

NWIFCA Quarterly Meeting

4th December 2025

REPORT NO.

5

HEAD OF ENFORCEMENT QUARTERLY REPORT – 1ST AUGUST – 31ST OCTOBER 2025

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 Haile	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. Please see appendices attached. A total of 70 daily patrols carried out in the quarter, with a total of 223 coastal locations visited. Some local vessels had been seen on satellite systems on grounds inside of the NWIFCA 6-mile limit, the odd ones being boarded and inspected. 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, some potters reporting cuttlefish in their pots also. By the end of September commercial vessels started to bring most of their pots ashore for winter, some vessels will fish throughout the winter with a reduced number of pots. Most of the recreational vessels have brought their gear ashore due to the autumn gales on this coast, vessels sea time is reduced, lobsters and crab catch usually go quiet this time of year also. Creel pots for shrimps have been used, with mixed results. <u>Angling</u> During this quarter 210 anglers were seen on piers and beaches. <u>Potting</u> Analysis of the vessel monitoring system (VMS) over the quarter showed vessels targeting whelks out of Whitehaven and Fleetwood, with the vessels engaged in whelk potting inside and outside of the district.

	<u>Beach nets</u> No nets seen in the quarter. <u>ATV patrols</u> 2 ATV patrols were carried out around Nethertown – Braystones - Silecroft areas.
Haverigg Point – Arnside – SIFCO Dixon & IFCO Taylor	<u>Mussels</u> During August 5 tonnes of mussels were removed from Foulney by a low number of Byelaw 3 permit holders. Crook Scar mussel bed in the northern part of Walney channel was classified in September and since then up to 11 permit holders have been observed and inspected gathering mussels from there, with 23 tonnes removed in September, and 40 tonnes removed in October, the mussels from Crook Scar were reported to be affected by pearling and sourcing suitable buyers was more problematic than first thought. No enforcement issues were reported at either Foulney or Crook Scar. Occasional sightings of low levels of mussel gathering in the Morecambe area were reported. Officers assisted the Science Team surveying the mussel beds. Officers continue to assist local Environmental Health Departments with the shellfish sample collections. <u>Cockles</u> Only Pilling cockle bed was open in August, where byelaw 3 permit holders removed 70 tonnes of cockles. From 1st September cockle beds at Flookburgh and Newbiggin were opened, with Total Allowable Catches (TAC's) of 800 tonnes and 300 tonnes respectively. After initial interest on the opening day at Newbiggin effort reduced to less than 20 byelaw 3 permit holders working there when weather conditions were favourable, in September, 47 tonnes was removed from Newbiggin, and 21 tonnes in October, no minimum landing size or permit issues were recorded. Flookburgh cockle bed has had no interest from fishermen since opening. Effort at Pilling reduced due to the opening of the cockle bed at Newbiggin, and many byelaw 3 permit holders also decided to gather cockles in South Wales. Some permit holders preferred to gather cockles at Pilling when tides were unsuitable for mussel gathering, 12 tonnes were removed from Pilling during September. Officers continue to take shellfish samples from all classified beds for local Authority Environmental Health Departments. <u>Shrimping</u> Activity was again at a very low level throughout the Morecambe Bay area. Up to 3 tractors were observed shrimping in the Leven channel area of Morecambe Bay,

