

Agenda Item – C3

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

Vessel priorities:

- Monitor TECFO areas for compliance with regulations
- Collect damage rate samples from Cockle Permit Fishery fleet
- Monitor areas closed under Cockle Permit Byelaw
- Conduct joint operations with Essex Police Marine Unit
- Carry out Oyster Survey on Swale estuary for ZSL
- Carry out KEIFCA annual BCRC Oyster Survey
- Inspect vessels suspected of illegal bass netting
- 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

During this brief timeframe, the Essex vessels were actively involved in a diverse range of enforcement operations, overseeing compliance across several significant fisheries throughout the district.

Vigilant began the quarter conducting patrols off the Essex coast, with particular attention to recreational angling vessels to ensure those on board were aware of and compliant with regulations. Minimum size stickers were given to those that did not already have some. Vigilant was then tasked with monitoring the weekly Sunday evening start of the TECFO cockle fishery, especially with regards to vessels working the Margate Sands. In addition, Vigilant monitored vessels working the Buxey Sands in Area 7 when the permit fishery opened, and collected damage rate samples from vessels which did not participate in the TECFO fishery. Other tasking for Vigilant in this period included a joint patrol with an officer of the Essex Police Marine Unit on board, focusing on bass enforcement.

Tamesis has only conducted one enforcement patrol in this period, as she was being readied for survey duties.

A combination of inclement weather, crew availability and survey taskings resulted in fewer enforcement patrols being conducted in the tail end of the period.

Within this period officers logged forty six fishing vessels, of which twenty three were commercial fishing vessels, three were charter recreational vessels, and a further ten were recreational angling vessels. Boarding inspections were conducted on two of the commercial vessels and non-boarding inspections were conducted on three additional vessels. Non boarding inspections were conducted on all ten recreational vessels.

During this period static fishing gear was recorded on ten occasions with surface markers being inspected on six of these. No offences were detected or suspected with any of the static gear.

Conservation/Survey Work

Surveys

During this period the cockle survey equipment was removed from Tamesis so she was ready for the autumn oyster surveys. Tamesis was chartered by the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) to conduct a native oyster survey on the Cant on the north Kent coast. For the purpose of this survey the vessel and crew were stationed in Queenborough harbour and were joined each day by a member of the ZSL team. When the survey was completed, the vessel returned to Brightlingsea, where she started the BCRC MCZ oyster survey in the last week of October. This is currently ongoing as efforts to complete it have been hampered by the recent inclement weather which has been marked by blustery and gusty conditions.

Marine Mammal observations

Marine mammal sightings were recorded on nine distinct occasions, featuring individual seal sightings in the Medway, the Swale, The Cant, South Shoebury and the Blackwater. Porpoises were sighted on one occasion with a mother and calf photographed at the entrance to the Colne.

Maintenance

Routine maintenance and servicing has been conducted on the vessels as required and monthly safety checks have been carried out on schedule. No unanticipated problems or defects have been uncovered during this period. Vigilant has now been taken out of the water as she will return to the manufacturers, Ribcraft, for servicing.

Other Information

Statistics

During this period FPV Vigilant put to sea seven times using 605 litres of fuel to cover a patrol distance of 286 miles. Tamesis has been at sea on eight occasions covering 316 miles and took 1740 litres of fuel.

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

Colm O'Laoi

Skipper FPV Tamesis & Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer