



## **Agenda Item C1**

### **Shore report, Kent**

#### **Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority**

#### **Quarterly report for the period February 2021 to May 2021**

##### Overview

Fish prices have stayed low as markets have been disrupted by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Kent's fishermen have started to sell more locally once again. The demand is high once more for local fish after the success of local fish schemes during the start of the pandemic.

April was one of the coldest on record and this severely affected the fishing effort. Many of the boats struggled to get to sea due to strong North Easterly winds. This is usually a good month for the whelk fishing across the Kent part of the district however the weather meant that boats struggled to get to sea and had to spend time sorting out their gear after the weather had passed.

Skate have been caught all over the coast by anglers, but fishermen are not seeing the amount seen in previous years. Seabass are showing signs of recovery as they are landed by boats as non-targeted bycatch from the start of April. This Winter was a good year for scallops when the weather allowed boats to go to sea. Trawling and netting effort has been low but steadily increasing with the warmer weather. The start of the crab and lobster season has been slow, but fishermen are hopeful they will start to crawl as the cold weather is behind us.

##### Queenborough

Fishing activity in Queenborough has been low in this period. The boats that have gone have been trawling for sole but catches have been lower than this time in previous years. Some boats also were netting targeting skate and smoothhound. One visiting vessel had been trawling from Queenborough but only for a short period. The cockle boats have been preparing for their season which will be starting in June, by carrying out routine maintenance.

Number of vessels fishing from Queenborough: 9

### Faversham

With the cold weather lasting until April, the boats in Faversham used this opportunity to do other jobs and carry out re-fits. One boat was doing a small amount of herring drift fishing and selling what they did catch locally.

Number of vessels fishing from Faversham: 2

### Whitstable

The main fishery in Whitstable over this period was whelk fishing but the bad weather played its part in how many times the fishing boats went to sea. Whelk prices stayed constant. One new vessel started fishing from Whitstable during this period. Other boats went oyster fishing, netting, trawling and crab and lobster fishing.

Some fishermen have recently set up their business to sell crab and lobsters and a small amount of other species locally. They have started really well with a lot of engagement from the public in a short space of time. Lobster fishing is starting to pick up with the better weather just around the corner.

The cockle fleet have been preparing for the upcoming cockle season in June and have been conducting experiments to improve their fishing methods.

Number of vessels fishing from Whitstable: 15

### Herne Bay

There are now two commercial fishing boats fishing out of Herne Bay. They are both launched from trailers and the newer of the two boats has started crab and lobster fishing before netting and whelk fishing soon. The other boat has undergone a refit and has started fishing using a variety of methods.

Number of vessels fishing from Herne Bay: 2

### Thanet Ports (Ramsgate/Broadstairs/Margate)

Ramsgate is predominantly a potting and netting fishing port these days. The whelk boats went as often as the weather allowed with many of the boats working outside the 6nm limit. Some of the boats have been bringing their whelk gear in though as the sea temperature starts to rise. Crab and lobster fishing began but without too much success yet. Boats are starting to sell more locally once again, and demand continues to be high for local fresh fish. Market fish prices have also played a part in how fish is sold these days.

In Margate, one vessel has been at sea more than the others and they have been netting and potting. They have had difficulty in selling what they catch with local fish merchants only able to take a small amount of skate from each boat and there has been small amounts of sole caught. There have been some bass being caught by the Margate boats. Broadstairs has not seen any fishing activity.

Number of vessels fishing from Thanet Ports: 31

### Deal and Walmer

There has not been much in the way of fishing activity over this period. The boats are preparing for warmer weather to come and will keep selling what they catch locally. When they have gone, they have landed skate and dogfish and just started lobster fishing in May but like most places it has been a slow start to the season.

Number of vessels fishing from Deal and Walmer: 3

### Dover

Dover's commercial fishing activity is low and one commercial boat fishes part time, potting and netting nearby. The other is used as a charter boat when weather and lockdown rules allow customers to come aboard.

Number of vessels fishing from Dover: 2

### Folkestone and Hythe

Some of the local fish landed in Folkestone continue to be split between sold locally and exported to the EU. The initial difficulties have started to ease and exporters are slowly getting used to the additional paperwork and health checks of the fish. Prices of these checks have been increasing though which has not made life easy. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Europe forced national lockdowns once again in some countries which affected prices and where the fish were being exported to.

Bass have been seen in good numbers by the netting boats. The three whelk boats in Folkestone started whelk fishing in March and reported large numbers of small whelks passing through their whelk riddles. They have had steady catches with most of the whelks sold and cooked locally. The scallop fishing off Dungeness and Sussex has been good this Winter.

In Hythe one boat has been selling some of their catch locally attracting regular customers. Plaice have been caught in good numbers as well as some sole and thornback ray. In April, spider crabs were starting to be caught in the nets which ruins the netting for the boats. 'May' water and North Easterly winds have played a part in the limited number of days at sea for the fishermen.

Number of vessels fishing from Folkestone and Hythe: 14

### Dungeness

Dungeness estate opened up to the public after the easing of COVID-19 lockdown rules. Stronger North-Easterly winds have made an impact on the number of days the boats have been able to get to sea. Some fin fish have been caught and sold locally. Whelk fishing was not good for some of the fishermen but one of the boats continues to land steady catches.

Number of vessels fishing from Dungeness: 5

**Robert Watson, Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer**