

Agenda Item – C3

Report on the patrol vessels 'Tamesis', 'FPV Vigilant', and FPV 'Nemo' Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Report for the period May – August 2026

Vessel priorities:

- Carry out stock survey of TECFO cockle beds
- Carry out stock survey of Permit Fishery cockle beds
- Carry out post-fishery stock assessment of Clam Trial area
- Inspect pots and traps for compliance with KEIFCA byelaws
- Finalise build of Nemo and conduct Sea Trials
- Deliver Nemo from Portland to Brightlingsea
- 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)
- Inspect recreational angling vessels to ensure compliance with regulations
- Vessel Maintenance

Fisheries Enforcement

During this quarter the Essex vessels were actively involved in a broad range of activities, overseeing compliance, gathering data, conducting stock assessment surveys, and commissioning the new patrol vessel Nemo.

Whilst the period started with an emphasis on survey taskings, and working toward completion of the build of the new patrol vessel, when days were available Vigilant put to sea to conduct fisheries enforcement taskings throughout the north of the district.

It was noted during these patrols, ranging from Dartford Creek, to the outer limits of the district and up to Harwich, that effort by the commercial vessels was significantly lower than in previous years. This was put down predominantly to high fuel costs and relatively poor catch rates. By the end of June the seagoing enforcement by Essex vessels was temporarily postponed as Vigilant was prepared and transported to Ramsgate where she will now be based. Tamesis was also used for enforcement in this period as she was tasked to haul and inspect some strings of Whelk Pots in the Middle Deepes.

From July onwards the focus was on the new vessel Nemo. She was moved from Yeovil to Portland and launched on the 6th July. Sea Trials and testing were then conducted in Portland harbour and Lulworth between the 7th and 9th July. Snagging

and final fitting was carried out the following week and on the 21st July officers took her to Weymouth for the MECAL coding survey. With the surveyor content pending minor outstanding items, officers undertook the 220nm voyage to Brightlingsea on 23rd July.

During the course of this period officers logged twenty five fishing vessels, of which fifteen were commercial fishing vessel and three were charter recreational vessels, and the remainder were recreational vessels. Non boarding inspections were conducted on eleven separate occasions and in most cases the vessels were given Minimum Size stickers and information on sizes and catch restrictions. One commercial whelk vessel was given a verbal warning for working inside the 6mile limit with untagged pots. His gear was subsequently hauled and inspected by officers on board Tamesis and was found to be compliant.

Static fishing gear was inspected on a further fifteen occasions, with four of these being served with an offence notice due to the surface markers not being clearly marked. Officers also hauled and seized one gill net which had been reported by local commercial fishermen as abandoned.

Conservation/Survey Work

Surveys

The period began with Tamesis completing the stock survey of the TECFO beds before turning her attention to the Permit Fishery beds on the northern side of the estuary (Buxey, Dengie, and Ray sands). With this tasking complete, the next survey was the Post-Fishery clam survey on the Buxey, which involves sampling a double density grid over the entire trial area.

When the cockle fishery opened, the ongoing and frequent heatwaves caused concern over the stocks, Tamesis was once again employed to conduct stock assessment survey on the East and West Barrows, Maplin Spit, and the Mouse-Knob.

Marine Mammal observations

There were fewer recorded sightings of marine mammals than in previous periods, which perhaps reflects on the fact that the vessels were not particularly active for the latter part of the period due to the aforementioned work on commissioning Nemo.

In spite of this seals were recorded on six occasions, including in the Wallet, the Mersea flats, the Ray sand channel, and the South West Sunk.

Maintenance

Vigilant was hauled out for the 1,100 hour service on schedule, and no additional work was required. Monthly maintenance was carried out as scheduled, with only a spare lifejacket service being required after the intense heat caused the lifejacket to inflate in the storage locker. The floating pontoon on which she berths was removed and overhauled, before being transported and launched in Ramsgate, where a suitable berth is being found.

Monthly maintenance was carried out on Tamesis as normal. In addition estimates were obtained for the work required to bring her up to standard for Workboat Code 3, and the decision was taken to send her to Fox's Marina in Ipswich for the work to be carried out. Similar to Nerissa this mainly involves replacing all the flexible hydraulic and fuel lines in the engine bays with solid lines as specified in the updated Workboat Code.

Nemo arrived in Brightlingsea and is due to be hauled out by Morgan Marine to conduct the 20 hour service on the engines. Ribcraft are also sending an engineer to rectify any items that arise from the initial use.

Other Information

Statistics

During this period FPV Vigilant put to sea 8 times before she was relocated to Ramsgate and in the course of these trips took 591 litres of fuel to cover a patrol distance of 321 miles. Tamesis has been at sea on 10 occasions covering 320 miles and bunkered 1645 litres during this period. Nemo has taken 600 litres and travelled the 213 miles back to Brightlingsea.

Colm O'Laoi

Principal Vessel Operations Office, Senior Skipper, Essex