

Agenda Item C2

Shore Report - Essex

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority **Quarterly report for the period February 2022 to May 2022**

Overview

Strong north-easterly winds held the inshore fleet back during this period, with increases in fuel and stringent MCA inspections adding to the frustrations. A slow showing of soles, codling, skate, gurnard, flounders, dabs and smoothounds picked up during this period, along with the start of the bass fishery from 1st April, which appears to have been 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 slowed considerably. Increased fuel prices and a continued low market value for whelks have forced local skippers to pull in their pots and diversify reverting to netting for the short term. Whelk vessels from outside the district have returned to ports further up the coast.

Preparations for this years Thames Estuary Cackle Fishery are under way with the fleet ensuring their vessels are ready for preseason inspections. The Listening phase has now been completed for the Cackle Review with the Consultation phase 1 finishing on 9th May 2022.

Harwich & Walton

Fishing effort has been slow during this quarter and catches have been poor. Lobster potting has slowly started again, but the main catches have been soles, thornback rays, some cod and bass.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 20

Brightlingsea, Wivenhoe, Clacton

Fishing activities have been slow throughout this quarter but have picked up in the last month or so. Trawlers are seeing some good catches of codling, soles, skate, whiting and bass.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 15

West Mersea & Tollesbury

Tollesbury Marina remains quiet with commercial boats typically operating out of West Mersea instead. Fishing activities have been consistent during this period seeing the fleet continue to work supplying already established markets and stalls on Mersea and adapting and providing delivery services not just on Mersea but to far reaching areas of the county and London. The start of April saw reports of bass being caught by a handful of boats. Whelk vessels due to low market value and increased fuel prices have decided to pull their pots in and diversify with netting for fin fish.

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 developed selling catch locally through Facebook and providing delivery services. This appears to have given the boats a consistent income during this period. Skate, sole and bass have been stable catches for these boats.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 4

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

The Essex Estuary byelaw continues to prohibit trawling in these areas. This has meant the main efforts have focused on oyster and mussel dredging on private grounds in the Crouch and Roach, while the native oyster fishery in public grounds remains closed.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 4

Southend-On-Sea & Leigh-On-Sea

Cockle boats from Leigh underwent their yearly maintenance and preparations for the coming season, whilst skippers also worked their other boats trawling and working private shellfish grounds. Some boats still managed to sell to Belgium with other boats selling to the public through Facebook and fish stalls. Whelking slowed during this period due to low market values and increased fuel costs.

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

Martin Ward,

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer, Essex