



Introduction

Welcome to the latest edition of the Responsible Fishing Scheme (RFS) newsletter. In this edition you will find information on all the developments that have taken place over the past few months, since our last edition in winter 2011. As you will see the emphasis over this period has been on updating and adding lots more information to the RFS website, as well as pursuing several new ideas to further promote the scheme.

An update on Seafish and its repercussions for RFS

As many of you will already be aware Seafish has undergone some considerable changes and upheaval since it got wrapped up in a long drawn out court case. Although Seafish came through that difficult period by winning the case, this did not draw a line under the changes that had to be made.

After the completion of national discussions on the future of the organisation we now have very clear direction on the core role and strategic objectives of Seafish and proposed models for the organisation's future structure. Funding and governance arrangements between Seafish, our government sponsors and industry are also now very clear. All Seafish projects and activities will have to be fully planned out and budgeted for, and all activities will have to be approved by industry panels implemented by Seafish to review activities and budgets, which could result in a review of the levy. The Responsible Fishing Scheme is seen as a major project/service for Seafish, and the catching sector, thus we are actively working in the background to have a sound plan in place.

Further developments occur in the RFS web site

The past few months has seen lots of development with the RFS website on several fronts.

Firstly, a lot of the old information has been removed, some useful information has been updated and lots of new material has been added. This is intended to give both newcomers and members a better understanding of what RFS is all about and what the potential benefits are.

Secondly, for those wishing to join the scheme and gain an understanding as to what will be required as you progress through the certification process, the following additional documents have been added:

- Questions and Answers about RFS;
- RFS - Basic information and Application form;
- The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries;
- RFS – Audit checklist;
- RFS – Guide to Audit Checklist;
- RFS - First audit and re-audit costs.

And finally, for current members there is lots of information on how you can use RFS as a tool to promote what you are doing. For example every RFS certified vessel has their own individual web page on the site, which Seafish would encourage everyone to view. Make sure that you have all the relevant details listed and are taking full advantage of this section. (Note buyers will consult these pages when they are looking for supplies, and one of our aims over the next few months is to make the buyers and processors more aware of this facility).

There are some small leaflets you can obtain and use to promote the scheme. There is a link to the supplier of the fish tallies should you wish to purchase additional tallies, and we have set up other links to keep you up to date with what's happening throughout the catching sector. The new links added so far include:

- www.fishupdate.com
- Recent media stories
- MMO website
- Succorfish
- Discount insurance
- Responsible Sourcing Guides

It is our intention to expand the range of this information so that it is all together in one place, making things easier for you. With this in mind it would be great if you could take some time to look at the RFS web site and let me know if you have any ideas that we should look at. Our aim is to make the site a useful tool that benefits its' members and promotes the scheme to potential new members. **Are you making the most of your web page? Check it out and make sure that everything you want to say about yourself is listed.**

To help us monitor traffic to the web-site we have set up a Google web-stats account, this will give us lots of statistics to help us to target our information and monitor how well it is being used. There will be more on this in the next newsletter - when we have gathered some more meaningful statistics.

Developments being made to the RFS specification Standard

In early February a meeting of the Responsible Fishing Scheme (RFS) Technical Review Group took place, the outcomes from which are shaping the key elements of the Standard going forward. Building on the strategy laid down by the RFS Strategic Steering Group the revised Standard will reaffirm and build on the central themes of quality, safety and environmental interaction. Mindful of the already high work load on skippers and crews, revisions will be considered to ease the repetitive documentation requirements, whilst at the same time maintaining the overall standards required.

Welsh fishers receive benefits from group coaching session

During February a group of local inshore fishers from around the Cardigan Bay area took the first positive step towards gaining RFS certification by undergoing the first stage of the audit process. They enjoyed a group coaching session run by Jim Hyam (centre) and Mick Bacon (left), which was organised by local co-ordinator Sam Wilding (right) – all stood at the back.



Jim went through all the requirements needed to pass the final audit by highlighting the sections of documentation required to be completed in the RFS folder, as well as focussing on appropriate sections of the audit checklist. Mick was there mainly in an observer capacity and was involved in the technical discussion that followed.

It was agreed by all that this is an excellent way to undergo coaching sessions and to get skippers ready for the final audit. The group session works as it saves time and gets like minded fishers together to discuss their collective concerns.

If there are any other groups out there that would benefit from this type of approach please contact Jim Hyam or Mick Bacon on the numbers given at the bottom of this publication.

Discount benefits working for RFS members

In the last edition we highlighted that Seafish had linked up with David Oliver Associates (DOA), in order to offer significant insurance discounts to member vessels. The Feedback from DOA is that although they have had quite a lot of enquiries it has not always led to any direct business, however having this potential benefit in place has certainly given members an opportunity when re-visiting their insurance renewals.

On a similar note Seafish linked up with the Shipowners Mutual Protection Society who offered further financial support to **new applicant vessels** (£75 per skipper per new vessel - where the skipper holds the Seafish under 16.5m skippers ticket). Since the link up we have seen over 25% of new vessels take advantage of this benefit.

For further details on how you may be able to save on your insurance costs, or to apply for your under 16.5m skippers ticket, please consult the RFS web site at <http://rfs.seafish.org/> and view the relevant sections of the benefits for members page.

Development of local/regional good practice guides

Aside from improving the financial benefits Seafish is also currently working with several organisations and assisting them in developing good practice guides that are applicable to their respective fisheries. This enables fishers to demonstrate their adherence to best practice and offers a benchmark for customers looking to source responsibly. If you would like further information, or think that your region would benefit from the development of such a guide, please feel free to contact Mick Bacon (who is doing the work on these guides) using the contact information below.

Seafish Science and RFS members a New Partnership?

In addition consideration is being given to forging closer links between RFS vessels and the scientific community, to provide the scientific data and evidence they increasingly need to validate their experiences at sea. Potential partnerships between vessels and Seafish Science could see vessels gathering and retaining ownership of the data collected, with some of the costs associated with data collection being offset for RFS members. Once collected the data from a number of vessels could be collectively used to support negotiations across a range of issues that potentially affect fishing opportunities and catch allowances. If you would like further information, please contact Mick Bacon on 07976 222936 or email m_bacon@seafish.co.uk



World Fisheries Congress is coming to Edinburgh

This four-day Congress in 2012, which is hosted by the Fisheries Society of the British Isles, is taking place from 7-11 May 2012, and will address the important topic of "*Sustainable Fisheries in a Changing World*". It will examine the science that underpins sustainable fishing; adaptive management and tools to cope with changing environments; the social and economic cost of failure; and meeting increasing food and nutrition needs through cultivation.

The Congress is expected to attract approximately 2,000 delegates to Edinburgh. **(Special note: there is a 50% reduction in registration for all fishermen).** The keynote speakers are:

- [Professor Sir John Beddington CMG FRS](#), Chief Scientific Advisor to the UK Government and Professor of Applied Population Biology at Imperial College, London.
- [Professor Ray Hilborn](#), University of Washington, Seattle, USA.
- [Mike Mitchell](#), Youngs Seafood Company, UK.
- [Dr Malcolm Beveridge](#), Director of Aquaculture and Genetics at the WorldFish Center, Zambia.

For further information, visit the WFC website www.6thwfc2012.com or follow Twitter @6thwfc2012 #worldfish

Shellfish Tags update

Following on from the previous newsletter we have been in discussion with the producer regarding a new development they are working on. This development is still on-going and we are looking to meet with them to discuss possibilities of conducting some kind of trial of their use (watch this space).

Case studies/good news stories update

Since the last edition, when Seafish said it was looking to promote RFS members and their vessels by publicising the RFS more widely, we have had a few leads and ideas brought to us and so we will be looking to work something out with these guys during the coming months. Remember the presentation of RFS certificates to skippers and crews by local celebrities or dignitaries is always an easy way to gain some publicity.

Vessels removed from scheme

Following the recent publication of some recent underhand practices, two member vessels have been expelled from the scheme as a result of prosecution for fishing related offences. A consequence of this is that their web pages have been disabled and they will not be party to any other RFS benefits, which includes this regular RFS Scheme members newsletter.

And finally, why should we all be looking to support the Responsible Fishing Scheme?

Well the market for fish is becoming ever more global and the competition the industry is facing will only get stronger. Add to this the growing concerns of the consumer and the pressure is well and truly on the major retailers to make policy based purchasing decisions. Probably the number one policy based purchasing decision is to purchase from MSC certified fisheries, but what policy decision is at the next level down? Well if you are a buyer you need assurances that the product you buy is of good quality and is caught responsibly. Iceland and Southern Ireland have already set up their own responsible fishing schemes, to meet this criteria, and we are sure others will follow. So we all need to work together to protect our position in the UK and make the most of the advantage that being an RFS certified vessel offers. You may soon find that being a certified vessel is the only way you are able to supply the market - but we need to make sure we are not pushed out by the competition.

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