



Agenda Item C1

Shore report, Kent

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly report for the period February 2019 to May 2019

Overview

In this quarter, as temperatures begin to increase, vessels usually start to target spring fisheries. The most productive fishery in Kent this quarter was whelks, followed by thornback ray and towards the end of the period crab and lobster. Smoothound were also landed in considerable numbers.

With the introduction of the 2019 Bass Regulations, no landings of bass were permitted in February and March, but a small amount of bycatch was permitted from April onwards for fixed nets, hook and line and trawling.

Quota for skates and rays in the North Sea and Eastern Channel has increased for the under 10 fleet compared with last year, which has allowed netters and trawlers to maintain steady catches throughout the quarter, with abundant thornback ray moving inshore. Sole quota also remains reasonable at 3 tonnes in May, however there are limited sole being caught inshore.

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 2018 permit. The end of this quarter saw the 2019 whelk permits introduced, with most fishermen renewing their permits again this year, and other fishermen signing up for the first time.

The weather has been fair in comparison to the sustained easterly winds this time last year, which has given the opportunity for more days at sea for inshore vessels. Warmer temperatures earlier in the season has led to a bloom of "may water" algae in April which has resulted in poor water clarity.

Queenborough

The number of vessels operating from here is decreasing, however the port maintains a diverse range of fishing methods. Trawling is the most common method, used to target thornback and sole this quarter. Despite this, fishermen have said that landings are low for this time of year, especially for valuable sole. Meanwhile the two cockle vessels based here have started to gear up for the start of the cockle fishery this summer.

Number of vessels fishing from Queenborough: 10

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 and hand gathering pacific 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, whitefish, whelks and lobsters.

Most vessels have focused on whelking during this quarter, with good landings seen by most boats. With increasing temperatures several vessels have also started setting lobster pots, however whelking effort has remained high with the introduction of the 2019 permits. Netters mainly targeted thornback ray in this quarter as sole has been late to show in any significant numbers. Regular native oyster dredging has also been taking place.

Maintenance work has been ongoing on the four cockle dredgers in preparation for the summer fishery with repairs and modifications on all vessels.

Number of vessels fishing from Whitstable: 15

Herne Bay

Commercial fishing activity in Herne Bay is virtually non-existent, however angling boats and trailer vessels are launched here regularly for fishing in the Outer Thames.

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, with resident whelk potting vessels continue to set gear both inside and outside the KEIFCA district. The whelk fishery has been lucrative with consistent catches of large whelks seen inside the 6nm limit, demonstrating the benefits of management from the KEIFCA permit byelaw.

Netting activity has increased in the warmer weather, with fixed and drift bottom-set nets being used. Vessels have mainly targeted thornback ray with some bycatch of sole, cod, bass and smooth hound. Most Ramsgate netters now seek fishing grounds further out to sea beyond the 6nm limit, and this is the only way soles have been caught this quarter. As with other ports in Kent, some vessels have set lobster pots and have started to land small quantities.

Broadstairs and Margate vessels have mostly been netting for skate during the last quarter but have turned their attention to potting for lobster now that temperatures have started to increase.

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, with increasing quantities of skate being landed, but herring and sprat have still been fished. Lobster and crab potting has also started this quarter.

Number of vessels fishing from Deal and Walmer: 8

Dover

Commercial fishing effort is low in Dover, with only two boats remaining. These regularly target crab and lobster with parlour pots in the chalk reefs off Dover, but also occasionally use gill nets to fish for herring or thornback.

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, smoothound and bass.

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. All whelk boats from these ports have renewed their KEIFCA permits for the 2019 fishery, and landings have been good. Netters continue to land a diverse range of finfish that follow the seasonal trends, including thornback, dogfish, and a few turbot. Boats with towing capability have been using trawls and scallop dredges.

Number of vessels fishing from Folkestone and Hythe: 14

Dungeness

Most fishing effort from Dungeness beach has focused on potting for whelks, with a total of 4 vessels applying for permits this season. Whelk landings from this port have yielded some of the highest returns in the district. Netters from Dungeness have been landing mainly thornback ray and smoothound.

Number of vessels fishing from Dungeness: 6

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