

Agenda Item C3

Report on the patrol vessels 'Tamesis' and 'Blue Jacket' Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Report for the period May 2019 to August 2019

Vessel priorities:

- Patrol areas closed for bottom trawling under Essex Estuaries byelaw
- 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 cockle stock surveys for Permit Fishery & TECFO
- Set and retrieve whelk pots to obtain seasonal samples for EMFF Population Study
- Vessel Maintenance

Fisheries Enforcement

This was a busy period for fisheries off the Essex coast, with the Thames Estuary cockle fleet working three trips from the beginning of the fishery, and the rest of the fleet working on the sole fishery.

Sea based enforcement was significantly affected during this period by a major engine problem on Blue Jacket, however she still managed to put to sea for ten enforcement patrols at the start and end of this period. Tamesis was utilised for gear inspections and monitoring the cockle fishery as well as combining enforcement duties with survey work.

Over the course of their patrols officers logged 69 vessels, of which 50 were commercial fishing vessels and 7 were charter recreational vessels. Boarding inspections were conducted on 12 vessels and non-boarding inspections were conducted on a further 10 vessels. Officers also conducted non-boarding inspections on 9 recreational vessels. The patrol vessels also logged 22 sets of gear, of which 8 were inspected. Most gear sighted and inspected was compliant with KEIFCA byelaws, with one unmarked pot seized.

Conservation/Survey Work

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). This year the cockle surveys continued into this period, and with the day grab left on board, Tamesis returned to the Buxey late in August to take some samples and assess the growth rate of the cockles ahead of the Permit Fishery.

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, the data used to inform the ongoing EMFF population study. This involves setting whelk pots and recovering them after a specified "soak" period. Tamesis routinely carries out enforcement duties whilst conducting the whelk survey.

Marine Mammal observations

Patrols have led to sightings of marine mammals on ten occasions with individual seal sightings from the north east Gunfleet all the way to the East Cant. The usual groups of seals were observed hauled out on Foulness and on the Buxey and the Roach, and individual sightings also occurred in the Colne and Blackwater. One porpoise was logged having been sighted by near the Inner Bench on the Colne.

Maintenance

Routine maintenance was conducted on the vessels as required and monthly safety checks were carried out on schedule. Items needing replacement due to lapsed expiry dates were replaced as required.

Blue Jacket suffered a major engine failure early in this period, which required a substantial rebuild of the engine. This meant it was unavailable for a significant period as quotes were sought and the repair was carried out. It is now back in operation and has resumed enforcement patrols.

Other Information

Statistics

During this quarter, Tamesis has put to sea on 15 occasions and took 2532 litres of fuel and travelled 490 nautical miles. Blue Jacket put to sea 10 times using 885 litres of fuel to cover a patrol distance of 495 miles.

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