

The Skipper and Owners of a 25 metre Scallop Dredger Plead Guilty to fishing in the Lyme Bay Marine Protected Area.

On the 25th of August 2015, at Torquay Magistrates Court Mr Leigh R Shields and SRR Trawlers Ltd as the Master and Owners of the fishing vessel Harm Johannes PLN BM 51, pleaded guilty to 8 separate charges relating to fishing activity during a trip in December 2014 that included scallop dredging within The Lyme Bay and Torbay Special Area of Conservation. The Lyme Bay and Torbay Special Area of Conservation is an internationally Important Marine Protected Area.

The prosecution resulted from partnership working between the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities and the Marine Management Organisation. The offences included fishing within an area closed to 'bottom towed fishing' through byelaws of the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority's (IFCAs) of Devon and Severn IFCA and Southern IFCA.

IFCA byelaws ensure that the Lyme Bay and Torbay Special Area of Conservation is protected. The IFCA byelaws prohibit damaging fishing activity on the reefs and corals within that important marine area. The Marine Protected Area is designated because it contains an array of nationally and internationally rare species and habitats which include pink sea fans, sunset and southern cup corals, and fragile sponge communities on rocky reef habitats.

The fishing vessel was 25.40 meters in length and was also therefore too large to fish within 6 nautical miles of the coast as a result of IFCA byelaws which only permit smaller inshore vessels to operate in that area. This combination of byelaws to protect sensitive habitats and byelaws that allow only smaller vessels inshore ensures the protection of our inshore marine environment and the the vibrant coastal fishery in the area.

The IFCAs lead the management of inshore fisheries management in England and work closely with the Marine Management Organisation which has national jurisdiction and further fisheries monitoring responsibilities. The collaboration between the IFCAs and the MMO ensured that further offences relating to failure to transmit 'electronic logbook' data were also considered by the Magistrates.

The Master and Owner also pleaded guilty to failure to maintain in operation an Automatic Identification System (AIS), a system required on vessels of this size and which monitors the movements of large vessel. The data gathered from a separate monitoring system known as a Vessel Monitoring System, which uses satellites to track all large fishing vessels, was important in bringing this case to court.

As Master of the vessel Mr Leigh R Shields was fined £800 and ordered to pay costs of £1600 with a victim surcharge £120 and as owners SRR Trawlers Ltd were fined £3200 with costs of £6400 and a victim surcharge of £120.

Ends.

Notes;

the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities 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”.

The Devon and Severn and Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority’s are two of the ten IFCAs whose jurisdictions cover the entire coastline of England.

The 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.

Further information

For further information on the IFCA please contact Southern IFCA on 01202 721373 or robert.clark@southern-ifca.gov.uk or Devon and Severn IFCA on 01803 854648

Or visit our websites at

www.southern-ifca.gov.uk

<http://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/marine-management-organisation>

