



AN t-ÚDARÁS UM
CHOSAINT
IASCAIGH MHARA

SEA-FISHERIES
PROTECTION
AUTHORITY

Press Release

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Fishing Master Convicted of Mesh Size Offence and Breach of Sea-Fishing Licence Condition

The Master of a fishing vessel, “Celtic Warrior II”, Patrick Smith, from Clogherhead, County Louth, pleaded guilty at Dublin District Court on the 17th June 2024, to two charges relating to breaches of sea-fisheries law, including the non-compliant use of below minimum legal mesh size, and failing to comply with the terms of the vessel’s sea-fishing licence due to the number of non-European Economic Area (EEA) national crew members onboard. The offences were detected during an at-sea inspection onboard the fishing vessel “Celtic Warrior II”, by Irish Naval Service officers attached to the LÉ George Bernard Shaw in the Irish Sea in October 2022.

The Court heard evidence that Naval Service Officers took sample mesh measurements and detected the square mesh panel was below the minimum regulatory requirements in place in October 2022 of at least 120mm when used in combination with a codend with mesh measurement of at least 80mm. Evidence was given that the regulatory requirements for mesh sizes are important to allow juvenile sea-fish to survive and replenish stocks. Evidence was also given that an examination of crew members’ documents onboard disclosed that with the exception of the master, the remaining crew were Egyptian citizens, constituting a breach of the terms of the sea-fishing licence issued by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine that at least 50% of crew members be nationals of the EU/EEA.

The Court convicted and fined the Defendant the sum of €2,500.

An SFPA spokesperson commented:

“The SFPA notes the seriousness attached by the Court to the non-compliances, as reflected in the decision and penalty imposed. Mesh size and gear requirements are key tools to ensure the sustainability of fish stocks and future fishing activities for the fishing community. Masters and owners of fishing vessels must ensure ongoing compliance with mesh size requirements for gear used during each trip, particularly having regard to the potential damaging impact of non-compliant use of fishing gear. The case also highlights the seriousness of non-compliance with the conditions of a

sea-fishing licence. The SFPA commends the Sea-Fisheries Protection Officers for their diligence in this inspection and enforcement action.”

Ends

Note to Editor

Codend

Codend is the narrow end of a tapered trawl net.

Square mesh panel

Square mesh panel is a selectivity device in nets.

Further Information

About the SFPA

The Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) is the independent statutory body responsible for the regulation of the sea-fisheries and the sea-food production sectors. It promotes compliance with the EU Common Fisheries Policy, sea-fisheries law and food safety law relating to fish and fish products, verifies compliance and, where necessary, enforces it. Its mandate covers all fishing vessels operating within Ireland’s 200-mile limit, over 2,000 Irish registered fishing vessels wherever they operate, and all seafood produced in Ireland’s seafood processing companies. The SFPA operates through a network of regional port offices situated at Ireland’s main fishery harbours. For further information visit: www.sfpa.ie