

£13 K fine – The cost of illegal fishing

Master and Owners of a 13.1 metre scallop dredger plead guilty to six offences of fishing in the closed season

Illegal fishing is proving to be an expensive business. On the 13th March 2017, at Torquay Magistrates Court Mr David Parry, Eric McLeod and Andrew McLeod as the Master and Owners of the fishing vessel Providing Star FD 366 pleaded guilty to six charges of scallop dredging in prohibited areas.

In July and August 2016 to the East of Lundy Island within the Devon and Severn District, the vessel dredged for scallops during the closed season. The Master and Owners were order to pay a total of £12,772 which included costs.

Deputy Chief Officer Mat Mander said after the case; *“The scallop fishery is one of the most important fisheries within the D&SIFCA District. Up to 80 local and visiting scallop boats rely on the inshore scallop beds for part of their income. The Authority uses a range of management measures to support the scallop fishery including a seasonal closure to protect the scallop beds during the main spawning season, July to September”.*

“The Authority introduced a Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw in 2014. The permits that we issue clearly set out the conditions of use for the fishermen. The undermining of the Authority’s management through this type of illegal activity threatens the sustainability of the inshore scallop beds and has an adverse financial impact on the majority of the fleet that abides by the regulation”.

VMS data – D&SIFCA on track towards a fully monitored fishery

This case was the sixth time in the last three years where the D&SIFCA has relied completely on Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) data and catch information to secure successful convictions in the Magistrates’ courts.

Chief Officer Tim Robbins said; *“From an early stage, D&SIFCA has recognised the developing role that VMS data offers for future fisheries management and enforcement. All IFCA’s are committed to exploring the better use of technology and the use of gear in, gear out technology is another initiative being considered for future use to manage mobile fishing activity. D&SIFCA is in the process of applying under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund for a grant that would allow for the purchase and installation of Inshore VMS units on board all of the under 12 metre fleet that uses towed fishing gears in the Authority’s district. If the bid is successful, D&SIFCA will introduce a requirement, though the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw, for all vessels (including the over 12 metre vessels) to provide VMS data every ten minutes whilst in the district. The data from the units will be sent via the mobile phone network providing a low cost, high resolution, vessel monitoring system”.*