



Agenda Item C1

Shore report, Kent

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly report for the period November 2018 to January 2019

Overview

This quarter has been challenging for many fishermen trying to sustain a living. Long periods of northerly and easterly winds have made life difficult for the fishermen. Numbers of fish have also been sporadic over the Winter season and the sole fishery has now slowed down significantly.

Small numbers of cod have shown up, particularly off the Southern Kent coast but also off the North coast near the windfarms. Whelks had a chance to spawn over this period and the April 2017 technical requirements of the whelk fishery permit byelaw seems to have had a positive effect on stocks. Fishermen reported good catches of whelks, especially in January 2019.

Bass have been caught across Kent from fishermen permitted to land them as bycatch. Measures on bass will be finalised in January 2019, with proposals indicating that there will be a slight increase in the limits that authorised boats can land bass in 2019. Recreational fishers will likely have a one bag limit from April to October.

The full landing obligation (discards ban) came into effect from the 1st January 2019 after being implemented gradually over the past few years. Brexit is fast approaching and has been a hot topic when visiting each port in Kent as it could affect the fisherman's livelihood significantly

Queenborough

Commercial fishing activity has slowed over this period, but vessels continue to trawl in the Thames Estuary in favourable weather days. The two whelk permit holders in Queenborough are not currently fishing for whelks as whelk catches have been poor for areas close to Queenborough. There have been good reports of catches of thornback ray likewise with a lot of parts of the district.

Number of vessels fishing from Queenborough: 9

Faversham

The Faversham boats have been oyster dredging over Winter, whilst also trawling for various finfish species. Thornback ray reports have been good, and the boats continue to sell their fish through their merchant business.

Number of vessels fishing from Faversham: 2

Whitstable

Whitstable continues to be a highly active port in terms of fisheries. Fishermen continue to vary their methods of fishing to earn an income. Many of the fishermen fish for oysters on the Kentish flats, trawl and net for finfish; but mostly rely heavily on whelk fishing for a sustained income.

Whitstable has reported good catches of whelks after a slow start to the season, with fisherman enjoying particularly good catches after the Christmas break. Herring have been reported in high numbers but are generally not targeted due to lack of demand. Vessels have continued to dredge for oysters off the Kentish flats and cockle vessels continue their maintenance to prepare for the cockle season over the Summer.

Number of vessels fishing from Whitstable: 15

Herne Bay

There is no change to the commercial fishing activity in Herne Bay, with the only activity coming from trailer-based fishing vessels which are known to be launched here over high water.

Number of vessels fishing from Herne Bay: 0

Thanet Ports (Ramsgate/Broadstairs/Margate)

Bad weather has hampered the amount of sea days that fishermen can fish and the combination of bad weather and lack a finfish has made for a difficult period for the Ramsgate netters. Sole have been reported in small numbers and many of the netters have been fishing for thornback ray. Bycatch of other species such as plaice, bass, smoothhound and gurnard have been important, but some fishermen have decided not to go to sea due to the lack of fish to catch and difficult weather.

Whelk fishing has been steady over the period for the Ramsgate whelk fishing fleet. The whelks have been landed in Ramsgate in good quantity and sizes which were caught both inside and outside the KEIFCA district. Prices have been very good for the whelks and have increased significantly since last year as demand has been high from the Asian market in particular.

Fishing activity in Margate and Broadstairs has been low, with the majority of the fishermen working part time and using small boats limiting the areas in which they can fish. Boats from Margate continue to set gillnets and sell their catches locally.

Number of vessels fishing from Thanet Ports: 31

Deal and Walmer

Fishing boats in Deal utilise nearby fishing grounds to fish for herrings and thornback ray whilst also selling fresh fish straight off the beach as soon as it's landed which is popular with the local community. For this season although fishing for herring and sprat is continuing it is very poor with most days catching in single figures only.

Number of vessels fishing from Deal and Walmer: 8

Dover

Fishing effort in Dover remains low as many of the fishermen are part time. Charter vessels went out in good weather days especially when the ban was lifted for recreational anglers to catch one bass per person near the end of 2018. One of the boats catches bait to be used for the crab and lobster season.

Number of vessels fishing from Dover: 2

Folkestone and Hythe

Folkestone fishing boats have been trawling and netting over the start of the Winter months. Vessels have Hythe Bay close by and the trawlers sell their catch at the local fish shops in Folkestone.

Hythe vessels have mostly been netting for finfish. Thornback ray have been seen in large numbers and fishermen from Hythe are able to utilise the quota from ICES areas IVc and VIIId. In January the quota for thornback Ray is 1.2 tonnes in ICES area IVc and 0.7 tonne in area VIIId. Turbot have also been landed here to help with the income for the fishermen. A new fishmonger has opened in St Marys Bay and other fish shops in the area continue to sell locally caught seafood.

Number of vessels fishing from Folkestone and Hythe: 14

Dungeness

Strong winds and unfavourable sea conditions have limited the number of days at sea for many of the fishermen down at Dungeness. When they have been able to go out there has been very good reports of catches of thornback rays. Whelk fishing has been good over the Winter period with fishermen reporting good prices for their catches. Good whelk catches have been reported right the way around the South coast of England. Cod have also been caught along with small amounts off bass. Unseasonably mild Winter temperatures have kept some of the warmer weather species around for a bit longer than expected for this time of year.

Number of vessels fishing from Dungeness: 6

Robert Watson,

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