

# South Devon College launches fishing apprenticeship

A Devon college is hoping to reel in commercial fishers of the future with its new apprenticeship scheme. South Devon College, in Paignton, has recently launched its fisher apprenticeship.

Working alongside regional employers, apprentices on the scheme will learn how to sustainably harvest fish and shellfish as well as learn about fishing methods.

Laurence Gilson, who has been working as a fisherman for 16 years – like his father, grandfather and great-grandfather before him – is undertaking the apprenticeship. He is one of around 11,000 fishers in the UK.

“I work 12 hours a day in the wheelhouse on six hour shifts,” he said. “I spend my life chasing something just like a video game and I know what I’m chasing is worth money and what I’ve chased I’ve done it all myself.”

He added: “If you’ve got the drive to make you want to go into the industry there’s no ends to what you can do in this job. Set a goal and achieve the goal. The sky’s the limit.”

Martyn Youell, head of fisheries at Waterdance, which is working with South Devon College on the scheme, says fishing is “physically and mentally challenging with excellent career progression” but is facing a recruitment shortage.

“Fishing can seem like a closed world where the only routes in are by word of mouth or being born into a fishing family. But the skills to be a fisher can absolutely be learnt,” he said.

“The apprenticeship route provides a structured introduction to fishing that I’m confident will draw in brilliant people

who go on to achieve success in UK fishing,” added Martyn, whose company will be taking on several apprentices. “There is so much potential for people who want to work hard.”

Fisher apprentices will study at the recently opened South Devon College Marine Academy, which is based at Premier Marina’s new £75m Noss-on-Dart Marina.

“We see this apprenticeship as being of great importance to the future of the South West’s fishing communities and employers, and are pleased to have been able to work with local employers and fish producers organisations on its development,” said Adrian Bevan, head of curriculum at South Devon College.

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