



## **Agenda item C2**

### **Essex Report**

#### **Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Quarterly report for the period ending 31 December 2014**

### **GENERAL SITUATION**

More sole were seen during the start of this period. However due to a closure on skates and rays throughout the period, some vessels avoided setting bottom gear to prevent large by-catches which would all have to be returned. This period also saw large shoals of herring along the Essex coast but, due to poor market prices, not many boats joined the fishery and some commented that the larger herrings were a nuisance filling up large mesh bass and cod nets, resulting in unwanted by-catch. Closure of the Thames Estuary cockle fishery on 26<sup>th</sup> September where 6468 tonnes of cockles were taken was followed by the opening of Area 7 of the outside cockle fishery from 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> October with 38 vessels taking part in the fishery, landing 699 tonnes of cockles..

### **HARWICH & WALTON**

Catches of crab and lobster were average for this period of year. The increase in sole available allowed boats trawling to catch fair quantities of it but had to return all by-catches of skates and rays. Vessels fishing for private stalls managed to continue to get fair amounts of mixed fish during October and November but reduced effort during the end of the period as catches slowed.

*Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 12*

### **BRIGHTLINGSEA, WIVENHOE AND CLACTON**

The start of this period saw a large increase in activity with vessels from The Wash taking residence in Brightlingsea while the outside cockle fishery was opened at the start of October. Biosecurity inspections were carried out on two vessels from these ports prior to the opening of the fishery. Vessels were landed at Oliver's Wharf by officers day and night during the period of the fishery to ensure no vessels were overloaded and that the biosecurity measures for the fishery were adhered to.

Fishing activity return to previous lower levels after the end of this cockle fishery with resident vessels targeting the first of the cod showing in The Wallet and the last of the bass. Herring were also seen in good numbers during this period but seldom wanted due to low market value and cost of transport. Some potting carried on during the start of the period but gear was retrieved later in the period to reduce the risk of loss.

*Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 10*

## **WEST MERSEA**

Netters continued for the first half of the period targeting bass and the first of the codling. Trawlers continued to have a slow year only improved by increased landings of sole to fair levels in November. However, this was short lived and all by-catch of thornback rays had to be returned. Public shellfish beds remained closed for native oysters during this period. However, Gigas oysters continued to be harvested with good stock levels and marketing opportunities being reported.

*Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 10*

## **HULLBRIDGE, NORTH FAMBRIDGE, BURNHAM-ON-CROUCH & BARLING**

The continued low fishing effort through gill, drift and trammel netting activity seen from these ports in the past years continued in this period. Vessels reported that the ban on landing thornback was having a noticeable effect on business and that the number of small to medium bass seen in the rivers in previous year had not been seen at the start of this period as expected.

Clam dredging and collection of Gigas oysters remained at similar levels to that reported in previous reports. One vessel from these ports joined the outside area cockle fishery at the start of this period while other vessels from the fishery landed cockles in North Fambridge.

*Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 7*

## **SOUTHEND-ON-SEA & LEIGH-ON-SEA**

After a poor summer period, vessels from Southend were able to make the most of the herring and intermittent sprats seen during October and November. Reports from vessels indicated that the quota was too low for the quantity of herring in the estuary again.

The cockle fishery inside the Regulating Order continued until 26<sup>th</sup> September before vessels prepared for the opening of the outside area on 5<sup>th</sup> October. During the preparation period, 19 biosecurity inspections took place to ensure vessels were compliant with the requirements of the emergency bylaw. As seen in previous years some vessels switched to different gear types to profit from other fisheries after the cockle fisheries were closed. Due to tidal heights and times the December survey of the Maplin Sands was moved to late November with good quantities of spat recorded.

*Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 26*

## **HOLEHAVEN & THURROCK**

Activity and catches remained low during this period again with most vessels fishing part-time.

*Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 5*

*Alex Senechal  
Fishery Officer, Essex*