

### **Agenda Item - C3**

### **Report on the patrol vessels 'Tamesis' and 'FPV Vigilant' Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Report for the period November 2025 – January 2026**

#### **Vessel priorities:**

- Cross deck training with Essex Police & Sussex IFCA
- Record data of all vessel sightings
- Record data of all static fishing gears (fixed nets and pots)

#### **Fisheries Enforcement**

This quarter is traditionally quiet with regards vessel activity in Essex due to a combination of reduced fishing effort over the Christmas period, and regular adverse weather conditions. This year has been no different in this regard, but additional factors have led to a limited number of opportunities to undertake enforcement patrols. These factors included officers from Essex supporting the Kent crew in delivering Nerissa to the Isle of Wight and officer training. Most significantly however was a number of meetings with boatyards and engineers, to begin to discuss and arrange the level of work required to bring Tamesis under Workboat Code Edition 3.

When vessels were able to put to sea, they often encountered largely empty fishing grounds. Elevated fuel prices significantly increased operating costs, while persistently poor fishing conditions reduced the likelihood of a worthwhile catch. As a result, many vessels curtailed frequency of their trips, and overall fishing effort remained severely constrained. The clam fishery trial which was due to run through November into mid-December was postponed as the prices and catch rates fell, and with that the monitoring, damage rate assessment, and post-fishery surveys were pushed forward to next spring.

One notable event during this period was when the Essex vessels were joined by members of Sussex IFCA to conduct pacing and cross-deck training in conjunction with Essex Police Marine Unit, who also had their Bradwell based patrol vessel, Sentinel engaged in the exercise.

#### **Conservation/Survey Work**

Survey work is rarely planned or scheduled for this period due to among other factors, the unpredictability of weather at this time of year. This year was no exception, though it is anticipated that there will be a significant increase in the

survey taskings over the coming months. The clam fishery trial was postponed as previously mentioned, which will lead to a significant workstream for the vessels in Spring. This will be followed immediately by the cockle stock assessments so a busy period lies ahead for the vessels and crew.

With the reported increase in seal populations and seal interactions with static gears and catches, the importance of recording marine mammal sightings by the patrol boats has taken on an even greater significance. In the few patrols conducted up to Christmas, officers noted the presence of seals almost everywhere the patrol vessels went, the Wallet, into the Blackwater, out on the Eagle Bank and down in the Middle Deep and Maplin.

## **Maintenance**

Tamesis suffered a leak on the port side turbo, which was removed and sent away for repair. The repair was successful and following fitting she underwent sea-trials and returned to service for the aforementioned training. The main concern for Tamesis now is to bring her up to standard for Workboat 3, however with Nerissa being in the Isle of Wight for similar works it has been decided to remain under MGN280 coding until the spring surveys have been completed, so as not to have both workboats out of commission simultaneously. This also allows us to learn from the process as Nerissa undergoes it. In addition, boatyards often have greater flexibility during the summer months as fewer boats are in storage over this period.

FPV Vigilant was taken out of the water and stored in the yard for the Christmas period but has now been relaunched and is on the pontoon ready for deployment. In the coming weeks, Vigilant and the floating pontoon will be prepared for transport to Ramsgate pending the arrival of the new cabin rib, Nemo.

## **Other Information**

A significant vessel based workstream for this period was the implementation of the Sea Flux vessel management system. This software allows officers and designated persons to monitor and track all vessel related certificates, deadlines, safety equipment and drills, and allows Kent and Essex IFCA to monitor and maintain the Safety Management System that was written as a requirement for Workboat Code 3. Other vessel related work included numerous visits to the Ribcraft factory in Yeovil in order to monitor progress of the Nemo build.

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