project will feed into the upcoming consultation on the draft crab and lobster plan.



2023 SPECIES CHALLENGE!

NIFCA is excited to launch its very first shore-based competition in the Northumberland IFCA district! Get out on the coast, cast a line and send us what you catch for your chance to win a prize, and to help us understand more about the different fish species present in the area. Whether you're a seasoned angler or someone looking for a new hobby, we'd love to hear from you.

Prizes for entrants that submit the most species of fish and much more! So head to the website register for your place and let's see what we can learn together!

www.nifca.gov.uk/challenge23

Tight Lines!

Amble Open 2023

One of the biggest events on the sea angler's calendar returned once again this year with hundreds of entrants! It was the 45th 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 officers IFCO O'Regan and Environmental IFCO Smart to engage with people from the recreational sea angling community and raise awareness of our work. It was a great day

meeting a lovely group of anglers and understanding the current issues that are most important to them such as declining catch rates.

At the end of the day, over a hundred anglers weighed in at the Radcliffe Club, with first prize heaviest bag including 16 flatfish with a total weight of 18lb 05.8 and heaviest fish weighed in at 7lb 01.2!

If you are a recreational sea angler take a look at the Sea Angling section of NIFCA's website and get involved in

our 2023 Species Challenge to help provide information on what species are present in the district!

As always please get in touch if there are any issues you would like to discuss or if you have any recreational sea angling events coming up. We would love to hear from you. We can promote the event, distribute minimum size tackle box measuring stickers and it is a great way to meet more local sea anglers!



Fisher Forums

A new initiative for increasing engagement with the commercial fishing sector, NIFCA Fisher Forums are small, stakeholder-led sessions where fishers and NIFCA officers can meet to discuss any important matters.

The first round was held at the end of last year and in early 2023 at Holy Island, Seahouses, Eyemouth, Amble, Blyth and North Shields. The discussions were fishermen-led and included topics like the Lindisfarne HPMA, engagement practices, observed changes in the fishery and environment, views on existing byelaws and management, and suggestions for future management e.g. V-notching scheme or maximum landing sizes.

It was great to discuss these topics in-depth, and shows how effective communication even with relatively small numbers of stakeholders is very useful for gaining a better understanding of the issues on the ground, impacts of legislation, and ideas for better management of the fishery.

As a two-way conversation it was also an opportunity to update fishers on things like proposals to change IFCA byelaws or national policy updates, for example Fisheries Management Plans.

The Forums are intended to give fishermen the space to voice their views informally which should complement wider engagement efforts like the MMO's Regional Fisheries Groups

(RFGs) which not everyone can attend. NIFCA are working with Sarah Coulthard of Newcastle University and the MMO to ensure any relevant information or actions from the Fisher Forums are passed on.

The second round of Fisher Forums will take place in Spring, where we will continue the conversations with fishermen and engage with additional members of the fishing community. Active and retired commercial fishermen and family members are invited and we hope to see as many as possible there.

More about our Fisher Forums

To learn more about our Fisher Forums including how you can get involved and upcoming dates, head to our website. All of our events will also be publicised on our social media pages so get online and follow us to make sure you don't miss your chance to get involved.

www.nifca.gov.uk/commercial-fishing/fisher-forums/



Environmental Survey Work

NIFCA's Environmental Team carry out regular monitoring surveys of sea fisheries resources in the district. So far in 2023 the team have surveyed:

- Lobster and crab on fishing vessels, on the quayside, and at local wholesalers

- The mussel beds at Holy Island, Fenham Flats, and the Blyth Estuary
- Lugworm abundance at popular collection spots (Boulmer & Berwick)
- Periwinkles at popular collection spots (Boulmer & Berwick)

Data collected from these surveys feed into time-series data sets to allow local populations to be monitored over time and in relation to fishing pressure, helping us to ensure local fishing practices are sustainable into the future!

Prosecution: March 2023

On Monday the 6th March at Newcastle Magistrates Court, Mr Charles "Michael" Denton of Atea Terrace Newbiggin by the Sea, was sentenced for breaching national fisheries legislation when he prevented a Fisheries Officer from inspecting the vessel he was master of.

The master of the currently unlicensed trawler *Andigee* and owner/skipper of the potting vessel *Talisman II* BK176, brought the *Andigee* into Blyth harbour from the sea. Officers from NIFCA attempted to board the vessel to carry out an inspection in line with their statutory duties under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 but were prevented from boarding by Mr Denton, who blocked the only access ladder and refused to move, despite repeated requests to do so. After observing the Officer's body worn camera footage and hearing the testimony of one of the Officers, Mr Denton changed his original 'not guilty' plea to 'guilty'.

Mr Denton had committed one offence; failing, without reasonable excuse to comply with a requirement reasonably made, or a direction reasonably given, by an enforcement officer in the exercise of any power. Contrary to the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, section 292, part (1).

District Judge Currer ordered Mr Denton to pay a fine of £300, a further £300 in prosecution costs and a victim surcharge of £34, totalling £634.

Prosecution: October 2022

NIFCA successfully prosecuted a commercial fisher £12,500 for contravening fisheries legislation. On Thursday the 13th of October 2022, Mr Neal Priestley of Seahouses appeared at North Shields Magistrates Court for four breaches of national fisheries legislation and NIFCA byelaws.

Mr Priestley, owner and master of the fishing vessel *Mary May* BK140, landed his catch at Seahouses harbour. Fisheries Officers inspecting the catch found a number of prohibited shellfish or their commercially valuable parts, including from sections of the catch that the crew had concealed from Officers during their initial inspection.

The offences found were of an environmental nature, breaching national and local legislation created to protect fish stocks and to gather accurate information to aid fisheries management. Mr Priestley had committed and pleaded guilty to four offences. After taking into consideration Mr Priestley's early guilty plea, the court-imposed penalties of £615 for the negligent landing of the egg bearing Lobsters (pictured right).

£3,076 for the deliberate landing of parts of Lobsters. £3,076 for the deliberate landing of detached crab claws and £3,076 for failing to send accurate information to NIFCA. A victim surcharge of £190 and costs of £2,914.88 were also awarded. In total Mr Priestley was ordered to pay £12,947.88 for committing these offences.

Fishing in Northumberland is an economically sensitive activity and of great social importance to our local heritage and character. Our byelaws in conjunction with national legislation, balance the social, environmental and economic needs of our stakeholders to promote healthy seas, sustainable fishing and a viable industry. To ensure this, officers must be able to undertake inspections both at sea and in harbours. Fishers must comply with our officers' requests and instructions to facilitate these inspections. NIFCA will vigorously pursue anyone who jeopardises the health of the fishery or fails to comply with our officers and legislation.





Community Outreach



Earth Day at St Mary's

For Earth Day 2023, NIFCA Officers were lucky enough to work side by side with other partners, local wildlife charities and other organisations at the beautiful venue of St Mary's Lighthouse! The day was a fantastic opportunity

to promote wildlife protection and encourage everyone to interact with their local natural world! NIFCA had a great time speaking to the public at our stall (pictured above) about our work and learning more about

local inshore fishing issues. All in all it was a great day with lots of shared learning and even a bit of grey seal watching!

Sea Cadets at NIFCA

NIFCA recently received a visit from the Newburn branch of Sea Cadets

The cadets were shown the equipment that NIFCA officers use for inspections and patrols at sea (pictured left), and were able to ask questions about the work that we do.

We ran a fish identification session to show the cadets what kind of fish is

caught by local fishing boats, and they were also able to try their hand at measuring crab and lobsters.

Natural England were also on hand to deliver a great presentation about the various marine protected areas in Northumberland, and the wildlife and habitats you could expect to find there. Some of the cadets were so surprised by the underwater habitats

we have that they thought a video of a reef at the Farne Islands was actually the Great Barrier Reef!

