



Agenda Item – C1

Shore Report - Kent

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Quarterly report for the period November 2017 to January 2018

Overview

Gales at the start of this period have made fishing conditions difficult for many of the fishermen. Despite strong winds and rough seas, the sea has continued to be particularly clear especially for this time of year which has affected catches of finfish. This has been noted by fishermen during inspections by officers on patrol.

Some fishermen have expressed concerns over losses of catches of whelks due to the required increased riddle size of 25mm. Officers have directed fishermen to a report undertaken by leading whelk scientist, Dr Phil Hollyman studying whelk maturity sizes in different areas of the KEIFCA district. Whelk spawning has carried on for a longer period than in previous years which has been reported by fishermen to be up to two months rather than two to three weeks seen previously. Whelks have been landed in large quantities through the port of Ramsgate from fishing vessels visiting from Sussex, fishing outside the KEIFCA district.

Fishermen are waiting to see what quantities of bass they will be permitted to land in 2018 and what techniques they will be allowed to use. Fishermen have been considering different fisheries as well as more cost-effective techniques in order to maximise their income and sustain a living. Fishing vessels have been scalloping in South Kent and there has been more oyster fishing effort in the past month.

Queenborough

A new fishing vessel has started fishing from Queenborough after the owner sold his old boat and swapped his whelk permit over. One vessel has been seen trawling and fishing for oysters, as have many other vessels in the district.

Number of vessels fishing from Queenborough: 7

Faversham

In Faversham, one vessel has been seen trawling for finfish in this quarter and also dredging for oysters. This vessel has been diversifying in terms of their fishing techniques to catch a variety of finfish and shellfish species.

Number of vessels fishing from Faversham: 2

Whitstable

The Whitstable fishing fleet have been targeting oysters considerably more over this period. Some vessels have been travelling further than their usual fishing grounds to catch oysters. Whelk fishing has been steady, as expected for the time of year with Whitstable being the busiest port in terms of whelk fishing inside the KEIFCA district. Most of the fishing effort within the KEIFCA district in November happened in area two off the North Kent coast with the majority of these boats fishing out of Whitstable. Another fishing boat in Whitstable harbour will start whelk fishing inside the KEIFCA district bringing the total to seven boats. The whelk fishermen reported that the whelks continued to spawn for a prolonged period and as a result, waited to work the whelk pots. The strong winds also affected fishing time in the quarter with less boats working. Trawlers and netters in the harbour worked throughout this quarter when conditions were favourable.

Number of vessels fishing from Whitstable: 14

Herne Bay

A whelk fishing boat out of Herne Bay recently changed ownership and has been active during this period. There is also a category two whelk permitted fishing vessel that lands small quantities of whelks to this port. Recreational boat anglers use the slipways at Herne bay to fish on favourable weather days

Number of vessels fishing from Herne Bay: 2

Thanet Ports (Ramsgate/Broadstairs/Margate)

Ramsgate has been productive in terms of whelks being landed with four of the whelk fishing vessels working outside the KEIFCA district and landing their catches in Ramsgate harbour. There are two whelk vessels that fish inside the KEIFCA district from Ramsgate and they have reported that the whelks have

been spawning and catches have been slow with not as many whelks caught compared to previous years, forcing them to try alternate fishing grounds.

Vessels continue to net for sole and thornback ray but many boats are not reaching their quota for the fish species they are targeting. Some vessels were drift netting for herring before Christmas but have stopped now to allow for the fish to develop in size. Fishermen have stated that they will start fishing for herring again in February and March. Cod have been caught sporadically in this period with individuals being landed in Margate and Ramsgate, but not in numbers seen in previous years. The charter fishing vessels have had good custom in this period and are regularly seen taking clients out on day angling trips.

Number of vessels fishing from Thanet Ports: 27

Deal and Walmer

Deal remains active with sales of local fish. Sprats and herring are some of the species being sold freshly off the beach.

Number of vessels fishing from Deal and Walmer: 6

Dover

Commercial vessels in this quarter have been lobster fishing and also preparing for the lobster season by catching bait for their lobster pots and traps.

Number of vessels fishing from Dover: 4

Folkestone and Hythe

Fishing vessels have been setting nets in Hythe Bay and one smaller vessel has been whelk fishing. In Folkestone over the Winter period, the whelk fishing slows until around March where vessels fish for whelks over the Summer period until the water temperature is too high. Scallops have been caught during this period off the Dungeness area with one boat out of Folkestone seen fishing for them. Trawlers based in Folkestone have also been seen working in this quarter.

Number of vessels fishing from Folkestone and Hythe: 15

Dungeness

Boats have been netting throughout this period, and in January started to set whelk gear at sea again after a short lay off. Visiting vessels from Sussex have

been coming into the Kent and Essex district to trawl for finfish, dredge for scallops and set lobster pots.

Number of vessels fishing from Dungeness: 5

Robert Watson, Inshore fisheries and conservation officer, Kent