



## Agenda Item B10

By: Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer - Kent

To: Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority – 20 May 2016

Subject: **Update: River Medway Nursery Area**

Classification: Unrestricted

---

### **Summary:**

This report will update Members on progress made with the River Medway Nursery Area byelaw. Members will also be provided with information on the steps being taken to promote this byelaw within the wider community by involvement in two festivals in the area.

---

### **Recommendation:**

Members are asked to **NOTE** the report and make **COMMENT** on it

### **Introduction**

At the KEIFCA meeting held on 6 November 2015, Members approved the making of the River Medway Nursery Area (Prohibition of Fishing) Byelaw. Since then, the byelaw has gone through the formal consultation process and has been submitted to MMO for final approval before being passed to Defra for signing by the Secretary of State. To promote the byelaw, as well as the importance of estuarine waters to juvenile finfish, a series of promotions and events have been held within the Medway area in collaboration with Medway Council. This activity is building towards the Medway River Festival on the 9 July where celebrations will be held to mark the creation of the River Medway Nursery Area.

### **Consultation**

The byelaw and impact assessment were opened to consultation following the extraordinary meeting on 6 November 2015, ending on 23 December 2015. It was advertised in three local newspapers, Fishing News, on the KEIFCA website, and letters were sent to important stakeholders to personally notify them of the

intent. Stakeholders consisted of six tackle shop owners in the Medway area and the owner of a residential marina within the no-take zone. At the closing of the consultation, the only response was a letter of support and recommendations from the Institute of Fisheries Management, which also included the Institute's position on the sustainable management of sea bass and fisheries management in estuaries.

After the consultation period had ended, we were contacted by concerned individuals regarding the exemption clause in Regulatory Notice 2. Owners of moorings in both Stoke Creek and Damhead Creek explained that boat owners could not carry fish back to their mooring that were caught outside the River Medway Nursery Area.

To resolve this, KEIFCA has created a database of boats and their owners with registered moorings in both Stoke and Damhead Creek. Therefore, if the boats were inspected whilst returning to shore with fish on board, the database could act as supporting evidence that they were returning to a registered mooring.

### **Designation event**

Since 6 November 2015, KEIFCA officers have been planning an event to raise the profile of the byelaw both locally and nationally. After meetings with Festivals, Area, Theatres and Events department of Medway Council, the event was merged with the Medway River Festival to be held on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2016.

KEIFCA officers have also been in close contact with the following partners to help promote the event nationally.

- MMO
- Defra
- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- Institute of Fisheries Managers

The partners will be collaborating through a range of methods:

- Social media and timed press releases will be used to spread information to the public rapidly and broadly
- KEIFCA officers can visit the organisation to give a short presentation or host a stall in the foyer to provide more information.
- Inviting senior staff of the relevant organisations to the Medway River Festival or the organisation having a stall within the Festival.

### **English Festival**

In preparation for the Medway River Festival, KEIFCA were invited to the English Festival on 23 April. This event was used as an opportunity to promote the River Festival and the Living River art piece, whilst acting as a gauge for popularity and to anticipate any issues for the River Festival.

The KEFICA stall hosted a crafts area where wooden fish were decorated. Families could select one of five fish found in the River Medway, and colour it in

whilst learning about it. Alongside, parents and interested people could learn more about the River Medway Nursery Area, marine conservation and the role of Kent & Essex IFCA. The event was a success with 426 fish decorated and the River Festival event well-advertised through posters and 300 promotion cards handed out.

### **Next steps**

There will be a focus on promotions for the designation, to raise awareness with potential funders and future partners. Once the no-take zone (NTZ) is designated, the focus will move to research. The research group will meet once more to refine the various research questions asked, and identify funding sources.

Anglers will be approached both at the River Festival and along the river to participate in angling surveys. This will not only generate interesting data about both angling and fish distributions in the river, but also generate support for the project and involve the local community for future projects.

### **Financial implications**

None identified in relation to agreed budget headings.

### **Recommendation:**

Members are asked to **NOTE** the report and make **COMMENT** on it