

NWIFCA Authority Meeting
17th September 2026: 10:00 a.m.

REPORT NO.

7

New Vessel Build – Proposed Specification Changes

Purpose

To update members on proposed amendments to the specification for the new patrol vessel and seek approval to proceed with the changes and associated expenditure.

Recommendation

Members are recommended to:

1. approve the proposed amendments to the vessel specification; and
2. approve the associated additional expenditure of £27,000.

Background

Following the resolution made at the AGM in June to proceed with Swiftcat for the new vessel build, officers have continued working with the company to ensure that the vessel's specifications meet all identified operational requirements. A shortlist of proposed alterations and additional features has subsequently been developed and is detailed below.

In August, a meeting of the Vessel Task and Finish Group (VTFG) was held, during which officers and members considered each proposed change in detail. This included an assessment of the operational benefits, financial implications and potential longer-term savings, alongside the need to maintain operational capability and safeguard officer safety. Following these discussions, VTFG endorsed the proposed approach, subject to formal resolution from the full Authority. The proposed financial expenditure would be from the Capital Asset Replacement Fund (CARF) and not from the Authority's operating budget, so there is no impact on councils' levy requirements.

Officers therefore seek members' approval to proceed with the procurement on this basis.

Proposed Specification Changes

1. Yamaha Engines

Officers propose replacing the currently specified Suzuki engines with Yamaha engines incorporating joystick control, together with an increase in engine power to 350hp.

The joystick control system would improve close-quarter handling, marina manoeuvring and station-keeping during patrol and boarding operations. It would also reduce the workload placed

on the helm and provide greater control when operating in confined areas or alongside other vessels.

The increased engine rating would provide additional performance capacity once the vessel's final operational fit-out has been completed, including the installation of batteries, davit, communications equipment and operational stores. It should also allow the engines to operate without routinely working at the upper end of their performance range, reducing associated wear-and-tear and increasing overall lifespan. Swiftcat have provided data demonstrating the improved economy to officers.

The proposed control arrangement would remove the requirement for a fixed second helm position for pot-hauling operations. The remote-control system would allow the helmsperson greater flexibility to position themselves appropriately while maintaining control of the vessel and overseeing operational activity.

Additional cost: £10,000 (ex. VAT)

2. Higher-Rated Davit

Following further discussions with officers after the tender process, it has been identified that a higher-specification hydraulic davit arm will be required to provide sufficient capacity and operational margin to recover heavier sets of fishing gear safely, as well as future proofing the vessel for use of scientific equipment such as the side scan sonar.

The davit and hauler would be powered by an electro-hydraulic pump supplied from the vessel's battery bank. This will require additional structural support and increased battery capacity to operate the system effectively.

The final design will be subject to confirmation by Swiftcat that the proposed system meets the necessary safe working load and that appropriate consideration has been given to structural loading, vessel stability, electrical demand, battery capacity and the applicable workboat certification requirements.

Additional cost: £8,500 (ex. VAT)

3. Hull Patches

Officers propose adding protective wear patches to key areas of the hull that are likely to experience regular contact during pot hauling, gear recovery and vessel launch and recovery operations.

The wear patches would provide additional protection around the hauler and other high-contact areas, reducing cosmetic and structural wear and helping to preserve the vessel's condition throughout its operational life.

This is considered a proportionate enhancement for a working enforcement vessel that will regularly operate around pots, ropes, quaysides and shallow-water environments.

Additional cost: £1,500 (ex. VAT)

4. Integrated Connectivity

Officers propose installing integrated Starlink and 4G connectivity.

This would improve operational connectivity whilst at sea, enabling officer access to cloud-based systems, email, enforcement information, electronic mapping and reporting systems. It would also support the upload and download of video footage and improve general communications.

Using both systems would provide greater resilience. The vessel could use lower cost 4G connectivity when operating within mobile coverage and switch to Starlink where mobile reception is limited or unavailable.

The initial installation cost is shown below. On-going data costs would be negotiated by NWIFCA based on requirements and data usage.

Additional cost: £3,000 (ex. VAT)

5. CCTV

Officers propose installing a CCTV system providing 360-degree external coverage, together with coverage of the wheelhouse and working deck.

The system would support enforcement activity, officer safety, evidence capture, incident review, training and general situational awareness. It would also assist in documenting inspections, boarding operations, pot hauling and any pursuit or other higher-risk activity.

The system could record footage locally, with the potential for remote access depending on the final communications package. Eastern IFCA have installed a comparable system that is being used to support inspections of static fishing gear in a similar manner to body-worn video used during other enforcement inspections.

Before the system becomes operational, officers will ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for data protection, recording retention periods, access controls, evidential continuity and any applicable signage or notification requirements. A Data Protection Impact Assessment will be completed if required, as advised by our Data Protection Officer.

Additional cost: £3,000 (ex. VAT)

6. Warning Equipment

Officers propose fitting appropriate visual and audible warning equipment to improve the vessel's visibility and facilitate clear communication during interception and enforcement activity.

This equipment would help the vessel signal its presence and intentions to other craft, particularly during controlled interception or pursuit activity where other marine users may be present.

Additional cost: £1,000 (ex. VAT)

Financial Expenditure

Proposed change	Cost
Yamaha Engines	£10,000
Higher-Rated Davit	£8,500
Hull Patches	£1,500
Integrated Connectivity	£3,000
CCTV	£3,000
Warning Equipment	£1,000
Total Additions	£27,000

Head of Enforcement, 8th September 2026