

Press Release – 24/11/2017

Significant fines of £24k for illegal crab and lobster fishing for fishermen

Six fishermen have been prosecuted for offences relating to catching and keeping undersized shellfish and berried lobsters in the Devon & Severn IFCA district. All six men pleaded guilty to the offences, which have resulted in fines and costs of £24,057 in total.

On the 9th May, Enforcement Officers from the IFCA conducted an inspection of the fishing vessel Vesta (PLN FY529). They found that the vessel's master, David Cross, had retained eight lobsters and seventeen spider crabs below the minimum conservation reference size. There was also no permit in place allowing the vessel to fish commercially for shellfish with pots in the Devon & Severn IFCA district. Mr Cross was fined £2,629 while the owner, Darren Andrews of Jovern Marine Ltd, was fined £4,179.

On the 25th May the fishing vessel Elsie Leigh (PLN PH8) was inspected. It was found that the master of the vessel had 166 edible crabs that were below the minimum conservation reference size. The master was named as Stephen Evans and the owner as Brian Tapper.

On the 31st May another inspection was carried out on the fishing vessel Suzie P (PLN PH9), also owned by Brian Tapper. Officers found that the master had retained two lobsters that were carrying eggs, one lobster below the minimum conservation reference size and 48 edible crabs and lobsters that were also below the minimum conservation reference size. The master of the vessel was Bee-Jay Tapper and Lee Tapper was a co-owner.

Other similar offences identified from an inspection carried out on board the fishing vessel Elsie Leigh on the 25th September 2017 were taken into consideration by the court. Brian Tapper was ordered to pay £6,335, Bee-Jay Tapper will pay £5,762, Lee Tapper will pay £3,962 and Stephen Evans will pay £1,190.

“Crab and lobster fisheries in the Devon and Severn IFCA district are important and need to be managed within current regulations to avoid undermining the management in place to support the shellfish fisheries,” Matthew Mander, Deputy Chief Officer, said. “They provide important sources of income to 192 commercial potting vessels and we hope that the outcome of these cases will act as a deterrent to fishermen undertaking similar illegal activity or contemplating breaching any of the permit conditions.”

Crab and lobster fisheries within the Devon & Severn IFCA District are managed through the Potting Permit byelaw that has been in place since 1st March 2015. This prohibits the use of pots for fishing unless in accordance with a permit. Permits are issued to both the commercial and recreational sector upon application and they contain several important technical requirements - including restrictions on catch, bait, gear and time - that help to ensure that everyone has fair and balanced access to a sustainable shellfish fishery.

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If you would like further information, images or an interview with a D&S IFCA Officer, please contact:

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Editors Notes:

- D&S IFCA was established under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 to lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries. The duties, responsibilities and powers for all IFCA's are clearly set out in this Act of Parliament.
- The D&S IFCA is the largest of ten separate IFCA districts and has two sea boundaries. The D&S IFCA District covers an area of 4522 Km²
- The D&S IFCA is funded through its constituent Local Authorities by an annual levy. That levy is supported by central Government to enable the Authority deliver on national management objectives. The Local Authorities funding the IFCA are: Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council, Torbay Council; Somerset County Council, North Somerset Council, South Gloucestershire Council, Gloucestershire County Council and Bristol City Council.
- The D&S IFCA manages the exploitation of sea fisheries resources in its district and seeks to ensure that the conservation objectives of any Marine Conservation Areas in the district are furthered.
- D&S IFCA's vision is 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".
- Elsie Leigh and Suzie P cases heard at Newton Abbot Magistrates' Court on 23rd October 2017
- Vesta case heard at Newton Abbot Magistrates' Court on 30th October 2017