

Agenda Item No C4
Report on the patrol vessel 'Tamesis'
Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
Quarterly report for the period ending December 2014

Vessel priorities

- Monitor Commercial and private fishing vessels, fixed/drift nets and static gear for compliance with Kent and Essex Byelaws, EU Legislation and Regulations.
- Thames and Blackwater Herring Fishery
- Monitor closed cockle areas
- Enforcement of outside area cockle fishery
- Whelk survey N Kent coast – Essex coast
- Targeted enforcement of static gear
- Input enforcement information into UK fisheries Monitoring, Control Surveillance System database (MCSS)
- Vessel refit at Burnham

Risk based fisheries enforcement

Risk based Enforcement has continued, allowing senior officers to determine species at risk within the district throughout the whole year. Bi-weekly tactical meetings between senior officers allows informed decisions to be made on how to enforce and regulate, using information reports and data collected by officers on shore and vessel patrols.

Enforcement patrols have been conducted covering the Thames Estuary, North Kent coast and local rivers.

Forty one vessels were sighted and recorded. Four non boarding inspections were carried out to check for compliance with Byelaws and EU regulations. Private vessels have been recorded with guidance given to individuals on drift nets, pots and traps and minimum size of species.

Further development to the access database for recording vessels, fixed nets and static gear sightings has resulted in eight gear sightings unidentified, six gear sightings (GS identified PLN or name and address) and eight gear inspections (handled gear checked for compliance) being recorded which resulted in four offence notices and two seizure notice being attached and gear removed for non-compliance with byelaws.

Patrols were carried out to monitor closed area cockle beds. No activity was recorded.

Patrols were carried out along the Essex coastline to monitor whelk fishing. A small fleet of commercial potting boats continue to fish for whelks along the Essex coast.

The Thames and Blackwater Herring Fishery is now open and is scheduled to close on 31 January 2015 or when the allocated quota is taken. Drift nets and minimum landing size have been monitored.

The Outside area cockle fishery opened this year, Essex based officers worked on Tamesis monitoring the fishery at night. Enforcement of the closed areas resulted in no breaches recorded. Vessels positions were recorded and intelligence was passed to shore based officers to facilitate enforcement on landings.

Enforcement of static gear

Tamesis stayed in Ramsgate to complete whelk surveys off of the North Kent coast. Whilst there, targeted enforcement was carried out on static gear leading from intelligence reports. In total two sets of 15 whelk pots were seized. Notices were issued locally to advise the potential owners of these seizures.

Conservation/Survey Work

Officers carried out two whelk surveys this quarter. Survey pots were deployed on separate occasions on the North Kent coast and the Essex coast. Although the survey was completed, officers had to re deploy one survey as weather hampered efforts to haul the survey pots safely. Contents of the pots were weighed and counted with sub samples being retained for future analysis.

Maintenance

Regular maintenance has been carried out for the vessel's engines and equipment, records have been stored in both hard copy and electronic format.

Statistics

During this quarter, Tamesis has undertaken 12 patrols, used 1119.73 litres of fuel and travelled 310 sea miles. The engines have run a total of 48 hours.

Other Information

Annual refit at Burnham

Tamesis is now in refit in Burnham on Crouch, maintenance and works are being carried out by Burnham boat yard and should be completed by mid January.

Mammal observations

One seal was sighted in the Wallet spitway, near to the Gunfleet wind farm and 40 long finned pilot whales were sighted in the River Blackwater. Concerns by local fishermen were that the whales would beach themselves in the shallow waters. Tamesis monitored the whales, they were escorted to the Bench head where they exhibited a pattern similar to feeding behaviour. The marine mammal society were deployed and met with officers on board. The pilot whales remained within the Thames estuary for a number of days, unfortunately, a 2.18m female whale was washed up in the shallow water near Goldhanger creek. This was the first incident of a

long finned pilot whale being found dead for over 22 years. An expert announced "The most likely cause of stranding and death at this stage is starvation, although we are waiting for the results from follow-up tests, including several to determine whether the animal had an underlying infection."

Training and Procedures

Standard operating procedures are being finalised for survey methods and equipment on board Tamesis, the procedures will outline safe working practices for employees and other agencies whilst working on the boat.

Mark Davey
Skipper/IFC Officer