

November 2022



NIFCA News

"Taking in the Coast at Blyth from the Clouds"

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 latest edition of our newsletter and the final one before my retirement in December. It's been a dramatic few months in this country since our last newsletter with all of the governmental changes and of course the sad news of the passing of her Majesty the Queen. That of course brought the immediate accession of King Charles III and hopefully his reign may herald a golden age.

In the NIFCA district, as we find ourselves in the season of mellow fruitfulness, we can reflect on a busier than usual last few months for the Officers and members of NIFCA, particularly because of the work in the summer connected with the Defra consultation on pilot HPMA's, in relation to Lindisfarne. In my 19 years with firstly the Northumberland Sea Fisheries Committee from 2003 and then NIFCA from 2011, this has undoubtedly been the most significant consultation we have had to deal with, producing far more stakeholder and indeed wider public interest than we have ever known. There was fantastic NIFCA member engagement during the 3 months of the consultation, with sterling leadership by our Chair Les Weller. Our Officers led by Chief IFCO Mark Southerton and Lead Environmental Officer Alex Aitken also worked extremely hard both meeting stakeholders particularly on Holy Island and at Seahouses and in preparing the Authority response to the consultation. The result thereof and whether a pilot HPMA is created in Lindisfarne is awaited in the new year.

I am delighted to say that there are many articles of interest in this edition of NIFCA News, but I would particularly like to confirm the welcome which was given to our two new Enforcement IFCOs, Emily O'Regan and Toby Nash and to say how well they have fitted in. It is great that NIFCA has a full strength team of Officers, as well as a full complement of 21 members. My thanks

to the members (past and present) for supporting the work of myself and the NIFCA team in everything which is undertaken for the benefit of inshore fisheries and the marine environment in our district. I am confident that NIFCA is in as good a place as possible as I bid my farewell.

Finally, I would wish to give my sincere best wishes to Mark Southerton who will move up from being Chief IFCO to the Authority Chief Officer after I retire, together with a really strong management team around him comprising Alex Aitken, Nick Weir and Emma Cosimini, with all of them very ably supported by the rest of the NIFCA team. I look forward to receiving reports of them and NIFCA in general continuing to go from strength to strength.

Mike Hardy
Chief Executive



CEO Mike Hardy (left) with Chair Les Weller (right)



NIFCA Members, Officers and staff gather together for CEO Mike Hardy's last quarterly meeting

Meet the NIFCA Team



Michael Hardy
Chief Executive



Mark Southerton
Chief IFCO

Please meet the **Northumberland IFCA** team. The NIFCA staff is made up of Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers (IFCOs), both Enforcement and Environmental, and office staff.

The Environmental team comprises 4 IFCOs and the Enforcement team comprises 6 IFCOs.

If you see us out in the district and would like to have a chat, please do not hesitate to come and say 'hello'.

ENVIRONMENTAL



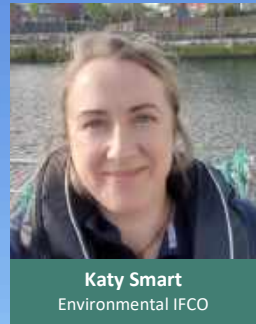
Alex Aitken
Lead Environmental IFCO



Andrew Boon
Snr. Environmental IFCO



Beth Harvey
Environmental IFCO



Katy Smart
Environmental IFCO

ENFORCEMENT



Nick Weir
Lead Enforcement IFCO



Paul Ridley
Engineer/IFCO



Rick Willis
Enforcement IFCO



Mark Lynn
Enforcement IFCO



Toby Nash
Enforcement IFCO



Emily O'Regan
Enforcement IFCO

OFFICE TEAM



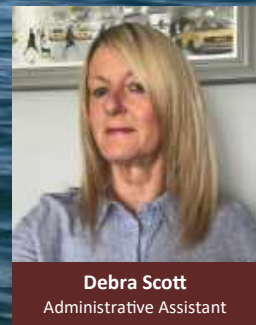
Julian Sutton
Finance Officer



Emma Cosimini
Administrative Officer



Debbie Carr
Administrative Assistant



Debra Scott
Administrative Assistant

Becoming an IFCO: My Work Experience with the Northumberland IFCA



Student Rhys Thomas onboard St Aidan

I am a marine biology student currently studying at Newcastle University who just completed six amazing weeks at the Northumberland IFCA this summer. I have been fascinated with marine life long before I started my undergraduate course at Newcastle university.

I always look for opportunities to further my knowledge and skillset to prepare me for a future in the marine sector. Before the summer internship, I took part in many opportunities offered by my university to get more hands-on experience in marine biology. From countless trips to the rocky shores undertaking biodiversity surveys to a more recent placement in Mozambique during March which introduced me to techniques and methods such as coral reef

surveys, fisheries management, and taxonomy. All of which gave me an understanding of basic fieldwork studies in marine biology. I wanted to further my knowledge and skills gained from these opportunities during the summer before I start my final year.

Then on one fateful day in the month of June, I received an email describing a summer internship opportunity with the Northumberland IFCA. At first, I didn't know anything about this Authority, and only after days of browsing through the online website, I gained a rudimentary understanding about what they do. After joining them for the summer, I truly witnessed the passion and determination the people at Northumberland IFCA show to not just preserving the marine life in the district but to also the local community that is dependent upon it.

My time at the Northumberland IFCA introduced me to various kinds of work they undertake for the management of the Northumberland district. This ranged from measuring lobsters at a local wholesaler, to shore patrols up and down the coastline monitoring all forms of shoreline activities. There is always an office-based element after working in the field. This started out with recording survey results, be it lobster measurements or previous shellfish surveys onto Excel spreadsheets, to identifying species previously observed on the rocky shores, bringing out small amounts of detective work. I also had to work on a report comparing results and methods

between survey sites from previous studies. The report also involved a grueling detour with an old enemy, STATS! But with the help of environmental officers, the task was completed, resulting in a long overdue feeling of accomplishment. I even had the opportunity to travel alongside environmental officers to areas such as Holy Island and Seahouses where testimonies from fishermen were surveyed and recorded in response to the Defra consultation on a pilot HPMA at Lindisfarne.

It's not always all work at the Northumberland IFCA, every now and then, a nice treat was well appreciated. Such as a visit to the lobster hatchery, witnessing all stages of a lobster life cycle, updating the leaflets with recent information and advancements, boat patrols on the fisheries patrol vessel to record all fishing vessels and activity in the area and finally operating the RIB up the coastline under the close supervision of an experienced Officer was a thrill I won't forget.

I completed my summer internship at the Northumberland IFCA with a newfound appreciation for the kind of effort and management that is required to preserve marine life and our inshore fisheries. I have enjoyed my time here and will put the knowledge and experience gained to good use in my future studies and research.

Rhys Thomas
Newcastle University Student

Shellfish Association of Great Britain (SAGB) Annual Conference, 2022

In May 2022, Lead Environmental IFCO Alex Aitken attended the Shellfish Association of Great Britain Annual Conference. There was a range of speakers and attendees at this conference, which is the first to be held in person since the Covid 19 pandemic began. Talks were heard from Victoria Prentis MP, and from her counterparts on Welsh and Scottish Government.

Key themes throughout the talks were on the difficulties the fishing industry have faced over the last 2-3 years with Covid and Brexit causing market and export difficulties. The export of bivalve molluscs was covered in some detail, there was an interesting talk on the methods used

to classify waters as Shellfish Production Areas and how they may not be very accurate and could be overestimating E. coli levels in bivalves, which leads to lower classifications (any area lower that a Class A cannot export to the EU).

There were updates from Seafish and MacDuff Shellfish on the Crab Management Group and the offshoot groups from this, what they do, and how they are linked to Fisheries Management Plans, under the Fisheries Act 2020 which is an important area of work nationally.

There were also a couple of great personal stories from Lindy Wood from the Lob-

ster Pot in Anglesey talking about her life in lobsters. And from Bobby Groves who travelled around the UK and Ireland on a tour of all of the oyster sites on his motorbike. The conference also included an outstanding five course dinner in Fishmongers Hall which was an excellent opportunity to meet with people from the sector in a beautiful location.

Overall, it was a brilliant couple of days and great to meet and hear from so many different people.

Alex Aitken
Lead Environmental IFCO



Speaker gives presentation at the SAGB Conference



A beautiful selection of seafood at Fishmonger's Hall



Conference attendees enjoy an evening meal at Fishmonger's Hall

New to the NIFCA Team



Toby Nash (left) and Emily O'Regan (right) join the NIFCA Enforcement Team

A warm welcome to Emily and Toby who joined our Enforcement Team in June. Working closely with and learning from our experienced team of IFCOs, they have both settled in extremely well and are fantastic additions to our existing capability, as our Officers work to protect and ensure the long-term stability of the fishery in the NIFCA district.

Emily, pictured above (right) with new colleague Toby (left) at Royal Quays Marina, joins us from the Marine Management Organisation where she has been working in fisheries management since 2018. She has a keen interest in the marine environment and when not patrolling the shores of Northumberland at work, Emily can often be found beneath the

waves as she is a keen scuba diver. Emily says “the team have been so welcoming and have made my first few months with NIFCA very enjoyable. It has also been great working in the district and getting to know the local fishing community, whilst also undertaking training and working alongside my NIFCA colleagues.”

Toby is the other new IFCO joining our team (also pictured right driving TT St Aidan). You may have seen Toby out and about in the district over the last couple of months, or driving the RIB through the north sea as pictured. Toby has come from a varied environmental consultancy background including offshore environmental baseline surveys in South America. In his personal life he

is a keen sailor and amongst other long passages has completed two transatlantic sails.

Toby says, “It feels great to be able to combine my environmental background with my love of being at sea. I’m really looking forward to engaging with all aspects of the regions fisheries and to promoting sustainable use of the local resources.”





TT St AIDAN

NIFCA NEWS SNIIPPETS



NIFCA at Splashdown Summer School



In August, Andrew, Katy and Beth went to the Dove Marine Lab at Cullercoats to help out and present to secondary school pupils at the 'Splashdown Summer School'. It wasn't the first time for Andrew who had attended himself back in the day!

Andrew and Beth did a presentation on who NIFCA are, what the different types of fishing are in the district and what animals are caught, before talking about lobsters – their life cycle, different parts, and how they are caught and measured. Everyone's favourite part was bringing out the live lobsters fresh from the wholesalers that day (although not everyone was so keen to touch them). Finally, we talked more about other NIFCA work, showing videos of the Seaspyder and baited cameras, grab sampling and drone (UAV) surveys. Hopefully this got the kids interested in marine science!

Beth and Katy also talked to an older group of A-level students, with more of an emphasis on marine science as a career and how we got here ourselves. The fact that they are already at a marine science school in their summer holidays instead of just having fun means they are already way ahead of us Officers at that age so we're sure they'll do just fine. Who knows, maybe they are the future of the IFCA?

Reel Anglers Recycling in the District



If you are an angler your fishing line can be recycled using one of the angling recycling line bins that have been installed in Blyth, Tynemouth and Amble. The following materials can be placed in the recycling bins:

- **Monofilament**
- **Fluorocarbon**
- **Braids**
- **Fly Lines**
- **Fly backing**
- **Plastic Line Spools** (*empty or part used*)
- **Small plastic tackle items** (*beads, lead clips etc*)
- **Single use Plastic packaging**

If you are a local recreational angler and have any issues you would like us to look at, please call NIFCA on 01670 797676 or email us at nifca@nifca.gov.uk.



Consultations

It is really important for NIFCA to gather the views of stakeholders regarding policy developments and other matters such as the making of byelaws in respect of the NIFCA district and remit. There have been two very good examples of that recently: -

Firstly, NIFCA consulted in September regarding amendments to our byelaw about the requirement to fix the correct coloured tag to lobster pots. This consultation was primary online and two responses were received to seek some clarification but there was no issue raised with

the change and NIFCA was therefore able to bring in the new wording in paragraph 12 of byelaw 4 to say "A commercial permit holder must not fish for specified shellfish using a pot unless a tag issued to the commercial permit holder and named vessel in the current colour being issued by the Authority is affixed to the pot."

Secondly, at the time of going to press with this issue of NIFCA news, we are consulting both online and in the district with fishers and stakeholders regarding the Authority's Fixed Engine Byelaw to see if

any changes are felt to be necessary. This is an in-depth consultation which will be considered in the new year by the Authority and if necessary the formal legal process will begin after the consultation with the aim of bringing in any necessary changes to the current byelaw provision. Please check on the NIFCA website for news regarding this important consultation.

Berwickshire & Northumberland Marine Nature Partnership

Partnership working is a vital part of the NIFCA remit. We are very pleased to enjoy excellent professional relationships with a number of organisations including Natural England, the Marine Management Organisation, Environment Agency, Newcastle University, the Angling Trust and others including members of the local fishing community. That also applies

to the Marine Nature Partnership who carry out important work in the district, facilitating collaborative working in marine management between its many members, including NIFCA. We were therefore delighted that their Officer Nick Brodin was able to come to the Authority's October quarterly meeting and present upon his work in the last year, in-

cluding the development of the championing coastal communication (3 c's project) looking at the regional response to likely climate change impacts on the coast. NIFCA also feels that it is important to make contribution of £4,000 per annum to the Marine Nature Partnership and we look forward to the continuation of this fruitful relationship.

Recreational Angling on Blyth Pier

Patrols have recently been carried out with a recreational angling focus to ensure the fish caught have been above the minimum conservation reference sizes. It has been great getting out and speaking to the local recreational angling community. While on patrol fish measuring signs were requested at Blyth pier and 7 more signs were installed and used simultaneously for measuring the mackerel as the season got well underway.

Equality and Diversity Training



NIFCA Officers and staff undertake Equality and Diversity Training at the NIFCA office

The NIFCA team were delighted to welcome a trainer from Equality and Diversity UK to the office in November. She took the Officers and staff through the developments in the Equality Act, with a look at the 9 protected characteristics. She facilitated thought-provoking discussion to bring about self-reflection on our personal and professional lives, to better understand the unconscious biases which exist within everyone.

The trainer opened discussion about challenging discrimination which is the

responsibility of everyone. She presented scenarios as the team worked through the best way individuals can tackle discrimination.

The training was an excellent chance to assess the policies within NIFCA to ensure we achieve our aim to be actively inclusive for prospective employees, stakeholders and partners and the team felt energized by the day. The team reflected on the learning outcomes from our training and many people commented how holding open and honest conver-

sations about diversity is key to paving the way for inclusion.

NIFCA continues to put equality and diversity at the forefront of our policies and are would like to thank Equality and Diversity UK for an excellent training day.

Emma Cosimini
Admin Officer

Summer Events Around the District

Officers were delighted to once again head out this summer to attend some of the district's coastal community events, celebrating all things marine and getting the chance to meet and talk to stakeholders and the public. In June, IFCOs headed up to Amble Harbour to attend the local launch of Operation Seabird, an initiative aiming to reduce the disturbance of wildlife in Northumberland and North Tyneside. June also saw the return of the Amble Puffin Festival where Officers enjoyed a fun day of meeting and greeting the local community, who were keen to learn about the work of NIFCA whilst trying to escape the glare of some rather oversized and pesky seagulls!

Later that month, the country was united in celebrating the Queen's Jubilee and with that, NIFCA joined representatives from the Angling Trust to enjoy an afternoon of fishing at an angling event organised by NIFCA member, Amelia Henderson. Money raised at the event

was donated in support of the RNLI and Forward Assist.

In August, Environmental Officers joined local wildlife conservation and rescue organisations at St Marys Island Local Nature Reserve. This event, which celebrates the beauty of the area's wildlife, gave NIFCA a chance to meet the local community and share information about the work we do in the district.

Also in August on a warm and bright Sunday afternoon, CEO Mike Hardy and Chief IFCO Mark Southerton took the Authority RIB, Robert Arckless MBE to Cresswell Tower at the invitation of our Member Steve Lowe and set up a stall there to tell visitors about the work of NIFCA. Member Martin Kitching was also there to particularly talk about cetaceans and it was great to meet so many visitors as well as to hear their views on fisheries and the marine environment.



NIFCA stall at Operation Seabird, Amble Harbour in June



NIFCA Member Amelia Henderson and Chair Les Weller with members of the Angling Trust at the Jubilee Open



EIFCO Katy Smart and CEO Mike Hardy at the Puffin Festival



The Puffin Festival Seagulls having some fun with the NIFCA display



Summer event at Cresswell Tower

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

Come along to our next Quarterly Meeting on Monday 23rd January 2023 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!

Crustacea Sampling

Environment Officers returned to working on commercial fishing vessels to gather biodata in August.

Senior Environmental Officer Andrew Boon (pictured left) showed Environmental IFCO Katy the ropes on how to measure crustacea quickly and precisely from the vessel as it recovered fleets.

It was a great day with a small swell and perfect summer conditions. A total of 700 lobsters were measured. The Officers were also lucky enough to see bass and octopus, as well as white beaked dolphins swimming in the distance!

The lobster data collected will contribute to ongoing stock assessment work to ensure a sustainable fishery within the Northumberland IFCA district.

Katy Smart
Environmental IFCO