

News story: Fisherman and owner fined £38,201 for fisheries offences

Klaas Kramer and Island Fishing Company Limited (master and owner of the vessel Eben Haezer GY57) pleaded guilty to breaching fisheries regulations at North Tyneside Magistrates Court.

The court heard how between November 2015 and January 2016 the vessel repeatedly fished in the North Sea 'Cod Recovery Zone' despite having exceeded the maximum number of days at sea which the vessel was allowed to spend in that area with regulated fishing gear under the regulations. Investigations by the MMO found that the vessel exceeded the 200 day limit by over 37 days over eight separate fishing trips, contrary to section 4(9) of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1967. The MMO had sent the vessel owners a letter reminding them that they were within 1 day of the limit in November 2015, but the vessel continued to fish, which resulted in the prosecution.

Mr Kramer was fined £3,200 with a victim surcharge of £120 for his role as master of the vessel on seven of the trips.

Island Fishing Company (of which Mr Kramer is a Director and shareholder) was fined an initial £9,200, with an additional fine of £24,000 which the magistrates indicated represented the net profit of the illegal fishing, costs of £1,561 and a victim surcharge of £120.

A spokesman for the MMO said:

"The fines issued by the magistrates in this case send a clear message to the small minority of fishermen who seek to put profit first by failing to comply with the regulations. By issuing an additional fine of £24,000, which the bench indicated that they felt represented the profit from the illegal fishing in this case, the court has made it clear that sentences for unlawful behaviour should deprive offenders of the economic benefit of offending.

The MMO is clear that the vast majority of fishermen operate lawfully and in compliance with regulations which exist to protect fisheries from overfishing and are in place to ensure healthy, sustainable fisheries for this and future generations of fishermen. In the rare instances that non-compliance is detected, MMO uses a risk-based enforcement strategy and operates a graduated and proportionate system of sanctions, with prosecution reserved for the most serious offences."