

MMO and NIFCA joint enforcement operation results in successful prosecution

20.4.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

The owner and a master of a UK-registered fishing vessel have both been sentenced following a joint enforcement operation and subsequent inspections carried out at the Port of Blyth in 2024 and 2025.

On 11 September 2024, officers from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), Northumberland Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (NIFCA) and Northumbria Police conducted a joint compliance patrol at the Port of Blyth following reports that the Andigee WY372 was repeatedly landing undersized shellfish.

Officers inspected and measured a total of 250 lobsters seized from the vessel. Of these, 248 were found to be undersized, 28 were egg-bearing, and 2 had mutilated tails. Only 2 lobsters were compliant with legislation.

On the 17 January 2025, officers from NIFCA and the MMO conducted inspections on static fishing gear in the NIFCA district set from the Andigee WY372, which was not permitted to fish at the time.

Officers seized 70 illegally set lobster pots that were not marked appropriately, and which were discovered to be storing 174 undersize lobsters one of which was egg-bearing.

The defendants Brenda Denton, owner of, and Charles Michael Denton, master of, the vessel Andigee WY372 from Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, were found guilty of the 2025 IFCA offences at a trial at Newcastle Magistrates Court in December 2025. They entered guilty pleas on the day of trial to the 2024 MMO and IFCA offences at North Tyneside Magistrates Court on 16 April 2026, following which they were sentenced on the same date for all offences.

The offences were:

- Landing European lobster below the minimum conservation reference size
- Landing mutilated lobsters
- Landing berried (egg carrying) lobsters
- Retaining and carrying berried Lobsters aboard their vessel
- Fishing within the NIFCA district other than in accordance with a NIFCA permit
- Failing to display relevant information on fishing gear

These offences were in breach of legislation laid out in Fisheries Act 1981, the Sea Fish Conservation Act 1967 and the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 through NIFCA byelaws. The defendants received proportionate fines and costs totalling £6,060. They have also been disqualified from holding any IFC permit for 3 years and forfeited the 70 pots seized by NIFCA.

Sean Douglas, Head of Regulatory Assurance at MMO, said:

We are pleased to have secured this intelligence-led prosecution in coordination with our local partners. This outcome demonstrates the effectiveness of our joint enforcement and sends a clear message that we will take firm action against those who break the rules protect our marine environment and fish and shellfish stocks for future

generations. I would like to thank all the officers and teams involved in bringing this prosecution to a successful conclusion.

Nick Weir, Lead Enforcement Officer at NIFCA said:

NIFCA welcome the court's decision to disqualify Mr and Mrs Denton from holding any IFC permit along with the fines and forfeiture ordered, we agree with the courts assessment of Mr and Mrs Denton's "flagrant disregard" fisheries legislation. Joint operations such as these show NIFCA's commitment to promoting healthy seas, sustainable fishing, and a viable industry whilst vigorously pursuing anyone who jeopardises the health of the fishery. NIFCA would like to thank our partners at the Marine Management Organisation along with Park Square Barristers and Andrew Jackson Solicitors for their ongoing support.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mmo-and-nifca-joint-enforcement-operation-results-in-successful-prosecution>