

Agenda Item C2
Essex Officers' Report Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation
Authority Quarterly report:
Period ending January 2017

GENERAL SITUATION

Fishing has been extremely poor this quarter. None of the traditional winter species of cod or whiting have shown in any number leaving many boats struggling to fill quotas. The Summer and Autumn high sole numbers have now gone, leaving many boats pursuing smooth hound and ray. Reasonable weather for the time of year has allowed most boats to put to sea. However, despite this sustained effort, catches are very poor. A few large bass have been caught but most have reported only undersize school bass being hauled in nets.

HARWICH & WALTON

Fishing effort has continued at the same intensity as last quarter although catches have been poor. Lobster potting has now finished for the season with most gear being stowed at sea. Despite sustained effort most boats are failing to meet their quotas for cod and sole.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 20

BRIGHTLINGSEA, WIVENHOE, CLACTON

For the last quarter late-season sole and thornbacks have made up the majority of quota catches in these three ports. Now, however, sole numbers have declined steeply and no boats have reported good catches of cod. Some boats have been putting reasonable effort into shrimping in the Essex Estuaries area with the price of shrimp currently being high. Oyster dredging continues at moderate levels on private grounds with the public fishery remaining closed.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 12

WEST MERSEA & TOLLESBURY

Tollesbury Marina has been particularly quiet this quarter, with only a few boats operating out of this port and activity continuing to decrease. Earlier in the year both West Mersea and Tollesbury boats had a fair show of codling but this has not matured into large size cod catches, as is the case with the rest of the district. Mersea boats continue to sell their small catches of cod and skate, though lobsters have now finished for the season.

Whelk gear has been noted to be high around these ports, however, whelking activity is occurring out of the districts 6nm limit. Hand gathering of wild pacific rock oysters continued at low tide and the native oyster fishery remains closed.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 23

MALDON & BRADWELL

Fishing effort from Maldon and Bradwell remains low with only a small number of boats operating from these ports. Most activity is drift netting targeting cod and whiting but reported catches of these fish have been very low.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 4

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

Activity here is mostly centred around private grounds for native and pacific oysters. Dredging for clams continues in the Crouch and Roach at low levels and there is a reasonable level of bait potting in the area. There has been an increase in shrimping in the Roach, and outer reaches of the Crouch.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 3

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA & LEIGH-ON-SEA

With the cockle fishery now closed for the year, the cockle fleet is laid up for the annual winter maintenance. Some boats continue to fish but have seen poor catches this quarter, similar to most of the district.

Most fishermen report poor catches despite efforts to fish further afield in the estuary. There have been little or no cod landings for some and many have only landed whiting only just above the minimum size.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 31

HOLEHAVEN & THURROCK

Fishing effort remains low and in decline from Holehaven and Thurrock. Both vessels operate only on a part time basis with trips out working now very infrequent as winter weather closes in for the end of the year.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 2

Gemma Galbraith

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer, Essex