



States of Guernsey
Sea Fisheries

2015

Annual Report



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1 Summary

1.1 Background

All commercial fishermen must fill in a logbook as a condition of their fishing vessel licence. Vessels smaller than 10 metres in length are required to submit logsheets quarterly, whilst vessels between 10 and 12 metres must submit their logsheets within 48 hours of landing. All local vessels over 12 metres in length now submit their logsheets directly to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) via an electronic logbook (E-log). Nil returns and small quantities of fish caught are still recorded as these are important data that contribute to the overall picture of fishing effort in Bailiwick waters.

2 The Year in Brief

2.2 Onshore and Inshore



Fig. 1 – an inshore patrol being carried out by *Puma* in Sark

Routine patrols were conducted in the same manner as preceding years, with shore-based patrols using the Land Rover and inshore patrols using *FPV Puma*. Although patrols are conducted throughout the year, particular emphasis is given to the summer months to coincide with the fishing season of the bay boats. Several vessels displaying GU numbers were found to not be holding a fishing vessel licence and swift action was taken to strike these vessels off the register. There was a concerted effort to

crackdown on sales of ‘black fish’ from unlicensed vessels to hotels and restaurants, with Sea Fisheries officers visiting a number of establishments to carry out inspections.

An important part of the shore patrols are inspections of the designated shellfish beds. These beds are susceptible to storm damage but are only accessible at low water on spring tides. This means that the sites cannot always be inspected immediately after a storm event, but Officers endeavour to inspect all of the sites as soon as the tides permit. As with 2014, the unusually warm November and December resulted in increased conflict between netters and other beach users. The netting ordinance dates from 1997 and the number and type of activities being conducted in the inshore zone has increased considerably in the passing 19 years. Sea Fisheries are in the process of consulting with islanders with a view to overhauling the existing ordinances to better reflect the modern-day demands being placed on the inshore zone.



Fig. 2 – workers on the shellfish bed at Grande Havre

2.3 Offshore

Offshore patrols are conducted throughout the year and consist of both targeted and routine inspections. Targeted inspections are carried out when Officers believe that an offence may

have taken place, whereas routine inspections are undertaken to monitor fishing activity and to act as a deterrent. Although licensed fishing vessels are the main target of offshore patrols, attention is also given to visiting charter vessels. Charter boats from the south coast of the UK often use Alderney as a base to fish around the islands, particularly on the Schole and Casquets banks. Regular inspections are carried out to ensure that the masters/ charterers are aware of the local ordinances regarding minimum sizes and the ban on the sale of fish caught on unlicensed boats.



Fig. 3 – Emilia Jayne BM10 hauling her scallop dredges

Commercial vessels from Guernsey, Jersey, the UK and France are routinely boarded both within and without Bailiwick waters. Depending on the size and type of vessel being boarded, inspections can last from twenty minutes up to a number of hours. Details of the fishing vessel licence are checked; fishing gear is measured and inspected to ensure that it complies with both local and EU legislation and catches are inspected to ensure that minimum

landing sizes have been respected and catches in the fish hold reflect the catches recorded in the log book.

2.4 Working Relationships



The array above shows a small selection of other government departments, trading bodies and non-governmental organisations that Sea Fisheries works closely with. Relationships range from the trading of data and statistics to using the *Leopardess* for marine operations and personnel transfer. Sea Fisheries Officers are tasked to skipper and crew the *Leopardess* for other States of Guernsey departments as part of the Sea Fisheries mandate. She is available 24/7 for emergency callouts.

2.5 Ormering

Sea Fisheries were once again on patrol for each of the permitted ormering tides. As has become traditional in recent years, the first set of tides saw an impressive number of people turn out – despite the tide height being notably poor. The best tides of the season occurred at the end of March, with two consecutive tides of 0.1 predicted. Although ormer patrols are undertaken primarily to deter people from taking undersized ormers, public interaction is vital in order to gain feedback on stock levels. Ormer gatherers spoken to by Officers were reporting catches broadly in line with previous years; however there seemed to be a notable reduction in the number of juvenile ormers reported.

2.6 Sea Temperature

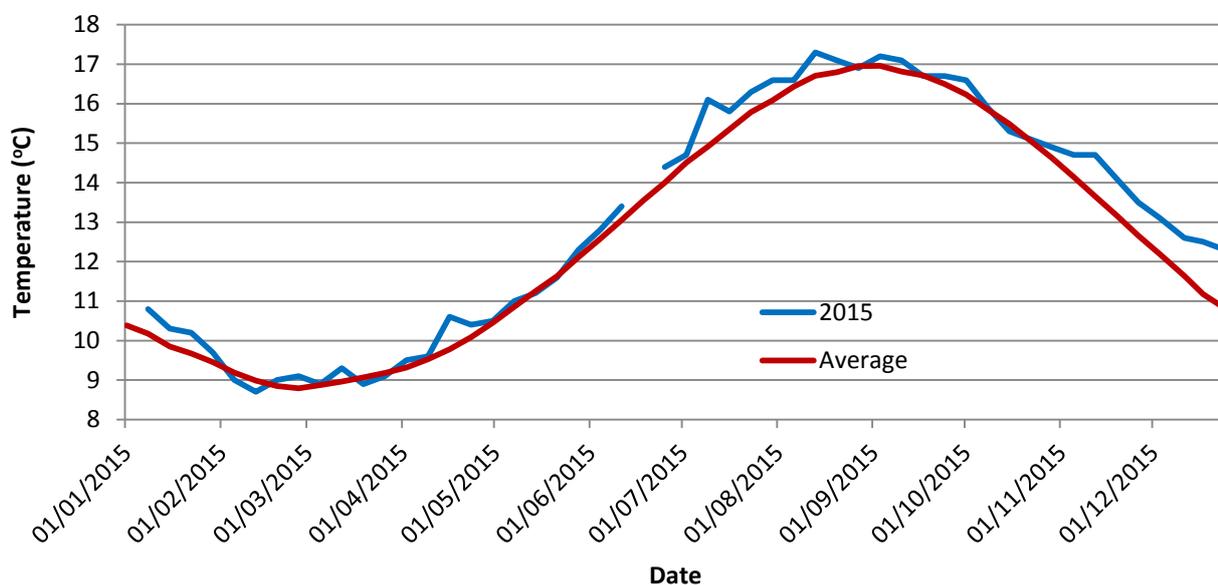


Chart 1 – comparison of weekly sea temperature for 2015 against the 35-year average

The weather for the first ten months of 2015 was notably uneventful, particularly when compared with recent years. Temperatures and wind speeds were broadly in line with average figures and this is reflected in the sea temperature (see *Chart 1* above), where the plot for 2015 closely matches that of the average until October. The sea temperature becomes increasingly higher than average from mid-October onwards, with a record high of 12.3°C recorded on 31st December – a significant 1.5°C above the average. This is due to a large blocking anticyclone which became established over continental Europe during the beginning of November and remained broadly unchanged for the following two months, bringing consistent southerly and south-westerly winds to the Channel Islands. These winds originate from the tropics and blow over comparatively warm ocean, resulting in persistently high air temperatures being recorded in November and December. Guernsey Met Office figures show that the average air temperature for December was 11.6°C, a new record high by some margin.

2.7 Disease Testing

Every year a sample of oysters and larvae is sent to the laboratories at Cefas (Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science) for the purpose of disease screening. This screening is designed to limit the spread of disease between aquaculture sites and a clean bill of health is necessary to enable local aquaculture farmers to export their produce to sites in the UK, Europe and further afield. The oysters and larvae are tested for ostreid herpesvirus-1 (OsHV-1) and other diseases listed by the OIE (Office International des Epizooties). All of the tests performed on the local oysters and larvae came back negative, showing that the local aquaculture sites continue to be in good health.

3 The Fleet

Vessel Category	Number of vessels 2010	Number of vessels 2011	Number of vessels 2012	Number of vessels 2013	Number of vessels 2014	Number of vessels 2015
GU registered <10m	171	160	158	159	159	153
GU registered >10m	8	8	8	7	7	7

Table 1 – the Bailiwick of Guernsey licensed fleet 2010-2015

3.1 Local Under 10m



Fig 7 – Dorado GU151 potting on the west coast of Sark

The net change in 2015 was a reduction of six Under 10 vessels; the largest reduction in the number of Under 10 vessels in a single year since 2011. The total number of vessel movements was significantly higher than this. Changes of ownership occur both between owners locally and selling and buying vessels and licences from the UK. The Under 10 fleet is unrestricted with regard to which methods can be used for fishing (subject to adherence to the 1997 Fishing Ordinance), with all

vessels being permitted to undertake fishing by any method. The advantage to this lack of restrictions means that the Under 10 fleet can be dynamic and adjust their fishing to whatever species and methods are most beneficial at that time of year. Allowing the fishery to be flexible means that our local fishermen can always obtain the greatest commercial value from their fishing licence.

3.2 Local Over 10m

The same seven vessels made up the Over 10m fleet in both 2014 and 2015. Of these seven, four vessels are engaged in potting (three based in Guernsey and one in Alderney) and three vessels are trawlers (both demersal and beam trawling). Unlike the under 10 fleet, the Over 10m vessels are restricted as to what methods they are permitted to use. Four of the seven Over 10m vessels (two trawlers and two potters) have now switched to the electronic logbook which reports directly to the MMO in the UK in accordance with EU law.



Fig 8 – Amy Blue GU116 is an Over 10m trawler

3.3 Non-GU Vessels



Fig. 9 – Ebonnie BM 176 is a UK-registered vessel with a Bailiwick fishing licence. Photo credit: shipspotting.com

Non-GU vessels are granted a licence to fish based on their track record of fishing in Bailiwick waters. The permitted methods are granted based on the track record. This applies to both Under 10 and Over 10 vessels. There was a reduction of one Under 10 and Over 10 licensed vessel in 2015, meaning a total of 30 non-GU vessels now hold a licence to fish in Bailiwick waters. Although 30 vessels hold a licence, only approximately 1/3 fish in Bailiwick waters on a regular basis.

	Trawling	Dredging	Potting	Angling	Multi-Method	Total
Under 10	0	0	1	4	3	8
Over 10	3	6	6	1	6	22

Table 2 – breakdown of non-GU vessels by method and sector

4 Landings

4.1 Landings Table

	Annual Landings (tonnes)							Average Value/ kg (2015 prices) ²
	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	
Anglerfish	0.4	0.9	1.9	1.3	1.1	1.1	1.1	£3.78
Bass	18.5	30.5	27.6	44.4	74.0	120.0	94.2	£11.57
Black Bream	10.4	21.3	13.7	12.7	13.9	34.0	91.5	£3.36
Brill	5.4	8.7	6.8	7.9	10.2	7.4	7.4	£6.40
Cod	3.9	3.0	1.7	3.0	3.4	2.7	0.9	£3.03
Conger	6.4	7.7	8.8	10.1	8.7	12.0	31.0	£1.00
Crayfish	0.1	0.2	0.6	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.5	£31.92
Cuttlefish	3.4	2.6	1.6	1.7	1.4	0.2	0.4	£1.91
Dogfish	9.2	12.5	16.2	15.3	18.0	9.0	23.5	£0.63
Edible Crab	708.9	878.2	784.2	785.6	692.7	759.0	622.0	£2.03
Grey Mullet	1.3	1.6	1.7	2.6	5.5	4.9	5.3	£0.67
John Dory	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.6	£8.34
Lobster	117.2	128.2	98.6	102.3	101.5	79.0	66.5	£17.50
(number)	164,143	168,645	139,654	146,429	147,204	105,532	58,881	NA
Ling	0.7	0.9	2.0	2.0	2.6	1.8	1.8	£2.58
Mackerel	4.4	6.5	9.3	5.3	5.4	7.4	9.7	£1.15
Plaice	1.2	1.7	1.4	1.3	1.8	1.0	0.9	£1.45
Pollack	53.5	68.1	64.5	82.4	85.8	59.8	68.2	£4.08
Ray	144.7	153.3	110.2	136.5	158.8	112.0	105.8	£2.42
Red Mullet	4.8	5.0	4.7	6.0	4.8	5.2	4.3	£3.72
Sand Sole	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.4	1.1	0.9	1.4	£4.58
Sandeel	21.2	28.1	26.4	55.6	48.3	56.8	51.7	£3.34
King Scallop	105.2	101.2	102.6	95.7	108.2	118.0	89.6	£3.76
Smoothound	4.6	5.6	6.6	4.4	3.5	2.0	16.7	£1.30
Sole	2.4	5.1	4.0	2.3	4.0	3.1	3.2	£9.15
Spider Crab	57.6	34.2	34.9	40.7	40.1	69.0	77.8	£1.48
Squid	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.5	£5.72
Turbot	9.2	6.0	7.8	10.2	10.3	6.2	3.4	£9.96
Tope	0.1	3.3	5.7	3.2	4.8	8.9	14.0	£1.80
Wrasse ¹	4.7	5.6	4.0	7.9	8.1	8.2	8.5	£0.76
Total (wetfish)	308	376.4	325.9	414.9	474.2	464.6	545.1	
Total (shellfish)	993.1	1145.3	1022.8	1026.4	944.4	1025.8	857.3	
Total (all)	1301.1	1521.7	1348.7	1441.3	1418.6	1490.4	1402.4	
Value (£000's)	5,089	5,832	4,960	5,438	5,704	5,863	5,219	

Table 3 – landings of key commercial species by GU-registered vessels in 2015. This does not include landings or catches made by non-GU vessels fishing in Bailiwick waters.

¹ Wrasse landings do not include those caught and used as pot bait.

² To reflect the fact that approximately 80% of landings are made into France the indicative 2015 price has been weighted more heavily towards the French market prices than prices paid locally. The French market prices were obtained by calculating the average from the daily Cherbourg Criée prices and applying the average 2015 Euro exchange rate.

4.2 Analysis

4.2.1 Overview

The majority of species saw a reduction in landings during 2015, of varying degrees of severity. The result is that total landings were over 200 tonnes lower than in 2014 and the lowest since accurate records began in 2003; 47.6 tonnes lower than the previous low of 2013. Despite this record low in landing weight, the value of the landings remains above that of 2013 thanks to increased landings of high-value species such as lobster and turbot. Whilst low landings are always of concern, it is not necessarily the conclusion that fish stocks are reducing. Landings data are only statistically useful when viewed in parallel with the effort data which is presented later in this report. The logsheet return rate was 5% lower in 2015 than in 2014, which will account for a minor percentage of the drop in landings and effort recorded.

Almost 80% of landings are now made in to France, with the larger boats using Cherbourg and smaller vessels landing to Dielette. Although the prices paid are higher than those achievable locally, it means that fishermen are vulnerable to fluctuations in the Euro exchange rate. 2015 saw a much weaker Euro than 2014 (average exchange rate of 0.73 compared to 0.8) which meant that although prices paid by the market had actually increased, the net price to the fishermen was lower.

4.2.2 Shellfish



Fig 10 – Dorado GU151 is an Under 10m potter

The pleasing story of 2015 was the substantial increase in spider crab landings compared to the decline experienced in recent years. Although still significantly lower than the landings experienced historically, at 57.6 tonnes the landings were nearly 60% higher than those in 2014 and the highest since 2010. Lobster landings saw an 11 tonne decrease compared to 2014 but remain comfortably above the 5-year average of

109 tonnes. In percentage terms the drop in lobster landings equates roughly to the drop in potting effort, implying that the stock is still stable. Landings of edible crab saw a 20% reduction compared to 2014, dropping 170 tonnes from 878.2 to 708.9. This is the lowest landing of edible crab since 2011 and is 61 tonnes below the five-year average. Approximately half of this drop could be attributed to the decrease in potting effort seen in 2015. The resurgence of the spider crab fishery could also have played a role, with fishermen choosing to target grounds for spider crab rather than edible crab.

Scallop landings have remained broadly similar since 2013, fluctuating by less than 5%.

4.2.2 Wetfish

After two years of decline, it was encouraging to see the wetfish landings experience a 50 tonne increase compared to 2013. A large part of this increase (15.5%) is due to the ray landings made in 2014, as this species was abundant in local waters. Landings of bass showed a slight increase for the first time since 2010, although 2013's landings were still less than 25% of those landed in 2008. Although only a small percentage of the total landings at 3 tonnes, cod also unexpectedly saw a large percentage increase compared to



Fig 11 – sorting a typical mixed trawl of wetfish species

2013 – this was surprising given the record sea water temperatures. Sandeel landings also appear to have stabilised at around the 28 tonne mark, partly due to the fact that there is now only one dedicated full-time sandeel trawler in the fleet. Despite several species showing encouraging increases compared to 2013, it is worth noting that the wetfish landings for 2014 remained 76 tonnes below the 7 year average. The reduction seen in mackerel landings in 2014 can be attributed to the late arrival of mackerel into our waters due to the high turbidity at the start of the year, which effectively shortened the mackerel season.

5 Effort

5.1 Potting

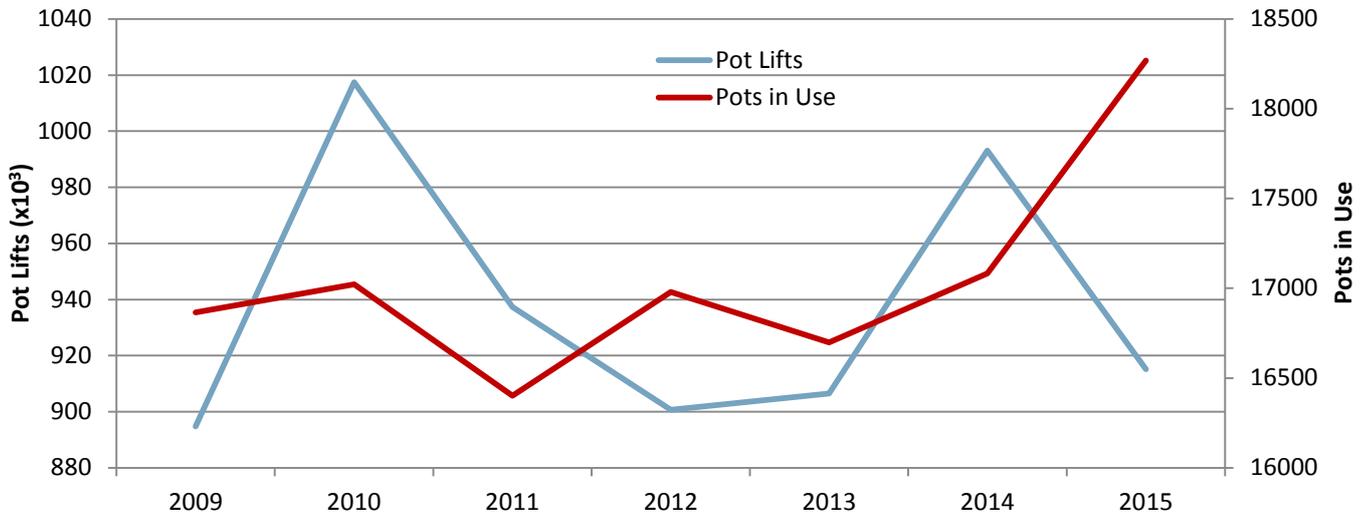


Chart 3 – number of pots in use and number of pot lifts 2009-2015

After the peak in pot lifts seen in 2014, potting effort for 2015 returned to a similar level to that of 2012 and 2013. Despite the decline in the number of pot lifts, the number of pots in use actually increased by over 1,000 compared to 2014. Although the 70,000 decline in the number of pot lifts looks dramatic on the graph, it represents a change of less than 10%. Dividing the number of pot lifts by the number of pots in use, each pot was lifted an average of 51 times.

5.2 Netting

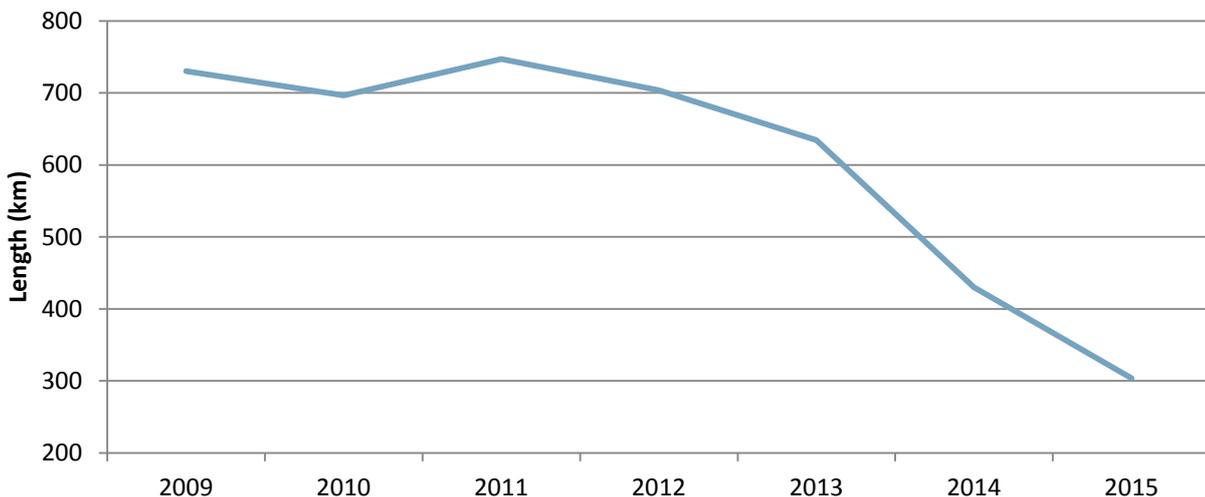


Chart 4 – length of nets set in Bailiwick waters 2009-2015. Includes tangle netting.

Netting effort has been decreasing since 2012, with the 304km of net set in 2015 less than half the length set in 2011. Due to the successful lobster fishery of the past couple of years many of the Under 10m fleet have diversified into potting, with a consequent reduction in netting effort. Netting is one of the most emotive fishing methods locally, with increasing conflict in recent years with other beach users and anglers.

5.3 Trawling

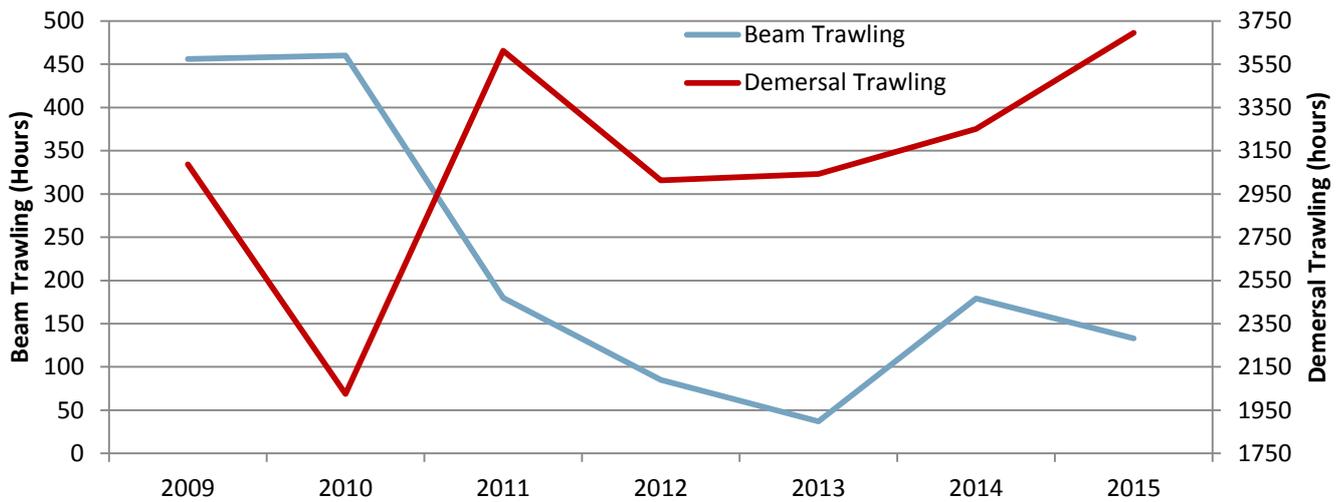


Chart 5 – demersal and beam trawling effort 2009-2015

Despite a decrease in beam trawling effort compared to 2014, effort was still higher than the 5 year average. Only a select few of the Under 10m fleet and one Over 10m vessel use this method, often only during the summer when the ray fishery is reduced. Demersal trawling effort is over one order of magnitude greater than beam trawling (please note the different scales used). Demersal trawling effort has been steadily increasing since 2012 and has now surpassed the previous 5 year high recorded in 2011. Effort by non-GU vessels has decreased significantly since 2012 thanks to the reintroduction of fishing vessel licensing out to 12nm.

5.4 Hand Diving

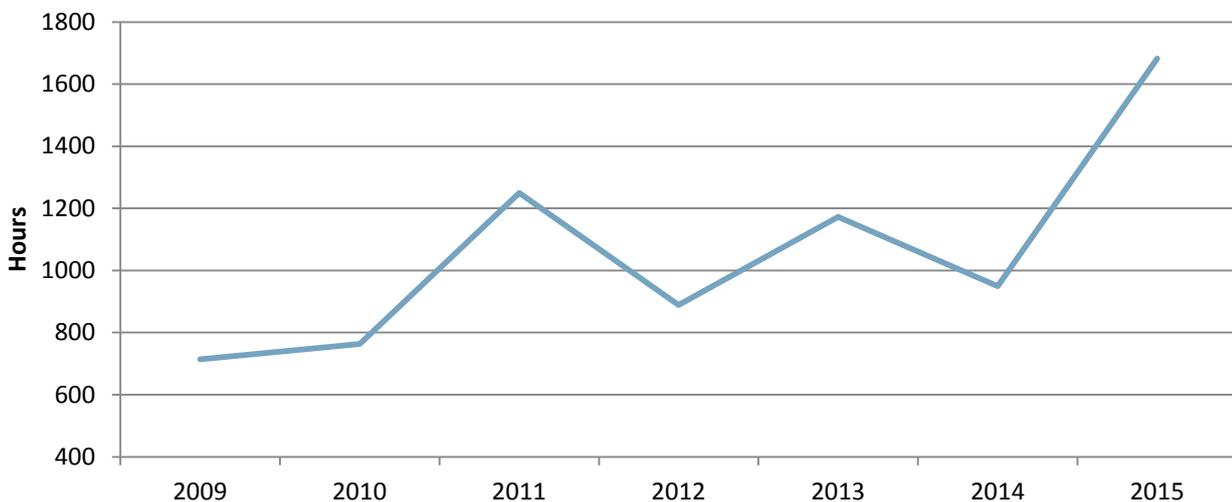


Chart 6 – hand diving effort 2009-2015

The warmer sea temperatures later in the year and fewer periods of inclement weather than in recent years meant that hand diving effort saw a substantial increase. This resulted in increased scallop landings compared to 2014 despite the decrease in dredging effort. Despite the large hike in effort, the number of vessels recording diving as a fishing method in 2015 was the same as in 2014 (9 vessels). Diving is becoming a more popular pastime locally and it is predicted that diving effort will continue to increase as fishermen diversify their fishing methods.

