

NWIFCA Quarterly Meeting: 27th June 2024

REPORT NO.
6

HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLBEING (HS&W) QUARTERLY REPORT 7TH MARCH TO 17TH JUNE 2024

Purpose: For members' information.

Recommendations: The report is received.

1. External Support

Members may be aware that for the past several years we have used the services of Inspire Safety, a Cumbria-based company who provide advice to organisations on improving their health and safety policies, procedures and overall culture. Over the last 12 months of my tenure, I have kept this service provision under review and back in April, decided that, going forward, we no longer needed Inspire Safety's support. Whilst over the years they had provided a lot of direction in identifying gaps in our policies and procedures, I felt they were not able to provide the support to help us plug these gaps and did not have the relevant specialised maritime and coastal expertise that we required to help us do this. Their role with us had become fundamentally an administrative one, arranging regular internal health and safety meetings and keeping track of actions attributed to individual Authority officers; this is a role we can fulfil ourselves through our Admin Team. As a Senior Management Team (SMT), we are now in a much better position to understand where our priorities lie in terms of reviewing and updating our HS&W policies and procedures and improving our overall culture, and I therefore concluded that we no longer needed Inspire Safety's services.

As per what is set out below, work is continuing to review and develop our HS&W policies and procedures. At the appropriate point in the future, it may be worthwhile bringing in a specialist maritime safety consultant to review some of our operational policies and procedures to provide me, members and our stakeholders with some external, independent assurance that what we have in place is suitable. I have begun making enquiries with some contacts regarding this potential future one-off consultancy work.

2. Training

The following formal external HS&W-related training has been undertaken in this reporting period:

Training Course	Duration (days)	No. Officers Attended
Food Hygiene ¹	1	6
Firefighting	1	13
First Aid At Sea	1	12
Emergency First Aid at Work	1	2
Powerboat Level 2	2	3
Lifting Equipment ²	2	6
Vessel Stability ³	1	3
VHF Operation	1	4
ATV Handling	1	1

Total number of officer days on formal external HS&W related training: 59 days

Much of the above training was organised on the back of a review of our training records and requirements relating to the respective statutory workboat codings for the Authority's three patrol vessels. We found that we were under-qualified in certain areas, and so IFCOs have undertaken specific training to address these deficiencies.

Our Admin Team have also developed a new Training Matrix which records all the mandatory training and qualifications that specific officers need for specific roles, including when such training was undertaken and if and when it expires. This is now routinely reviewed by the SMT in our monthly management meetings to ensure training, qualifications, medicals *etc.* are in-date and relevant to the duties being undertaken across the Authority.

3. Medicals

Our seagoing officers (IFCOs and Science Officers) are required to have a medical before going to sea. Currently, this is a medical certificate known as an ML5 which is a fairly basic medical check which lasts for five years and then needs renewing. In reviewing our officers' medical certification expiry dates, it came to the SMT's attention that we were not aware that a couple of officers were carrying restrictions on their ML5s that limited what duties they were able to undertake when going to sea; these were immediately addressed with the relevant officers. However, this generated further discussion about whether five-yearly, basic ML5s were the most appropriate form of medical certification for our officers. There is another form of certificate, known as an ENG1, which is more robust in terms of the checks carried out, which are carried out by an MCA-approved GP (whereas ML5s can be carried out by any GP) and must be renewed every two years, rather than every five. The SMT felt it would be more appropriate for us to move to having officers undergo ENG1 medical checks every two years, rather than ML5 checks every five years. This change would provide more

¹ For food preparation onboard North Western Protector – required under Workboat Code

² Relating to operating lifting equipment onboard NWP

³ Required under Workboat Code for NWP

assurance to individual staff members themselves, their colleagues, management, members and our stakeholders that our seagoing officers are physically and mentally capable of fulfilling the role that is required of them. The requirement to renew an ENG1 every two years was seen as an additional benefit in that it provides a much more up-to-date, current view of officers' health and associated capabilities to deliver their operational duties. We asked the other IFCAs what they required; seven responded – five require ENG1s whilst only two require ML5s.

However, in communicating this proposed change with officers, some raised concerns with our union representative, and UNISON have communicated that they would not support this change to a more robust medical examination process. They state that they would deem it to be a breach of contract on the basis that many officers were recruited from job adverts or job descriptions that stated that an ML5 was required, or more recently, that an ML5 or ENG1 was required. There is nothing specific within anyone's actual Employment Contract which makes reference to medical certification requirements, but explicit reference to ML5s in previous job adverts / descriptions is problematic. UNISON also point out that for the category of coding our vessels have, the MCA does deem ML5s to be satisfactory. Further discussions need to be had between the SMT and UNISON to see if we can find a way forward on our future medical certification policy.

4. Policy Development

With the ceasing of Inspire Safety's services, I have stood up an internal HS&W Working Group, and we began with a status check of all our HS&W-related policies and associated standard operating procedures (SOPs) and risk assessments (RAs). We identified a list of up to 30 HS&W-related policies which we should have as an Authority, many of which we do already have but need reviewing / updating. In this reporting period, we have updated our Manual Handling, Incident Reporting and COSHH policies and associated documentation, and have begun reviewing our policies, SOPs and RAs on our ATV and vehicle usage, Lone Working, Drones, RIBs and Boarding Operations. We will continue to work through our policy reviews and add further ones as we go along.

5. H&S Statistics

Statistics relating to H&S will be reported on a financial quarterly basis for the most recent completed quarter, in this case Q4 2023/24:

- Near Misses = 2
- Accidents = 1
 - (of which RIDDOR reportable) = 0
- First Aid administered = 0
- Average daily number of officers = 14
- Approximate total officer hours = 518

One of the near misses related to an officer working from home on their laptop with a charger that had not been PAT tested. The charger blew the electrics at the officer's home. Officers were reminded to ensure all their personal-issue electrical equipment has been PAT tested and, going forward, the Admin Team will inform officers when PAT testers are visiting the offices, so that officers can ensure all electrical equipment is available to be tested.

The other near miss related to Admin Officers identifying that our helmets used for seagoing and ATV driving had expiry dates, which had not been previously known (or at least wasn't recorded

anywhere). All expiry dates for each officers' helmet have been recorded and will be replaced ahead of their respective expiry dates (fortunately, no helmets were yet to have expired).

The one reported accident related to an officer in one of our pick-up trucks scraping an oncoming vehicle as they passed one another along a narrow road. The damage was minimal and the driver of the other vehicle did not wish to claim against their insurance. We notified our insurer for information purposes only but no claim needed to be made.

For future reports, I endeavour to be able to bring more information and data on our H&S stats with the improvement of our policies and procedures, including information relating to spot checks undertaken by line managers.

Mark Taylor, North Western IFCA CEO, 17th June 2024.