

36 AT A MEETING OF THE NORTH WESTERN INSHORE FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY HELD AT TRUCKHAVEN, CARNFORTH, 20th MARCH 2025

PRESENT – MEMBERS

Mr. P. Capper	Chair	MMO Appointee
Mr. B. Leigh	Vice Chair	MMO Appointee
Cllr. A. Markley		Cumberland Council
Cllr. P. Norris		Liverpool City Council
Cllr. S. Brookes		Blackpool Council
Cllr. S. Clarke		Lancashire Council
Cllr. C. Richards		Sefton Council
Cllr. H. Deynem		Cheshire and Cheshire West Council
Mr. S. Johnston		MMO
Mr. J. Turner		Environment Agency
Mr. L. Browning		Natural England
Mr. N. Baxter		MMO Appointee
Mr. S. Brown		MMO Appointee
Mr. L. Stainton		MMO Appointee
Mr. T. Jones		MMO Appointee
Ms. G. De Jong Cleyndert		MMO Appointee
Mr. R. Lomax		MMO Appointee
Mr. D. Williams		MMO Appointee
Mr. R. Benson		MMO Appointee

PRESENT-OTHERS

M. Rowlings  
Y. Tordoff

NWIFCA OFFICERS ATTENDING

M. Taylor	CEO
J. Moulton	Head of Enforcement (HoE)
I. Dixon	SIFCO
A. Brownrigg	SIFCO
A. Plumeridge	Head of Science (HoS)
S. Reid	Administration Officer

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr. J. Boak	Westmorland and Furness Council
Mr. R. Donnan	MMO Appointee
Mr. G. Pidduck	MMO Appointee
Mr. K. Thompson	MMO Appointee
Mr. W. Friend	MMO Appointee
Mr. M. Tupper	MMO Appointee

37 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Chair welcomed all members and to those representing industry. He expressed apologies on behalf of Councillor Boak, Wayne Friend, Richard Donnan and Kelsey Thompson.

The Chair reminded members to sign the attendance register and declare any items of interest.

38     DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Mr. T. Jones expressed that he had an interest in all the items on the agenda.

39     MINUTES OF MEETING 5<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2024 (AGENDA ITEM 3)

The Minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record

40     MATTERS ARISING (AGENDA ITEM 4)

Mr. Leigh referred to Minute 29, TSB Vacancy. He suggested postponing changes to the Constitution until after the AGM in June. Mr. Johnson queried if there would still be the option to increase the number of members on the TSB sub-committee after the AGM. Mr. Leigh confirmed that the Authority could change the makeup of the TSB sub-committee, and that the sub-committee already has the power to co-opt additional members where it requires additional expertise.

41     FINANCE REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 5)

The CEO presented the Financial Report for the third quarter of the financial year 2024/2025 on behalf of Rushton's Accountants.

The HOE requested Rushton's changed Fixed Administrative Penalties to Financial Administrative Penalties. Cllr. Norris observed that the second biggest income stream in this financial year was interest received. Discussion took place around how the reserves and the interest accrued could be invested in the replacement of sea-going assets, as discussed in Agenda Item 12. Cllr. Markley shared the previous financial strategy of saving more to replace aging sea-going assets, therefore minimising the burden on councils. Cllr. Markley suggested bringing forward Agenda Item 12 however, Cllr. Deynem gave an opposing view and felt leaving it until the end of the meeting would be beneficial. The Chair felt that moving Agenda Item 12 forward would give more discussion time on the item.

16\_in favour, 1 abstention, Carried

THE REPORT WAS RECEIVED

42     MARITIME ASSET REVIEW (AGENDA ITEM 12)

The CEO referred to his over-arching report for Agenda Item 12. He discussed the three options which are proposed in the HoE's annex for this Item and the predicted cost for each option. The CEO explained a marine surveyor had valued North Western Protector at £890,000 however, the vessels sale price would be determined by the purchase cost a buyer would be willing to pay. The CEO stated that option one, in the long run, could cost the Authority more due to costs which would be incurred by ensuring the vessels met the Workboat Code Version 3 requirements. A lengthy procurement process will be followed for each vessel purchased.

The HoE emphasised that what is proposed is a strategy for the replacement of the sea-going assets. The proposed strategy would help to increase the Authorities capabilities. Cllr. Markley asked for more information around the buying and selling of

sea-going assets and how confident the HoE was that the strategy proposed would fulfil the Authority requirements. The HoE explained the vessels would be designed, in consultation with the staff who use the Authorities vessels. The CEO highlighted that he felt the replacement would be a three-year strategy and procurement would be staggered. Mr. Stainton highlighted that the design and procurement process for a new patrol vessel had been started 3-4 years ago. The HoE responded by saying that this was for an additional asset, and it had been paused due to North Western Protector requiring an engine refit. Cllr. Clarke enquired on the low number of RIB patrols which had been undertaken since 2021. The HoE explained that is largely due to the RIB assets not being fit for the IFCA's requirements. Also, the location of Bay Protector in Liverpool Marina with lock gates reduces its capabilities. The Chair added that other operational requirements, such as open fisheries, reduces the use of vessels. The HoE explained that a trailer vessel asset would give more flexibility and could increase vessel usage. The sea-going assets will be more broadly available for all staff also due to the difference in training requirements for smaller vessels more accessible to helm.

Cllr. Norris voiced his support for option 2 but he felt that resources would be concentrated in the North of the district. He requested if the members could hear the opinions of SIFCO Dixon and Brownrigg. The Chair suggested that SIFCO Dixon and Brownrigg could voice their opinions once Members had finished their discussion. Mr. Brown said that fishing effort could move to the South of the district, and we need assets to support this. He felt that the approximate value of £900,000 for North Western Protector was not achievable because there is no market for used patrol boats. The Chair asked if it was a boat surveyor or a boat broker who had valued North Western Protector. The HoE informed members it was a valuation surveyor who had valued North Western Protector. Mr. Brown and Mr. Jones requested a task group made up of staff and members with experience and knowledge of vessels be set up to ensure the strategy is future proof. The Chair reiterated the concerns raised by Cllr. Norris and Mr. Brown that the proposal seem to go beyond strategy, and it raised questions about the operational capabilities of the south of district.

Cllr. Deynem raised further questions around the financing of sea-going assets and training, issues. The CEO explained that the proposal is the start of a process and there would be potential cost implications due to CDEL funding being withdrawn. However, the Authority does have a healthy reserve, therefore, this could result in the Authority being able to replace vessels without needing the financial backing of the councils. The CEO explained that there are time implications with vessel training and selected staff are going to be prioritised to ensure they progress to the desired level.

Mr. Johnson queried the staffing of the vessels and the capabilities of the vessels for joint working. The HoE said that these factors had been considered in the proposal and joint working had taken place with the Environment Agency. Mr. Browning felt that option 2 was the only viable option for the Authority to enable officers to access the Marine Protected Areas which they are responsible for regulating. Mr. Williams felt that the Authority needed to consider the changes which are taking place in the South of the district around the River Dee. He felt it was important to bring NWIFCA up to operating capacity. Cllr. Richards supported the procurement of cabin ribs as they provide greater facilities for crew members. The CEO and HoE agreed with Cllr. Richards and during the build process, consideration would be given to the National Shipbuilding Strategy.

Mr. Lomas suggested North Western Protector being put up for sale at the start of the procurement process as the sale of the vessel impacts purchasing and finance options. The CEO agreed with Mr. Lomax and suggested the Authority could explore the level of interest in the potential purchase of North Western Protector. However the early sale of North Western Protector could leave the Authority unable to work at capacity.

The Chair asked SIFCO Dixon and Brownrigg to share their views on the vessel replacement strategy. SIFCO Brownrigg gave background information on the rib use in the south of the district. He explained that the current issue with Bay Protector is its lack of onboard facilities when it is used for longer periods of time. Operationally, going forward, consideration needs to be given to the Dee Estuary boat fishery. Moving to a trailer RIB would increase travel costs for the IFCA and reduce the amount of time officers can spend on patrol. SIFCO Dixon gave a background to the procurement of Protector Gamma. SIFCO Dixon felt that smaller catamarans would be more beneficial compared to RIBs. The CEO explained that boat birthing locations provided an issue and NWIFCA needed to move away from location-based assets. Cllr. Markley and Cllr. Deynem suggested an amendment to the Option 2 Proposal

#### AMENDED RECOMMENDATION

OFFICERS ARE AUTHORISED TO INVESTIGATE, IN DETAIL VIA A TASK GROUP WHICH INCLUDES MEMBERS, THE PROCUREMENT OF A 16M CATAMARAN, 10M CABIN RIB AND 7M TRAILER RIB.

Proposed Cllr. Markley; Seconded Cllr. Deynem

All in favour, Carried

#### 43 TSB SUMMARY 11<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2025 (AGENDA ITEM 6)

Mr. Jones provided a summary of the TSB meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

Mr. Jones reported that it was a well-attended meeting. The Oral Histories Presentation was well received and thorough. Mr. Jones enquired if officers had a date for when the presentation and report would be published on the NWIFCA website. The HoS Said this was still unknown but she would make enquiries into this.

The Whelk Project, presented by Officer Grose, led to a resolution of the minimum landing size being set to 65mm which would be reviewed within 3years.

Officer Loud gave a presentation on Shrimps and concluded that there are uncertain reasons surrounding the decline to the shrimp population in the district. The HoS said further information on the shrimp work was in her report, which would follow later in the meeting.

Mr. Jones said that the HoS gave a detailed Survey and Science Report. He enquired if the mapping software had been implemented.

AOB had been a lengthy discussion around the Pilling Cockle Fishery and a there was a request to amend to the permit conditions.

#### 44 SCIENCE REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 7)

The HoS reviewed the contents of the Science Report summarising the work that the Science Team had undertaken over the last few months, providing details on finalising the MCRS for Whelks as stipulated in the flexible permit conditions, the shrimp fisheries research study, initiating the mobile netting consultation and a post Leasowe Fishery survey. On-going work has taken place with Marine Natural Capital with the Oral Histories Project and the Bird Food Model. The HoS is continuing to work on the Cockle Fisheries Management Plan which should be completed by early 2026. There have been 13 consultations with outside agencies where the Science Team have been requested to advise on. HoS continues to engage with TAG and further develop partnerships with Lancaster University, Bangor University and Salford University.

Officer Haines has completed drone training which should allow the Science Team to assess stock and coverage using a multi-spectral camera. Further steps were identified.

Officer Love has been trialling a new software which will provide the Science Team with more accessible information gathered by the Enforcement Team while out on patrols.

Cllr. Deynem enquired if the consultations had now closed. HoS said she would need to check on the timeframe of each consultation. Mr. S. Johnson added that there is a consultation still open on the proposed Allonby Bay Anchoring Byelaw.

Proposed Mr. L Stainton; Seconded Cllr Deynem.

All in favour, carried.

#### THE REPORT WAS RECEIVED

#### 45 ENFORCEMENT TEAM REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 8)

The HoE provided a summary of the Enforcement Team Report presenting updates from staff across the district.

The report included summary points from each area of the district. Staff are confidently using CLUE to report any intelligence, and it is assisting with the tasking of officers.

The HoE reported on the open Cockle fisheries from this period. The HoE drew attention to the returns data presented in the report.

HoE reported that it had been a busy period for sanctions and infringements. 44 sanctions were applied during the reporting period including 10 financial administrative penalties. There were 4 verbal warnings given during this period, 7 advisory letters and 23 official warning letters. 1 case file has been submitted to NWIFCA's prosecutors.

The shore patrol included in the report shows it has been a busy period across the district particularly high in the areas where cockle fisheries were active.

Cllr. Norris asked for more clarification regarding the TAC on Leasowe not matching the returns data presented by the HoE in his report. The HoS explained that the returns data does not match Movement Documents obtained from Mersey Port Health. This is currently being explored and analysed by an officer and this information will be used for future enforcement. The CEO commented that the TAC issues surrounding

Leasowe have posed some questions on how the Authority monitor TACs in the future. One suggestion to explore is standardising bag sizes which would allow officers to use a bag count approach to ensuring TACs are adhered to.

All in favour, carried. [OBJ]

#### THE REPORT WAS RECEIVED

#### 46 CEO REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 9)

CEO reviewed the report providing a summary of the contents.

With regards to Estates, since writing the report the senior management team determined the Lancaster property was not suitable. The legal team at Cumberland County Council have acknowledged that communication needs to take place with the Authorities solicitor with regards to the ownership of the Whitehaven office. The new Whitehaven property continues to sit with Cumberland County Council Planning Department.

Two stakeholder events were held and were very well attended. The events were aimed at Byelaw 3 stakeholders. It allowed stakeholders to have in depth conversations with officers. The CEO thanked Mr. Brown for attending the Flookburgh stakeholder event on behalf of the committee.

The Netting Byelaw has returned from the MMO. There are some amendments which are required. Once these have been completed the Byelaw will be sent to DEFRA to be confirmed. With regards to the bass entitlement, which is an element of the netting byelaw, an email has been sent to the working group to start work on creating an application for the bass entitlement element of the Netting Byelaw. The CEO suggesting using a blind application process to ensure it is a fair and transparent procedure.

The HoE sat on North West Environment Group set up due to the pollution incident at Half Moon Bay. Around 200 litres of oil was removed from the beach and NWIFCA advised on the fisheries which could have been affected.

The Chair attended an event at Parliament where the Minister gave a speech and Dr. Sarah Coulhard presented. The Chair has attended various meetings in the last 3 months including a staff meeting and a meeting with the MMO.

All in favour, carried.

#### THE REPORT WAS RECEIVED

#### 47 HS&W REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 10)

The CEO provided a summary of the HS&W report.

There has been a reduction in the number of HS&W training days from quarter one, due to the focus on meeting the requirements of the Work Boat Code earlier in the year.

There is an on-going policy development programme where policies are reviewed and refreshed. Policies that have recently been updated are lone-working, ATVs, Vehicles

and accident reporting. North Western Protector SOPs have been reviewed and now need to be communicated to staff. The CEO is looking to bring in an external body to quality assure SOPs and risk assessments.

There were two near misses in quarter three. Sea-going life jackets have been replaced, and an ATV became stuck, leading to new tow strap being purchased. Using the mapping software previously spoken about by HoS, the authority is looking at flagging areas of concern. Radon gas emissions were deemed to be elevated in the Carnforth Office. A radiation protector advisor has been appointed, HSE were informed, and positive ventilation is being explored.

Mr. Jones enquired which make and model of life jackets have been assigned to the crew of North Western Protector. The HoE said that the Crewsaver 275n lifejackets have been replaced with Spinlock. Mr. Jones further enquired if the First Aid qualification held by staff was the STCW. The HoE responded that although the qualification was not the STCW course the RYA course fulfils the same requirements.

Cllr. Deynem suggested reporting the radon gas to the NWIFCA's building insurance provider. He also questioned if the IFCA's took part in peer-on-peer assessments of management systems. HoE explained that this does happen and recently a vessel management group has been set up. This group looks at policies and procedures to ensure standardisation. The CEO explained that historically records have been kept on paper however for access and quality assurance the Authority is looking to explore more digitalised systems. The Vessel Management group have suggested the procurement of a software called Seaflux. Mr. Jones commented that Seaflux is costly and an alternative to explore is [safetyfolder.co.uk](https://www.safetyfolder.co.uk). The HoE and CEO thanked Mr. Jones for his suggestion.

All in favour, carried.

#### THE REPORT WAS RECEIVED

#### 48 DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN 2025/2026 (AGENDA ITEM 11)

The CEO referred to the Annual Plan which had been shared. He asked the Chair to produce a Foreword which would be included. The draft Annual Plan covers the objectives suggested for the year. In the final version, information needs to be included around the work the Science Team complete such as surveys. Mr. Browning felt that the Marine Environment section required addition objectives linked to how the Science and Enforcement Team assist with the MPAs in the district. The CEO agreed with this point. The HoS said the Authority could include the MCZ assessments on the Solway.

Mr Leigh felt that reporting the Annual Plan at the Authority meeting gave the members a framework as an improvement tool. Some of the report is predefined by DEFRA and part of the Annual Plan needs to include how the Authority will meet what is set out by DEFRA. Mr. Leigh felt that a digital version of the Annual Plan was the best course of action as it reduced costs and wastage. Furthermore, he felt the NWIFCA need to increase their online presence to include reporting the Authorities work, including supplementary images. The CEO agreed with Mr. Leigh and explained that sometimes staff feel that their work goes unrecognised. Highlighting some of the work undertaken by officers on the website would help to address this. Four additional members of staff had been trained on how to manage the website which will help the Authority to

become more public facing. The Chair suggested having annotations to accompany photographs. Mr. Lomax agreed that the formatting of the report was good but suggested that images from the drone software could be included.

Cllr. Brookes enquired if the 20 rib patrols on Protector Charlie, Protector Gamma and Bay Protector was achievable based on the 24-25 figures presented in the Enforcement Report. The HoE and the CEO felt it was achievable. Officer Brownrigg stated the aim for Bay Protector is ten patrols.

The CEO stated the Annual Plan will be published on the website next week.

TO RECEIVE THE DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN WITH ITS AMMENDMENTS TO PUBLISHPMENT ON THE NWIFCA WEBSITE.

Proposed Cllr. S. Clarke; Seconded Mr. L. Stainton.

All in favour, carried.

#### 49 ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 13)

Mr. Jones raised an issue on behalf of a hand gatherer who was concerned about a loss of income due to the Ribble Mussel bed classification being downgraded. The HoE explained that the classification of the shellfish beds was outside of the IFCA. It is the Environmental Health Authority who classify shellfish beds and the hand gather would be advised to contact them. The IFCA takes samples from the Ribble Estuary on behalf of the Environmental Health Authority. The IFCA follows sample protocols to ensure accurate results.

Discussion took place around when a shellfish bed should be sampled and the Authorities limitations due to time and commitments.

The Chair thanked members for their attendance and closed the meeting at 14:15.