

Agenda Item C1

Shore Report - Kent

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly report for the period ending June 2014

Overview

Weather improved across the district this quarter and fishing activity has increased significantly as a result. However, concerns regarding prices and catch levels remain across the district.

Queenborough

Fishing activity at Queenborough has remained low during this quarter with boats struggling to sustain an income from fishing. Boats in Queenborough take part in a variety of fishing methods including whelk fishing and trawling. Skippers continue to be concerned that fishing in the estuary is consistently very poor with catch levels low and quality of fish being landed also being poor. Skippers here also commented that prices were the lowest they have seen for a significant period of time. Vessels have undergone maintenance during this time.

Concerns have been raised 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 meeting is being organised by Thames Estuary Partnership to bring together stakeholders who have concerns regarding this dredge activity, to try and address the issue.

Two cockle vessels have been landing at Queenborough this quarter with cockles from the Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order 1994 area.

Faversham

Vessels in Faversham are fishing a variety of methods, with a focus on oyster dredging. Some trawling activity has also been undertaken but vessels here have also undergone maintenance this quarter. Catches have been poor but local fishermen are involved in processing their catch and are selling their fish locally. This has resulted in them receiving a better price than fishermen in other areas of the district.

A meeting was held by DEFRA to gather information regarding fishing activity in the Swale estuary to help inform the Tranche 2 MCZ process with a Faversham skipper attending as well as IFCOs. Concerns were raised by the local community regarding a large mussel dredger fishing on private grounds and were followed up by IFCOs.

Whitstable and Herne Bay

Whitstable continues to see high levels of a variety of activities. The focus of vessels continues to be on using a combination of fishing methods to maximise income from the fishery with vessels trawling both inside 6nm and beyond.

Trawling activity has been consistent this quarter and catches have improved slightly but skippers still have concerns regarding numbers of sole in the estuary. Thornback ray stocks appear to be consistently high in the area. Vessels once again have raised concerns regarding pulse beamers fishing outside the estuary.

A number of vessels have been netting this quarter. Numbers of bass caught have been disappointing this season and vessels continue to focus on whelk potting as a supplementary income. Whelk fishing remains relatively stable in Whitstable and there has been continued support for the KEIFCA Whelk Byelaw.

A number of vessels were potting for lobster this quarter and have seen reasonable catches.

Concerns remain here regarding fish prices being consistently low. Vessels sell a number of fish locally and the remainder abroad.

Vessels from Herne Bay continue to focus on potting for whelks and will be lobster potting for the coming season.

Herne Bay remains a consistent area for angling activity, both boat angling and shore angling.

Thanet Ports (Ramsgate/Broadstairs/Margate)

Thanet vessels were active this quarter. There continues to be one vessel consistently fishing from Margate. Fishing vessels from Broadstairs have also been focused on netting and some potting activity. One vessel has also started whelk fishing.

Vessels in Ramsgate continue to use a wide variety of fishing methods including drift and fixed nets, trawling and potting. Netting levels remain high. Sole and Thornback Ray continue to be targeted. Sole catches have been poor but vessels continue to see high numbers of thornback ray and some smoothounds. Skippers inform us that catch levels overall remain low and again prices received for fish are of concern.

High levels of whelk fishing activity have been seen at Ramsgate. Towards the end of the quarter, catches of whelks have reduced significantly.

Deal and Dover

Levels of effort remain consistent at Deal with vessels netting and potting. A number of vessels have been targeting lobster and crabs in the area of Deal pier. Angling effort remains high on Deal pier, with a number of clubs active in the area.

Dover continues to see consistent fishing. Small scale lobster and whelk fishing has been a focus for Dover vessels. There has been some netting activity this quarter.

Folkestone and Hythe

Folkestone continues to be a diverse fishery with high levels of activity. A number of vessels primarily trawl and have reported that catches were moderate but prices remain low. Vessels continue to sell fish and shellfish locally where possible.

Vessels also take part in netting and potting in Folkestone. Catches of whelks have been consistent in the area and more lobster activity has been seen on the ground. Vessels from outside the district have taken part in the whelk fishery in Hythe Bay this quarter and local vessels have been concerned about the impact this might have on whelk stocks.

Hythe vessels have continued to focus on netting for a variety of species. They have moved their nets much closer inshore as the season has progressed as target species have moved inshore. Here skippers are reporting moderate catches.

Dungeness

Dungeness vessels continue to focus on netting for sole this quarter. Vessels have seen relatively good fishing this quarter. Vessels have been fishing almost every day and are selling some fish locally and some internationally.

**Evanna Lyons,
Kent Shore Officer**