

D&S IFCA 03_25 – Retention of undersized Bass

On the evening of 14th January 2025, D&S IFCA officers conducted a patrol within Plymouth Sound and associated rivers. At approximately 20:00, Officers observed a small fishing vessel transiting through Sutton Harbour. Shortly afterwards, the vessel returned to its berth, and the individual was seen disembarking while carrying a black plastic bin liner. The individual was a holder of a Commercial D&S IFCA Netting Permit.

Officers approached the individual, who confirmed the bag contained fish being taken home for personal consumption. The individual stated that the rest of the catch had already been landed to a fish market and provided the bag to officers. The bag was found to contain three European sea bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*). During the inspection, one of the bass was measured at 40cm, which is below the 42cm Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) established under both national regulations and the D&S IFCA Netting Permit conditions.

The individual was interviewed under caution where it was confirmed the fish had been caught using nets operated within the District.

The remainder of the landed catch on the fish market, including bass and whiting, was inspected and found to be compliant.

Relevant Permit Conditions and Regulation

The D&S IFCA Netting Permit Conditions paragraph 1.4(h):

“A permit holder or named representative is not authorised under this permit to remove from a fishery within the district a bass less than 42cm measured from the tip of the snout to the end of the tail fin.”

Offences to Consider

- Removal of bass under 42cm from a fishery within the district, otherwise than in accordance with paragraph 1.4(h) of the D&S IFCA Netting Permit Byelaw. Contrary to Paragraphs 2 and 3 of the D&S IFCA Netting Permit Byelaw and Section 163 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

Outcome

The Authority reviewed the case and was satisfied that the evidential test has been met. The Authority considered the public interest in this case and, in line with the Authority's Compliance and Enforcement Strategy, an Official Written Warning was issued for the offence.