

Agenda Item - C3

Report on the patrol vessels 'Tamesis' and 'Blue Jacket'

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Report for the period January 2018 – May 2018

Vessel priorities:

- Check closed cockle areas
- Undertaken cockle grab surveys
- Patrol district for any large vessel infringement of byelaws
- Patrolled areas closed to bottom towed gear
- Inspect trawling vessels for EU gear legislation and catch composition
- Record data of all vessel sightings
- Record data of all static fishing gears, fixed nets and pots
- Input key enforcement information into national fisheries enforcement database (MCSS)
- Inspect pots and traps for compliance of byelaws
- Check potting vessels for compliance of byelaws
- Check for compliance of Whelk byelaws
- Sightings and observations logged and information reports forwarded
- Finished oyster Harrow Survey
- Completed Spring Oyster Dredge Survey
- Annual Maintenance

Fisheries Enforcement

Patrol activity is generally relatively low during the winter period as adverse weather conditions, reduced activity in the fleet and annual vessel maintenance takes place. As spring breaks the focus then shifts on to survey duties. The increase in staff resources has allowed a significant increase in enforcement patrols and vessel boardings over the same period last year. The capability to use both vessels simultaneously to conduct survey duties and enforcement did not go unnoticed in the community.

During their patrols officers logged sixty-nine commercial vessel sightings. Non-boarding inspections (NBIs) were conducted on twelve of these vessels, and twenty-two vessels were boarded. No offences were reported from these boardings. A further eleven charter vessel sightings were recorded with two NBIs, and twelve recreational angling vessels were recorded with NBIs conducted on nine of these.

The patrol vessels also logged thirty-five sets of gear of which sixteen were inspected. Eleven offence notices were issued for incorrectly marked gear. Follow-up operations indicate that remedial action had been taken and all gear in that area now appears to be clearly marked.

Conservation/Survey Work

Harrow Survey

The final harrow survey was conducted in February on sites on the Blackwater and in the Ray Sand Channel. As before the sidescan sonar was deployed from Tamesis and towed across the twelve boxes (six harrowed and six control). Three grab samples were also taken from each box which were then photographed before sediment cores were extracted and retained.

Oyster Survey

The Spring oyster dredge survey was carried out at the beginning of March. This survey, which is being conducted in association with Essex University PhD student Alice Lown, involves the analysis of dredge contents of a single tow over 100 sites within the Blackwater, Crouch, Roach and Colne MCZ. In addition, oyster strings have been deployed at selected sites, which are hauled and measured at regular intervals to monitor growth in the different areas.

Cockle Survey

This period also saw work commence on the annual cockle stock assessment. This is conducted over high water using a 0.1m² day grab. The weather proved favourable, and with Nerissa concentrating on the Kent sites it enabled Tamesis to complete the survey of the Dengie, Ray, Buxey and East Barrows in Essex.

Marine Mammal observations

Marine mammals were sighted on sixteen occasions with many individual seal sightings in the rivers Roach, Crouch and Colne and large groups of seals observed at low tide on the Buxey and Foulness sands. Sighting were also recorded on the Wallet Spitway, Bench Head and in Hamford Water. Officers also recorded a sighting of a single porpoise on the Colne Bar.

Maintenance

Routine maintenance was conducted on the vessels as required and monthly safety checks were carried out on schedule. Tamesis underwent her annual refit in January at Levington Marina in Suffolk. The vessel was repainted with anti-foul, the port drive shaft was replaced with a previously used spare unit, and some minor electronic work was carried out.

The safe working load test was conducted in Brightlingsea and the vessel was attended by a MECAL appointed surveyor for an annual test. Defects identified were addressed and the vessel was certified for another year.

Other Information

Statistics

During this quarter, Tamesis has put to sea on nineteen occasions and took 2508 litres of fuel and travelled 551 nautical miles. Blue Jacket put to sea twelve times using 825 litres of fuel to cover a patrol distance of 528 miles.

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 FPV Tamesis & Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer