

NWIFCA Quarterly Meeting: 17th September 2026

REPORT NO.
2

CEO QUARTERLY REPORT

9TH JUNE – 4TH SEPTEMBER 2026

Purpose: For members' information.

Recommendations: The report is received.

1. Authority Committees

A meeting of the Technical, Science and Byelaw Sub-Committee (TSB) was held on 4th August. At this meeting, officers took members through the summer survey results for the district's cockle beds and presented a recommendation to keep all beds closed for the season, due to generally low biomasses across all beds, and relevant thresholds set out in the newly adopted Cockle Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) not being met. Members adopted a resolution to keep all beds closed, but to keep the situation under review over the course of the season, as per our requirements to manage all our fisheries adaptively.

I have now completed an Executive review of our Constitution, with support from relevant officers, and have created a suggested draft for a new Constitution. This is not a radical rewrite, rather it is primarily focussed on updating the Constitution to reflect our current operational and governance practices, whilst retaining all the necessary checks and balances and ensuring unfettered member oversight. I have now provided this draft to the Chair and Vice-Chair for their consideration. My intention is to then share the draft Constitution with members in the coming weeks, with the aim of seeking formal approval at the December Full Authority meeting, with formal adoption occurring at the March 2027 meeting.

2. Finances

The Authority's Financial Report for Q1 of 2026/27 is provided in a separate report to this meeting and will be discussed under the relevant agenda item.

We are still due to receive the following amounts of Defra RDEL funding for 2026/27:

- £52,256 for marine protected area (MPA) management
- £30,000 for marine licensing
- £92,256 for Allonby Bay Highly Protected Marine Area (HPMA).

We have yet to receive confirmation from Defra regarding RDEL funding for 2027/28 and 2028/29. They had indicated Letters of Intent were to be sent out to all IFCA's by the end of August, but at the time of writing these had not yet been received. There is a meeting of the Finance & Personnel Sub-Committee (F&P) on 21st September at which I will be proposing to defray a large proportion of our RDEL funding on two new posts.

At the end of August, we received notification that this year's pay award had been agreed as 3.3%. This will be enacted in September's pay-run, with associated backpay for all staff. This amounts to a c.£30,000 increase in our salary costs for the year and is in line with what we budgeted for 2026/27 salary (and associated pension and NI) increases.

3. Estates

There is no update on the application to the Land Registry to transfer our old Whitehaven Office at Duncan Square into the Authority's name.

Following receipt of quotes for refurbishment of the Head Office in Carnforth, our Facilities Management company has begun work. This work includes a new communal space and kitchen area, a one-to-one meeting room, converting the unused attic into a larger meeting room with video conferencing facilities, and removing the old kitchen from the Admin Office to give the Admin Team more space.

We have now moved our Carnforth Lock-Up to the Keer Park Industrial Estate, from our old premises on Kellet Road. The new set-up comprises of two separate units, one for our Carnforth-based enforcement officers and one for the Science Team. The Science Team's lock-up has undergone some minor modifications to provide suitable laboratory facilities for post-survey analyses and sampling. Following the termination of our lease at Kellet Road, the landlord's agents requested £35,000 (inc. VAT) for dilapidations costs associated with returning the premises to its pre-lease condition. This was despite our having undertaken significant work already to return the premises to the state it was in prior to our taking up the lease. Due to the amount requested, we appointed our own independent surveyor to assess the condition of the property, and they recommended dilapidations costs of just £6,500. We have instructed our appointed surveyor to serve their assessment to the landlord's agents on our behalf, but at the time of writing we have yet to hear back from them.

4. Vessels and Vehicles

The build of the first of our two new ~10m vessels has commenced and is progressing well. As discussions with the boatyard have continued, several suggested practical changes have emerged, some of which were cost neutral whilst others involved additional build costs. As such, I directed our Head of Enforcement Joe to pull together relevant information and justification on these additions and convene another meeting of our Vessel Task and Finish Group (VTFG). Authority members on the VTFG gave their provisional approval for the additions, but we agreed that it was appropriate to then bring these to the Full Authority for formal approval. Joe will present a separate paper on this matter under agenda item 12.

Following some significant upgrades and refurbishments to North Western Protector in the Spring, Joe and our SIFCO (Master) Hugh Thinnesen are now working to pull together quotes for a second period of dry dock, likely in early 2027. This will involve some deck reconfiguration to enable static gear to be hauled and shot from the bow, the installation of a new crane, along with several other age-related improvements.

5. Communications and Engagement

Comms and engagement have been varied over this summer period. Our new Comms Officer has been proactive in publishing stories on our Facebook page about our activities, and we have also been issuing key comms to stakeholders regarding our cockle fisheries and engagement events for the new Dee Cockle Regulating Order application. On the latter, we worked with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to arrange four events for stakeholders to attend in person to give us their views and feedback on the new Regulating Order and what our joint application should include. We planned events within the district in Grange-over-Sands and Wallasey, as well as two in Wales, one in the north and one in the south. Whilst we did not get any uptake for the Grange event, the other three were well attended and provided a useful basis for further consideration for our application.

6. HR

We held our quarterly face-to-face team meeting in Liverpool on 12th June. This included an afternoon's team building activities at Gravity MAX. The morning's meeting focussed primarily on staff discussions about proposed new organisational values. Our Head of Science Anna led discussions on this, following work from a small number of staff to develop these values as part of a Values Working Group, which Anna led. Following the meeting on 12th June, our new organisational values were finalised and adopted; these are included in Appendix 1 of this report. Alongside each of these values, the Values Working Group developed indicators of positive behaviours that staff can model to demonstrate these values. There are now plans to incorporate assessment of these values-based behaviours into staff's performance appraisals, as well as adopt some form of recognition scheme for individuals demonstrating exceptional representation of these values.

Also at this team meeting, our IFCO (Deputy Master) Erik Thinnesen was presented with a gift and plaque in acknowledgement of 25 years' service with the Authority and its predecessor Sea Fisheries Committee. I am sure members will join me in thanking Erik for his many years of dedicated service.

Following F&P approval, we commenced recruitment for a new fixed-term IFCO in Liverpool, with a view to their going on secondment to NRW for the remainder of the current Dee Cackle Regulating Order; the temporary contract is initially until June 2028. The job advert generated significant interest and we received 39 applications. After interviewing five high calibre candidates I am pleased to inform members that we have appointed Yasmin Tordoff to this position. Members will know Yasmin as she has recently been sitting on our Authority and TSB meetings as the MMO representative, as a substitute for our permanent member. Yasmin will be starting with us on 21st September and then, following a month's induction, her secondment to NRW as their Dee Estuary Cackle Fishery Management Officer will commence. Any extension (temporary or permanent) to Yasmin's contract beyond June 2028 will be dependent on the progress and outcome of our application for the new Order.

In early July our IFCO (Intel) Anthony Graham handed in his notice, and he subsequently left the Authority in August. Anthony had been with NWIFCA for 11 years and his resignation has left a big void in terms of his organisational knowledge and experience. During his time with us, Anthony worked as Office Manager, Comms Officer, IFCO and, most recently, fulfilled our Intelligence Officer role. Officers and members will join me in giving my heartfelt appreciation to the service Anthony provided to the Authority over the years and in wishing him all the best in his future endeavours. As a result of Anthony's resignation, we moved quickly to seek his replacement. At the time of writing, we have interviewed six candidates for the IFCO (Intel) post, with one more to interview on 7th September. We received 31 applications for the position, and all of those selected for interview held highly relevant experience; I am therefore very confident we will end this recruitment exercise with a high-quality new IFCO (Intel).

Our Head of Science Anna will be commencing maternity leave in late October / early November. As a result, I have decided to temporarily promote our Senior Science Officer Jonathan Haines to Head of Science for the duration of Anna's maternity leave. After inviting expressions of interest to backfill Jon's post during this period, I have also temporarily promoted Science Officer Gemma Grose. At the time of writing, Anna, Jon and I were in discussions about how to address the vacant Science Officer post created by these temporary promotions. It is likely we will seek a 12-month fixed-term Science Officer to fill this vacancy, but other options are still being considered.

Our Head of Administration Alison has been working to develop a new comprehensive, structured induction programme for new starters. This replaces a previous, less detailed version, and will involve a systematic approach to inducting new starters, with members of the senior management team, along with selected other officers, taking the lead on providing relevant information and training. There is also a focused health and safety element to the induction, which Alison has worked with our Health and Safety Competent Person, Robin Love, to develop. The new induction programme will be used to induct Yasmin Tordoff prior to her commencing her NRW secondment, and then the new IFCO (Intel) when they start in Carnforth.

Over 24th and 25th June, we held organisational De-Escalation Training with an external provider. All staff attended the first day, with the second day covering more practical techniques for operational staff. The training was very useful and well received by all staff.

7. Admin

Key performance indicators (KPIs) for our Administration Team are included in Appendix 2 of this report, as is now customary.

8. Fisheries

Further to previous updates to members on the progress on Byelaw 7 (Netting Byelaw) with Defra, I can confirm that I have agreed with Defra for us to submit a plan outlining how we intend to implement the Bass Entitlements that form part of the proposed Byelaw. The Science Team have produced a draft of this plan, and the intention is to send this over to Defra in the coming weeks for their consideration. Defra have indicated that it is not likely that the Netting Byelaw will be addressed until the late Autumn, due to the ministerial changes within the department over the past few months.

Since submission of the application for the new Dee Cockle Regulating Order to Welsh Government (WG) at the beginning of 2026, work has been continuing with NRW to develop the FMP that will sit alongside the Order. We have also undertaken informal consultation events with stakeholders, as described above in Section 5. In the Autumn, we will be progressing to the formal consultation period. Our understanding is that WG have already produced an initial draft of the Regulating Order, and we are awaiting receipt of this for further consideration.

The new Anchoring Byelaw for Allonby Bay HPMa was confirmed on 30th July. This means that anchoring within the HPMa is now prohibited, except in *force majeure* circumstances. Whilst this is an MMO byelaw, NWIFCA will be leading on the compliance monitoring and enforcement of it, primarily as we have a patrol vessel that can frequent the HPMa and have more officer resources at our disposal than MMO in the area. The risk of non-compliance with the byelaw is very low, but we will provide appropriate levels of monitoring, both at-sea and from the shore. The HPMa Fishing Byelaw is still delayed, with no clear indication from Defra as to when it is likely to be confirmed.

Drafting of the proposed new Byelaw 10 (Mobile Nets Byelaw) has halted due to Joe's workload and other priorities. There are resourcing issues here, which I will be addressing in the relevant papers to F&P for the meeting on 21st September.

Through Joe's coordination, conversations are ongoing between the Authority, industry and Lancaster City Council's Environmental Health Department on initiating a sampling programme for the potential classification of the Middleton and Warton cockle beds, which are currently unclassified. Lancaster City Council are not in a position to pay us to carry out the sampling on their behalf, as we do for other local authorities, but initial discussions with industry have been encouraging in terms of establishing an industry-led sampling regime instead. With recent changes to the Food Standards Agency's classification processes, it will take at least six months for a full set of samples to be acquired, and longer still for the full classification process to be completed. Having these additional cockle beds classified in time for the start of the 2027/28 cockle season will be a difficult task, but theoretically, these beds could be opened at any point during the September-April season when a classification was confirmed, *if* next year's stocks are of a level to justify a fishery.

9. External Engagement / Other CEO Work

On 11th June I accompanied our Science Officers on a brown shrimp sampling survey, which forms part of our review into the status of the species within the district.

On 29th June I joined the Science Team for a survey of the Aldingham cockle bed.

I attended a meeting of the IFCA's Chief Officer Group (COG) on 8th July and a meeting of Defra's Marine and Fisheries Chief Officer Group (MAFCO) on 5th August.

I attended the Dee Regulating Order stakeholder consultation event at Greenfield, North Wales on 12th August.

Mark Taylor, North Western IFCA CEO, 4th September 2026.

Appendix 1 – New NWIFCA Organisational Values



BEHAVIOURS

INTEGRITY

- ✓ We communicate honestly and transparently
- ✓ We raise concerns openly and address issues constructively
- ✓ We apply policies and decisions consistently and fairly
- ✓ We remain calm, objective, and solution-focussed when addressing issues
- ✓ We lead by example, and support continuous improvement

PROFESSIONALISM

- ✓ We manage time effectively and honour commitments
- ✓ We are honest about mistakes, take responsibility and learn from them
- ✓ We prepare thoroughly and take responsibility for our work and decisions
- ✓ We follow procedures, codes of conduct and organisational standards
- ✓ We act professionally when representing the organisation externally, and maintain up-to-date fisheries knowledge

RESPECT

- ✓ We treat colleagues and stakeholders with respect and fairness
- ✓ We listen to all team members and recognise their contributions
- ✓ We value different perspectives and experience
- ✓ We maintain confidentiality and avoid divulging information that is not ours to share
- ✓ We demonstrate consideration for the environment through responsible work practices

COLLABORATION

- ✓ We provide support when colleagues need assistance across teams and functions
- ✓ We share knowledge, information, and resources
- ✓ We work together with stakeholders and external organisations to achieve shared aims
- ✓ We communicate clearly to keep others informed, and work together to solve problems

MARINE STEWARDSHIP

- ✓ We are evidence led, we act objectively, and seek the right evidence to inform our decisions
- ✓ We listen to and respect the views of stakeholders, and their input in providing evidence and identifying issues
- ✓ We are innovative, and actively seek new data, methods, technologies, and approaches to improve our understanding and decision-making
- ✓ We protect and respect the environment by making responsible decisions and promoting sustainable use of resources

Appendix 2 – Selected NWIFCA Admin Team Stats (Q1 2026/27)

KPI	Actuals	Max.	RAG	Previous Quarter's RAG
BYELAWS				
<i>Byelaw 3 (Cockle and Mussel)</i>				
Permit holders using database	130	150	G	G
Permit renewals	150	150	NA	NA
New permits	0	NA	NA	NA
Waiting list number (of which under 18)	167 (15)	NA	NA	NA
Late / no returns	22	NA	G	G
<i>Byelaw 4 (Potting)</i>				
Permit renewals	0	NA	NA	NA
New permits	7	NA	NA	NA
Late / no returns	13	NA	A	G
AUTHORITY				
<i>Full Authority</i>				
Vacancies	2	30	A	A
Councillors' attendance	4	10	A	A
MMO appointees' attendance	13	14	G	A
Statutory members' attendance	3	3	G	A
TSB				
MMO appointees' attendance	5	7	A	G

Statutory members' attendance	3	3	G	G
<i>Ex-officio</i> members' attendance	2	2	G	G
ASSETS				
Vehicle checks conducted	19	20	G	A
Monthly kit checks	38	54	A	A
HR				
TOIL days taken	55	NA	G	G
Sick leave days	5	NA	G	G
Carers' leave days	0.5	NA	G	G
Volunteer days	0	NA	NA	NA
Unsocial hours	526	NA		TBC ¹
Outstanding grievances	0	NA	G	G
Outstanding disciplinaries	0	NA	G	G

¹ New metric. Needs monitoring over an extended period to see what is normal / to be expected.