



Agenda Item C1

Shore report, Kent

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly report for the period November 2022 to January 2023

Overview

Over the last quarter strong winds have really hampered the days in which boats have been able to get to sea.

Some codling have been caught in nets mostly in the Thames estuary and also off Folkestone, which is a positive sign for future fisheries. Squid have also been landed by some opportunistic fishermen. Sole prices have been very good but the difficulty is landing them in good quantities. Whelk catches in the Thames Estuary have been very poor and officers have been closely liaising with industry to try and establish a cause.

New bass regulations for 2023 were agreed in December and will see a slight increase for the commercial fishermen. Bass have been landed early into the winter season but not so much since the temperature has dropped. Prices for bass were low but there have been good numbers seen. The recreational bass season will coincide with the commercial season from the end of this year which is seen as a huge boost for the recreational industry.

Queenborough

The boats in Queenborough have kept very quiet so far this Winter mainly due to the weather hampering many fishing days. One boat has been oystering and occasionally trawling. Another boat is getting set up to start whelk fishing and netting after obtaining a new whelk permit recently. The TECFO cockle fleet have begun refits and maintenance on their vessels in preparation for the season. Some herring fishing has also occurred here which is popular for local tackle shops.

Number of vessels fishing from Queenborough: 6

Faversham

A trawlerman in Faversham has continued to fish down off the Devon coast and another trawler is now ready to start fishing. Some herring were also caught from here and sold locally. Faversham is a useful location for the boats to have maintenance and refits. A new boat has arrived recently to eventually become a whelk boat in the district.

Number of vessels fishing from Faversham: 2

Whitstable

Fishing activity in Whitstable has been quiet recently. Rising expenses, bad weather and poor fishing catches have forced some boat owners to list their boats for sale. Landings of whelks have been low ever since the end of Summer 2022 and there is significant concern amongst the fishermen in the harbour as to the reasons behind this. The boats that have been whelk fishing have been working hard to find bits of ground which would produce bigger catches, most of which seem to be in the deeper water. They have reported that the whelks have been spawning during this time as well which typically slows catches.

Many of the boats were netting and trawling towards the back end of last year and if they could land bass or sole then it would be worth their while going to sea. Lobster fishing continued for the boats up until just before the cold snap in December. The oyster boats have still been fishing but supply and demand has dropped in recent times due to the effects of the Southern Water pollution media attention.

The cockle boats have started prepping for the 2023 TECFO season and one of the skippers has been attempting to exploit other fisheries in the Thames estuary.

Number of vessels fishing from Whitstable: 15

Herne Bay

After a good Summer season of lobster fishing for one of the boats, fishing activity has slowed due to bad weather but lobsters were still being caught in good numbers around Christmas time. A fisherman is continuing to v-notch the egg bearing lobsters before returning them to sea.

Number of vessels fishing from Herne Bay: 1

Thanet Ports

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

The main activity by the boats in Ramsgate has been gill and trammel netting. Only one of the whelk vessels started whelk fishing before Christmas and another is prepping to start imminently. In previous years boats that fish for

whelks outside the district have fished most of the year, however this year it wasn't the case. The strong winds have limited the number of days the boats have been able to get to sea. The couple of rod and line fishing boats had a good run of seabass up until 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

Seabass was caught as bycatch in nets late into the season. Some squid have also been caught not far from Margate and other mixed finfish including herring were landed and sold locally.

Number of vessels fishing from Thanet Ports: 31

Deal and Walmer

One father and son team fishing boat at Deal have been netting when weather has allowed. They have switched from catching dogfish, skate and the occasional bass to herring and sprat fishing. All of their catch is sold fresh off the boat at their beach stall. The herrings are always popular, but they only started to be caught well into November last year and was a short season.

Number of vessels fishing from Deal and Walmer: 3

Dover

There has little commercial fishing activity from Dover. Most of the fishing is now from recreational and charter boats.

Number of vessels fishing from Dover: 2

Folkestone and Hythe

There is one boat in Folkestone that has been scallop fishing when weather has allowed. They have reported good catches when they are able to get to sea but rough winds from mostly a South Westerly direction have made this challenging. Other activity in the harbour is very quiet. The other boats have mostly been netting for skate, huss, plaice and bass when they are able to get to sea, a trawler has been targeting sole although catches have been quite poor. There have been some codling caught which has been encouraging for the fishermen.

Hythe boats haven't been to sea much at all since the Autumn. The boats are mostly part time now and one recreational boat on the beach enjoys the occasional netting and whelk potting when weather allows.

Number of vessels fishing from Folkestone and Hythe: 14

Dungeness

Some of the whelk boats started fishing again towards the end of November and they have noticed a difference in the quality of whelks which had reduced. The boats like to mix between netting and potting due to strong tides but the rough weather has kept the boats mostly on the beach over Winter.

Number of vessels fishing from Dungeness: 6

Robert Watson, Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer