

Single use plastics in the Fishing industry

Response to States of Jersey/Scrutiny review.

Jersey Fishermen's Association. Don Thompson

- 1) **Challenges faced by the industry in reducing plastics use.** The fishing industry in Jersey does not produce a great deal of waste, however there are three sources of plastic waste. The first is in the packaging of potting bait. Given the nature of the product and the fact that it is subject to a good deal of transport and storage before ending up on the boat, it is perhaps unlikely that there will be an alternative found, but the issue of the plastic bait packaging waste entering the sea was addressed some time ago, when the Environment Dept arranged for a wheely bin to be sited on the fish quay for collection of the specific packaging. The bin is well used, indicating that fishermen have understood the need to be involved.
- 2) A second source is; Plastic (polypropylene) netting used in manufacture of pots and rope: This does not necessarily constitute single use plastic and fortunately the lobster pots and the rope have a fairly long life, however it is not easy to dispose of the netting when the pots do reach the end of their life. The pot frames are of steel, the rest is netting and rubber, hence they cannot be consigned to any single waste disposal unit. Old pots battered by the ground swells around Jersey do however provide good habitat for juvenile shellfish and it would be interesting to look at perhaps re-cycling old pots to form an artificial reef or similar.
- 3) Trawl netting- is a third source of plastic. It is often lost accidentally when bottom trawls are damaged while in use on the seabed. As it floats it can be very visible and can cause a danger to navigation, however the amount lost at sea is probably smaller than is perceived. There is unlikely to be any replacement found for polypropylene trawl netting in the near future

Comment

On the question of awareness: while some fishermen may be slow to change old habits I have certainly seen a major shift in mind set during my time and the move from old "acceptable practices" of throwing plastic bait packaging overboard, to the same practices now being unacceptable, amongst many is very positive.

Solutions: In the UK there has been a long running initiative that has received excellent support from the industry. Labeled "fishing for Litter" UK trawlers in most of the major ports can request the well known 1 tonne builders bags, which they take to sea and use to collect the various items that are picked up in the trawls. The total amounts collected on an annual basis are pretty remarkable. The project obviously requires involvement of both the port authorities and the fishermen.. While we are not specifically a trawl fleet in the island, the example does show that it is possible for industry, with a little support, can actually create a positive offset to the issue of discarded plastics.

Regarding **Q3 Are there efforts within the industry to reduce eliminate plastics:** The only initiative, (apart from the bin for plastic bait bag disposal), which has been instigated in Jersey, has come about through working with Ports of Jersey to eliminate discarded rope from the skip that is used for burnable waste in the fishermen's boat maintenance park. That involves the JFA sourcing the 1 tonne builders bags previously mentioned and locating them beside the skip for collection of old rope. Previously Ports of Jersey had an arrangement in place with a small local shipping company to deliver the bags of rope to France, where it is up cycled. Unfortunately while we are still separating rope, with the company no longer operating, there is a need to find an alternative way of getting the old rope to a destination where it can be recycled.

I am aware also of a company sourcing old netting from the gill net fishery in the UK and I think Denmark for recycling. Again this is not available or appropriate for local conditions (we do not have a significant netting fleet), but it is an indicator that many forms of waste, where quantities make it viable, can be attractive for up cycling into reconstituted plastic.

Q4- Members experiences of disposing of plastic. My only comment is that I think the best results to be gained, would come via education/awareness. While many fishermen will be aware of the need to reduce waste in general and plastics specifically, I suspect that there are some who give it little time or thought. Furthermore if the skippers do not set an example or give instruction it is likely that crew members will not make effort to dispose of plastics properly.

Projects and initiatives that promote awareness of the need and the value of caring for the marine environment need not always have a hefty price tag. A good example is on Condor ferries where there is a small but strategically placed sign, by the railing where passengers go outside to smoke or for fresh air. It simply says " the sea is for fish, the bin is for rubbish"

There has not been any engagement between the industry and the environment department on the issue of reducing plastic waste, but we do enjoy a reasonably good working relationship and would be happy to look at any cooperation that may be required to set up any new initiatives.