

Inshore Vessel Monitoring Update

On 28th August 2018, new mobile fishing permits were issued. This signified the formal introduction of inshore vessel monitoring systems on all 145 vessels using towed gear between 6.99 metres and 15.25 metres for the first time. The vessel monitoring systems will provide positional information at least every ten minutes and three minutes when operating within restricted areas. In addition, 44 over 12 metre vessels using towed gears will also have to report at the same intervals whilst inside the Authority's District. It is envisaged that the total number of under 12 metre vessels fitted with vessel monitoring systems will increase further when visiting boats come to the district to fish for cuttle or scallop in the Autumn.

This has been a great partnership project which has been helped by the level of co-operation shown by the vessel owners to work alongside the engineers TecMarine to have the systems fitted to the vessels. Both companies that have supplied the systems, Applied Satellite Technology Ltd (AST) and Succorfish M2M have also assisted in delivering the project. The co-ordination of the installation programme was overseen by staff from Common Seas.

Officers are now working with the MMO's national vessel monitoring system co-ordinators and the vessel monitoring systems manager at the Fisheries Monitoring Centre to prepare the necessary paperwork to reclaim the costs of the project from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. (EMFF)

A further related IT project to provide mobile fishing gear permit holders with memory sticks preloaded with all of the restricted areas has reached another important stag in its development. Officers believe that the project has developed sufficiently to test the data on two types of on board plotter, Maxsea and Olex and is in the process of identifying fishers that are willing to take place in the trial.

A final report on the Authority's vessel monitoring system project will be produced and this will help inform the decisions taken relating to the national project. Nationally, the inshore vessel monitoring system project faces a few more challenges before it can commence in the coming months. A significant change to the way the project will be delivered has been made following discussions between IFCA's, the MMO and Defra in the last month. IFCA's will no longer be expected to fund the purchase and installation of the units and the IFCA's' bids to the EMFF will no longer be processed. Different funding options are being considered.

IFCA's are still wanting to support the project, recognising how the project, along with the under 10 metre catch reporting project will help with the transformation of inshore fisheries and conservation management. It may very well be that their roles are to support the two national vessel monitoring system co-ordinators in facilitating the roll out of the units. Depending on the decisions taken after consultation, it is possible that approximately 2,700 vessels will be fitted with units. The units are planned to be installed over a three year period.