



Agenda Item C1

Shore report, Kent

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly report for the period May 2018 to August 2018

Overview

The Thames Cockle fishery opened on 17 June and has been a major work stream for officers during this quarter. TECFO vessels have seen good returns compared with last year's fishery, which resulted in an increase from two to three trips per week for all licenced vessels.

Bass catches from commercial vessels are continually limited to bycatch, with most being caught in fixed nets or by commercial hook and line. Recreational fishing for bass remains prohibited.

Thornback ray, sole and smoothound have been the main species targeted by netters and trawlers during this quarter. Catches of valuable sole have been poor compared with previous years, whereas thornback rays have been numerous with the monthly quota of 1.2 tons being quickly used up by the under 10m fleet.

Whelking continued to be a stable fishing activity at the start of the quarter, with catches declining as the sea water warmed throughout the summer. Lobster potting increased as the waters warmed with reasonable catches in May and June, however returns started to reduce by the end of the quarter.

Overall there has been good weather during this quarter, including an extensive period of high pressure bringing calm sea conditions. This has allowed the inshore fleet to be highly active during the summer months.

This fair weather has also greatly benefited charter vessels, who have run frequent trips to fish for mackerel and smoothound.

Queenborough

The small fleet here have undertaken gillnetting, trawling and potting during this quarter. Whelking has ceased with potters turning their attention to setting lobster pots on the numerous wrecks in the Thames. Trawlers have been using larger mesh size cod ends to catch smoothound, and netters have reported some bycatch of bass amongst the mixed finfish they land. Overall, fishermen have reported that landings are low for this time of year.

The two TECFO cockle vessels based here have completed three fishing trips per week for the majority of the quarter. They have managed to fill up quickly enough to complete their trips over a single tide.

Number of vessels fishing from Queenborough: 9

Faversham

The two boats fishing out of Faversham creek sell fish locally through their own merchant business and have been trawling for sole and skate with limited bycatches of bass.

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.

During this quarter many of the vessels that target whelks during the colder months have switched to netting, targeting sole and thornback ray. Some whelking took place during the beginning of the quarter, however this activity had virtually stopped by August due to low catches, which is typical for the time of year. Trawlers have targeted sole and skate in this quarter, however due to poor catches in the greater Thames area some vessels have moved further afield to areas with more consistent fishing.

The four TECFO cockle vessels working from Whitstable were able to catch the designated 13.6m³ in less than an hour at the beginning of the season, although this time has gradually increased throughout the season with vessels now taking just over one tide to fill up and steam back into port.

Number of vessels fishing from Whitstable: 15

Herne Bay

Resident commercial fishing activity has ceased in Herne Bay, with the only vessel working from here being sold. Commercial vessels are deployed from trailers on the slipway on occasion, however most fishing from this harbour is done by recreational angling vessels.

Number of vessels fishing from Herne Bay: 0

Thanet Ports (Ramsgate/Broadstairs/Margate)

Ramsgate is the largest and most active of the Thanet fishing ports, with almost all vessels either potting or netting. The only trawler working from Ramsgate in the previous quarter has moved to Devon, with its place being taken by a trawler from Whitstable. Gill netting activity has increased in the warmer weather with landings of sole, thornback ray, cuttlefish and smooth hound in addition to bycatch of bass and lobster. Lobster potting activity has greatly increased during this quarter with good returns reported early in the season, however this decreased after the water temperature rose significantly in July.

Lobster potters reported that this prolonged period of exceptionally warm weather caused the lobsters to stop crawling and eating.

Broadstairs has a very small fleet of vessels that have undertaken small amounts of netting and lobster potting, with recreational fishermen contributing to this effort.

Margate vessels have mostly been netting for skate and sole during the last quarter, although catches have been reported as very poor for the time of year. Lobster pots have also been set.

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 been mostly using larger mesh sizes to target the summer species and avoid numerous spider crabs fouling their nets. Landings have included smoothound, thornback ray, lobster, edible crab and a bycatch of bass. Fishermen have also been potting for lobster and crab with reasonable catches in most of the quarter.

Number of vessels fishing from Deal and Walmer: 8

Dover

Fishing has declined further in Dover, with only two commercial vessel remaining. Vessels have mostly focused on potting during this quarter, with lobster being the main target species. Numerous charter boats working out of the port have been targeting the abundant summer mackerel in the clear water off Dover.

Number of vessels fishing from Dover: 2

Folkestone and Hythe

The Folkestone trawlers have switched from scallop dredging last quarter to otter trawling in the summer months, targeting a combination of sole, plaice, thornback ray and smoothound.

Potters have been targeting lobsters and crabs, although reports of a shortage of good quality bait has meant that catches are not as good as expected for the time of year. Whelks have been landed throughout the quarter by two vessels, with one vessel stopping due to the small size of whelks.

Netters from Folkestone and Hythe have been targeting sole and plaice with smaller mesh gear, and catching thornback ray, smoothound, lobster and edible crab with larger mesh gear. Abundant spider crabs in the area have been a nuisance to netters by damaging gear, although fishermen are able to sell this bycatch for pot bait and therefore recover some costs.

Several Folkstone vessels have been chartered as safety boats for cross channel swimming during the summer, as this is a lucrative opportunity to supplement their income.

Number of vessels fishing from Folkestone and Hythe: 14

Dungeness

Netters from Dungeness have been landing mainly sole, thornback ray, and smoothound, but like the ports further up the coast they have been hindered by spider crabs fouling their nets and low numbers of sole. Two vessels launched from Dungeness beach have been fishing within the KEIFCA whelk permit fishery in the last quarter and have been showing good returns throughout this quarter.

Number of vessels fishing from Dungeness: 6

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