

## **Agenda Item C2**

### **Shore Report - Essex**

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

#### **Quarterly report for the period February 2023 to May 2023**

### **Overview**

As typical for this time of year, poor weather has restricted the inshore fleet somewhat. Frustrations remain high with expensive fuel, ongoing stringent MCA inspections and iVMS confusion. Skate and smooth hound seem to be plentiful, but we are only seeing a slow showing of cod and sole. The bass fishery opened from 1<sup>st</sup> April, which has brought the usual frustrations on regulations, but is a welcomed supplement to all the authorised boats around the coast adding to the variety of fish they can sell during this difficult time.

Whelking around Essex has not been good this period with all but one vessel declining to fish in the district. The high fuel prices combined with a poor catch rate have forced local skippers to pull in pots. Whelk vessels from outside the district remain in other IFCA districts with some local skippers following suit.

Concern is high among the Thames Estuary Cockle fleet following a poor year in 2022. This combined with the TECFO review mean that uncertainty seems a main concern for the fishermen. Despite this, preparations are under way with the fleet who are beginning to prepare vessels for the 2023 preseason inspection.

### **Harwich & Walton**

Many of the vessels have remained out of the water until very recently but fishing efforts are now starting to pick up. Lobster potting is beginning, and fin fish are being caught but in small quantities. Species include sole, skate, dogfish and some cod. Bass is reported to be in good supply.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 20

### **Brightlingsea, Wivenhoe, Clacton**

Fishing activities have been slow throughout this quarter, but large quantities of bass have been reportedly landing in to Brightlingsea. Trawlers are seeing some catches of codling, soles, skate, whiting and bass. Oyster dredging has been seen in Brightlingsea creek with reports of low catch rates.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 15

### **West Mersea & Tollesbury**

Tollesbury Marina continues to have no commercial vessels in port. Commercial boats still typically operate out of West Mersea. Mersea vessels continue to put in steady efforts with a few vessels being seen at sea frequently. Quantity and quality of fish is not reported to be very good, however a good supply chain on the island continues to make going to sea worthwhile. The vessels with bass entitlement have begun to shift efforts to this fishery with reports of bass being landed by a handful of boats. Whelk fishing has slowed with one vessel taking all pots ashore, and another vessel fishing only outside the 6nm limit.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 20

### **Maldon & Bradwell**

Fishing efforts from Maldon and Bradwell remains low with only four vessels operating from these ports. Boats from this area have continued to sell catch locally through Facebook and provide delivery services. This appears to be a good way for these boats to maintain a steady income. Species tend to be skate, sole and some bass.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 4

### **North Fambridge, Burnham-On-Crouch, Barling, Paglesham & Rochford**

Bottom trawling remains prohibited within the rivers, so it leaves vessels with limited options. The only activity remaining is dredging, which historically has been oyster dredging. However efforts are now being seen from a developing clam fishery on private grounds. Target species are American hard shells. Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 4

### **Southend-On-Sea & Leigh-On-Sea**

Fishing efforts have been slow throughout this quarter with a couple of vessels going out every now and then. Sole is reported to be very poor within the Estuary. Sales are going through local fish stalls as well as Brixham fish market. Whelking efforts stopped completely towards the start of the year as catch rates were not good enough for it to be worthwhile. Cockle boats from Leigh are continuing with ongoing maintenance in preparation for the 2023 TECFO.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 18

### **Holehaven & Thurrock**

Fishing efforts are low from these ports, with only a small number of vessels working on a mostly part time basis; activity from these ports has continued to decline.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 4

Alice Highton / First mate / Essex