



**Agenda Item No. C1**

**Quarterly Report – Chief IFC Officer**

**Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority**

**Quarterly report for the period ending March 2013**

**Fishing activity**

Fishing activity during the winter period has been generally low with mostly poor catches of cod, thornback ray, sprats and herring. Due to low water temperatures the spring fisheries for sole and thornback ray were not early as has been the case in several recent years. Catches of scallops in the southern part of the district were moderate. Harvesting of pacific rock oysters continued and there were again issues relating to the harvesting of clams from private grounds. With few alternative fisheries available an increased number of fishermen turned to potting for whelks which produced moderate catches. This has been a difficult winter for most fishermen with a long winter with very low earnings.

The progression of the usual spring fisheries did not get underway until mid-April when catches of sole and thornback ray started to improve and fishing activity increased.

**Whelk Fishery permit Byelaw**

Following the previous making of an Emergency byelaw relating to potting for whelks, and extensive consultation and consideration by the Authority, a new Whelk Fishery permit Byelaw which was confirmed on behalf by the Secretary of State was made on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2013. Bringing in this byelaw has required a lot of effort and working to tight deadlines from both KEIFCA officers and Authority members; and we see the flexible byelaw that we have developed as a ground breaking piece of legislation that gives the tools to KEIFCA to manage the whelk stock in a sustainable way. Both Will and I would like to thank everyone for their hard work on this issue.

## **Herring Fishery Closure**

Notification was received from the Marine Management Organisation of a closure on the Thames Estuary and Blackwater Herring Fishery as a result of TAC uptake and management decisions regarding analysis of the stock. This resulted in implementation of the Authorities herring fishery byelaw with closure of the fishery within the Thames Estuary west of a line longitude 001°10'East during the period 11<sup>th</sup> April 2013 to 31 August 2013.

## **European Marine Sites and Marine Conservation Zones**

A series of 7 workshops involving fishermen throughout the district were held during March to provide an update regarding Defra's change of approach to assessment and management of fishing activities within European Marine Sites. Information was also provided at these workshops with regard to the Defra Marine Conservation Zone consultation process which concluded at the end of March. KEIFCA will be responsible for delivering the fisheries management requirements for those areas that fall within the KEIFCA district.

One of the most contentious sites in the district is the proposed MCZ in Hythe Bay, KEIFCA officers worked with defra, Natural England and local fishermen to discuss the issues connected with this site in depth. KEIFCA officers feedback the issues discussed in this meeting to defra as well as the results of an economic survey provided by KEIFCA to better capture the socio-economic activities on the site (this document can be provided to members if requested, but is not a public document as the data was given with the express desire to be passed on to defra).

## **London Gateway**

Port construction and dredging has continued. The first 3 cranes have now been installed on the completed sections of the quayside. Concerns have been raised with regard to a small change to planned dredging to improve the turning circle radius at the port. This will result in some increased dredging at one point on the edge of Blyth Sands. Discussion is soon due to commence in considering plans for maintenance dredging once the capital dredging is completed. This main capital dredging is due to be completed by early summer and there will be some ploughing in the Channel which is required to contour the slopes, however aggregate dredging is due to continue 2 or 3 times per month until the end of the year.

## **Enforcement**

Officers have monitored fishing activity both from the shore and by use of the Authority's Patrol Vessels. Enforcement activities have applied the requirements of the Regulating Order, Byelaws, National and EU Legislation. One verbal warning has been issued.

Joss Wiggins

Chief Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer