Agenda Item C5

Recreational Angling Report

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly Report for the Period June 2025 – November 2025

Overview

Fishing across the District was productive over summer, with bass commonly caught on lures and bait, and sporadic mackerel catches in the south. September brought excellent fishing, including smooth hound up to 19lbs, conger eels, codling, and squid swarming South Kent's beaches. October's storms limited opportunities, though flatfish and whiting began to appear more consistently. In the Thames and Medway, anglers landed good-sized whiting, smaller bass, and flounder. North Kent's boat anglers targeted bass and mackerel, often releasing larger fish to protect breeding stocks. Notably, a Dover charter boat caught and released a bluefin tuna after weeks of effort in trying to capture one.

KEIFCA Progress

Officers have been out and about on beaches, piers, slipways and harbours inspecting angler's catches and enforcing byelaws and national legislation. Angling offences have been found however most anglers know the rules and abide by them. Those who do not know the rules are educated using minimum size stickers and directed to our website for more information.

Kent Angling Summary

Bass have been caught across Kent throughout summer on lures and baits. In South Kent, mackerel were being caught sporadically on lures and feathers, good-sized thornback rays were caught from piers.

September was a good month for fishing; smoothhounds were caught more frequently with some large specimens up to 19lbs being caught. Down South, conger eels were a common catch, and some were lucky enough to hook into a codling. Excitingly, squid swarmed beaches in South Kent, and many anglers tried their hand at lure fishing for these to stock up their freezers with bait and dinners.

October didn't allow much time for fishing, two named storms made finding a weather window difficult. When they could go, fishers caught a range of flatfish, thornback rays, and whiting as they started to show. Down South, a humpback whale was seen from a popular angling pier – a video can be found on YouTube. As we get later into the year, and the water temperature has decreased, whiting catches have become more consistent.

Inner Thames and River Medway

Further up the rivers, impressive sized whiting have been caught from the piers. A smaller stamp of bass compared to Kent and flounders have also been caught.

Essex Angling summary

The persistence of warmer sea temperatures appears to have contributed to a gradual shift in species composition. Increasingly, recreational sea anglers reported the presence of species more typically associated with southern waters, including gilthead bream and black bream, which are becoming more frequent along the Essex coastline. Anglers recorded an encounter with a megrim (*Argyrosomus sp.*), caught in Walton-on-the-Naze, a rare and notable landing for Essex waters. Recreational fishing effort was steady throughout the period, supported by generally favourable summer weather and active coastal angling communities. Sea bass catches remained stable, with anglers consistently reporting good-sized specimens, particularly within the Blackwater estuary. Dogfish were also caught in higher numbers during the summer months, mirroring commercial trends.

Boat fishing

In North Kent, bass and mackerel have been popular with recreational boats throughout summer, however fishers have not always hit their two per person limit on the bass. Some fishers have been saying they prefer to keep the 42-50cm bass and release the larger fish as they are important for the breeding stock. Down South, after many attempts, a charter boat with a bluefin tuna licence boat out of Dover managed to catch-and-release a blue fin tuna on rod and line. October was a windy month, and the fishing dropped off; less bass were around but there were some congers and small whiting to save the anglers from blanking.

Adam Ayles, Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer