

NWIFCA Quarterly Meeting

20th March 2025

REPORT NO.

3

HEAD OF ENFORCEMENT QUARTERLY REPORT – 1ST NOVEMBER – 31ST JANUARY

Purpose: For information.

Recommendations: That the report is received.

Patch Summaries for the quarter are given in the table below:

Patch	Summary Points
Haverigg Point – Burghmarsh Point – Deputy Master Thinnesen, IFCOs Webber, Schweizer and Haille	<p>Shore and quad patrols were undertaken throughout the north of the district during the quarter covering all known ports and hot spots between Port Carlisle and Haverigg Point. Officers were also deployed in other areas of the NWIFCA district throughout the quarter.</p> <p>A total of 59 daily patrols were carried out in the quarter by Erik Thinnesen, Hugh Thinnesen, Alex Schweizer, Leon Webber and David Haile with 532 places visited and 125 of these being fishing ports.</p> <p>No sea patrols were carried out due to the port engine being taken out of the vessel.</p> <p>Beach nets – Nets have been seen at areas from Nethertown to Seascale, on inspections, most were catching thornback rays, some had the odd codling and whiting, some had flat fish like turbot and plaice. No reports of bass being caught or taken by beach netters.</p> <p>Boat netting - Two vessels with bass entitlements have been targeting bass, with landings varying from 1-2, 8 stone boxes landed on any given day.</p> <p>Some other species like thornback rays and codlings have been caught and landed also.</p> <p>Trawling - When monitoring AIS and VMS, activity was observed from local trawlers targeting prawns (nephrops) and bait fish (plaice/dogfish) from grounds southwest of St Bees out to 10 nautical miles west of Whitehaven and in Scottish waters.</p> <p>A few usual trawling vessels from Maryport have changed over to the annual Isle of Man scallop fishery which opened on 1st November 2024. With reports that the vessels targeting scallops from our area are fishing moderately. Weather has played a key factor in vessels getting to sea this quarter with 5 storm cycles causing the vessels to cease operations.</p> <p>This quarter has seen mainly local vessels fishing both inside and outside the 6 nautical mile limit line, with reports of prawns (nephrops) being caught and catches ranging between fifteen and twenty-five stones per day over last 3 months. Vessels from Maryport and Whitehaven continue landing to local co-ops, along with some vessels landing directly to the public mainly at Maryport & Whitehaven.</p>

	<p>Potting – This quarter has again showed whelking vessels both out of Whitehaven and Fleetwood engaged in whelk potting both inside and outside of the NWIFCA district.</p> <p>Vessels from Fleetwood were observed fishing North Wales and off the coast, west of Formby and on the Scottish side of the Solway Firth.</p> <p>Vessels targeting lobster and brown crab continued to fish pots. These vessels targeted areas north and south of Whitehaven with mixed reports from fishers on the quantities of lobsters and crab being caught, only a few vessels are still fishing with a reduced number of pots in this quarter, but this is normal for this time of year. Lobsters and edible crabs are still being caught but in reduced numbers, again normal for this time of year.</p> <p>Angling - During this quarter in daylight hours, 91 anglers were seen on piers and beaches with effort on the whole being quite good.</p> <p>By late November codlings were being caught and much of this fish species is caught at nighttime on a bait called CART.</p> <p>Some activity on boats, beaches and piers was evident in some of the areas, with good numbers of anglers sighted in most areas during the quarter. This year has seen a very good run of mackerel up and down the coast mainly between St Bees and Maryport and still catching fish up to November. Whiting has started to be caught at all the stations, in November they were too small to keep, but reports and sightings are that the size of whiting's are now over MLS.</p> <p>Thornback ray and spotted dogfish continue to be caught although not in as great a number.</p>
<p>Haverigg Point – Arnside – SIFCO Dixon & IFCO Taylor</p>	<p>Mussels - Activity was at a very low level during this reporting period, with only occasional sightings of less than 5 byelaw 3 permit holders gathering mussels for local depuration orders.</p> <p>Activity was possibly at a lower level than usual due to ongoing cockle fisheries at other locations within the District.</p> <p>IFCO's assisted Science Team members to begin surveying a mussel bed which had developed in Walney Channel.</p> <p>IFCO's continue to gather mussel samples for Local Authority Environmental Health Department from Foulney.</p> <p>Cockles - During early November there were regular sightings and inspections of up to 77 Byelaw 3 permit holders working the cockle bed at Flookburgh. Activity ceased at Flookburgh when Leasowe cockle bed opened in mid November, and IFCO's from North Morecambe Bay were deployed at Leasowe. Once Leasowe cockle bed had closed gatherers returned to Flookburgh, but in much reduced numbers, with 30 permit holders being the most observed/inspected. Numbers continued to decrease and dropped to less than 10 once the main buyers had left the area. The fact Flookburgh cockle bed became a seasonal 'A' Classification in January meant that small orders of large cockles were exported by small numbers of usually locally based fishermen who had completed the relevant paperwork with Local Environmental Health Officers to permit them to export their cockles.</p>

	<p>No enforcement issues were recorded at Flookburgh.</p> <p>I continue to undertake cockle samples from 2 sites near Flookburgh and 1 site at Newbiggin for the Local Authority.</p> <p>Shrimping - No Shrimping activity was observed during the reporting period.</p> <p>Netting - Netting activity decreased in this reporting period as would be expected due to the time of year, with only occasional reports of one or two licensed vessels operating near the Duddon estuary.</p> <p>No beach nets were observed or reported during this reporting period.</p> <p>Potting - Activity was at the usual seasonal low level in this quarter, with one vessel from Barrow occasionally active to fulfil small orders sold locally, especially in the run up to the festive period.</p> <p>Four licensed vessels very occasionally work outside the District.</p> <p>One licensed vessel from Barrow pots for Whelk regularly and assists NWIFCA Science Officers with a project .</p> <p>Long lines - No activity was observed.</p> <p>Angling - Activity decreased during the quarter as the usual Summer species declined in numbers as they migrated away from the District. Occasional sightings and reports of anglers targeting the winter available species such as Cod and whiting were low in numbers.</p> <p>Bait Collection - Occasional sightings of 2-3 commercial bait diggers in the Duddon estuary.</p> <p>Sightings also recorded of Black lug commercial bait pumping on the Irish sea coast of North Walney.</p>
<p>Arnside – Lytham</p> <p>IFCO Graham & Edwards</p>	<p>The period had a higher than usual level of intelligence for IFCO Graham to process. Patrols in the quarter have focused on the Pilling cockle bed due to the stock levels and possible outlets for poached cockles.</p> <p>IFCO Edwards and Graham completed half day Conflict Resolution training in January.</p> <p>Angling - Angling has continued at low levels in popular spots such as Halfmoon Bay, Stone Jetty and Marine Beach. Patrols further south targeting angling have not occurred this quarter due to prioritising other activity.</p> <p>Bass - In late January IFCOs seized a fishing rod and lures from Heysham Bass Nursery while on routine patrol. No owner has been identified to date. Both routine patrols and joint patrols with the Civil Nuclear Constabulary are scheduled to continue in the area.</p> <p>Cockles and Mussels - Pilling cockle bed reopened on 4th January 2025 five tides a week. Levels of activity have remained low at the fishery with around a maximum of five gatherers fishing on the busier days.</p>

	<p>There has been limited fishing activity at Ribble training walls. Due to sample results the classification for the area has now been changed to a seasonal Class B between 1st May to 31st January. No fishing activity has been sighted at the Knott End mussel beds.</p> <p>Netting - Set beach nets have been taken in over the winter and no activity has been sighted.</p> <p>Drone - During this quarter, the drone has been used to observe fishing activity at Flookburgh using a site assessed by IFCO Graham. The crib sheet system has eased routine patrols by reducing paperwork.</p>
<p>Dee-Southport – SIFCO Brownrigg, IFCO Taylor</p>	<p>During this quarter, officers have continued to concentrate their efforts on overseeing the enforcement of the Wirral North (Leasowe) cockle fishery along the north Wirral coastline, as well as providing officer support to the Pilling Sands cockle fishery. Due to these requirements, enforcement commitments to regular tasks have been limited.</p> <p>In February, SIFCO Brownrigg attended the Byelaw 3 stakeholders' event at West Cheshire Sailing Club, alongside the NWIFCA CEO, Head of Enforcement, and Science representatives.</p> <p>For professional development, both officers attended a one-day conflict resolution course to maintain their competency. Additionally, IFCO Taylor attended the five-day RYA Day Skipper theory course.</p> <p>Byelaw 2 – North Wirral Foreshore Bivalve Molluscs remains in place along the North Wirral coastline.</p> <p>On behalf of West Lancashire Borough Council and Mersey Port Health Authority, officers have continued to collect the monthly shellfish samples required to maintain the classification of the Penfold (Southport) fishery.</p> <p>Hand Gathering Bivalve - Mid-November saw the opening of the Leasowe cockle fishery. A popular fishery among Byelaw 3 stakeholders, it saw numbers peak at 122 gatherers, with an average of 80 working daily. A total of 1,400 inspections were conducted throughout the fishery, with 560 tonnes taken from the 570-tonne Total Allowable Catch (TAC).</p> <p>Officers have continued to observe good compliance among gatherers. Up until the fishery's closure in mid-December, routine landing inspections recorded landings ranging from 8 to 15 tonnes of cockles per tide.</p> <p>Since January, both officers have regularly provided an enforcement presence at the Pilling Sands cockle fishery. Operating a five-day fishery from Saturday to Wednesday, with one tide fished per day, officers have recorded consistently low numbers of Byelaw 3 permit holders in attendance. This trend is not expected to change. Total landings of up to 400 kilograms per tide have been recorded.</p> <p>Recreational Rod Angling - Shore</p> <p>Sixteen inspections of shore and beach anglers were conducted during this quarter, with the promenades along Wallasey front continuing to remain active. Kings Parade, New</p>

	<p>Brighton, and Seacombe promenade remain the most popular locations. Catches of whiting have been recorded.</p> <p>Netting - Low levels of netting activity were observed during this quarter, with eleven inspections taking place along the north Wirral coastline. Catches of plaice, turbot, whiting, and ray were recorded.</p> <p>Premises Inspections - Officers have continued to provide a presence at Liverpool Fish Market. Routine inspections of the four independent units have been carried out, offering guidance and direction as required.</p> <p>Finally, officers have continued to provide advice and support to the Mersey Port Health Authority, Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, Natural Resources Wales, RSPB, and Wirral and Sefton Councils.</p>
<p><u>North Western Protector</u></p> <p>Master Hugh Thinnesen</p>	<p>Over the reporting period officers have been heavily involved in engineering work on the main patrol boat North Western Protector.</p> <p>Officers also conducted shore duties throughout the district along with essential staff training.</p> <p>As Members will be aware the main patrol boat was taken offline on 7th October 2024 as the port main engine was excessively smoking and losing oil.</p> <p>MAN, Engine agents PME Group were contacted to investigate the fault as the engine was under warranty. PME Group engineers arrived on site on the 15th October 2024 to investigate the fault.</p> <p>After pressure testing and bore scoping all twelve cylinders, it was found that 2 cylinders had failed the pressure test, and pistons and liners were showing signs of scoring and pitting. It was decided that the port main engine would have to be taken out of the vessel to carry out the necessary repairs.</p> <p>The engine was taken out of the vessel on the 4th December 2024 and transported to the Whitehaven Marina boat shed for work to be carried out under cover. The engine removal was carried out by J Hogg Construction Ltd along with our patrol engineer and crew.</p> <p>On the 11th December 2024 PME Group started work on the engine. After removing 2 of the pistons and liners the damage was worse than originally thought. After further discussions with PME Group it was then decided that that the rest of the pistons and liners should be removed for inspection as they were all showing worrying signs of wear. This turned out to be a good decision as all the pistons and liners were in poor condition and would have failed if not addressed.</p> <p>New parts were ordered and PME Group arrived back on site on 13th January 2025 to carry out repairs. With the work on the engine being completed on the 17th January 2025 with 12 new piston and liners fitted. The engine was then reinstalled back into the vessel on the 22nd January 2025. Installation was also carried out by J Hogg Construction Ltd along with patrol boat engineer and crew.</p> <p>PME Group did not give a specific reason for the cause of the engine failure other than possible contaminated fuel, which we had tested, and the results came back ok.</p>

	<p>We also had some Hydraulic repairs carried out over the last quarter this work was carried out by Barrnon hydraulics.</p> <p>Over the reporting period crew were tasked with carrying out essential work in order to be compliant with the MCA (Maritime Coastguard Agency) workboat code, some minor work remains to be done before the workboat certificate can be issued.</p> <p>Once the coding certificate is issued engine sea trials can be carried out.</p> <p>All maintenance schedules and oil changes are all up to date.</p>
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Intelligence Reporting

Head of Enforcement and intel officer continue to attend weekly support meetings with the MMO intelligence team, these meetings are continuing to lead to positive use and development of the CLUE system, IFCAs and MMO are now working well to standardise the inputs.

With a number of offences during the reporting period the process is working well with the documenting of incidents and subsequent outcomes where sanctions are applied. This process has streamlined how offences are recorded due to the golden thread principle of records only being stored once and joined together through tags in the system.

A significant recent development specific for NWIFCA is the ability to apply points to sanctions and therefore a person under the Cockle and Mussel permits. The points system operates similar to a driving licence with a rolling total of four points in a three year period.

Where system issues are detected, they are raised to the CLUE support team and the intel officer and intel lead are continuing to attend the weekly update meetings on Thursday mornings where best practice, issues and updates are shared amongst other users.

The following table demonstrate the information reports submitted to CLUE for this reporting quarter.

Intelligence Reports	November	December	January	Total
IFCOs	34	12	24	70

Officers continue to conduct risk based and intel led patrols across the district, taskings are based upon seasonal, operational and priority areas allowing the strategic deployment of resources where required.

Tasking and coordination group meetings continue to be held bi-weekly between, Head of Enforcement, Intel officer, Senior IFCOs and are regularly attended by colleagues from the environment agency. Intel led and Officer continue to attend the MMO, NW & Irish sea TCG meetings.

Specific Fishery Reporting

During the reporting quarter there were three cockle fisheries open in the District, the Flookburgh fishery was fished by 77 permit holders for the first couple of weeks of November before the Leasowe cockle fishery opened. The Leasowe cockle fishery opened on the 18th November, upon which all active permit holders transitioned to fishing at bed on the Wirral.

The Leasowe fishery operated one tide per day on weekdays only. The fishery operates in a very visible area which a lot of public use from other stakeholders and there are residential properties nearby by the site access. The fishery was well resourced with staff under the operational plan Op Lowena both checking permits at the access point and patrolling on foot on the cockle bed as well as conducting inspections of cockle when landed. There were some reports of conflict between fishers and the public, officers did make Merseyside Police aware of the issues but were instructed it was for individuals to report complaints.

