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BODY-WORN VIDEO CAMERA SYSTEMS

Officers of the Northumberland Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (NIFCA) may be seen wearing small video cameras on their person during patrols and inspections conducted at sea or ashore. This leaflet explains the reasons why, when, and of whom, recording will mostly likely be carried out and who will be informed that recording is taking place.

Why do officers require video and sound recording? Where an offence is suspected, officers must endeavour to discover all the relevant details surrounding the case. The use of digital picture and sound records could be critical to show exactly what happened and what was said. It should help to avoid disputes, reduce the time taken to establish important facts and clearly show the truth of many matters.

In what circumstances will a video camera be operated? A video camera worn by the coxswain of a rigid inflatable boat (RIB) may be used to film the approach to any vessel engaged in fishing activity. This is regardless of whether or not an offence is suspected, because offences sometimes only become apparent during the final approach and evidence can be disposed of before a boarding takes place.

Where a boat is inspected at sea or berthed alongside, at least one boarding officer is likely to have a camera system on their person. If an offence is suspected, the camera will be operated, otherwise it will normally be off.

At least one officer conducting a shore-based inspection of fish or shellfish is likely to have a camera system on their person. If an offence is suspected the camera will be operated, otherwise it will normally be switched off. Picture recording will not be carried out during the search of a dwelling place unless prior legal permissions have been granted.

If at the scene of a suspected offence a relevant person is questioned, including through a formal interview, the camera will be operated in most circumstances.

What will a video camera normally be used to record? This equipment enables officers to record picture and sound evidence in any situation where it is considered to be appropriate to the circumstances which are encountered during the course of their work.

Who will be told if a video camera is being used for recording? The skipper and/or owner on board a vessel boarded at sea will be informed as soon as practicable during an inspection. Other boat crew or passengers on board a boat will be told if a camera is in operation, should they be directly encountered. Where fish or shellfish is inspected ashore, any person who is encountered at the scene and is believed to own, or to be responsible for the fish or shellfish, will be told if the camera is in operation.

Who can view or listen to a video camera recording? Only Northumberland IFCA officers or a person acting in a legal capacity on its behalf will be allowed to routinely view or listen to recordings. However, during the course of an investigation, recordings will be offered to be shown to relevant persons involved in a case, including the Defence in a prosecution and may be presented as evidence in any court proceedings.