



**COMBINED OFFICERS' REPORT FOR THE QUARTER  
ENDING 30 SEPTEMBER 2011**

**CHIEF IFCO (OPERATIONS) A.B. BROWNE  
with input from other officers**

The Authority district is divided into two sectors. IFCO D. Graham operates mainly from the northern sector (Amble to Scottish Border) and Deputy Chief IFCO (Operations) M. Southerton from the southern sector (Tyne to Amble). Both are of course supported by other officers during shore patrols and RIB patrols using Bravo 1.

As usual, the reports by the IFCOs give a very good insight into what is being caught, and where, in the Authority's district and also give the movements of vessels being either bought or sold. As can be seen it has been a very busy quarter for all the officers throughout the Authority's District.

As reported in the last quarterly report, Mr. Michael J. Docherty started as an IFCO on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2011 and has fitted in very well with all the officers and staff. Michael has previously worked for the MFA and Caleys Fisheries and also spent a few years working on larger trawlers and has a very good knowledge of the fishing industry and will I'm sure be an asset to the Authority.

**Northern Area Amble to Scottish Border  
IFCO D. Graham**

Port	Potting Boats	Trawlers	Approx. Crew	Salmon
North of border	7	0	11	0
Berwick	7	0	10	0
Holy Island	6	0	11	1
Seahouses	10	1	19	1
Beadnell	3	0	4	3
Newton	1	0	1	0
Craster	2	0	2	0
Boulmer	3	0	5	3
Amble	17	7	41	7
Totals	56	8	104	15

**GENERAL**

Weather throughout this quarter was varied as expected for the time of year. The start of July saw winds coming from the north, lifting the sea which made for uncomfortable working conditions. However the wind backed towards the west midway through, bringing a period of calm before veering towards the north again increasing sea conditions once again. Winds continued like this well into August, with the odd variant coming from the east, and towards the latter end wind veered towards the south bringing slightly warmer temperatures. This continued into September, with the odd day when the winds came from the west.

This quarter saw the continuation of the Salmon and Trout season and many of the district's fishermen with a licence to fish for salmon and trout have commented on how good a season it has been with an abundance of salmon being landed, but numbers of trout were

down from last year. This continued until the close of the season. At one point it was reported that the price of salmon per kg was lower than the price per kg of trout and some of the older fishermen have commented that this is the first time this has happened in a very long time.

Shellfish landings throughout this quarter have been as expected for the time of year, reaching a peak for lobsters towards the latter end of August and continuing through September. Landings checked varied in number from some vessels landing low single figures to one vessel from Seahouses landing approximately 600 lobsters in one day and saying he had done this on a number of occasions. This same vessel then had engine problems which caused the skipper to miss almost the whole month of August.

Fishing vessels from Holy Island continued to do well throughout the quarter, with each vessel landing high numbers. One vessel skipper when checked upon landing his catch expressed disappointment at only having approximately 350 lobsters saying it had been a poor day. Many of the northern district's fishermen have commented that this season has been a very good one for the lobsters, which seems to continue the trend over recent years.

Brown crab landings as expected for this time of year have been low, only starting to increase towards the latter end of the quarter, average landings of approximately between 1 box and 3 boxes were seen landed with a couple of exceptions from the vessels which were working more gear which had landings of between 5 and 7 boxes approximately. Velvet crab landings have been few and far between in this quarter with only a handful of skippers choosing to land them. For those who have landed, it was not uncommon to see between half a box and 1 full box landed. Two landing inspections at Holy Island were a contradiction to this trend when the same vessel on two separate occasions landed 7 boxes on one occasion then 13 boxes of velvet crabs the next time.

The price for Lobsters varied over the quarter from approximately £7.00 per kg to approximately £10.00 per kg. Brown crab prices have remained steady throughout the quarter, from approximately 90p to £1.30 per kg. The same can be said for velvet crab prices which were approximately £90p per to £1.20 per kg.

There was one new addition to the potting fleet at Amble, with the arrival of the Serenity - an under 10 metre fast worker, with a catamaran hull which the skipper says will also double up as a chartered angling vessel. One vessel has been replaced north of the border; the Beblowe has been sold and replaced by another fast worker catamaran called Czar.

### **News Stories**

As reported in the Berwick Advertiser on 12 August 2011, two local businesses: Swallow Fish of Seahouses and L Robson and Sons of Craster have recently been awarded grant money from the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) to update and expand their businesses.

As reported in the Northumberland Gazette on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September 2011, Warkworth Harbour Commissioner has again attempted to bid for a grant, to help repair the damaged quayside at Amble. This is also from the EFF.

### **Average Prices**

**Lobster £10 to £7 per kg;  
Crab £1.30 to 90p per kg;  
Salmon £10 to £6 per kg  
Sea Trout £7.50 to £5.90 per kg**

**Southern Area (Tyne to Amble)**  
**Deputy Chief IFCO (Operations) M. Southerton**

Approximately 22 potting boats and 20 trawlers were working from the southern sector during the quarter.

Newbiggin by the Sea: 3 potting boats  
Blyth: 10 potting boats and 10 local trawlers  
Seaton Sluice: 1 potting boat  
Cullercoats: 1 potting boat  
North Shields and Royal Quays: 7 potting boats, 10 trawlers

**General**

Weather conditions during the quarter were as expected for this period with July and August being relatively settled and September seeing more autumnal weather, as average wind speeds increased the winds were mostly prevailing south west with only a few days when sea winds curtailed fishing activity.

Fishing activity during this quarter was buoyant as the summer lobster season had got under way by mid-July when catches per landing were as high as 80. One or two landings were up to 100 per landing and this trend continued throughout August when some of the greatest landings were seen with lobster catches into the hundreds and reports of up to 400 lobsters being landed, although this was the exception. All the fishermen spoken to have agreed that this season has been very good with higher catches than during last season without the problems of oversupply encountered in the same period last year when a glut of lobsters caused the wholesalers to struggle to shift quantities. Prices remained average with prices flat in early August to around £7 per kg. As lobster catches fell prices began to pick up and towards the end of September lobster was around £12 per kg.

Pots worked close inshore benefited from catches of velvet crabs with up to 3 boxes landed. Not all fishermen landed these and the numbers landed have fallen from previous years.

Brown crab landings during the quarter were low, as expected, as most fishermen tended to fish close inshore where better numbers of lobsters were landed and when lobster catches fall the boats generally fish further offshore and crab catches improve. However large numbers of these crabs were recently casted and in poor condition and most were returned to the sea. Average landings were between 1 and 4 boxes.

Gill nets were fished from a couple of boats during the quarter with catches reported as poor with only the odd few stones of fish landed.

The season for taking of salmon and sea trout finished at the end of August with all netsmen agreeing that it was one of the best seasons for decades with good runs of fish throughout the season, especially with salmon. Beach fishing may have seen less fish than in last year as there were reports of more salmon than trout running which was reflected in prices as salmon towards the end of the season was the same price as sea trout, at around £6 per kg. Average landings ranged from 30 to 60 fish. One of the beach cobbles ended up coming ashore in the surf off Blyth and was later patched up on the beach and towed off by the lifeboat.

Trawling during the quarter has been quite promising with a few of the local boats returning to home ports earlier than usual due to a small summer prawn fishery off Northumberland, where best catches were made during sunset and sunrise although very little in between. Catches locally were fair with around 6 to 8 boxes of prawns landed for two hauls. Gradually

towards the end of the quarter, catches improved during the day and with reports of up to 20 baskets being landed, this has been the best sign of prawns in a long time as the last three autumn/winter prawn fisheries have been very poor. However this may be short-lived as a number of visiting boats which fish off Northumberland are reportedly looking to make their way down to take advantage of the promising early show of prawns.

New vessel movements were the Blyth potting boat "Laura June", which is working from the river at Blyth.

Activity from the shore has increased due to the finer weather and patrols were carried out in the usual hotspots over spring tides for people who were collecting shellfish or diving from the shore. Shellfish catches had increased with nearly all those inspected being aware of the restrictions on taking shellfish.

Again boat angling increased over the quarter, especially during the finer weather although catches were lower on average than the last quarter, especially for codling with mostly single fish seen caught. Mackerel was caught in good numbers when conditions have been suitable.

Shore fishing has mostly taken place over the Tyne and Blyth piers mostly for mackerel with the odd codling and coley taken. From September onwards more anglers were seen bait fishing as the autumn/winter shore season begins.

Joint working was carried out with the warden from Holy Island after reports of illegal bait digging taking place during the hours of darkness - patrols were carried out with positive results and large numbers of worms seized and returned alive.

In July and August I attended RNLI harbour days at Berwick upon Tweed and Amble with the Authority's Land Rover and RIB and spoke to a number of members of the public about the new IFCA.

#### **AVERAGE PRICES**

**Lobster £12.00 to £10.00 per kg**  
**Crab £0.30 – £90 per kg**  
**Salmon £10 per kg**  
**Sea Trout £7.00 per kg**  
**Creel caught prawns £60 to £100**