

Wash Fishermen convicted and fined £7,088 for illegal fishing

On the 23rd of November 2006 King's Lynn Magistrates heard the Masters of two Wash commercial fishing vessels both plead guilty to fishing in an area of the Wash closed to fishing on the 25th of April 2006. The Master of one vessel also pleaded guilty to fishing without the authority of a Wash Fishery Order licence.

The case was brought against the fishermen by Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee. Fishery Officers boarded the two vessels whilst they were fishing on the Gat Sands within the Wash. This area was closed to vessels targeting 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.

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 Committee's 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 1

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

Master of vessel 2

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 1

Ordered to pay £3000 for the offences and £794.10 costs

Master of vessel 2

Ordered to pay £2500 for the offence and £794.10 costs

Eastern Sea Fisheries Protection vessels involved: *FPV ESF Protector III*

FPV Sea Spray

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