



## Christopher Kowalski Fishery Officer

“I read the news today, oh boy...”

For once, a Beatles reference that is actually quite close to the truth! Except, I hadn't read the news, I'd read the Daily Handover, which details events of note throughout the Scottish fishing industry, or at least, the part that we deal with here in the UKFMC.

This is passed from team to team, so that we always know what has happened in the last 24 hours, and what might come up in the next.

The UKFMC (United Kingdom Fisheries Monitoring Centre), based at Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, is a 24/7, 365 days a year operation, staffed by British Sea Fishery Officers (BSFOs) who keep an eye on the activities of all fishing vessels in Scottish waters, and all Scottish vessels, wherever they may be in the world.

Unlike our colleagues who work in our coastal offices and at various fishing ports throughout the country, we don't get out much - we tend to deal with emails and telephone calls coming in - although these can generate quite a bit of follow up work! We also constantly monitor the various Protected and Restricted areas around the Scottish coast, making sure that our marine ecosystems are given the protection they need.

Whether it is dealing with issues or requests from other Fishing Administrations in the rest of the UK, anywhere in Europe with a fishing fleet, or further afield - such as Norway and The Faroe Islands - or answering phone calls from disgruntled skippers whose laptops have decided not to work (after all, sea water and electronics don't mix well all the time) there is rarely a dull moment in this place.



VICTORIA QUAY

I graduated from Edinburgh University as an “adult learner” (I refuse to say mature student, cos I am not!) and was keen to get back into work. I was lucky enough to get a job with Marine Scotland, and after a short time, was asked to go into the UKFMC to cover a vacancy. I have to confess, I was absolutely astonished by the complexity of the job - I knew I didn't know much about the fishing industry, but I soon found out how MUCH I didn't know! Demersal, pelagic, nephrops, otter trawls,

Square Mesh Panels, codends - who knew? Well, with the help of some incredibly patient folk at all levels now I know - well, sort of...and I also know there is a LOT more to learn. The legislation and Directives that we work to are quite complicated as well (not to mention the jargon); SSIs, EPis, CFP, TechCon Regs, EFCA requirements, Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013 - I could go on, but it would make the job seem far more intimidating than it actually is.

The people I work with have a wealth of knowledge, and are more than willing to share it with you (sometimes at length, mind!) This really is the place where the phrase “There is no such thing as a silly question” is taken seriously - and believe me, I have tested that many times!

Ultimately, the vast majority of people we deal with, in any capacity, are trying to get a decent job done, in often trying,

challenging, or difficult circumstances. I have been in the UKFMC for a year and a half, and have enjoyed 99% of it - apart from the getting up at 5am for an early shift.

The second line of the Beatles song I started with is ...“...about a lucky man who made the grade”. I know it is not really cool and trendy to admit to being proud of your job - but I have to be honest and say I am proud of what I have achieved in the past 18 months, and proud to say I work for Marine Scotland. I think I am ‘making the grade’ here, and I hope I continue to do so for quite some time to come.

## Further Information

For further information about our work:

Access our website:

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