



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2010**

### **Incident highlights the real cost of marine litter**

The skipper and crew of the Newlyn based trawler the “Elizabeth N”, narrowly escaped a serious incident in the Bristol Channel last week, when their propeller got caught up in lost fishing gear, in poor weather.

The large piece of trawl, believed to have been lost from a French trawler, became caught in the propeller of the Elizabeth N around 2am, early on Saturday morning. After considering all options and after trying to free the prop themselves, in the interests of safety Skipper Chris (Spanner) Spencer decided to request assistance from the RNLI. The vessel was towed back to Newlyn by the Sennen Cove lifeboat from 35 miles north of Lands End - a 9 hour tow.

This incident has highlighted the potential dangers and significant cost to the fleet associated with marine litter and lost or discarded fishing gear. To combat this, representatives of KIMO's Fishing For Litter scheme are working with the Fishing Industry to reduce levels of marine litter, in order to prevent incidents like this one, from becoming a regular occurrence.

The Elizabeth N has been an active member of Fishing For Litter South West, since May 2009. The scheme provides fishing vessels with large sacks to safely recover all types of litter and debris that collects in fishing gear during normal fishing operations. The project covers all the costs associated with the safe disposal of the waste once it is brought back to port.

Voluntary participation helps vessels meet the requirements of the Responsible Fishing Scheme and over time, it is hoped, that as fishing grounds become cleared of debris, the project will help to reduce the significant cost to the fleet and the associated risk to fishermen's lives and livelihoods.

To date, the scheme, which has been active in Scotland since 2004 and in the South West since 2009, has created a network of 23 harbours. 230 member fishing vessels have recovered over 280 tonnes of litter since the project's inception.

Michael Nowell, owner of the Elizabeth N commented, “This incident alone has cost us approximately £3,500 in lost fishing time, put the boat and crew at risk of danger and required the

assistance of the RNLI to tow the boat back into port. Thank goodness the skipper had the foresight not to try and free the net by putting her ahead and astern, or we could have had a bill for around £60,000 -£70,000 for a new gearbox”.

Sarah Crosbie, Project Officer for the Fishing for Litter project in the South West added, “Research has shown that marine litter costs the fishing industry on average, £10,000 per boat, each year, through contamination of catches, broken gear and fouled propellers. Vessels surveyed by KIMO spend an average of 41 hours a year removing marine litter from fishing gear. These are costs that vessel owners cannot afford to absorb. Participation in the project will contribute towards the permanent removal of litter from the marine environment, which not only makes good financial sense, but also helps vessels meet the requirements of the Responsible Fishing Scheme, therefore I urge skippers who wish to take part, to get in touch.”

Fishing For Litter South West 2008 – 2011 is jointly sponsored by The Marine and Fisheries Agency (now MMO), Cornwall Council, The Environment Agency, Natural England, The Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, The Cornish Fish Producers Organisation, The Crown Estate and The Duchy of Cornwall.

For more information visit [www.fishingforlitter.org](http://www.fishingforlitter.org)

Ends

### **Note to Editors**

**Image1.** Elizabeth N and the Sennen Lifeboat returning to Newlyn after a 9 hour tow  
Image courtesy of Jack Lancaster

**Image 2.** The Elizabeth N was out of action until her propeller had been cleared  
Image courtesy of Laurence Hartwell

### **Contact details:**

Sarah Crosbie - Fishing For Litter South West, Project Coordinator  
C/o Seafood Cornwall Training Ltd.  
E: sarah@seafoodcornwalltraining.co.uk  
T: 01736 364324

### **Fishing For Litter**

Fishing For Litter is an environmental project, undertaken by KIMO UK, designed to engage the fishing industry to improve waste management practices and reduce the amount of marine litter in our seas. The project has two main aims; firstly maintaining a network of harbours around the country that participating boats can land marine litter they have caught in their nets and secondly to change the working practices within the fishing industry, hopefully preventing litter reaching the marine environment in the first instance.

The idea is simple, participating vessels are given hardwearing bags to collect marine litter that is caught in their nets as part of their normal fishing activity. Filled bags are deposited on the quayside, staff at participating harbours then move the bags to dedicated skips for monitoring, collection and disposal. Skips are kept locked to prevent misuse.

The project provides the bags and covers waste costs. Fishermen and harbours volunteer their time. Operational or galley waste generated on board, and hence the responsibility of the vessels, continues to go through normal harbour waste management systems.

The North Sea Directorate of the Dutch Government, in co-operation with the Dutch Fisheries Association originally started the Fishing for Litter initiative in March 2000. The aim of the initiative was to clear the North Sea of litter, by providing bags to bring ashore the litter that gathered in the nets as part of fishing activities and disposing of it on land. During the first year of the project (up to March 2001) over 120 tonnes of litter was collected. The co-operation of the vessels and their crew was on a voluntary basis.

A Scottish project has been in operation since 2004. The project has created a network of 17 harbours with over 160 fishing vessels registered to the scheme. At the time of writing over 157 tonnes of marine litter has been landed during the current phase of the project (April 08 – present) and over 275 tonnes has now been landed in Scotland since the projects inception.

In 2007, fish industry representatives in the South West approached KIMO with a view to operating a pilot scheme in key ports across the region. In October 2008, sufficient funding had been secured to commence a three year project, modelled on the successful Scottish template. The project aimed to involve 60 vessels across four ports and recover 200 tonnes of marine litter.

Since its launch in Newlyn, the project has set up waste collection facilities in 6 harbours across Cornwall and Devon (exceeding the original target of 4) and at the time of writing has registered 80 fishing vessels to the scheme (exceeding the original target of 60).

Vessels working out of Newlyn have filled 6 skips with marine litter weighing approx. 6 tonnes since facilities were put in place in March 2009.

During the early part of 2010, the project got underway across Newquay, Appledore and Looe. A second, part-time project officer (Brixham based), has recently been appointed to recruit vessels working out of Brixham and Plymouth. A further 60 vessels are expected to join the scheme during Autumn 2010.

### **About KIMO:**

KIMO was founded by local municipalities with a shared concern for the state of the environment. KIMO is designed to give municipalities a political voice at the international level, to share best practice and to find solutions to marine political problems that affect coastal communities.

Fishing for Litter is an example of where this has been successful. The scheme, which encourages fishermen to take ashore litter they catch while fishing by providing the infrastructure required, has been acknowledged by United Nations Environment Programme as one of the tools to reduce marine litter. KIMO will continue to seek funding for projects in the future that will benefit the coastal communities that it represents.

### **Fishing For Litter South West Sponsors:**

