

Iconic fishing boats may disappear from Southend seafront



Glyn Gilson, Lewis Gilson, Vincent Bushby and Bill Gilson with the boats

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TWO fishing boats may soon disappear from Southend seafront as declining fish stocks force one of the town's biggest fishing families to shut up shop.

W&G Gilson is putting its fishing boats, which have featured in countless postcards and TV programmes moored next to the pier, up for sale due to the collapse in catches.

The Gilson family, which has fished the area for three generations, is also likely to shut its fishmonger in Burdett Road, Southend, which opened in 1972.

It will result in the loss of five jobs. Bill Gilson, 60, who has been fishing in Southend for 40 years, said: "These two boats are iconic.

"They appear on most articles and television programmes at the top of [Adventure Island](#) and they are all over the internet.

"People will be very upset because the town views it as a traditional industry.

"They are losing a traditional business that has been a flagship for the town in the past."

His brother Glyn, 57, said: “With the expense of running a business and the boats something has to give.”

The brothers have put the Lilley G and Marli J on the market for £250,000 each, after repainting them at Essex Marina, on Wallasea Island.

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The 10m trawlers, which the Gilsons designed and built 15 years ago, were meant to last 40 years.

However, sole stocks in the Thames have more than halved in two years, the Echo revealed in June.

Bill added: “Our family has had a good living out of the river for three generations.

“There is always a period that earns you money for the year, whether it is sprat, sole or herring.

Never does it fail all together.

“But in the past two years all the fisheries have failed.”

The brothers, along with other fisherman, blame the collapse in fish stocks on dredging for the £1.5billion London Gateway superport, at Corringham.

DP World, which owns the port, has pointed to other possible causes, including new fishing techniques and the Thames being inundated with fresh water after heavy rain.

MEETING TO DISCUSS FISH STOCKS TO BE HELD TODAY

FISHERMAN, marine experts and representatives from London Gateway will meet to discuss declining fish stocks today.

Bosses from DP World, which owns the superport in Corringham, and fishermen will meet officials from the Marine Management Organisation, the Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority and the Environment Agency in Southend.

Scientists from the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science, which advises the Government on managing fish stocks and raised alarm bells about a decline in sole earlier this year, will provide information and evidence at the meeting.

Paul Gilson, co-chairman of [Leigh](#) and Southend Fishermen's Association, South East England vice-chairman of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations and cousin of Glyn and Bill will attend the meeting, at the Tickfield Centre.

He said: "It has taken four and a half months to get to this stage.

Even the anglers are concerned now. There was a fishing competition on [Southend Pier](#) last Sunday and I've heard only five fish were caught."

A DP World spokesman said: "We are continuing our support to all agencies and will be attending the meeting."

Comments (4)

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7:39am Thu 25 Sep 14

another council tax payer says...

Paul Gilson got nicked for trying to sell fish far above his quota not so long ago so not a lot of sympathy from me

8:10am Thu 25 Sep 14

VeteranOfMany says...

It's the very actions of the local greedy fisherman, which has resulted in this decline in local fish stock. They wanted to make as much money as possible, and have ruined it for all.

8:15am Thu 25 Sep 14

Vange Resident says...

London Gateway does have a lot to answer for the decline in the fish stock, but over fishing and greed are all to blame, a well established business does not just fail over night, clearly something else has happened and 3 generations of one family have decided their day is done!

11:57am Thu 25 Sep 14

maxell says...

another council tax payer wrote:

Paul Gilson got nicked for trying to sell fish far above his quota not so long ago so not a lot of sympathy from me

you really do need to research before stating things you really know nothing about, as if you did it would be impossible for you to state as such. Truth is if you believe this then it you that are telling lies.

But going back to the item its not surprising, we are flooding there is no ground left to soak up the water. What ground there is , is so full of pesticides that then leach into water courses and into the sea. Airport want to burden the load further by dumping millions of gallons a day of untreated trade effluent into brooks which drain to the sea, this all need stopping instantly , then investment needs to be in placed before any further construction can take place. my opinion as always