

D&SIFCA Pilot project

82 IVMS units have been fitted to vessels between 6.99m and 12.0m that use mobile fishing gear as part of the EMFF funded project. In addition, a further 44 vessels between 11.99m and 15.25m have had the VMS unit onboard updated so that all units report at the required transmission rates.

To date four units have been identified as not working properly and on three occasions that has meant that the vessel has returned to port in line with the mobile fishing permit condition requirements. The response from the manufacturers and the local engineering company has meant that the down time for the vessels was kept to a minimum and the repairs were completed under warranty in a matter of hours.

The information provided by the units at the higher reporting intervals of between three and ten minutes has been used in supporting investigations in to the activity of four towed gear vessels. The spatial information is already being used to start to understand more about the seasonal use of different areas of the District by the towed gear sector. This information will help inform future management decisions taken by the Authority.

With the help of the MMO's national VMS co-ordinator the first reclaim application to the EMFF has been made. The claim covers the costs of purchasing and installing the IVMS and will see most of the Authority's expenditure reclaimed. A further claim will be submitted once a detailed invoice has been received from the facilitators of the project, Common Seas.

National IVMS project

The six weeks consultation on the national IVMS proposal has now closed. The national proposal would see the introduction of IVMS on all licensed British fishing vessels (~2,700) operating in English waters. It has been confirmed that the project will be eligible for an EMFF grant covering the purchase and installation of the units. Defra are understood to be aiming to release the consultation report in mid January next year. Officers have been informed that a third company has expressed an interest in joining the other IVMS suppliers in delivering the national project.

Although the IFCA's direct involvement in the national project has been reduced, the national project has benefited from D&SIFCA running a successful pilot project and the key learnings and documentation provided in the project report have been used widely by the national project team.

Gear in Gear out technology

The introduction of gear in gear out technology has always been a recognised aim to build on the benefits delivered by the IVMS projects. D&SIFCA are hoping to run a pilot project onboard a local trawler looking to assess one of the possible solutions.