

Wash Fisherman convicted and fined £3,000 for illegal fishing

On the 22nd of February 2007 King's Lynn Magistrates heard the Master of a Wash commercial fishing vessel plead guilty of fishing without the authority of a Wash Fishery Order Licence, he also plead guilty to fishing an area of the Wash closed to fishing on the 29th of March 2006.

The case was brought against the fisherman by Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee. A Fishery Officer boarded the vessel when it landed its catches of mussel in the King's Lynn Fisher Fleet. The Fishery Officer ascertained that the catch of mussel had not been fished from an area open to the mussel fishery. The Wash is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and the mussel beds are designated as an interest feature of this European Marine Site. Due to this fact certain mussel beds are closed to fishing activity in order to protect their integrity.

Matthew Mander, Clerk and Chief Fisheries Officer at Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee said:

“The Wash is an important marine site with significant shellfisheries supporting both fishermen and the wider ecosystem The Wash is recognised as a site of high environmental value and as such is afforded significant protection through legislation. The Joint Committee takes its fisheries management and protection seriously as this helps to ensure the sustainable utilisation of marine resources within this European Marine Site.”

“Today's fines reflect the seriousness of the offences committed. Illegal fishing seriously undermines the Joint Committees management of these important fisheries and in turn this places the future, for the vast majority of Wash fishermen, in jeopardy.”

Notes to editors

- 1) Fishing activity may be regulated in relation to the quantities of fish, area in which they are caught, the species involved and the gear used. It is important that fishermen comply with these rules.
- 2) Enforcement of EU, UK and local fisheries regulations on British registered vessels within the Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee district is conducted by Fishery Officers from Eastern Sea Fisheries operating from one of the Joint Committee's fishery patrol vessels.
- 3) Information of Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee and the work it does can be obtained from www.esfjc.co.uk
- 4) The Wash is recognised as a site of high environmental value and as such is afforded significant protection. The Wash is designated as a: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA), Ramsar site and part of it is also a National Nature Reserve. In light of these designations ESFJC has a lead role in ensuring that the environmental importance of the site is not compromised by commercial fishing activities.

Offences:

Master of vessel

Offence: Unlicensed fishing

Contrary to Section 8 (2) of the Wash Fishery Order 1992 (S.I. 3038) made under Section 1 of the Sea Fisheries (Shellfish) Act 1967.

Offence: Fishing in a closed area

Contrary to Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee Byelaw 8 (b) made under Section 5 (1)(a) of the 1966 Sea Fisheries Regulation Act 1966 Chapter 38 Contrary to Section 8 (2) of the Wash Fishery Order 1992.

Penalties:

Master of vessel

Ordered to pay £2000 for the offences and £1000 costs

Prosecuting on behalf of Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee: AMJ Solicitors (Hull)