

Charges for various fisheries offences in latest MMO prosecutions

Trawler owner charged with failing to cooperate with MMO marine officers

On 16 April 2021 David Gair, owner of Gair Trawler Agents, appeared at Newcastle Magistrates Court charged with failure to comply with a reasonable direction given by a marine enforcement officer.

The court heard how on 9 March 2020, Aquarius II (BH456), a 14.9 metre UK registered fishing vessel owned by Gair Trawlers Limited and skippered by David Gair, was boarded for inspection by MMO marine officers. Mr Gair was directed by the officers to haul in his fishing gear for inspection. He redeployed the gear back into the sea before officers had a chance to measure it and refused to haul it back in.

Mr Gair pleaded guilty and was ordered to pay a fine of £623, £1,511.40 in costs and a £62 victim surcharge.

Registered buyer of first sale fish fails to submit sales notes

On 4 May 2021 Russell Lovitt of HG Lovitt's, Filey, North Yorkshire, appeared at Scarborough Magistrates Court charged with failure to submit sales notes.

HG Lovitt's has been a registered buyer of first sale fish since October 2016. On 8 May 2019 MMO marine officers visited HG Lovitts and requested all of the submitted sales notes that they had for first sale purchases of fish. During this visit two receipt books were removed for further assessment, which showed over 370 purchases of fish had non-submitted sales notes.

Mr Lovitt pleaded guilty and was ordered to pay a fine of £4,000, £1,230 in costs and a £190 victim surcharge.

Master and vessel owner fined for logbook offences

On 4 May 2021 David Wilkins and Matthew Wilkins, joint owners of 15.6 metre vessel Nordstjernen (GY1477), appeared at Scarborough Magistrates Court charged with failing to keep and submit an electronic logbook of fishing activity.

The court heard how during a separate MMO investigation it was discovered that between January 2018 and April 2019, fish merchant HG Lovitt had been purchasing cod from Matthew Wilkins. A cross-check of the electronic log and landing declaration from Nordstjernen for this period showed no entries for cod.

Both defendants pleaded guilty. Matthew Wilkins was ordered to pay a fine of £10,200, costs of £872 and a £190 victim surcharge. David Wilkins was ordered

to pay a fine of £8,400, costs of £872 and a £190 victim surcharge.

An MMO spokesperson said:

Legislation is in place to protect fish stocks and provide key data for setting fishing quotas. It is vital that this legislation is adhered to.

When this is not the case the MMO will always take the appropriate action, including prosecution, to ensure offenders do not benefit from such illegal activity and to protect fish stocks for the wider fishing industry and future generations.