



Agenda Item C1

Shore report, Kent

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly report for the period February 2023 to May 2023

Overview

The whelk fishing on the North Kent coast has been reported as very poor this year. Those vessels making good catches have done so in deeper water or outside the district.

With fishermen needing to be able to make the most of every catch, Seals are becoming a major problem by either removing or damaging fish that have been caught in trammel/gill nets making entire catches unmarketable. Whilst the damage in trawls seems to be less noticeable, the presence of seals is limiting the catch.

The winds this spring has been mostly from the North East, which has reduced fishing effort throughout the Kent coast.

Queenborough

The port has started to see one or two vessels start to fish, but the fishing is hard and with high fuel prices not many days are being worked.

The one boat that decided to invest in whelk fishing gave this up after a very short time due to lack of whelks.

The cockle vessels are preparing for the upcoming cockle season by refitting at their yard in Queenborough

Number of vessels fishing from Queenborough: 6

Faversham

The main trawler from here has been working away from the port, landing in Brixham, Devon and has only just recently arrived back in its home port.

Number of vessels fishing from Faversham: 2

Whitstable

The whelk fishing from here has been poor, with some boats working at the 6 mile limit some 15 to 20 miles away from port. The fishermen that have gone netting have had the problem of Seals damaging all or some of the catch, resulting in the days work being limited to a handful of fish.

The oyster season has just finished with steady orders and steady fishing has kept this viable.

The cockle boats have been having their annual refits, with major out of the water work being carried out in Dover.

Local trawled fish is scarce with trawls having to travel distances to make a viable catch. One Trawler is talking about moving away from the port for the summer months just to make a living.

Number of vessels fishing from Whitstable: 14

Herne Bay

A trailer launched commercial vessel is working out of this port with small catches of sole and Thornback rays. Vessels have been voluntarily v-notching female breeding lobsters in the area. The potting season has started slowly.

Number of vessels fishing from Herne Bay: 1

Thanet Ports

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

The whelk season was late to start with only 3 vessels making a go at this fishery, the rest have been using gill nets to target soles, smoothhounds and thornbacks. One or two vessels have been setting pots for crabs and lobsters. Seals have made finfish fishing harder than normal with parts of the catch being damaged or removed from the nets.

Broadstairs: Number of vessels fishing from Broadstairs: 1

There has been no fishing activity in Broadstairs

Margate: Number of vessels fishing from Margate: 3

One vessel has been targeting soles, thornback rays and smoothhounds using gillnets, also setting a few pots for early lobsters. Seal problems are also occurring at this port.

Number of vessels fishing from Thanet Ports: 17

Deal and Walmer

There are a very small number of boats left in Deal nowadays and most of the activity come from a small netting boat that sells their catch at a stall next to their boat. The boat hasn't been to sea as much recently but when they have gone, they have been catching skate and dogfish.

Number of vessels fishing from Deal and Walmer: 3

Dover

In Dover one smaller vessel has been fishing for crab and lobster and landing small amounts. A vessel that will be using hook and line for bass has joined this fleet.

Number of vessels fishing from Dover: 2

Folkestone and Hythe

Folkestone boats started whelk fishing with the inside grounds showing an abundance of small under 53mm whelks. One boat has been regularly fishing for scallops off Dungeness and has been landing good catches when the weather has allowed. Other boats have been swapping their fishing between netting and potting. Using both methods has let them take advantage of the fish that has been available. The one vessel that is exclusively rigged for trawling has been targeting both soles and plaice.

Hythe vessels have been mostly netting recently. Spider crabs and May weed has made fishing difficult this year with small numbers of soles, plaice and mixed fish being landed. Removing spider crabs from the nets takes a long time and damages the nets.

Number of vessels fishing from Folkestone and Hythe: 14

Dungeness

The vessels have been potting for whelks but the catches are not as plentiful as last year. Various other methods are being used to catch finfish with most of the catches being sent away to market, whilst fish for the shop are being imported into the district. Fishing for crabs and lobsters has just started.

Number of vessels fishing from Dungeness: 5

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