

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 2019 – May 2019

Vessel priorities:

- Patrol district boundary for incursions by oversized or foreign vessels
- Patrol areas closed for bottom trawling under Essex Estuaries byelaw
- Conduct and assist with EU exit patrols
- Board and inspect vessels for compliance with EU technical measures
- 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 with KEIFCA byelaws
- Inspect recreational angling vessels to ensure compliance with regulations
- Conduct spring oyster survey
- Conduct cockle stock surveys for Permit Fishery & TECFO
- Set and retrieve whelk pots to obtain seasonal samples for EMFF Population Study
- Set whelk pots outside 6nm limit to obtain samples for Genetic study
- Vessel Maintenance

Fisheries Enforcement

This period is traditionally quite important for vessels working the Essex coast. This year however has seen significantly reduced effort as the late run of cod failed to materialise and the spring sole run is yet to start in earnest. A period of prolonged easterly wind did little to improve the situation. As usual for this season some enforcement activity gave way to the annual oyster and cockle stock surveys. The principal enforcement priorities for this period were the Essex Estuaries and the whelk fishery. EU Exit patrols were a priority in March and April with Blue Jacket being relocated and operating from Ramsgate for a period at the end of March. A further period of EU exit enforcement was carried out with crew from Essex assisting on the Kent vessel.

Over the course of these patrols officers logged 48 vessels of which 37 were commercial fishing vessels and three were charter recreational vessels. Boarding inspections were conducted on eight vessels and non-boarding inspections were

conducted on a further 17 vessels. The patrol vessels also logged 27 sets of gear, of which nine were inspected. One offence notice was attached and one unmarked pot was seized.

Conservation/Survey Work

Oyster Survey

In past years the spring oyster stock survey has been conducted with PhD student Alice Lown of Essex University. Her study required the entire contents of each dredge to be photographed, separated by species, weighed, and recorded. Her study is now complete, so this year our stock survey was only recording native and gigas oysters, so the vessel time required was reduced in accordance.

Cockle Surveys

As is the case every April, Tamesis is engaged in the cockle stock survey of both the Permit and TECFO cockle areas (excluding the Maplin Sands), deploying a 0.1m² day grab at regular intervals across the Buxey, Ray, Dengie, East Barrows, Marsh End, and Scrapsgate. At the request of the cockle fleet this year a survey was also conducted on the Mouse-Knob.

Whelk Survey

As there are very few vessels involved in the whelk fishery in Essex, Tamesis was tasked to collect whelk samples from inside the district which will then be analysed with the data used to inform the ongoing EMFF population study. Tamesis was also tasked to collect whelk samples from outside the 6 nautical mile limit for a genetic study which is being undertaken as a Masters project at Essex University funded jointly by Natural England and KEIFCA.

Marine Mammal observations

Patrols have led to sightings of marine mammals on nine occasions with individual seal sightings on the Colne bar, Knoll, and the Eagle bank. The usual groups of seals were observed hauled out on Foulness and on the Buxey

Maintenance

Routine maintenance was conducted on the vessels as required and monthly safety checks were carried out on schedule. Tamesis underwent a MECAL survey and identified defects were rectified in line with the schedule. The surveyor did however express concern over a possible issue with electrolysis and stated that the vessel should be hauled and have skin fittings replaced prior to the next annual survey.

New RIB

In January the Authority approved a request to replace Blue Jacket with a similar spec vessel equipped with twin engines and fuel tanks.

An order has been placed with Ribcraft for a 7.8m RIB powered by twin Suzuki 175HP engines. As expected Ribcraft are extremely busy (Northumberland IFCA currently have a vessel in build and the Isles of Scilly IFCA also have a vessel on order), the next available build slot is September, with delivery expected at the end of November.

We have applied for EMFF funding to offset part of the cost of the replacement and the application is currently in process.

Other Information

Statistics

During this quarter, Tamesis has put to sea on 18 occasions and took 2523 litres of fuel and travelled 685 nautical miles. Blue Jacket also put to sea nine times using 865 litres of fuel to cover a patrol distance of 469 miles.

Other trips

Operations were conducted in accordance with standard operating procedures; the procedures outline safe working practices for employees and other agencies whilst working on the boat.

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 & IFC Officer