

Agenda Item - C3

Report on the patrol vessels 'Tamesis' and 'FPV Vigilant' Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Report for the period September – November 2021

Vessel priorities:

- Monitor TECFO areas for compliance with regulations
- Monitor areas closed under Cockle Permit Byelaw
- Conduct joint patrols with Eastern IFCA
- Carry out survey for Cefas / Anglian water
- Patrol district boundary for incursions by oversize or foreign vessels
- Patrol areas closed for bottom trawling under Essex Estuaries byelaw
- Record data of all vessel sightings
- Record data of all static fishing gears (fixed nets and pots)
- Input key enforcement information into national fisheries enforcement database (MCSS)
- Inspect pots and traps for compliance with KEIFCA byelaws
- Inspect recreational angling vessels to ensure compliance with regulations
- Vessel Maintenance

Fisheries Enforcement

In the relatively short period since the last quarterly meeting the Essex vessels have been reasonably active, mainly monitoring the Thames Estuary Cockle fishery and activity within the Essex rivers and further offshore. Vigilant also welcomed officers from Eastern IFCA aboard and conducted operations covering the border area between the two districts.

As in previous periods patrol activity has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, and with the rise in case numbers over the course of the autumn the emphasis was on Covid secure non-boarding inspections. Towards the end of the quarter however officers began resuming routine boarding inspections of fishing vessels, and it is expected this return to normal operations will continue for the foreseeable future.

In the September to November period, officers logged 60 vessels, of which three were charter recreational vessels, and two recreational drift netters. Non-boarding inspections were conducted on 17 commercial vessels, one charter recreational angler, and two recreational vessels, the latter to ensure all were aware of, and compliant with landing restrictions and minimum sizes.

Full boarding inspections were conducted on six commercial fishing vessels, all of which were found to be compliant with regulations.

The patrol vessels also recorded gear sightings on 14 occasions, with gear being inspected on three of these. One offence notice was attached for gear not being clearly marked.

Conservation/Survey Work

Surveys

Tamesis was only engaged on a single survey in this period. This was a charter by Cefas and Anglian water to sample eight sites in the Blackwater, Ray sand, Crouch and Roach over two days in October. The survey involved dredging for native oysters and collecting sediment and water samples which were subsequently taken away for analysis. The survey is due to be repeated in spring 2022.

Marine Mammal observations

Marine mammals were logged on eight occasions with individual seal sightings in the Blackwater and in the Crouch and Roach, as well as further offshore. A large group of seals comprising a mix of adults and juveniles was also observed at low tide on the Buxey sands. A lone porpoise was observed on the Colne bar.

Maintenance

Routine maintenance was conducted on the vessels as required and monthly safety checks were carried out on schedule. FPV Vigilant underwent a routine 500-hour service on the engines, with the automatic bilge pumps replaced due to sensor faults.

Tamesis has now been in service for over 10 years and is now due to undergo major refit. To this end she was moved to Suffolk Yacht Harbour in Levington for haul out and is currently on hard standing. The engines have been removed and taken away to be overhauled and refurbished. Some aging and obsolete electronic equipment is being replaced, and the hydraulic system is also being overhauled and refurbished.

Other Information

Statistics

During this period FPV Vigilant put to sea 13 times using 1193 litres of fuel to cover a patrol distance of 779 miles. Tamesis has been at sea on five occasions covering 189 miles and took 619 litres of fuel.

Invitation to Authority Members and P.R

An open invitation is usually extended to Authority Members to join the crew on an enforcement patrol or survey aboard the vessel, unfortunately however under circumstances due to government guidance on social distancing requirements and the size of the vessels it will not be possible to do until further notice.

Colm O'Laoi
Skipper FPV Tamesis & Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer