



Agenda item C6
Compliance and Enforcement Update
Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
Enforcement report for the period September 2021 to November 2021

Introduction

In undertaking its regulatory responsibilities, KEIFCA starts from the position that the vast majority of people, organisations and industries using the marine area within the KEIFCA district are compliant with the regulations and controls that affects them. KEIFCA works to try to ensure that all parties understand both what rules apply to their industry and the justification for this regulation. Full compliance with EU, UK and local fisheries and environmental legislation is the overall aim of the Authority.

This aim is best achieved through the adoption of an adaptive co-management approach to fisheries management. Adopting the 'Prevention, Intelligence and Enforcement' model used by police forces across the UK, we are making best use of proven methods, using a proportionate approach and ensuring the taxpayer receives value for money.

COVID-19

Throughout the pandemic KEIFCA have strived to be the first point of contact for the fishing industry and continue to work closely with partners such as the MMO to provide reliable intelligence on the impacts of COVID to DEFRA for national decision making. Officers have remained vigilant of personal safety and to this end are encouraged to take up vaccines, carry out lateral flow tests twice a week, and continue with mask wearing and basic hygiene practices.

Prevention Activity

Public engagement remains key to achieving compliance objectives and is promoted in person during patrols and remotely via social media and our website. Building on the concept of the ever-popular KEIFCA minimum size stickers as engagement tool for the angling community, we have now installed permanent minimum size boards in key angling hotspots in Kent, such as piers, and have started to roll out the same signs in Essex. Shellfish gathering activity has remained at low levels this season, which has hopefully been assisted by the installation of joint agency signage with IFCA, Environmental Health, Local

Police, Natural England in key hotspots. As always, IFCOs in the field have been providing advice to fishermen on local byelaws and other legislation and encourage the fishing community to communicate with them if they require clarification.

Intelligence Activity

As is usual in the winter months, intelligence reporting has been quieter compared to the in the last period, with a total of 48 reports processed and disseminated by KEIFCA. Most reporting comprised information on instances of non-compliance with legislation and vessels of interest. All intelligence is assessed and collated to prioritise our enforcement objectives through the biweekly Tasking and Coordination Group (TCG) meetings. TCG taskings give enforcement officers clear direction to focus on significant non-compliance issues. Setting clear taskings in this way has allowed our officers to focus on tackling high priority targets, but with fishing activity generally quietening down in October officers have been more available to address routine and lower risk compliance issues.

Enforcement Activity

Joint working

Throughout this period, we have maintained frequent communication with partner agencies such as neighbouring IFCA and the MMO to share information and intelligence via the TCG process. With a number of intel reports relating to instances of noncompliance on the Northern borders of the district, we have increased joint patrol work with the Eastern IFCA and MMO East Team. We have also carried out joint patrols with the Environment Agency in Kent, giving our officers a better understanding of their working practises and an opportunity to utilise their cross-warrants.

Cockles

The Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery closed at the beginning of October and therefore has therefore not been a priority for most of this period. The "outside" permit fishery remained closed this season meaning there was no further fishing into later October, and no visiting vessels from outside the district. Only one offence was detected in the final month of cockle fishery, for unloading cockles prior to the time reported for notice of landing. The fisher was issued with a written warning for this offence. Two TECFO offences detected in July remain under investigation, with interviews completed we are now awaiting legal advice to determine next steps.

Marine Protected Areas

Marine Protected Areas continue to be monitored from sea, from shore and remotely using AIS and VMS vessel tracking. Sea patrols in Essex have been conducted aboard FPV Vigilant to monitor Essex Estuaries SAC and BCRC MCZ and no infringements were detected. In Kent, officers have made regular visits

to the Medway Nursey Area no take zone from shore, but no further offences have been detected during the last period.

Whelk Fishery

With whelk fishing increasing with the colder weather, monitoring permit whelk fishery has become a key compliance priority for KEIFCA in the last period. In North and East Kent, the inshore whelk season had good catches reported and prices have remained constant, at approximately £1.00 kg. We have tasked FPV Nerissa to complete regular gear hauling inspections of whelk pots at sea to check for compliance and have also tasked officers to complete landing inspections of whelk vessels in port to check minimum size. KEIFCA are currently investigating two offences for setting whelk pots illegally (illegal pot configuration) resulting in two fleets of gear being seized.

Bass

Fishery Bass activity has increased slightly into autumn, and as such we have maintained a patrol presence both at sea and on shore to address reports of breaches to bass regulations, particularly to disrupt illegal drift netting and recreational angling offences. Officers have also addressed an increase in intel relating to recreational and shore netting activity, particularly in areas where juvenile bass are likely to be caught such as estuaries.

Offence Reports in the last quarter

- X2 offences for illegal whelk pots being deployed, resulting in 2 fleets of pots being seized. Both remain under investigation at the time of writing.
- X1 offence for recreational bass fishing, verbal warning issued.
- X1 TECFO cockle offence for unloading early in contradiction to cockle line message, written warning issued.
- X2 TECFO cockle offences remain under investigation for using illegal dredges.
- X1 offence notice for using parlour pots fitted with illegal door release mechanisms.
- X1 fleet of unmarked and illegally constructed parlour pots seized. No ownership established.
- X2 offence notice for unmarked gear.
- X6 offences for recreational anglers retaining undersized fish, written and verbal warnings issued.

Training and developing staff

Eleven officers are warranted including the chief and assistant chief IFCO, with our newest IFCO in Kent attaining her warrant in the last period. Officers are scheduled in for a variety of training courses, including refreshment of maritime STCW safety courses during the winter period.

Hayden Hurst Lead Compliance Officer