

Agenda Item C2

Shore Report - Essex

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly report for the period February 2021 to May 2021

Overview

Colder waters during this period saw a fair presentation of cod and codling to the area, with trawlers recording good catches. However, these waters brought a decline in soles, and with low prices on thornback rays saw a poor return for efforts.

1st April saw the opening of the bass fishery which appears to have been a welcomed supplement to all the authorised boats around the coast adding to the variety of fish they can sell during this difficult time. Prices at market were low, but some fishers with route to market through Facebook and fish stalls received fair prices.

Easing of COVID restrictions during this period saw some restaurants opening in a limited capacity with outdoor dining but allowed for fishers to get their products back into the hospitality industry.

Whelk boats began to see some good catches during this period with prices around £1.20 per kilo. Essex had two new whelk boats to the area from Kings Lynn, but mainly working outside the 6nm KEIFCA limit.

Harwich & Walton

Fishing effort has slowed during this quarter and catches have been poor. Lobster potting has slowly started again, but the main catches have been thornback rays, some cod and bass.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 22

Brightlingsea, Wivenhoe, Clacton

Fishing activities have been slow throughout this quarter but have picked up in the last month or so. Charter vessels are seeing good business again after the easing of COVID restrictions. Whelk boats from Kings Lynn were active whilst weather permitted, landing 1 to 2 ton per trip.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 14

West Mersea & Tollesbury

Tollesbury Marina remains quiet with commercial boats typically operating out of West Mersea instead. Fishing activities have been consistent during this period seeing the fleet continue to work supplying already established markets and stalls on Mersea and adapting and providing delivery services not just on Mersea but to far reaching areas of the county and London. The start of April saw reports of bass being caught by a handful of boats. The oyster markets have slowly opened up again with the opening of outdoor dining in restaurants, and the continued supply to private customers through the internet.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 24

Maldon & Bradwell

Fishing effort from Maldon and Bradwell remains low with only four vessels operating from these ports. Boats from here have turned to selling catch locally through Facebook and providing delivery services. This appears to have given the boats a consistent income during this period. Skate, sole and bass have been stable catches for these boats.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 4

North Fambridge, Burnham-On-Crouch, Barling, Paglesham & Rochford

The Essex Estuary byelaw continues to prohibit trawling in these areas. This has meant the main efforts have focused on oyster and mussel dredging on private grounds in the Crouch and Roach, while the native oyster fishery in public grounds remains closed.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 9

Southend-On-Sea & Leigh-On-Sea

Cockle boats from Leigh underwent their yearly maintenance and preparations for the coming season, whilst skippers also worked their other boats trawling and working private shellfish grounds. Some boats still managed to sell to Belgium with other boats selling to the public through Facebook and fish stalls. Whelking continued during this period, with reports of good catches with reasonable market prices.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 17

Holehaven & Thurrock

Fishing efforts are low from these ports, with only a small number of vessels working on a mostly part time basis, activity from these ports has continued to decline.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 4

Martin Ward,

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer, Essex