



## **Agenda Item C1**

### **Shore report, Kent**

#### **Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority**

#### **Quarterly report for the period May 2021 to September 2021**

##### Overview

The cold weather and North Easterly winds in Spring appeared to hamper fishing going into the Summer. This year has been bad in terms of the abundance of the Japanese Wire weed particularly off the North Kent Coast. It was not good for the fishermen in 2020 but seemed to get worse in 2021 and has stayed throughout the Summer.

Sole has been caught but not in the numbers compared to recent years. Seabass have been showing signs of recovery and targeted with rod and line caught commercial fisheries and caught as bycatch by other methods. Easing of lockdown steadied fish prices a little bit, but they have stayed quite low for the time of the year prompting fishermen to sell locally and be adaptive with their fishing methods.

The TECFO cockle season opened on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2021 with the 6 Kent boats allocated 40 trips each for the season. Stocks have been lower than previous years with Total Allowable Catch set at 6160 tonnes.

Whelk catches have been good off the Kent coast, but slowed as usual in the Summer off the North Kent coast. They have continued to be caught elsewhere as some boats fish for whelks all year round now. Prices have stayed at around £1 per kilo for quite some time now.

##### Queenborough

The boats in Queenborough have been selling fish locally and a new stall has been set up this Summer right next to the fishing boats. Boats have been netting and trawling in small amounts this Summer, with some boats being bought and sold. The two TECFO cockle boats moored in Queenborough are now landing their cockles in Whitstable.

Number of vessels fishing from Queenborough: 9

##### Faversham

After a quiet start to the year, the local boats started fishing a bit more regularly targeting sole and thornback ray. They have been hand gathering oysters and doing a small amount of netting as well. They sell their catch locally.

Number of vessels fishing from Faversham: 2

### Whitstable

For the 2021 TECFO season the boats that landed in Queenborough in previous years were forced to land elsewhere, with Whitstable being their best option. It did mean that 6 boats had to land in Whitstable this year. Some weeks, the boats were allocated 3 trips so with weather, tide and lorry availability a factor, it meant for careful planning. The meat yields of the cockles were good nearer the start of the season but has since declined with fishing time becoming longer.

Whelks catches have been steady and one boat has fished for whelks consistently through the Summer. A vessel arrived in Whitstable in April and has mainly fished for whelks. Oyster fishing and netting for finfish also occurred.

More boats are selling their catches locally as well as to fish merchants. Demand for locally caught fish boomed in 2020 and has continued into this year as well. Lobster catches slowed significantly in late August and there were inconsistent catches through the Summer months. The presence of the Japanese wire weed meant that fishermen had to change their methods or move their gear further offshore as the wire would swamp their gear.

Many of the Whitstable boats underwent re-fits this summer and some of the re-fits have taken longer than anticipated due to difficulties in acquiring materials due to Brexit.

Concerns have been raised by fishermen over the impact on the oyster fishery at Whitstable from the sewage discharges by Southern Water. Fishermen have had to discard large quantities of the shellfish as unfit for consumption and oysters had to be bought in to allow the annual oyster festival to go ahead.

Number of vessels fishing from Whitstable: 15

### Herne Bay

A small amount of netting and lobster potting occurred over this period. Both vessels are launched from trailers so are restricted by the tide. One fisherman had to move their lobster pots further out due to poor catches and abundance of weed. Recreational lobster potting and angling activity has been high.

Number of vessels fishing from Herne Bay: 2

### Thanet Ports (Ramsgate/Broadstairs/Margate)

**Ramsgate:** Number of vessels fishing from Ramsgate: 14 (plus 9 Charter boats)

Funding for chillers in Ramsgate has been received recently which has helped fishermen with storage and processing. Lobster catches have been good in some areas of Ramsgate as they have not been targeted as much in previous years. Whelk fishing inside and out the district has remained constant and the vessels fishing far off Ramsgate have had good catches throughout summer.

The Charter angling boats have been the some of the busiest boats in the harbour. Some of the boats have been doing two trips a day. Bass, sole,

Thornback ray and smoothhound have been seen landed in Ramsgate. Some vessels with entitlement have been landing rod-and-line caught bass.

**Broadstairs:**

There has been no fishing activity in Broadstairs

**Margate:**

One boat has been lobster fishing in small amounts but reported poor catches so resorted to drift netting for sole. Bass have also been landed as bycatch and some Herring fishing has occurred. Local merchants buying off the fisherman in Thanet have a limit on the quantity of fish, in particular skate, that they want from the fishermen.

Number of vessels fishing from Margate: 3

**Deal and Walmer**

The small amount of Deal fishermen that are left on the beach have reported poor catches of lobster. They have been catching mostly finfish to sell off the beach at Deal but have not been out regularly.

Number of vessels fishing from Deal and Walmer: 4

**Dover**

Fishing activity is low in Dover with the boats that go doing netting and lobster potting nearby. The Charter angling boats have been very busy over the Summer when the weather has been good.

Number of vessels fishing from Dover: 2

**Folkestone**

Scallop fishing has continued; one boat has seen with good amounts of scallop catches. Whelks are worked from spring to autumn usually in Folkestone and this has continued with good catches. Crab and lobster fishing has been steady and the fish stalls and merchants have had good business buying and selling fish, with one merchant keeping busy with deliveries also. Boats have had some bycatch of bass and also some cod. There has been one new lobster potting vessel turn up in Folkestone during this period.

Number of vessels fishing from Folkestone: 9

**Hythe:**

One of the more active fishing boats in Hythe has now been sold with a replacement one being readied for the autumn season. The usual influx of spider crabs has deterred netting but with sea temperatures starting to cool, the spider crabs are now slowly moving off. Other fishing activity such as potting has been low over the summer. One other vessel has had an engine refit.

Number of vessels fishing from Hythe: 3

## **Dungeness**

The Dungeness Fish shop has been extremely busy and have been selling the crab and lobsters that the local boats have been catching. The boats have been doing a small amount of netting and trawling and one boat has been predominantly whelk fishing, while the others have been doing it on and off.

Number of vessels fishing from Dungeness: 6

**Robert Watson, Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer**