

Agenda Item - C3

Report on the patrol vessels 'Tamesis' and 'FPV Vigilant' Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Report for the period January 2023 – May 2023

Vessel priorities:

- Monitor areas closed under Cockle Permit Byelaw
- Conduct spring cockle stock survey for TECFO
- Conduct spring cockle stock survey for Permit Fishery
- 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
- Vessel Maintenance

Fisheries Enforcement

This is traditionally a very busy period for the Essex vessels as the spring fisheries swing into action, however a number of factors affecting both vessels meant that sea-based enforcement opportunities were limited. These included crew availability, prolonged periods of poor weather dominated by easterly winds, and the annual inspection and certification of the vessel and equipment.

The early part of this period saw the appointment of a new First Mate for Tamesis and subsequent patrols were conducted using Tamesis for combined enforcement and vessel familiarisation. These patrols covered the district from Crouch and Roach rivers, out to the Barrow Deep and up along the 6-mile limit to the north-east corner near the Rough tower, otherwise known as the Principality of Sealand.

Vigilant was tasked twice to conduct joint agency patrols, the first was within the Blackwater and Colne with Essex Marine Police. The second was with Eastern IFCA and covered the coastline of North Essex and South Suffolk.

In the course of the period January to May, officers logged thirty five vessels, of which nine were charter recreational vessels and two recreational anglers. Non-boarding inspections were conducted on two commercial vessels and two recreational vessels. Full boarding inspections were carried out on two commercial vessels, both of which were found to be compliant with KEIFCA byelaws.

The patrol vessels also recorded gear sightings on thirteen occasions and an offence notice was attached to one set of gear which was not clearly marked in accordance with KEIFCA byelaws. Officers also came across and seized a drift net which had been lost or abandoned.

Conservation/Survey Work

Surveys

Tamesis is usually very busy with survey work during this period. It was intended that she would undertake a second Cefas / Anglian Water oyster survey early in March before gearing up for the annual cockle stock assessments. However, Nerissa was brought up from Kent for this survey as she was on the Cefas VSAID system.

The cockle survey commenced in April with priority being given to the TECFO areas. Tamesis conducted the surveys on Marsh End, the Mouse-Knob, the Maplin Spit, the West Barrows, and the East Barrows. Tamesis also surveyed the outer sections of Area 2 & 3 where the presence of deep gullies poses a significant risk to the quad bikes. With TECFO area completed, the focus then shifted to the Permit Fishery grounds (Area 7) and at the beginning of May the survey of the Dengie, Ray, and Buxey sands were completed.

Marine Mammal observations

Marine mammals were logged on ten occasions with individual seal sightings in the Middle deeps, the Ray Sand Channel, the Buxey sands, the Eagle bank, and in the Roach. Groups of seals were seen hauled out on the artificial island on the Maplin sands.

Maintenance

Routine maintenance was conducted on Tamesis as scheduled, and the vessel passed the annual MECAL survey with no defects. The vessel was put on the hard in Brightlingsea for cleaning, and had new larger anodes fitted at the end of the propeller shafts. A clutch failure on the hydraulic pump meant that the vessel was out of action for a short period in March whilst waiting for a replacement. Some minor issues with the electronics were resolved following a visit by an engineer.

Vigilant was taken out of the water for her 700-hour service and remained ashore for the annual survey. It was decided that the vessel should be stored ashore for safety as the priority taskings required the use of Tamesis and Nerissa as mentioned above. Vigilant was launched again at the latter part of the period, ready once again for deployment on enforcement duties.

Other Information

Statistics

During this period FPV Vigilant put to sea three times taking 236 litres of fuel and cover a patrol distance of 121 miles. Tamesis has also been at sea on sixteen occasions taking 3,112 litres and covering 617 nautical miles.

Invitation to Authority Members and P.R

An open invitation is extended to Authority Members to join the crew on an enforcement patrol or survey aboard the vessel subject to tasking and crew requirements.

Colm O'Laoi

Skipper FPV Tamesis & Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer