

NWIFCA Quarterly Meeting

25th September 2025

REPORT NO.

4

HEAD OF ENFORCEMENT QUARTERLY REPORT – 1ST MAY – 31ST JULY 2025

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 Haille	<p>Shore patrols were undertaken throughout the North of the district during the quarter, covering all known ports and hot spots between Port Carlisle and Haverigg Point. Please see appendices attached outlining patrols undertaken during the quarter.</p> <p>Officers have also assisted in other parts of the district throughout the reporting period.</p> <p>A total of 61 shore patrols carried out in the quarter, with 359 locations visited including 80 fishing ports by officers.</p> <p>ATV Patrol</p> <p>10 ATV patrol were carried out around Nethertown, Braystones and Silecroft.</p> <p>Details of all patrols carried out on shore this quarter can be found in the appendices.</p> <p>Trawling</p> <p>Activity was observed from local trawlers targeting prawns (<i>Nephrops</i>) and bait fish (plaice – dogfish) from grounds, South West of St Bees 3 to 10 nautical miles offshore.</p> <p>Individual vessels were monitored at sea on VMS fishing inside the six nautical mile limit, during the quarter, with some reports of prawns being caught on the odd occasion in between 30 - 60 stones per day throughout the quarter, some of vessels from Maryport and Whitehaven are landing to coops and direct to the public in both ports.</p> <p>Some small landings of thornback rays, plaice and prime fish also landed at ports.</p> <p>Potting</p> <p>Activity on VMS over the quarter showed whelk vessels from Whitehaven and Fleetwood engaged in whelk potting inside and outside of the district.</p> <p>Vessels from Fleetwood were seen fishing off North Wales, 6 – 10 miles off the coast, West of Formby, South and North of IOM as well as 10 miles west of Whitehaven and Scottish waters in Solway Firth.</p> <p>Some local vessels had been seen on VMS fishing on grounds inside of the NWIFCA 6-mile limit, this year, majority of the fishing days had been carried out outside of the district.</p>

	<p>Some local vessels targeting lobster and brown crab continued to fish pots. These vessels targeted areas North and South of Whitehaven, mixed reports from fishers of quantities of lobsters and crab being caught.</p> <p>Angling</p> <p>Angling activity on beaches and piers was evident at all areas from beginning of May to end of July, catches varied from small dabs, whiting, plaice, dogfish and thornback rays, mackerel have been caught in quantity this year with the warm weather bring people out more and the shoals of fish swimming in have made this year one of the better years for anglers, most activity was seen over the weekends.</p> <p>During this quarter during daylight hours, 90 anglers were seen on piers and beaches. However, with NWP being fully back online a lot of time was spent at sea so the effort to do shore patrols wasn't as great as previous years.</p> <p>Beach Nets</p> <p>1 net was seen this quarter and seized due to byelaw 10 shallow water restrictions.</p> <p>Other Duties</p> <p>Other duties undertaken included early morning patrols and evening patrols, in known areas where activity has been most.</p> <p>VMS satellite surveillance work was undertaken with over 100 vessels monitored.</p>
<p>Haverigg Point – Arnside – SIFCO Dixon & IFCO Taylor</p>	<p>Mussels</p> <p>Once again mussel gathering activity was at a very low level during this reporting period, with sightings of less than 5 byelaw 3 permit holders gathering mussels for local depuration orders.</p> <p>Classification sampling began on a weekly basis from the mussel bed known as Crook Scar in Walney channel, with samples being taken for e-coli monitoring, biotoxin monitoring and Chemical contaminants monitoring. The bed was classified as a class A.</p> <p>IFCO's assisted the Science Team surveying Foulney and South America mussel beds, the latter of which was accessible via ATV again, although very little mussel remained on the scars.</p> <p>IFCO's continue to gather mussel samples for Local Authority Environmental Health Department from Foulney.</p> <p>Cockles</p> <p>Cockle beds within North Morecambe Bay were closed for the duration of the reporting period. Officer's based at Barrow assisted with the cockle fishery which opened at Pilling on the 1st July.</p> <p>All cockle beds within the area were surveyed again to determine if there was sufficient stock to permit a September opening.</p>

I continue to undertake cockle samples from 2 sites near Flookburgh and 1 site at Newbiggin for the Local Authority.

Shrimping

Shrimping was again at a very low level, with most shrimps being reported as smaller than the historical average by stakeholders. Very few shrimp tractors were observed, with only occasional sightings in the Leven estuary or in Morecambe Bay from Flookburgh.

Netting

Netting activity was again at a low level during this reporting period, the presence of large numbers of smooth hounds in Morecambe Bay meant that commercial vessel operators were reluctant to set nets. Occasional reports were received towards the end of the reporting period but very little was being caught.

In the earlier part of the reporting period two beach nets were observed and inspected in the outer Leven estuary, these were set for plaice and flounders, occasional catches of sole were reported.

No Flue netting activity was recorded during the open season at the end of the reporting quarter.

Potting

Two licensed vessels were observed occasionally during the period, setting lobster and crab pots in the Irish Sea west of Walney Island. One other licensed vessel occasionally fished a limited number of pots as permitted under byelaw 4.

Three vessels continue to pot for lobster and crab, and occasionally prawns, outside the district.

Long lines

Only 1 long line was observed during this quarter.

Angling

Angling activity increased this quarter as numbers of bass increased, with popular locations being Foulney Island, the coast road between Rampside and Ulverston, and the upper Leven Estuary, and the Duddon estuary. Occasional reports were received regarding minor offences, but patrol findings showed a good level of compliance with most anglers preferring to practice catch and release.

Commercial licensed vessels were observed targeting bass using rod and line in the area south of Foulney.

Bait Collection

Regular sightings of 2-3 commercial bait diggers in the Duddon estuary.

Sightings also recorded of Black lug commercial bait pumping on the Irish sea coast of North Walney.

During the quarter the peeler crab gathering slowed down, with very few fishermen observed.

	<p>Miscellaneous</p> <p>During the reporting period several patrols were undertaken with colleagues from the Environment Agency and the Marine Management Organisation, as well as assisting local Authority Environmental Health Officers with shellfish matters.</p>
Dee-Southport – SIFCO Brownrigg, IFCO Taylor	<p>General</p> <p>This quarter has seen the continued enforcement of Byelaw 2 – North Wirral Foreshore Bivalve Molluscs along the north Wirral coastline. Despite the closure remaining in place, low-level illegal gathering has continued to be recorded.</p> <p>From July, officers oversaw the operational planning and routine enforcement of the Pilling Sands cockle fishery. Regular shore patrols and intertidal ATV work have also continued. As predicted, the warmer weather has brought a slight rise in general fishing activity within the area; however, overall recreational angling activity has remained low.</p> <p>Officers have also provided out-of-area support to enforcement and science teams in the form of survey work. Quarterly sampling on behalf of West Lancashire and Wyre Councils and Mersey Port Health Authority has continued. Multiagency patrols have also taken place forming strong links with Lancashire Rural Police, Environment Agency and Marine Management Organisation.</p> <p>The area’s fishery patrol vessel, Bay Protector, carried out its annual in-house training programme, ensuring both science and enforcement officers remain current and competent in small boat handling.</p> <p>As part of the ongoing Health & Safety review, the Liverpool office underwent renovation works to improve welfare facilities. In addition, the mezzanine floor has been converted into a purpose-built enclosed office space, capable of comfortably accommodating four officers.</p> <p>Hand-Gathering of Bivalves</p> <p>Despite the active enforcement of Byelaw 2, low-level illegal gathering continues along the north Wirral coastline, with both cockles and otter clams being targeted. Inspection report forms have been compiled and submitted to the HoE for review.</p> <p>July marked the opening and enforcement of the Pilling Sands cockle fishery, where some ninety-four Byelaw 3 permit holders were subject to minimum landing inspections.</p> <p>Weekly vehicle patrols continue across the Dee Estuary coastline. Both the Caldy Blacks and West Kirby mussel beds remain under observation, with low-level mussel gathering recorded.</p> <p>Recreational Rod Angling – Shore</p> <p>Seventy-three inspections of shore and beach anglers have been carried out this quarter. The Wallasey promenade continues to attract activity, with Seacombe promenade being the most popular location, alongside the beach around Perch Rock.</p> <p>Species recorded include whiting, plaice, flounder, dab, and sole. Catch returns remain low overall, reflecting the positive catch-and-release approach adopted by many anglers.</p>

Recreational Rod Angling – Boat

Recreational angling craft have continued to be sighted around Liverpool Bay, the River Mersey, Dee Estuary, and River Ribble areas. Unfortunately, shore based enforcement work has severely limited any chance of conducting any boardings and inspections at sea.

Beach Netting

A reduction in seasonal beach netting has been noted during this quarter. Nets have continued to be observed along both the north Wirral and Sefton coastlines, with very little catch recorded.

However, officers have recorded an increase in purse-seine activity in the Leasowe Bay area. Overall catches here have included plaice, sole, smoothhound, and turbot.

Bait Digging

Bait digging remains active along both coastlines, with Mockbeggar Wharf continuing to be the most popular location. Twenty-two inspections have been undertaken, with both pump and spade methods observed.

Bay Protector

The start of the quarter saw Bay Protector briefly at sea. Unfortunately, due to the opening of the Pilling Sands fishery in early July and officer unavailability beforehand, 10 pre-planned RIB patrols had to be cancelled.

During her last coding inspection in 2024, hollow areas were observed in the deck flooring. A boat surveyor was therefore engaged to carry out an external inspection of the deck area. On the recommendation of the surveyor, YDSA, and MCA, the vessel's coding has now been changed.

In line with these recommendations, Bay Protector will be lifted out of the water in October for a full external inspection of the hull and transom.

Communication & Engagement – IFCO Edwards

Byelaw 3 Fisheries Updates

Dedicated web pages are now live, providing stakeholders with clear and accessible information on each open fishery, including conditions, notices, and enforcement updates.

Byelaw 7 Netting Applications

Applications are now live and have been advertised via the Authority's website and social media channels, ensuring transparency and raising awareness among both applicants and the wider public.

Seafest Community Engagement

Officers organised and attended the Cumbria Wildlife Trust's Seafest event at St Bees, alongside the Whitehaven crew. The event provided a valuable opportunity to promote sustainable fishing practices, raise awareness of the Authority's role, and strengthen relationships with local communities and partner organisations.

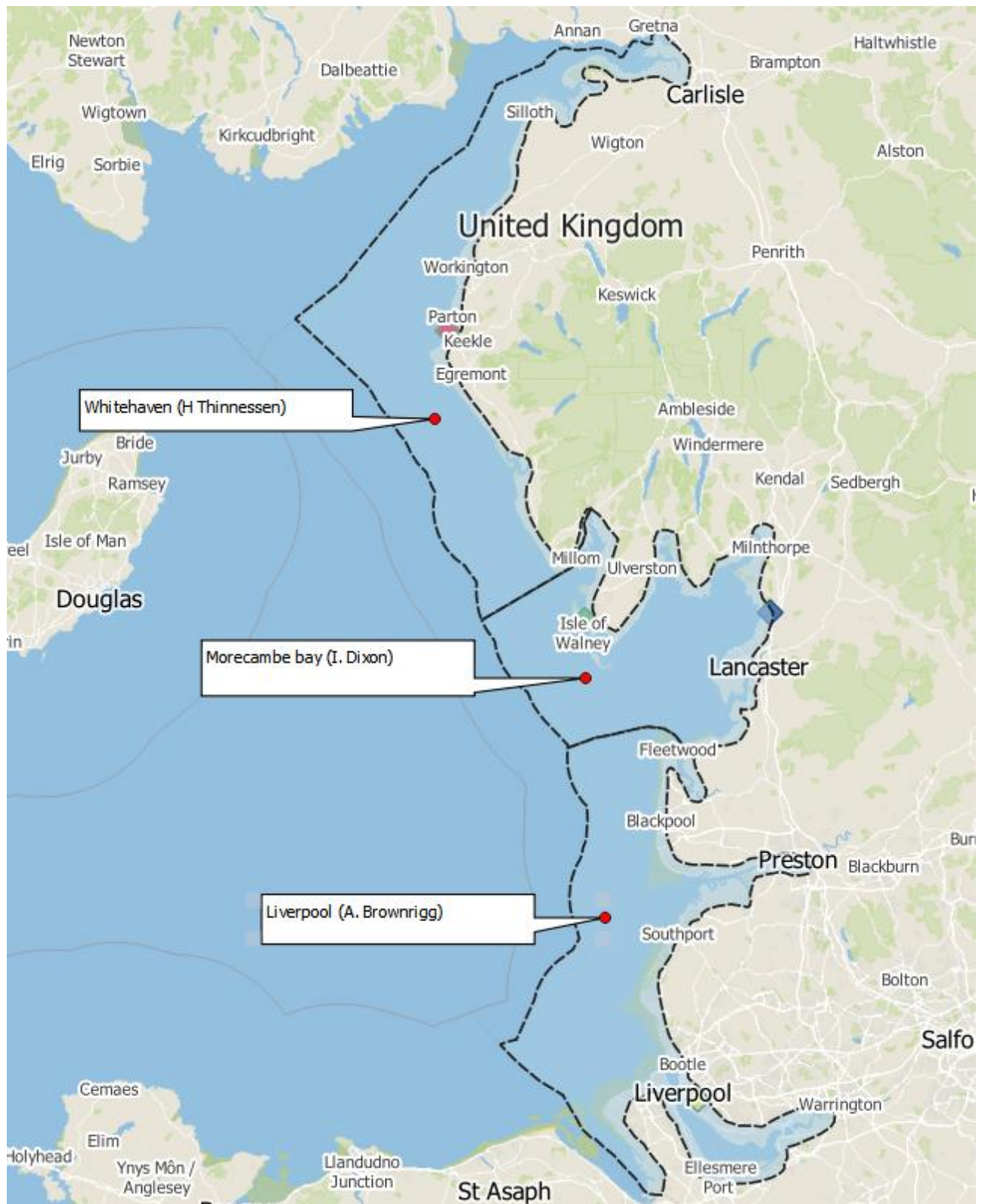
<p><u>North Western Protector</u></p> <p>Master Hugh Thinnesen</p>	<p>I am pleased to report that the patrol boat has performed well over the reporting period with only a couple of minor repairs carried out over the last 3 months.</p> <p>North Western Protector was lifted out of the water at Workington for annual slipping on the 17th May 2025 to carryout planned maintenance and services.</p> <p>The 5000-hour main service was carried out on both jet drive units. This work involved stripping the units down and replacing all the internal mechanical seals and bearings and was carried out by Marine Jet Power's engineer Lee Welling along with the patrol boat engineer and crew assisting.</p> <p>The corroded main deck hydraulic pipes were stripped back, rubbed down and cleaned off before being re-painted. The vessels hulls were pressure washed down before being re-painted with antifoul. New sacrificial anodes were also fitted prior to the vessel going back in the water on the 6th June 2005 and that was carried out by patrol boat crew.</p> <p>Patrols boardings and inspections of vessels at sea, along with static gear inspections logged from North Western Protector and Protector Charlie can be found in the appendices to the Head of Enforcement's report.</p> <p>Compliance overall has been good, however a number of lobster/crab pots were seized for none compliance to the potting byelaw.</p> <p>Vessel maintenance and service schedules on North Western Protector and Protector Charlie are all up to date</p>
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General Update

Patch update

The past 18 months of having the senior IFCO level of management in place have presented an opportunity to review the areas of operational and staff covered by each senior IFCO. Between staff and senior management, the areas covered were examined and it was decided to extend the area covered by SIFCO Dixon to move South from The River Kent to Knott End. This now means the area covered by SIFCO Dixon is between Haverigg point and Knott End on the River Wyre. The benefits of this are one SIFCO operationally managing Morecambe Bay, in particular the cockle fisheries and less distance in SIFCO Brownrigg having to travel in covering the Northern fisheries such as Pilling and Heysham Bass Nursery Area.

Please see below for a visual description of the areas covered by each SIFCO team.



Safety Management System

Head of Enforcement has during this period been exploring the requirements and need for demonstrating a safety management system under Workboat code 3 the new Maritime and Coastguard Agency regulation for managing the operation and safety of commercial vessels. The use of a digital system as well as fulfilling compliancy will greatly assist in reducing the administrative burden of maintenance and servicing of equipment as well as giving management oversight of safety task and record completion.

Intelligence Reporting

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

Intelligence Reports	May	June	July	Total
IFCOs	25	20	22	67

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 six ongoing operational plans running across the district.

Op Albion- Enforcement of the Flookburgh cockle fishery.

Op Wistful- Enforcement of NWIFCA Byelaw 2- North Wirral Bivalve Molluscs.

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.

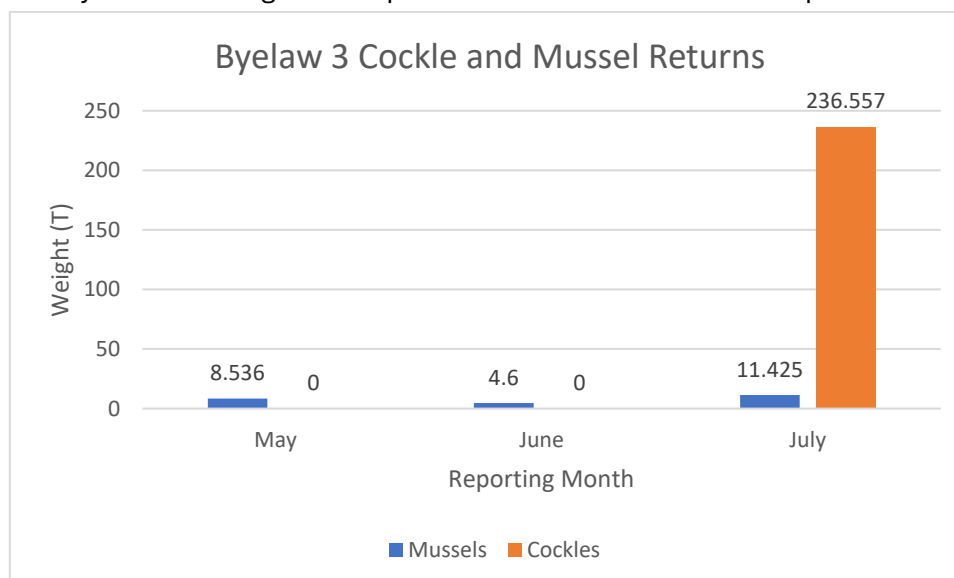
Op Unite- Enforcement of Heysham bass nursery area.

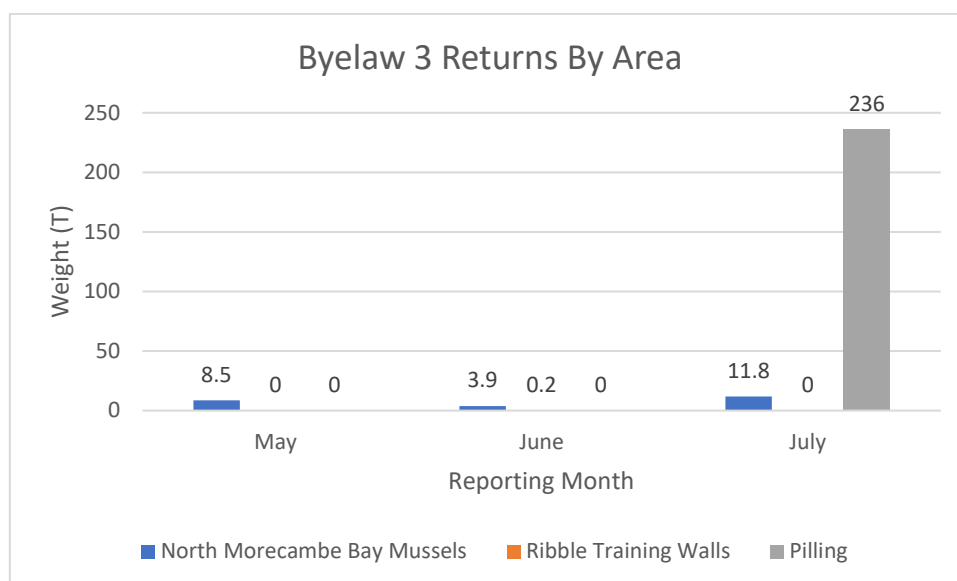
Tasking and coordination group meetings continue to be held bi-weekly between, Head of Enforcement, Intel officer, Senior IFCOs and are regularly attended by colleagues from the Environment Agency. Intel lead (HoE) and Intel Officer continue to attend the MMO, NW & Irish sea TCG meetings.

Specific Fishery Reporting

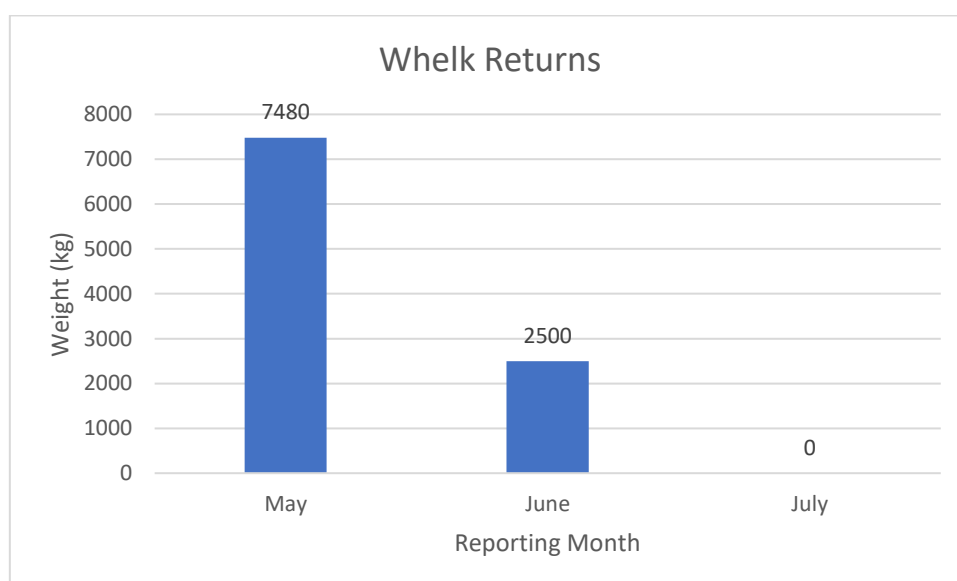
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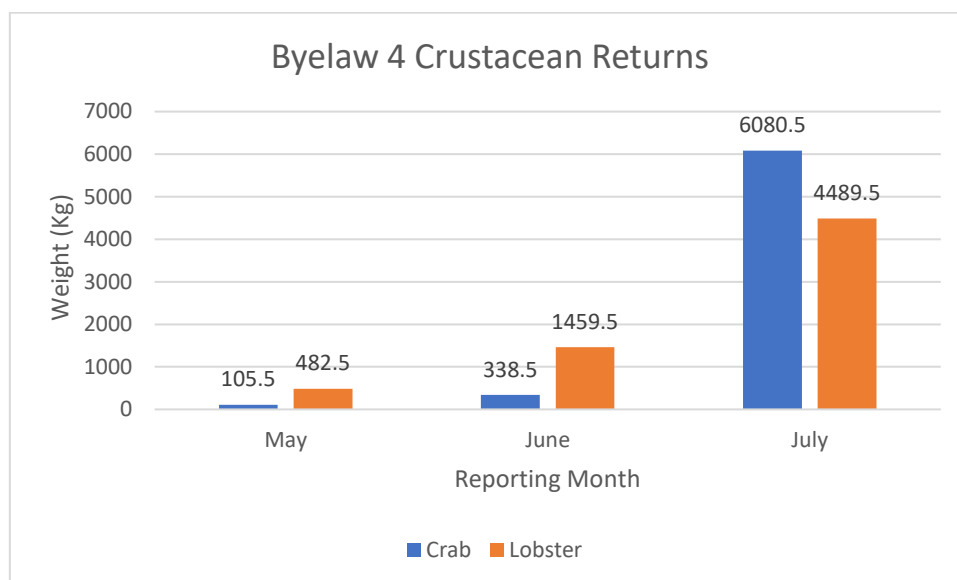
This reporting period saw the start of the cockle closed season, which is reflected in the Byelaw 3 returns data, This period also saw very low levels of effort on mussel fisheries. The Pilling cockle fishery opened on the 1st of July under NWIFCA Byelaw 3 flexible permit conditions. The fishery saw initial numbers of permitholders attending at approximately 60, however due to the price offered of one pound per kilo this quickly dropped to circa 25. Average landings of between 200-300kg per day were observed by fishery officers with good compliance with the minimum size in place under the byelaw.





Reported levels of whelk fishing declined through this quarter with no reported landings from within the district. Vessels have been observed fishing outside the district waters with local vessels switching to crab and lobster through the summer months.





Sanctions, Infringements and Court Activity

As seen in the table below a compliant quarter with low levels of sanctions reported. As mentioned by the master in his update the authority is in possession of 5 seized pots and a net from a patrol on the 30th July. If not claimed before the 15th of November they will be disposed of as appropriate.

Sanction Applied	Details
Verbal Warning	N/A
Advisory Letter	Six- Failure to Submit returns
Official Warning Letter	Two- Undersize Cockle offences. Offences also resulted in the issuing of penalty points.
Financial Admin Penalty	N/A
Caution	N/A
Prosecution	One (previously reported)

Shore Based Activity Report

Number of:	Burgh Marsh Point -Haverigg Point –	Haverigg Point – Arnside	Arnside – Knott End	River Wyre – River Alt	Mersey, Wirral and Dee
Shore patrols by all NWIFCA officers*	61	64	49		61
ATV patrols	10	35	9		22
Inspections under taken	72	14	62		100

*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 & PC	20	131.47	1,036	5	6	217	329
Totals for the quarter	20	131.47	1,036	5	6	217	329

Annex B

Patrol Date	Patrol Time	Distance (nm)	Area Covered	Risk/ Purpose	Sectors Covered	No. Boarding	No. Closings	No. Sightings	No. Inspections
<u>North Western Protector (and Protector Charlie)</u>									
01.05.2025	04.75	55	St Bees, Prawn Pitch	Potting, trawling,	Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	18	14
12.05.2025	06.66	63	Parton, Harrington, Workington, Maryport, Prawn Pitch, St Bees	Trawling, netting, potting, angling	Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	3	11	10
14.05.2025	06.50	67	St Bees, Prawn Pitch, Selker, Black Leg, Haverigg Point, Seascale, Sellafield, Caulderton	Trawling, potting, netting	Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	8	8
15.05.2025	07.00	60	Parton, Harrington, Workington, Maryport, Allonby HPMA, Silloth	Potting, angling, trawling	Allonby Bay HPMA	0	0	4	2
19.05.2025	03.50	8	Whitehaven - Workington	To be lifted out		0	0	0	0
06.06.2025	01.00	10	Workington - Whitehaven	Return to usual birth		0	0	0	0
17.06.2025	07.66	45	Northern Prawn Grounds, St Bees, Harrington, Workington, Maryport, Allonby Bay HPMA	Potting, netting, trawling, angling	Cumbria Coast MCZ, Allonby Bay HPMA	0	0	4	20

18.06.2025	08.50	75	Prawn Pitch, Seascale, Caulderton, St Bees, Maryport	Trawling, potting, angling	Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	20	38
02.07.2025	08.58	55	Prawn Pitch, Black Leg Rock, Selker, Drigg, Caulderton, St Bees	Potting, trawling,	Drigg Coast SAC, Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	5	12
03.07.2025	08.16	70	Prawn Pitch, Selker, Drigg, Nethertown, St Bees, Workington, Maryport, Allonby HPMA	Potting, trawling, netting	Drigg Coast SAC, Allonby Bay HPMA, Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	2	5	38
08.07.2025	05.58	44	Lowca, Harrington, Workington, Maryport, W/ of St Bees	Potting, netting, angling	Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	44	0
16.07.2025	09.92	42	Harrington, Workington, Maryport, Allonby Bay HPMA, Parton	Potting, angling, netting,	Allonby Bay HPMA	2	0	5	50
17.07.2025	08.25	72	Prawn Pitch, Black Leg, W/ of Walney	Potting, angling, trawling	West of Walney MCZ	1	0	2	30
18.07.2025	07.42	65	Prawn Pitch, Scallop Bank, Allonby HPMA, Maryport, Workington, Harrington, Parton	Trawling, potting, whelking,	Allonby Bay HPMA	0	0	16	18
23.07.2025	04.84	45	Parton, Harrington, Workington, Maryport, Allonby HPMA, Scallop Bank	Potting, netting, angling, dredging	Allonby Bay HPMA	0	0	8	14

24.07.2025	04:33	40	Selker, Prawn Grounds, Caulderton, St Bees	Potting, angling, trawling, MOB & fire drill training	Cumbria Coast MCZ	1	0	30	28
28.07.2025	05.66	40	Prawn Pitch, W/ of Ravenglass, St Bees	Potting, trawling, netting	Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	15	12
29.07.2025	05.00	40	Prawn Grounds, W/ of Seascale, Nethertown, Caulderton, St Bees	Trawling, potting, angling	Cumbria Coast MCZ	1	1	18	18
30.07.2025	09.00	65	Parton, Harrington, Workington, Maryport, Allonby HPMA, Prawn Pitch, Silecroft, Eskmeals, Seascale, Sellafield, Caulderton, St Bees	Potting, trawling, angling, netting	Allonby Bay HPMA, Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	2	14
31.07.2025	09.16	75	Workington, Harrington, Prawn Pitch, South Walney, Selker, Sellafield, St Bees	Potting, netting, angling, trawling	Allonby Bay HPMA, Cumbria Coast MCZ	0	0	2	3
20	131.47	1,036				5	6	217	329