



Agenda Item C4

Report on the patrol vessel 'Nerissa' and daughter RIB 'Nereus' Kent & Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Report for the period May to August 2023 (up to 24-8-23)

Priorities of vessel for quarter

- 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.
- Inspection of commercial and recreations fishers.
- Patrol, monitor and inspect cockle fishing activity.
- Record data of all vessel and gear sightings.
- Sightings and intel logged and reported.
- Input key enforcement information into national fisheries enforcement database (MCSS).
- Attend to cockle survey on inside and outside areas.
- Attending to tide hight and sea temperature survey equipment.

Fisheries Enforcement

This quarter the vessel has had good coverage across the north Kent coast with several patrols to the southern limits and up onto the Essex coast. June was filled with strong winds but the boat was able to make a few trips and August has made up for it with a full crew assisting boarding and survey works. The use of vessel tracking and AIS has assisted in locating vessels to facilitate boardings at sea but also when the crew have been working ashore. Joint work with the Essex RIB Vigilant worked well with RIB Nereus also out collecting cockle damage rates and Nerissa being a platform to return to to process samples quickly.

During our sea patrols 71 registered fishing vessels were sighted, 12 of which were boarded and six logged as a non-boarding inspection. 15 charter angling boats and 18 private angling vessels were also logged. A total of 80 entries to the log were made for gear sightings; these list 337 individual surface markers the majority of which were well marked. 23 gear markers were hauled and inspected for compliance; for 4 of these we were just looking at the surface maker but for the rest we hauled either part or all of the string. A string of whelk pots was found dragged into a pile which we were able to untangle and inform the fisher of the location in case as they were presumed lost. An individual lobster pot was also found in an unusual location, we were able to recover it and

return it for the owner in its usual area. For both of these sets of gear, it was only possible to assist and inform the owners because they were well marked. Nine gear offence notices were issued for marking of gear or issues with escape gaps in parlour pots. A further two surface marker inspections resulted in gear being seized.

Vessel sighting data went into the MCSS central database and intelligence reports were produced and shared with neighbouring IFCAS, MMO, Police and Border Force where relevant as well as being discussed in biweekly enforcement meetings. We have also had Border Force and MMO aboard whilst in harbour to discuss activity and share knowledge.

Conservation/Survey work

We have continued with temperature/tide height surveys along with some whelk research, this has been extended to biweekly visits to the gear with some back to back days for the whelk data. Procedures have worked well with some improvements made to method for both safety and ease of re-deployment of gear. Additional mid-season cockle surveys were undertaken by Nerissa as well as taking TDC EHO to sea to understand the fishery, methods of fishing and our surveys for cockles as well as other species.

303 seals were sighted this quarter, both hauled out on sand banks and bars in groups as big as 50, as well as individuals or pairs being seen in open water. Porpoises have also been seen totalling 13 in groups of five plus at times with young amongst them.

Maintenance

Nerissa has recently been surveyed by MECAL for her Small Commercial Workboat Certificate and is all set to continue work. Inspection of the fire equipment is due next month and is booked in already.

Monthly safety checks have been undertaken as well as day-to-day observations of equipment, requiring only some hydraulic hose replacement due to signs of corrosion.

Other Information

An additional crew member throughout August has helped the vessel meet its potential for seagoing operations and he has assisted with routine maintenance.

During a patrol south we were able to assist CEFAS with the recovery of a Wave buoy that had broken its tether and was drifting into shipping lanes; this was recovered on our RIB launch ramp and taken into Ramsgate for them to arrange its collection.

Statistics

The vessel has spent some time undertaking survey work this quarter with four of its 23 trips being purely dedicated to survey and the rest working mainly on

enforcement with an hour taken to attend to survey equipment on a few occasions.

Nerissa spent 145 hours at sea, covered 1100 miles and took on approximately 15,000 litres of fuel.

Ben Hermitage

Skipper FPV Nerissa & Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer