

## **Agenda Item C1**

### **Shore Report - Kent**

#### **Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority**

#### **Quarterly report for the period ending March 2014**

### **Overview**

Ongoing inclement weather has been extremely restrictive throughout the district. Fishing activity was greatly restricted during the first few weeks of 2014 due to high winds. Water temperatures were notably warmer than recent years and this may have impacted fish migration patterns throughout the district.

Prices for fish species continue to be very low with many fishermen commenting that prices are lower than they have ever seen and are continuing to fall.

### **Queenborough**

Fishing activity at Queenborough has been heavily restricted by weather conditions during this quarter. Whilst boats in Queenborough take part in a variety of fishing methods, some vessels have only taken three to four trips over three months. Vessels have undergone maintenance during this time. Skippers commented that fishing in the estuary continues to be very poor and catches in the estuary are low. Skippers here also commented that prices were the lowest they have seen for a significant period of time.

Concerns were raised by skippers at this port regarding the impacts of pulse beaming outside the district reducing the numbers of fish entering the district. There also continues to be concerns regarding the impacts of dredging activity carried out at the DP World site on fish spawning within the estuary.

A number of boats continue to fish for whelks from Queenborough. Whelk skippers have concerns regarding whelk stocks in the area and suggested that temporal closures alongside a pot limit might have a positive effect on stocks. Cockle vessels are preparing for the coming season.

**No of Vessels fishing from Queenborough: 9**

## **Faversham**

Vessels in Faversham are fishing a variety of methods, with a focus on oyster dredging this quarter. Some trawling activity has also been undertaken as well as whelk potting. Swale and Medway estuaries are proposed for designation as an MCZ for Tranche 2 of the MCZ designation process

**No of Vessels Fishing from Faversham: 2**

## **Whitstable**

Whitstable continues to see a wide range of fishing activity. Activity levels have also been reduced here, once again due to the severe weather at the beginning of the quarter.

The focus of vessels continues to be on using a combination of fishing methods to maximise income from the fishery. The port has seen consistent trawling activity this quarter but skippers have reported catches as being relatively poor. Vessels are fishing further offshore and once again have raised concerns regarding pulse beamers fishing outside the estuary.

Whelk potting remains common in Whitstable although a number of vessels have moved to other ports this season. Whelk fishing remains relatively stable in Whitstable and there has been support for the KEIFCA Whelk Byelaw. Concerns remain here regarding fish prices being consistently low. Vessels sell a number of fish locally and the remainder abroad.

Vessels have seen high numbers of herring in the area although they are not being targeted due to lack of demand. Cockle vessels have been undergoing maintenance in preparation for the season ahead.

**No of Vessels Fishing from Whitstable: 15**

## **Herne Bay**

Herne Bay remains a consistent area for angling activity, both boat angling and shore angling. Vessels continue to focus on potting for whelks and will be lobster potting for the coming season.

**No of Vessels Fishing from Herne Bay: 2**

## **Thanet Ports (Ramsgate/Broadstairs/Margate)**

Thanet vessels were active this quarter despite being port bound a number of times due to high winds. Vessels continue to use a wide variety of fishing methods including drift and fixed nets, trawling and potting. Netting activity is remaining high in Thanet Ports with Sole, Thornback Ray and Cod continue to be targeted. Skippers have felt that catches are low and again prices received for fish are of concern.

Thanet skippers remain concerned regarding high levels of seal activity, with boats reporting seals taking fish from nets. Concerns have also been raised here about the impact of foreign vessels operating outside 6nm and 12nm. Fishermen feel that high levels of trawl activity by foreign vessels in this area is restricting fish from travelling further into the district.

**Number of vessels fishing from Thanet Ports: 24**

## **Deal and Walmer**

Vessels fishing from Deal and Walmer have been focusing on herring fishing for the winter. There are reports of very high levels of herring in the area and vessels have reported good catches. Vessels have started putting out lobster pots towards the end of the quarter.

**Number of vessels fishing from Deal and Walmer: 5**

## **Dover**

Dover continues to see low levels of consistent fishing. Small scale lobster and whelk fishing has been a focus for Dover vessels. Dover is at the centre of two proposed rMCZ for tranche two of the project; Dover to Deal and Dover to Folkestone.

**Number of vessels fishing from Dover: 2**

## **Folkestone and Hythe**

Folkestone continues to be a busy port with a diverse fishery. A number of vessels primarily trawl while some vessels have been scallop fishing this quarter. Vessels also take part in netting and potting in Folkestone. Hythe vessels have been netting for a variety of species. Vessels continue to sell fish and shellfish locally. Weather also has had an impact on vessels here, particularly in January. Once again, skippers are reporting low catches.

Vessels have been seeing consistent catches of whelks in the area and are beginning to see more lobster activity on the ground.

A decision on the future of Hythe Bay rMCZ has been deferred by DEFRA and the site is to be reassessed as part of Tranche 3 of the MCZ process. The decision was taken to allow for further in depth surveys of the wider area of Hythe Bay to ensure the best evidence is available before designation.

**Number of vessels fishing from Folkestone and Hythe: 13**

## **Dungeness**

Vessels fishing from Dungeness have been netting for sole this quarter. Vessels have seen mixed landings but catches are low for the time of year. Fishing off Dungeness was impacted by the bad weather over the quarter and was beginning to pick up towards March. Encouraging numbers of small coding were caught by shore anglers although angling numbers were significantly down on previous years. Local concerns about the beach profile and the amount of shingle being used were also expressed.

**Number of Vessels Fishing From Dungeness: 5**

Evanna Lyons,  
Kent Shore Officer