



Agenda Item C1

Shore report, Kent

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly report for the period September 2020 to November 2020

Overview

With less than two months to the Brexit date, vessels and fishmongers are preparing for the changes which will occur on January 1st 2021 with trial runs being organised with some fish merchants and to transport fish to designated ports in the EU.

In North Kent the whelk fishing season has started again and has been a saving grace for many of the fishermen. Prices of whelks have been stable at around £1.10/kg however the price of finfish dropped with the second wave of coronavirus impacting the European market. This was due to freezers being full and demand dropping from restaurants closed. Price of sole has dropped considerably to £4/kilo for smalls and around £9/kilo for large. Some of the Kent boats are beginning to sell locally again due to the fact the prices of fish seem to be worse than the first lockdown.

The TECFO cockle fishery closed on the 2nd October with the boats reporting good catches off the Margate sands. The outside cockle permit fishery was open the following week for one trip also. Some of the cockle boats have continued to fish for cockles outside the district.

Queenborough

Queenborough now has three active trawling fishing vessels berthed in the river which is a good sight to see. Boats have been reporting mixed catches of soles and other finfish species. The cockle boats in Queenborough enjoyed having the Margate sands area open from August during the cockle season.

The second lockdown has significantly decreased the prices of sole and other fish so the boats have had to adapt and target different markets. Herring has been landed and boats have been netting as well. Oysters have been difficult to sell for the fishermen so not targeted often. The chiller and skinning facility in Queenborough is useful for the fishermen to store fish to be collected and sold in bulk orders.

Number of vessels fishing from Queenborough: 9

Faversham

One of the vessels has begun whelk fishing for the first time in November after receiving a KEIFCA whelk permit. Before that they were busy trawling, netting and oyster dredging mostly to sell catch locally but also to London and elsewhere. Their business became busy once more over lockdown with orders from the local residents.

Number of vessels fishing from Faversham: 2

Whitstable

The Whitstable whelk fleet have been out regularly during this period and have had a lot of engagement with KEIFCA officers to discuss the emergency byelaw and have their catches inspected again.

The cockle boats had a good season especially when the cockles became classified in August in Area 15 off Margate. It meant Whitstable boats were able to sometimes fill up and land two trips on the same tide for the first time in many years. Some of the cockle boats have continued prospecting and landing cockles caught outside of the KEIFCA district.

Native oysters have been caught by two of the Whitstable boats as well as other boats netting and trawling and selling locally. The two vessels that sold via Facebook locally during the first lockdown, were hugely popular with locals. They have stopped selling locally for now but will start up again in Spring 2021.

Number of vessels fishing from Whitstable: 15

Herne Bay

No commercial activity occurred from here during this period. Two recreational fishing boats moored in the harbour were out around once a week and trailer boats were used mostly on weekends and good weather days.

Number of vessels fishing from Herne Bay: 1

Thanet Ports (Ramsgate/Broadstairs/Margate)

Two boats from Sussex came up to Ramsgate to fish for whelks outside the district off the coast of Essex as seen in previous years. One boat has been fishing for whelks inside the district reporting good catches for a short period but recently has been forced to move their gear as catches have slowed. Fishing in general has been poor recently, but cod have been seen in small numbers and this has not occurred for a number of years. Some crab and thornback ray have been landed but in small numbers. Charter boats were very busy until the second national lockdown.

Broadstairs has not seen any commercial activity at this port. The Margate fishermen have been out fishing occasionally and selling locally. Their boats sustained some vandalism recently which did not help matters.

Number of vessels fishing from Thanet Ports: 31

Deal and Walmer

The fishing boats on the beach by the pier continue to sell their catch straight off the beach. They have been netting and potting mostly for herring, sprats and thornback ray.

Number of vessels fishing from Deal and Walmer: 4

Dover

One boat in Dover has been crab and lobster fishing by the nearby cliffs. Commercial activity remains low in this port. The new rules of 6 and second lockdown affected the Charter boats significantly during this time. Recreational boat anglers have been out when the weather has allowed

Number of vessels fishing from Dover: 2

Folkestone and Hythe

In Folkestone one of the boats has started scallop fishing whereas the other boats have been netting for finfish and have reported steady catches of cod. Brown crab are still being landed and a small amount of trawling also occurred. The whelk fleet stopped whelk fishing in September and will begin again in Spring 2021. The local fishmongers have been keeping busy during the second national lockdown with locals choosing to eat locally caught fish.

Hythe boats have also been selling locally with one boat choosing to sell their catches of fish daily on the beach to the general public which has proved to be very popular. The whelk boats stopped fishing after Summer and are looking to make plans for when the spider crabs come back, as this severely hampers their fishing.

Number of vessels fishing from Folkestone and Hythe: 14

Dungeness

Two of the most active boats on Dungeness beach have been whelk fishing whereas the other two other main boats have been trawling and netting. The boats had a good season fishing for crab and lobster when they could avoid the spider crabs.

Number of vessels fishing from Dungeness: 6

Robert Watson, Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer