

Fishing vessel owners guilty of safety breaches

Philomena Trawlers Ltd and D&G Seafoods Ltd were represented by defence lawyer Paul Rogers at the hearing at Southampton Magistrates Court on Friday, August 28.

Both companies pleaded guilty to charges of offences Contrary to Regulations 5(1)(b) and 5(4) of the Fishing Vessels (Codes of Practice) Regulations 2017. Philomena Trawlers Ltd were fined £1,000 and D&G Seafoods Ltd were fined £3,000 and ordered to pay costs of £8,380.

The court heard how scalloping trawlers Camm Courageous and the Sea Lady, owned by companies Philomena Trawlers Ltd and D&G Seafoods Ltd respectively, went to sea with invalid or expired International Fishing Vessel Certificates on 14 July 2020.

Two days later, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency issued detention notices to the companies. However, both vessels continued fishing and on July 18th they came into the Port of Shoreham with a joint catch worth around £25,000.

The MCA's Regulatory and Compliance Investigations team applied for and were granted court summonses, which were served on 20 July to the representative for both vessels, Mr Christopher Nicholson.

On passing sentence the magistrates said: "This was a technical breach with no apparent criminal intent. Certificates are there for a purpose and those vessels which did not go out fishing without a valid certificate need to know it is the right course of action."

Paul Atkins, Financial Investigations Manager at the Maritime and Coastguard Agency said: "We will always investigate those who disregard the regulations and legislation under the Merchant Shipping Act 1995. The regulations are there to ensure the safety of those at sea.

"Many events involving casualties on fishing vessels are a result of compliance failure, neglect and flagrant disregard for the law. This is completely unacceptable and those who put lives at risk will be investigated and prosecuted where necessary.

"We are committed to ensuring that all breaches of these vital regulations are fairly and robustly investigated."

The Sea Lady has now been released from detention after rectifying their deficiencies and paying a £30,000 bond. The Camm Courageous remains under detention.