

**NWIFCA Meeting:
21st March 2024 10:00 a.m.**

**AGENDA
ITEM NO.
8**

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

Purpose: For information.

Recommendations:

- 1. That the report is received**

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

Patch	Summary Points
Haverigg Point – Burghmarsh Point – IFCO Thinnesen, Thinnesen	<p>Shore 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.</p> <p>Please see appendices attached for daily patrols carried out this quarter.</p> <p><u>TRAWLING</u> - activity was observed from local trawlers targeting prawns (nephrops) and bait fish (plaice – dogfish) from grounds, South West of St Bees 6 - 10 nautical miles offshore.</p> <p>Individual vessels were monitored at sea on VMS fishing inside the 6 nautical mile limit during the quarter, with some reports of prawns being caught on the odd occasion, of between 10 - 20 stones per day during November. Some of vessels from Maryport and Whitehaven are landing to Co-ops and direct to the public at both ports.</p> <p>Some small landings of thorn backed rays and plaice also landed at ports.</p> <p><u>POTTING</u> - Activity on VMS over the quarter showed whelking vessels out of Whitehaven, Fleetwood and Maryport frequently seen, with vessels engaged in whelk potting inside and outside of the district.</p> <p>Vessels from Fleetwood were seen fishing north of North Wales, 6 – 10 miles off the coast, west of Formby, south and north of the Isle of Man as well as 10 miles west of Whitehaven and Scottish waters in Solway firth.</p> <p>Some local vessels had been seen on VMS fishing on grounds inside of the NWIFCA 6-mile limit, this year, with the majority of the fishing days being carried out outside of the district.</p> <p>Some local vessels targeting lobster and brown crab continued to fish pots. These vessels targeted areas north and south of Whitehaven, mixed reports from fishers of quantities of lobsters and crab being caught.</p>

	<p>Creel pots for shrimps have been used, with mixed results.</p> <p>18 sightings on VMS with lobster boats, 27 sightings on VMS with whelkers, most of which were outside of the district.</p> <p><u>ANGLING</u> - Angling activity on beaches and piers was evident at all areas in numbers, from November 2023 to the end of January 2024. Catches varied from small dabs, whiting, plaice, dog fish and thorn backed rays. Some codlings have been caught in dark hours; this is normal for the time of year leading into winter and the darker nights.</p> <p>During this quarter during daylight hours, 194 anglers were seen on piers and beaches. However, most of the time officers were re-fitting North Western Protector, and as such the effort by officers undertaking shore patrols wasn't as great as in previous years.</p> <p><u>BEACH NETS</u> – no nets seen or reported on any beaches over the quarter.</p> <p><u>OTHER DUTIES</u> - Other duties undertaken were</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VMS satellite surveillance work was undertaken with 88 vessels were monitored. • Crewing and being Deputy Master on 4 occasions on board North Western Protector. • Assisting officers in Southport cockle fishery • Protector Gamma is now back in service, and currently in Barrow. <p><u>ATV Patrol</u> – an ATV patrol was carried out around Nethertown and Braystones, mostly to familiarise and train the new recruits on quad bike operations.</p> <p>Details of all patrols carried out on shore this quarter can be found in the appendices.</p>
<p>Haverigg Point – Arnside – IFCO Dixon</p>	<p><u>Mussels</u></p> <p>Activity during the quarter was reduced to no more than three Byelaw 3 permit holders gathering large mussels from Foulney on spring tides for depuration orders locally.</p> <p>I continue to undertake mussel sampling from Foulney for the local Authority Environmental Health Department.</p> <p><u>Cockles</u></p> <p>No activity was observed on any of the cockle beds within the North Morecambe Bay area during the quarter. Interest in the Flookburgh cockle bed increased during January during the consultation process concerning the possible opening times should there be a commercial fishery permissible this year.</p> <p>I continue to undertake cockle samples from 2 sites near Flookburgh and 1 site at Newbiggin for the Local Authority.</p>

Shrimping

Activity was again at a low level during the early part of the reporting period, with only occasional sightings of a tractor shrimping in the Leven channel. No activity was observed during December and January.

Netting

Commercial vessel netting activity was less than in previous years especially in November, with only occasional sightings or reports received. Catches of Bass were reported to be lower than usual, although reports of good numbers of juvenile/undersize Bass were encouraging for the future. One commercial vessel from Barrow was observed netting west of North Walney during January, with reported catches of pot bait and very occasional Cod.

No recreational netting from vessel was observed or reported.

No intertidal beach nets were reported or observed during the quarter.

Potting

Activity was at a low level as is usual with this time of year. During November the commercial vessels based at barrow brought in the majority of their gear for the winter. One vessel continued potting occasionally but catches were very low, as is expected during the winter months.

One whelk potting vessel was active occasionally from Barrow during the quarter and is assisting the NWIFCA Science Team with sampling.

Long lines

One recreational beach long line was observed being set, with the target species being Plaice.

Angling

Activity decreased during the quarter, as is usually the case when the majority of the target species such as Bass and Flounder migrate away from the area. Occasional reports of Cod being caught at night, but not in the numbers reported from the North Cumbria area.

Bait digging

Occasional sightings of 2-3 commercial bait diggers in the Duddon estuary.

Sightings also recorded of Black lug commercial bait pumping on the Irish sea coast of North Walney.

Arnside – Lytham

General

IFCO Graham & Edwards

The winter months are quieter for fishing activity and have seen a focus on office-based work given the split roles of IFCO Graham and IFCO Edwards. In addition, a large portion of annual leave has been taken in this period.

Monthly MSH sample collection continued for Pilling, Knott Spit, Sea Centre and Ribble Training Walls. Due to the tidal and light limitations, Pilling and Knott End samples had to be carried out on separate days.

In late November and early December, IFCO Graham assisted in the recruitment of two new members of the admin team drawing upon his experience as Office Manager and Digital Communications Officer.

As part of the restructure IFCO Graham is continuing to maintain his role coordinating IT until 1st April 2024 at which point, he will move to a more focused role of IFCO (Intel). The restructure/pay review increased Union related work for IFCO Graham as the deadline for appeals approached.

Specific

Hand Gathering Bivalve Molluscs

No cockle fisheries within the patch are currently open. Random patrols of the area have not highlighted any activity. Very low levels of mussel gathering has occurred off Lytham.

Netting

Activity has reduced in the winter months with shore nets being taken in over winter.

Recreational Angling

Recreational anglers continue to regularly fish across the patch, reporting catches of whiting, flat fish or nothing. Reports of angling at Heysham Bass Nursery area have been received on a couple of occasions.

Drone

IFCO Graham has continued to contribute to the Authority's drone usage by creating crib sheets, maintenance logs and flight logs. It is hoped the first operational drone usage will occur in March 2024.

Joint Working

In late January SIFCO Dixon and IFCO Graham went on joint patrol with EA officers identifying ways NWIFCA can assist with the enforcement of the elver fishery.

General

During this quarter officers have continued to concentrate their efforts overseeing the enforcement of the Penfold cockle fishery on Southport. Due to this requirement, enforcement commitments to normal regular tasks have been limited. Byelaw 2 – North Wirral Foreshore Bivalve Molluscs continues to remain in place along the north Wirral coastline.

On behalf of West Lancashire Borough Council and Mersey Port Health Authority officers have continued to collect the monthly MSH sample collection required to maintain the classification of the Penfold fishery.

During November, area officers attended an open evening at West Cheshire Sailing Club with the NWIFCA CEO and Senior Scientist.

As part of the management restructure, IFCO Brownrigg took on a new role as a Senior IFCO within the organisation and will look to have operational oversight and daily management responsibilities of three enforcement staff.

Specific

Hand Gathering Bivalve

Some three hundred and seventy-two inspections have taken place throughout this quarter. Officers have continued to observe compliancy amongst the gatherers. Up until January, routine landing inspections indicate anywhere between 1.5 ton of cockles was being recorded.

Recreational Rod Angling

Shore

Twenty inspections of shore and beach anglers have taken place during this quarter, with the promenades of Wallasey front continuing to remain active. Seacombe and Magazine promenades continue to be most popular. Catches of dab and whiting have been recorded.

Netting

Low level netting activity was observed during December with seven inspections taking place along the north Wirral coastline. Generally, throughout this quarter netting activity has been quiet.

Recreational/Charter Boat Angling

During this quarter area officers attended two winter small boat competitions overseen by Wirral Small Boats club. Officers remained on hand throughout the competition offering advice and guidance while building positive relationships with the recreational small boat community.

Premises Inspections

Officers have continued to provide a presence at Liverpool Fish Market. Routine inspections of the four independent units have continued to take place offering guidance and direction. Officers have also continued to inspect two further premises recorded during their routine ATV patrols along the Sefton coastline. To date, all premises have been found to be compliant.

Finally, officers have continued to provide advice and support to Mersey Port Health Authority, Gangmasters Labour & Abuse Authority, Natural Resources Wales, RSPB and Sefton Council.

General Update

During this reporting period and up until writing there has been a seismic change in the staff structure under the new organogram which has been implemented. This has created a level of senior IFCOs with management duties for IFCOs. There are improved reporting mechanisms and team meetings across the enforcement.

North Western Protector

As can be expected at this time of year, the weather has been mainly poor with a number of patrol days at sea being lost.

It has again been reported that fuel prices are continuing to have a significant impact on the fishing industry, with some vessels deciding to remain in port. This along with gear and bait costs are squeezing the profit margins for a number of vessels, to the limit.

Fishing activity in the district amongst the local fleet, has on the whole been low key, with only a couple of light landings of nephrop (prawns) and thornback rays being made into Whitehaven.

A number of visiting scallop vessels have been making regular visits into Whitehaven during the reporting period, with good landings of scallops being reported back to officers.

Whelk vessels continue to make regular landings into Whitehaven.

Patrol boat crew along with science officers carried out tests on our underwater survey equipment. I am pleased to report that no faults were reported and all the equipment was working fine.

Priorities/patrols/boardings/inspections statistics:

- Patrol district for large vessel infringement of byelaws
- Record data of nets and pots in district
- Inspect lobster/brown crab pots and carry out checks on potting vessels
- Inspect gill nets for compliance with legislation
- Record data of nets
- Inspect vessels for compliance with fishing gear legislation
- Maintain service and repair patrol boats
- Inspect and carry out checks with hobby fishermen vessels byelaw 26
- Patrol throughout the district for detection of fishery limit line offences

- Byelaw 20 compliance

Patrols boardings and inspections of vessels at sea, along with static gear inspections from North Western Protector, Protector Charlie and Protector Gamma. Details of which can be found in the appendices.

Compliance on the whole has been good with only 1 verbal warning issued for marking of static gear with regards to the potting byelaw 4.

All vessel maintenance and service schedules on North Western Protector and Protector Charlie are all up to date.

Training

During the reporting period staff have completed conflict resolution training, this course is now being completed on an annual basis. Training in manual handling was completed across the organisation and most staff have completed fire warden training as recommended in a review of H&S. New staff have progressed through any statutory sea going certificates where required and ATV training course.

Training this quarter throughout the organisation included:

STCW – personal survival techniques – 2 officers

STCW – fire prevention & fire fighting – 5 officers

ML5 sea farers medical – 2 officers

ATV quad bike training – 2 officers

IFCOs training course – Torquay – 5 officers

Trailer and towing courses – 2 officers

Health & Safety

Health and Safety workstreams have begun to transition from Operational Support to the new Admin team.

Byelaw Update

Netting Byelaw

Officers met with members of the netting byelaw working group In February and good headway was made with agreeing points of a final draft to be submitted to the next meeting of the TSB committee. There were agreements from the group on the temporal/spatial closures, removal of provision for whitebait filter nets and a definition of Flue netting.

Officers are conducting an informal consultation period during mid-March with an online survey and drop in meetings on the Wirral, Lytham, Rampside and Whitehaven. Comments during this will assist in expediting any issues during the formal consultation period after the Byelaw is made.

Medical Exemptions

In November 2023 regulations came into effect requiring those working on small UK flagged vessels to have a certificate of medical fitness. The government has worked to support those who would have been unduly forced ashore but are able to fish. Grandfather rights have been extended for eyesight, BMI, diabetes and additionally seasonal fishers.

Unlike larger fishing operations, those who operate vessels of 10 metres and under are usually independent and require more support, which is why today the Department for Transport is seeing how to best deliver medical exemptions safely so hard-working, small-scale fishers aren't unduly forced ashore.

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency is currently considering the results of a recent consultation on this issue.

Bass Regulations 2024

Recreational Bass Fishing

All recreational fishing is limited to catch 7 release only during February to March 2024. From the 1st April to 31st December 2024, two bass per day may be retained per fisher. The size remains at 42cm. No bass can be retained by fixed or drift nets recreationally.

Commercial Bass Fishing

Under [The Sea Fisheries \(Amendment\) \(No. 2\) Regulations 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk) all commercial fishing vessels are now authorised to land bass bycatch by demersal trawls and seines and no written authorisation is required.

It is important to note that bass caught using trawls and seines remain subject to a 5% by weight of all marine organisms per trip. The Sea Fisheries (Amendment) Regulations 2023 sets an unavoidable by-catch limit of 3.8 tonnes (3800kg) per vessel per year.

For clarification, ring nets are not included in the trawls and seines category. Bass landing are prohibited by vessels using ring nets.

Commercial Bass fishing with hooks and line or fixed nets in Area 7a continues to operate under Authorisations issued under track record for fishing between July 2015 and September 2016. Authorisations are issued to retain bass by hooks and lines or fixed gill nets and only one metier of gear can be carried at one time.

Bass can be landed between April and the end of December, hooks and line are limited to 6.2T per year and fixed gill nets a by-catch of 1.6 tonnes per year.

	Demersal Trawls and Seines	Hooks and Lines	Fixed Gillnets Nets	All other gears (including drift nets)
Fishery Restrictions	Closed February and March	Closed February and March	Closed February and March	All bass catches prohibited
Maximum catch limit	Maximum 5% by weight of all marine organisms PER TRIP. Unavoidable by-catch 3.8 tonnes (3800kg) per vessel per year	6.2 tonnes per year	By-catch of 1.6 tonnes per year	All bass catches prohibited

For clarification a year means a calendar year.

Meetings

Head of Enforcement has continued to attend regular meetings of;

- IFCA Workshop
- National Inshore Fisheries & Marine Enforcement
- North West Marine Area Tasking & Coordination meeting
- Shellfish liaison Meeting

Fishery Report

Penfold Cockle Fishery

The cockle fishery was accessed by approximately of 20% of permit holders during the first full month of opening in November. Officers covered almost all the open tides. Numbers of attendees dipped in December and after the festive period the fishery has seen stable low numbers of attendees of between 8-12 permit holders. Daily catches have dropped to below 100kg per day.

Officers monitored a cold snap of weather in December under the NWIFCA cold weather protocol, in line with the protocol communications were maintained with permit holders and committee members. Thankfully the cold weather improved and missed the threshold of 60 hours out of 120 at or below zero degrees by a mere six hours and the fishery was able to remain open at the important period before Christmas.

Byelaw 3 Reporting

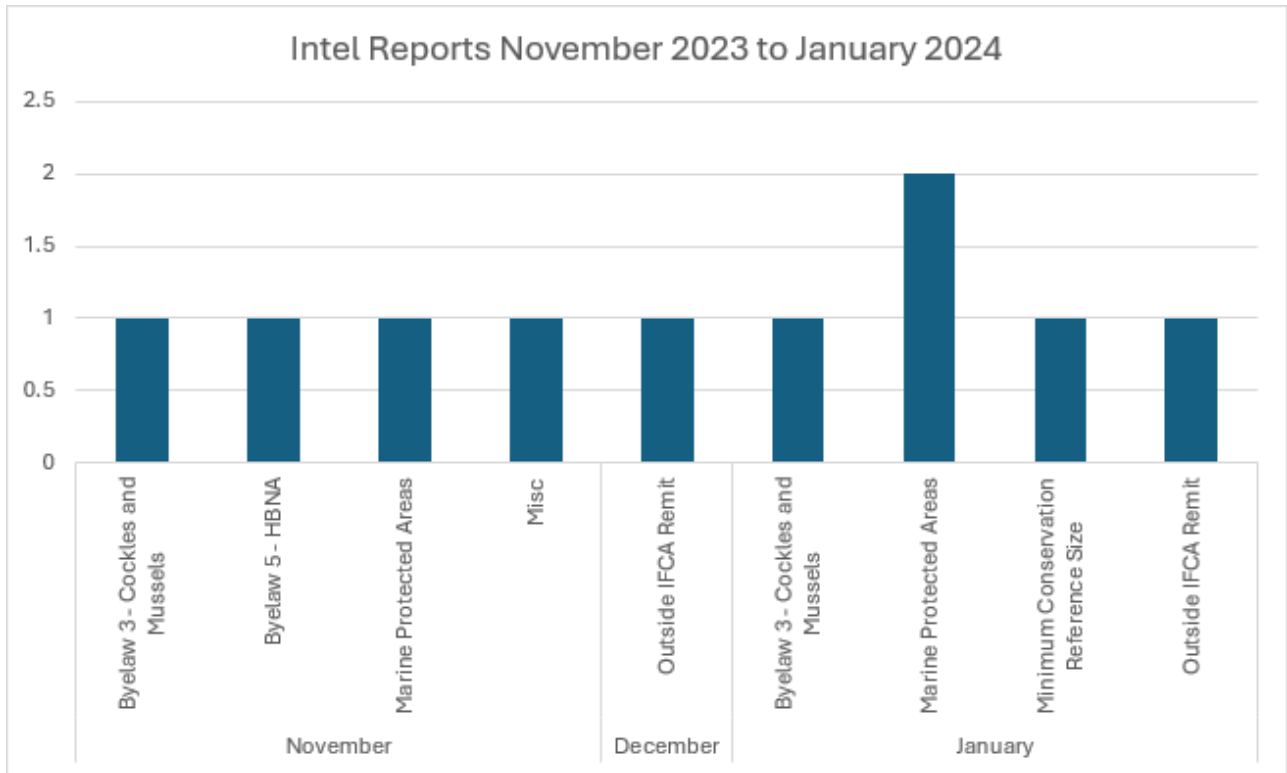
There has continued to be an issue with the current permit database and the figures reported from the fishery. Although a new online reporting system is almost ready to be trialled at the point of writing officers have discovered the issue with low reporting is likely to be with how some online forms are being entered.

November to January 2024				
Byelaw 3 Returns		Mussels		Cockles
		Foulney	Ribble TW	Penfold/ Southport
Activity	Activity			
Amount Removed (kg)	Nov-23	20410	570	30256
	Dec-23	17911	160	17551
	Jan-24	4927	1370	10728
Attendance	Nov-23	18	6	299
	Dec-23	18	2	163
	Jan-24	9	2	131
Hours	Nov-23	43	12	1386.5
	Dec-23	93	3	794
	Jan-24	25	7	650
No. Inspected Fishing	Nov-23	0	0	0
	Dec-23	0	0	0
	Jan-24	0	0	0
No. MLS Inspections	Nov-23	0	0	0
	Dec-23	0	0	0
	Jan-24	0	0	0
Days Covered by IFCO's	Nov-23	13	3	28
	Dec-23	14	1	17
	Jan-24	4	2	19

Sanctions, Infringements and Court Activity

During the reporting period there were only six official warning letters issued to Byelaw 4 potting permit holders for failure to comply paragraph 32 of the byelaw relating to the submitting of returns. Sanctions will be escalated where there is continued failure to comply with this important reporting element of the byelaw.

Intelligence Reporting



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

Shore Based Activity Report

Number of:	Haverigg Point – Burgh Marsh Point	Haverigg Point – Arnside	Arnside – Knott End	River Wyre – River Alt	Mersey, Wirral and Dee
Shore patrols by all NWIFCA officers*	76	72	17		69
ATV patrols	3	13	8		4
ATV patrol hrs	5.83	11.09	12.5		6
ATV kms covered	80	131.5	66		60
Inspections under taken	131	3	14		209

*undertaken either by vehicle or on foot without using ATV.

Annex A

Vessel	No of patrol (days)	Patrol time (hrs)	Distance patrolled (nm)	Boardings	Closings	Sightings	Inspections (inc. gear inspections)
North Western Protector	5	26.33	258	0	11	11	227 gear inspections
Protector Charlie	2	3.50	38	0	0	0	18 markers inspected
Protector Gamma	1	2.50	26	0	0	0	0
Totals for the quarter	8	32.33	322	0	11	11	245

Annex B

Patrol Date	Patrol Time	Distance (nm)	Area Covered	Risk/ Purpose	Sectors Covered	No. Boarding	No. Closings	No. Sightings	No. Inspections (inc. gear inspections)
<u>North Western Protector</u>									
10.01.24	8.42	74	Sellafield to Walney	Potting, recreational and charter activities	Cumbria Coast MCZ to EMS Walney Channel	0	0	0	70 gear inspections
11.01.24	6.17	80	Parton, Harrington, Workington, Maryport, Silloth, NW corner	Trawling, recreational angling, potting and netting activities	Solway Firth EMS	0	0	0	43 gear inspections
12.01.24	3.67	60	Scallop Bank, Prawn Pitch, Seascale, Sellafield, Workington	Trawling, potting, recreational angling and netting activities	Prawn pitch	0	11	11	60 gear inspections
17.01.24	7.00	30	Prawn grounds – engines on reduced revs	Trawling activities	Prawn pitch	0	0	0	54 gear inspections
18.01.24	1.08	14	Engine testing						
5	26.33	258				0	11	11	227

Patrol Date	Patrol Time	Distance (nm)	Area Covered	Risk/ Purpose	Sectors Covered	No. Boarding	No. Closings	No. Sightings	No. Inspections
<u>Protector Charlie</u>									
05.01.24	2.50	26	Whitehaven to Workington	Inspection of static gear surface markers; Buoys, Dahns etc.,	Whitehaven north ICES area 38E6	0	0	0	18 markers inspected
11.01.24	1.00	12	Whitehaven to Workington	Inspection of static gear surface markers; Buoys, Dahns etc.,	Whitehaven north ICES area 38E6	0	0	0	0
2	3.50	38				0	0	0	18