

SPRING 2024



# NIFCA NEWS



LOCAL WORK



NATIONAL WORK



COMMUNITY OUTREACH



WILDLIFE NEWS

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# WELCOME

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**Welcome to the NIFCA March 2024 spring Newsletter, which marks the first 14 months of my term as Chief Officer, I would like to express my thanks to all the staff at NIFCA and the wider membership for their continued support over the last 14 months which has been an incredibly diverse year with many achievements along the way.**

This Newsletter aims to inform wider stakeholders of some of those workstreams following the last newsletter in June 2023, thank you for your time in reading it, for more detailed reports please check out our website, [www.nifca.gov.uk](http://www.nifca.gov.uk) we hope to see as many of you as possible in the year ahead.

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Chief Officer

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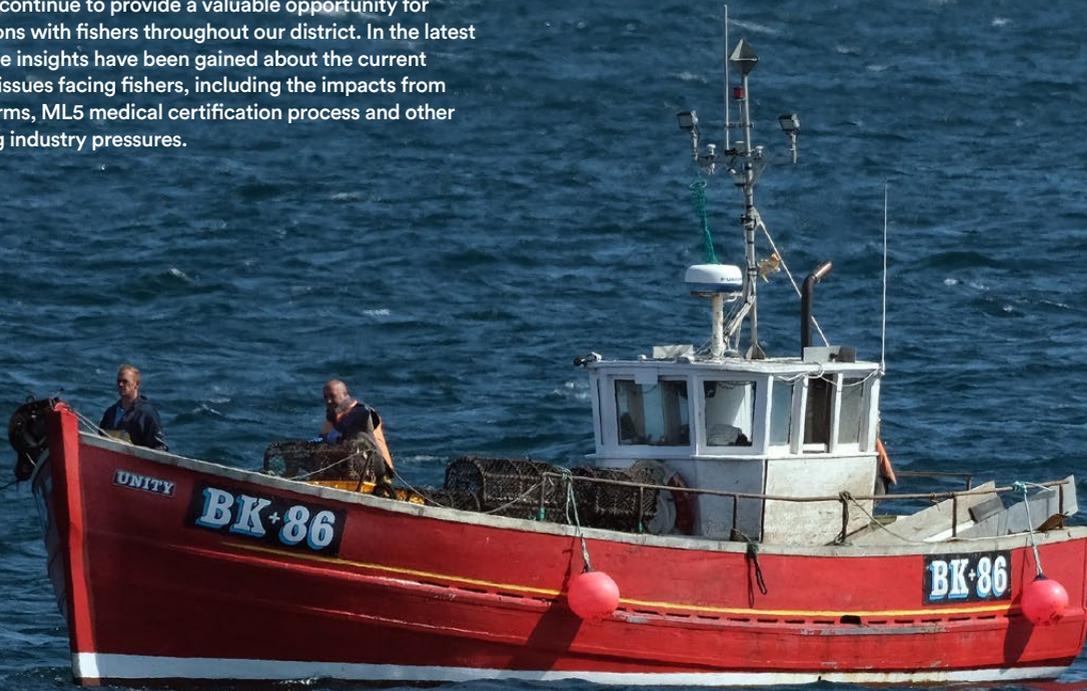
 Northumberland IFCA

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# FISHER FORUMS

Fisher forums continue to provide a valuable opportunity for open discussions with fishers throughout our district. In the latest round, valuable insights have been gained about the current concerns and issues facing fishers, including the impacts from the winter storms, ML5 medical certification process and other general fishing industry pressures.



We would like to thank all the fishers and organisations who have attended the sessions so far and the harbour masters, port authorities, and marinas who have helped to accommodate us.

We are always interested to hear your thoughts on how to evolve these forums, so please just get in touch.

Fishers also provided their thoughts and ideas for enhancing and sustainable developments for the local fishery including, successful trawl gear trials to reduce discards as well as being supportive of seeing the NIFCA V-notch programme restarted. These meetings also gave NIFCA officers the chance to ask fishers what they think about recent consultations and feeding back with updates on national work including Fishery Management Plans.

Further meetings are planned in the next year at ports previously not visited. We hope to be joined by other organisations, including the MMO. Look out for a summary of topics and issues discussed, plus what resulting actions and further work is being carried out from these sessions, which will be hosted on our website under the Fisher Forum menu.



Blyth Forum



Eyemouth Forum

# NATIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLANS

FMPs are national 'action plans' for the management of individual fisheries and will be developed collaboratively with the fishing industry and other stakeholders.

The plans could change management measures in your fisheries, so it is important to stay up to date and where possible, give your views to feed into the development of the plans as part of the process. Consultations closed in October 2023 for Tranche 1 and 2 with the first 5 plans published in December.



To get the very latest information on FMP's, please visit the FMP section on our website.

[www.nifca.gov.uk/fmp](http://www.nifca.gov.uk/fmp)



## AUTHORITY WELCOMES NEW ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER

**(NIFCA) is pleased to announce the appointment of a dedicated Environmental Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer.**

Vicky Rae joined the team to further strengthen the Authority's role in protecting and conserving the local marine environment in the NIFCA district.

As an environmental officer, Vicky will be responsible for a range of important tasks, including working closely with local communities,

fishermen, and stakeholders to promote sustainable practices as well as responding to marine licences and consents and supporting the environment team more widely.

Vicky's experience will be an asset to NIFCA as we work closely with the local community and stakeholders to ensure the responsible management of Northumberland's inshore fisheries and a sustainable and thriving marine environment.

## STUDENT PLACEMENT

Over the summer, we welcomed Eleanor, who joined us for 6 weeks as part of our NIFCA Summer Placement. During her time with us, Eleanor joined us for a mix of sea patrols and survey work, as well as assisting with the analysis of the data back in the office. We'd like to thank her for the contributions she made over her time with us and wish her success in the future.





# RESEARCH WORK

The environmental team completed their annual mussel surveys with the reports available on the website. Periwinkle surveys have continued at sites across the district with the final two surveys completed in November and the results will be analysed and published of Spring 2024. Biannual fish surveys at the AIn estuary provided some great data with a high number of juvenile herring and European eels found.



AIn Survey Team

NIFCA has used its SeaSpyder camera for two projects during the summer. The first was contract work for Cefas in the Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast SAC, with some ground-truthing work in Coquet to St Mary's MCZ.

NIFCA also surveyed the release site for the Wild Oyster project, with plans to repeat this survey with the oysters now on the ground. Poor visibility underwater with winter conditions has prevented this to date.



Seaspyder Camera



Crustacea Survey



As well as the ongoing monitoring work undertaken, offshore sampling by officers also continued on several fishing vessels, where the team collected biometric shellfish data of lobster and crab to further add to the data held in these fisheries. A big thank you to all those fishers who facilitated this important work.

# RESEARCH AND SURVEY EQUIPMENT

To further develop our survey capabilities, NIFCA recently purchased HYPACK software which will provide officers with a platform to plan, design and run future surveys.

As well as helping to plan surveys more effectively, the software continuously logs metadata such as speed and course overground. It can also more accurately capture the GPS position of the camera than from taking the position of the boat, improving the quality of the data collected. Preparatory work using this software was part of the initial pre-deployment survey work undertaken for the local Wild Oysters Project.

Additional support in the way of training was provided by our partner Cornwall IFCA which incorporated the Hypack training with the addition of a sidescan system that was beneficial for future acoustic surveys. Hypack proved to be a great success and the survey went smoothly, it is planned to run further surveys to continue to improve the data quality and outputs.



Find out more about the Wild Oysters Project.

[www.wild-oysters.org/tyne-wear](http://www.wild-oysters.org/tyne-wear)



NIFCA has also made upgrades to our existing remote-operated vehicle (ROV) in the form of a FiFISH V6 Expert device that will further strengthen our existing survey capabilities.

This omnidirectional ROV will be an important survey asset going forward and will be utilised as part of several surveys monitoring sensitive habitats and inspecting fishing gear in-situ.

## A collection of some of the more photogenic specimens found during our work:

1. Pipefish



2. Long-clawed porcelain crab



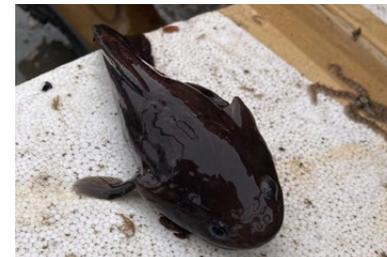
3. Juvenile lumpsucker fish



4. Wolffish



5. Tadpole fish



6. IFCAOs with wrasse



# OIL SPILL TRAINING

Environmental IFCO Katy Smart along with Lead Enforcement IFCO Nick Weir attended a day's training on Oil Spill reaction at Seahouses harbour. The course was provided by Briggs Marine & Environmental Services Limited.

The main objective was to familiarise attendees with the different tools and equipment used during a first response and deploying these safely and efficiently. By the end of the course, both officers were familiar with the oil spill prevention measures from classroom presentations and able to take part in a practical exercise in the harbour by launching booms and skimmers. Further training in this area has also been completed with officers attending an MCA Beachmaster course as well as taking part in a training exercise with the Port of Tyne.



RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY

# SPECIES CHALLENGE

NIFCA launched its first Pilot Recreational Sea Angling competition in May 2023 to learn more about what fish species are present in the district throughout the year.

The entries did not disappoint, with more than 60 competitors submitting catches. The winner was announced in January and presented with a cheque for £150. Following the feedback

from 2023, we are now running a bigger and better angling species competition this year, introducing monthly prizes, a larger overall winner's prize and an active leaderboard. If you've not signed up yet, you can register on the website [www.nifca.gov.uk](http://www.nifca.gov.uk) and follow the link from the Recreational Fishing Page.

Good luck and tight lines!

As part of our RSA, engagement officers attended the annual Amble Open fishing comp in January speaking to as many of the 572 anglers taking part in the event as they could manage. Fishing conditions were challenging but several fish were seen as part of our engagement. Angling Trust representatives from policy/enforcement and volunteers who fished the competition were invited to NIFCA

offices the following day to share ideas on how we can work more closely to promote recreational sea activity in Northumberland. A number of signs and measuring fish boards have been placed in popular areas of shellfish gathering and angling marks in the district, as well as fishing line recycling bins. To find your nearest line recycling bin, please send an email to [nifca@nifca.gov.uk](mailto:nifca@nifca.gov.uk).



Species Challenge winner



## NIFCA SPECIES CHALLENGE 2023 RESULTS

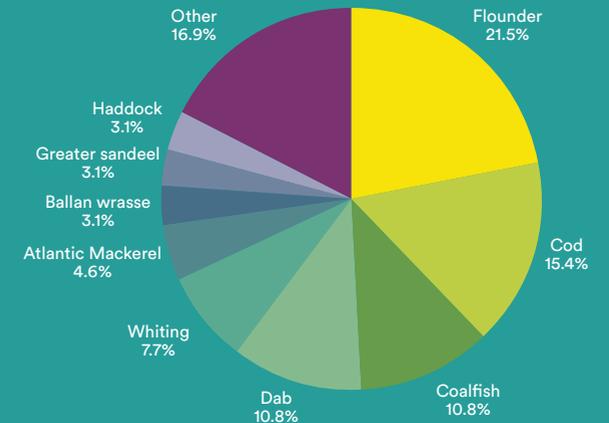
### THANK YOU!

Over 60 anglers took part in the NIFCA Species Challenge this year which helped us learn more about the fish found in the district!

### FISH SPECIES CAUGHT

During the competition's timeline between May and December, a cracking 20 different species were submitted! Some people not competing were even happy to share their unusual finds including shad and bonito!

### A comparison of the different fish species submitted to NIFCA between May to December 2023



September was the best month for the number of different species being caught. (11 different species recorded). While the highest number of fish submitted was in May.

# 2023 EVENTS

## MARINE PATHWAYS, SPLASHDOWN, CULLERCOATS HARBOUR DAY, PUFFIN FESTIVAL, ST MARY'S WILDLIFE EVENT

The NIFCA team experienced some great opportunities to talk to stakeholders and the public about the local marine environment and inshore fisheries at various events throughout 2023.

We also took part in the Marine Pathways Summer School and Splashdown at the Dove Marine Laboratory where officers talked about the work we do to an enthusiastic group of young people. We also attended the St Mary's Wildlife Day and Cullercoats Harbour Day to educate more people in the community about our work.



St Mary's Wildlife Day

# BOATLIFE 2024

NIFCA was happy to support the Association of IFCA's at Boatlife 2024 at Birmingham NEC recently, it was a fantastic opportunity to speak to many of our stakeholders nationally to understand some of the collective challenges and to hear feedback from those who visited our stand.

Rob Clarke the AIFCA Chief Officer presented on the role of IFCA's at the main stage as part of Sustainability Day.



# PROSECUTIONS

## Commercial Fisher Fined for National Fisheries Legislation

In January 2024 NIFCA successfully prosecuted Michael Denton Senior of Newbiggin for breaching national fisheries legislation. Mr Denton Snr, the shellfish permit holder of the Talisman II from Blyth retained 179 undersize lobsters in two distinctive keep boxes off Cambois before the vessel headed into Blyth Harbour. After landing, the vessel's catch was inspected and found to contain 11 undersize lobsters on the 18th of July 2022. Mr Denton Snr was found guilty by magistrates at the North Tyneside Magistrates Court of two separate fisheries offences and ordered to pay a total of £2400.

## Recreational Fisher Prosecuted for Four Offences

In October 2023 NIFCA successfully prosecuted Michael Denton Junior of Newbiggin for Breaching NIFCA's byelaws. On the 13th of October 2022, Mr Denton Jnr a recreational permit holder fished with more than five pots, took 21 undersize lobsters, three of which were berried, and had taken more than two lobsters in one day. Mr Denton was found guilty of four offences and ordered to pay £1072.

## Commercial Fisher Disqualified for Breaching Fisheries Legislation

In January this year, Mr Charles "Michael" Denton of Newbiggin by the Sea, was found guilty of breaching local fisheries legislation during an incident in March 2023 when Mr Denton retained and landed an egg bearing Lobster.

After hearing evidence from an enforcement officer, the Bench found Mr Denton guilty in his absence. Noting Mr Denton's high degree of culpability despite reasonably low harm to the fishery in this instance, as well as his previous convictions for fisheries offences, the Bench

agreed to NIFCA's request to disqualify Mr Denton from holding a shellfish permit to fish for 12 months, also ordering him to pay a fine of £480.00, a further £1,800.00 in prosecution costs and a victim surcharge of £192.00.

## Commercial Fishers Fined for Breaching Shellfish Permit Conditions

In February this year, NIFCA also successfully prosecuted three members of a family from Blyth and Newbiggin by the Sea, for breaching local fisheries legislation that manages the pot fishery along the Northumberland coast.

In an incident in July 2023 when a fleet of 40 fishing pots operated by the Armstrong family were inspected at sea and found to be missing or have incorrect identification tags attached. Upon inspection, the individual pots either had no mandatory NIFCA pot tags attached or they displayed tags allocated to another vessel owned by the family.

The case was brought against David Armstrong Snr, David Armstrong Jnr, and Christopher Armstrong. The three members of the Armstrong family pleaded guilty to the same offence, that they had: 'Fished for specified shellfish using pots without tags issued to the commercial permit holder and named vessel affixed, contrary to NIFCA's byelaw 4. Crustacea and Mollusc Permitting and Pot Limitation.'

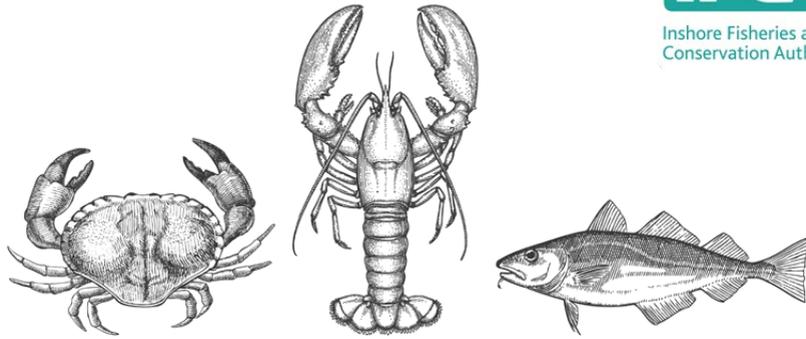
To Christopher Armstrong and David Armstrong Snr the owners of the fishing vessel; Wendy Patricia BH22, the court individually imposed financial penalties of a £433.00 fine, a victim surcharge of £173.00 and awarded costs of £1,300. David Armstrong Jnr as master of the vessel was ordered to pay a £300.00 fine, a victim surcharge of £120.00 and to pay £780.00 in costs. In total £5,012.00 is to be paid by the family.



**NIFCA is grateful to stakeholders for their support in the prevention of illegal activity in the NIFCA district.**

If you see something that you think is suspicious, please report it.

[www.nifca.gov.uk/contact/reporting-suspicious-behaviour](http://www.nifca.gov.uk/contact/reporting-suspicious-behaviour)



# ATTENTION!

The Northumberland Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority regulates fishing activity along the Northumberland and North Tyneside coast.

Before you fish here, you need to be aware of the regulations that may apply to you. Patrols operate in the areas and officers have powers to enforce the regulations in place.



For more information about the regulations visit our website or scan the QR code.

[www.nifca.gov.uk](http://www.nifca.gov.uk)

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## OUR SHARED VISION

“To 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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