	although the average size of the shrimp was small, effort increased during the later part of the reporting period. <u>Netting</u> Netting activity from vessels was at a lower level this year than usual. Prolonged periods of unsuitable weather and conditions, combined with reports of numbers of small Bass being present meant that some fishermen decided to wait until conditions improved, and still activity remained at a low level, although this might increase slightly at the beginning of the next reporting quarter. Very few beach nets were observed or reported this reporting period. <u>Potting</u> Potting for lobster and crab increased during the quarter, as is usually the case within the District in the Irish Sea West of Walney at this time of year, two Barrow based vessels were active within the District, and another vessel from the North of the District was observed regularly. 3 Barrow based vessels continue to pot beyond the six nautical mile limit on occasion. <u>Long lines</u> No long lines were observed or reported during this quarter. <u>Angling</u> Angling was as popular as usual for the time of year, with the favoured target species being Bass, Plaice and Flounder. Competitions were well attended towards the end of the reporting period. The movement of the Leven channel closer to the foreshore in the Aldingham area became a popular location for anglers. Anglers using vessels were popular during the summer months, launching at Walney slipway and fishing in the outer Morecambe Bay and West of Walney. <u>Bait Collection</u> Peeler crab collection continued throughout the reporting period although numbers dropped noticeably as is usually the case, especially in Walney channel. Bait digging was observed regularly in the Duddon estuary and off Earnse Bay on Walney, and in the Newbiggin area of the Coast Road.
Dee-Southport – SIFCO Brownrigg, IFCO Taylor	Throughout this reporting period, officers have been active across the Southern Area. Activity along the North Wirral and Sefton coastlines has included monitoring hand gathering, intertidal netting, rod-and-line fishing, and commercial netting. Shore-based and intertidal ATV patrols have been conducted alongside survey work. Byelaw 2 – North Wirral Foreshore Bivalve Molluscs remains in effect, continuing to restrict activity along the North Wirral coastline, with August seeing a spike in illegal gathering activity by members of the public. To assist in this matter, joint

shore and inter tidal ATV patrols have been undertaken with Merseyside Police Rural, Wildlife & Heritage team.

Officers have continued to provide enforcement support for the Pilling Sands cockle fishery and have assisted the Science Department with the annual cockle and otter clam surveys, as well as the Black Scar mussel fishery. In line with the recent expansion to the 'patch' area, IFCOs have undertaken multiple intelligence-led patrols in the Fylde area. These patrols were used for intelligence gathering and provided opportunities to engage with stakeholders.

As part of her secondary Communications and Engagement role, one officer has continued to maintain and update the NWIFCA website, communicate with stakeholders through news posts, social media, and the text marketer system, and further develop and update the Communications and Engagement Strategy.

Quarterly MSH sample collections have been carried out on behalf of West Lancashire Borough Council. Alongside the NWIFCA CEO, MMO, and local commercial fishermen, the area SIFCO also attended the River Mersey tidal project meeting in Liverpool and the TSB meeting in Carnforth.

Due to coding issues and the implementation of the Maritime Asset Review, a decision was made to advertise and sell Bay Protector. Following a quick sales process, Bay Protector and her supporting equipment were sold to an RYA-accredited sea training school in Liverpool.

In October, the area SIFCO, together with the HoE, HoS and Senior Scientist, visited Cornwall Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority to examine their patrol/survey vessel. The visit provided an opportunity to gather information on the vessel's design and suitability to inform the NWIFCA's wider vessel asset review.

Hand Gathering - Bivalve

Enforcement under Byelaw 2 have continued along the north Wirral coastline to uphold the closure of the area. Despite clear signage indicating the restrictions, offences relating to the collection of shellfish (razor clams, otter clams, and cockles) have persisted. During this period, officers observed over 126 persons, resulting in 24 separate gathering offences. Statements and supporting evidence have been submitted to the Head of Enforcement for review.

I am pleased to report that throughout our enforcement work on the Pilling Sands cockle fishery, all Byelaw 3 permit holders were found to be compliant.

Recreational Rod Angling - Shore

A total of 82 shore and beach anglers have been inspected this quarter. Kings Parade, New Brighton, and the promenades in Liverpool and Wallasey continue to see significant angling activity. Species such as plaice, sole, dogfish, and bass

	have been recorded; however, due to the prevalent catch-and-release practices among anglers, recorded landings remain minimal. <u>Recreational/Commercial Boat Angling</u> Officers have inspected numerous small recreational angling vessels and several commercial craft operating within Liverpool Bay and the River Mersey. Moderate catches of plaice, flounder, and sole were recorded from commercial netters, who remain particularly active in the Mersey area. <u>Bait Digging</u> Bait digging remains prevalent along both coastlines, with Mockbeggar Wharf on the north Wirral coastline and Ainsdale/Birkdale Sands remaining notable hotspots. Officers have undertaken several inspections, with the pump method continuing to be the most observed technique. Officers also completed six inspections of crab shore collection along the north Wirral coastline, undertaken to obtain bait for rod angling. These monitoring checks were carried out during routine shore-based vehicle patrols. <u>Netting</u> Netting activity has been recorded along the north Wirral and Sefton coastlines. Four set nets off Taylor's Bank, Formby, and two additional nets off Ainsdale/Birkdale Sands continue to be routinely monitored. Beach seine nets (5) and gill nets (8) continue to be used along the low-water tide line from Leasowe Lighthouse to Gun Site car park. Inspections revealed catches of plaice, sole, and skate, with all nets and catches compliant with regulations. <u>Premises Inspections</u> Routine premises inspections continue to be carried out during planned shore-based and intertidal ATV work. To date, all premises inspected have been found to be compliant.
<u>North Western Protector</u> Master Hugh Thinnesen	Overall, the patrol boat has performed well with only two repairs on Port and Starboard fuel return pipes to report on. As can be expected for this time of year, the weather has been quite poor this quarter with 34 patrol days at sea being lost. Although fuel prices have come down, it continues to have a significant impact on the fishing industry with some vessels deciding again to remain in port. This along with gear and bait costs are again squeezing profit margins for several vessels. Fishing activity in the district amongst the local fleet has overall been low key, with only a couple of light landings of nephrops (prawns) and thornback ray being made into Whitehaven.

	Whelk vessels continue to make regular landings into Whitehaven. The patrol boat crew along with science officers carried out a grab survey on the upper Solway on the middle banks. North Western Protector along with Protector Charlie went through their annual coding on the 13th October which was carried out by YDSA surveyor Duncan Swinson. <u>Trawling</u> Activity was observed from local trawlers targeting prawns (nephrops) and bait fish (plaice/dogfish) from grounds, southwest of St Bees 6 to 10 nautical miles. Individual vessels were monitored at sea on VMS fishing inside the 6 nautical mile limit during the quarter, with reports of prawns being caught on the odd occasion ranging between 10 to 20 stones per day in August and September. Vessels from both Whitehaven and Maryport continue landing to co-ops and direct to the public. Small landings of thorn backed rays and plaice have also been landed into the ports. Reports on common skate numbers from fishermen are again on the rise this year in the Eastern Irish sea. <u>Potting</u> Activity on VMS over the quarter showed vessels out of Whitehaven and Fleetwood have been frequently observed, with vessels engaged in whelk potting mainly outside of the district. The local potting vessels have been targeting lobster and brown crab. These vessels have been mainly targeting areas north and south of Whitehaven, with mixed reports from fishers of quantities of lobsters and crab being caught. <u>Angling</u> Boat Angling in the Northern part of the district was observed from Maryport to Barrow. Catches varied from small dabs, whiting, plaice, dog fish, thorn backed rays and on the odd occasion codlings. Patrols boardings and inspections of vessels at sea, along with static gear inspections logged from North Western Protector and Protector Charlie can be found in the appendices to the Head of Enforcement's report.
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General Update

Safety Management System

As previously reported the implementation of a digital system to manage the logging of maintenance, safety records and vessel use was being investigated by officers. Officers trailed several systems and a system by Sea Flux has now been procured. The system by Sea Flux gives officers digital recording of safety checks, expiry dates, maintenance logs amongst other records. It also have crew particulars and certification (all which carry either internal or external expiry dates) which must be monitored.

As well as the assisting with the above record keeping the portal houses the required SMS document for vessel coding and standard operating procedures, policies and risk assessments all in one place providing easy access for staff and gives management oversight for the management team. Where required external persons such as contractors or the MCA can be given limited access to view necessary documentation. When the Authority is up to a full compliment of assets the oversight of all systems in this manner will be crucial for compliancy with statutory regulations.

Vessel procurement

During this reporting period both RIBs (Bay Protector & Protector Gamma) have been sold. In the intermediate time prior to new vessels being delivered officers are exploring the potential of hire of vessels where required for specific or essential tasks.

In Early October officers travelled to view Cornwall IFCAs survey vessel. This proved a worthy trip to discuss with Cornish counterparts on design features which work on their vessel, its capabilities and any things they would improve on. This trip helped determine final draft specification for the procurement process.

Walker Marine Design a naval architecture consultant are currently in the process of designing a twin hulled catamaran to the specification provided to them by officers. Once confirmed, WMD will assist with disseminating this to boat yards/builders who can provide tenders for consideration.

Intelligence Reporting

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

Intelligence Reports	August	September	October	Total
IFCOs	30	27	19	76

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. There are currently four ongoing operational plans running across the district.

Op Albion- Enforcement of the Flookburgh cockle fishery.

Op Notorious- Enforcement of the River Dee mussel fishery.

Op Gambon- Enforcement of the Pilling cockle fishery.

Op Tidal- Enforcement of the Newbiggin cockle fishery.

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 lead (HoE) and Intel Officer continue to attend the MMO, NW & Irish sea TCG meetings.

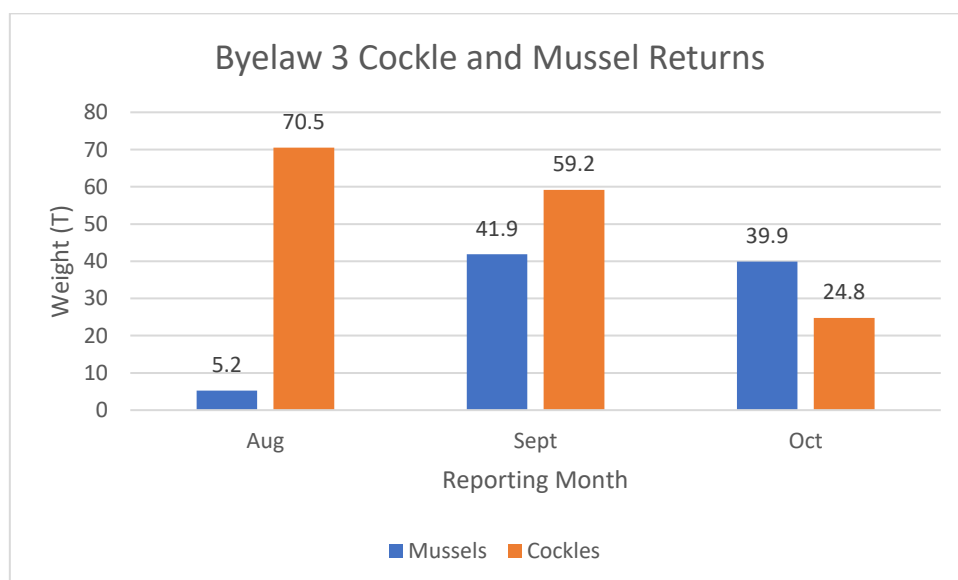
More recently after a three-month trial, IFCO Anthony Graham has become the Authority's fulltime Intelligence officer. Whilst still assisting operationally when required IFCO Graham can focus on reviewing the large number of intelligence reports we receive (the highest of any IFCA), developing intelligence pictures to support operational efficiency and assist in partnership working.

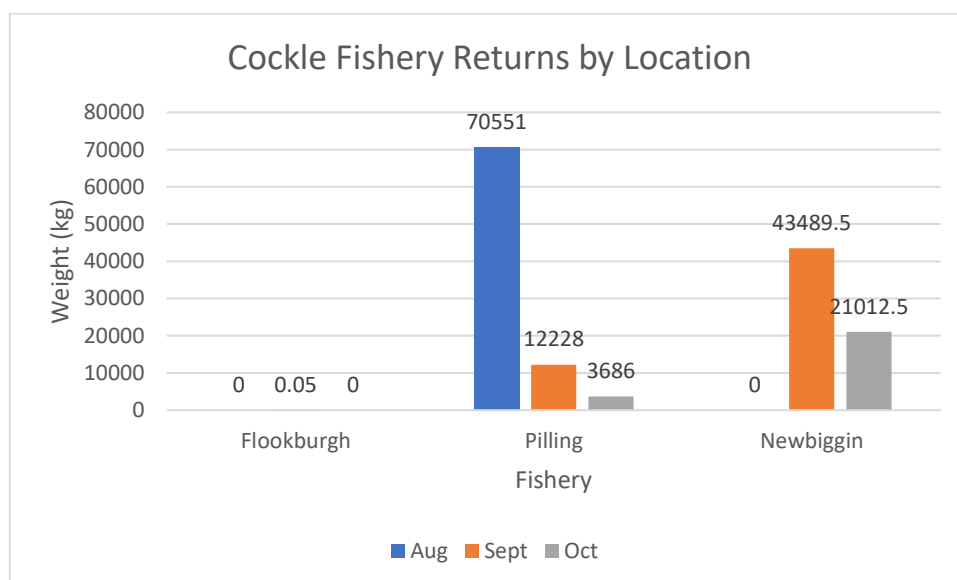
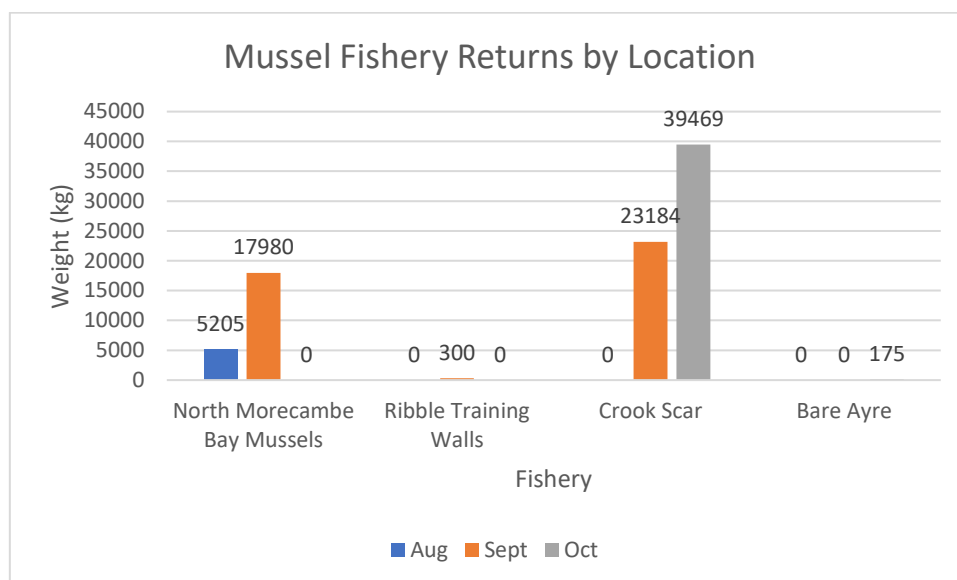
Specific Fishery Reporting

Returns data

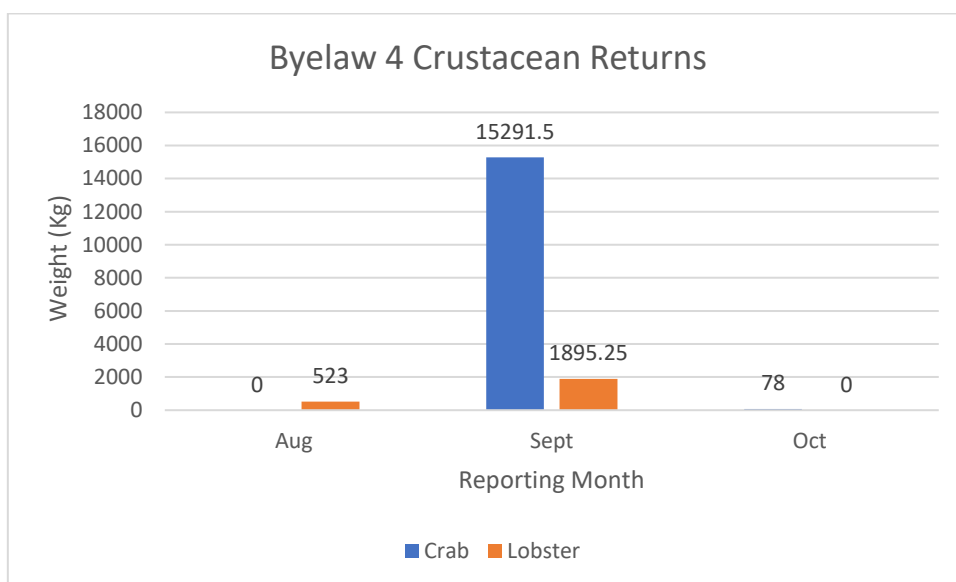
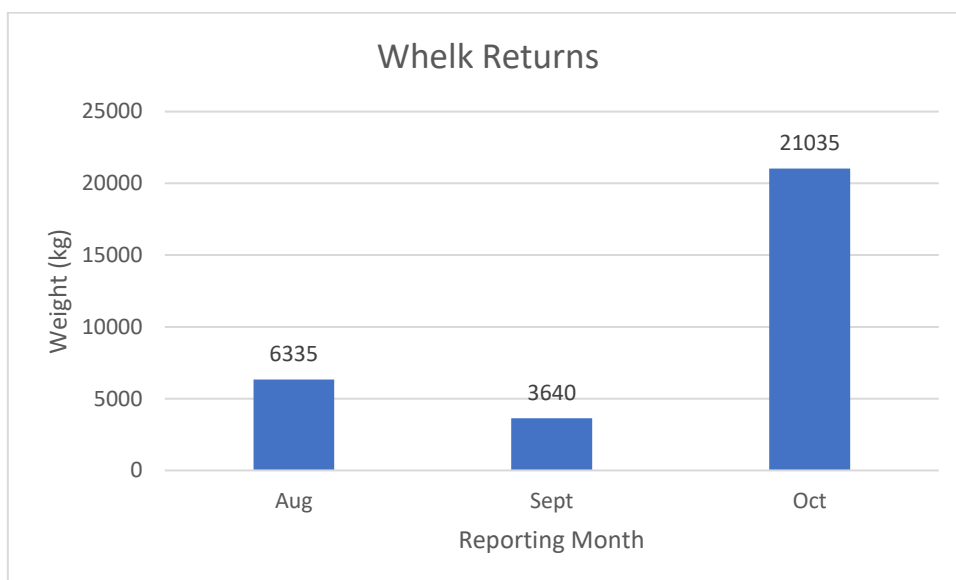
This reporting period saw the second month of the early open season for cockles at the Pilling cockle fishery, the fishery continued to only be fished by low numbers of byelaw 3 permit holders with only 70T reported from returns allocated to the area. There was limited interest from buyers on the cockles at the Pilling Fishery with industry effort driven towards the Newbiggin cockle fishery which opened in September, at the point of writing 74T of cockle has been removed from the fishery noted by returns and officer sightings and analysis of documentation.

Unusually at this time of the year mussel fisheries have been fished almost on par in gross tonnage with cockle fisheries due to the opening of a good-sized mussel fishery in Walney Channel. Compliance from the fisheries has been exceptional. Smaller mussel beds have been sporadically prosecuted by permitholders and there has been negligible activity on the Flookburgh cockle bed, this is possibly due to a better seasonal classification in the latter part of the season.





Whelk fishing grounds within the district waters were fished at low levels through the end of the summer and have seen a significant increase in October indicating a shift of vessels working offshore moving static gear in to more sheltered inshore waters for the duration of winter. Crustacean fishing effort has tailed off for the winter period which is normal for this time of the year.



Sanctions, Infringements and Court Activity

As seen in the table below a compliant quarter with low levels of sanctions reported

Sanction Applied	Details
Verbal Warning	On for undersize fish caught with Rod/Line
Advisory Letter	Three for offences at North Wirral
Official Warning Letter	20 for offences relating to North Wirral Foreshore Molluscs,
Financial Admin Penalty	One £250 fine for a repeat offence relating to removal of shellfish from North Wirral
Gear Notice	Three notices issued for gear seizure.
Caution	N/A
Prosecution	N/A

Shore Based Activity Report

Number of:	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*	70	68	18		238
ATV patrols	2	26	8		52
Inspections under taken	200	104	9		481

*undertaken either by vehicle or on foot without using ATV

Annex A

Vessel	No of patrol (days)	Patrol time (hrs)	Distance patrolled (nm)	Boarding's	Closings	Sightings	Inspections (inc. gear inspections)
North Western Protector & PC	18	120.92	1,095	4	8	102	105
Totals for the quarter	18	120.92	1,095	4	8	102	105

Annex B

Patrol Date	Patrol Time	Distance (nm)	Area Covered	Risk/ Purpose	Sectors Covered	No. Boarding	No. Closings	No. Sightings	No. Inspections
North Western Protector (and Protector Charlie)									
11.08.2025	05.00	52	Whitehaven to St Bees	Potting, trawling,	Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	4	0
13.08.2025	18.67	130	Whitehaven to River Dee	Trawling, netting, potting, angling	Cumbria Coast MCZ, Walney MCZ	3	0	6	0
14.08.2025	06.00	65	River Dee to Whitehaven	Trawling, potting, netting	Dee Estuary, Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	0	0
19.08.2025	08:17	70	Whitehaven – Northern Prawn Grounds – Selker Point Maryport	Potting, angling, trawling	Allonby Bay HPMA	0	0	6	0
20.08.2025	06.83	62	Whitehaven – Silloth – Prawn Grounds – Sellafeld – St Bees	Potting, angling, trawling	Allonby Bay HPMA, Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	5	0
21.08.2025	07.92	61	Prawn Grounds – N Whitehaven - HPMA	Potting, angling, trawling	Allonby Bay HPMA	1	6	10	8
27.08.2025	03.50	31	Whitehaven - HPMA	Potting, trawling, angling	Allonby Bay HPMA	0	0	0	20
29.08.2025	04.25	41	Whitehaven - HPMA	Trawling, potting, angling	Allonby Bay HPMA	0	0	3	0

03.09.2025	07.00	62	Prawn Grounds, W/ Walney, Selker Point, Ravenglass, W/ Sellafield, St Bees	Potting, trawling	Drigg Coast SAC, Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	0	0
05.09.2025	07.92	74	Upper Solway Firth	Day Grab Survey 45 grab drops carried out	Allonby Bay HPMA,	0	0	5	0
23.09.2025	04.33	44	Whitehaven – Silloth, HPMA	Potting, netting, angling	Allonby Bay HPMA	0	0	21	0
24.09.2025	05.50	52	Whitehaven - Prawn Grounds,	Potting, angling, netting,	Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	19	0
26.09.2025	09:67	111	Prawn Grounds SW/ St Bees Head, W/ Sellafield, Annaside, Saltom Bay	Potting, angling, trawling	Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	3	0
01.10.2025	02.00	17	Engine Trial			0	0	0	0
15.08.2025	07.50	74	HPMA – Prawn Grounds – Selker – HPMA	Potting, trawling, netting	Allonby Bay HPMA, Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	0	35
17.10.2025	06.25	52	Prawn Grounds – Selker Point – Maryport	Potting, netting, angling	Allonby Bay HPMA Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	2	12	17
20.10.2025	03:08	31	Prawn Grounds, SW/ St Bees Head - Harrington	Potting, angling, trawling	Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	4	0
30.10.2025	07.33	66	Whitehaven – HPMA – Prawn Grounds	Potting, trawling, netting	Allonby Bay HPMA, Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	4	25

18	120.92	1,095				4	8	102	105
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