

Agenda Item C3

Report on the patrol vessels 'Tamesis' and 'Blue Jacket' Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Report for the period September – November 2017

Vessel priorities:

- Patrol River Roach Several Order
- Conduct night patrol to monitor the Cockle Permit fishery
- Patrol Essex Estuaries with particular emphasis on Bottom Trawling Byelaw
- Record data of all vessel sightings
- Record data of all fixed net and pot sightings
- Monitor recreational and charter recreational fishery
- Oyster dredge survey
- Recruitment of First Mate and MPA Compliance Officer

Fisheries Enforcement

Both Tamesis and Blue Jacket were in use in this quarter and tasked for both survey and enforcement duties, though other workstreams (including the cockle quad survey and biosecurity inspections on cockle permit fishery) limited the opportunities to put to sea.

Tamesis was stationed in the Crouch on night patrol during the permit cockle fishery to ensure no vessels encroached on the Thames Estuary fishery. Tamesis has also conducted patrols through the Wallet to the North Eastern extremity of the district.

Blue Jacket was utilised to conduct patrols on the Essex Estuaries to monitor and distribute information on the Essex Estuaries Bottom Trawling Byelaw which has recently come into force. Blue Jacket was also used to monitor the Oyster fishery and the patrol the Roach Several Order.

During these patrols, commercial fishing vessels were sighted on 25 occasions with 6 non-boarding inspections conducted. Recreational vessels (including charter recreational) were sighted on 12 occasions, with 5 non-boarding and 1 boarding inspection conducted.

Fishing gear was logged on 22 occasions with 4 sets being inspected. All inspected gear was mostly found to be compliant with 1 notice issued for gear not clearly marked.

Conservation/Survey Work

Dredge Survey

Tamesis spent a number of days at the beginning of September conducting the annual oyster dredge survey in the Blackwater, Crouch, and Colne. This survey consists of 100m tows at 104 sites where native oysters were found on the original survey in 2014. A number of strings are deployed at key sites to monitor oyster growth. These strings are hauled and inspected at regular intervals to record growth and mortality of the attached oysters. Data gathered from this survey may help to inform targeted management of oyster beds and forms the basis of a KEIFCA sponsored PhD by University of Essex student Ms. Alice Lown.

Marine Mammal observations

During the course of the patrols and survey trips marine mammals were sighted on 14 occasions. One of these sightings was a harbour porpoise and the rest were seals. Mammals were sighted on the Knoll, the Blackwater, the Buxey and Ray sands and in the Crouch and Roach. On one occasion up to 20 seals were observed vigorously feeding and breaching on the Buxey.

Maintenance

Routine maintenance was conducted on the vessels as required and monthly safety checks were carried out on schedule. The hard drive on the PC which controls the sonar on Tamesis failed and was replaced locally. Tamesis has been booked in to Suffolk Yacht Harbour for winter refit, which will take place early in January.

Other Information

Statistics

During this quarter, Tamesis has put to sea on 14 occasions, used 1938 litres of fuel and travelled 461 nautical miles. Blue Jacket put to sea 4 times using 175 litres of fuel to cover a patrol distance of 196 miles.

Other trips

Candidates for the post of First Mate and MPA compliance officer were taken to sea on both vessels at the beginning of September. Operations were conducted in accordance with standard operating procedures; the procedures outline safe working practices for employees and other agencies whilst working on the boat.

Invitation to Authority Members and P.R

An open invitation is extended to Authority Members to join the crew on an enforcement patrol or survey aboard the vessel.

Colm O'Laoi
Skipper & IFC Officer