

Industry welcomes minister to Newlyn

Full day of engagement with Cornish fishermen and industry representatives

FISHERIES MINISTER Daniel Zeichner visited Newlyn earlier this month, accompanied by senior Defra officials and

representatives of the MMO. He took in a tour of the fishmarket, visited Cornwall Fish Direct and shellfish merchant W Harvey & Sons, and met with



▲ The minister met with a wide range of fishermen, shore staff and industry representatives during his visit to Newlyn. CFPO CEO Chris Ranford is second from right.

the chief executive and members of the Cornish Fish Producers' Organisation (CFPO).

Discussions focused on the future of the industry and ways to strengthen Cornwall's role in UK food security. Other topics included the progress of the Cornish fishing strategy, solutions to current and future marine spatial planning challenges and the importance of co-managing fisheries.

In the afternoon, the minister moved on to Sennen to meet with fishermen there.

Daniel Zeichner said: "I have learned a great deal and hugely enjoyed visiting Newlyn and seeing its diverse fleet, looking at the variety of fish at the market, and having thought-provoking conversations at the quayside.

"Many opportunities lie ahead for our fishing sector, from the opening of new fisheries to more considered industry engagement, and this government is committed to making the most of them



▲ Fisheries minister Daniel Zeichner (right) with Tom Lambourn of the Newlyn ring-netter Lyonesse.

to ensure the sector can best contribute to our country's food security and economic growth."

Chris Ranford, CEO of the CFPO, said: "We were pleased to host the minister and have the chance to promote the importance of the Cornish fishing industry and its role in feeding people and supporting our coastal communities.

"He was very impressed with the results of our 'True Value of Seafood to Cornwall' research, and it's reassuring to know our new government is prioritising fishing as part of the wider food security agenda.

"We're hopeful this visit will lead to meaningful actions that support the long-term viability of our industry."

Environmental health raids on shellfish gatherers

Ongoing concerns about unregulated gathering for black market in shellfish

ILLEGAL SHELLFISH pickers off the Essex port of Southend had their equipment and shellfish seized in raids on several groups last Sunday, after numerous complaints locally about unregulated shellfish gathering, as well as the retention of undersized bass by anglers.

Essex Police's marine unit and Southend Council's environmental health officers worked together in the crackdown on illegal shellfish harvesting. Nineteen people were stopped and 43kg of shellfish was retained, including, *FN* understands, 25kg of shucked oyster meat.

The action was sparked by both conservation and public health concerns, with the worry that the bivalves would enter wider food chains illegally, with accompanying public health risks.

Ian Gilbert, Southend councillor for regulatory services, said: "The council is committed to working with the HM Coastguard, Essex police and other partners to prevent these activities, and I am pleased to see the results of the successful

By **ANDY READ**

operation on Sunday last week.

"All shellfish, in particular live bivalve molluscs such as oysters, must be collected with proper registration and documentation, followed by purification, to avoid serious health issues.

"Our food officers regularly patrol the registered shellfish beds. They have powers to inspect, seize and detain any food or equipment they suspect is being used for harvesting shellfish.

"We urge anyone witnessing suspicious harvesting behaviour to report it to the council, and we encourage residents and visitors to purchase shellfish from reputable food businesses.

"This way, you can be assured they are safe to eat and will be supporting local industry."

NFFO president Paul Gilson said that there had been repeated calls for a crackdown on the shellfish gathering, which risked undermining local tourism.

"We've five miles of beach

where we see gangs of shellfish collectors operating. Some of the very same people stopped on Sunday were returning to the beds on the Monday, both for the morning tide and the evening tide as well. Many of them are working with masks on – a clear sign that they realise what they are doing is illegal," he told *FN*.

"And it is not just clams and oysters. This is a growing issue with cockles, undersized bass taken home regularly by anglers, and even crab and lobster. Sadly, in my NFFO role I am hearing similar stories from around the English coast with, in some instances, environmental health officers being threatened by those taking the shellfish.

"This isn't, as far as we can see, about a few people collecting a feed, it is organised, commercial activity, underneath the radar and risking public health as well as stocks. It's something I feel quite strongly about – it's not only undermining commercial fishing, shellfish were being cleaned on the beach on the hottest day of the year, out in the open, and at some stage someone is going to be poisoned."

Within the Essex district of Kent and Essex IFCA, restrictions on the fishery appear to be in the hands of environmental health officers, rather than coming under byelaws restricting hand-gathering for personal consumption. *FN* asked the IFCA for comment on the issue and its involvement in the raids last week, but had received no reply as we went to press.

NI crew initiative

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NIFPO AND ANIFPO have engaged an independent human rights service provider, Human Rights at Sea International (HRASi), to conduct internal due diligence governance reviews on all aspects of welfare standards across their membership.

Led by the founder and former CEO of the UN-accredited charity Human Rights at Sea David Hammond, HRASi is a consultancy that supports organisations in raising their human rights standards, enhancing individual protections and reducing inherent risk.

ANIFPO chief executive Brian Chambers said: "ANIFPO has always strived to enhance the welfare of all our fishermen. To ensure our

continued improvement and transparency, we have asked HRAS International to conduct a professional review of our social welfare policies."

NIFPO chief executive Harry Wick added: "NIFPO wants our members, clients and buyers to have a strong level of reassurance that we're applying appropriate ethical welfare standards across the services we provide. It's natural that the next forward step on our journey is to invite HRASi to run the rule over our internal practices and procedures to ensure we're getting it right."

The work undertaken by HRASi will look at the two POs separately, with the results initially presented to their respective boards, who will consider any findings and recommendations and the next steps moving forward.

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