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**An Insight into the Fisheries throughout the District of the  
Authority's predecessor body  
Northumberland Sea Fisheries Committee  
in 2010**



**Chief Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Officer  
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# INTRODUCTION

**On 1 April 2011** the Northumberland Sea Fisheries Committee (NSFC) was replaced by Northumberland Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority (NIFCA) pursuant to the Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009. The new Authority's duties include continuing with the previous work and statutory requirements and byelaws of the former NSFC and is reflected in this document where reference to 'NSFC' will now cover NIFCA.

This document therefore gives an insight into the fisheries throughout the NSFC district in its final calendar year 2010 and which will continue to be managed and regulated by NIFCA and its Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Officers (IFCOs). It also gives an introduction to the areas of the coast and communities in Northumberland and North Tyneside where commercial fishing activity is based. The importance of commercial fishing in these communities, not just to the fishermen and their families but also to associated businesses, the wider community and tourism should not be underestimated. The vision of the IFCA 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" is obviously of significance to these fishing communities.

Any enquiries regarding this document or generally can be addressed to NIFCA (details shown on the front cover).

Further information including on the precise boundaries of NIFCA is also available on the NIFCA (the Authority) website [www.nifca.gov.uk](http://www.nifca.gov.uk).

# FISHING ACTIVITY

There are approximately 44 local trawlers working from 4 ports in the NSFC/NIFCA district, approximately 30 of these are under 10 metre trawlers, the remainder are over 10 metres.



In the last 5 years the trawl fleet has become ever more reliant on the local prawn (nephrops) fishery, which is now the fleet's principal fishery. The local fishery takes place between 3-25 miles offshore with best catches being seen during the autumn and winter months. When the fishery is at its height it also attracts a large number of visiting trawlers from Scotland, Northern Ireland and other English ports. The majority of the visiting trawlers are larger and more powerful than the local boats and most also

use more than one net (multi rigged), and these combined factors enable them to work further offshore in most weather conditions and, because they are towing 2-3 nets, they can potentially catch more prawns, which can be an issue between the locals and visitors. Byelaw 14 was introduced by NSFC to restrict any fishing boat from "multi rigging, pair trawling and pair seining" inside the NIFCA district (6 mile limit). In the summer months a number of smaller under 10 metre boats from North Shields, Blyth and Amble move up to the Firth of Forth to target the summer prawns, normally working daylight and darkness throughout the week and coming home at weekends. The remaining under 10 metre boats and the larger local trawlers tend to work further offshore in the summer when the weather is usually finer, targeting both white fish and prawns, however 2010 was a poor year as the boats did not have the required quota and by all accounts there were plenty of whiting on the grounds this year. The Authority also restricts the size of trawlers which can fish within its district, e.g. between 0-3 miles vessels allowed to trawl must be below 11.59 metres and have a trawling permit. No vessels over 24 metres are allowed to trawl within any part of the district, and at the present time there are approximately 115 local and visiting boats with permits to trawl within the 3 mile limit. No vessel can Purse Seine Net or Ring Net within the Committee's district and any vessels dredging within the Authority's district are restricted to no more than 10 dredges in total.

## Static Gear

### Potting



Throughout the district potting is the main fishing method from the static fleet. Pots, creels, traps and cages are used to fish for lobsters, brown crabs, velvet crabs and some for nephrops at various times of the year. Most fishermen use either single or double-eyed pots, most being parlour pots. The lobster season normally starts in June and is at its peak in August and September. In the summer when the fishermen have their pots very close inshore they are also able to catch large numbers of velvet crabs which used to

be considered pests by fishermen but have now become an important marketable product.

By October lobsters start to become scarce and due to the unsettled weather most fishermen start to either reduce or take all their pots out of the water. The fishermen who continue to pot usually move their pots offshore to target brown crabs throughout the winter and into spring. In the last 5 years there has been an increase in the number of fishermen who have invested in prawn pots which they tend to work further offshore, just on the edge of the hard ground, where they can catch very good quality large nephrops which are kept alive by putting them into individual tubes (to stop them fighting with each other). These fetch a very good price from the wholesalers who in turn export them all over the world.

The Authority operates a Shellfish Permit Scheme and all fishermen who want to pot within the Committee's district have to apply for a Shellfish Permit and they are only entitled to a permit if they have a National Shellfish Entitlement. The Authority also has Byelaw 15 Pot Limitations (introduced June 2009) which restricts the amount of pots each individual boat can work within the Authority's district to 800 pots, creels, traps and cages and all pots have to be marked with a yellow tag issued by the Authority. Part-time/hobby fishermen with unregistered boats or persons working from the shore are restricted to 5 pots which also have to be fitted with a white tag issued by the Authority and each hobby fisherman is restricted to landing not more than 1 lobster, 5 crabs, 20 whelks or 5 prawns per day.

## Gillnets

One of the biggest differences, not seen for a number of years in 2010 was an increase in the amount of codling early in the year being landed by boats which were gillnetting. During February approximately 6-7 boats from Blyth to the Tyne worked gillnets on favourable days, and had catches of between 2-12 boxes of codling per landing. Unfortunately most only had quota for a ton during the month and almost all had reached that point before the month ended, however a number of bass were being taken as by-catch. More quotas were available in March, but by then there no fish to be caught and fishermen reverted to potting. The same problems remained for the next few months with low quota when catches of codling improved.

The main time of the year when fisherman normally set their nets is between September to March when they target cod. In the summer months some fishermen will set their nets to catch flat fish, which they use to supplement their pot bait. Also in the summer a number of fishermen hand-line for mackerel but once they have used up their quota will retain the rest for pot bait.

# MUSSEL REPORT SUMMARY 2010

Deputy Chief Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Officer (Environmental) J. Green

## Annual Mussel Survey Fenham Flats, Holy Island

The mussel bed on Fenham Flats was visited at low water on a spring tide on 3rd March 2010, when the outer edges of the bed were mapped using the tracking facility of a hand-held GPS. The mussel bed was found to occupy an area of 36.28 hectares, up slightly on the area in 2009 when it was 34.43 hectares, but still down on previous years in 2008 when it was 36.72 hectares, 37.18 hectares in 2007 and 41.52 hectares in 2006.



Within this mussel bed mussels were found to occupy 78.41% up from the 72.1% in 2009 but similar to the 2 previous years which were 78.58% 2008 and the 79.81% of the ground in 2007 but above the 60.44% in 2006. The mean biomass per square metre was 12.72kg/m<sup>2</sup> similar to last

year's 12.51kg/m<sup>2</sup> but down from the high in 2008 of 16.41 kg/m<sup>2</sup> but still significantly up from the 10.52 kg/m<sup>2</sup> in 2007 and the 7.467 kg/m<sup>2</sup> in 2006. The mean density per square metre was 1323 mussels/m<sup>2</sup> up slightly from the two previous year's 1162 mussels/m<sup>2</sup> similar to the 2008 result of 1173 mussels/m<sup>2</sup> again significantly up from the 651 mussels/m<sup>2</sup> in 2007 and 536 mussels/m<sup>2</sup> in 2006. From these figures the total tonnage of mussel biomass was calculated to be 4614 which is an increase from the 4307 tonnes in 2009 and still down from the 2008 high of 6022 tonnes but remaining up from the 3911 tonnes in 2007 and the 3101 tonnes in 2006.

The total population estimated at 486 million which to date is the highest since surveying began. It is significantly up on the 2009 estimate of 396 million and indeed even the previous high recorded in 2008 with a population of 431 million, and over double the population estimates for 2007 and 2006 being 242 million mussels and 222 million mussels respectively.

While there has been a slight increase in biomass there continues to be a significant reduction in percentage of commercially sized mussels. This decline in commercially sized mussels was predicted in 2008 and 2009. With 2 strong year classes showing in the 2010 of mussels below 45mm commercial quantities of mussels for the next few years should be good.

The 2010 survey estimates that there are between 2005 tonnes and 3222 tonnes of commercially sized mussels depending on the minimum sized used (55 mm and 45 mm respectively).

The survey was undertaken by the NSFC fishery officers with the assistance of Catherine Scott from Natural England.

A full report of this and previous surveys can be found at [www.nifca.gov.uk](http://www.nifca.gov.uk)

# LOBSTER V-NOTCHING REPORT

The lobster v-notching programme was started in 2000 by NSFC and is now in its eleventh year. 1246 mature egg bearing females were v-notched and returned back to the fishery in 2010.



A v-notch takes at least two castings (approximately 2 years) to grow out, thus enabling each notched female to potentially release two clutches of eggs before being eligible for capture again. Lobsters grow by shedding their hard exoskeleton, a process known as Ecdysis or moulting. During each moult the carapace (body) length typically increases by 10-15%. A large female lobster can produce 20,000 eggs, which they carry for 11 months, though survival rates for juveniles can be as low as 1 in 20,000. It

is difficult to assess precisely the number of offspring that will be produced as survival rates are governed by a large range of factors. The release programme for notched lobsters takes place in the summer, normally beginning in July which is the time when newly moulted egg-bearing females come out of their holes and feeding is abundant.

In order to protect v-notched lobsters, the committee has a byelaw (Byelaw 6) prohibiting the landing of v-notched lobsters. It is also an offence to land “a mutilated lobster”, meaning removal of any part of a lobster tail that could disguise its v-notch. V-notching is carried out on alternate Uropods (inner tail flap) adjacent to the Telson (centre flap) every year. One year on the left, the next on the right and so on. This enables the Authority to broadly identify the rate of notch loss yearly.

Since the start of the scheme positive feedback is received from throughout the district from fishermen who claim that the number of immature lobsters has increased which bodes well for the future of the fisheries, since the main purpose for the v-notching scheme is to maintain and enhance a healthy lobster stock within the Authority district.

For a number of years NSFC used two wholesalers for the supply of lobsters, one is in the northern part of the district and one in the south as without their kind participation the scheme would not be possible. The wholesalers take time to sort and maintain the given amount of berried females in their holding tanks in excellent condition for the officers to collect for re-release, for which the wholesalers get very little recognition. The scheme is funded from a variety of sources; including donations from local fishermen and, sometimes, local organisations.

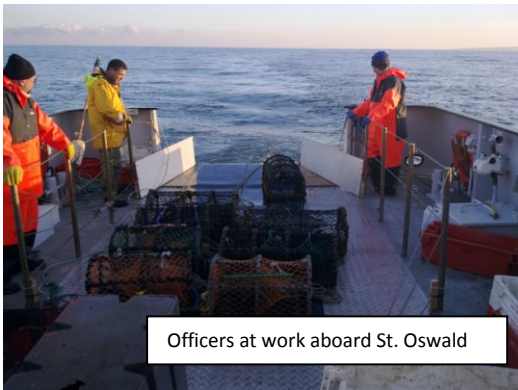
To summarise activity in 2010, 1246 mature egg bearing female lobsters were released on various suitable grounds throughout the Northumberland district. A total of 16 separate release sites were used throughout the district’s 5 v-notching sub sectors on 7 separate patrols, using either the St. Oswald patrol vessel, or the smaller shore-based RIB, Bravo 1.

# **LOBSTER AND CRAB SURVEY**

## **Assessment of Edible Crabs and Velvet Crabs in the Northumberland Fishery: Establishment of Local Lobster (*Homarus gammarus*) Population:**

**A joint project undertaken by 2 MPhil students from Newcastle University, funded by Natural England with contributions in kind from the NSFC. The above 2 projects were undertaken at the same time during November and December 2010.**

**Reports for these projects are not yet available (as of May 2011) but will be posted on the Authority website as soon as possible.**



The edible (brown) crab fishery is not as lucrative as the local lobster fishery but at certain times of year is of importance to the local fishery. The velvet crab fishery has become more important in recent years and is often caught as bycatch when fishing close inshore for lobsters. On a local basis little is known about the population dynamics of either of these crab species and it is hoped this project will address some of the lack of knowledge. The project will also seek to describe the Northumberland crab fishery and provide a first step in mapping

potting distribution and density based on NSFC data. Additional information was collected in the field using mark and recapture data obtained using commercial fishing pots operated from the Authority's patrol vessel St. Oswald with the intention of supplying some baseline information on population dynamics.

Lobster is the main target species for inshore vessels working out of the local ports throughout Northumberland, the main season runs from July through to January with catch rates falling as the season progresses (fall catch rate offset by rising prices). This main aim of this project was to provide small-scale data describing local lobster population and movements within the fisheries. It will accomplish in a similar manner the crab project, but will also rely on previous joint studies undertaken by Garside et al. (2003) and Turner et al (2009).

During the mark and recapture process of these projects additional research took place aboard the St. Oswald by undergraduates

## MACROCONSUMER PROJECT

The aim of this project has been to build on previous work by Newcastle University along the Yorkshire Coast by systematically exploring the advantages and disadvantages of different gears in describing the spatial variation in macroconsumer (fish, crustaceans etc.) biodiversity along the NE coast of England.

The work investigated the relationship between point and trawl data in the southern part of the NSFC district with the following objectives:

1. Are trawl and point count data equally good at describing spatial variation in macroconsumer species diversity?
2. How do trawl and point data relate to each other, and what are the implications for alternative survey designs and counts?
3. Are point data more likely to detect fine-scale diversity associations with particular habitats or combinations?

When completed, a full report of this project will be placed on the Authority website.

## EUROPEAN MARINE SITE

Commercial fishing within the site has generally been restricted to potting for shellfish, principally lobster, brown crab, velvet crab and to a lesser degree nephrops. One boat from Berwick has on occasion also used tangle nets to target lobster. Other fishing methods employed in the EMS have included salmon nets during the summer season and scallop dredging by 2 visiting vessels north of the Farne islands on a handful of occasions.

### Miscellaneous Research

On 27 November 2008 the Committee's assisted Jon Hlland from CEFAS in obtaining quantities of Green Crab (*Carcinus maenas*) from 2 local fishermen (1 from Berwick and 1 from North Shields). The green crabs were needed for a project to establish levels of the disease "white spot" in this species of crab.

# SOUTHERN SECTOR OF THE NSFC/NIFCA DISTRICT (NORTH SHIELDS TO AMBLE)

## Approximate number of local boats working from this sector of the district in 2010:

**28 Boats Trawling**

**27 Boats Potting**

**11 Salmon Boats**

**Approximate number of fishermen employed: -140**

As well as all the local trawlers, in the winter months a number of visiting trawlers arrived at North Shields and Blyth to target the winter prawn fishery. In the past there have been up to 130 visiting trawlers (the majority twin rigging and some triple rigging) from Northern Ireland, the West Coast and Scotland.

Deputy Chief Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Officer Mark Southerton is the main point of contact for the southern sector of the district, with the assistance of other officers.

## Overview

The Southern Sector covers approximately 20 miles of coastline, most of which is made up of a number of sandy bays with rocky outcrops in between. Starting at the south of Druridge Bay with the small village of Cresswell, this station leading on to Newbiggin by the Sea, Wansbeck, and Blyth harbour, Seaton Sluice, Cullercoats and finally North Shields the most Southerly port in the entire district.

Commercial fishing methods are mostly potting, netting and trawling.

## NORTH SHIELDS

### Trawlers

The port of North Shields has been in decline over the last few years especially from the trawling fleet based here. Decommissioning, poor autumn/winter prawn fisheries and quota problems have reduced the fleet to around 12 vessels, half of which are under 10,



half over 10 metres. One of these vessels was lost in 2010 after a collision with a North Sea ferry while fishing off St Abbs tragically resulting in the death of one crewman and another being pulled from the sea.

The main fishing opportunities are from the local autumn winter prawn fishery, with the 2009/2010 season being an improvement on the last three seasons which were the worst for a long time. The fleet is then divided with some boats fishing on the west coast of Scotland,

again targeting prawn fisheries, while others fish on the Firth of Forth grounds from Eyemouth and Port Seaton depending on the fishing. A small number of boats remain at North Shields and multi day fish from offshore grounds like Dab Hole or the Silver Pits where prawn catches are supplemented with whitefish, mostly haddock, whiting and cod. By late summer most boats are usually back at North Shields waiting for the prawn season to begin from October onwards. The 2010/11 autumn/winter prawn fishery has again been a let-down, as the season again started late and it was almost mid November before prawns were being landed in any quantity. A prolonged spell of poor weather in December also reduced time spent at sea and catches were poor on days boats could put to sea. The West Quay has undergone structural improvements during the year and this work was completed by the end of the year.

## Potting



There are 5 potting boats working from North Shields Fish Quay and a further 3 boats working from the Royal Quays Marina. At the start of the year most of these boats will have their pots further offshore targeting mainly brown crabs and the odd lobster. By spring most of the fishermen take their boats out of the water to paint before the busy summer months. The start of June saw an increase in activity as most of the fishermen had started to put all their pots back into the sea ready for the lobsters to crawl. This year they didn't start catching large numbers of lobsters until the end of July,

however once the lobsters did come out of their holes all the boats were having some very good daily landings. This continued throughout August and September, with a number of fishermen saying how many small lobsters they were seeing on the grounds and also how many good-sized lobsters they were catching. By October landings of lobsters had dropped dramatically and most fishermen once again moved their pots further offshore to protect them from the weather and also to target the brown crabs. All the fishermen have commented on the amount of newly cast or white crabs being caught and returned to the sea, hopefully these will harden up to catch and land early next year. A couple of fishermen also put prawn pots in over the winter months and were catching large good quality nephrops, which they keep alive, and put in separate tubes, as they can command a very good price from the wholesalers, who export them to Europe and America.

## Salmon/Sea Trout

There are 4 boats from here which either drift or set beach nets for salmon and sea trout. The fishermen who set T-nets work at the back of the South Tyne Pier (NEIFCA District) and they take their turns throughout the week. One of these fishermen, when not at the pier, along with two other fishermen have drift net licences and tend to work between Souter Point and Marconi Point targeting both salmon and trout. The fishermen who have beach licences tend to wait till the 1<sup>st</sup> June when they are allowed to catch and land salmon along with the drift net fishermen. All in all 2010 was one of the best years they have seen for a very long time.

## CULLERCOATS

Cullercoats Haven has only two commercial vessels, both of which are beach-launched and



fish for lobsters and brown crabs. one of these vessels also has a salmon licence for driftnetting and a T-Net licence for the back of the South Pier. Most potting activity is inshore around the Cullercoats/Whitley Bay area with most activity seen over the summer months targeting lobsters. The vessel licensed to fish for salmon tends to land all pots prior to the salmon season starting and pursuing this fishery until the close of the season at the end of August before fishing pots again. One vessel fished gillnets when catches improved, as like the other stations this year it was netting catches which had been reasonable at

the start of the year and this fishery was pursued for a short period.

There is also a small boat park that uses this station for recreational fishing either pots or angling. A number of divers also frequent this area, more so over the summer months when conditions are more suitable either from boat or from the shore and this activity is also common from St Mary's Island which a number of club divers use. This area is also popular with divers learning the sport using the shelter that the island gives.

## WHITLEY BAY/SEATON SLUICE

There is a small boat compound at Whitley Bay where a number of recreational/hobby fishermen keep their small boats. These normally only go to sea in the summer months and in the finer weather. Most are mainly angling but a couple also have up to 5 pots in. Access to Seaton Sluice harbour is limited to around 2 hours either side of high tide and as a result



only one boat fishes commercially from this station, fishing around ten months of the year before landing pots before the worst of the winter weather. Main species landed are lobster and brown crab, and gill nets are occasionally set when catches are more favourable or to supplement pot bait. A number of angling boats also work from this station during the finer months some of which also work pots on a hobby basis. There are a number of reefs to the

south of the harbour including St Mary's Island and Whitley Bay which are popular for hobby fishermen setting pots from the shore. Also shellfish gathering from these rocks is common, especially over spring tides. A little bait digging is seen from these areas also mostly late summer onwards while bait collecting for green crab is mostly seen from May to August.

# BLYTH

## Trawlers

Blyth is the biggest port for commercial fishing in the Southern Sector. The trawling fleet consists of around 14 under ten-metre boats and two over ten metres, four of these boats



are also rigged for potting depending on catches. Fishing is mostly targeted towards the nephrop fishery during the summer months with around half of these boats travelling north to Eyemouth and other ports around the Firth of Forth fishing daily for nephrops on local grounds. The greatest problem this year for under 10 metre vessels was the lack of quota for whiting which is the prime species landed during the summer months. The remaining under 10 m boats normally fish locally going out daily when catches are most worthwhile. One vessel worked scallop dredges for a short period working from

Amble, while fishing off Dunstanburgh although unfortunately poor meat content limited this fishery to only a few weeks duration. The two larger trawlers from here were multi day fishing during the summer months from grounds further offshore. All boats returned to their home ports by September, for when catches of prawns increase during the autumn/winter fishery usually beginning from October onwards. The local fleet increases when visiting trawlers from Ireland, West and East Scotland fish locally and there were around 30 visiting trawlers using Blyth for the 2009/2010 seasons.

## Potting

Blyth has around 11 potting boats that have actively fished during the year, fishing for mostly lobster, brown crab and velvet crabs. One or two boats have also fished prawn creels and there was a brief spell early in the year when gill netting was pursued after good catches of codling were being reported. Unfortunately lack of quota for cod resulted in nets going back onto the quayside and potting resumed. Nets were fished when quota allowed during the following months although catches weren't as good as earlier in the year.



The summer lobster fishery was in full swing from mid-July onwards and fishermen have again commented on another good season with prices not falling as much as they had earlier feared.

As the season slowed into October a few of the bigger boats worked offshore where brown crab catches improved especially after unsettled sea conditions brought on by the first winter storms.

## Salmon/Sea Trout

Blyth also has a number of salmon licence holders fishing from the port with 2 salmon drift netters and around 4 beach netters. Fishing for sea trout began at the end of April with only the odd few single fish landed, however catches picked up during May and when conditions were favourable between 200-300 fish were taken from Blyth Beach. This good fishing continued throughout the season. Salmon can be landed from 1<sup>st</sup> June to 31<sup>st</sup> August and by all accounts it has been a very good year. The only real complaint from fisherman was the vast swathes of jellyfish experienced during the summer months meant challenging conditions at times. Fishermen commented on the lack of seals they have seen this year, especially around their nets.



## WANSBECK

No commercial fishing takes place from this station, as access is too restrictive with only an hour or so either side of high tide. There is a small boat park on the south side of the river with most activity seen over the summer months mostly boat fishing in the surrounding area.

## NEWBIGGIN BY THE SEA



The coastal town of Newbiggin by the Sea has seen a decline in commercial fishing in the last few years with only three commercial potting boats actively fishing. This station is made up of traditional coble boats that are beach launched by tractor. The main fishing methods are inshore potting for lobster and crab, two of these boats also work prawn pots after the main summer lobster fishery. Numbers of pots worked are between 150-450. Between June and August another coble fishes from this station, and is the one drift net salmon licence left fishing from Newbiggin. The town benefited

from a 10 million pound scheme back in 2007, which included a new breakwater and recharging the beach with 500,000 tonnes of new sand as well as improvements to the promenade and the UK's first offshore sculpture as well as numerous other enhancements.

A small boat park next to the lifeboat station is well used in the summer months with anglers and a number of hobby fishermen working up to 5 pots each around this area. The shore is also well used for hobby fishermen setting pots although this tends to be during the summer months especially. Shore gathering for lobster and periwinkles is also common during spring tides.

The area is also very popular with shore fishing during the summer months, mostly spinning off the rocks for mackerel, pollock and saithe while during winter the beaches and rock marks are mostly fished after heavy seas for cod. Tragically an angler died after fishing from cliffs during an extremely bad spell of weather in January. Sea fishing again made the headlines in March for the wrong reasons as another angler was drowned whilst evening fishing at Cambois during heavy seas.

## CRESSWELL

This once popular natural haven has no commercial fishermen working from the beach; the main activity is from a small boat park with tractor-launched recreational anglers fishing mostly over the summer months. The area is popular with families rock pooling and shore gathering, mainly over the bigger tides and mainly for periwinkles and occasionally lobsters. From autumn onwards the area is busy with bait digging over big tides, this area is also popular with shore anglers again mostly from autumn throughout the winter mostly for cod and whiting, however anglers are seen during the summer months fishing for flatfish and bass from the beaches.

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## NORTHERN SECTOR OF THE DISTRICT (AMBLE TO BERWICK)

Approximate number of local boats working from the northern sector of the district in 2010

14 Boats Trawling

56 Boats Potting

8 Salmon Boats

Approximate number of fishermen employed: - 130

Fishery Officer Darren Graham is the main point of contact for the Northern Sector of the district, with the assistance of other officers.

### Overview

The Northern Sector covers approximately 41 miles of coastline starting at Amble, a busy port for both trawlers and potting boats all year round. Heading north from Amble there is the small village of Alnmouth (which only has recreational boats), then Boulmer, Craster, Low Newton, Beadnell, Seahouses, Holy Island and Berwick upon Tweed which is the most northerly port before the English/Scottish Border. There are also a number of Scottish boats which work out of 2 Scottish ports, Burnmouth and Eyemouth, situated just over the border, and which fish within the Northumberland District.

Commercial fishing methods are mostly potting, netting, trawling and dredging.

# AMBLE



Amble Potting Boats in Port

Amble is one of the largest ports with regard to the amount of commercial fishing boats in the Northumberland district. It has a mixed fishery with the majority of local smaller boats potting for shellfish (all year round). It is also home to a number of inshore local trawlers, most being under 10 metres. In the summer months licensed fishermen target migratory fish, salmon and sea trout and between 26<sup>th</sup> March and 31<sup>st</sup> August, some driftnet and some use set beach nets (depending on licence). There are also a number of hobby/recreational fishermen who use the Marina or launch

their boats from the public slip and set up to 5 pots during the summer months. The finer weather in the summer months also sees a couple of charter boats and some of the local fishermen take angling parties out normally at the weekends or early evening.

## Trawlers

There are approximately 12 local trawlers working from Amble, 10 under 10 metres and 2 over. As with other ports in the Authority's district the main effort for all the trawl fleet is the prawn fishery, which normally starts in the autumn and carries on through to March. At that



Under 10m Local Trawler

time of year the trawlers tend to work daily leaving the port early in the morning and returning early evening, working between 3-15 miles offshore (weather and tide permitting). The 2 larger boats have the capability to work further offshore if they need to. In the summer months in particular the boats tend to work further offshore targeting both white fish and prawns or move up north fishing from Eyemouth or Port Seaton (targeting the summer prawn fishery). The boats which remained in Amble in 2010 had it tough, with quotas restricting how much white fish they can catch when they are at sea, with

some boats catching all their quota in the first two weeks then having to tie up for the rest of the month. In late summer all boats returned to their home ports to fish locally for prawns and whiting over the winter.

## Potting

Up to 17 boats were potting from this station in 2010. The start of the year saw most fishermen move their pots further offshore to target brown crab and also to protect their pots from the rough winter seas. A few boats also fished prawn pots which they tend to set further offshore between 2-6 miles on the edge of rocky ground where they hope to catch



Under 10m Potter off Coquet Island

good quality prawns which are graded and put in tubes (this stops them fighting and damaging themselves) keeping them live, these fetch top prices from the wholesalers with most being exported. By June all the potting boats start putting in up to 800 pots (the majority work between 250 – 500 pots) back in the sea waiting for the lobsters to appear. This year the lobsters were slightly later than in previous years - not appearing until the mid/end of July, however when they did appear all the boats were having some very good days, landing anywhere from 50 to 200 lobsters per day. By October and the

start of the colder weather, landings of lobsters had dropped dramatically and boats once again started to move offshore to target brown crabs. Throughout the year boats also target velvet crabs when they are working close inshore, however this year hasn't been as good as previous years with landings down. A number of boats in the summer also targeted mackerel using hand lines catching some excellent quality fish but once again they were restricted by quota so ended up using most they caught for pot bait.

Most of the fishermen have commented that a lot of juvenile lobsters have been seen, which is a good indication that the lobster v-notching scheme in the district is working and this is greatly helped by the support and donations given by the fishermen from Amble.

## Salmon/Sea Trout

There are currently 2 boats, which hold drift net licences, and 6 boats, which hold a beach net licence to target salmon and trout in the summer months. The beach net licence starts on the 26<sup>th</sup> March whereby the fishermen are allowed to catch sea trout but have to return any salmon they catch back to the sea (hopefully still alive) and this year they had a very good start to the season. On the 1<sup>st</sup> June the drift net fishermen started and once again this was an excellent year with all fishermen saying it's been one of the best years they have had for a very long time, the season closed on the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2010.

## **BOULMER**



Traditional Coble

There are 3 local boats working out of here throughout the year - their main fishery is potting for lobsters and crabs, which they prosecute most of the year. In the winter months they tend to work their pots further offshore up to 8 miles off targeting brown crabs. In the summer from June onwards they start to move pots further inshore (a number of pots are landed while they are fishing for salmon and trout) for the lobster season to begin and they will keep their pots close inshore

until the weather breaks normally around October time when once again they will shift offshore. These 3 fishermen and 1 other also have beach net licences which they use from the 26<sup>th</sup> March till 31<sup>st</sup> August and mainly target sea trout using “T” nets in the Alnmouth Bay area and this year has been very good by all accounts.

## CRASTER



Potter & Charter Boat

There are 2 boats which work from here all year round; the same family owns both boats. In the winter months they tend to only use one of the boats to target the lobsters and crabs. However in the summer months when the lobsters are at their height they will use both boats. In the summer months they will also use one of these boats to take fishing parties out and as they have such a good reputation are normally fully booked throughout the summer from fishing parties from all over the country. Due to the nature of the sea bed being hard ground just off Craster they work

their pots both inshore and further offshore targeting both lobsters and crabs and, by the amount they have been seen landing, have had a good year.

## NEWTON

Only one licensed boat works from here and only in the summer months from June–September. By the time the rougher weather appears this fisherman takes his small boat out of the water for the rest of the year. Throughout the summer months he tends to work a small amount of pots around the Newton area, not venturing very far due to the size of his boat. Also in the summer Newton Bay normally fills up with a number of recreational boats which are not eligible to have a shellfish permit but can apply and have done so for 5 tags entitling them to put up to 5 pots in. All were aware of the byelaw regarding what they can land and regular checks confirm they are complying.

## BEADNELL



Potting & Salmon/Trout Boats

Beadnell has 3 fulltime boats which are all involved in potting throughout the year targeting both lobsters and brown crabs. As with other ports catches of lobsters are more prolific throughout the summer months when they are able to move their pots closer inshore. By the end of the autumn they move their pots further offshore and target brown crabs. There are also 3 fishermen who hold beach net licences, 2 normally work close to Beadnell in the bay and the other tends to work down beside Newton but they all mainly catch sea trout between 26<sup>th</sup> March and 31<sup>st</sup> August.

## SEAHOUSES

The trawl fleet has dropped to only 3 boats, 1 over 10 metres and 2 under 10 metres (the 2 under 10 metres boats also pot) and are also rigged for scallop dredging, which is



sometimes carried out in the summer months. In the winter the 2 smaller boats will also sometime try their trawls for prawns in the Farne Deeps, depending on catches. The over 10 metre trawler very rarely fishes in Northumberland as it tends to work up in Scotland or round the west coast targeting both white fish and prawns, returning in late summer for the prawn fishery.

There are now 12 boats working pots from this port throughout the year targeting lobsters, brown crabs and velvet crabs. The seasonal trend is that they tend to work their pots further offshore in the winter months targeting

brown crab and in the summer they move all their pots close inshore for the lobsters. However one boat tends to work approximately 2-4 miles further off the Farne Islands pretty much by himself where he targets both lobsters and crabs. A couple of boats also have some prawn pots, which they tend to put in in the winter months working them further off up to 20 miles from port. This year has been a good year for lobsters with a number of fishermen saying they have seen plenty of juvenile lobsters in catches which is a good sign and, once again, without donations from the fishermen here it would be difficult for the Authority to continue as successfully with the v-notching scheme.

A couple of commercial boats are chartered out to take angling parties normally at weekends or early evening, especially during the finer summer months. Although the area still has a big influx of divers throughout the summer months, numbers have dropped from previous years. The officers throughout the summer during evenings and at weekends at sea as well as on land carry out regular checks. Most of the divers spoken to are aware of the Authority's byelaws regarding what they are entitled to land and most say they wouldn't take any shellfish, some also say that they are members of diving clubs and their clubs forbid them from taking any shellfish.

## HOLY ISLAND

The island is home to 6 fulltime potting boats, which target mainly lobsters, brown crabs and velvet crabs all year round with each boat working between 300–800 pots. Pots are usually



worked on the grounds closer to the shore in the summer months until autumn and then moved further offshore into deeper water in the winter when the brown crabs become more prolific. Lobster catches at the start of the spring were seasonally low like other ports, however by the middle of July they started to pick up and they had a very good lobster season. Landings of lobsters started to drop by the end of October and the fishermen started to move their pots further offshore. There are 2 fishermen with a

salmon and sea trout licence on the island and by all accounts they had a good season.

## BERWICK



This year sadly saw the loss of one of its better-known fisherman who passed away early in the year. The remaining 7 boats working out of here have all been working pots, targeting both lobsters and brown crab. Like all the other ports fishermen tended to target lobsters in the summer/autumn and then move further offshore in the winter/spring to target the brown crabs. Landings in the summer for lobsters have been good with most boats going to sea whenever the weather permitted. The boats here work between 200-600 pots throughout the year. In the summer months a number of boats also hand-line for mackerel, which they use

for pot bait and some even salt some down for the winter months.

## BURNMOUTH/EYEMOUTH



The Authority district also has 7 boats from outside the district from Burnmouth and Eyemouth which are permitted to fish in the Northumberland district. They tend to work some of their pots in Scotland and some as far down as Holy Island targeting both lobsters and brown crabs.

## RECREATIONAL/HOBBY FISHERMEN

There are also a large number of pleasure craft working from various harbours and rivers throughout the Authority's district, most of which recreationally fish over the summer months, with a number of these also working pots on a hobby basis. Boat fishing is always popular over the summer months and the main species caught are cod, ling, saithe and mackerel. In addition a number of full-time fishermen supplement their income by taking fishing parties out either after they have been to sea and hauled their pots early in the evening or at weekends.

Shore fishing is generally popular throughout the year and summer attracts good numbers of anglers spinning from the piers for mackerel and beach fishing for flatfish and bass. Winter fishing is very popular in this area as anglers fish mostly for cod and activity takes place from piers, rock marks and beaches.

Throughout the year there are a number of 'cleekers' (shore gatherers who go onto the rocks and look for lobsters with a long pole with a hook on the end, normally when there are big

tides) up and down the Committee's district going down at any outcrop of rocks searching in rock pools for lobsters. Officers tend to target these when there are big tides at all the known hot spots, these inspections can be carried out through the week and especially at weekends and bank holidays. Also in the summer months up and down the Committee's coast line numerous divers appear and regular checks are carried out on both shore and boat divers with most being aware of the Committees Byelaws regarding what they are entitled to land and most saying as they are members of Dive Clubs they have club rules forbidding them from taking any shellfish from the sea.

## ST. OSWALD, DELTA 1 AND BRAVO 1

### St. Oswald

The Authority's Patrol Vessel St .Oswald, was built, at Hepworth's Shipyard at Paul on the river Humber in 2001 after being commissioned by NSFC. It is a 21 metre steel-constructed



vessel with a 6.08 metre beam and a 3.04 metre draught, gross tonnage 60.41. The vessel is powered by twin Caterpillar 3406E Engines which at 2,100 revs develop 520 kW giving a top speed on trials of 13.5 knots. Whilst on normal patrols the engines are run at between 17.50 to 18.50 revs allowing the vessel to cruise at an economical speed of approximately 11–12 knots. Since taking delivery of the St Oswald, she has proven to be an excellent seagoing vessel, which is capable of

carrying out tasks it is given. The vessel is well maintained by the Authority's Engineer and is inspected and painted every year.

### Wheelhouse Electronics

- 1X: - Furuno Marine ARPA Radar FR – 7062
- 1X: - Furuno 15" ARPA Radar FM – 1501
- 1X: - Furuno Colour Video Sounder FCV – 291
- 1X: - Furuno Colour Sounder FCV – 582L
- 1X: - Icom VHF Marine Radio IC – M501EURO + DSC Controller
- 1X: - Furuno VHF DSC Radio Telephone FM - 85001X: - Furuno Satellite Compass
- 1X: - Furuno Navtex NX – 300
- 1X: - Furuno GPS navigator GP-31
- 1X: - Navitron NT921G Auto Pilot
- 2X: - Computers, fwd. Fitted with MaxSea Plotter System, aft with
- 1X: - Internal & External Inter-com,
- 1X: - Engine room CCTV Cameras and Monitor.

***NB In 2011 the IFCA installed an Olex mapping system with the aid of Defra funding and monitor control surveillance system (MCSS) in the wheelhouse.***

The St Oswald is fitted with all the Safety Equipment legally required to operate within the Authority's district and is coded to Category 3 of the Workboat Code and the safety of the vessel and the RIB's (Rigid Inflatable Boats) is overseen by surveyors from Seafish. All the Authority's boats are checked annually and the St Oswald is slipped annually to have its hull surveyed, shafts, propellers checked and also to have any minor work carried out as well as being painted. Safety equipment carried includes: - 1 x 10 man life raft, 1 x EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon), 1 x SART (Search and Rescue Transponder), 2 x life-rings with smoke, 2 x life-rings with lines, 2 x portable VHF radios, flares and a Man Overboard recovery system.

