

## **Cornwall Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority**

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JJJ SS333  
PRESS RELEASE  
Cornwall IFCA  
February 2023

On 28 February 2023, at Bodmin Magistrates Court, Cornwall IFCA successfully prosecuted Michael Ian Jepson (53) of Newquay Cornwall, the master of the fishing vessel JJJ SS333 and a director of Three Jays Shellfish Ltd which owned the vessel. Mr Jepson and the company pleaded guilty to five offences in relation to fishing for berried lobsters on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022 and on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022. Magistrates sentenced Mr Jepson to a fine of £933 plus a surcharge of £93 and ordered to pay £3,120 towards the prosecution costs. Three Jays Shellfish Ltd were fined £15,000, plus a surcharge of £190 and also ordered to pay £3,120 towards the prosecution costs. The total payments ordered by the court amounted to £22,456.

Berried lobsters (female lobsters bearing eggs) are protected by law and any that are caught in English waters must be returned immediately to the sea. Over recent years Cornwall IFCA has become aware of increasing fishing pressure on inshore crab and lobster fisheries and it is therefore vital that existing conservation measures such as returning female lobsters carrying eggs to the sea are followed. It is estimated that from a single clutch of thousands of eggs released by a legal sized lobster, that only one or two will eventually result in a mature lobster, which is why it is so important to allow female lobsters to produce eggs and naturally release their young.

On the 12 May 2022, the fishing vessel JJJ SS333 came into the port of Hayle where its catch of crabs and lobsters were landed and loaded into a van. A Cornwall IFCA officer conducted an inspection of the shellfish and discovered that seven lobsters were carrying eggs. Other lobsters found in the box were in poor condition with the undersides of their tails appearing to have been

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subjected to rough treatment, which was considered to be consistent with having been scrubbed to remove all the eggs.

Mr Jepson was interviewed under caution and agreed that on 12 May 2022, seven of his lobsters had been landed with berried tails. He denied that any of his lobsters had been scrubbed and went on to explain that he believed somebody had placed scrubbed lobsters in his pots. Having also explained that he and his crewman checked female lobsters for berried tails, he then said he must have missed seeing them without his glasses on.

In view of the suspected berried lobster offence in May 2022, Cornwall IFCA began the process of bringing court prosecution proceedings against Mr Jepson and Three Jays Shellfish Ltd. However, before they were due to appear in court, a new investigation of them was begun on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022. On this occasion, the JJJ SS333 was boarded and inspected at sea by a Cornwall IFCA enforcement officer who discovered three berried lobsters retained on board the vessel. Again, it was suspected that they had been subjected to scrubbing in an attempt to remove the eggs, but some eggs had remained attached.

All the berried lobsters seized by Cornwall IFCA during both investigations were returned to the sea alive, once they had been recorded and photographed for evidential purposes.

Both of the investigations of Mr Jepson and Three Jays Shellfish Ltd were combined into the same court proceedings which went ahead at Bodmin Magistrates Court on 28 February 2023.

Simon Cadman, Cornwall IFCA's Principal Enforcement Officer said, "The vast majority of those fishing for lobsters respect and abide by the regulations

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which exist in the interests of a sustainable lobster fishery. It is therefore particularly disheartening to find an individual repeatedly disregarding the rules, even committing the same offence whilst the initial event was still under investigation. I want to assure everyone that Cornwall IFCA will continue to remain vigilant for illegal shellfish catches, investigate as necessary and take appropriate enforcement action. I hope that today's convictions and the sentencing of Mr Jepson and Three Jays Shellfish Ltd demonstrates that taking berried lobsters from Cornish waters will not be tolerated and that the sentences handed down by the Court will act as a deterrent to others".

Note to editors

### **Sentence/penalties:**

Master – Mr Michael Ian Jepson

Fine: £933

Surcharge: £93

Costs: £3,120

**Total: £4,146 to be paid within 28 days**

Owner – Three Jays Shellfish Ltd

Fine: £15,000

Surcharge: £190

Costs: £3,120

**Total: £18,310 to be paid within 28 days**

**Photo:** Lobsters that were seized from the vessel in May 2022

### **Legislation relating to offences charged**

Lobster and Crawfish (Prohibition of Fishing and Landing) Order 2000 as amended by the Lobster and Crawfish (Prohibition of fishing and Landing) (Amendment) Order 2017

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For more information please contact Simon Cadman on 01736 336842. Or visit [www.cornwall-ifca.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall-ifca.gov.uk)

Cornwall IFCA manages the inshore fisheries around the Cornish coast out to the six nautical mile limit from the baselines, which include the Eddystone rocks. It makes and enforces local byelaws relating to fisheries and the protection of the marine environment, and may also enforce other national and EU fisheries legislation.

If you would like to find out more about fishing regulations in Cornwall please visit [www.cornwall-ifca.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall-ifca.gov.uk). Or call us on 01736 336842.

### Contact details:

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