

Whitby Seafoods acquires first scampi trawler in move to improve fishing efficiency

Scampi producer Whitby Seafoods has acquired a new trawler – the first it has owned outright.

The £65.6m turnover firm says the purchase is part of a long term investment strategy and will be used to develop the use of new fishing technologies. Whitby Seafoods has already been working with The Golden Ray B963 to carry out fishing gear trials, and now the Northern Ireland-based vessel comes under the North Yorkshire company's ownership.

The Golden Ray is skippered by Darren McClements who has been fishing for more than 37 years. He joins Whitby Seafoods Group's Northern Ireland-based company, Kilkeel Seafoods, as fleet operations director.

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Mr McClements was named Fisherman of the year winner at the 2023 Fishing News Awards, nominated for “undertaking leading work for the industry”, which included the work with Whitby Seafoods and SafetyNet Technologies on what is said to be ground-breaking gear trials.

Whitby Seafoods said the acquisition of the vessel is evidence of its interest in improving welfare and innovation on fishing boats. Trials so far carried out on The Golden Ray include work on gear selectivity devices, more efficient propulsion and handling innovation. Forthcoming work could help improve

sight of fishing grounds to The Golden Ray can head directly to the best fishing areas and therefore reduce fuel consumption and impact on the sea bed.

Daniel Whittle, Whitby Seafoods managing director, said: "This important purchase means we can showcase best practise in gearing and technology and the highest welfare standards. This investment shows Whitby Seafoods' tangible commitment to provide real on the water solutions to further improve the welfare of fishers and the sustainability of scampi, the dish we are famous for."

Whitby Seafoods, which employs about 400 people, markets a range of frozen and chilled scampi, fish goujon and calamari products which it supplies to major supermarket retailers such as Tesco, Asda, Morrisons and Farmfoods. It recently announced it coordinated a cross industry agreement to move to an In Transition to MSC fishery improvement scheme to get Marine Stewardship accreditation for scampi caught in waters around the British Isles.