

THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE FISHING INDUSTRY

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In UK waters, as well as in the rest of Europe, the fishing industry is having to come to terms with spatial planning. Awareness of underwater cultural heritage issues hitherto has generally been quite low. The southern North Sea has regularly yielded Ice Age- or land bridge-related artefacts but there has been no real perception of the existence of heritage sites per se; if recovered objects have received any sort of media coverage it has been on a par with recovered mines or other 20th century ordnance. The occasional reports of wreck-related ‘catches’ have been in the same category.

Seafish has operated its Kingfisher Charts department for over 50 years and has built up a huge database of seabed obstructions or ‘fasteners’. Virtually the entire fleet co-operates in this endeavour with the result that ‘coming fast’ is now quite an unusual occurrence.

Spatial planning, increasing recognition of the importance of heritage sites, dramatic advances in vessel monitoring systems (VMS), and moves to codify good practice in fishing all now offer the potential for a more systematic approach to marine heritage protection. This presentation outlines this potential and the means by which it could be achieved.

**note: Seafish provides support to, but does not represent, the UK seafood industry*