

Fishing vessel owner and skipper ordered to pay £55,842.47 for fisheries offences

Ocean Venture II (S121) is an Irish registered and licensed stern trawler owned and operated by Cornelius and Ross Minihane, the directors of the Irish company Ocean Venture II Fishing Limited.

The court heard how the vessel departed Castletownbere on 17 May 2019 and Michael Harrington was master for the trip. The vessel was using two trawls, each with double codends, and during the trip fished in areas forming the Hake Recovery Zone, the Biologically Sensitive Area and the Celtic Sea Square Mesh Panel Area.

On 22 May 2019 the vessel was boarded by MMO marine enforcement officers from Ocean Osprey. The subsequent inspection found seven offences relating to inaccurate catch recording and the codends used. The master also failed to produce a stowage plan.

Mr Harrington and the owner (represented by Ross Minihane) pleaded guilty to all charges. Ocean Venture II Fishing Ltd. was fined a total of £51,204.99, ordered to pay £1,884.15 in costs and a £170 victim surcharge. Mr Harrington was fined £1,813.33, ordered to pay £600 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 vital that these restrictions are followed.

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.