



Agenda Item C1
Shore report, Kent
Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
Quarterly report for the period September 2021 to November 2021

Overview

Late Summer and Autumn have seen a real contrast compared to the beginning of the year when there were strong North Easterly breezes and cold weather. Sea temperatures have been mild and mostly low wind days so summer fish species have had extended seasons this year. The Japanese wire weed has finally dispersed which has caused havoc for the fishermen off the North Kent coast.

The TECFO cockle fishing season ended on 8th October after the six Kent boats completed their allocated 40 trips. The IFCA have since started an extensive review into the management of the cockle fisheries in the district with all interested parties voicing opinions in questionnaires and video interviews.

Many North Kent boats have started whelk fishing again and prices have remained under £1/kg for a while now. Although the number of inshore trawlers has been declining for some years, the ones that are still around have been having some good hauls of sole in particular. Some parts of Kent have had good reports of lobster catches whilst the fishermen have also highlighted the number of berried lobsters seen which is usual for this time of year.

Local fish have become more and more popular among the general public in Kent and nationally as well. Boats that have set up businesses selling local fish have done very well and often the demand outweighs the supply.

Queenborough

The fishing stall which was set up by the fishing boats catching local fish in August attracted very good business to start with but has slowed, and fish landings have mostly been going elsewhere now. Boats have been coming and going and most fishermen in Queenborough work part time now. One vessel has started oyster fishing and has found a market to sell them too.

Number of vessels fishing from Queenborough: 6

Faversham

Fishing activity in Faversham is inconsistent throughout the year. One of the vessels has spent this period fishing down in Brixham, which has proved very successful for them. A new vessel to the area has had extensive re-fit work and will be readied for whelk fishing shortly.

Number of vessels fishing from Faversham: 4

Whitstable

A number of vessels have now begun whelk fishing again full time after the summer season. Recently, there have been reports that the whelks have started spawning again and landing quantities have started to slow as a result. There are also reports of large quantities of very small whelks being seen in most areas off Whitstable. Fishermen who had started selling their catches locally paused their sales in October and are focussing their efforts more on the whelk fishing for the winter season.

The oyster fishermen have been catching native oysters but selling them has been difficult due to the ongoing issues with sewage discharge. Demand has reduced for Whitstable oysters particularly this year. One boat has been herring drifting and another has continued to work lobster pots. Some Whitstable fishermen have been v-notching berried lobsters this year to help protect the breeding stocks. The weed which was such a nuisance this year has finally dispersed.

The TECFO cockle fleet in Whitstable completed all their allocated trips for 2021 and managed their first full season in which all six boats landed their bags into Whitstable.

Number of vessels fishing from Whitstable: 15

Herne Bay

There have been two trailer launched commercial boats working out of Herne bay. They have been mostly lobster potting but also doing some netting as well.

Number of vessels fishing from Herne Bay: 2

Thanet Ports (Ramsgate/Broadstairs/Margate)

Ramsgate: Number of vessels fishing from Ramsgate: 13 (plus 9 Charter boats)

One whelk fishing boat has been sold recently but two boats continue to land whelks in between netting as well. The water temperature has not dropped significantly yet, and lobsters are still being caught in decent numbers. Ramsgate fishermen have also seen a good number of berried lobsters but also many smaller lobsters compared to the bigger sized ones. An issue for the fishermen is getting hold of bait for the pots.

The Ramsgate netters have had the weather on their side for this time of year to do regular trips. Sole numbers have been steady, and seabass have been landed as bycatch. Rod and line caught bass have been landed in large quantities by one boat with permitted entitlement. The Charter boats are still reporting bass

catches and are getting as many trips as possible in before bass are catch and release only for December.

Broadstairs: Number of vessels fishing from Broadstairs: 1

There has been no fishing activity in Broadstairs

Margate: Number of vessels fishing from Margate: 3

The boats in Margate mostly work part time and one of the boats has since moved to Ramsgate. The boats that have been going to sea continue to sell fin fish locally. Crab and lobster catches have not been good off Margate.

Deal and Walmer

Fishing activity is low in Deal and when the part time fishermen have been going, they have been catching mostly skate, herring and smoothhound to sell off the beach. Lobster catches have remained poor off Deal.

Number of vessels fishing from Deal and Walmer: 2

Dover:

One smaller vessel in Dover has been crab and lobster fishing but catches have been low over the Summer and Autumn months. This vessel is now part time. The Charter boats have been going regularly still with some fairly mild weather days in November so far.

Number of vessels fishing from Dover: 2

Folkestone and Hythe

Folkestone: Number of vessels fishing from Folkestone: 9

A couple of boats have been trawling and scallop fishing over Autumn and catches have been steady for finfish and good for scallops. The whelk boats finished whelking for the season at the end of summer, and catches were lower than desired for many of the fishermen. Some of the netters have caught bass and also some cod in their nets. Most of the fish was sold locally but some catches were still sent off to the EU.

Hythe: Number of vessels fishing from Hythe: 3

In Hythe a new fishing vessel has arrived on the beach with final preparations being carried out before going to sea. Other fishing activity has been low over this period.

Dungeness

Dungeness boats were able to land a real variety of fish when the weather allowed. The weather has been better than the start of the year and meant the fishermen could get to sea regularly. Sole fishing has been mostly good for one netting boat and they have had cod and bass in their hauls as well as a huge variety of other fish. One boat has been trawling consistently and one vessel has started skate fishing in November. There was even tuna spotted off Dungeness in November this year.

One boat in Dungeness has been whelk fishing throughout the year and the other boats have been crab and lobster potting recording good catches where they have landed spider crabs.

Number of vessels fishing from Dungeness: 6

Robert Watson, Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer