

The RNLI is the charity that saves lives at sea

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From: Anstruther Lifeboat Station

Anstruther RNLI partake in a UK first improving safety for local fisherman

Anstruther Lifeboat Station has assisted a local association in becoming the first group of its kind to win funding in the provision of integrated lifejackets for a fishing fleet

Anstruther coxswain Michael Bruce and RNLI Fishing Safety team member John Fulton have worked closely with the Fisherman's Mutual Association (FMA) in Pittenweem to secure a grant totalling over 60% of the total costs from the European Maritime Fisheries Fund to provide local skippers with this advanced safety equipment.

In addition to the standard benefit of buoyancy, these lifejackets are equipped with Personal Location Beacons (PLB's) which can be activated quickly in the event of the person entering the water and the signal that is transmitted will not only alert the emergency services to this incident but will continue to communicate the position of the person to aid in their swift rescue.

Michael Bruce commented: 'This is a fantastic development in the safety of our fishermen and it has been a privilege to be a part of the first movement of its kind in the UK. It is especially pleasing for me as I was a fisherman for 23 years and a lifeboat volunteer for 24 years so to bring together both in this way and help put in place such high-tech equipment for friends and former colleagues is a huge honour.'

Local skipper John Davidson had lifejackets previously on his two vessels *Sparkling Star* and *Scotia Star* and he is delighted in the advancement in technologies to further safeguard his crew of nine. John said: 'This is a great development for our fishermen and we are delighted to have this in place. We previously wore our lifejackets religiously but the RNLI workshops delivered to us over the last few months on Cold Water Shock and the analysis of our man overboard recoveries has certainly helped us in our thinking. I would like to thank the RNLI for their efforts in both educating and analysing our current procedures and the FMA for working hard on securing the funding and the European Maritime Fisheries Fund for helping with the costs of these lifejackets.'

It is hoped that our fishermen never require the use of the advanced technology but it is comforting to know of their capabilities and this is a view shared by Pittenweem FMA Manager Tom Mackenzie. He spoke of his own delight at this advancement in fishing safety. 'We are extremely proud of our skippers for taking this critical safety step in safeguarding themselves and their crew members whilst at work in an extremely challenging environment. Special thanks must go to Marine Scotland and the EMFF for contributing 60% of the overall cost of these jackets. We have

fishermen who have worked in the industry for over 20 years and to see them engaging in such a positive change is fantastic. On behalf of the FMA and our members, I would like to thank Michael Bruce and John Fulton of the RNLI Fishing Safety team for delivering presentations on cold water shock and reaffirming the importance of life jackets and how the emergency services are alerted when a PLB is set off. We hope never to have a situation where this equipment has a telling impact on our fishermen but we have comfort in its capabilities should it ever be called upon.'

With the handover of the lifejackets complete, it is hoped that the RNLI in Anstruther can further aid in the provision of servicing these jackets annually.

With similar advancements by ports on the west coast of Scotland, it is hoped that others will follow suit and contribute to the aim of our charity in eliminating preventable loss of life at sea.

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RNLI online

For more information on the RNLI please visit www.rnli.org.uk. News releases and other media resources, including RSS feeds, downloadable photos and video, are available at the RNLI Press Centre www.rnli.org.uk/press

Key facts about the RNLI

The RNLI charity saves lives at sea. Its volunteers provide a 24-hour search and rescue service around the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland coasts. The RNLI operates over 230 lifeboat stations in the UK and Ireland and has more than 100 lifeguard units on beaches around the UK. The RNLI is independent of Coastguard and government and depends on voluntary donations and legacies to maintain its rescue service. Since the RNLI was founded in 1824 its lifeboat crews and lifeguards have saved over 137,000 lives. The RNLI is a charity registered in England, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland.