

NWIFCA Quarterly Meeting
18th June 2026

REPORT NO.

6

VESSEL PROCUREMENT REPORT

Purpose

To update members on the work undertaken to procure a replacement vessel for the Authority and to summarise progress to date.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

1. Note the progress made in developing and delivering the vessel procurement project.
2. Note the current project status and proposed next steps.
3. Approve the award of the contract to proceed with vessel procurement.

Background & Timeline

In March 2025, an exercise was undertaken to review the strategic use of the Authority's maritime assets and the proposed replacement of its patrol vessels. Members approved the proposed maritime asset replacement strategy at the Authority meeting on 20 March 2025, with an amended recommendation: "*Officers are authorised to investigate in detail, via a task group which includes members, the procurement of a 16m catamaran, 10m cabin rigid inflatable boat (RIB) and 7m trailer RIB.*"

Following this decision, a Vessel Task and Finish Group (VTFG) was established, comprising officers and members of the Authority. The group has continued to meet regularly to review potential vessel specifications, the cost-benefit of hull materials, and launch site options.

In September 2025, following further officer engagement and discussion with the VTFG, the preferred direction for the overall vessel specification changed. The CEO reported to the Committee that a consensus had been reached in favour of procuring two approximately 10m catamarans, one to be based in Liverpool and one in Whitehaven, as this was considered more appropriate than the previously discussed cabin RIB and trailer RIB. It was also proposed that North Western Protector (NWP) should be refurbished rather than replaced, to increase its utility and extend its lifespan.

The revised direction was as follows:

- Procure two purpose-built approximately 10m catamarans
- Base one in Whitehaven and one in Liverpool
- Refurbish NWP rather than replace
- Begin procurement work for the first catamaran
- Cost the proposed refurbishment of NWP

- Dispose of RIBs due to limited operational capability.

By December 2025, further work had progressed, with the Head of Enforcement leading on a prioritised list of refurbishment and modification works for North Western Protector. A naval architect was engaged to assist with designing the first of the two planned catamarans. This work helped move the process forward, confirm the asset’s capabilities and general specification, and produce tender documentation. Officers also visited Cornwall IFCA to view their catamaran vessel and discuss specification and design.

Within this reporting period, both RIB assets, Protector Gamma and Bay Protector, were disposed of for a total sum of £45,000, due to lack of utility of the former and a downloading of coding for the latter which rendered it almost unusable. This left the Authority with one patrol vessel for the district during the intervening period; however, interim vessel hire options were explored with a view to being put in place if required.

Tendering and progress to date

Officers worked with the naval architect to produce the final vessel specification, which was issued for tender in February 2026. A request for proposal was prepared and finalised with the VTFG. This comprised the request for proposal form, including instructions for completion and associated timelines, a minimum equipment specification, and a general arrangement drawing to provide applicants with a visual representation of the required build.

The timeframes for the process which took place are detailed in the table below.

Issue of Tender Documents	9 th February 2026
Tender Return Date	5pm 19 th March 2026
Tender Evaluation by	6 th April 2026
Shortlisted Supplier Discussions	27 th April 2026
Target Notice to Award	1 st June 2026

In total, four vessel builders submitted proposals by the deadline. Officers and the VTFG subsequently analysed the tenders and produced a shortlist of two yards offering glass-reinforced plastic builds rather than aluminium, reflecting an approximate £150,000 difference in build costs arising from raw material prices and manufacturing processes. The initial scoring was undertaken using the scoring criteria template attached to this report as Annex I.

The Head of Enforcement held debrief meetings with unsuccessful candidates to support future engagement and maintain positive relations in advance of any further tender exercises.

Our Head of Enforcement, Senior IFCO for Liverpool and the Chair then visited both prospective yards that had been successful at the initial scoring stage to gain a better understanding of build processes, specification differences, and delivery approach. This informed the final round of

scoring, which was undertaken on 29 May 2026. Candidates were again assessed against the criteria set out in Annex I.

Following the final evaluation, Swiftcat Boats, based in Colchester, was identified as the preferred bidder. The tender demonstrated strong compliance with the specification, exceeded requirements in some areas, offered a build time within the proposed timetable, and provided a competitive price of £349,245, which was the lowest of any yards'. The yard also demonstrated innovation in its build practices and a strong understanding of the Authority's strategic requirements.

The tender remains subject to contract, and member approval. The Authority's legal adviser has reviewed the contract and provided comments to the CEO.

Subject to approval and contract signature, construction can commence in July 2026.

Recommendation: Members are asked to approve the award of the contract to Swiftcat Limited and the associated expenditure of £349,245 for a 10.8m catamaran patrol vessel.







Annex I – NWIFCA Vessel Tender Scoring

Item	Measure	Requirement	Max Points	Candidate
1	Meeting or exceeding the specification	Based on meeting the requirements if the specification and the quality of the design provided.		
2	Meeting of completion and delivery of workboat	Completion and delivery of the workboat within a maximum period of nine months of the date of execution of the contract, or earlier.		
3	Warranty requirement	Providing a statement detailing the proposed warranty of the goods and services. The length of any warranty provided with the sale of the boat.		
4	Price	Tenderers price for delivery of the workboat as detailed within this request for proposal and supporting documents.		
Overall Maximum Score				