

Communication and Engagement Strategy

Version 2: October 2026

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1. Introduction

1.1 Who we are

The North Western Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (NWIFCA) was created in 2011 under the Marine and Coastal Act 2009, following the merging of the North West and Cumbria Sea Fisheries Committees, forming one IFCA district for the entire North West of England.

NWIFCA is one of ten IFCAs across England that are responsible for inshore fisheries management and conservation. The district covers approximately 850km of North West English coastline from the Scottish to the Welsh borders and extends six nautical miles offshore.

NWIFCA is funded by an annual levy provided by local authorities and supported by central government. Through this support, we aim to deliver socio-economic outcomes balanced with the protection of the marine environment.

This strategy aims to provide clear and concise information about how NWIFCA aims to communicate and engage with all stakeholders to ensure the continued sustainability of the district's fisheries.

1.2 Purpose

Communication is a key component of every aspect of work NWIFCA performs. To ensure that each stakeholder has a voice and is informed, an efficient and comprehensive Communication and Engagement Strategy is essential.

IFCA Success Criteria guidelines were established by Defra in 2015 to support IFCAs in delivering their duties. These criteria are incorporated in NWIFCA's Annual Plan each year. The first criterion focuses solely on communications and is categorised into high-level objectives, outlining the basis for success. These are listed below in Table 1.

Table 1: Success Criterion 1 set by Defra. The criterion is broken down into the following high-level indicators.

Success Criteria Indicators	
SC1A	The IFCA will maintain a database of stakeholder contacts reviewed and updated by 31st March each year.
SC1B	The IFCA will review its communication strategy and implementation plan by 31st March each year.
SC1C	The IFCA will review its website by the last working day of each month.
SC1D	The IFCA will ensure the website meets the objectives of its communication strategy by 31st March.
SC1E	The IFCA will review all Memoranda of Understanding by 31st March each year. There will be plans in place to update MoUs to agreed timescales.
SC1F	By 31st March each year IFCA will participate proportionately and at the right level of delegation, in regional and national fisheries and conservation activity identified in the annual plan.

To effectively meet Defra's Communications Success Criterion, NWIFCA has developed principles that underline all forms of engagement that it will engage in. These are to:

- Be proportionate both for the group being consulted / consulting and to the purpose of the engagement
- Be open, transparent and focused with our stakeholders, being clear how their views will be used and what they may and may not influence
- Be consistent and joined up ensuring no group has undue influence or access, but that engagement is tailored to the commitments and interests of the audience
- Support and promote improvement by sharing findings with other stakeholders and to improve engagement where required
- Be accountable and cost effective, using the necessary resources and time to make a difference and properly evaluating findings

2. Vision and Objectives

2.1 Vision

Our vision for this Communication and Engagement Strategy is to build trust, transparency, and collaboration with all stakeholders and communities to achieve sustainable fisheries and marine conservation in the North West.

2.2 Objectives

- Increase awareness of NWIFCA's work, roles, and responsibilities, both at a regional and national level
- Identify key stakeholder groups and appropriate methods of communication and engagement
- Build and encourage relationships with stakeholders and groups, to ensure they have a voice
- Strengthen two-way communication and feedback mechanisms
- Establish core communications and utilise those tools effectively
- Support compliance by providing clear, accessible, and timely information
- Ensure all our communications are accessible to all stakeholders
- Inform and educate the wider community
- Enhance NWIFCA's reputation as a fair, evidence-based regulator and fisheries manager
- Establish a process of annual planning and review.

3. Stakeholders

3.1 Our Stakeholders

Stakeholders are defined as any group or individuals who may affect, or be affected by, NWIFCA's decisions. NWIFCA's stakeholders range from local coastal communities, recreational and commercial fishers, conservation groups, sea users, government bodies and NGOs.

NWIFCA works closely with multiple organisations and stakeholders on a regular basis. By having close working relationships, we can provide and facilitate opportunities for open discussions and shared opportunities to provide successful management of the inshore fisheries.

NWIFCA has statutory partner government bodies that sit on our committee – Marine Management Organisation, Natural England and the Environment Agency.

3.2 Key Messages

The points listed below are the key messages NWIFCA aims to promote to all stakeholders through the implementation of this strategy.

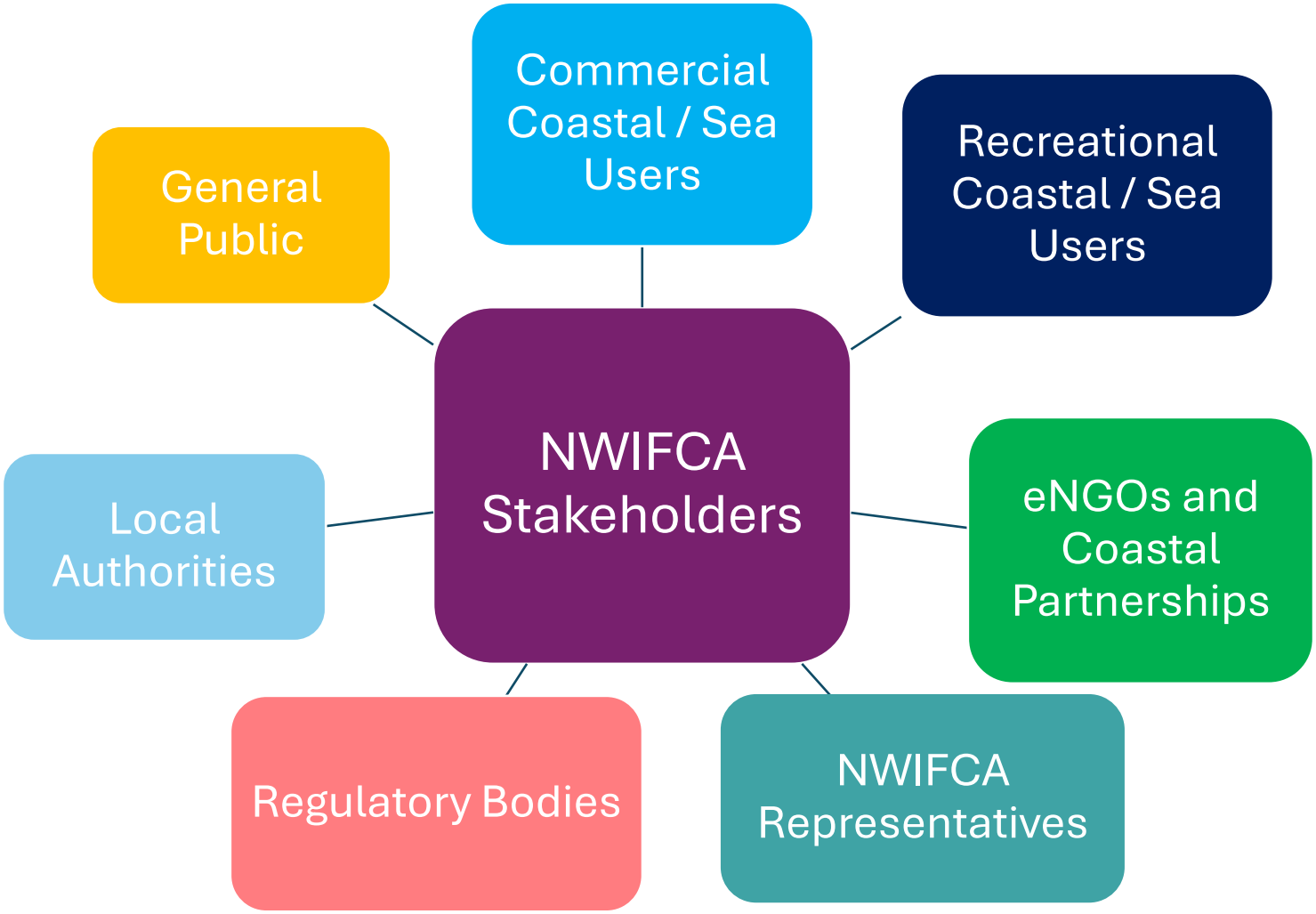
NWIFCA protects local fisheries and marine life for current and future generations through effective management and regulation

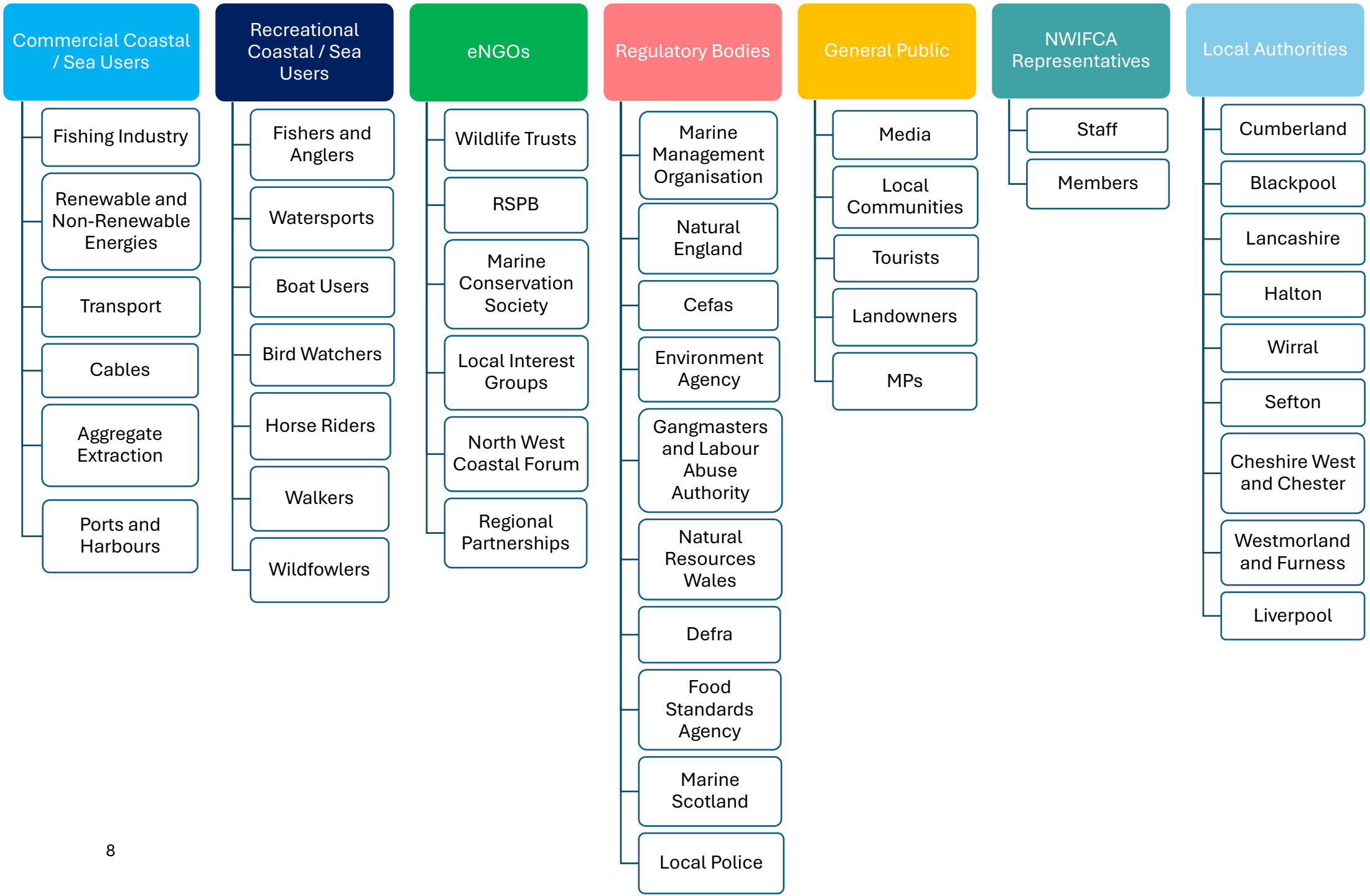
Our decisions are evidence-based, balancing ecological, environmental, and socio-economic needs, and are informed by data and stakeholder input

Compliance with regulations protects fishing livelihoods, communities and marine resources

Stakeholders' voices matter – we listen and we explain how feedback influences our decisions

We work in close partnership with other agencies and communities across the North West coast


Commercial Coastal / Sea Users
General Public
Recreational Coastal / Sea Users
NWIFCA Stakeholders
Local Authorities
eNGOs and Coastal Partnerships
Regulatory Bodies
NWIFCA Representatives


Commercial Coastal / Sea Users
Fishing Industry
Renewable and Non-Renewable Energies
Transport
Cables
Aggregate Extraction
Ports and Harbours
Recreational Coastal / Sea Users
Fishers and Anglers
Watersports
Boat Users
Bird Watchers
Horse Riders
Walkers
Wildfowlers
eNGOs
Wildlife Trusts
RSPB
Marine Conservation Society
Local Interest Groups
North West Coastal Forum
Regional Partnerships
Regulatory Bodies
Marine Management Organisation
Natural England
Cefas
Environment Agency
Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority
Natural Resources Wales
Defra
Food Standards Agency
Marine Scotland
Local Police
General Public
Media
Local Communities
Tourists
Landowners
MPs
NWIFCA Representatives
Staff
Members
Local Authorities
Cumberland
Blackpool
Lancashire
Halton
Wirral
Sefton
Cheshire West and Chester
Westmorland and Furness
Liverpool

4. Communication and Engagement Approaches

4.1 Communication Pathways

Table 2 below outlines the pathways in which NWIFCA engages with our stakeholders.

Table 2: Communication Methods and Benefits

Method	Benefits	Owner(s)
Website	First point of contact for stakeholders. Home page allows for stakeholders to easily find the required information. News posts are regularly updated. Can easily be integrated with other tools such as Microsoft or Gravity forms.	Comms Officer CEO Selected other officers
Social Media	Allows information to be distributed quickly. Provides direct engagement with stakeholders, many of whom use our Facebook page as a main source of information.	Comms Officer Selected other officers
Text	Can reach large groups quickly through Textmarketer service. Allows us to contact those who do not readily use digital sources. Can easily include direct links to our website. Can target individuals if needed.	Comms Officer Head of Science Admin Team
Email	Can reach a large audience quickly and effectively. Easy for stakeholders and staff to easily and quickly respond to queries. Provides a record of communication on both fronts. Varying implications for security.	CEO Admin Team
Letters / Forms	Accessible to nearly every stakeholder. Formal. Letters are sent first class to avoid refusal of notice.	Admin Team

Telephone	Accessible to nearly every stakeholder as it provides a direct line to staff. Admin staff can reroute calls to the appropriate staff member. Allows for stakeholder queries to be answered promptly.	All officers (Admin Team as first triage)
Face-to-Face (including meetings, workshops and presentations)	These events allow for an open dialogue between staff and stakeholders. It allows for relationships between the Authority and stakeholders to develop and for stakeholders to have a voice. This ensures that NWIFCA will have effective engagement when consultations, issues and fisheries arise. Stakeholders can receive information to queries quickly and directly from staff.	CEO Head of Science Head of Enforcement Senior IFCOs
Posters and Signage	These are a passive method of communication. A wider audience can be reached quickly. Posters can contain specific information, such as fisheries closures, updated / new regulations and stakeholder events. Posters can be placed where target stakeholders frequent. They are a quick and effective education tool.	Comms Officer Senior IFCOs
Reports	Provide concise insight on a subject. Can be distributed electronically and physically	CEO Head of Science Head of Enforcement
Press Releases	Official communications to the media, ensure that there is large public exposure. These are normally sent to local newspapers and online news outlets. Provides access to a wider range of mediums such as TV and radio.	CEO Comms Officer

Stakeholder Database[1]	Allows for targeting of stakeholders by interest, location or sector. All data is held in one place. Can produce lists with just essential information.	Comms Officer Admin Team

[1] Stakeholder data is held and used in line with data protection legislation and NWIFCA's privacy notices. Stakeholders can request updates and removal of their details.

4.2 Engagement

NWIFCA will be proactive in engaging stakeholders. The organisation hosts regular stakeholder events whereby stakeholders can come and talk to senior management and staff about current fisheries management.

Stakeholders have some involvement in the opening of fisheries and the development of new byelaws. This is done by consultation, online and in-person where appropriate. Stakeholders' views and suggestions can be used to inform Authority members' decisions. Consultations will be run for a minimum of one month but could be significantly longer depending on the nature of the proposals being considered or views sought. Analysis of consultation responses will be carried out using various standard qualitative and quantitative analyses methodologies, and NWIFCA will 'close the loop' on consultations by publishing consultation summaries and decisions explaining how responses influenced outcomes.

If stakeholders contact our office, they can talk to someone directly. There are clear feedback protocols that are followed. Most enquiries can be answered quickly and efficiently by relevant officers. Enquiries by Authority members, MPs or the media are answered by senior management. Stakeholders can also contact and engage with us through our feedback forms and email, whereby they will receive a response within 10 days.

NWIFCA has engaged with partner organisations and have an information stand and other publicity material to display and give out at public events. These have proven effective in educating the public about the work the organisation undertakes.

4.3 Pathway Updates

4.3.1 Website

NWIFCA's website was reviewed and updated in 2024. New features and formatting have allowed for a cleaner, more accessible and navigable website. The new 'sticky' feature allows for the prioritisation of information published. Relevant partner organisations' information can also be shared this way.

New dedicated, issue-specific pages have been developed and published, allowing stakeholders a direct link to the latest information they are interested in. In addition, a help page has been produced to assist our permit holders with various tasks on our new permit system. There are direct links to the new permit database that permit holders and staff can easily access.

The integration of Survey Monkey has allowed staff to run consultations quickly and collate data effectively and efficiently. These forms can be set to allow permit holders or

stakeholders to submit a response only once. This has helped streamline responses and allow for all stakeholders to have a voice. It has also reduced the potential for bias or elite capture in our consultations.

In the coming years, blogs and vlogs will be used on the website to highlight the variety of work being done by the Authority.

4.3.2 Permit Database

This is a new system for 2025 which allows staff to access permit lists and directly contact individuals or groups. Permit holders can access their information and directly input their returns data onto the system. This improves data accuracy, which in turn underpins our evidence-based decision-making.

4.3.3 Stakeholder Events

In recent years, NWIFCA has increased the number of stakeholder events we run. These have included open events where stakeholders can come and engage with officers about current issues and specific events relevant to them. We also run an appointment-based system where stakeholders can discuss issues with officers individually or in small groups. The introduction of an appointment-based system has allowed for stakeholders to have a stronger voice, fostering a clearer, more productive relationship between us, in turn developing trust in NWIFCA's decisions.

Staff have also taken part in partner agency events. This has helped increase the NWIFCA's presence and educate the public about who we are and what we aim to achieve. NWIFCA aim to collaborate at future events in the coming years.

5. Urgent Communications

In the event of an urgent issue (*e.g.* fishery closures, environmental incidents, media coverage or circulation of misinformation), NWIFCA will apply a set of protocols to ensure all staff, members and stakeholders are quickly and efficiently communicated with.

These protocols include the following:

- A clear spokesperson. These will be either the CEO, Chair, Head of Enforcement or Head of Science.
- Where appropriate, there will be a set of pre-prepared statements and FAQs that can be released until further information is available.
- All relevant parties will be communicated with through our internal channels, email, text, website, socials and, if needed, through the media.
- Coordination of messaging with partner organisations where appropriate.

6. Branding and Style

NWIFCA branding will be clear, concise and easily recognisable. Across all media platforms and papers, the same logo and font will be used along with the same colour scheme.

Tone will be professional, clear and approachable. Technical jargon will be limited to ensure all stakeholders can understand our messages. This is particularly important for survey results and consultations regarding new byelaws or fisheries management proposals.

A library of appropriate images will be kept for use in external comms. This will include NWIFCA-owned images as well as those for which we have been given explicit permission to reproduce, with appropriate attribution given.

All external communication material will be checked for clarity before release.

An internal Comms Handbook will be produced for staff setting out templates, branding rules and tone-of-voice guidance.

7. Monitoring and Implementation

7.1 Monitoring

We will monitor and evaluate our engagement by observing the attendance at stakeholder events and the types of conversations occurring. We will also run online stakeholder satisfaction surveys, which may give us an indication as to whether our existing practices are effective.

Once we have given the media press releases or statements, we can follow how the public receive our messages by monitoring relevant news outlets and social media.

Website and social media analytics can be used to monitor traffic and identify trends in stakeholders' interest areas.

We may also analyse compliance rates to see if there are any measurable effects from targeted communication campaigns.

7.2 Implementation

Overall responsibility for this strategy lies with the CEO, but various individuals will be responsible for its implementation. These include the Authority's Communications Officer, Admin Team and senior management. Each team (*e.g.* Admin, Science and Enforcement) will be responsible for feeding content into comms channels. All members of staff will be responsible for basic communications such as answering queries from stakeholders, whilst anything serious will be dealt with by the relevant officer(s).

The Communications Officer will be primarily responsible for digital communications, such as the website and social media. They will also be responsible for the Textmarketer service. Selected other individuals, including senior management, will also have access to contribute to these pathways.

Stakeholder forums and events will be led by senior management.

Overhaul of digital pathways has already begun with the Communications Officer being the main lead. In the coming years, stakeholder engagement will evolve to include more face-to-face events with clearer structure.

This strategy will be annually reviewed and updated accordingly.