

Agenda Item No. C2
Shore Report - Kent
Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
Quarterly report for the period ending March 2013

Overview

Poor weather has restricted fishing effort dramatically this quarter. The cold weather has resulted in very cold water temperatures for a prolonged period. This could be having an impact on migration patterns of key species in the district.

Prices have varied across the fishery. Cod is commanding a good price whilst thornback ray and bass prices have been poor. A significant number of fishermen are exporting fish although poor exchange rates of late have impacted on the income of those exporting. Vessels selling their catch locally are fetching higher prices but demand is not as high.

Other economic pressures are being felt across the district. High fuel prices are having an impact on all fishermen. Harbour fees have increased at both Whitstable and Ramsgate as well as an increase in storage fees.

Towards the end of the quarter, cod landings have increased, as would be expected this time of year. There has been much Thornback fishing activity and there have been reports of Thornback Ray gear being set on the Kentish Flats towards the end of the quarter also.

Queenborough

Activity in Queenborough has been affected heavily by weather this quarter. A number of boats have been trawling whilst whelk fishing is continuing as a method of supplementing income for a number of vessels.

Local cockle fishermen have been preparing vessels for the forthcoming cockle season.

Faversham

Faversham vessels have continued to focus on oyster dredging, both on private and public grounds. There has also been some trawling activity, mostly for herring and sprats. There is also a new vessel fishing for whelks out of Faversham/Harty Ferry.

Whitstable

Activity levels have reduced, once again due to the severe weather.

Whelk fishing is still popular with vessels in the port and catches are still high, but many vessels are now turning more and more to oyster dredging also due to lack of other accessible stocks. Boats began to set lobster pots towards the end of March.

A number of vessels have also been trawling. Landings of herring have shown high quality fish, with fish full of roe toward the end of the quarter. The closure of the Herring fishery has been timed very well, and should allow this year's stock to spawn. One of the Whitstable vessels has been fishing out of Folkestone, citing poor fishing in the Thames estuary as having a negative impact on his business.

There are still three cockle fishing vessels based in Whitstable. One vessel has spent much of this quarter in dry dock being preparing for the forthcoming season. Extensive refurbishment of the cockle processing plant has been carried out over this quarter.

Herne Bay

There have been two vessels fishing out of Herne Bay this quarter, with the focus on whelk fishing. One of the vessels has changed ownership over recent months. Herne Bay remains an active angling area for both shore anglers and boat anglers.

Thanet Ports (Ramsgate/Broadstairs/Margate)

Margate has had some angling activity this quarter, mainly shore anglers fishing from the pier. There remains one vessel fishing from Margate and this has focused on netting. This vessel mainly sells his fish locally. Reports have also been received that there is a problem with seals damaging nets in the Thames estuary.

Fishing vessels from Broadstairs have also been focused on netting but have been restricted due to the inclement weather. Fishermen here have also reported instances of seals causing issues.

In Ramsgate, fishermen have reported soles being caught late into the quarter. There have also been landings of skate, whiting, some bass and cod. Drift gear is being used regularly in the area. Vessels have been greatly affected by the weather with few boats being able to fish regularly in this quarter.

Whelk fishing continues to be used to supplement income for a number of Ramsgate boats. Ramsgate pier continues to experience some angling activity over the quarter.

Deal and Walmer

This area has seen relatively low effort on the whole this quarter. There has been some herring fishing, continuing on from the strong fishing last quarter by a number of Deal vessels. Angling, as always, remains high on Deal pier.

Dover

Dover remains a small scale fishing port. Vessels working out of Dover have seen small catches using surface drift gear. Small scale lobster and whelk fishing has continued to be a focus for Dover vessels. Vessels have used Dover as a midway point this quarter due to poor weather conditions. A number of vessels from other ports have been sighted at Dover undergoing maintenance work over the winter season.

Folkestone and Hythe

Folkestone remains a steady fishing port. Vessels have been trawling for cod and sole as well as supplementing catches with whelk fishing. A number of Folkestone vessels have also been scallop dredging in the region of Dungeness point this quarter.

Hythe vessels have seen some netting activity during the quarter. One vessel has been assisting CEFAS with a discards survey.

Much of the focus of fishermen at Folkestone this quarter has been on the impending decision with regard to designation of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ) by DEFRA. Hythe Bay has been recommended as a suitable site for the location of an MCZ. The fishermen of Folkestone, Hythe and Dungeness are concerned that if the site is designated, a ban on trawling will be implemented in the bay, which would have a major impact on trawlers from these areas. KEIFCA officers have been working with the fishermen to ensure the potential impact of the site on the

local community is fully examined before the site is designated. A Defra consultation on MCZs closed on 31st March, to which many of the fishermen responded.

Dungeness

A number of boats from Dungeness have been netting this quarter but fishing here has also been slack. The fishermen here have also been actively campaigning against the introduction of an MCZ in Hythe Bay. The Fish Hut on Dungeness point has been undergoing some expansion work over the quarter and has been shut as a result. As usual, high levels of anglers at Dungeness beach have been observed.