

Agenda Item C3
Report on the patrol vessels 'Tamesis' and 'FPV Vigilant'
Kent & Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
Report for the period May – August 2023

Vessel priorities:

- Monitor TECFO areas for compliance with regulations
- Collect damage rate samples from TECFO fleet
- Conduct stock assessment surveys on cockle beds
- Monitor areas closed under Cockle Permit Byelaw
- Conduct joint operations with MMO
- 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

As is traditionally the case, the summer months proved to be a busy period for the patrol vessels. This year however, fewer trips were undertaken by the vessels due to combination of factors including unseasonal winds and crew availability in the Essex office.

When the vessels did put to sea, the effort was targetted and planned to deliver the maximum benefit for the patrols. Vigilant as usual began the period looking at trawlers and netters with particular emphasis on compliance in the bass fishery. Indeed IFCA officers and vessels provided marine support to the MMO in operations targeting similar offences. When the TECFO fishery opened, Vigilant was then engaged in collecting samples from the fleet to ensure they were compliant with gear requirements. With most of the checks done, emphasis then returned to monitoring compliance in other fisheries and other parts of the district.

Tamesis was not heavily used for enforcement activities this period though she was called upon to haul and recover a ghost net discovered by officers on a routine Vigilant patrol. She was also engaged on a patrol of the 6 mile limit, to monitor activity and to ensure no incursions by unauthorised vessels.

Despite the aforementioned difficulties, between May and November officers logged 103 fishing vessels, of which 16 were charter recreational vessels. Full boarding inspections were conducted on 12 occasions on the TECFO fleet for the purpose of

checking damage rates, to ensure cockles being returned to the sea could survive grow. A further 4 boarding inspections were conducted on finfish vessels all of whom were found to be compliant with regulations. Non-boarding inspections were conducted on 16 commercial vessels, 1 charter recreational angling vessels, and 10 recreational angling vessels the latter to ensure all aboard were aware of, and compliant with landing restrictions and minimum sizes. KEIFCA minimum size stickers were also given to those aboard.

During this period static fishing gear was recorded on 34 occasions with surface markers being inspected on 15 of these. Offence notices were left on 3 surface markers which were not clearly marked and once again officers discovered and seized a net which had been lost or abandoned, this one having clearly been there for some time.

Conservation/Survey Work

Surveys

The survey work carried out by the vessels in general tend to occur in spring and autumn, however in this period Tamesis was tasked to conduct an additional cockle survey on Area 7 (Buxey Sands) to monitor growth, due to the large number of small cockles recorded in the initial survey. This was completed over 5 trips in mid June.

Marine Mammal observations

Marine mammal sightings were recorded on seven distinct occasions, featuring individual seal sightings in the Blackwater and the Stour rivers. Notably, a substantial congregation of seals was observed hauled out at the periphery of the Swale. Porpoises were sighted on two occasions, once near the Colne Bar and the other at the entrance to Walton backwaters. Regrettably, a deceased juvenile porpoise was discovered in the Black Deep however, officers were unable to determine the cause of death at the time.

Maintenance

Routine maintenance and servicing were conducted on the vessels as required and monthly safety checks were carried out on schedule. No unanticipated problems or defects were uncovered during this period.

Other Information

Statistics

During this period FPV Vigilant put to sea 17 times using 1654 litres of fuel to cover a patrol distance of 853 miles. Tamesis has been at sea on 7 occasions covering 153 miles and took 617 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