

**NWIFCA Meeting:  
21st September 2023 11:00 a.m.**

**AGENDA  
ITEM NO.**

**HEAD OF ENFORCEMENT QUARTERLY REPORT –  
1<sup>ST</sup> MAY – 31<sup>ST</sup> JULY**

**Purpose:** For information.

**Recommendations:**

1. **That the report is received**

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

<b>Patch</b>	<b>Summary Points</b>
Haverigg Point – Burghmarsh Point – IFCO Thinnesen, Thinnesen	<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. A summary of daily patrols carried out this quarter can be found in the Shore Based Activity report.</p> <p><b><u>Trawling</u></b></p> <p>Trawling activity was observed from local trawlers targeting prawns (Nephrops) and bait fish (plaice – dogfish) from grounds southwest of St Bees between 6 to 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 of between 40 &amp; 60 stones per day on the odd occasion in June and July. Some of the vessels from Maryport and Whitehaven are landing into Co-operatives and also direct to the public at both ports.</p> <p><b><u>Potting</u></b></p> <p>Activity on VMS over the quarter showed whelking vessels out of Whitehaven, Fleetwood and Maryport frequently seen, with vessels engaged in whelk potting 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 Isle of Man.</p> <p>Local vessels were pioneers on the grounds inside of the NWIFCA 6-mile limit, after the new potting byelaw 4 came into force last year. This year, most of the fishing activity has taken place outside of the district.</p> <p>In May most of the vessels targeting whelks in the district started to fish their normal lobster and crab pots, thus leaving the whelks until the season for other species, has finished.</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 of quantities of lobsters and crab being caught.

Creel pots for shrimps have been used, with mixed results. Although skippers have said that once they get used to the new grounds, they can direct their effort on the better areas when placing their pots on any ground.

26 sightings on VMS of lobster boats, 62 sightings on VMS of whelkers, most of which were fishing outside of the district.

ANGLING - Angling activity on beaches and piers was evident at all areas, but in smaller numbers. In June and July a run of mackerel returned to our coast, with anglers from Whitehaven to Maryport catching them, with the majority being from the two piers in Whitehaven, with reports of up to 6 being caught in single casts.

During this quarter during daylight hours, around 300 anglers were seen on piers and beaches. However, effort is down on other years for the time of year.

#### **Beach Nets**

No nets seen or reported on any beaches over the quarter as byelaw 10 came into force.

#### **OTHER DUTIES**

- Monitoring vessels using VMS satellite surveillance, was undertaken during the quarter.
- Crewing on board North Western Protector working alongside other crew members in preparing engine room bays; cleaning and upgrading areas ready for engines to be returned.
- Assisting Barrow area IFCO.
- Protector Bravo - the 7m Osprey Viper RIB was brought back to Whitehaven from Dobson Marine in Lancaster, after the yard costed the work involved to get the vessel back on line with a view to us carrying on using the vessel for inshore patrol work. After some discussions with respect to the costs involve in keeping the vessel, it was decided to retire vessel from service. The vessel was put up for sale in June, however not much interest has been shown in the vessel up to press.
- Protector Gamma was brought back to Whitehaven from Chorley after having two extra seats fitted as per coding. Most of the list of the other coding requirements have now been carried out. At time of writing this report, the vessel has undertaken sea trials but is not yet back in service

ATV Patrol – 3 ATV patrol were carried out with the Barrow area IFCO, undertaking doing cockle sampling and local patrols.

Haverigg Point  
– Arnside –  
IFCO Dixon

### **Mussels**

Activity remained at the usual level of up to 10 locally based gatherers working small orders for relaying or depuration, apart from an increase up to 16 gatherers during one spring tide in early July when a larger relaying order was fulfilled. No permit or minimum landing size issues were observed.

I continue to take samples for the local authority, on a weekly basis from Foulney, and monthly for the oysters, and quarterly for the Duddon mussel bed which has almost disappeared.

I assisted the Science Officers to conduct several mussel surveys on Foulney and the South America area.

### **Cockles**

No activity was observed or reported on the cockle beds in my area of responsibility.

Surveys were conducted on all the cockle beds in my area during this quarter, with an increasing number of juvenile cockles observed, which looks promising for the future if it survives the winter.

I continue to undertake Food Hygiene samples from the cockle beds in my area for the local Authority.

### **Shrimping**

Activity was again at a fairly low level, with sightings of 3 tractor's in the Leven channel occasionally, although it was usually only 1 tractor observed shrimping from Baycliff, catches were reported to be moderate, continuing the trend of recent years.

Very little shrimping activity has been observed in the eastern side of the bay from Flookburgh.

### **Potting**

During the quarter potting activity has increased due to the seasonal prime time for lobsters in the inshore areas west of Walney Island, with 2 licensed vessels observed regularly.

Three vessels from Barrow work outside the IFCA district in the Irish Sea, with 2 of these also potting for nephrops as well as lobsters and crab.

Limited sightings of Whelk vessels were seen.

No recreational potting activity has been observed.

### **Netting**

Commercial netting from licensed vessels was limited by the weather conditions and the high numbers of jellyfish in the outer Morecambe Bay area. Very few catch reports were received, with catches seemingly poorer than last year, although the adverse

	<p>conditions no doubt affected this.</p> <p>One beach net was observed in the Leven estuary, set for flatfish/pot bait, this is a similar trend to recent years since the Bass restrictions were introduced.</p> <p>No Flue netting was observed in the Leven estuary, with reports suggesting that no suitable locations were available unlike recent years.</p> <p><b><u>Angling</u></b></p> <p>Angling activity continued to increase during the quarter as Bass numbers and catch reports increased, with the west coast of Walney, Foulney Island and the coast road proving popular. Several anglers were observed in the upper Leven estuary but catch reports suggested that it wasn't fishing as well as the previous year.</p> <p>Limited commercial angling was seen in the area.</p>
<p>Arnside – Lytham IFCO Graham &amp; Edwards</p>	<p><b><u>Cockles</u></b></p> <p>All cockle beds within the patch remain closed. No reports of any gathering have been received. Monthly sampling of cockles has continued at Pilling.</p> <p><b><u>Mussels</u></b></p> <p>Very little mussel fishing activity has occurred within the area. No activity has been observed at the Knott End mussel beds but returns information indicates limited fishing. There has only been limited activity has occurring on the Ribble Training Walls. As previously reported, as there is the fishery at Foulney, there is no incentive to travel to the area to gather mussels.</p> <p>The ephemeral seed mussel on Heysham flat was lost from the fishery.</p> <p>None of the other beds have seen activity this quarter.</p> <p><b><u>Bass</u></b></p> <p>Commercial landings of Bass began in April in accordance with the regulations, however as previously reported, not all fishers with entitlement are currently fishing.</p> <p>Signs of activity have been seen at Heysham Bass Nursery. Patrols have taken place and are scheduled for the near future.</p> <p>There has been continued low levels of commercial fishing out of Knott end and towards the Lune.</p> <p><b><u>Angling</u></b></p> <p>Angling has continued to remain popular across the district. Smooth hound numbers have since reduced. Good reports of bass from the low water marks have been reported.</p>

	<p><b><u>Netting</u></b></p> <p>Fixed nets have been sighted intermittently on Pilling sands. There have been some reports of netting on the Lune.</p> <p><b><u>Training</u></b></p> <p>IFCO Graham has completed and passed the drone theory exam. He has also completed Unison steward training.</p>
Dee- Southport – IFCO Brownrigg, Taylor	<p>This quarter saw the continued targeted enforcement along the North Wirral coastline. Despite the Byelaw 2 closure low levels of attempted breaches have been detected.</p> <p>Regular shore patrols and inter tidal ATV work has continued to take place. As predicted, with the warmer and better weather conditions officers have noted a steady rise in general fishing activity within the area.</p> <p>Officers have also provided support to the science department during the cockle and mussel survey season. Sampling work continues to take place on behalf of West Lancs BC and MPHA.</p> <p>Officers were also on hand to offer advice and guidance as part of the Wirral netting consultation held at West Cheshire Sailing Club. Also in attendance were the NWIFCA Chair, CEO and Senior scientist.</p> <p>Both officers have successfully revalidated their ML5 medicals and RYA commercial endorsement qualifications. The revalidation of the forementioned qualifications and the replacement of the life raft on Bay Protector now make her and crew compliant.</p> <p><b><u>Hand Gathering Bivalve</u></b></p> <p>Officers have continued to enforce the byelaw along the North Wirral coastline. Both cockles and otter clam remain to be targeted. Offence Detection Reports regarding illegal gathering activity have been sent to the Head of Enforcement for review. On recent inspection, Wirral North Cockle bed presently has a large amount of spat covering the area of beach running from Leasowe Bay to New Brighton. Area officers will continue to monitor the spat levels on both coastlines during the coming months.</p> <p><b><u>Recreational Rod Angling</u></b></p> <p><b>Shore</b></p> <p>One hundred and thirty-one inspections of shore and beach anglers have taken place during this quarter, the promenades of Wallasey front continuing to remain active. Seacombe promenade has been recorded as the most popular.</p> <p>Catch recordings continue to be minimum due to a positive catch and release approach</p>

by anglers.

### **Boat Angling**

Recreational boat angling has remained constant throughout this quarter. Sightings have been observed in the Liverpool Bay, Crosby channel, river Mersey and Dee estuary areas. Catch size have been minimum with bass, mackerel and plaice being recorded during routine inspections.

### **Long Line**

Long line activity has been recorded in the area of East Hoyle Bank, some fifty-four lines were observed but no catch was recorded.

### **Beach Netting**

Netting activity has increased during this quarter with nets being observed and inspected along both the north Wirral and Sefton coastlines. Nine set nets have been observed and are routinely monitored off Taylor's Bank, Formby and the Ainsdale/Birkdale sands area.

A further three set nets have been recorded east of Hilbre island. To date, no enforcement issues have been recorded.

Officers have also recorded in an increase in beach hand seine activity within the Leasowe Bay area. Overall catches of plaice, sole, smooth hound and thornback ray have been recorded. One netter was found have a catch where fifty percent were found to be undersize. Enforcement action is presently being taken.

### **Bait Digging**

Bait digging remains to be active along both coastlines, the Mockbeggar Wharf area along the north Wirral coastline continues to be the most popular. Some thirty-four inspections have been undertaken with both the pump and spade methods being used.

### **Dee Estuary**

Regular weekly vehicle patrols continue to patrol the Dee estuary coastline for fishing activity. Both Caldy Blacks and West Kirby mussel beds continue to be monitored.

### **Southport – Penfold Cockle Beds**

Southport cockle beds have continued to be enforced. At the last inspection, officers observed a large amount of spat fall throughout the area. This will continue to be monitored.

### **Bay Protector**

The area's enforcement vessel Bay Protector has recently been active within the area – a detailed report will be published in the next quarterly report.

	<p><b><u>Premises Inspections</u></b></p>
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	<p>Officers continue to regularly provide a presence at Liverpool Fish Market. Routine inspections of the four independent units have continued to take place offering guidance and direction.</p>
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## **General Update**

### **Employer Recognition Scheme 2023 – Gold Award**

I am pleased to announce that NWIFCA are receiving the Gold award from the MOD Employer Recognition Scheme, The Authority has twice received the Silver award in the last 10 years and in the last 12 months officers have progressed policies, procedures and commitment to support the armed forces community to the requirement of the gold award.

Officers and the Chairman of the Authority will be present at the awards ceremony in November to receive the award.

### **Drone Procurement**

Approval for purchase of a drone took place last year following the successes of the Oceanmind project and analysis of other IFCA's operational usage and procurement. This has allowed NWIFCA to ensure the specification is correct and policies and procedures are in place. Procurement of an enforcement drone is now progressing quickly, two members of the IFCO enforcement team are completing training to pilot the drone and a collaborative operational manual is being drafted amongst the team. Having a drone resource will greatly increase the team safety and evidence gathering in the field. The specification of drone required will include thermal imaging, night vision, lighting, and the ability to play recorded audio messages.

### **Vessel Procurement**

The procurement of a vessel to enforce the Allonby Bay HPMA and replace protector Bravo has commenced and is being completed in line with the national shipbuilding strategy and DEFRA's requirements for issuing funding under the government's control development budgets for assets.

The process to begin procuring a replacement of Protector Bravo was paused this time last year, however with the announcement of the HPMA in Cumbria there was a commitment from DEFRA to provide C-DEL funding towards a patrol vessel.

The specification of the vessel will remain the like that which was reported to the committee last September. 8-10m catamaran with the capability to lift pots & nets in the near inshore area. This allows officers to ensure the Authority is capable to tackle non-compliance from activities in the HPMA and monitor inshore potting across the District.

## **Recruitment**

In August NWIFCA welcomed Alexander Schweizer and David Haile to the team in Whitehaven as IFCOs and crew of the patrol vessels. IFCO Schweizer and Haile both bring valuable prior experiences from the marine sector to the Authority. In addition, in September and October another three members of staff are joining the enforcement team to the IFCO/crew position, IFCO/Engineer position and IFCO position in Barrow.

## **Training**

Staff training has continued during the quarter. Head of Enforcement has continued with completing an assessment in "Assessing competence in the Work Environment Level 3". The current unit is practically assessing staff in the workplace and professional discussions and verbal questioning of staff on personal protective equipment have been signed off. The next stage is to assess staff in conducting a fisheries inspection. This is seen as a useful tool in professional development for staff.

Induction procedures with staff have been formalised. To date staff have completed induction work developed through the national lead Training Officer back in 2019.

All incoming staff have been enrolled on the Torquay IFCO training course in January 2024, sea going qualifications are being revalidated as required. A conflict resolution course has been booked for the start of October with new staff doing a full course and staff who completed the training last year doing an annual refresher course.

In seeking to develop sea going experience of staff a provider has been found to do classroom-based chart work with staff.

Head of Enforcement is now a part of the National Training Group looking to develop training across IFCA through courses, inhouse training and assessment using external providers such as the learning management system with the MMO.

## **North Western Protector**

As members will be aware North Western Protector was taken off-line in September 2022, and we have subsequently encountered massive delays with regards to receiving parts for the engines, especially the gearboxes.

At the time of writing this report the engines remain with PME group in Plymouth. One engine had a dyno test carried out on the 20th June 2023 at the Alicat boat yard in Great Yarmouth. Officers attended the testing, and the other dyno test was carried out in July without officers in attendance.

Both engines ran well on the test bed producing strong Horsepower output and ran as they should at different revolutions under load. Only a couple of minor faults with the sensors were picked up and were rectified at PME groups engine repair premises in Plymouth.

We hope to have the two engines and gearboxes back with us and in the vessel during the next quarter. An estimated date was given of around the end of August to the beginning of September.

In between shore patrols and other duties, crew have been busy refurbishing both engine bays.

Both compartments have been industrially cleaned; pumps and hydraulic pipes replaced. All the insulation in both bays have been replaced along with some rewiring having been undertaken.



Work was completed in mid-July, at which point Boat Electrical Engineering (BEE) were asked to provide additional work to complete with respect to the installation of new replacement up-to-date chart plotter; new fire suppression equipment, along with a mega test on the boat's electrics (electrical health check). The CCTV system was also replaced. At the time of writing this report, this work is still on going.

**UPDATE:** *As of 6<sup>th</sup> of September, both engines have been refitted. Vessel due to be lifted out of the water in coming weeks for routine work post engine refit and replacement of the jet drives. Vessel to be operational by end of September, start of October. JM*

### **Health & Safety**

No safety issues have been reported during the quarter. FLOWER checks of vehicles and PLB checks were only 67% complaint during this period and therefore an increase in monitoring of this will be carried out in the current quarter.

### **Byelaw Update**

There has been no further update on the progress of the NWIFCA MCRS Byelaw.

Head of Enforcement has continued with the final drafting of the NWIFCA netting permit byelaw. This will be provided to the next TSB committee meeting.

### **Fishery Report**

Head of Enforcement has continued to informally chair a multi-agency group relating to the Penfold Fishery, in response to issues raised by partners last year officers are seeking to implement new management which will reduce the impact of the ancillary activities of cockle fishing in the area such as parking of vehicles, manoeuvring of HGVs and the merchant operations.

Due to the seasonal closure in place under Byelaw 3 there has been no cockle fishing during this quarter. Permit holders have continued to access the Foulney mussel bed on a regular basis. In the intelligence reporting below, issues reporting illegal cockle gathering were resolved to be reporting the legitimate mussel gathering in the Foulney area. Due to an increase in the activity at this location not experienced for circa ten years there has been a rise in communications from the public requesting information on the fishery.

### **Meetings**

Head of Enforcement has continued to attend regular meetings of;

- National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group,
- National Training Group,
- Regional Fisheries Group,
- NW Marine Area tasking and coordination group,
- Marine Wildlife Enforcement Group,
- Dee Estuary Enforcement,
- Shellfish Association meetings,
- Fisheries Management Plan groups,
- NWIFCA TSB and Finance and HR sub-committees

## **Byelaw 3 Reporting**

### **Waiting list**

Under GDPR we are required to ensure the data we hold is accurate and up to date and therefore is a need to communicate effectively with stakeholders on the waiting list for Byelaw 3 cockle and mussel permits. Letters and emails will be sent to all persons on the waiting list asking them to complete an application form, confirm details, identity and confirm eligibility to work in the UK. A reasonable period of time to respond will be set after which those who have not responded will be removed from the waiting list. This will bring the waiting list in accordance with the new byelaw.

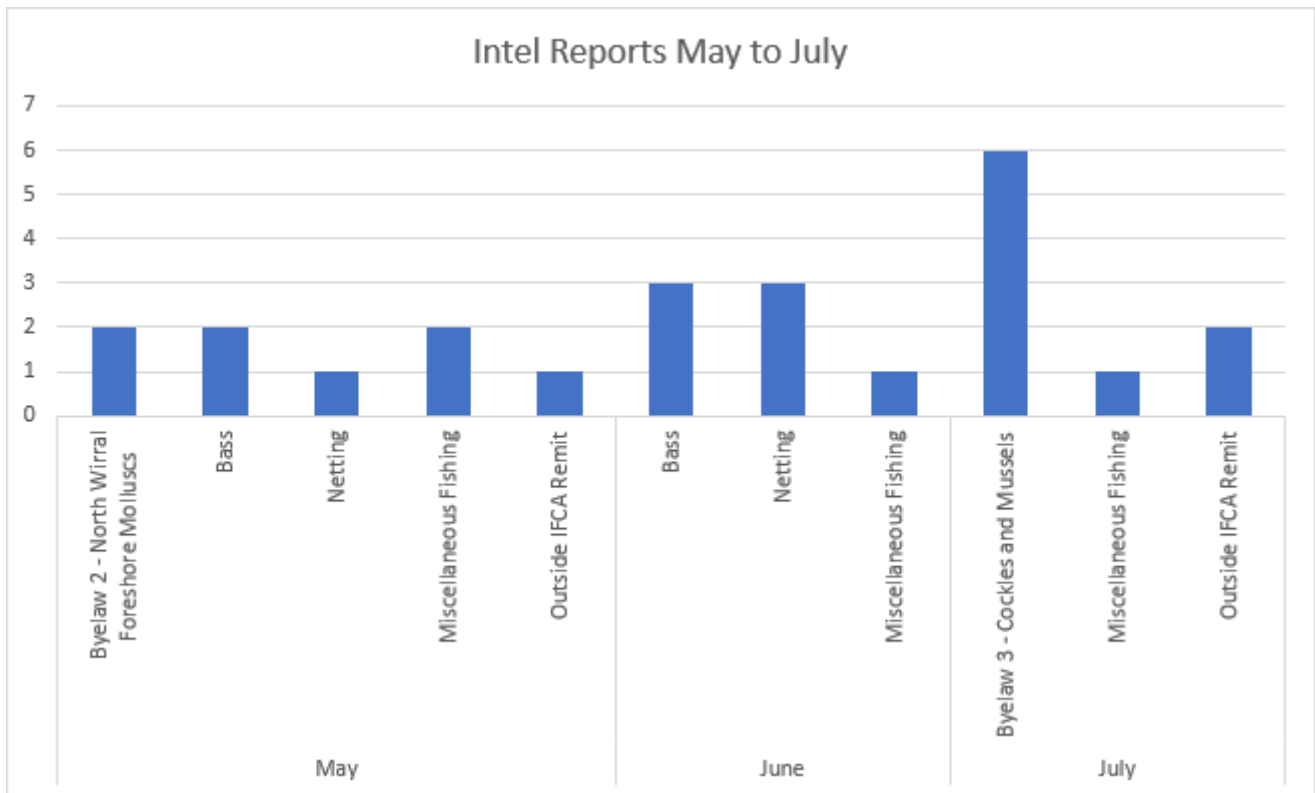
<b>Byelaw 3 Returns</b>		<b>Mussels</b>			
		<b>Foulney</b>	<b>Ribble Training Walls</b>	<b>Knott End Spit</b>	<b>Knott End Sealife Centre</b>
	<b>Activity</b>				
<b>Amount Removed (kg)</b>	May-23	66784			
	Jun-23	13411	120	1000	650
	Jul-23	50457			
<b>Attendance</b>	May-23	89			
	Jun-23	21	2	1	1
	Jul-23	59			
<b>Hours</b>	May-23	287			
	Jun-23	65	2	4	2
	Jul-23	214			
<b>No. Inspected Fishing</b>	May-23				
	Jun-23	2			
	Jul-23	16			
<b>No. MLS Inspections</b>	May-23				
	Jun-23	2			
	Jul-23	15			
<b>Days Covered by IFCO's</b>	May-23				
	Jun-23	1			
	Jul-23	1			

## Sanctions, Infringements and Court Activity

Sanctions	Comments
Verbal	22- 21 verbal warnings issued for Byelaw 2 offences. One for a minor net infringement.
Advisory Letters	89 – Advisory letters issued for Byelaw 3 returns
Official Warning Letters	6 – Two for net offences, four for Byelaw 2 offences
FAPS	0
Permit suspension	0
Prosecutions Pending	1
Prosecutions	0

During the reporting period of this quarter 117 sanction were applied under the NWIFCA compliance and Enforcement strategy. The large number of advisory letters were issued as part of a compliance drive for failure to submit Byelaw 3 returns. Other minor offences detected by IFCOs were resolved with the issuing of Official Warning Letters. Verbal warnings were issued for non-compliance with Byelaw 2 on the North Wirral foreshore. There was no detection of removal of stock from the fishery with offenders being detected during the course of gathering, equipment was seized in the majority of offences.

## 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

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Haverigg Point – Burgh Marsh Point</b>	<b>Haverigg Point – Arnside</b>	<b>Arnside – River Alt</b>	<b>Mersey, Wirral &amp; Dee</b>
Shore patrols by all NWIFCA officers*	47	46	40	86
ATV patrols	3	19	16	23
ATV patrol hrs	6.66	24.91	33	57.5
ATV kms covered	47.4	296	132	604
Inspections under taken	67	33	16	151

\*undertaken either by vehicle or on foot without using A

