

Agenda Item - C1
Shore Report - Kent
Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
Quarterly report for the period January 2018 to May 2018

Overview

Vessels have started to take advantage of the arrival of spring fisheries such as sole, bass and thornback ray, with additional catches of smoothound and lobster starting to show.

As a result of the introduction of the 2018 bass regulations, no landings were permitted in February and March, but in April some bycatch was reported for fixed nets.

Quota for skates and rays has increased for the under 10 fleet compared with last year, and netters and trawlers have enjoyed steady catches throughout this quarter, with abundant thornback ray moving inshore. Sole quota also remains reasonable at 3 tonnes in May.

Whelks remain a key target species for a large proportion of the inshore fleet, and effort has remained high with reasonable returns for most vessels in the final months of the 2017/18 permit. The end of this quarter sees the 2018/19 whelk permits introduced, with many fishermen renewing their permits again this year.

The weather restricted days at sea this quarter, with sustained North Easterly winds bringing cold weather and rough seas. The colder than usual temperatures persisted throughout March and only started to increase during April, at which point fishing opportunities started to improve. In addition, coastal waters became clear early on compared to previous years, although the arrival of thick "May Water" has impacted fishing at the very end of the quarter.

Queenborough

The number of vessels operating from here is decreasing, however the port maintains a diverse range of fishing methods. Gillnetting, trawling and potting are the most common methods, with whelks, thornback and sole being landed in this quarter.

Fishermen have said that landings are low for this time of year. The three cockle vessels based here have started to gear up for the start of the cockle fishery this summer.

Number of vessels fishing from Queenborough: 9

Faversham

The two boats fishing out of Faversham creek sell fish locally through their own merchant business. The vessels have been trawling for sole and skate, and dredging or hand gathering for oysters.

Number of vessels fishing from Faversham: 2

Whitstable

Whitstable harbour remains a highly active fishing port, with boats using an assortment of gear types including trawls, dredges, gillnets and pots to target oysters, finfish, whelks and lobsters.

While the weather was cold most effort was focused on whelking and some trawling, but with increasing temperatures at the end of the quarter several vessels have started setting lobster pots, however whelking effort has remained high with the introduction of the 2018/19 permits. Trawlers are taking advantage of the increase in sole and skate this quarter, and regular native oyster dredging has been taking place.

Maintenance work has been ongoing for cockle vessels in preparation for the summer fishery, with adjustments and upgrades on all vessels.

Number of vessels fishing from Whitstable: 15

Herne Bay

Commercial fishing activity has ceased in Herne Bay during this quarter, with the only vessel working from here being sold.

Number of vessels fishing from Herne Bay: 0

Thanet Ports (Ramsgate/Broadstairs/Margate)

Ramsgate remains by far the largest and most active of the Thanet fishing ports, and in addition to the local fleet it has hosted several whelking vessels from Sussex who set their pots outside the KEFICA District. Meanwhile resident whelking vessels continue to set gear within the 6nm and have seen consistent catches this quarter despite adverse conditions.

Gill netting activity has increased in the warmer weather, and vessels have been landing mainly thornback ray with some bycatch of cod, bass and smooth hound. Only one vessel has been trawling from this port. As with other ports in Kent, some vessels have set lobster pots and have started to land small quantities.

Broadstairs vessels mainly focused on netting, but also have started to set pots for lobster now that temperatures have started to increase.

Margate vessels have mostly been netting for skate during the last quarter, with quotas being used up on a regular basis. Lobster pots have been set with only limited success.

Number of vessels fishing from Thanet Ports: 32

Deal and Walmer

Boats that launch from the beach here have been fishing with a combination of netting and potting gears. Netters have changed their meshes to target the spring fisheries, but herring and sprat have still been landed. Lobster and crab fishing has also started this quarter.

The pier and beaches north and south continue to be popular for anglers. Some vessels have been sold at these ports.

Number of vessels fishing from Deal and Walmer: 8

Dover

Fishing has declined further in Dover, with only two commercial vessels remaining. Vessels carry out regular potting and netting activities, with lobster being the main target species this quarter.

Despite the reduction in the commercial fleet, there are numerous charter boats working out of the port which take large parties of anglers out to target thornback, smoothhound and even mackerel as the water has cleared.

Number of vessels fishing from Dover: 2

Folkestone and Hythe

Folkestone has a diverse range of boats that are equipped for trawling, netting and potting. Local reports claim that shellfish has become the primary focus of most vessel in this port. Potters have begun targeting lobsters and crabs, along with continued landing of whelks caught within the KEIFCA district. Most vessels from these ports have renewed their whelk permits to continue fishing in the district in 2018/19. Netters land a diverse range of finfish that follow the seasonal trends, and most vessels with trawling capability have been using dredges to target scallops in the last quarter.

Number of vessels fishing from Folkestone and Hythe: 14

Dungeness

Netters from Dungeness have been landing mainly thornback ray which has been highly abundant, and have therefore quickly filled their quotas during this quarter. Most netters switched to target sole at the end of the quarter. Other target species such as cod failed to show in large numbers. Two vessels from Dungeness fished within the KEIFCA whelk permit fishery in the last quarter.

Number of vessels fishing from Dungeness: 6

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