

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 May - September 2021

Priorities of vessel for quarter

- Additional cockle sampling (Area 15 North Margate Sands)
- Support for cockle damage rate checks
- Goodwin sands survey
- RIB Nereus repairs
- Targeted inspection of static gear
- Monitor TECFO fleet for compliance with regulations
- 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

This period included the start of the TECFO cockle fishery where Nerissa is usually the primary enforcement vessel, with the daughter RIB Nereus used to board and collect damage rate samples. Unfortunately, issues with Nereus meant that this could not be accomplished, however Nerissa acted as an operations platform to support Vigilant in carrying out these inspections, where the samples were then processed aboard Nerissa.

Gear was sighted and logged on 81 occasions which included approximately 135 strings of gear. Twelve inspections of gear, primarily whelk and lobsters pots, were carried out on the surface and hauled where possible. Offences were detected on two occasions with gear being seized and taken ashore, one of these offences is still under investigation.

During this quarter officers sighted 93 fishing vessels, including seventeen charter vessels and six private angling vessels.

Conservation/Survey work

Surveys

Nerissa conducted 14 days of survey work during this quarter, including extra days of cockle survey work on Area 15 (North Margate Sands) at the request of the Authority members from the May 2021 quarterly meeting.

The patrol vessel also started a side scan sonar survey around the Goodwin Sands MCZ. Over several days around 40 miles of side scan data was collected over 19 planned sites. The process was fairly new to staff and the well-known tidal conditions in the area made it challenging, but the process of safe deployment and recovery were quickly worked out and the vessel worked well for the task at hand.

Marine mammal observations

Twenty-four log entries were made for marine mammals; large numbers of seals have been sighted mainly hauled out on sand banks and 27 porpoises sighted with a possible dolphin sighting also.

Maintenance

Nerissa has only required smaller parts to be replaced during this quarter, most of which were scheduled. Some items including the life rafts have been sent off for service during this period. The main navigation system developed a fault which was rectified before the vessel next went to sea. Monthly safety checks have been carried out as scheduled.

Nereus, the daughter rigid inflatable boat which is carried aboard Nerissa for boarding operations has been out of service for most of this quarter. The MCA survey found that some of the non-return valves in the inflatable tubes were not functioning correctly. The vessel was transported to a repair facility on the south coast in early August for this to be rectified. The vessel is planned to return to operational status in early September, following completion of its MCA survey.

Other Information

Assistance was provided to a commercial fishing vessel who had broken down during this quarter, with the vessel being towed to safety.

Statistics

During this period Nerissa put to sea 26 times and covered 1397 miles taking on 10,005 litres of fuel.

Ben Hermitage

Skipper FPV Nerissa & Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer