



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 to October 2022

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.
- Record data of all vessel and gear sightings.
- Sightings and intel logged and reported.
- Input key enforcement information into national fisheries enforcement database (MCSS).
- Board and check cockle fishing vessels
- Cockle sampling sites on the Kent coast.
- SideScan survey works

Fisheries Enforcement

Nerissa has had good coverage across the majority of the district. Efforts have been made to patrol the 6-mile limit and district limits as weather has allowed. Larger European vessels have been observed from the patrol vessel as well as being monitored on tracking system for incursions. None were found but sightings of vessel fishing near the 6nm limit, and particularly those passing through but not fishing, were logged by the patrol vessel and reported centrally to the MMO.

When the Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery opened in June, the priority taskings for Nerissa were to facilitate boardings of the cockle boats to allow damage rates to be checked. A total of thirty-six hours were spent at sea over five days carrying out this duty, in addition to normal patrols to check compliance with start and finish times.

The Rib, Nereus undertook some patrols in a standalone capacity during the summer months on the Kent coast looking at fishing gear closer to the shore and getting alongside angling boats. It also spent a few weeks in Essex to be utilised for enforcement duties there. Its statistics are added to totals below.

There are a total of 145 log entries for static gear identifying 779 individual markers. Thirty two of these were inspected mainly because the identifying marks were unclear but also for routine inspection. There were two seizures of gear and 11 notices of offence issued and followed up.

One hundred and eighty fishing vessel sightings were logged with 29 boardings and 15 non boarding inspections taking place. Out of this total 19 were charter angling boats, many seen on several occasions, with a further 19 being private angling boats.

Conservation/Survey work

Due to concerns that had been raised over the slow growth of cockles and to check survivorship of spat, Nerissa was asked to conduct additional surveys in cockle beds, including Area 15. A total of 18 days were spent carrying out grab sampling to provide data to allow officers to decide whether the management of the fishery should be reviewed.

In addition to this, Nerissa spent four days carrying out side-scan surveys on the Goodwin Sands MCZ. A total of five, five-km long (25 km total) transects were completed to map the extent of the inshore Sabellaria reef and a further 39 one-km long transect were revisited to assess the persistence Sabellaria reefs at sites surveyed in 2021.

Marine mammal observations

Sightings of marine mammals look to have increased over the years. This summer period the vessel sighted 40 porpoises often in pairs but some pods of five or six at a time. The number of seals is higher too at 455, a few log entries reporting large groups of 40 or 50 hauled out on sand banks.

Maintenance

I have been looking to the future and await quotes and book a lift slot for works on the hull as the specialist anti-foul the is due for replacement. There are some additional works for the vessel that can be undertaken at the same time.

The normal monthly checks of the vessel, annual inspections of equipment and systems have been undertaken as required. Crew have run drills on board for man overboard and spent time discussing additional fire and first aid scenarios.

Other Information

Officer have kept observation for small vessels crossing the channel but not been required to assist at any time. A fishing vessel with propulsion issues was heard giving a "Mayday" call, the patrol vessel was in the area and able to stand by to give assistance if required. The vessel was able to make a temporary repair and limp back to port without requiring our help.

Statistics

During this period the Kent based vessel has put to sea for 300 hours and covered 2,446 miles; she has been required to take on 26,000 litres of fuel.

Ben Hermitage

Skipper FPV Nerissa & Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer