

### **Agenda Item - C3**

## **Report on the patrol vessels 'Tamesis' and 'Blue Jacket' Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Report for the period September – November 2019**

### **Vessel priorities:**

- Monitor areas closed under Cockle Permit Byelaw
- Monitor activity and conduct boardings during Permit Cockle fishery
- Monitor TECFO areas for compliance with regulations
- Patrol district boundary for incursions by oversized or foreign vessels
- Patrol areas closed for bottom trawling under Essex Estuaries byelaw
- 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 BCRC MCZ oyster stock survey
- Set and retrieve whelk pots to obtain seasonal samples for EMFF Population Study
- Vessel Maintenance

### **Fisheries Enforcement**

The patrol vessels are traditionally busy into the autumn, however, this was reduced this year as crewing requirements for Brexit patrols and shore based enforcement of the cockle fisheries were priority outcomes of the biweekly TCG meetings. The main areas of concern for the vessels in this period were the cockle fisheries, bass fishery, oyster survey and whelk survey, with the vessels tasked accordingly subject to weather conditions. The majority of Essex-based sea enforcement was conducted using Blue Jacket, with Tamesis being used for survey work and some gear inspections.

Principal enforcement priorities for the period included the Permit Cockle Fishery, Essex Estuaries MPA protection and the bass fishery. Tamesis was deployed to the Crouch on a night patrol during the permit fishery to ensure there were no incursions into TECFO areas, whilst Blue Jacket was on standby to be deployed if required. Blue Jacket was active in the rivers Blackwater and Crouch, Roach and Colne to ensure compliance with the Essex Estuaries byelaw and was also engaged in monitoring fishing activity in the Wallet. During this period, it also operated out of Suffolk Yacht harbour and conducted patrols in the Stour and a joint patrol with Eastern IFCA covering the Stour and Orwell.

Officers logged 28 vessel sightings over this period. Boarding inspections were conducted on three commercial vessels and non-boarding inspections were conducted on seven of these vessels. One vessel was observed and reported for trawling inside the Essex Estuaries prohibited area. Officers also conducted non-boarding inspections of eight recreational angling vessels (four of which were charter vessels) to ensure all were aware of, and compliant with, landing restrictions on bass and the new minimum size emergency byelaw.

The patrol vessels also recorded gear sightings on seven occasions, with gear being inspected on two of these. One offence notice was attached for gear not being clearly marked.

## **Conservation/Survey Work**

### *Surveys*

An outcome of the Oyster workshop held during the summer was that the original oyster stock survey of the Blackwater, Crouch, Roach and Colne Estuaries MCZ in 2014 should be repeated, with any sites where native oysters are now present being added to the spring survey. This survey work commenced in September and will continue into the next period subject to weather and crew availability.

Dr Alice Lown who was involved with the oyster surveys over the past three years and has now completed her PhD is continuing with her experiments and once again has deployed a number of oysters attached to strings which were set in different areas to monitor growth rates. Tamesis assisted with this work and will continue to assist with monitoring by hauling the strings and measuring the oysters at regular intervals.

There are very few vessels involved in the whelk fishery in Essex, particularly during the summer months. Tamesis therefore continues to set whelk KEIFCA survey whelk pots to collect samples from inside the district which are then analysed and the data used to inform the ongoing EMFF population study.

### *Marine Mammal observations*

Marine mammals were logged on six occasions with individual seal sightings in the rivers Roach, Mersea flats, and the Colne bar. A large group of seals was also observed at low tide on the Buxey sands.

## **Maintenance**

Routine maintenance was conducted on the vessels as required and monthly safety checks were carried out on schedule. No major work was required on any of the vessels during this period.

## **Other Information**

### *Replacement Patrol Vessel*

Ribcraft have commenced work on the new patrol vessel "Vigilant" and at the time of writing the hull is complete and the fuel tanks are ready to be fitted. The surveyor has inspected and approved the build to date. KEIFCA officers have visited the factory to examine the build and to discuss the design and layout of the console.

### *Statistics*

During this quarter, Tamesis has put to sea on nine occasions and took 570 litres of fuel and travelled 263 nautical miles. Blue Jacket put to sea eight times using 491 litres of fuel to cover a patrol distance of 345 miles.

### *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 FPV Tamesis & Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer*