

The Irish Sea as the first ICES region to be a Fully Documented Fishery.

**A Paper for the consideration of Working Group 4,
and, if agreed, by the Executive Committee of the
NWWRAC.**

**Sea Fishery Advisory Group
Irish Seal Sanctuary**

At the area VIIa Irish Sea Working Group meeting in Paris in January 2013 it was revealed that the Belgian fleet had agreed to all have observers aboard their vessels operating in the Irish Sea. Since then we have heard of CCTV trials taking place in the North Sea involving Scottish vessels. Initially the skippers involved were reluctant and suspicious about having CCTV aboard but then they realised the benefits that they were getting from having them.

While the Belgian fleet is small. From watching the AIS there are generally not more than two dozen trawlers working in the Irish Sea at any given time. Agreement between Member States should be possible.

We propose that as one fleet has already decided to have observers aboard we have an opportunity to put the Irish Sea forward as the first Fully Documented Fishery in Europe. The benefits to the industry are many. Increased days at sea, the biggest incentive would be the fact that with a fully documented fishery the auto reductions for data deficiencies would not apply. When the scientific advisory bodies know the true figures the quotas could increase.

For this to happen all fleets fishing in the Irish Sea would have to agree, as stated Belgium has already signed up to having observers aboard. Internationally CCTV has proven itself to be the most cost-effective way to achieve Fully Documented Fishery status.

If agreed, we believe a proposal such as this would have great benefits for the boats fishing the Irish Sea. Also the reputation of the North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council as being proactive and willing to assist the scientific advisory bodies to achieve sustainable fisheries and a future for the industry. We see this as an opportunity for the RAC to accept what most consider inevitable, that is, the introduction of Fully Documented Fisheries.

Being proactive on this might stand the RAC in good favour for the future.