

# Fishing vessel owner and skipper ordered to pay £21,240 for fisheries offences

Tranquillity (BF7) is a Scottish based 22.3 metre stern trawler owned and operated by Tranquillity BF7 LLP.

The court heard how the vessel left the port of Newlyn on 30 May 2019 with Brian Johnstone as master on board. The vessel was targeting nephrops using two trawls with a single codend on each trawl in an area of the Celtic Sea known as Jones Bank. The area forms part of the Biologically Sensitive Area the Hake Recovery Zone, where additional technical measures have been put in place to protect juvenile fish.

On 3 June 2019 officers from Fishery Protection Vessel Ocean Osprey boarded Tranquillity to conduct an inspection. A wheelhouse inspection and fish room check found that the tolerance between the recorded catch in the Elog for hake was under-recorded by 36%, in excess of the 10% tolerance.

A gear inspection then found the starboard side net consisted of a synthetic double twine diamond mesh codend with a lifting strop, bottom side chafers, a square mesh panel and type B top side chafer. The average mesh size of the top side chafer was not twice that of the codend and the twine thickness was greater than 4mm, in breach of regulations. The chafer was also attached to the codend in such a way that the meshes of the chafer did not align with the meshes of the codend.

Both defendants in the case entered guilty pleas. Tranquillity BF7 LLP was fined a total of £12,000, ordered to pay £1,050 in costs and a £170 victim surcharge. Mr Johnstone was fined £6,800, ordered to pay £1,050 in costs and a £170 victim surcharge.

An MMO spokesperson said:

The technical measures put in place in these areas are essential to the protection of juvenile fish. They are afforded extra layers of protection as scientific evidence shows these areas are at greater risk of overfishing. It is also important that Elogs are completed accurately to ensure that quotas can be properly managed.

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. In this case, the court has clearly identified these offences as potentially serious infringements, and the level of penalties imposed reflects this.