

Agenda Item - C3

Report on the patrol vessels 'Tamesis' and 'FPV Vigilant' Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Report for the period January – May 2021

Vessel priorities:

- Monitor areas closed under Cockle Permit Byelaw
- Conduct spring cockle stock survey for TECFO
- Conduct spring cockle stock survey for Permit Fishery
- Patrol district boundary for incursions by oversize or foreign vessels
- Conduct enforcement patrols for Whelk Byelaw
- Conduct monitoring and disruption patrols for bass fishery
- 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
- Vessel Maintenance

Fisheries Enforcement

This is traditionally a very busy period for the Essex vessels as the spring fisheries swing into action, and this year was no exception. The early part of the quarter was dominated by adverse weather conditions and vessel maintenance, with enforcement activity increasing from March onwards. As usual however, a delicate balance was required to ensure that enforcement effort did not impact on the survey programme.

As in the previous quarter KEIFCA patrol activity has placed a greater emphasis on Covid secure non-boarding inspections rather than full boarding inspections. This did not have any adverse impact on the principal taskings for period, which were predominantly monitoring closed areas (Essex estuaries), monitoring and disrupting vessels using drift nets to catch bass, and monitoring activity and inspecting gear following an increase in whelk fishing effort in the area. Sea patrols covered the district from the river Stour in the North, along the six-mile limit, the Essex rivers and estuaries, into the Thames, and along the North Kent coast. Vessels also visited ports and marinas throughout Essex to observe and gather intelligence on active vessels and gear types.

In the course of the period January to May, officers logged 106 vessels, of which 18 were charter recreational vessels, and 6 recreational anglers. Non-boarding

inspections were conducted on 37 commercial vessels and 1 charter recreational vessel, with 1 offence being recorded as detailed below.

The patrol vessels also recorded gear sightings on 31 occasions, with gear being inspected on 7 of these. Offence notices were issued for 5 set of gear, mainly for non-compliance with requirements for surface markers. One string of whelk pots was seized for non-compliance with the whelk byelaw, and one vessel skipper was interviewed under caution for setting a fixed net in a prohibited area.

Conservation/Survey Work

Surveys

Tamesis is usually very busy with survey work during this period, though the oyster survey with members of the industry was postponed until later in the year due to continued operating restrictions brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. The spring cockle stock assessments for both the Thames Estuary and the Permit fishery proceeded as planned, though delayed slightly by a prolonged spell of easterly winds. Tamesis undertook the surveys in areas 1, 8, 9, and 12, and this year has also taken over a significant portion of survey duties in area 2 and 3. Area 7 has almost been completed, though a few sites remain to be surveyed.

Marine Mammal observations

Marine mammals were logged on eleven occasions with individual seal sightings across the northern part of the district from Shoebury to the Black Deepes and the Wallet spitway. A large group of seals comprising a mix of adults and juveniles was also observed at low tide on the Buxey sands. The usual populations were observed in the Roach. A single porpoise was recorded at the inner bench on the Colne.

Maintenance

Tamesis was hauled out at Suffolk Yacht Harbour in February for the 5 year out-of-water survey, the in-water portion of which was conducted shortly afterwards in Brightlingsea. The vessel was passed with only minor defects, but shortly afterwards the main navigation computer suffered a terminal failure. The system was installed when the vessel was built and is now obsolete with parts and support no longer being provided by Furuno. As a result, a new navigation system (Timezero Professional) was installed which utilises many of the existing components, and a new solid state radar was also fitted to accompany the Timezero system. The new navigation system is a significant improvement on the original and allows for direct transfer of data between Tamesis and Nerissa. Aside from that the vessel only required routine maintenance during this period.

Vigilant underwent her first annual survey since being commissioned and passed, again only minor defects needing to be rectified. Vigilant was also hauled out for the 300 hour service on the engines.

Other Information

Statistics

During this period FPV Vigilant put to sea 21 times using 1733 litres of fuel to cover a patrol distance of 1194 miles. Tamesis has been at sea on 11 occasions taking 1390 litres and covering 514 nautical miles.

Invitation to Authority Members and P.R

An open invitation is usually extended to Authority Members to join the crew on an enforcement patrol or survey aboard the vessel, unfortunately however under circumstances due to government guidance on social distancing requirements and the size of the vessels it will not be possible to do until further notice.

Colm O'Laoi

Skipper FPV Tamesis & Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer