

**Agenda Item C5**  
**Recreational Angling Report**  
**Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority**  
**Quarterly report for the period January 2024 – May 2024**

**Overview**

As the days get brighter, the presence of mayweed has made the rod and line fishing a little difficult this quarter, especially from shore and in the Thames, as the water has been thick with it along the coast. Across the District it has also been a bad year for peelers, which seem to be peeling in pockets over four to six months, rather than during their spring run. Despite this, recreational fishing has still been relatively good. The fish still seem to be taking alternative baits and there have been consistent catches of bass, smoothhound and rays across the district despite the water quality. With the mayweed beginning to clear a little earlier this year, this will hopefully leave some room for cleaner and tighter lines.

The 2024 bass catch-and-release closed season came to an end on 31 March. From April, a maximum of two bass can be retained per recreational fisher per day. Bass fishing remains a popular option for recreational fishers in the district, with the north winds bringing good fish up the North Kent coast.

Essex University are currently promoting a one-day symposium 'All About the Bass' to recreational anglers which will take place in July. This event brings together scientists, anglers and policymakers to share, learn and discuss the latest in seabass science. KEIFCA Officers have been spreading the word amongst recreational anglers while on the coast. A full schedule of talks and workshops can be found here: <https://www.essex.ac.uk/events/2024/07/08/all-about-the-bass>

**KEIFCA Progress**

Engagement with the recreational angling sector has remained a core priority during this quarter. The appointment of an Angling and Commercial Liaison Officer will assist in furthering the work of the IFCA within the recreational angling sector. Officers have continued to patrol popular beaches and piers in the district to carry out inspections and issue the KEIFCA Minimum Sizes ruler stickers and business cards to anglers and local tackle shops.

Officers have had no compliance issues relating to recreational angling inspections this quarter.

## **Kent Angling Summary**

At the start of the year, dabs were still showing in fairly good numbers in Kent and there was still a few whiting about. The arrival of mayweed made rod and line fishing a little difficult. Despite this, the Kent coast has still been producing good fish. There have been reports of smoothhounds and rays and the bass fishing from shore has been pretty consistent too with better numbers coming back through while the mayweed clears.

Ramsgate pier has been busy and has fished well with catch reports of dogfish, schoolie bass and the odd thornback. Plaice and flounders have also been featuring in catches off the piers and beaches, along with some turbot. There have also been reports of stingrays making an appearance on both Kent and Essex coasts.

Deal pier remains a popular angling hotspot. In March, anglers had a two-day run of blonde rays with some fairly decent numbers and weights being caught. Catches of dogfish, a few pouting and strap congers have also been reported. Admiralty Pier has remained busy, with consistent catches of smoothhound, bass, rays, conger eels and dogfish. With the improved weather recently, the early mackerel have slowly started to show in singles. The pier continues to host match fishing days which have become popular for members. Samphire Hoe has produced catches of pollack and wrasse. The beaches from Deal to Walmer have also been fishing well.

The south beaches have been producing some nice plaice; with dogfish, flounders and bass also bending rods from Hythe to Dungeness.

## **Essex Angling Summary**

The main catches across Essex have been bass, with the occasional smoothhound. The mayweed has also made an appearance over in Essex, but the fishing remains steady. As with the Kent beaches, Essex has had a small influx of thornbacks looking for peeler crab.

The Essex piers have produced dogfish, dabs and whiting with some rays and bass in between. There have also been some reports of turbot showing up again.

## **Inner Thames and River Medway**

The dabs were showing early in the year in fairly good numbers up the rivers, with flounders being caught in both the Thames and the Medway. Small bass have also made up these catches.

## **Boat fishing**

With strong winds dominating most of this quarter, breaks in the weather have meant that the charter boats in both Kent and Essex have still been able to remain relatively busy. There has been plenty of dogfish, but as of recent decent catches

of smoothhound and bass, with a few bigger fish being caught that have been keeping anglers happy. Recently the fishing has been more productive, with the bass ban over from April the charter boats have been able to start targeting them and have been successful in finding a few each trip. The winter fishing for rays were slow but have picked up significantly over the start of spring with some decent sizes being caught. There have also been pollack showing off the wrecks in Dover, with positive reports that the wrecks are returning to better health. Some charter boats have recently started to see some mackerel, but still await the mackerel run.

We have just started to see an increase of private recreational boats fishing across along the North Kent coast, which we expect to further increase as the weather keeps improving.

**Ellie Wyatt**  
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