

Press release: Fine of £24,414 for fisheries offences

On 5 May 2017 Macduff Fishing Fleet Limited, owner of the scallop dredger "Cornelis Gert Jan" and its three masters Pawel Czerniak, Oliver Hughes and Robert Watt pleaded guilty to breaches of the Sea Fish Conservation Act 1967 at Worthing Magistrates Court.

The court heard how the vessel was permitted to retain non-quota species as a bycatch of its main catch of scallops. However, it had fished on a number of occasions in an area known to contain mixed species where a bycatch of quota species was inevitable.

Investigations by the MMO identified that £6,000 worth of sole and anglerfish had been landed by the vessel in the period between 5 May 2015 and 26 November 2015. This was in breach of the vessel's licence.

While it was acknowledged that the company had provided landing data in the form of log sheets and sales notes electronically during the period, the MMO system would not necessarily pick up on potential breaches of licence conditions. The Court accepted that it was, in any event, incumbent on the masters and owners to ensure they did not retain any species on their vessel which were prohibited by their licence.

Macduff Fishing Fleet Limited (vessel owner) were fined £12,000, with an additional fine of £6057.67 to the value of the fish involved in the offending, costs of £4,758.75 and a victim surcharge of £120.

Mr Hughes (vessel master) was fined £580, Mr Watt (vessel master) was fined £678 and Mr Czernia (vessel master) was fined £220.00. These fines included a victim surcharge.