



Agenda Item C6

Compliance and Enforcement Update

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly report for the period February 2019 to May 2019

Introduction

In undertaking its regulatory responsibilities, KEIFCA starts from the position that the vast majority of the community of people, organisations and industries using the marine area within the KEIFCA district are compliant with the regulations and controls that affects them. KEIFCA works to try to ensure that all parties understand both what rules apply to their industry and the justification for this regulation.

Full compliance with EU, UK and local fisheries and environmental legislation is the overall aim of the Authority. This aim is best achieved through the adoption of an adaptive co-management approach to fisheries management.

Adopting the 'Prevention, Intelligence and Enforcement' model used by police forces across the UK, we are making best use of proven methods, using a proportionate approach and ensuring the tax payer receives value for money.

Prevention Activity

Education and prevention have long been used within newly established MPAs, to educate and inform. Proactive contact with new whelk license holders and early inspections has proved to be beneficial, mapping out our expectations from an early stage.

Officers have refreshed local awareness of bass regulations with visits to angling shops and hotspots to distribute educational material.

Intelligence Activity

The intelligence sharing and bi-weekly tasking and coordination meeting for staff continues to form the basis of the targeted compliance strategy. KEIFCA attendance at the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) Eastern and South Eastern Area monthly tasking and coordination meetings has also been beneficial sharing information about local issues. This is proven, as sharing intel between KEIFCA and MMO has led to the detection of offences this quarter.

Regular liaison with Border Force intelligence has broadened our awareness of current affairs affecting our coastal waters. This close relationship mutually

benefits both parties, as we can act as each other's eyes and ears while at sea. Facilities exist for officers to conduct Police National Computer and local intelligence checks with both Kent and Essex Police, where circumstances justify this and it is proportionate.

Details of patrols are shared with the National Maritime Information Centre (NMIC) and Joint Maritime Operations Command Centre (JMOCC) in order to prevent 'blue on blue' incidents and also enhance officer safety.

While most of our intelligence comes from officers interacting with the fishing industry itself, working with other agencies is vital to keep staff safe while conducting enforcement activity.

Enforcement Activity

Whelks, bass and Marine Protected Area activity has been a priority this quarter. Joint working with partners continues to bring tangible benefits and enhances officer safety. Border Force continue to maintain a very high visibility presence in the Eastern Channel deterring illegal immigration, with a secondary tasking of KEIFCA MPA enforcement. Six sea patrols have taken place with the Marine Management Organisation, most of which were charter operation to target larger fishing vessels outside the district. A further three were cancelled due to poor weather.

Marine Protected Areas

Marine Protected Areas continue to be monitored from sea and shore. An intelligence led response, supplemented by targeted enforcement has been adopted to ensure compliance with management measures in MPAs across the district. Current management measures include a No Take Zone in the Medway MCZ; no bottom towed gear in Folkestone Pomerania MCZ, Margate and Longsand SAC and Thanet Coast SAC; and no bottom trawling in Essex Estuaries SAC.

Compliance with such byelaw regulations has stemmed from the proactive distribution of educational information by IFCOs to marine users, and frequent patrols of MPAs. These compliance activities help to ensure that designated features of conservation interest are protected.

Whelk Fishery

Enforcing the whelk permit fishery has been a priority for IFCOs during this period with the introduction on 2019 permits in April. Gear has been inspected at sea to ensure compliance with technical requirements, and catch has been inspected ashore to ensure small whelks are not being retained after riddling. Whelks continue to demand a high price and with more fishermen turning to whelking we have stepped up compliance effort for this fishery.

Bass Fishery

Reporting of bass increased during this period, undoubtedly due to seasonal fishing trends, with targeted enforcement activity increasing around Easter. Recreational and commercial bass fishing activity remains a priority for the both Marine Management Organisation and Kent and Essex IFCA.

Cockle Fishery

Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order licence holders have been well underway with preparing for the fishery in June, with most of the fleet switching to bags this year as opposed to loose loading cockles in the hold. Officers have started to conduct biosecurity, bag and gear inspections before the start of the fishery for those vessels which are prepared already.

Offence Reports

Two investigations have been concluded in the period for whelks and bass fishing offences. One of these resulted in an official written warning and the other was charged with a FAP. Four case files (2 x cockles, whelks and gear offences) are currently under investigation. It would be inappropriate to comment on detail within this report.

H Hurst, Acting Lead Compliance Officer