

## Agenda Item C2

### Shore Report - Essex

#### Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

#### Quarterly report for the period January to May 2017

### **Overview**

In addition to poor weather conditions in January which limited fishing opportunities, there was a poor show of cod throughout the period. This was of great concern to many fishermen as this is the second year that significant cod catches have remained negligible. Large herring shoals did occur in the district and were exploited by a number of vessels, however low prices meant effort was minimal. Larger fish in particular remained scarce for the entire winter season along the Essex coast. Thornbacks occurred in great abundance and dominated much of the bycatch.

Sole catches have gradually increased throughout the period as waters warm up, but due to the low quota for both skate and sole, most active commercial vessels quickly used up their quota. Bass authorisation from the MMO was ongoing within this period, with vessels demonstrating a track record being granted permission to retain bass as bycatch in trawls and fixed nets, or target by long lining. Many vessels have now received their permission and are fishing for bass to supplement catches of other species. The overall feeling from the industry was that catches had been poor for most species throughout the Essex coast. Fishermen who have received permission to catch bass by long lining seem to be the most optimistic for the following period.

### **Harwich & Walton**

Drifting for cod reported poor catches throughout the period, however poor weather conditions and a limit on the amount of thornback ray vessels were allowed to land meant some vessels chose to stay in port for long periods. Effort on lobsters was low, as expected for this time of year.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 9

### **Brightlingsea, Wivenhoe & Clacton**

Due to poor weather conditions and poor numbers of cod present at the start of the period, fishing effort from these ports was relatively low. Thornbacks were again seen in abundance but with limited quota only selected fish were retained in nets. Large herring were also caught in drift gear during this period but prices were low. There was also a new moderate effort of whelk potting occurring out of

Brightlingsea during the period. A new vessel is due to start working out of Wivenhoe in the next period, and another vessel that has been unused is being serviced to start fishing again, which will slightly increase effort in the area.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 7

### **West Mersea & Tollesbury**

Similar quantities of herring were seen by vessels from these ports as those in Brightlingsea, Clacton and Wivenhoe. Hand gathering of wild pacific rock oysters, at low tide, continued while the native oyster fishery remained closed. Trawlers targeting cod had poor catches. The low quota allowance for thornback rays and sole was the limiting factor on catches from these fisheries during the period. Bass regulations had a similar effect on landings into the port compared to the same period in previous years, due to the ban on targeting fish by drift netting.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 20

### **Maldon & Bradwell**

Fishing effort from these ports was mostly on private grounds for oysters. Vessels harvesting pacific oysters continued to work at levels seen during the same period. Very low levels of drift netting for cod occurred.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 2

### **North Fambridge, Burnham-on-Crouch, Barling, Paglesham & Rochford**

Low level activity was again seen from these ports. Dredging for clams in the Crouch and Roach rivers has continued this period at low-fair levels of intensity. Activity was mostly centred on private grounds for native and pacific oyster production. There has also been a low level of shrimping effort in the estuaries.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 4

### **Southend-on-Sea & Leigh-on-Sea**

The Authority's management of the cockle fishery resulted in the fishery remaining closed throughout this quarter. Most cockle vessels underwent routine maintenance during this period while some went on to other fisheries including whelks, trawling and working private grounds for other shellfish. Low quotas for sole and thornback limited fishing effort. Trawling for herrings and sprats occurred with fair landings. Trawlers from these ports mostly worked away during this period noting a poor show of codling.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 26

### **Holehaven & Thurrock**

Fishing effort was low from these ports, with only a small number of vessels working on a mostly part time basis, or being out of the water for maintenance during the period. Activity from these ports has continued to decline.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 2

Hayden Hurst, Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer, Essex