5.5 Long Lining

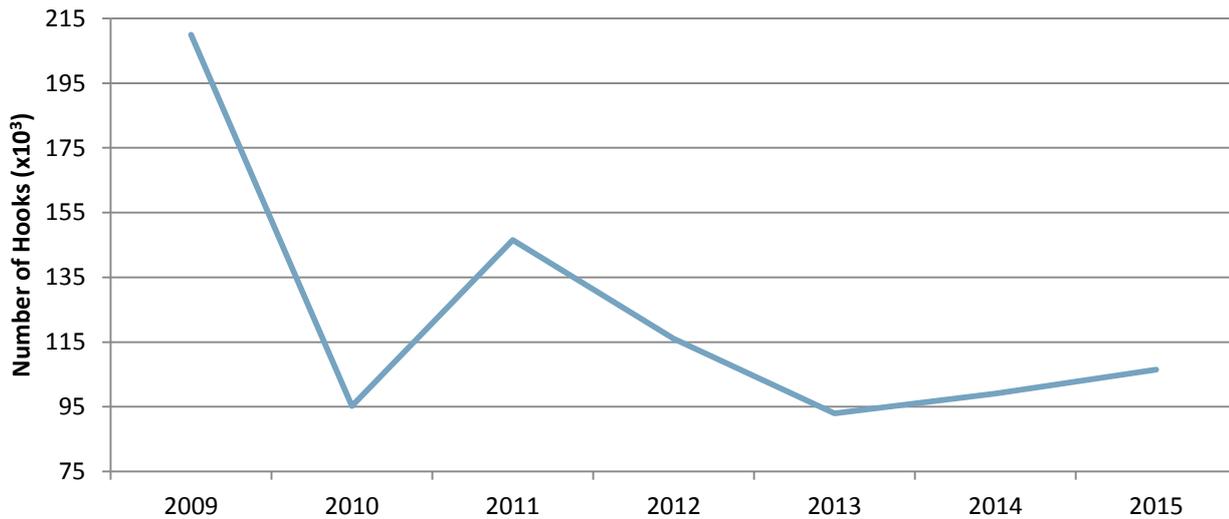


Chart 7 – long lining effort 2009-2015

After a three year period of decline from 2011-2013, 2015 saw a small increase in long lining effort for the second year running. Despite this increase, the number of hooks set in 2015 is just half that recorded in 2009. Long lining is a very labour intensive fishing method, with lines of up to 300 individual hooks needing to be prepared. Interestingly despite the increase in the number of hooks set from 2014-2015, the number of vessels recording long lining as a fishing method decreased from 14 to 11.

5.6 Angling

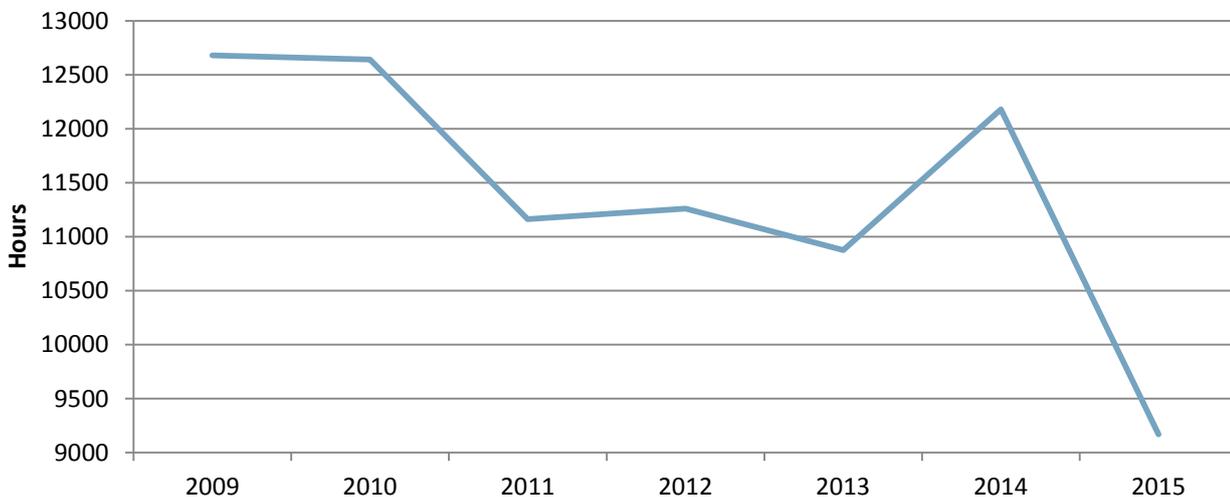


Chart 8 – angling effort 2008-2014

Angling effort includes fishing by rod and line, handlines, jigging machines and trolling. In terms of the number of vessels, angling is by far the most popular fishing method as almost every fishing vessel has the capability to allow a rod and line to be used. Angling effort experienced the biggest drop of all the fishing methods from 2014-2015, with 2015's effort of 9167 hours representing close to a 30% reduction compared to 2014.