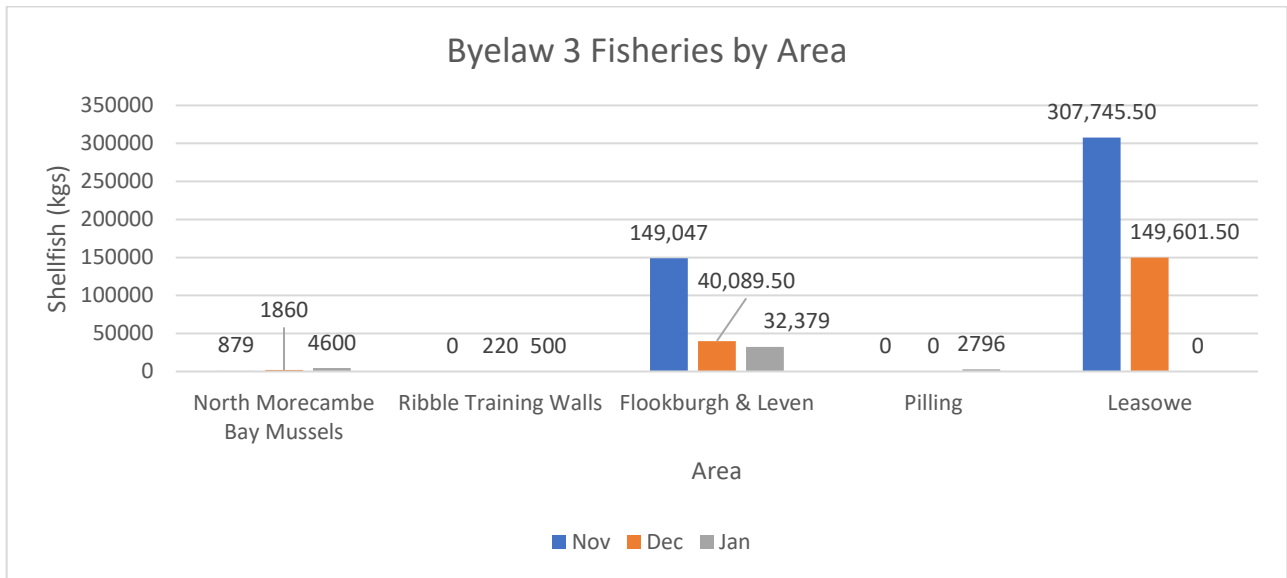
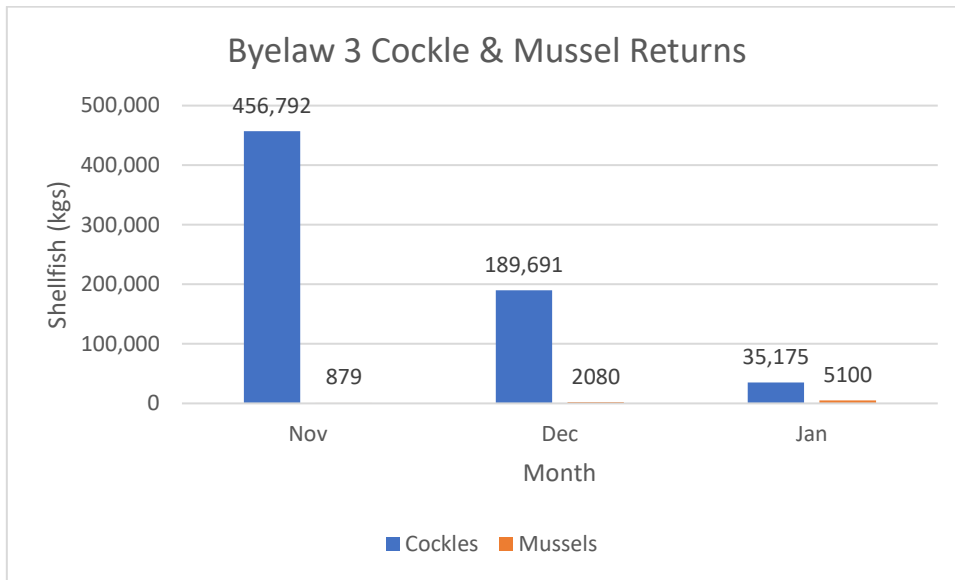
Permit Database

The NWIFCA permit system has continued to be a good development for the Authority despite some teething problems. A recent development has allowed officers in the enforcement team to move away from using paper sheets to record attendance at Cockle/Mussel fisheries. Now officers log on to the system on their IT devices and can select which permit holders have been in attendance at the fishery.

