

Shore report, Kent
Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
Quarterly report for the period May 2019 to August 2019

Overview

Historically the summer is a chance for many fishermen to carry out maintenance on their vessels before the busy autumn and winter seasons. This summer was no different aside from a few fisheries which carried on. Warm temperatures at the start of summer and blooms of algae throughout the summer have made conditions challenging for many fishermen to say the least.

The Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery season has been in full flow since the opening on 16th June 2019 and will continue until 4th October 2019. The pre-season survey established the large amount of stock on the grounds and as a result the 14 vessels have over 50 trips allocated to them for the 2019 season. Yield in the shells took some time to improve, however it has increased as the season went by.

Whelks have continued to be worked by many fishermen off the Southern part of the KEIFCA district. Fishermen off North Kent fished for whelks until around June and many fishermen brought their whelk pots back ashore or further inshore over the Summer months.

The Summer season usually means crab and lobster fishing for many boats, however lobster stocks in particular have been down on previous years. Edible crabs have also seen a drop in their numbers. Edible crabs and dogfish are a good bait for whelk pots which is one of the biggest fisheries in Kent. With edible crab numbers low, suppliers have been forced to try other crab species such as shore crab and spider crabs. Spider crabs have been a problem for many netters off Kent due to their vast numbers and ability to tangle and make holes in nets.

KEIFCA introduced a new emergency byelaw in August for minimum sizes which coincided with the new technical conservation measures which were established by the MMO.

Queenborough

The main fishing activity during this period out of Queenborough was cockle dredging. There has also been one other boat trawling out of Queenborough targeting soles.

Number of vessels fishing from Queenborough: 9

Faversham

The Faversham fishing boats have been trawling and oyster dredging over Summer and the boats continue to sell their fish through their merchant business.

Number of vessels fishing from Faversham: 2

Whitstable

Shellfish fisheries are the main fisheries in Whitstable over the Summer including cockles, whelks, oysters, crabs and lobsters. Whitstable hosted an annual oyster festival in July with oysters being a popular draw for tourists to this town. Many boats have taken the opportunity to carry out essential maintenance on their boats during this period.

There are four TECFO licenced boats fishing for cockles out of Whitstable. They have been on three trips per week, meaning the cockle boats have been the busiest boats in Whitstable over the Summer. Other boats have been whelk fishing until the sea temperature rose too much which slowed whelk catches down. Whelk fishing at the start of the year was very good for all of the fishermen in Whitstable fishing off the North Kent coast. There are many whelk fishing areas within close reach of Whitstable meaning that exploitation could be spread evenly by the fishermen. One of the Whitstable whelk boats set their pots near Dover for around a month when whelk fishing slowed in the North Kent coast; they reported good catches but strong tides.

Catches of sole have been inconsistent throughout the season and some boats have been forced to target other fisheries to sustain an income. Other boats have been fishing for oysters as well as crab and lobsters. Lobsters have been sold locally at good prices with increased demand from local restaurants and markets.

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 have been launched here frequently over the Summer months by recreational anglers

Number of vessels fishing from Herne Bay: 0

Thanet Ports (Ramsgate/Broadstairs/Margate)

Ramsgate is the busiest port in Thanet in terms of fishing activity and boasts a wide range of fisheries. There are four whelk boats fishing from Ramsgate and whelks have been landed up until July from these boats from both inside and outside the KEIFCA district. This year there have been no visiting whelk boats from Sussex which has been different from previous years. Netting boats have continued to work but not as much as in Spring and Autumn. Lobsters and crabs were also worked by some fishermen from Ramsgate. Thornback ray, soles and smooth-hound were also landed along with bycatches of bass. Ramsgate also has a large number of charter vessels and with angling proving popular this keeps the boats busy over Summer.

Part time fishing boats in Margate have been netting and lobster potting inshore over high water. Another boat has been working further offshore to catch soles and sells locally off the harbour arm.

There has been no commercial fishing activity in Broadstairs as the boats moor their boats nearby at Ramsgate for summer to keep out of the way of the public. A small number of recreational boats have been setting their lobster pots just off Broadstairs.

Number of vessels fishing from Thanet Ports: 31

Deal and Walmer

Deal, like Hythe and Dungeness, is a beach launch area and the boats have been netting and potting close to the pier to fish for thornback ray and also crabs and lobster. They still sell their locally caught fresh catch straight off the beach as soon as its landed and residents take advantage of this.

Number of vessels fishing from Deal and Walmer: 8

Dover

Fishing effort in Dover remains low key as many of the fishermen are part time and mostly set crab and lobster pots off the rocky areas. Charter vessels have been out fishing regularly as the Summer season attracts holiday makers. Anglers have been allowed one bass per person per day.

Number of vessels fishing from Dover: 2

Folkestone and Hythe

In Folkestone many of the boats landed shellfish over the Summer. Reports of crab and lobster have been down on last Summer and lobster catches have been particularly poor. One boat from Folkestone has been trawling fairly regularly over summer and catches have been inconsistent for sole. Many of the whelk boats catch whelks in Hythe bay and some have been setting their pots near Dover, however strong tides make whelk fishing challenging in those areas. The Summer season is busy in the Dover straights for cross channel swims and some of the fishing boats from Folkestone have been working as pilots for the swimmers to earn more money.

Hythe boats have been targeting finfish in this period including skate and sole. There are two main boats which work from the beach but there are also a number of smaller boats working part time netting and potting. Spider crabs have been an issue for many of the fishermen down in Hythe as they tangle and make holes in their nets.

Number of vessels fishing from Folkestone and Hythe: 14

Dungeness

Commercial boats from Dungeness continue to fish for whelks and catches have been good throughout the Summer, as these boats make the most of cooler sea temperatures, making for more favourable whelk fishing conditions. One of the whelk vessels has been in refit and only started whelk fishing in July again. There are three main whelk fishing vessels in Dungeness and some of the boats also have been fishing for crab and lobsters selling some of their catch locally. Two of the boats have also been netting for sole and skate off Dungeness whilst also catching some mixed species as bycatch including turbot and bass.

Number of vessels fishing from Dungeness: 6

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