

NWIFCA Quarterly Meeting

26th June 2025

REPORT NO.
2

HEAD OF ENFORCEMENT QUARTERLY REPORT – **1ST FEBRUARY – 30TH APRIL**

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>Trawling - Activity was observed from local trawlers targeting prawns (Nephrops) and bait fish (plaice – dogfish) from grounds, South West of St Bees out to ten nautical miles. Maryport vessels also targeted the nearby Scottish waters.</p> <p>This quarter has seen both local and visiting vessels fishing both inside and outside the six nautical mile limit line, with reports of prawns (Nephrops) being caught. Catches have been light, ranging between 10 to 40 stones per day over the last three months. Vessels from Maryport and Whitehaven continue landing to local co-ops, along with some vessels landing again directly to the public both at Whitehaven and Maryport.</p> <p>Potting – This quarter has again seen vessels targeting whelks both out of Whitehaven and Fleetwood potting both inside and outside of the NWIFCA district. These vessels continue to make visits into Whitehaven landing on average 3 to 4 tons per trip</p> <p>Vessels from Fleetwood were observed fishing mainly North Welsh waters and off the coast, West of Formby.</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. Some vessels have targeted shrimp using creel pots within the district. Fishers reported mixed results back to officers.</p> <p>Angling - Activity on boats, beaches and piers were evident at all areas during day and nighttime hours, with smaller numbers of anglers sighted in most areas during the quarter.</p> <p>Thornback ray and spotted dogfish again continue to be the dominate species for anglers.</p> <p>During this quarter in daylight hours, 64 anglers were seen on piers and beaches with effort on the whole being quite good.</p> <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 NWIFCA districts throughout the quarter when necessary.</p>

	<p>A total of 86 daily patrols carried out in the quarter, with 498 places visited 97 were fishing ports.</p>
<p>Haverigg Point – Arnside – SIFCO Dixon & IFCO Taylor</p>	<p><u>Mussels</u></p> <p>Activity was again 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>Classification sampling began on a weekly basis from the mussel bed known as Crook Scar in Walney channel.</p> <p>IFCOs assisted the Science Team surveying Foulney and South America mussel beds, the latter of which was accessible via ATV again.</p> <p>IFCOs continue to gather mussel samples for Local Authority Environmental Health Department from Foulney.</p> <p><u>Cockles</u></p> <p>Activity levels dropped to less than 10 Byelaw 3 permit holders gathering cockles for export, due to the cockle bed at Flookburgh being a seasonal A classification. No enforcement issues were recorded.</p> <p>Activity reduced noticeably during April.</p> <p>All cockle beds within the North Morecambe Bay area were surveyed during late April.</p> <p>We continue to undertake cockle samples from 2 sites near Flookburgh and 1 site at Newbiggin for the Local Authority.</p> <p><u>Shrimping</u></p> <p>Shrimping was again at a very low level, early season prospecting activity was observed and reported, but changes to the Leven channel, with obstructions such as boulders uncovered by the movement of the course of the channel and several scars being uncovered, meant that it was difficult to locate a suitable area to tow the chassis. Similar reports were received for the Kent channel area, with no suitable locations being found. No more than 4 tractors were observed or reported shrimping .</p> <p><u>Netting</u></p> <p>Netting activity was at a low level during this reporting period, during the later part of the quarter the presence of large numbers of Smoothhounds in Morecambe Bay meant that commercial vessel operators were reluctant to set nets. Occasional sightings of vessels netting for pot bait were recorded.</p> <p>Towards the end of the reporting period a low number of beach set nets were observed in the outer Leven estuary, targeting pot bait for the vessels planning to work inshore to target the seasonal increase in lobster and crab.</p>

	<p><u>Potting</u></p> <p>Potting activity increased towards the end of the reporting period, as is usually the case at this time of year, 2 vessels began to work gear inside the district from Barrow.</p> <p>4 Licensed vessels very occasionally work outside the District.</p> <p><u>Long lines</u></p> <p>Very few long lines were observed, this seems to be the case since the Bass regs were introduced.</p> <p><u>Angling</u></p> <p>Activity increased as is usually the case for this time of year, Bass numbers were increasing and anglers were reported to be catching good numbers of Bass from the usual marks. Enforcement patrols were undertaken to ensure compliance with the byelaws and Bass Regs. Anglers were also reporting good catches of Plaice, Flounders and occasionally Sole from locations along the Coast road.</p> <p><u>Bait Collection.</u></p> <p>Regular 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>During the quarter the peeler crab gathering started, with large numbers of tiles/guttering observed in Walney channel, and the area between Roa Island and Foulney mussel bed, and in the Millom area of the Duddon estuary, occasional inspections were undertaken to check for the presence of undersize edible crabs, no offences were recorded.</p>
<p>Arnside – Lytham</p> <p>IFCO Graham & Edwards</p>	<p><u>General</u></p> <p>IFCO Graham attended the weeklong IFCO course in Brixham in February. He is currently undertaking a level four diploma in Intelligence Operations and has delivered in house training to officers on intelligence reporting. In addition, IFCO Graham assisted on a joint patrol with Environment Agency Officers in relation to Elvers fishery.</p> <p><u>Angling</u></p> <p>The recreational Bass fishery began to pick up towards the end of the quarter with anglers reporting catches of Bass. Specimen fishing for Smoot hound has begun and is drawing fishers from other areas.</p> <p><u>Bass</u></p> <p>IFCOs have undertaken patrols in Heysham Bass Nursery Area including some joint patrols in with Civil Nuclear Constabulary. Two anglers were caught fishing in the area; rods were seized and sanctions issued.</p> <p><u>Cockles and Mussels</u></p>

	<p>Pilling cockle bed saw very low levels of effort across the quarter. Officers undertook random patrols of the fishery during this period.</p> <p>Officers continue to collect samples from the Ribble, Knott End, Sea Centre and Pilling. In the coming months, sampling workload will increase in June when Knott End moves to weekly samples.</p> <p><u>Netting</u></p> <p>Low level netting off Pilling has resumed. No other nets have been sighted within the period.</p>
Dee-Southport – SIFCO Brownrigg, IFCO Taylor	<p>During this quarter, officers focused their efforts on overseeing the enforcement of the Pilling cockle fishery until its seasonal closure at the end of April. Afterwards, they concentrated their efforts on monitoring for illegal shellfish gathering along the north Wirral coastline. Byelaw 2 – North Wirral Foreshore Bivalve Molluscs remains in effect to enforce this matter.</p> <p>When not enforcing Byelaw 2, officers continued to monitor the mussel beds on the Dee Estuary, as well as rod angling and netting activities along both the north Wirral and Sefton coastlines.</p> <p>Officers continued to collect quarterly shellfish samples on behalf of West Lancashire Council and Mersey Port Health Authority, a task that remains ongoing. As part of their professional development, officers attended ‘in-house’ training. One officer attended a five-day STCW Navigational Aids & Equipment Simulator Training Course. Another officer attended the five-day IFCO Competent Officer Course at Brixham.</p> <p>Officers also delivered a presentation to local area officers of Merseyside Police who patrol the North Wirral coastline. The presentation covered the role and responsibilities of NWIFCA and addressed issues and concerns particular to the area. I am pleased to report that the presentation was a great success for both parties and has led to a better mutual understanding and subsequent joint enforcement work.</p> <p>In addition to their enforcement duties, officers also participated in the NWIFCA B3 consultation in New Brighton with stakeholders and members of the public.</p> <p><u>Hand Gathering – Bivalve Molluscs</u></p> <p>Leading up to the seasonal closure at the end of April, officers observed a steady decline in gathering activity, with only five Byelaw 3 permit holders observed and inspected working the fishery. During this period, no enforcement issues were noted or recorded. As standard practice, seasonal closure notices were posted throughout the area to indicate that the fishery is now closed.</p> <p><u>Recreational Rod Angling - Shore</u></p> <p>53 inspections of shore anglers were conducted this quarter, with the promenades of Wallasey front remaining active. Catch recordings continue to be minimal due to a positive catch-and-release approach by anglers.</p> <p><u>Shore Netting</u></p> <p>Netting activities have continued throughout this quarter, with set nets being observed and inspected along the Sefton and north Wirral coastlines. During inspections, officers</p>

	<p>recorded catches of sole, plaice, thornback ray, and mullet. All nets were found to be compliant.</p> <p><u>Shrimping</u></p> <p>Shrimp tractors have been observed and inspected along the Sefton coastline. Officers recorded catches of up three to four kilograms being observed.</p> <p><u>Bait Digging</u></p> <p>Bait digging remains prevalent along both coastlines, with Mockbeggar Wharf on the north Wirral coastline being a notable hotspot. Officers have undertaken several inspections, with the pump method being the most common technique observed.</p>
<p><u>North Western Protector</u></p> <p>Master Hugh Thinnesen</p>	<p>Taking the main patrol boat offline late last year with port engine issues has resulted in most patrol days at sea being lost over this quarter.</p> <p>The patrol boat crew have been busy with shore patrols this quarter mainly throughout the Northern part of the district, covering all known ports and hot spots between Port Carlisle and Haverigg Point.</p> <p>Over the reporting period officers have again been heavily involved with all engineering work on the main patrol boat North Western Protector.</p> <p>It has again been reported that fuel prices, although well down compared to previous years, are continuing to have a significant impact on the fishing industry. This, along with high gear costs and bait prices going up is squeezing profit margins for all vessels in the district.</p> <p>Patrols boardings and inspections of vessels at sea, along with static gear inspections from North Western Protector / Protector Charlie totaled three resulting in 50 fishing gear inspections, these can be found attached to HoEs enforcement report.</p> <p>Compliance overall has been good with only 1 verbal warning issued, Officers continue with regular patrols in the Allonby Bay HPMA area, again with an educational approach.</p> <p>All vessel maintenance and service schedules on North Western Protector and Protector Charlie are all up to date.</p>

General Update

Maritime Asset Procurement

At the last meeting of the full Authority the maritime asset replacement strategy was presented to members. It was agreed that a task and finish group would be formed from officers and members. Following this there have been several meetings of the group which have been productive in challenging what the potential specifications of assets could be moving forward.

Head of Enforcement has recently produced a cost/benefit analysis of hull materials for a trailered asset or cabin rib examining the pros and cons of glass reinforced plastic, aluminium, steel, High

Density Poly Ethylene, Carbon Fibre and composites. This was presented to members of the group as well as further detail on potential launching sites across the Authorities coastline.

In early June officers (HoE, Master & Engineer) attended the Sea Works event in Southampton to research potential specification, design and equipment for use on the Authorities vessels. This proved a worthwhile trip with the testing of different hull materials and equipment for use of current and future boats.

Maritime Training Programme

A recent project has been for the Head of Enforcement to produce a strategy for development of maritime training within the staff cohort. A procedure has been drafted which sets out both formal training/qualification for staff and in house competencies across three stages. This allows staff to progress through from being competent and experienced crew to helming different assets. This will allow staff to see progression, develop as well as meaning the authority has a good breadth of staff able to crew and helm the vessels ensuring operational capabilities.

NWP Standard Operating Procedures

In this quarter a sixth revision of the standard operating procedures for the large patrol vessel North Western Protector were finalised before being examined with the crew of the vessel in detail and comments and edits made. This revision has expanded on procedures around normal operations such as hauling gear, emergency situations and general engine operations. It has now included the procedures for formal checklists, patrol plans and reports which are completed via SharePoint has live documents so members of senior management can approve operations and view the data from the patrols. This will greatly improve the efficiency of recording data on asset use, fisheries data and assist in translating this in to information required for reports and presentation to members.

Intelligence Reporting

Head of Enforcement and intel officer continue to attend CLUE system meetings and are leading the forefront of the development of the system nationally amongst the MMO and IFCAs. Intelligence officer and IFCO Anthony Graham has been instrumental in ensuring that NWFICA staff are confident in utilising the system, highlighting issues which need rectifying and brainstorming ideas which are developing the system into a powerful and effective tool. Senior officers extend a formal thank you to Anthony for his work on this project.

During the period a process of recording points attributed to Byelaw 3 permit offences has been incorporated into the CLUE system.

A quiet period during this quarter for intelligence generation which reflects the seasonality of fishing, limited activity on intertidal fisheries and poor weather which have all have led to a dip in information submission.

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

Intelligence Reports	February	March	April	Total
IFCOs	5	4	13	22

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

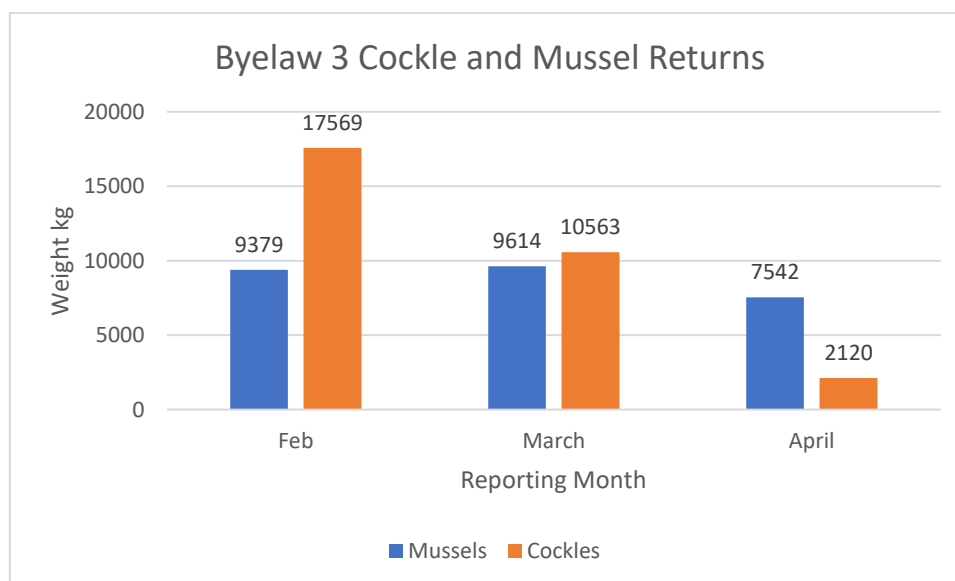
Specific Fishery Reporting

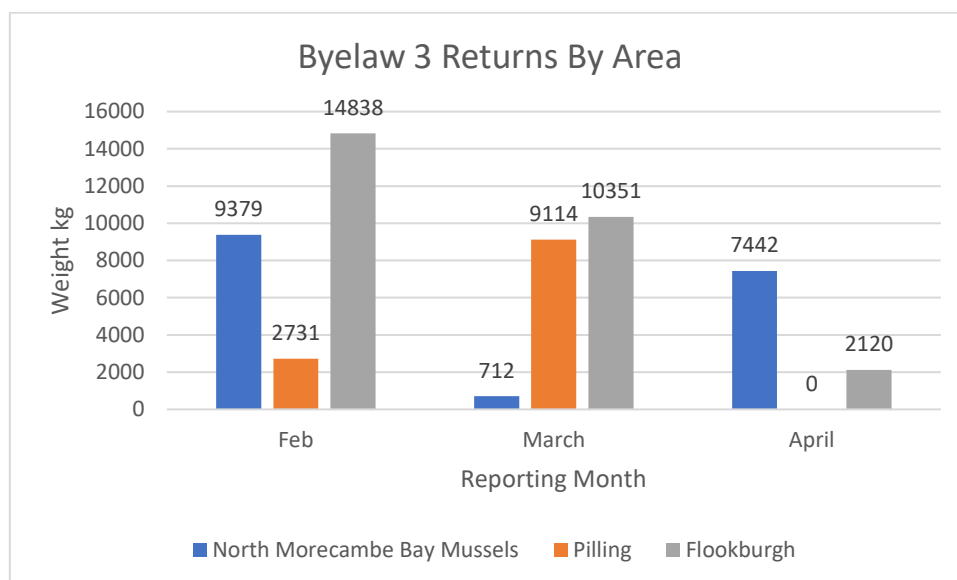
This quarter saw the end of the cockle season for 2024/25. There was limited activity across the cockle fisheries as can be seen in the officer reports and the returns data below. The Pilling cockle fishery saw an amendment to flexible permit conditions implemented for the final 4 weeks of the fishery to be open on all tides available however the fishery saw no activity from permit holders.

Permit Database

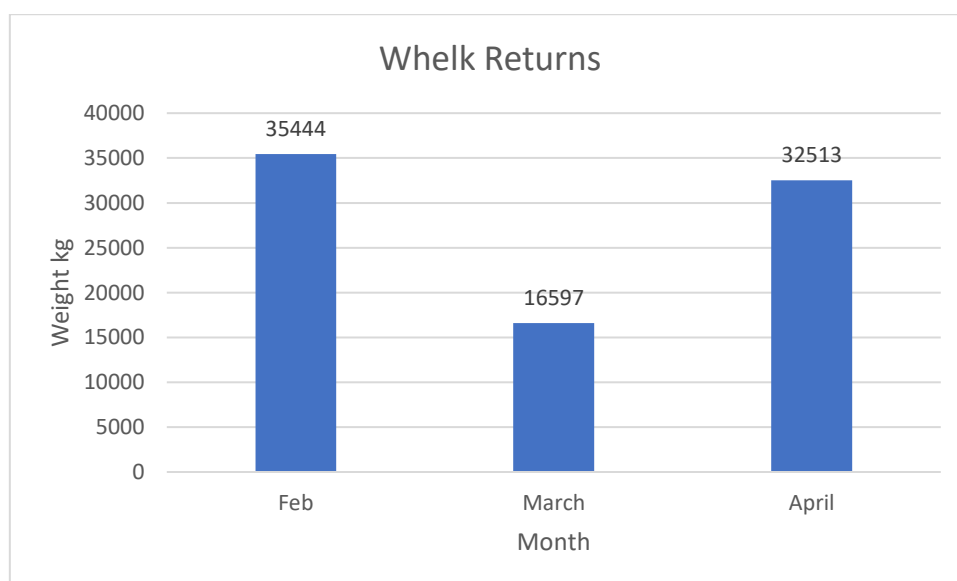
The NWIFCA permit system has continued to be a good development for the Authority despite some teething problems. A recent development has allowed officers in the enforcement team to move away from using paper sheets to record attendance at Cockle/Mussel fisheries. Now officers log on to the system on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

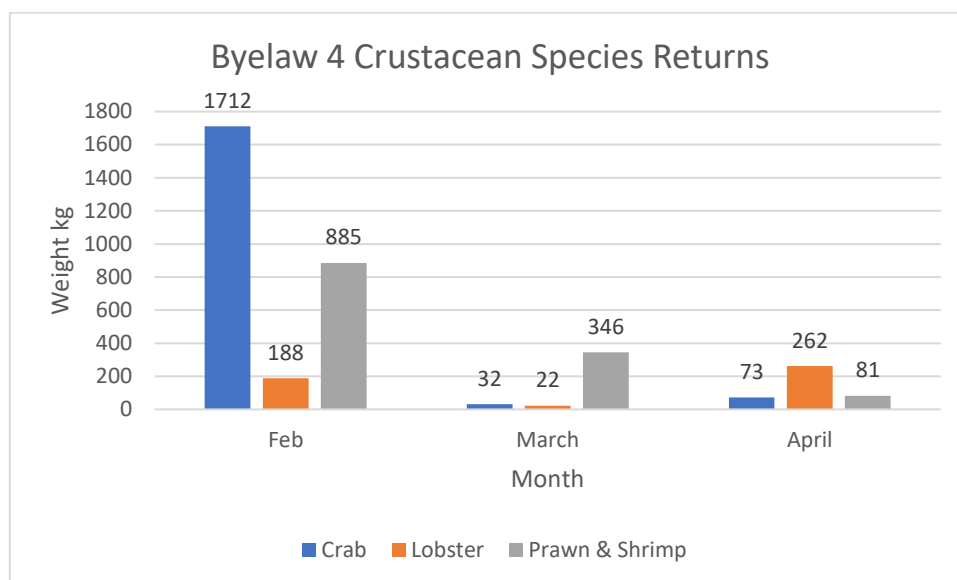
Returns data





Similar to previous reporting periods over recent years Whelks have remained the predominantly landed species from Byelaw 4 returns. Fishing for crustacean species within the district under the potting permit scheme has been very low during this quarter as seen in the included chart.





Sanctions, Infringements and Court Activity

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

General fisheries compliance was good through the reporting period of February to the end of April.

Although not within the reporting period of this paper I am pleased to inform members of a significant court outcome at Barrow Magistrates Court.

On 12th May at Furness & District Magistrates' Court, Barrow-in-Furness, Mr. Christopher Knowles of Hawke Street, Barrow-in-Furness pleaded guilty to landing and retaining a significant number of European seabass, contrary to fisheries regulations created to protect the species.

On 16th October 2024, NWIFCA officers inspected Mr. Knowles on a beach at the southern end of Walney Island. The inspection found Mr. Knowles in possession of 33 dead seabass, including one undersized, stored in two plastic bins. Officers determined that the bass had come from a beach net which had been set by Mr. Knowles.



Image: Seabass seized by officers.

In Court, Mr. Knowles was fined £1,346 for contravention of the bass regulations, reduced to £897 for his early guilty plea. He was ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £359 and costs of £1,500. The fish were forfeited to the Authority for destruction.

This investigation has made clear that NWIFCA will not tolerate any failure to abide by the regulations concerning the conservation of European seabass. This species is important environmentally and socio-economically for commercial and recreational fishers alike. NWIFCA officers produced a diligent and robust case for prosecution which achieved a significant outcome. The Authority remains committed to the protection of fish stocks and coastal fisheries ensuring healthy seas and a viable fishing industry.

Sanction Applied	Details
Verbal Warning	N/A
Advisory Letter	Five Advisory Letters for returns compliance with Dee transitional permits issued under Byelaw 3
Official Warning Letter	Two Official Warning Letters for breaches of NWIFCA Byelaw 5- Heysham Bass Nursery Area. Two OWL for Intertidal Bass Offences.
Financial Admin Penalty	N/A
Caution	N/A
Prosecution	Case set for Barrow Mags 12 th May

Head of Enforcement work streams

- Dee Cockle Order
- NWIFCA Byelaw 7- Netting Byelaw
- Operational planning for cockle fisheries
- North Western Protector Standard Operating Procedures
- Maritime Asset Replacement
- Maritime Training Programme
- Inhouse training
- Drafting policies and procedures
- Attending meetings of National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group, Vessel management group meeting, mobile working app group, CLUE development group, Chief officers' group
- Attended DMA Defra working group and North West Regional Fisheries Group.
- NWIFCA permit database
- Enforcement team SIFCO end of year appraisals and objective setting for 25/26
- Standardisation of organisation appraisals and objectives
- North West Marine Environment Response Group
- Patrols with staff.

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*	80	35	59		44
ATV patrols	7	37	6		10
Inspections under taken	53	63	22		86

*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	3	6.25	73	0	0	11	50
Totals for the quarter	3	6.25	73	0	0	11	50

Annex B

Patrol Date	Patrol Time	Distance (nm)	Area Covered	Risk/ Purpose	Sectors Covered	No. Boarding	No. Closings	No. Sightings	No. Gear Inspections
<u>North Western Protector (and Protector Charlie)</u>									
09.04.25	00.50	4	Saltom Bay	Engine trial		0	0	1	0
11.04.25	01.25	7	Saltom Bay	Engine trial		0	0	0	0
15.04.25	04.50	62	Harrington, Workington, Maryport, Silloth, Allonby HPMA, St Bees	Potting, netting, angling	Allonby Bay HPMA, Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	10	50
3	6.25	73				0	0	11	50