Returns data

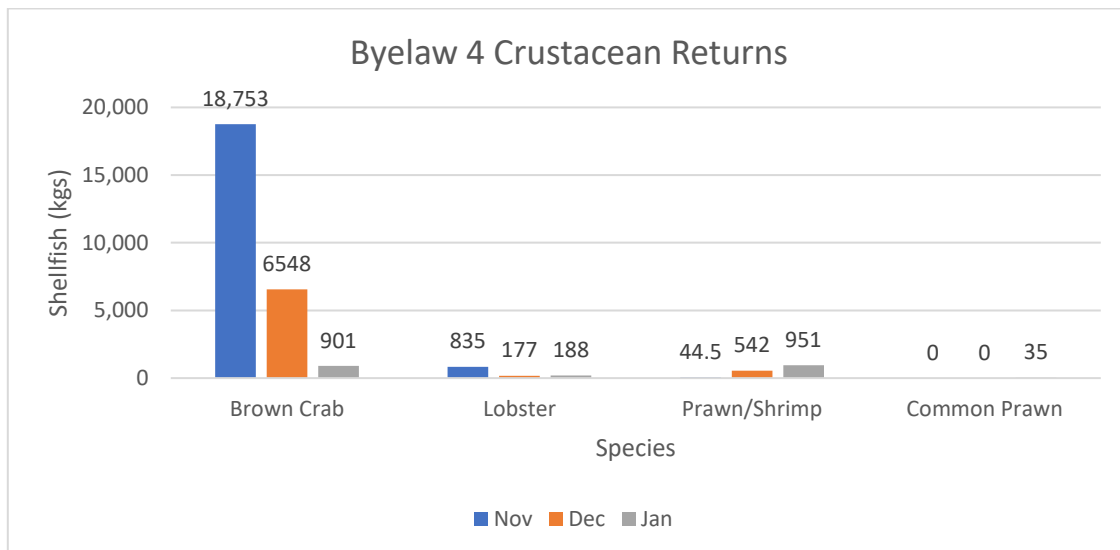
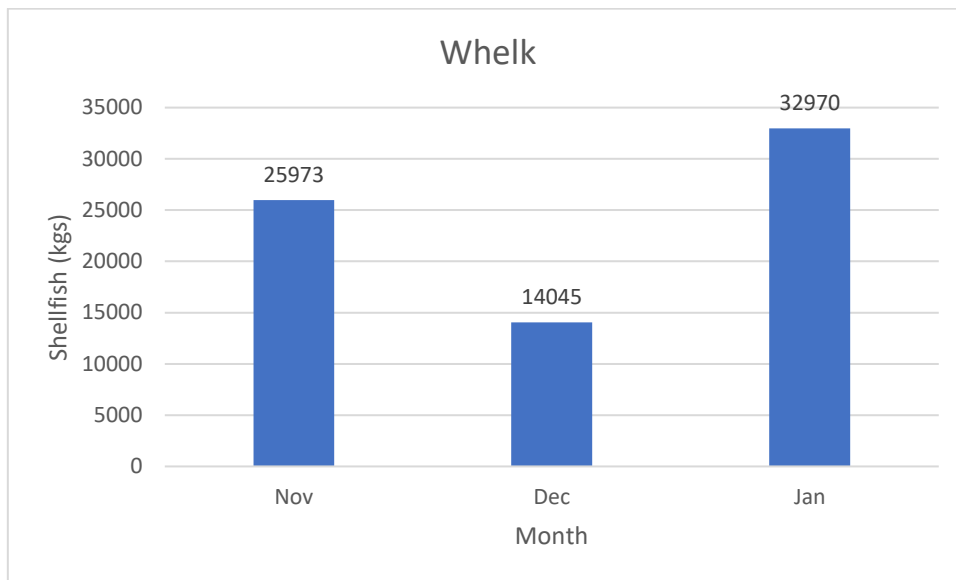
From the NWIFCA Byelaw 3 permit returns it is easy to see how permit holders have been predominantly fishing cockles as reported by IFCOs across the three cockle fisheries. November proved the best month with consistent fishing reported from Flookburgh, before the gatherers transitioned to the Leasowe fishery in mid-November with 456,792kg of cockles reported through returns for the month. This broken down in the charts below. Because fishers have been fishing on the seasonal cockle fishery's the mussel beds of Foulney and Ribble training walls have been largely left except for small orders.

The Pilling cockle fishery re opened on the 4th January 2025 with specific flexible permit conditions in place where fishing could take place between Saturday and Wednesday and only to the west of a line due North from the access slipway. There was also a requirement that under the HRA fishers work to minimise disturbance to pink-footed geese by delaying access to the fishery, if necessary, until geese have left their roosting sites or keep quad bike speeds slow and at a distance from any geese. The fishery has seen minimal effort during January with 2796kg reported in the month. There have been no more than five permit holders on a tide, but 12 permit holders have been seen present there at the Pilling fishery during January.



Whelks have continued to be the target species of vessels potting under NWIFCA byelaw 4 in the NWIFCA District, landings have picked up during January, whilst crustacean landings have been quiet through the winter period.

Prawn/Shrimp and common prawn as specified species requiring permits have continued to develop as a target species in the district as seen in the chart below in January landings for prawn/Shrimp from pots were greater than all other specified species with 951kg reported.



Sanctions, Infringements and Court Activity

A total of 44 sanctions were applied within the reporting period.

The opening week of the Pilling Cockle fishery in October saw the detection of a series of offences by Byelaw 3 permit holders for the retention of undersize cockles. As a result of investigations and consideration of evidence including minimum size inspections, statements from officers and previous offences sanctions were applied of verbal warnings and financial administrative penalties. Financial penalties applied under the sea fishing penalty statutory instrument varied between £250 to £500 based on all being first offences within a first year period for a byelaw offence at £250 however where the level of offending exceeded the starting penalty level the FAP must be doubled to £500. In total 10 fines were issued with a total value of £2750, all which were paid within the statutory period of 28 days from issue. There were no permit holders who chose not to pay fines which automatically results in escalation to prosecution. Each of the 10 FAPs issued also resulted in permit holders being issued a penalty point under paragraph 25 of NWIFCA Byelaw 3.

At the start of the year a returns compliance drive was conducted due to a significant amount of data being missing from byelaw 3 permit holders from the three cockle fishery's and two mussel fishery's which permit holders have been documented fishing at. This resulted in 30 administrative sanctions being issued to permit holders, the 23 official warning letters issued also resulted in each permit holder receiving a penalty point under paragraph 25 of the byelaw.

Sanction Applied	Details
Verbal Warning	Four verbal warnings, one for failure to comply with the NWIFCA Byelaw 2 and one for failure to label containers of shellfish in December. Two verbal warnings January for Pilling spatial area.
Advisory Letter	Seven advisory letters were issued for returns compliance.
Official Warning Letter	23 OWL for returns compliance
Financial Admin Penalty	10 FAPs for undersize offences at Pilling cockle fishery, 1 FAP of £2000 for undersize cockles at Leasowe.
Caution	N/A
Case file submitted	One case file submitted for prosecution in relation to bass offences.

Shore-Based Activity Report

	Burgh Marsh Point -Haverigg Point –	Haverigg Point – Arnside	Arnside – Knott End	River Wyre – River Alt	Mersey, Wirral and Dee
Shore patrols by all NWIFCA officers*	59	58	19	139	
ATV patrols	1	18	3	2	
Inspections under taken	36	366	5	1424	

* undertaken either by vehicle or on foot without using ATV