



Agenda Item C1

Shore report, Kent

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Quarterly report for the period May 2024 to September 2024

Overview

The TECFO 2024 season is well underway in the Thames. As of the 1st of September, the KEIFCA outside permit fishery opened, retaining the 'small scale' approach from last year- 8 vessels in Kent were issued permits.

Whelk fishing was reported up from last year, despite above average sea temperatures. This increase in temperature has coincided with reports of unusual species in the district.

Following the bass closed season in February and March, catches have been picking up from vessels with bass entitlement. Some vessels also had a good run on the mackerel this year.

There have been increased reports of mussel and seed mussel across the district.

Queenborough

Fishing activity has been low in Queenborough. The two TECFO vessels have been steady fishing this season, landing their catches into Whitstable. As well as the two TECFO vessels, an over 12m vessel has also been granted a permit to fish the outside cockle permit fishery this year but has yet to start. One vessel has been netting for mullet, but the presence of weed has proved difficult fishing. When the trawlers are out, the majority of their catches have been dogfish and smoothhound.

Number of vessels fishing from Queenborough: 10

Faversham

The active fishing vessels in Faversham and Oare Creek are owned and operated by one family. The two trawlers split their time between fishing the English Channel and the Thames Estuary. The spring run of sole in the Thames was reported better than last year, but catches were still poor. There have also been reports of more skate than last year.

The vessels have undergone refits during this period.

Number of vessels fishing from Faversham: 3

Whitstable

The four TECFO vessels remain busy as the cockle season continues, completing two trips a week and landing their catches into Whitstable. As of September 1st, these vessels will be permitted to land a further one trip a week from the outside permit fishery areas. An under 12m vessel in Whitstable has also been granted a permit to fish the outside cockle permit fishery this year, but has yet to start fishing.

As of September, the oyster fishers have started dredging again and they will spend the next couple of weeks turning over the grounds they rested over the summer. Trawling activity from this port remains low, with one vessel splitting its time between Whitstable and Shoreham. There has been an increase in netting activity, with smoothhounds making up the majority of the catches. Some efforts have also been made to rod and line for bass. The crab and lobster fishing has been slow, and there have been reports of conger eels getting into lobster pots, raising a concern on increased predation on lobsters. One vessel had a good run on the mackerel, selling locally on the quayside. One fisher even reported catching skipjack tuna.

There have been some good catch reports of whelks in this period, especially in the shallows where catches were reported significantly better than last year and seem to have picked up since the 2022 whelk die off. The whelk catches slowed down at the beginning of July, and most of the whelk vessels turned to alternative fishing methods.

Number of vessels fishing from Whitstable: 14

Herne Bay

The main commercial fishing vessel in Herne Bay is currently crab and lobster fishing and also using rod and line for bass. There have been reports of congers getting inside lobster pots. The commercial boats have continued to put v-notches in the tails of the breeding females and return them to sea.

Number of vessels fishing from Herne Bay: 2

Ramsgate

There have been reports of some unusual species in Ramsgate, such as Chinese mitten crab and sponge crab. Sole fishing has been poor in the Thames. There have also been reports of congers and spider crabs in lobster pots, increasing predation on lobsters.

One commercial rod and line bass boat has had a few good trips this quarter and has also landed some mackerel.

Number of vessels fishing from Ramsgate: 13

Broadstairs

There has been no fishing activity in Broadstairs.

Number of vessels fishing from Broadstairs: 1

Margate

One fishing vessel in Margate has been netting. The other vessels have not been to sea much over the summer, but have been spotted offshore on good weather days.

Number of vessels fishing from Margate: 3

Total number of vessels fishing from Thanet Ports: 17

Deal and Walmer

The main fishing vessel in Deal has continued to sell their catches at the stall next to the boats, mainly targeting skate.

Number of vessels fishing from Whitstable: 2

Dover

Commercial fishing activity has been low in Dover. One vessel has been out targeting mackerel.

Number of vessels fishing from Dover: 3

Folkestone and Hythe

Folkestone boats have mostly been setting pots for lobsters and crabs as well as whelk fishing. The presence of the May water meant whelks have been heavily covered in barnacles this season. The potting boats have reported very low edible crab catches. One fishing boat has been assisting with cross-channel swims which has reduced fishing efforts.

With the usual abundance of spider crabs making netting activity difficult, Hythe vessels have turned to potting, with one vessel targeting whelks. The fishery has been difficult, with low abundances and whelks covered in barnacles.

Number of vessels fishing from Folkestone and Hythe: 14

Dungeness

The four main boats working off the beach have been whelking, crab and lobster fishing and netting, working hard to keep the local fish shop well stocked. Netters have struggled due to the large numbers of spider crabs; they cannot leave their nets in for long because the crabs become entangled.

Number of vessels fishing from Dungeness: 5

Ellie Wyatt – Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer