



Agenda Item – C4

Report on the patrol vessel 'Nerissa' and daughter RIB 'Nereus' Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Report for the period May to September 2024

Priorities of vessel for quarter

- Targeted inspection of static gear.
- Patrol District limits for any large/foreign vessel incursions.
- Patrol areas closed to bottom towed gear.
- Inspect pots and traps for compliance of byelaws.
- Inspect commercial and recreations fishers.
- Patrol, monitor and inspect cockle fishing areas and activity.
- Log fishing vessels, gear and activity.
- Sightings and intel logged and reported.
- Input key enforcement information into national fisheries enforcement database (MCSS).
- Attend to cockle survey on inside and outside areas as required.
- Attend to tide height and sea temperature survey equipment and data.

Fisheries Enforcement

Forty patrols have been undertaken with seventy-eight commercial fishing vessels sighted. Of these, forty-three were actively fishing with the remainder steaming out or back to port. In addition, twenty-three charter angling vessels and fourteen recreational sea angling boats were observed actively fishing. Two commercial fishing vessels were also boarded using Nereus during the quarter.

Within the TECFO, Nerissa worked as a base assisting FPV Vigilant to process the collected damage rate samples from cockle vessels. Crews were able to swap around and take turns to board all the cockle fleet and made the most of having extra staff to put two persons aboard each boat.

This period, sixty-nine gear related log entries were made with two hundred and seventy-five individual ends recorded. Ten gear inspections took place, of both surface markers and gear hauled up to be inspected. Four offence notices were issued as well as six inspections notices. Five lobster pots were seized due to non-compliance.

During recent weekly survey work, we have continued to monitor fishing activity and effort within the areas we have surveyed. However, with her deck fitted to allow surveys to take place, the RIB Nereus is left back in port. In these

instances, boardings are therefore not able to be conducted, but, when possible, we will approach vessels to speak with the fishers directly.

After every patrol the logs have been entered into the required databases as soon as possible and information, in a report format, has been forwarded to the relevant agencies and enforcement bodies where required.

Conservation/Survey work

Nerissa has been undertaking weekly cockle sampling to provide Thanet DC with the necessary samples required to classify the cockle beds in South Margate Sands. She has also taken part in sample dredge trials for the Manila clam trial fishery and checked the data loggers on the whelk pots.

Two hundred and thirteen seals were sighted hauled out on sands banks in groups of 10 to 100, or as individuals swimming and fifteen porpoises have been sighted in groups of two or three.

Maintenance

The vessel has been operating well and has been busy with survey works this summer, the RIB Nereus has been on and off weekly with the deck in place to facilitate survey works as well as assisting hauling a return of fishing gear that has been inspected. New ropes are being fitted to winches after six months of use and the day grab has been checked over during preparation for survey works and the associated maintenance.

Annual inspections of the fire safety systems and lifting gear have taken place. As she approaches ten years old the engine bays and generator space have been measured to quote for a new, more suitable fire suppression system to be installed when replacement is required.

Nerissa did have a few outstanding issues with the engines after their reinstatement. The engineering company, Bartech, are still in communications to attend some sensor fault/issues that show periodically. These haven't stopped the vessel working but we are working together to get them aboard with the equipment to test and clear any faults logged. A small oil leak has been observed which they plan to attend to in the same visit.

Other Information

The crew has continued to run regular safety drills on the vessels and worked on their skills that assist in its safe operation.

Nerissa was able to assist a vessel in distress in July which had lost engine power near to a shipping channel with large vessels approaching it. We were able to make and maintain communications with coastguard and relay to the broken-down vessel. They were able to restart and get back to safety without requiring a tow from us.

Statistics:

Nerissa has spent 163 hours on patrol covering 1,429 miles and used 12,700 litres of fuel. HVO fuel is still not available in Ramsgate, but we will use it as soon as it is made available again.

Ben Hermitage

Skipper FPV Nerissa & Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer