

FishingFocus

The Defra and MFA marine fisheries newsletter

Inside this issue

Summer 2008
Number 11

Lyme Bay

Page 3



Science: ICES' advice and MariFish

Page 5

Marine and Fisheries Agency News

Pages 6 and 7



High fuel costs

We recognise that high fuel prices are having a serious impact on the fishing industry.

Ministers and officials from all four UK Fisheries Administrations have discussed with industry representatives action to help the industry adapt to a high fuel cost economy. The European Commission has also produced proposals which were discussed at the Council of Ministers on 15 July. The UK priority is that any measures must be linked to securing the long-term future of the industry. Defra has a number of measures already with this aim in mind. These include:

- **European Fisheries Fund** – about £71m European and national funding over seven years for England. We're discussing with the industry how best to use the Fund to help adapt to high fuel prices.
- **Fisheries Science Partnership** – £1m a year. The current programme runs to 2010/11 and involves fishermen working with scientists.
- **Fisheries Challenge Fund** – £300,000 a year for short-



term scientific, economic and social projects suggested by organisations with an interest in fisheries (see page 6).

- **Decommissioning scheme for under 10 metre boats** – £3m minimum. Depending on the response to our consultation (see page 8), the first boats could be decommissioned this year.
- **Funding e-logbooks** – an estimated £170,000 in 2009/10 for over 24 metre vessels, and £220,000 in 2010-11 for 15-24 metre vessels.
- **Business support for under 10 metre boats** – we're working

with Regional Development Agencies, through Business Link, to improve marketing and training; and advice on business planning and negotiating better market prices.

- **Environmentally responsible fishing project** – £280,000 and **Fishing for litter pilot project** – £50,000 (see page 4).

In addition, we're setting up a Fisheries Taskforce, with an independent chair to develop proposals for long-term reform of quota management and licensing arrangements.

Carol Billson, MFA



The sharp rise in fuel prices and access to quota for some key stocks are difficult problems. People are finding it hard to think about the long term. This is understandable, but the long term remains important. Any measures introduced will need to underpin the long term plans.

As some of you will know, I am retiring from the Civil Service at the end of this month. The main plus for me over the past four and a half years has been the opportunity to work with so many of you and to benefit from your experience and expertise. I leave this job with a great deal of respect for the people who make up the fishing industry and memories of your generosity of spirit even in difficult times.

David Dawson takes over this week as the new Director. I know that he will be keen to get to know you and to build on the progress made.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rodney Anderson".

Rodney Anderson
Director of Marine
and Fisheries

News in Brief

Marine Bill

The public consultation on the draft Marine Bill closed on 26 June. The Joint Committee undertaking pre-legislative scrutiny on the draft Marine Bill is expected to present its report to Parliament this week. The next steps are publication of the summary of responses to the consultation and Defra's response to the Committee's recommendations in the autumn.

📌 You can find out more about the Marine Bill at www.defra.gov.uk/marine/legislation/index.htm and about the Joint Committee at www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/jcdmb.cfm

Recreational Sea Angling Strategy

Thanks for your responses to our consultation on the Strategy. We're currently analysing the 500+ responses and aim to publish the summary of them in August. At its next meeting in the autumn the Inshore Fisheries Working Group will be discussing revisions to the Strategy to take account of your comments.

📌 You will be able to read the summary of responses at www.defra.gov.uk/marine/fisheries/conservation/fstock.htm

Marine Fisheries Science Advisory Group

Defra's Marine Fisheries Science Advisory Group met in May to discuss some of Defra's key research projects. The Group includes fishermen, scientists and environmentalists.

📌 You will be able to see the presentations from the meeting this summer at www.defra.gov.uk/marine/science/mfsag.htm

Marine Programme Plan

Defra has published its Marine Programme Plan for 2008-09. This sets out our sub-programmes of work and key milestones through to 31 March 2011.

📌 You can read the Plan and its accompanying information sheets at www.defra.gov.uk/marine/index.htm

Marine Fisheries Stakeholder Forum

The next meeting of the Forum is now on 10 September, not 3 July as announced in the last issue of Fishing Focus. The Forum agenda and papers will be on our website in early September. If you'd like to send us comments on any of the papers, we'll feed them into the Forum discussion. Forum Members advise Defra and UK Fisheries Administrations on key fisheries issues.

📌 You can find out more about the Forum and read Forum papers at www.defra.gov.uk/fish/sea/others/mfsf.htm Please send comments to marine.fish@defra.gsi.gov.uk or to Strategic Policy Team, Defra Marine Programme, Area 2E, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR.

New Deputy Director

Richard Pullen is the new head of the Sea Fisheries Conservation team, replacing Lindsay Harris, who is leading another team in Defra.

Lyme Bay decision

Last month, Jonathan Shaw, Minister for Marine and Fisheries, announced the closure of about 10% of Lyme Bay to dredging for shellfish and demersal trawling.

The closure of an area of approximately 60 square nautical miles of Lyme Bay from West Bay to Beer Head took effect from 11th July. The decision follows public consultation last year, which invited views on how best to protect the important marine biodiversity of Lyme Bay from the impact of potentially damaging fishing practices. In the light of the responses we received (over 100 substantive responses and over 7000 campaign responses – representing a broad range of opinion) we prepared a full Impact Assessment of the environmental, social and economic effects of the closure.

The Government's aim is to ensure the majority of the most important marine wildlife in the Bay is protected from the most damaging fishing practices. The previous voluntary closure offered protection in four areas where there were known populations of pink sea fan, but did not protect all the important rocky reefs and associated species identified in the Bay. Natural England, the Government's adviser on nature conservation, considers the reef system in Lyme Bay to be one of the best marine wildlife habitats in the UK and of international importance. Its advice showed that there were large and important areas of unprotected wildlife habitat that were



© Mike Marley 2006

Lyme Bay rocky reef with soft sponges.

vulnerable to damage from dredges and bottom trawls. The closure ensures that the majority of this habitat is now protected.

Whilst there was broad public support for this closure of the Bay, many fishermen and fishing industry organisations raised concerns about the financial and social impact of the larger statutory closure. In particular, within the new closed area there is an economically important scallop bed. Whilst the closure will offer additional economic opportunities to some people who fish in the area, there is a clear impact on fishermen who relied for their income on scallop dredging in the closed area. We recognise that this closure will increase the economic pressure on these fishermen at a difficult time.

The MFA is working with the fishermen who are most affected by the closure to provide advice and assistance on adapting to it. The MFA, with the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) and Seafish, are meeting fishermen on 14 August in Weymouth.

In addition, Defra is setting up a three year project to monitor the rate of recovery for the marine wildlife in the closed area and assess the socio-economic impacts. A key part of this project will be working with local fishermen, and others who work in and use the Bay, to understand how the local economy has been affected by the closure. The final report for this project, due in 2011, will help further our understanding of the social and economic effects of marine protected areas.

i You can read the Minister's decision at www.defra.gov.uk/news/2008/080619a.htm and the Impact Assessment at www.defra.gov.uk/marine/pdf/biodiversity/lymebay-ia-final.pdf The consultation papers are at www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/lymebay-biodiversity/index.htm The Explanatory Memorandum to the Lyme Bay Designated Area (Fishing Restrictions) Order 2008 No.1584 is at www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2008/em/uksiem_20081584_en.pdf

Environmental footprint of inshore fisheries

We're just starting a pilot project to improve our knowledge of the full range of environmental impacts of English inshore fisheries.

Since announcing the project in February, we've invited around 30 inshore fishing vessels from Hartlepool, Lowestoft and the Thames Estuary to participate. Vessels will fish normally but be fitted with a vessel monitoring system to record information such as course, speed and position at regular intervals. Skippers will also log a range of data, including length of tow, details of gear, catches and discards. They will also provide information on fuel consumption and certain aspects of their marketing. Observers will join some trips. Cefas is leading the project, working closely with the MFA and Seafish.



Cefas Photo Library

Cefas scientists at work.

We'll be using the results of the project to inform the long-term management of the inshore fleet for the benefit of all fishermen. In particular, the results will contribute towards the implementation of 'Fisheries 2027, a long-term vision for

sustainable fisheries' by helping to define the acceptable impact of producing and consuming fish; by ensuring fishing activity contributes to local communities; and by optimising economic returns from fish stocks.

Fishing for Litter

We're part-funding a 'Fishing for Litter' pilot project in south-west England.

Marine litter is a danger to fish and marine wildlife, as well as spoiling the appearance of our coastline. The project will invite fishermen to store on board (in a hardwearing one tonne bag provided by the project) any marine litter they've caught during their normal fishing operations. When they bring the litter ashore, it will be weighed and checked before being sent to a landfill site.

The project will make a small but valuable contribution to tackling the problem of marine

litter, 80% of which it is estimated comes from the land. It will remove from the sea litter that could otherwise kill or harm marine life. By reducing the amount of marine litter in the sea we also hope the project will reduce the cost to fishermen of clearing debris from nets.

The three year project, which starts this autumn, covers Newlyn, Plymouth, Brixham and Bideford harbours. It will be run by KIMO – an international association of local authorities with members in ten countries – that aims to clean up pollution in the North Sea, Irish Sea, Arctic Sea and

north-east Atlantic. KIMO will be working in partnership with Seafood Cornwall.

The project fits Defra's approach of inviting fishermen to have a wider marine stewardship role. Ensuring marine litter doesn't harm the marine environment is also a key part of achieving Good Environmental Status under the EU Marine Strategy Directive (2007). This pilot project will help us to decide whether similar projects could be used more widely to tackle marine litter.

📍 You will be able to find out more about the project at www.kimointernational.org/Fishing-for-Litter-.aspx

ICES' advice

In late June the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) issued its annual scientific advice to the European Commission and Member States on 2009 catch limits for most stocks.

Defra and Cefas met the fishing industry and others this month to discuss the implications of ICES' advice for Britain, as the first step in the lead-up to the December Fisheries Council, when Ministers decide on the Commission's proposals for the 2009 Total Allowable Catches (TACs) and associated controls.

ICES considers that some stocks are being harvested sustainably, including North Sea plaice and saithe. However, its advice varies according to the specific nature of each stock and the circumstances of the fisheries catching it. It recommends, for example, a 13% increase in the plaice TAC (on the grounds that

the stock can remain sustainable at a higher level of exploitation), but a slight reduction in the 2009 saithe TAC in line with the agreed EU/Norway management plan. For Nephrops, ICES is concerned about the mechanism for estimating their abundance so has suggested significant quota reductions. For stocks such as Area VII megrim and VIIIjk sole where data is limited, ICES advises cutting quotas in line with recent uptake. For others, like Irish Sea sole, ICES recommends a recovery plan.

For most stocks the situation is like last year, with continuing reduced or poor recruitment. ICES therefore advises cuts in catches and/or effort for some key UK stocks, including North Sea and West of Scotland cod and haddock; North Sea whiting and herring; Irish Sea cod, haddock and plaice; Western Channel sole; and English

Channel/Celtic Sea cod. At previous December Fisheries Councils, EU Ministers have decided that the social and economic effects of following advice on zero-catches of cod and other fish would be too great: and we expect them to take account of these effects in a similar way this year.

The Commission is likely to publish its proposals for TACs after ICES publishes its advice on the remaining pelagic stocks in October. However, the Commission's policy statement and ICES' June advice indicate what we can expect. We're therefore working with the industry and others and plan some meetings around the English coast to seek local fishermen's views on priorities for the December Council.

📌 You can read ICES' advice at www.ices.dk/advice/icesadvice.asp

MariFish



MariFish is a European Commission funded project encouraging managers of European

fisheries science to work together. Defra is co-ordinating the five-year project which involves 19 partners from 15 countries.

Several MariFish partners are planning to jointly fund research into the development of operational fisheries management indicators, starting in May 2009. Management of many species is now changing

from 'how to avoid stock collapse' to 'how to develop management strategies consistent with long-term sustainability and ecosystem health.' This requires indicators to allow fisheries to be managed effectively. The research will explore ways in which the indicators might be applied to a selection of European fisheries.

MariFish partners are also planning to link their existing and planned research by sharing data, working together on projects, and jointly assessing findings. Defra is leading a research programme, which will

involve fishermen and other stakeholders, to help tackle the problem of discards. It may include investigating new cod-avoidance schemes and real-time closures, and new technologies for recording discard data on board fishing vessels.

Defra is also looking at the issue of two-way communication between managers and scientists. MariFish will be publishing the findings from interviews with European fisheries managers and scientists in a good practice report in August.

📌 You can find out more about MariFish at www.marifish.net

EFF grants

Proposed changes to the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) regulation are being discussed by the Council of Ministers this month in response to the increase in fuel prices.

The MFA has also been discussing with stakeholders the priorities for EFF grants in England. As part of its second phase consultation on the EFF Operational Programme, which ended on 27 June, the MFA Business Relations Team held meetings in Newlyn, Brixham, Southampton (Boat Show), Portsmouth, Ramsgate, Leigh on Sea, Lowestoft, Grimsby, Scarborough, North Shields, Whitehaven and Fleetwood.

Over 250 fishermen and other stakeholders attended the meetings and the key issues to emerge from the meetings were requests for:

- funding to help fund young fishermen in England to buy fishing vessels;

- additional national funds to be used for decommissioning to protect EFF funds for other activities and for any scheme for decommissioning not just to target under 10 metre vessels;
- Defra to explain the reasons behind its decision not to fund engine replacements and to reconsider this decision.

In response to questions from fishermen, the MFA confirmed that:

- EFF funds will not be used to buy quota;
- non-mandatory safety training is eligible for funding;
- winches could be eligible for funding if quality is improved and there is no additional fishing effort, but each case would be looked at on its merits;
- funding could cover Marine Protected Areas but Defra was pursuing these Areas through other work streams.



Lindsay Harris, Defra

The MFA is accepting expressions of interest for EFF funding, and as soon as the European Commission approves the Operational Programme, the MFA will announce the timetable for applications and for holding a grants assessment panel to make grant offers in England as quickly as possible.

📌 You can find out more about EFF grants at www.mfa.gov.uk/grants/grants-eff.htm

New fisheries projects

The MFA has agreed funding for four projects since taking over the running of the Fisheries Challenge Fund from Defra.

The Fund supports projects to improve fisheries management. The 2008/09 projects agreed so far aim:

- to identify the yearly growth and reproductive cycle of mussels in the Kent and Essex Sea Fisheries Committee District to assess the abundance and sustainability of stocks; and also to research and implement best management practice

used by other seed mussel stock managers.

- to tag lobsters, estimate pot densities and landings and examine the effects of a minimum landing size increase on future catch rates of lobster stocks in the Northumberland Sea Fisheries Committee District.
- to find out how effective small Marine Protected Areas are in conserving finfish, including commercially important species, by assessing the impact of a prohibited trawl area off the

Yorkshire coast. The project is also exploring different methods of estimating the abundance of finfish.

- to publish identification cards on skate and ray species to help everyone in the supply chain for these species, Wildlife Officers and recreational anglers. The Shark Trust is working with commercial fishermen, Cefas and other interested groups.

📌 You can find out more about the Fund at www.mfa.gov.uk/grants/grants-fcf.htm

MFA's work – licensing offshore wind farms

Why do wind farms need to be licensed?

Building offshore wind farms can have a major impact on the marine environment so a licence is necessary to ensure that the UK's need for developing renewable energy is integrated with environmental concerns and other activities such as fishing.

What is MFA's role?

The MFA currently issues licences for offshore wind farms under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 and the Coast Protection Act 1949 on behalf of Defra for English and Welsh waters. MFA works closely with the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform which issues electricity licence consents for wind farms. Before MFA issues a licence a full Environmental Impact Assessment must be carried out. This examines the likely effects of the proposed wind farm on the local fishing community and on factors including coastal erosion, wave energy, seabed life, birds, marine mammals and

navigational safety.

The information that developers submit for the Environmental Impact Assessment is subject to a full public consultation. The MFA also directly consults organisations such as Cefas, Natural England, the Maritime Coastguard Agency, National Air Traffic Control and the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations. Most large wind farms take at least 12 months to go through the application process.

What happens next?

If a FEPA licence is issued it can contain specific conditions to protect local fishing interests, for example preventing construction at specific times of year to protect spawning fish.

During the project the developers work with the local community to establish effective communications between the licence holder, contractors, fishermen and other users of the sea. The Government also discusses wind farm construction issues with fishermen through the Fisheries Liaison and



Offshore Wind and Wet Renewables Group (FLOWW) to ensure that the UK plays its part in delivering the European Union's target of 20% of electricity from renewable sources by 2020 with minimum disruption to other activities.

📍 You can see the consultation on the UK Renewable Energy Strategy at www.renewableconsultation.berr.gov.uk

News in Brief

Fisheries grants

Final Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG) grant-aided projects in the south-east of England include new pontoon berths for the inshore fleet at Shoreham harbour. The Port Authority has recently constructed berthing for about 20 under 12 metre vessels. The berths, which have good vehicle access, will be useful

for the resident fleet and boats visiting the port seasonally, particularly for the scallop fishery.

Brighton and Newhaven Fish Sales, also based at Shoreham harbour, has received a FIFG grant for new freezing facilities. The company can now grade scallops and blast freeze them at its premises – adding value to the product. When sufficient quantities are frozen the scallops are transported to

continental customers. This has helped secure jobs in the company, provide a more secure market for the local fleet and offset some of the fuel price increase.

Business plan

The Marine and Fisheries Agency business plan for 2008/09 will be published this summer and you will be able to read it at www.mfa.gov.uk/publications/index.htm

Marine objectives

istockphoto.com



The UK Government, Northern Ireland Assembly and Welsh Assembly Government would like your views on 'Our seas - a shared resource.' This consultation paper sets out our draft high level objectives for our marine vision. The objectives describe the outcomes we're seeking for the UK marine area.

Consulting on these objectives is a key step in developing an integrated Marine Policy Statement for UK waters. Plans for this are included in the draft Marine Bill. The objectives in this

Statement will give a clear steer for planning and decision-making in the marine area, providing a framework to achieve sustainable marine development. They will also underpin the UK approach to negotiation and implementation of European and international marine policy.

📧 Please send your views by 30 September 2008 to Strategic Policy Team, Defra Marine Programme, Area 2E, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR or email: mps@defra.gsi.gov.uk

FishingFocus

Following our invitation for feedback on Fishing Focus in the last issue, we've decided to publish a further four issues. Have you any questions you'd like us to answer in the October issue of Fishing Focus or any comments on this issue? You can email us on fishingfocus@defra.gsi.gov.uk or write to Fishing Focus, Defra Marine Programme, Area 2D Nobel House, 17, Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR. You can read previous issues of Fishing Focus at www.defra.gov.uk/fish/about/index.htm

Under 10 metre fishing boats – consultation

Defra is aiming to enable as many fishermen as possible to operate viably and legally within the under 10 metre quota pool.

In February, we circulated to all licence holders a discussion paper which set out a number of proposals for tackling the current difficulties in the English under 10 metre fleet. The difficulties are due to the imbalance between capacity and available quota in the under 10 metre pool.

We received over 200 responses to the discussion paper, which we summarised in the April 2008 issue of Fishing Focus. Having taken account of these responses, we're now, as promised, providing more detail and analysis of the impacts of the proposals. These proposals will only apply to vessels registered in England and in British Fishery Limits adjacent to England.

By early August we'll be sending a consultation paper to all licence holders and others with an interest in fisheries.

📧 You will be able to read the consultation paper at www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/default.asp

