

Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

BRIEFING NOTE – No.13/17

Date: 7 August 2017

Briefing paper to: All Members of the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Purpose: To provide an update to Members of the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the no-take zone in the Medway Estuary.

In August 2016, the Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (KEIFCA) undertook a presentation to the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the closure of an area of the Medway Estuary to all fishing activities as a 'no take zone' so as to protect juvenile fish that are reliant on habitats.

Following the presentation, the Committee requested an update after a 12 month period.

The following update has now been received from KEIFCA:

River Medway Nursery Area

Since the River Medway Nursery Area was designated in June 2016, the project has continued to raise awareness of the no-take zone and its regulations through many different pathways, focussing further on river users.

Widespread awareness of the no-take zone regulations is important to ensure that river users understand the evidence and reason behind protection, which in turn increases compliance. Therefore, KEIFCA gave a presentation and Q&A session with the Medway & Swale Boating Association to reach all boating clubs in the surrounding waters. This gave clubs the opportunity to ask questions about the protection and how it will affect their members. Alongside the presentation, an advertisement pack was provided which contained a press release, short article, poster and small advert.

Further to the presentation evening, adverts were placed in the local tide tables, and during routine patrols of the River Medway, officers from KEIFCA

approached boats outside the no-take zone to explain the location of the River Medway Nursery Area and its restrictions.

The project was further promoted when the nursery area featured on BBC Radio Kent's Breakfast Show. With both KEIFCA and Rochester Oyster and Floating Fishery live on air, the show discussed sustainable fish throughout the show and explored how protection would benefit local stocks.

Small fish surveys

This year saw two more successful rounds of small fish surveys in the River Medway. Covering five sites spanning from the saltwater limit at Allington Lock down to the estuary mouth at the Isle of Grain, officers from KEIFCA worked closely with the Environment Agency to catch juvenile fish, identify and measure them, then releasing them back into the estuary.

The diversity of fish that inhabit the river has increased in recent years. Net hauls this year produced some rarer catches, such as anchovy and a 7lb pike. Furthermore, some sites produced a large number of juvenile bass, which have experienced an increasing trend over the years. This data will contribute to the monitoring of the changing fish populations in the estuary whilst allowing researchers to understand how the River Medway compares to other estuaries nationally.

Lead officer:

Priscilla Haselhurst (Flood Drainage and Special Projects Officer)

Tele no – 01634 331420

Email: priscilla.haselhurst@medway.gov.uk