

45. AT A MEETING OF THE NORTH WESTERN INSHORE AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
HELD AT TRUCKHAVEN, CARNFORTH, 19th MARCH 2026

PRESENT – MEMBERS

Mr. P. Capper	Chair	MMO Appointee
Mr. B. Leigh		MMO Appointee
Cllr. A. Markley		Cumberland Council
Cllr. T. Bloomer		Westmorland and Furness Council
Cllr. S. Brookes		Blackpool Council
Cllr. P. Norris		Liverpool City Council
Cllr. C. Richards		Sefton Council
Mr. L. Browning		Natural England
Mr. N. Baxter		MMO Appointee
Mr. S. Brown		MMO Appointee
Mr. K. Thompson		MMO Appointee
Mr. T. Jones		MMO Appointee
Mr. M. Burdekin		MMO Appointee
Mr. R. Lomax		MMO Appointee
Dr. M. Tupper		MMO Appointee

IN ATTENDANCE

Ms. S. Isles (Natural England), Mr. M. Rowlings, Mr. T. Davies and Mr. P. Harrison.

NWIFCA OFFICERS ATTENDING

Mr. M. Taylor	CEO
Mr. J. Moulton	Head of Enforcement
Ms. A. Plumeridge	Head of Science
Ms. C. Silverwood	Admin Officer
Mr. C. Taylor	IFCO

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr. A. Jones	Lancashire County Council
Cllr. D. Shaw	Lancashire County Council
Mr. C. Proud	MMO Statutory Member
Mr. J. Turner	Environment Agency
Mr. G. Pidduck	MMO Appointee
Mr. L. Stainton	MMO Appointee
Mr. W. Friend	MMO Appointee
Ms. G. de Jong Cleyndert	MMO Appointee
Mr. R. Benson	MMO Appointee

46. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Chair extended a welcome to Mr. Matt Burdekin, an ex-NWIFCA fishery officer and a new MMO Appointee.

An extraordinary TSB meeting will be held directly after this meeting.

47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (AGENDA ITEM 2)

No declarations of pecuniary interest were made.

48. MINUTES OF AUTHORITY MEETING 4th DECEMBER 2025 (AGENDA ITEM 3)

The minutes were accepted as a true record.

Proposed: Mr. K. Thompson, Seconded: Cllr. C. Richards

All in Favour

RESOLVED

49. MATTERS ARISING (AGENDA ITEM 4)

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

50. FINANCIAL REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 5)

CEO reviewed the contents of the Financial Report for Quarter 3. Currently, we are running a net surplus. Discussion took place around a training course that has already been paid for in this financial year but has been postponed and will be undertaken in the next financial year.

THE REPORT WAS RECEIVED

51. TSB SUMMARY 10th FEBRUARY 2026 (AGENDA ITEM 6)

The TSB Chair provided a brief verbal summary of the meeting held on the 10th February 2026 and explained that discussion took place around Whelk permit conditions and Byelaw 3 minimum use policy.

52. CEO REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 7)

CEO reviewed the content of the report briefly covering the reopening of applications for Whelk permits. Discussion has taken place with our lawyer with regards to the Byelaw 3 Minimum Use Policy.

CEO welcomed Mr. M. Burdekin and reiterated that there are two vacancies on the committee.

CEO informed the members that Lancashire County Council has queried the 4.4% agreed increase to the levy amount. The outstanding amounts of Defra RDEL funding for 2025/2026 have been received. This funding includes funding for the Allonby Bay HPMAs.

The Whitehaven office has moved in to Gordon Thomson House (the Fish Hall) next door to the MMO. No progress has been made on reaching a resolution with Cumberland Council with regards to the ownership of Duncan Square. Carnforth Head Office will be refurbished next. We are waiting for quotes from our facilities manager. A lease has been signed on a new lock up in Carnforth.

An update was provided on the vessel procurement process and the refurbishment of North Western Protector. Discussion took place around the proposed work being undertaken on NWP extending the longevity of the vessel and possible periods of lack of utility.

CEO informed members of a change to the Comms role. IFCO Grace Edwards will focus her time on the IFCO duties as the sole IFCO based in the Carnforth Office. The Comms role will move into the Admin Team and Catherine Silverwood has been appointed as Senior Administration Officer (Comms) starting from 1st April 2026.

There have been three stakeholder events held in Wallasey, Grange-over-Sands and North Wales. These were well attended. CEO thanked members for their attendance.

Mr. B. Leigh suggested that the Wirral netting and angling call for evidence consultation was reopened and he would actively promote it on social media.

CEO thanked Mr. Jon Haines for stepping up and covering for the HOS in her absence.

CEO updated the members on the progress of Byelaw 7. Byelaw 7 is currently with Defra who have raised an issue with an ongoing review they are conducting into shore-based bass netting. CEO and HOE sought legal advice last week. Discussion took place around the options available, what proactive actions could be taken and the ambiguity around time frames.

Dee Estuary Cackle Fishing Regulating Order is progressing. It was submitted to Defra and Welsh Government in January. It was reiterated that it was full cost recovery from the licence fees.

The MMO Byelaws banning anchoring and fishing are still waiting to be confirmed for the Allonby Bay HPMA; it is likely the anchoring byelaw will come in first.

Cllr. P. Norris inquired if there was a dispute resolution procedure and what is the risk of Lancashire County Council querying the raise in the levy. Further discussion took place around the payment of levies, the possibility of legal recourse through the Marine and Coastal Access Act, the governance process, the implications of the local government reorganisation and that LCC are a New Burdens funding recipient.

Proposed: Mr. B. Leigh, Seconded: Mr. T. Jones

All in favour.

THE REPORT WAS RECEIVED

53. SCIENCE TEAM REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 8)

The HOS reviewed the contents of the Science report.

The Science team are currently reviewing methodology to facilitate optimum survey work and developing the use of Mergin Maps for data acquisition. Applications have been reopened for whelk permits following Officer Gemma Grose's research project. Officer Lucy Loud has secured research funding through Salford University to further the shrimp research project, creating a baseline stock assessment and develop partnership work. Officer Jon Haines is continuing to move forward with the drone survey work. Officer Gemma Grose has also completed her General Visual Line of Sight Certificate for flying the drone.

The Cackle FMP consultation closes at the end of this month and will be brought back to the TSB members in May 2026.

Cllr. C. Richards asked for clarification around NWIFCA's responsibilities or powers with regards to sewage discharges at Southport and Formby beaches. HOE explained that NWIFCA do not have any statutory powers to assist with the regulation of water quality except where it affects our stakeholders and shellfish.

Cllr. S. Brookes asked for an update on the Blackpool Groynes consultation and for clarification around Dutch wand surveys. CEO extended an invitation to members to join Officers on surveys or on the boat.

Proposed: Mr. T. Jones, Seconded: Cllr. S. Brookes

All in favour.

THE REPORT WAS RECEIVED

Lunch break commenced at 12:05

Meeting re-commenced at 12:40

54. ENFORCEMENT TEAM REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 9)

HOE reviewed the contents of the report for the benefit of the members. The patches in the report need amending to reflect the new structure.

The national minimum conservation reference size for lobster is rising from 87mm to 90mm in 2028. When the statutory instrument comes in this will apply to all stakeholders.

The annual change to bass fishing guidance has changed for recreational fishers. From 1st April 2026, recreational fishers, using rod and line, can retain three bass per day.

All Enforcement Officers have completed the Environment Agency's online training and assessment to learn about EA legislation and powers and invasive species. The cross warrants carry increased powers in the estuarine areas and offers more opportunities for joint working.

The HOE provided an update on the procurement of the new vessel. The tender process closes today; 19th March 2026.

The enforcement team will undertake joint working with Cumbria Wildlife Trust and utilise the drone for bird survey work. Currently, exploring beyond visual line of sight options for using the drone and ways of ensuring compliancy for completing pre-flight paperwork and utilising an online portal for time saving efficiencies.

It was a very quiet quarter with regards to fishing activity and a compliant period. Market forces have reduced the activity on the cockle fisheries. Mussels have been predominately fished in this quarter.

Cllr. S. Brookes queried the lack of inspections and boardings undertaken by North Western Protector in this quarter and the alternatives available to Enforcement Officers for undertaking monitoring operations.

Discussion took place around the tendering process, procurement process and the options available to NWIFCA should no further tenders be received. Cllr. T. Markley

emphasised that the procurement process must be followed and it would need to be a complete re-tender process if insufficient tenders were received.

Proposed: Mr. N. Baxter, Seconded: Cllr. S. Brookes

All in favour.

THE REPORT WAS RECEIVED

55. HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLBEING REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 10)

CEO reviewed the contents of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing report including the training undertaken by officers in the quarter.

A gap analysis has been undertaken of the Authority's policies and procedures. Areas to be addressed initially include streamlining risk assessments, developing a process for investigating incidents and beginning to examine trends.

The HSE's Safety Climate Tool survey was completed by officers in January. Several areas for improvement have been identified.

It was recommended that the accident involving the fisherman was altered from an accident to a safety observation, so it does not affect our statistics.

Proposed: Mr. N. Baxter, Seconded: Cllr. S. Brookes

All in favour.

THE REPORT WAS RECEIVED WITH THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROPOSAL THAT THE FISHERMAN'S ACCIDENT IS A SAFETY OBSERVATION.

56. DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN (AGENDA ITEM 11)

CEO drafted the Annual Plan in January and February to bring it to the March meeting for members consideration. A full review of Byelaw 3, to commence in 2026/27, will be added to the objectives in the Annual Plan.

Discussion took place around the success criteria and the need to refresh the performance indicators. The draft Annual Report is produced for the September Authority meeting and then sent to Defra for assessment as it is their success criteria.

Cllr. S. Brookes requested that Blackpool Borough Council is amended to Blackpool Council on page 10 and 12.

RECOMMENDATION: The Draft Annual plan is agreed so that it can be published on the website with the two amendments, addition of a Byelaw 3 review to the objectives and amending Blackpool Borough Council to Blackpool Council.

Proposed: Cllr. A. Markley, Seconded: Cllr. T. Bloomer
All in favour.

57. DATA PROTECTION AUDIT (AGENDA ITEM 12)

A Data Protection Officer has been appointed through Blackpool Council. An audit was undertaken and a report produced. The report sets out a number of actions, and these are in the process of being addressed.

Discussion took place around the necessity for checking our obligations and utilising contractors or third parties for data storage.

Proposed: Mr. N. Baxter, Seconded: Cllr. P. Norris
All in favour.

THE REPORT WAS RECEIVED

58. AOB (AGENDA ITEM 13)

CEO informed members that a formal review of the constitution is being undertaken. Initially, the executive will review the constitution and then it will be brought to the members for consideration. The constitution needs to be fit for purpose for 2026.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending.

Meeting closed at 1:35pm.