The cadets were enthusiastic and got involved in all the activities. It was a really positive visit and NIFCA looks forward to welcoming them back in the future. Their only request for their next visit is that they get to join officers on a sea patrol!

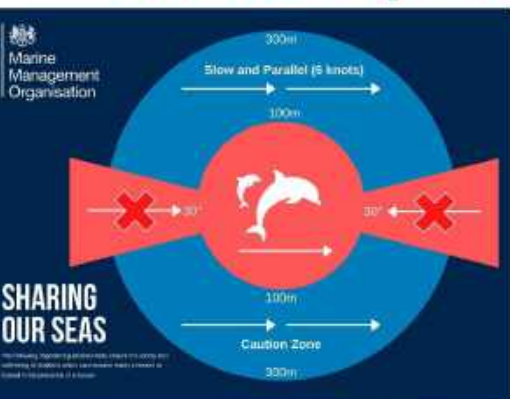
Seafish Training Day

It was great to be able to meet future fishers at the recent Anglo Scottish Seafish Training Association (ASSTA) introduction to commercial fishing course. Two NIFCA Officers (pictured above) provided a presentation about the remit of NIFCA and our core activities to ensure fishing is carried out in a sustainable way. Byelaws relevant to participants current and future jobs along the Northumberland coastline were covered and lots of interesting and productive discussion was had! It was a fantastic opportunity to meet enthusiastic participants of all ages beginning their career in the local commercial fishing industry.

Photo of a dolphin captured by NIFCA member Dr Martin Kitching



Wildlife Spotted In the District



On 2nd January, a roving Walrus arrived at Blyth. "Thor", the 8 foot long, juvenile male Arctic Walrus is believed to have been the same one that spent the New Year in Scarborough before making the 100 mile swim into our district.

Thor rested on a pontoon at the Royal Northumberland Yacht Club which caused quite a stir. As he is a protected species, the area was cordoned off and he was observed by members of the British Divers Marine Life Rescue.

He rested for 24 hours before returning to the water. This was the third sighting of a Walrus in the UK in the last 2 years.

There have also been increased sightings of Bottlenose Dolphins, with many Officers lucky enough to see them playfully following the NIFCA vessel, as well as reports of Minke Whales. There was also a juvenile Humpback Whale spotted from Blyth Pier in March 2023 and even more recently, sightings of Orca Whales have been reported just north of Holy Island.

Buzzard Rescue

On 26th January 2023, whilst on sea patrol in the NIFCA RIB, 'Robert Arkless MBE', Officers spotted a bird of prey approximately 3 miles off land at Dunstanburgh.

The bird had collapsed on the surface of the water and as we approached it with caution, we could see it was a Buzzard and thankfully, it was alive. We recovered the bird and wrapped it in a towel to keep it warm in the safe grasp of Officer Mark Lynn (pictured right).

The Buzzard was taken to Blyth Wildlife Rescue to receive care in

the hope that it would recover and could be returned back to the wild.

This "unusual" story was posted on our social media pages. Within 1 week it reached 1,868 people on Facebook and was shared by other IFCAs around the country, which shows the power of social media.

Find us on Facebook and Twitter to stay up to date with our news and stories!

 Northumberland ICA  @N_IFCA





New Engineer/Crew

Northumberland IFCA is pleased to welcome new Engineer/Crewman Wayne Mitchell (pictured above, left), a local lad who has his roots deeply embedded into the local marine sector having been a commercial fisherman for several years out of the port of Blyth, before moving across to the wind farm sector and working his way up the ranks to Master where he operated vessels across northern England. Wayne brings with him the skills essential for his new role as the Authority's Engineer and working across the Authority's current vessels.

Wayne's timing in joining NIFCA was perfect. It coincided with the annual lift out and maintenance program for the Authority's 17 metre catamaran patrol/research vessel St Aldan which was lifted out at the Royal Quays Marina North Shields. Wayne has recently completed service and engineering works and the vessel has been returned to the water within the planned timeframe and is operational once again.