

**NWIFCA Technical, Science and Byelaw
Committee**

20th of October 2026: 10:00 a.m.

Report no.

1

ADDITIONAL SURVEY AND INSPECTION REPORT

Purpose:

- a) To report on the results of the additional cockle surveys undertaken on Leven cockle bed.

Recommendation: Approve the following:

- a) Receive the report and related survey and inspection notes
- b) Newbiggin and Leven cockle bed to be opened as early as practicable, for 7 days a week, one tide a day with a 1867 tonne TAC, under Byelaw 3 Flexible Permit Conditions and subject to HRA
- c) All other District cockle beds, including Middleton, Warton, Pilling, Flookburgh, and Aldingham, remain closed under paragraph 15 of Byelaw 3.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between June and July 2026, NWIFCA officers completed cockle stock surveys across the District to assess whether fisheries could be opened for the 2026/27 season. Survey results were assessed against the biomass thresholds established in the NWIFCA Cockle Fisheries Management Plan (CFMP), alongside relevant ecological considerations.

The initial Morecambe Bay survey results showed that the biomass of size cockle had declined substantially since 2025 and was below the minimum CFMP threshold required for a fishery to be considered. On this basis, it was recommended that the Morecambe Bay cockle beds remain closed.

A subsequent survey undertaken in September identified a significant cockle stock within an extension to the western portion of the Leven bed. The distribution of this stock was considered likely to reflect changes in the position of channels and associated suitable cockle habitat within the Bay over the preceding two years. It was therefore considered appropriate to incorporate this area into the 2026 stock assessment.

As the additional area was surveyed approximately two months after the main June/July surveys, the September results were adjusted to account for growth and changes in size composition during the intervening period, allowing the biomass to be compared with the main 2026 survey results on a consistent basis. The revised Morecambe Bay stock assessment was subsequently reviewed against the CFMP biomass thresholds, with the results presented below.

KEY FINDINGS

- Following incorporation of the Leven extension, the estimated total cockle biomass in Morecambe Bay is **14,796 tonnes**, exceeding the CFMP minimum total biomass threshold of 10,000 tonnes.
- After adjustment to account for seasonal growth between the main summer survey period and the September survey, the Leven extension contributes an estimated additional **1,580 tonnes of size cockle** and **1,507 tonnes of undersize cockle** to the 2026 stock assessment.
- Incorporating these precautionarily adjusted estimates increases the total estimated **size-cockle biomass in Morecambe Bay to 5,907 tonnes**, exceeding the CFMP minimum threshold of **4,440 tonnes**. On this basis, a **Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 1,867 tonnes** can be recommended for the Morecambe Bay fishery.
- The distribution of exploitable stock is not uniform across Morecambe Bay. Leven and Newbiggin support substantial biomass of larger cockle, while the remaining beds contain either lower size-cockle biomass or a greater proportion of undersize stock.
- Based on the 2026 biomass estimates, stock distribution and size composition, Leven and Newbiggin are proposed as the beds suitable for consideration for opening to a cockle fishery.

Table 1 - Biomass calculations of size, undersize and combined biomass of cockles on Morecambe Bay cockle beds June-July 2026 and Leven September data adjusted for a late survey.

Cockle bed	Date surveyed	Area of cockle present (ha)	Size cockle (tonnes)	Undersize cockle (tonnes)	Total cockle biomass (tonnes)
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Aldingham and Newbiggin	June 29 th 2026	1,050	1,189	883	2,072
Leven	July 9 th 2026	1,000	482	692	1,174
Leven Extension	16 th September 2026 - adjusted	1,850	1,580	1,507	3,087
Flookburgh	July 8 th & 9 th 2026	2,600	1,064	2,348	3,412
Warton Sands	July 16 th 2026	906	123	1,941	2,064
Middleton	June 30 th 2026	747	378	897	1,275
Pilling	July 7 th 2026	1,450	1,091	621	1,712
Total		9,603	5,907	8,889	14,796

Table 2. Summary of cockle biomass estimates and whether the 2026 Cockle Fisheries Management Plan opening thresholds have been met.

