

NWIFCA Quarterly Meeting

18th June 2026

REPORT NO.

2

HEAD OF ENFORCEMENT QUARTERLY REPORT –
1ST FEBRUARY 2026 – 30TH APRIL 2026

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 Haile	<p>Shore patrols were carried out across the northern part of the district during the quarter, covering all known ports and key activity hotspots between Port Carlisle and Haverigg Point. Full details of shore patrols undertaken during the period are provided in the appendices.</p> <p>Trawling – Activity was observed from local trawlers targeting prawns (nephrops) and bait fish, including plaice and dogfish, on grounds south-west of St Bees, between 6 and 10 nautical miles offshore.</p> <p>VMS showed both local and visiting trawlers operating on the nephrops grounds south-west of St Bees Head and further south off the Cumbrian coast, generally between 6 and 8 miles offshore. In February, there were occasional reports of prawn catches exceeding 20 stone per day.</p> <p>More vessels began targeting nephrops during March and April, with some boats from Maryport and Whitehaven landing to co-operatives and selling directly to the public at both ports. Small landings of thornback ray and plaice were also reported.</p> <p>In April, Northern Irish vessels targeting nephrops were also observed on VMS and by North Western Protector, with landings made into the Port of Whitehaven.</p> <p>Potting – VMS activity during the quarter showed whelk vessels from Whitehaven, Fleetwood and Maryport operating both inside and outside the district.</p> <p>Fleetwood vessels were seen fishing north of North Wales, between 6 and 10 miles offshore, west of Formby, to the south and north of the Isle of Man, around 10 miles west of Whitehaven, and in Scottish waters within the Solway Firth.</p> <p>Some local vessels were also recorded on VMS fishing within the NWIFCA 6-mile limit, although some fishing activity also took place outside the district.</p> <p>Local vessels targeting lobster and brown crab continued potting to the north and south of Whitehaven. Reports from fishers on catch levels were mixed. Creel pots for shrimp were also used during the quarter, again with mixed results.</p> <p>Inshore lobster and brown crab vessels were also observed on VMS during the period.</p>

	<p>Angling – Angling activity on beaches and piers remained evident across the area throughout the reporting period.</p> <p>Recorded catches included small dabs, whiting, plaice, dogfish and thornback ray. Some codling were caught after dark, which is typical for the time of year as conditions move into spring.</p> <p>Beach nets – Three nets were seen or reported on beaches during the quarter.</p> <p>Other duties – Early morning and evening patrols were carried out in known activity areas. VMS satellite surveillance work also continued throughout the quarter, with vessels monitored as required. Additional duties included crewing as Deputy Master on board North Western Protector.</p> <p>ATV patrols – ATV patrols were undertaken around Nethertown and Braystones to check for netting activity. Officers also visited Ellisons Scar.</p>
<p>Haverigg Point – Knott End – SIFCO Dixon & IFCO Taylor, Edwards</p>	<p>Mussels</p> <p>During the reporting period, mussel gathering activity remained low, with only a small number of fishers working on Bare Ayre on suitable tides. No mussel gatherers were observed on Foulney or Crook Scar: Foulney due to a lack of large mussels, and Crook Scar because pearls in the mussels made them difficult to market.</p> <p>Officers surveyed the mussel bed known as Hard Acre in the outer Duddon Estuary, where mussels remained noticeably below the 45 mm size limit. Officers also surveyed the South America area using ATVs but found no evidence of seed settlement.</p> <p>Officers continue to assist local Environmental Health Departments with shellfish sample collection.</p> <p>Cockles</p> <p>All cockle beds within the area of responsibility closed at the end of February. Before closure, only three people were observed gathering small quantities of large cockles at Newbiggin.</p> <p>Officers continue to take shellfish samples from all classified beds for local authority Environmental Health Departments.</p> <p>Shrimping</p> <p>Activity began to increase after Easter, with three shrimp tractors observed occasionally: two in the Kent Channel area and one in the Leven Channel. Landings appeared slightly better than in recent years, although average shrimp size remained smaller than expected.</p> <p>Netting</p> <p>Netting activity from vessels remained low, although this is expected to increase during the next reporting period. Towards the end of the quarter, occasional stake nets were reported in the Leven Estuary, and a fyke net was observed in late April in the Morecambe area.</p> <p>Potting</p> <p>Potting for lobster and crab increased during the quarter, as expected for the time of year, with three vessels from Barrow occasionally working inside the NWIFCA district.</p>

	<p><u>Long lines</u></p> <p>No beach long lines were observed or reported during the quarter. One commercial vessel was observed long lining.</p> <p><u>Angling</u></p> <p>Angling activity increased over the reporting period as numbers of bass and smooth-hound increased. Competitions were well attended, although movement in the Leven Channel required some venue changes.</p> <p>Vessel angling increased from Walney slipway. Several commercial vessels were also observed targeting bass with rods, although catches were reportedly still relatively poor.</p> <p><u>Bait collection</u></p> <p>Peeler crab collection increased during the quarter, particularly in Walney Channel, the Foulney area, and on the north side of the Duddon Estuary in the Millom area.</p> <p>Bait digging was observed occasionally in the Duddon Estuary, off Earnse Bay on Walney, and in the Newbiggin area of the coast road.</p>
<p>Dee- Fleetwood – SIFCO Brownrigg, IFCO Taylor, Edwards</p>	<p><u>General</u></p> <p>Seasonal conditions during the reporting period continued to reduce levels of coastal activity; however, officers maintained a consistent operational presence throughout the Southern Area. Byelaw 2 – North Wirral Foreshore Bivalve Molluscs remains in force along the north Wirral coastline, and regular patrols continued to ensure compliance and maintain visibility within the district. Very little fisheries-related activity was observed between Lytham and Fleetwood during the period.</p> <p>One officer continued to assist colleagues in the Central Area, supporting routine shore enforcement patrols and sample collection activities around Morecambe Bay. The Head of Enforcement and Area SIFCO also attended a stakeholder event in New Brighton, providing an opportunity to engage with local fishers and hear first-hand the issues and concerns affecting the sector.</p> <p>On behalf of West Lancashire Borough Council and Wyre Council, officers continued to collect the required monthly MSH samples to maintain classification status. Assistance with science-led survey work also continued throughout the quarter in support of the wider scientific programme.</p> <p>In February, the Area SIFCO attended the five-day IFCA Competent Officers Course in Brixham alongside representatives from the Enforcement and Science teams. The course provided further professional development and operational learning relevant to frontline enforcement duties.</p> <p>Officers continued to engage with the Mergin Maps trial throughout the reporting period, gaining experience and familiarity with the system ahead of its planned rollout and transition to live operation in June.</p> <p><u>Specific</u></p> <p><u>Hand gathering – bivalve molluscs</u></p>

	<p>During the reporting period, no enforcement issues relating to hand gathering were identified or recorded. As part of routine seasonal management measures, closure notices were displayed throughout the area to reinforce that the fishery remains closed.</p> <p>To date, officers have not observed any mussel gathering activity within the Dee Estuary.</p> <p><u>Recreational rod angling – shore</u></p> <p>A total of 81 shore anglers were inspected during the reporting period, with the promenades along Wallasey Front and Kings Parade, New Brighton continuing to be the most active locations.</p> <p>Recorded catches remained minimal, reflecting the positive catch-and-release approach adopted by the majority of anglers.</p> <p><u>Shore netting</u></p> <p>Netting activity continued throughout the quarter, with set nets and beach purse seine nets inspected along the Sefton and north Wirral coastlines.</p> <p>During inspections, officers recorded catches including plaice, thornback ray and mullet. Nets found to be non-compliant were addressed at the time of inspection, with advice and guidance provided to owners where appropriate.</p> <p><u>Bait digging</u></p> <p>Bait digging activity continued along both coastlines, with Mockbeggar Wharf on the north Wirral coastline remaining one of the more regularly used locations.</p> <p>Officers undertook several inspections during the reporting period, with the pump method continuing to be the most observed technique.</p>
<p><u>North Western Protector</u></p> <p>Master Hugh Thinnesen</p>	<p><u>North Western Protector</u></p> <p>As expected for the time of year, weather conditions were generally poor, resulting in the loss of a number of patrol days at sea.</p> <p>It has again been reported that fuel prices continue to have a significant impact on the fishing industry, with a number of vessels choosing to remain in port. Alongside gear and bait costs, this is placing profit margins under considerable pressure.</p> <p>Fishing activity among the local fleet within the district remained generally low, with only a small number of light landings into Whitehaven. Several visiting scallop vessels made regular visits to Whitehaven during the reporting period, with good scallop landings of up to 40 dumpy bags for a single trip. One vessel in particular has been fishing closer to its home port in Liverpool Bay, mainly because of the fuel costs associated with travelling longer distances around UK fishing grounds.</p> <p>Whelk vessels continued to make regular landings into Whitehaven. Lobster and crab vessels have so far seen only light landings into local ports, although activity for these vessels usually increases in June.</p> <p>Priorities, patrols, boardings and inspection statistics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrol the district for large-vessel infringements of byelaws.

- Record data on nets and pots within the district.
- Inspect lobster and brown crab pots and carry out checks on potting vessels.
- Inspect gill nets for compliance with legislation.
- Inspect vessels for compliance with fishing gear legislation.
- Maintain, service and repair patrol boats.
- Inspect hobby fishing vessels for compliance with NW-IFCA Byelaw 4, the former NW&NW Byelaws 26 and 27, and former CSFC Byelaw 10.
- Patrol throughout the district to detect fishery limit line offences.
- Patrol inside Allonby HPMAs.
- Patrol within the Voluntary Code of Practice area around St Bees Head.

Details of patrols, boardings and inspections of vessels at sea, together with static gear inspections logged from North Western Protector and Protector Charlie, are included in the appendices to the Head of Enforcement's report.

All maintenance and service schedules for North Western Protector and Protector Charlie are up to date.

General Update

Kingfisher Project

Head of Enforcement has within the reporting period assisted staff at Seafish with reviewing the data and legislation used to support the Kingfisher Seafish Fishing Restrictions Project. This is a Seafish-led initiative designed to provide commercial fishers with a single, authoritative source of information on fishing gear restrictions throughout UK waters. The project was developed in response to industry concerns that fishing restrictions were difficult to locate, interpret and apply because they were spread across numerous regulatory websites and legal documents.

The system has created a UK-wide consolidated dataset of commercial fishing restrictions helping stakeholders generally answer the question “Can I fish here?”. In helping fishers under often complex fisheries legislation will in turn increase compliance and support sustainable fishing practices.

The system operates through an online mapping platform (kingfisherrestrictions.org) with downloadable datasets for plotters and navigation systems. The measures included arise from IFCA Byelaws, MMO measures, marine protected areas and other regulations. It does include quotas, minimum sizes, recreational restrictions temporary or emergency measures or engine power rules.

The updated data should be available imminently on the system.

Drone Desk

The Authority has recently procured Dronedesk which is a cloud-based drone operations management platform designed to help officers plan, manage, document and demonstrate compliance for drone operations. It brings together flight planning, risk assessment, fleet management, pilot records and reporting into a single system, reducing the need for separate spreadsheets and manual processes.

Officers have been recording required information within a system of spreadsheets and associated documents, however this was clunky and time consuming for the officers completing the required admin for flights and for senior management in authorising plans with an audit trail.

The system brings a lot of benefits in giving a structured approach to managing drone operations, gives centralised evidence of compliance with flight times and pilot competence, improved auditability, reduced administrative burden and better oversight of multiple pilots, aircraft and operational area. Together these features help streamline drone operations, improve oversight and ensure compliance with aviation regulations.

Crib Book

Over recent months, the enforcement team has worked collaboratively to develop an in-house crib book covering enforcement procedures, safe working practices and relevant legislation to support officers in the field.

This resource will support staff induction, strengthen core competencies and contribute to the ongoing development of all enforcement officers. A collaborative approach to reviewing and ratifying the crib book is central to ensuring it becomes a practical and reliable resource for day-to-day use.

I-VMS roll-out

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is resuming the roll-out of the I-VMS programme, having reached an agreement with CLS UK Ltd (previously Fulcrum Maritime Systems Ltd) to supply type-approved devices to the under-12m English fleet.

MMO has made this decision to ensure that all English vessels are fitted with type-approved I-VMS devices that transmit positional data to the UK VMS Hub, in accordance with the licence condition. The marine regulator has confirmed that fishermen impacted by the suspended data transmissions from SC2 devices will receive type-approved CLS UK Ltd replacement devices at no additional cost to themselves.

The agreement with CLS UK Ltd provides stability for the sector at a time of transition and reinforces MMO's commitment to delivering a workable and fair I-VMS solution ahead of a Statutory Instrument, which will mandate the use of I-VMS devices by all under-12m fishing vessels operating in English waters.

MMO will write to those impacted in the coming weeks with more details and urges fishermen not to take any action at this time, such as removing or switching off any devices.

MMO encourages fishermen to contact the I-VMS team with any questions at ivms@marinemanagement.org.uk or 01900 508618. Phone lines are open Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm.

Updates will also be published on the I-VMS guidance page on GOV.UK as more information becomes available: www.gov.uk/mmo/i-vms-england

Intelligence Reporting

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

Intelligence Reports	February	March	April	Total
IFCOs	5	4	9	18

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. There are currently four ongoing operational plans running across the district.

Op Albion- Enforcement of the Flookburgh cockle fishery.

Op Notorious- Enforcement of the River Dee mussel fishery.

Op Gambon- Enforcement of the Pilling cockle fishery.

Op Tidal- Enforcement of the Newbiggin cockle fishery.

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.

In response to ongoing priorities around interactions between NWIFCA cockle fisheries and intertidal hand gathered fisheries in Wales, officers have accepted an invite to the North/South Wales cockle fisheries group to assist in partner working between NWIFCA, Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Government.

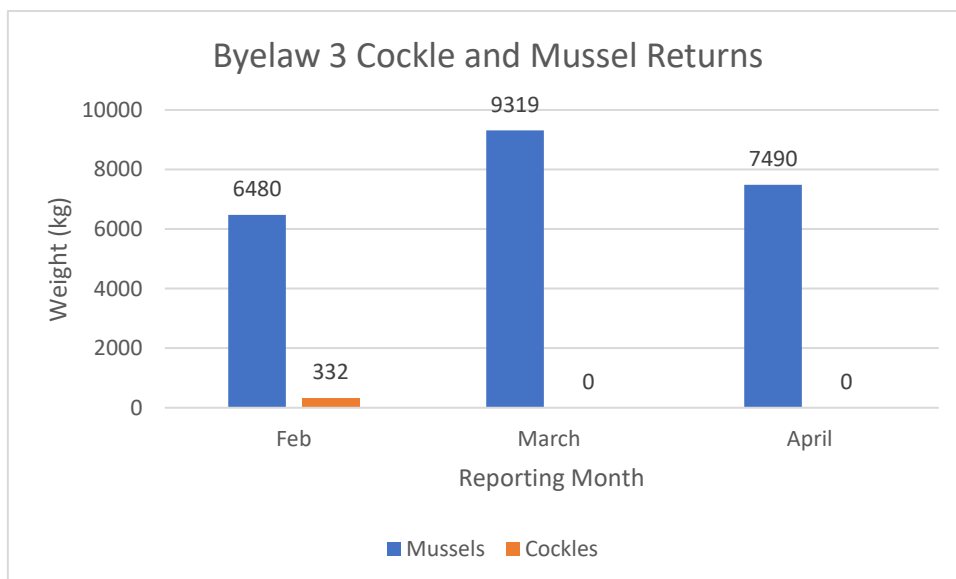
Meetings/Training/Sessions attended

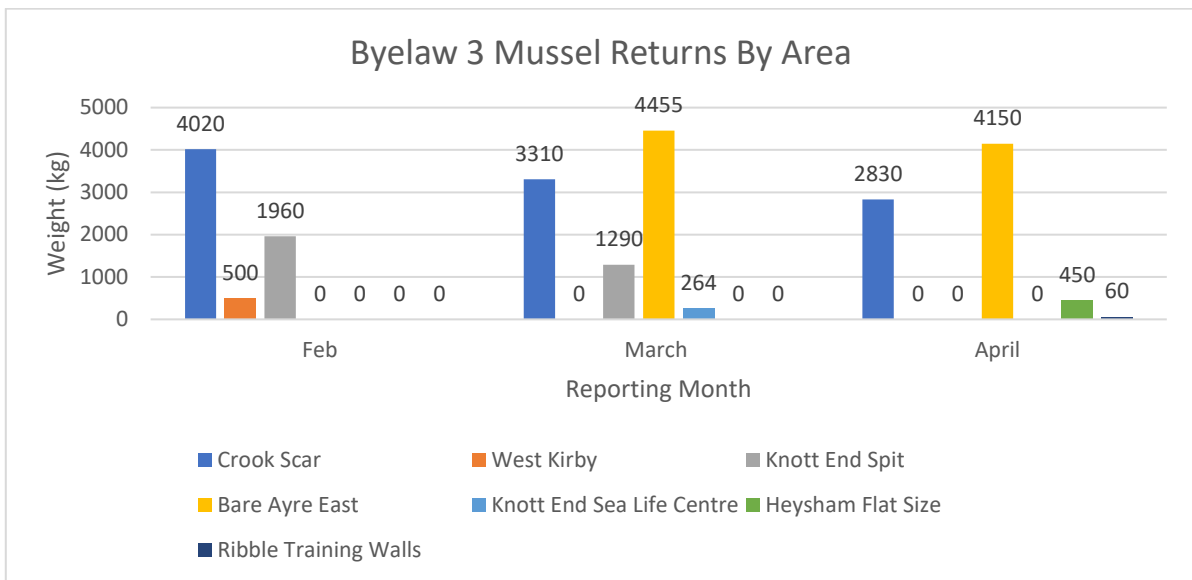
- National IFCA Enforcement Course
- REM in Practice workshop
- Mobile Working App Group
- National Inshore Marine Enforcement Group
- North/South Welsh Cockle Group
- Multi agency Group Meetings
- Dee Regulating Order Meetings
- Sea Fish fishing restrictions group
- IFCA – RIFG meeting
- Stakeholder meetings
- ACAS Training in intergenerational conflict in the workplace

Specific Fishery Reporting

Returns data

As in the previous reporting period, mussels remained the main species gathered by Byelaw 3 permit holders. Following the early opening trial, all cockle fisheries closed at the end of February, with only limited activity beforehand. Although the Foulney mussel bed is usually the most heavily fished area, low stock levels meant fishers instead worked smaller beds around the coastline, as shown in the chart below.





Because there are only small numbers of fishers holding Byelaw 4 potting permits, landings data for whelks and crustacea are not being reported in order to protect commercially sensitive information.

Sanctions, Infringements and Court Activity

There were no sanctions applied during the reporting period

Shore Based Activity Report

Number of:	Haverigg Point - Burgh Marsh Point	Haverigg Point - Arnside	Arnside - Mersey, Wirral and Dee
Shore patrols by all NWIFCA officers*	51	96	95
ATV patrols	14	16	8
Inspections under taken	45	5	107

* 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	15	113.91	993	7	5	56	18
Totals for the quarter	15	113.91	993	7	5	56	18

Annex B

Patrol Date	Patrol Time	Distance (nm)	Area Covered	Risk/ Purpose	Sectors Covered	No. Boarding	No. Closings	No. Sightings	No. Inspections (inc. gear inspections)
North Western Protector									
17/02/26	4.83	42	Whitehaven – Maryport – Allonby HPMA – St Bees	Potting, netting and angling	Allonby Bay HPMA, Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	0	0
03/03/26	5.58	50	Whitehaven – Maryport – Allonby HPMA – St Bees	Potting, netting and angling	Allonby Bay HPMA, Cumbria Coast MCZ	1	1	2	0
04/03/26	5.16	40	Prawn pitch - Workington	Trawling, recreational angling, potting and netting activities	Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	0	0
05/03/26	11.83	70	Isle of Man	Engineer assessment		0	0	0	0
19/03/26	6.67	60	Whitehaven – Allonby HPMA – St Bees	Potting, netting and angling	Allonby Bay HPMA, Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	3	0
26/03/26	12.08	110	Prawn pitch – W Walney - Lune deep – Heysham Bass	Potting, angling and netting	Lune Deep SAC, Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	1	0

	5.67	51	Whitehaven – Allonby HPMA – St Bees	Potting, angling & netting	Allonby Bay HPMA, Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	1	0
08/04/26	13.33	106	Whitehaven – Shell Flats – Lune Deep	Trawling, potting netting and angling activities	Lune Deep SAC	5	0	6	0
10/04/26	7.83	80	Whitehaven – Allonby Bay HPMA – Selker	Trawling, potting, netting and angling	Allonby Bay HPMA	0	0	3	0
14/04/26	4.25	48	Whitehaven – Allonby Bay HPMA – Silloth	Potting, netting & angling	Allonby Bay HPMA	0	0	1	18
21/04/26	5.92	66	Whitehaven – Allonby Bay HPMA – Northern Prawn Grounds	Potting, netting and angling	Allonby Bay HPMA	0	0	13	0
24/04/26	7.67	71	Whitehaven – Northern Prawn Grounds	Trawling, potting, netting and angling	Cumbria Coast MCZ	1	2	11	0
27/04/26	3.68	32	Whitehaven – Allonby Bay HPMA	Potting, angling and netting	Allonby Bay HPMA	0	0	0	0
28/04/26	6.25	62	Whitehaven – Prawn Grounds – Haverigg Point	Trawling, netting, potting and angling	Cumbria Coast MCZ, Drigg Coast SAC	0	1	8	0

29/04/26	13.16	105	Whitehaven – Selker – Liverpool Bay	Trawling, potting, netting and angling	Cumbria Coast MCZ – Liverpool Bay SPA	0	1	7	0
15	113.91	993				7	5	56	18