## DELTA 1

The St. Oswald also carries a 6 metre RIB 'Delta 1' which is stored on a stern ramp, making both launching and recovery safer and quicker. The system means that Delta 1 can be deployed in most sea conditions and works in close proximity to the St. Oswald and can be used to



Delta 1 hauling net

board any type of fishing vessel at sea. Delta 1 is fitted with a 90 hp Yamaha outboard motor (max speed of 30 knots) as well as a self-righting system. Also onboard it has a fitted waterproof DSC Radio, Garmin Plotter/Sounder/GPS, compass and all relevant safety equipment including, first aid kit and flares. All of the Authority's Fishery Officers are issued with their own personal safety equipment which includes: - dry suits, self-inflating life-jackets, under suits, helmets, hand-held flares, gloves and

stab jackets and most officers have either the RYA, Part 2 Power Boat Licence or the RYA, Advance Power Boat Licence. All officers have also undertaken the Basic Sea Survival Course.

Sea patrols using the St. Oswald, Delta 1 and Bravo 1 are listed in the 10-year enforcement summary, as are sightings, boardings, shore inspections and infringements.

Assistance has been given to other vessels and/or crew on a number of occasions, as has assistance with search and rescue involving local lifeboat stations throughout the district. Training exercises involving the Boulmer Search and Rescue Helicopter 131 are carried out whenever requested. These exercises entail the lowering onto and recovery of their personnel from the deck of the St Oswald and our co-operation with these exercises is much appreciated.

## SHORE BASED RIB BRAVO 1 AND LAND ROVER



Bravo 1 on Sea Patrol

In 2009 it was necessary to renew the Land Rover and shore based RIB and in June that year NSFC took delivery of a new long-wheeled based Land Rover Defender 110. This was needed for a number of reasons - firstly we needed a vehicle which could carry up to 5 officers as well

as equipment and also we needed a vehicle which would be able to tow, launch and recover our new RIB Bravo 1 which was a much larger and heavier RIB than the previous one. In early 2009 various companies were approached to supply the then Committee with a new larger RIB and eventually the contract was given to Humber RIBs who started building this custom-built vessel in early spring. The Chief Fishery Officer and the Engineer visited Humber on a number of occasions whilst it was being built and in July 2009 took delivery of Bravo 1, a 7 metre Ocean Pro RIB and Trailer which operates under the Workboat Code Category 3, enabling it to work alone at sea both at day and night and Seafish Surveyors oversaw the build and commissioning of Bravo 1. Once Bravo 1 was delivered it came on station immediately.

Bravo 1 is fitted with twin 70 hp Suzuki DF70ATL four-stroke outboard engines, internal fuel tanks (each tank holding approximately 175 litres of fuel, enabling greater range), waterproof Icom radio, Garmin GPS map plotter/fish-finder 555S, spotlight, compass, 4 man life-raft, flares, first aid kit, spare life-jackets and many more accessories. Since Bravo 1 came on station it has been a valuable tool for the Committee/Authority and has worked well in all sea conditions and is able to be launched at various sites up and down the district. Both Bravo 1 and the Land Rover are stored at the Authority's office at Cramlington. In addition, the Authority has now purchased with funding from Defra and the EU a personal video and recording system (Veecam) for use by officers.

## Open Days

A number of days in 2010 have been spent at either Harbour Days, RNLI Days and even at a Girl Guide Convention at the Baltic in Newcastle where the Authority had been requested to take its Land-rover and Bravo 1 to show the public. This also gives the opportunity to explain to the general public what the Northumberland Sea Fisheries Committee's duties and now the Authority's are. The officers also have pamphlets to hand out and are able to answer any questions. The Committee also attended a School visit down at the Fish Quay at North Shield's where some of the officers arranged for pupils to have a tour round the Tynemouth RNLI station and Fish Quay.



## TEN YEAR SUMMARY OF ENFORCEMENT

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Sea Patrols - PV	94	125	107	101	99	86	85	75	74	73
Sighting at Sea - PV	3,055	3,144	2,595	2,648	1,714	2,430	1,350	889	1,193	1023
Visual Sightings	544	639	1,103	725	512	695	574	675	870	893
Sea Patrols Cancelled	56	58	29	36	36	13	21	27	27	33
Sea Patrols RIB's	44	41	46	42	60	19	28	30	36	44
Boarding's at Sea	516	255	473	389	223	223	162	124	126	127
Static Gear Checked	56	217	606	525	294	412	406	278	307	247
Inspections of Landings	1,263	1,204	1,352	1,426	736	922	891	592	531	242
Wholesalers/Premises/ Vehicles Inspected	245	233	258	212	177	222	201	215	127	62
Anglers	506	507	633	661	315	350	259	271	165	71
Divers	606	719	784	698	150	226	115	100	96	97
Cleekers	199	179	215	236	150	246	207	226	207	153
Seized Gear Pots/Nets									84/3	38 pots 2 nets
Verbal Warning	24	12	17	10	12	19	20	29	21	30
Written Warning	2	6	2	0	4	3	1	14	11	6
Reports to Committee	0	5	5	6	5	6	8	6	5	4

**NB** The reduction in numbers in some of the above categories is due to there being less vessels in the district, increased targeted activity and that officers now generally work in pairs or teams for operational and health and safety reasons.