

Agenda Item C1

Shore Report - Kent

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Quarterly report for the period ending September 2014

Overview

Weather conditions have improved over the quarter but fishermen have reported that cold water conditions earlier in the year have continued to have an impact on fish species, with some species running late. This has been particularly evident with shellfish.

There have been a number of reports of shellfish being gathered from shore throughout the Kent coastline, to which officers have responded by undertaking shore enforcement in these areas

General prices of all fish species continue to fetch a low price and this is affecting fishermen across the district. A number of fishermen continue to sell fish abroad but those selling fish locally are consistently receiving better prices. Seals continue to be a constant issue in the Thames Estuary, with catches being damaged in gill nets.

Queenborough

Overall, activity from Queenborough has been very low this quarter. There has been some low level trawling activity over the course of the summer months. The local fin fisheries found low volumes of fish and had to venture further afield to meet their catch requirements. Fishermen from Queenborough continue to express concerns regarding levels of sole in the Thames.

The cockle fishing season began on 26th June and finished on 3rd October. Two Queenborough vessels are licenced to fish cockles within the Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order and land alongside the industrial quayside in Queenborough. Reports were received that cockle fishing was slow initially due to the presence of vast amounts of weed on the ground. Fishing improved greatly as the season progressed, as the ground was worked and the volume of weed decreased. The outside cockle beds were opened for one week in October and vessels from Queenborough also participated in this fishery.

Number of vessels fishing from Queenborough: 9

Faversham

There is continued focus on oyster fishing and trawling by the vessels in Faversham. Fishing effort has also focused on targeting bass and sole over the summer months. Catches have been steady during this time. Local fishermen are involved in processing and are selling their fish locally and as a result they are receiving a better price than other areas of the district.

Number of vessels fishing from Faversham: 2

Whitstable

The vessels within Whitstable, one of the busiest ports within the district, continue to use a combination of fishing methods in order to maximise their income. A number of vessels have been focused on trawling this quarter, seeing good landings of mixed fish whilst also potting for shellfish.

Whelk fishing remains popular with vessels in the port. However this quarter with the increased water temperatures, the whelk fishery was reported to be slow and becoming more sporadic.

Towards the end of the quarter, fisherman concentrated on oyster dredging. There were reports of lobster catches being steady this quarter.

Vessels from Whitstable were also engaged in cockle fishing this season, with three of the fourteen licenced cockle fishing vessels based in Whitstable. Vessels reported good catches and meat yields appeared to be good this year.

Number of vessels fishing from Whitstable: 15

Herne Bay

Vessels based in Herne Bay continue to focus on whelk fishing and lobster fishing. Herne Bay remains an active angling area for both shore anglers and boat anglers.

Number of vessels fishing from Herne Bay: 2

Thanet Ports (Ramsgate/Broadstairs/Margate)

Within the Thanet ports, there have been continued reports of issues with seals and this remains a concern for fishermen.

Fishing activity in Ramsgate has been consistent this quarter. There is continued focus on a variety of fishing methods, although netting appears to be favoured at the moment.

Sole has been the main focus of vessels in the area with Thornback ray also being targeted. Bass has been targeted by a number of vessels this quarter by use of surface drift nets, there are also a number of vessels using pots to catch lobster, crab and whelks. There has also been a small amount of trawling activity from Ramsgate.

Ramsgate harbour has seen an increase in commercial angling charter vessels and the pier continues to experience angling activity on a regular basis.

Vessels from Broadstairs and Margate have also continued to focus on netting and some potting activity. Catches have been mediocre and vessels have had to be more flexible in where they are targeting fish. Officers have also seen some angling activity this quarter.

Number of vessels fishing from Thanet Ports: 24

Deal and Walmer

Vessels fishing from Deal and Walmer focused on lobster potting for the summer, and beginning to focus on herring and sprat fishing for the winter. Angling effort remains high on Deal pier, with a number of clubs active in the area.

Number of vessels fishing from Deal and Walmer: 5

Dover

Dover has seen a lot of activity from charter angling vessels alongside shore angling. The commercial fishing vessels have primarily been using pots to fish this summer. Skippers from Dover and further afield attended a Defra workshop in June to contribute to the development of two MCZ sites either side of Dover for the Tranche 2 MCZ process.

Number of vessels fishing from Dover: 2

Folkestone and Hythe

Folkestone vessels have been both potting and trawling this quarter, with trawling proving to be particularly productive at the start of the quarter. Catches have reached a steady level with sole being the primary target, particularly for netters. High levels of plaice have been caught in Hythe Bay. Sales of fish and shellfish sold locally have been steady in price.

Lobster potting has continued throughout the summer and whelk potting has become more active over the course of the summer.

Fisherman have been highly engaged in discussions with local officers, NGOs and other stakeholders regarding future management proposals for Hythe Bay. Discussions have also taken place concerning management of the MCZ at Folkestone Pomerania.

Number of vessels fishing from Folkestone and Hythe: 13

Dungeness

Vessels fishing from Dungeness have been targeting sole over the course of the quarter. Vessels here often fish in both ICES areas iVc and Viid. Fishing has been steady over the later summer months although was more sporadic early on in the quarter. Landings of cod began to increase at the very end of the quarter. Angling is a large feature of Dungeness and the area has been highly active during this quarter.

Number of vessels fishing from Dungeness: 5

Evanna Lyons,
Kent Shore Officer