

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 – May 2022

Vessel priorities:

- Monitor areas closed under Cockle Permit Byelaw
- Conduct spring cockle stock survey for TECFO
- Conduct spring cockle stock survey for Permit Fishery
- Conduct enforcement patrols for Whelk Byelaw
- Conduct monitoring and disruption patrols for bass 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.

As Covid restrictions were lifted, the aim at the start of this period was to resume full boarding inspections on vessels. Throughout January and February, FPV Vigilant was tasked to monitor compliance within the whelk fishery. An additional tasking was to board finfish vessels which had not been fully inspected whilst operations were restricted. It was during one of these patrols at the beginning of March that the welds failed on the rear frame, and it collapsed outwards over the engine casings. The vessel returned to port and was withdrawn from service pending repair works.

Bass enforcement operations are a very high priority during April and with Vigilant out of commission the decision was taken to bring Nereus up from Ramsgate to support shore-based enforcement operations conducted jointly with MMO officers. Nereus was deployed twice and remained in port on standby on one other occasion.

In the course of the period January to May, officers logged sixty one vessels, of which twenty were charter recreational vessels, and one recreational angler. Non-boarding inspections were conducted on six commercial vessels and one charter

recreational vessel. Full boarding inspections were carried out on eight commercial vessels, during which one verbal warning was issued for using unmarked surface gear.

The patrol vessels also recorded gear sightings on twenty one occasions, with gear being inspected on five of these. Offence notices were attached to two sets of gear which were not clearly marked in accordance with KEIFCA byelaws.

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. Unforeseen delays following the refit meant that she was unavailable for surveys in early March, and the Cefas scientists have been unavailable in April. It is anticipated that the vessel will undertake these surveys as soon as the staff become available.

The cockle stock assessments for both TECFO and the permit fishery with areas 7 (Dengie, Ray, and Buxey), 9 (West Barrows), and 12 (Mouse – Knob) have been completed. Once again Tamesis completed the outer transects of areas 2 and 3 (Thorpe Bay and Shoebury) where fast flowing and deep channels pose greatest risk to the quad bikes.

Area 8 (East Barrows) and area 1 (Marsh End) remain to be surveyed, however it is hoped that these will be completed over the next few days, weather permitting.

Marine Mammal observations

Marine mammals were logged on four occasions with individual seal sightings in the middle deeps, the ray sand channel, and on the knoll. A number of porpoises were also observed near the Wallet spitway

Maintenance

Tamesis was hauled out at Suffolk Yacht Harbour in November 2021 for a full refit which will see the service life of the vessel extended by a further ten years. The engines have been removed and rebuilt, and any ancillary equipment such as turbos, alternators, heat-exchangers showing excessive signs of corrosion or wear have been replaced. The anti-foul paint was removed and at this point some osmosis was detected on the hull. This was treated before an anti-osmosis coating was applied to prevent reoccurrence, and a new hard wearing anti-foul was applied. Some of the old and obsolete electronics were replaced and highly efficient solar panels have been installed on the roof. These are of particular importance as there is no access to shore power on the pontoon at Brightlingsea. The hydraulics were overhauled and all the hoses were replaced, as after eleven years were beginning to fray and become brittle. The hydraulic rams which operate the gantry were replaced with new marine-grade rams. A new pot hauler was also fitted on the starboard bow to replace the original which suffered a significant fracture on removal. The engines were re-installed and the vessel was launched in early March 2022. A delay in return to service ensued as a result of a failed fuel sensor which

proved extremely difficult to diagnose. The vessel also suffered a fractured injector line on returning to service, however this was quickly resolved and normal operations quickly resumed.

Vigilant, as previously mentioned suffered a fractured frame which collapsed on to the engine. Whilst the warranty period had elapsed it was felt that such a significant failure should not have occurred on a two year old vessel and the manufacturers, Ribcraft were requested to carry out the repairs under warranty. As they were very busy they required the vessel to be delivered to their premises in Yeovil. At the time of writing the repair has been completed and the vessel is scheduled to be collected, with the intention of it being operational and deployed by the end of w/c 9 May.

Other Information

Statistics

During this period FPV Vigilant put to sea eleven times taking 463 litres of fuel and cover a patrol distance of 363 miles. Tamesis has also been at sea on eleven occasions taking 1143 litres and covering 395 nautical miles. Nereus took two trips out of Brightlingsea covering 50 miles and taking 50 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 subject to tasking and crew requirements.

Colm O'Laio

Skipper FPV Tamesis & Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer