



Agenda Item C1

Shore report, Kent

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly report for the period September to November 2019

Overview

Historically the autumn season is one of the busiest times for many fishermen although Kent's fisheries remain very mixed. Sole are still being caught and catches of Thornback ray have been good in North Kent with quota of four tonnes for ICES area VIIId. Cod have been caught sporadically throughout Kent and whiting are now showing up in large numbers.

The Thames Estuary Cockle fishery closed on the 4th October 2019 and yields and catch rates were good for many of the boats towards the end of the season. Vessels had modified their gear prior to starting the season in order to fish in deeper water sites and found large amounts of high yield cockles. Like last year, there was also one trip for the outside cockle permit fishery and 22 boats worked in Area 7 of the cockle fishery. Seven cockle boats from Kent landed in Kent ports.

Delays in the leaving of the EU have resulted in increasing uncertainty in the fishing industry. Since August fishermen have been getting to grips with the new technical conservation rules now in place in which the landing obligation has strong precedence.

Whelks remain a reasonably stable income for many vessels and the North Kent fleet have started fishing again after the summer. Visiting boats from Sussex have based themselves in Ramsgate to catch whelks outside the 6nm limit. Folkestone and Hythe vessels stop fishing for whelks over the winter and Dungeness boats continue for most of the year.

Queenborough

The two Queenborough cockle fishing vessels fished the TECFO fishery with 52 trips. There was one trip for the outside permit cockle fishery in which three vessels from Queenborough were involved. Other than that fishing activity has been low key with one boat trawling and one boat renovated by a local fisherman is to be used over the winter.

Number of vessels fishing from Queenborough: 9

Faversham

There are two fishing vessels still working from Oare creek with one trawler and a smaller vessel used for netting and rod and line fishing. Landings of skate and mixed species have been recorded during this period by the trawler.

Number of vessels fishing from Faversham: 2

Whitstable

Six of the Whitstable whelk vessels started whelk fishing again after the summer season and will usually fish until the whelks start to spawn, then carry on until the water gets too warm. One new whelk vessel arrived in Whitstable in September and another moved from nearby Ramsgate which is keeping Whitstable busy in terms of commercial activity. These whelk vessels have reported good catches and have recently seen signs of the whelks starting to spawn.

Other boats have been oyster fishing, netting for thornback ray as well as drifting and trawling for sole and mixed species. Crab and particularly lobster catches have been inconsistent for the potting boats and cooler sea temperatures compared to last year haven't helped with this fishery. Sea bass have also been landed by boats as unavoidable bycatch as well as smoothhound. Sea bass have been seen in healthy numbers by many fishermen.

The four cockle fishing boats finished the 2019 cockle TECFO season along with one trip for the outside cockle permit fishery. The skippers and crew remain busy with maintenance and other jobs.

Number of vessels fishing from Whitstable: 15

Herne Bay

Herne Bay had little commercial activity occur in this port and continues to be a trailer-launching port in which vessels work over the high water mostly to fish recreationally.

Number of vessels fishing from Herne Bay: 0

Thanet Ports (Ramsgate/Broadstairs/Margate)

Three visiting whelk fishing vessels from Sussex have been landing their catches of whelks in Ramsgate which they have been catching outside the 6nm limit in this quarter. However, catches have slowed for the whelks recently with there being some reports of the whelks spawning which slows the catches down. Whelk vessels have fished in various areas mostly to the East and to the North of Ramsgate in the shipping lanes.

Thornback ray and other ray species have been reported in good numbers. There have been plenty of smoothhound and dogfish which the netters tend to give to the whelk vessels to be used as bait. Sole have been caught by the netters and some of the netters have had good catches recently which is good for the time of year.

In Margate one vessel has been drifting for herring among other fishing methods, selling locally to the general public. Broadstairs has had very little fishing activity with boats favouring nearby Ramsgate as a preferred mooring area especially during school holidays.

Number of vessels fishing from Thanet Ports: 31

Deal and Walmer

Deal fishermen work close to shore and make the most of subtidal features. This time of year, fishermen drift for herring selling at a stall on the beach, which is popular among the locals. Fishermen from Deal also set crab and lobster pots whilst also netting for thornback ray.

Number of vessels fishing from Deal and Walmer: 8

Dover

Dover attracts many anglers to the port, and charter vessels remain very active when the weather conditions allow. Other vessels have been netting and potting and mostly working part time but there is also a new boat in Dover which has been rod and line fishing.

Number of vessels fishing from Dover: 3

Folkestone and Hythe

Folkestone vessels have stopped fishing for whelks which is typical for this time of year. Boats have been trawling and netting and the netters have reported reasonably good catches of cod compared to recent years. Other finfish species which have been landed have been sea bass, thornback ray, smoothhound, gurnard and dogfish. Edible crabs and lobsters have also been caught in this period, but catches have been down on previous years. Spider crabs continue to be found abundantly in this part of Kent. Fish catches have been sold locally mostly but some catches go up to Queenborough and down to Sussex.

Supporting cross channel swimming brought in good income for some of the fishing vessels over the fair-weather days as they worked as pilots and safety boats for the swimmers. Now the season has ended many of the boats work part time when the weather and tide are in their favour.

Hythe boats have been working close to shore and near the Hythe MOD firing range mostly netting and also potting for whelks and crab and lobsters.

Number of vessels fishing from Folkestone and Hythe: 14

Dungeness

Dungeness boats are continuing to fish for whelks after summer with these boats landing the largest quantity of whelks in terms of biomass from the four whelk areas in the Kent and Essex district. They work all year round although one of the vessels has had to have essential maintenance, so catches have been down from that vessel as it has had to use a smaller vessel temporarily to catch the whelks.

Sole and thornback ray have been landed by the netting boats and one boat from Sussex fishes for seabass using rod and line off Dungeness. Crab and lobster potting also occurred in this period and spider crabs are also caught regularly by the commercial fishermen.

Number of vessels fishing from Dungeness: 6

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