



Agenda Item C6 Compliance and Enforcement Update

Enforcement report for the period November 2023 – January 2024

Introduction

In undertaking its regulatory responsibilities, KEIFCA starts from the position that most people, organisations, and industries that use the marine area in 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 national and local 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.

Prevention Activity

Engaging and educating stakeholders is key to achieving compliance objectives and is promoted in person during patrols and remotely via social media and our website. We continued to promote and educate on compliance with recreational angling measures by distributing free minimum size stickers and business cards at angling hotspots and tackle shops. Over the winter angling activity has declined significantly but our officers have continued to patrol key locations both at sea and on the coast to promote awareness of minimum size and seabass recovery measures. We have also renewed key legislative infographics to be printed in local 2024 tide tables for Port of London, Crouch Harbour Authority and other key ports. As always, we encourage the fishing community to communicate with IFCOs, and have responded to numerous enquiries from commercial and recreational fishers where they require clarification on our byelaws or other legislation.

Intelligence Activity

Being a quieter period due to adverse weather and an astonishing frequency of winter storms, there have been fewer intelligence reports processed by KEIFCA between November and the start of January, with a total of 12 reports. These reported on issues such as whelk fishery activity, bass misallocation, recreational charter boat activity, unlicensed shore netting, foreign vessel infringements, and

sprat/herring trawl fisheries among other issues. All intelligence reports are assessed and collated, and then used to inform the prioritisation of 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, and therefore plan targeted patrols to have the greatest impact.

Enforcement Activity

Joint working

Joint agency patrols in this period have been conducted with the MMO from shore, and with Sussex IFCA on board their Fishery Patrol Vessel Watchful. Sussex IFCA carried out a sea patrol in the southernmost extent of KEIFCA's district while KEIFCA's FPV was out of the water for refit, and during this operation detected a vessel operating scallop dredges illegally inside the 3nm limit south of Dungeness. The vessel was boarded, and the master cautioned. Sussex IFCA have agreed to take on the investigation themselves despite the offence occurring inside the KEIFCA district, and the outcome is pending.

Following this incident KEIFCA sent officers to join another patrol aboard Watchful, which covered the eastern section of Sussex IFCA's district, starting from Shoreham, into the southern extent of KEIFCA's district in the vicinity of Dungeness and Hythe Bay. A number of boardings were carried out to inspect scallop dredging and whelk potting vessels, all of which were compliant on this occasion.

Our thanks go out to colleagues at Sussex IFCA for enabling an ongoing patrol presence off the South Kent coast while our FPV has been out of operation. Joint work such as this are sending a strong compliance message to industry, promote positive working relationships, and help to achieve enforcement objectives of both organisations, especially at the boundaries of our districts.

Cockles

All cockle fisheries remained closed throughout this period, however KEIFCA are continuing to investigate two TECFO vessels for suspected fishing activity in a closed area during the summer. The case files have been built and outcomes will be reported on in the next period once concluded.

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, further intelligence has been developed regarding occasional bait digging in the Medway No Take Zone, and in response our officers have increased patrols in the area over low water.

Whelk Fishery

Whelk fishing has only just started to pick up as the water temperature has dropped off, however this has been delayed by the unseasonably warm weather

throughout September and October. Whelk inspections to assess compliance with KEIFCA's permit byelaw conditions will be high on the priority list over the winter, with a regime of landing inspections from shore and gear inspections at sea planned for the next period.

Bass

Bass catches dropped off throughout November with only a limited number of commercial landings being recorded by the time December arrived. Compliance within the recreational angling community has been good with no persons being found to retain undersize bass, or more than 2 per day. In the commercial sector, KEIFCA worked with colleagues at the MMO to conduct targeted inspections of vessels that were suspected of retaining undersize and misallocating bass catches. Furthermore, a routine patrol aboard FPV Tamesis discovered another abandoned drift net at sea in December. The net had no identifying markings and all fish caught in the net were dead, albeit still fresh. The net was hauled on board and seized by officers. This is the third abandoned net to be found in 2023 and highlights an ongoing issue with gear loss and abandonment at sea in the district. KEIFCA would encourage any fisher that has lost gear at sea to report it immediately to KEIFCA or the MMO in order to meet legal obligations to do so under the control regulation, and to ultimately assist with its timely recovery before the "ghost gear" has time to entangle more wildlife and cause needless impact to marine life.

Offence Reports in the last quarter

- X1 offence for not reporting gear lost at sea. Abandoned drift net seized – no ownership established
- X1 offence for scalloper dredging inside 3nm limit south of Dungeness. Case being built, outcome pending.

Scientific dispensations issued:

Five scientific dispensations have been issued since May, granting exemption from KEIFCA byelaws for scientific research including international stock assessment trawl surveys, water quality and shellfish classification.

Hayden Hurst, Lead Compliance Officer