

**Agenda Item C3**  
**Essex Officers' Report**  
**Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority**  
**Quarterly report: Period ended 31 March 2013**

**GENERAL SITUATION**

Fishing effort in the region was affected by colder than usual weather conditions throughout January to late March. Herring and sprat were not seen in the large numbers experienced during the same period in 2012. Due to the continuing cold water conditions it was reported that sole had not begun to appear yet and that they were not expected to start showing until mid to late April.

**HARWICH & WALTON**

Fishing effort was low in the lobster fishery with many vessels not able to find good days to go out and haul gear. The small number of vessels that did attempt fishing in this period, when the weather permitted, reported small catches of crab and lobster.

Trammel and gillnetters drifting for cod reported fair catches of cod in the early and late parts of the period, but with no significant numbers of herring. Catches were fair to good on occasion with most catches taken in the Wallet area north of the Gunfleet sands.

With no sole to be seen by the end of the period, only a few boats had switched gear types to pursue this fishery.

Vessels operating out of Walton continued to work a mixed fishery with catches mainly sold direct to the public but being subsidised by fish from the markets as effort was limited throughout much of the quarter.

**BRIGHTLINGSEA, WIVENHOE, CLACTON**

Vessels working out of Brightlingsea, Wivenhoe & Clacton targeted the cod fishery when weather conditions allowed, with smaller vessels using drift nets. Attempts at drift net fishing for herring and sprats had little reward when weather conditions permitted providing enough herring for direct sale to the public but insufficient quantities to warrant transport costs to market. One vessel out of Brightlingsea was not able to work throughout the quarter until the last two days of March when good catches of fair sized cod were reported as being caught.

## **WEST MERSEA & TOLLESBURY**

A few vessels engaged in the drift net fishery for herring during this quarter with fair to good numbers of decent sized herring reported in the catches by some across the estuary. However these catches did not last through to the end of March with many of the herring caught at the start of March onwards being spent and therefore being of lower value.

Under the emergency whelk byelaw permitted boats targeted this fishery with varying success with only one vessel remaining in this fishery by the end of the quarter. As a result drift netting for herring at the end of January when catches increased became the preferred fishery for one or two vessels. Reports indicated fair to good landings for most of the period.

The prohibition on the movement of Pacific oysters within parts of the Blackwater continued as did the prohibition on the taking of native oysters under the shellfish beds byelaw currently in force. Harvesting of Pacific oysters continued nonetheless on private grounds with good stock levels and marketing opportunities being reported.

## **MALDON & BRADWELL**

Fishing effort from these ports has continued at a low level. Drift net fishing for herring continued at a very low level. Gill and trammel netting continued at only a very low level producing small catches of cod.

The rearing of pacific oysters from hatchery reared spat was maintained at previous levels, with the ban on the movement of any pacific oysters from the designated red zone to the green zone given to the West Mersea area of the Blackwater still in effect.

## **NORTH FAMBRIDGE, BURNHAM-ON-CROUCH, BARLING, PAGLESHAM & ROCHFORD**

Fishing activity from these ports remained at a low level.

Cultivation of native and pacific oysters continued at a low level and on-growing of hatchery reared spat continued. Cultivation of mussels has continued at a low level on private grounds.

Dredging for clams in the Crouch and Roach rivers has continued throughout this period. This has resulted in some dispute between the vessels engaged in the fishery regarding fishing rights in the area and the environmental impact of the gears used on the European Marine Site.

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

The Authority's management of the cockle fishery resulted in the fishery remaining closed throughout this quarter. During this period most of the fleet of cockle harvesting vessels underwent routine maintenance in preparation for the new season. A couple of vessels engaged in other fisheries throughout this quarter, including the whelk fishery on the North Kent coast.

Pair trawling for sprats and herrings was engaged in during this quarter, with skippers reporting good catches of herring in the first month, but becoming erratic for the rest of the period. However, poor landing of sprat and the closing of the Blackwater herring fishery by MMO/CEFAS and subsequently KEIFCA at the end of March has left skippers indicating that not enough quota had been given to satisfy demand in the coming months.

Vessels engaged in fishing for whelks off the North Kent coast indicated fair to good landing of whelks throughout the period when the weather permitted.

## **HOLEHAVEN & THURROCK**

Fishing effort remained fairly low from these ports, with a small number of vessels trawling for sprat in the inner estuary and some trammel nets being deployed towards the end of the period.

Alex Senechal  
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