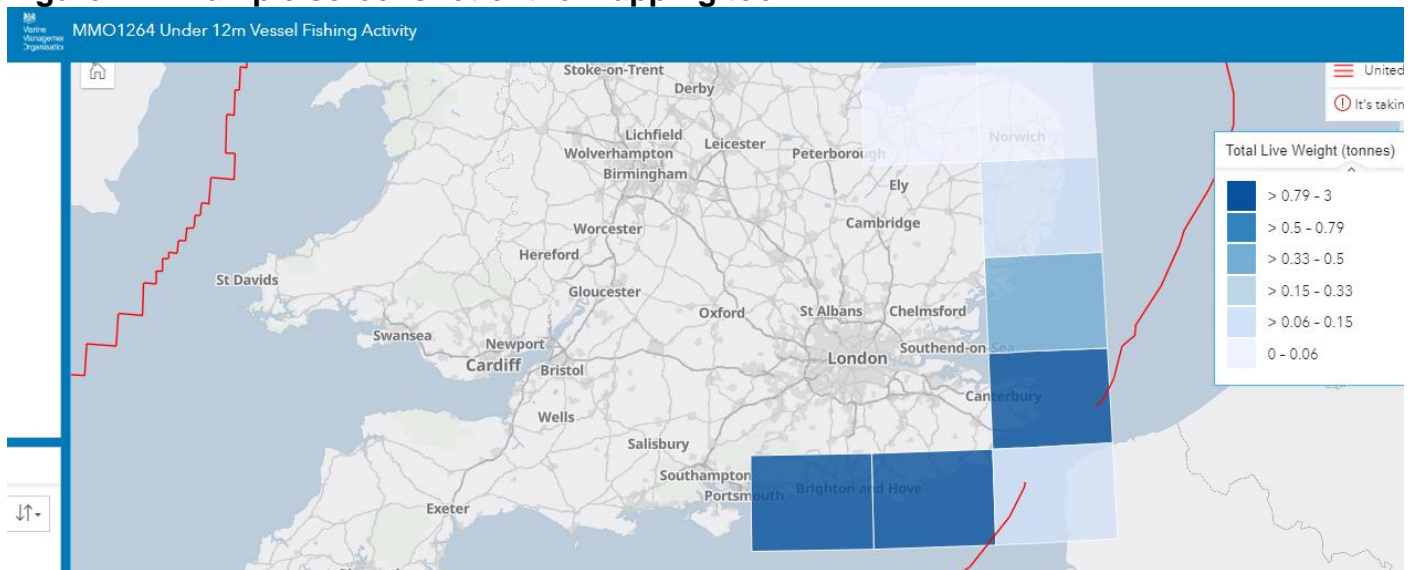




Aim

This project investigated existing data sources accessible to MMO to enable the spatial mapping of under 12m fishing vessel activity, with each data source described in terms of its advantages and limitations.

Figure 1 – Example screenshot of the mapping tool



Introduction and methodology

Commercial fishing vessel activity in England is regulated by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). Reporting requirements vary, but generally the reporting requirements increase as the catching capacity and the size of vessels increase. This means MMO has less data available for smaller vessels (under 12m) which comprise the majority of the fleet in England (88% of vessels).

An accurate understanding of inshore fishing vessel activity is important in terms of regulators and policy makers being able to make the best decisions for fisheries management, as well as informing marine conservation, marine planning and licensing, as well as fishers themselves in matters such as proving historic track records to benefit from continued access.

The project initially intended to use a vessel sightings-based approach to create a current picture of activity around England. However, upon investigation there wasn't enough appropriate data to meaningful analysis. The next best source of data was judged to be the UK's annual return to the European Union (EU) Commission's Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) Fisheries Dependent Information (FDI) call. This data set includes sales note data submitted by the buyers of the fish for under 10m vessels and paper logbooks for 10-12m vessels.



Results

The main output from this project alongside a general review of datasets is a [web-based mapping tool](#) (Figure 1), where it is possible to choose to display one of three map types: fishing effort (in terms of days), the amount of fish landed from the area (in live weight tonnes) and the value of fish landed (in GBP). Effort data covers all UK vessels in UK waters and can be filtered by Nationality, vessel length group, gear type and year (2014-2020). Landings data is restricted to the under 12m fleet in English waters and can be filtered by species, Nationality, vessel length group, gear type and year (2016-2020).

Conclusions and recommendations

It is recommended that the new Inshore Vessel Monitoring System (iVMS) for under 12m vessels and the Record your Catch application (Catch App) for under 10m vessels data sources should be investigated for data quality and utility. The aspiration is that they can be combined to form the most definitive spatial activity data for policy and scientific assessment. Catch App began full enforcement in Feb 2022 and the iVMS is being rolled out in 2023, MMO will be able to begin to draw down data for analysis, in the interim it would make sense to attempt to repeat this mapping exercise with the data gathered for the STECF data call on an annual basis to enable the most up to date data to be used, noting though that the UK no longer submits this data to STECF and conversations are ongoing about how fishing activity data is submitted to ICES.

MMO comments

This project created a new tool to allow users to better understand the activity of fishing vessels under 12m in length. The accompanying report reviews all current sources of fishing vessel activity data with the strengths and limitations. This work will allow the MMO to better understand and consider this evidence in its decision making. MMO has further planned work to improve under 12m fishing vessel data including the ongoing roll out and development of iVMS, remote electronic monitoring, Catch-app and the continual improvement of its strategic data. MMO will be investigating user needs for and experiences of fishing activity data as part of our intent to make fishing activity data more accessible and develop data products of more utility more quickly.

Further information

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