



Agenda Item – C4

Report on the patrol vessel 'Nerissa' and daughter RIB 'Nereus' Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Report for the period September to November 2021

Priorities of vessel for quarter

- Goodwin sands survey
- Targeted inspection of static gear
- Patrol District limits for any large/foreign vessel incursions.
- Patrol areas closed to bottom towed gear.
- Inspect pots and traps for compliance of byelaws.
- Record data of all vessel and gear sightings.
- Sightings and intel logged and reported.
- Input key enforcement information into national fisheries enforcement database (MCSS).

Fisheries Enforcement

Patrols on the district limits have taken place looking for larger and foreign vessel near the boundaries, this has been both routine and intelligence led. On occasions where staff or weather has hampered the patrol vessels deployment officers have tracked suspect vessel activity from shore and followed them along the coast observing their activity.

Additional staff, normally based in Essex, have been able to join the crew helping to cover staff absence. Having a full crew has enabled days hauling and inspecting static gear over the quarter. Once at sea the patrol vessel has made longer trips making the most of the time available.

Thirty seven log entries were made for sightings of static fishing gear, totalling 130 individual ends. There were fifteen inspections of fishing gear made, three resulting in fleets of gear being seized and evidence put together for analysis preceding new case files. Three offence notices were issued with instructions to amend smaller issues found during their inspection; these were followed up with phone calls or face to face discussion with the individual fishers. Both whelk and lobster pots were inspected.

Commercial, registered fishing vessels were sighted and logged 37 times, seven charter angling vessels, two private angling vessels were also recorded plus one sighting of a private vessel that looked to be herring drift netting close to shore.

Conservation/Survey work

Surveys

Continuation of visual works on the Goodwin sands site has seen the patrol vessel deploy the ARIS Sonar for ground truthing. The equipment is large and new to the vessel so underwent setup and training with staff in harbour for its deployment process as well as time spending time exploring the best conditions and limits of use at sea. From the previous side scan data new sample points had been selected and transferred to the patrol vessels chart plotter. Despite concerns, our initial expectations were exceeded with good image data from 47 sample points over nine sites in three days and covered nearly all of the sites accessible using this method.

Marine mammal observations

Six log entries for the sighting of marine mammals were made totalling 156 seals, some positively identified as young Grey Seals, and a small pod of porpoise.

Maintenance

Within the quarter both vessels have completed inspection for their relative code with no outstanding issues.

Nerissa has required some high pressure hydraulic and water hoses to be replaced due to age. A new EPIRB, emergency locator beacon, has been sourced and installed on board and the annual inspection of fire safety systems taken place.

The Rib Nereus is now back on board Nerissa only requiring a recharge of batteries after being away for repair. The built in VHF radio has been replaced due to intermittent faults within the previous unit making it unreliable.

Other Information

On two separate dates inflatable boats with outboards were sighted with no persons on board, also an abandoned lifejacket was found on a separate date. These three incidents were logged and reported to Dover coastguard as required, presumed to be related to recent migrant crossings. The area around these sightings were observed for casualties or debris prior to continuing on with our patrol. The coastguard did not require Nerissa to stand by any of the abandoned vessels, the lifejacket was recovered by us and disposed of ashore.

In house training is under way using RIB Nereus following her recent repair; this will progress from basic handling to boarding capability in the future.

Statistics

During this period Nerissa put to sea 11 times and covered 474 miles taking on 4956 litres of fuel.

Ben Hermitage

Skipper FPV Nerissa & Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer