

Success criteria: 4, 5 & 6

By: Chief IFC Officer

To: Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation
Authority – 21 November 2014

Subject: The condition of commercial fish stocks in the Thames

Classification Unrestricted

Summary: results of the Thames Estuary Workshop held 25 September 2014

On 25th September the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (KEIFCA) and the Environment Agency (EA) held a joint agency workshop at the Tickford centre in Southend to discuss the condition of commercial fish stocks in the Thames. The meeting was independently chaired by a lecturer from University College London and brought together a wide range of over 20 stakeholders, including fishing industry leaders and local anglers, as well as national experts in fish stocks, marine ecology and hydrography to review and discuss the available data and to start to develop a way forward. Presentations from the Marine Management Organisation, local fishermen, CEFAS (government marine laboratory) and Dubai Ports (London Gateway) were made at the meeting.

A range of different issues were discussed at the workshop concerning the changes and current state of the Thames estuary and greater Thames (Appendix 1 – Notes from the meeting). Commercial fishermen and recreational anglers expressed significant concern regarding the dramatic reduction in some fish and shellfish stocks, particularly in the number and size of commercially exploited Dover sole caught in the estuary, as well as changes in the marine habitat. Participants felt that there had been major changes on a very large estuary wide scale, and expressed worries about the combined impact of human activity as well as the effects of extreme weather on the estuary.

There was a general consensus from the meeting that a specific independent project needed to be developed to draw together and analyse the wide range of data available presented. Representatives from Thames Estuary Partnership offered to develop a proposal with help from all the participants. More immediate actions to try and address the specific issue of Dover sole was also

discussed with the potential of a Dover sole hatchery being put forward as a potential option.

Since the meeting, KEIFCA officers have discussed the possibility of commissioning Thames Estuary Partnership (TEP) to develop an independent project proposal that would meet the requirements developed in the meeting. Commissioning this piece of work would cost about £2,000 and could be met from the KEIFCA research budget. After the proposal is written, TEP would then take the lead in identifying further funding streams for the project. One of the key points the meeting highlighted was the lack of faith some parties had for government-funded organisations to be impartial on this issue. Commissioning the TEP to undertake this work would help mitigate this concern.

Recommendations:

- 1. To agree the notes of the meeting (Appendix 1)**
- 2. To discuss commissioning Thames Estuary Partnership to write a project proposal that would meet the requirements developed at the meeting held on the 25th September and for Thames Estuary Partnership to then take the lead on identifying further funding streams for the project.**