

Agenda Item – C1

Shore Report - Kent

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
Quarterly report for the period September to November 2017

Overview

Sea temperatures are beginning to drop as expected for the time of year after an extended period of warm weather and light winds. The water has become increasingly more turbid after a long spell of clear waters which made for difficult fishing for many of the commercial netting and trawling boats. Now with more colour in the water, it has meant that many of the boats have been reporting steady catches of sole and thornback ray along with other species. The under 10m fleet in the North Sea have 2 tonnes of quota for Thornback rays and 5 tonnes for sole for the month of November. The current price of thornback ray makes it difficult for the fishermen to land large quantities. Cod haven't appeared in significant numbers as expected for the time of the year but are still being caught.

Whelk fishing slowed over the summer months and the season has been slow to start, with just three permitted boats fishing for whelks inside the KEIFCA district in September. October picked up with eight boats fishing for whelks with the majority fishing off the North Kent coast. Many boats will primarily fish for whelks over the winter period with netting and potting as an additional form of income for the fishermen. Lobster fishing has been steady over the summer with new rules being implemented at the beginning of October with no UK registered vessels being allowed to fish for berried lobsters in English waters and not to land berried lobsters regardless of where they were caught.

The Thames Estuary cockle fishery season (TECFO) closed in October with 14 boats completing 26 trips. The outside permit cockle fishery opened for one trip from the 3rd – 5th October with 25 boats fishing for that one trip in area 7 on the Ray, Dengie and Buxey sands. Officers monitored both of these fisheries to a high standard, conducting boardings at sea and landings on shore to check for compliance.

Queenborough

The TECFO cockle season finished in October with extra trips allocated for the TECFO boats to compensate for lost trips earlier in the season. This happened after the outside permit cockle fishery was open for one trip at the start of October. Other vessels from Queenborough have been whelking, trawling and netting and white weeding.

Number of vessels fishing from Queenborough: 11

Faversham

A netter and a trawler are based in Faversham with Oare creek being used by one vessel to land their finfish. Locally caught fish have higher prices on average from this Port.

Number of vessels fishing from Faversham: 2

Whitstable

The Whitstable fleet has begun fishing for whelks with steady reports of whelks so far to start the season. Both Whitstable and Ramsgate continue to be two of the biggest ports in terms of catches of whelks. Boats have been targeting sole and other finfish during this quarter, with conditions starting to be as they should for the time of year.

The three cockle boats completed the 2017 TECFO season in October and also did an extra trip for the outside cockle permit fishery which opened in area 7. Oyster dredging has continued in Whitstable from four of the fishing boats. Fishing has also been constant throughout this period with trawlers, potters and netters.

Number of vessels fishing from Whitstable: 15

Herne Bay

One boat from Herne bay has been netting during this period with most of the fishing activity coming in the way of anglers and private potters around Herne Bay pier and also near Beltinge Bay.

Number of vessels fishing from Herne Bay: 1

Thanet Ports (Ramsgate/Broadstairs/Margate)

Boats have been recording steady catches of sole recently with colour in the water finally helping with the catches of fish. Whelking inside the district has just begun after the warm sea temperatures during the summer. The warmer temperatures earlier in the summer meant that boats fishing for whelks had to stop earlier than in previous years. Visiting whelk vessels from Sussex have returned to Ramsgate during this period and have set their pots outside the KEIFCA 6nm limit.

Fishing vessels have been reporting large numbers of starfish that are covering the nets and tangling up the gear making it hard going for the fishermen. Catches of cod have been sporadic by both commercial and recreational fishermen and numbers appear to be lower than expected for this time of year. Bass have been landed by commercial boats who are permitted to land bass as bycatch.

Catches in Broadstairs have been steady this quarter with one boat using a variety of fishing methods including potting for crab and lobster and also netting. Herring is being sold freshly caught off one of the boats. Margate has seen boats netting throughout this quarter with one main fishing boat from this port selling its catch locally.

Number of vessels fishing from Thanet Ports: 27

Deal and Walmer

Boats in Deal have been lobster potting, netting and drifting for herring during this period with the fish caught being sold locally right off the beach which continues to be popular with the locals. Mackerel were caught off the pier right up until the end of September with the clear waters and good conditions.

Number of vessels fishing from Deal and Walmer: 6

Dover

Charter vessels continue to operate throughout this period whilst the weather has been good. Fishing effort has been low key and fishing ports either side of Dover have reported more catches. Dover sees more activity from angling boats as well as crab and lobster potters, rather than netters and other fishing methods.

Number of vessels fishing from Dover: 4

Folkestone and Hythe

Lobster fishing has slowed since the summer and fishermen have predicted a slow season for whelks in the Hythe Bay area with one boat reporting that they will not be whelk fishing again over the winter. Most whelk fishing vessels in Folkestone tend to fish for whelks during the summer months in and around Hythe Bay. Nets have been set in the area close to Folkestone and Hythe and trawlers have been working in the bay also. One vessel in Folkestone has continued to work as a guard boat during this period. Nets set from the shore have been reported during this quarter near these ports with one net seized by IFCA officers due to contraventions of KEIFCA byelaws.

Number of vessels fishing from Folkestone and Hythe: 15

Dungeness

There have been two new whelk permit holders this year and this has had a significant impact on the whelk fishery. The KEIFCA district is split into four areas for whelk fishing and these two vessels alone make up a huge amount of catches in area 4 in the Southern part of the district and this has become a heavily fished area along with area 2 on the North Kent coast. However, whelk fishing slowed from September with these boats fishing through the summer months.

Catches of sole have been good by commercial netters. Spider crabs have been a problem in this region with the smaller specimens becoming entangled in nets throughout the summer. Seals have also been causing problems for the fishermen with fish being damaged and taken from the nets by the seals.

Number of vessels fishing from Dungeness: 5

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