Cockle area	Cockle beds	Total biomass	Size biomass	Threshold met?	Recommendation
Morecambe	All	Yes	Yes	Yes	Consider Opening – size cockle biomass does exceed the agreed CFMP thresholds
Ribble Estuary	Penfold	No	No	No	Closed – cockle biomass does not exceed the agreed CFMP thresholds
Wirral	Leasowe	No	No	No	Closed – cockle biomass does not exceed the agreed CFMP thresholds

MAIN REPORT

2026 Adjusted Survey Results and Stock Status

In 2026, NWIFCA developed a Cockle Fisheries Management Plan (CFMP), which established minimum biomass thresholds that must be met before the opening of a cockle fishery in Morecambe Bay can be considered. The CFMP requires a minimum total biomass of 10,000 tonnes, of which at least 4,440 tonnes must comprise size cockle Figure 1.

Threshold	Morecambe Bay	Leasowe	Ribble Estuary ⁶	Solway Firth ⁷
1. Minimum total biomass needed to be left on the site (t)	10,000	800	1,500	TBC
2. Minimum biomass of sized cockle to be left on the site (t)	4,000	800	900	TBC
3. Minimum TAC (t)	400	300	300	TBC
4. Minimum buffer (% of TAC)	10%	10%	10%	TBC
5. Minimum biomass of sized cockle required for a fishery to open (t)	4,440	1,130	1,230	TBC

Figure 1. Minimum cockle biomass thresholds for opening fisheries as agreed in the NWIFCA CFMP.

The June/July 2026 surveys identified sufficient total biomass to meet the 10,000-tonne threshold. However, the estimated biomass of size cockle was 4,327 tonnes, 113 tonnes below the required threshold. On the basis of these survey results, the cockle beds remained closed.

Following this decision, industry representatives highlighted a number of areas around Morecambe Bay where cockle may occur but which fall outside the established survey areas. These generally comprise either small, isolated patches or low-density cockle distributed over large areas.

It is important to distinguish these areas from significant changes in the distribution or extent of established cockle stocks. Small or low-density populations outside the principal survey areas have historically existed within Morecambe Bay but have not formed part of the stock assessment dataset on which the CFMP biomass thresholds were developed. Including these residual areas now, without also accounting for them within the historic baseline, would therefore make the 2026 biomass estimate inconsistent with the dataset used to establish the CFMP thresholds. Examples include residual stocks on Warton Sands in years of low abundance, Duddon Sands, Half Moon Bay and Cockerham Sands.

In contrast, the established survey areas have previously been expanded where significant cockle stocks have developed outside the existing survey grid as a result of changes in the physical characteristics of Morecambe Bay, including movement of channels and changes in suitable settlement habitat. These

changes represent a genuine shift or expansion in the distribution of the stock rather than the inclusion of previously unaccounted residual cockle.

Examples within the historic dataset include:

- **Warton Sands:** Since 2017, significant stock has been recorded in 2019, 2020 and 2026. In other years, the cockle bed was absent as a result of movement of the Keer Channel.
- **Flookburgh:** In 2023, 25 additional survey locations were added to incorporate cockle to the north-east of the existing survey area, which had previously been constrained by the Kent Channel. A further nine survey locations were added to the south of the bed in 2025 following changes in the distribution of stock and the extent of sand exposed at low water.
- **Newbiggin:** Fifteen survey locations were added to the west of the bed in 2025 to ensure that the full extent of the cockle stock was represented.
- **Middleton:** In 2018, a large area of dense cockle was identified to the south-east of the existing survey grid. This area was subsequently incorporated fully into the survey grid in 2019.

A comparable change was identified in September 2026 adjacent to the Newbiggin and Leven cockle beds. A significant stock of cockle was found within an area comprising part of the historically surveyed Leven and Aldingham beds together with a newly identified area between them (Figure 2).

Figure 2 also demonstrates the dynamic nature of this part of Morecambe Bay. A significant proportion of the historic Aldingham and Newbiggin survey points either contained no cockle in 2026 or had become inaccessible following movement of the Leven Channel. At the same time, suitable habitat and significant cockle stock were identified on the Leven side of the channel, including the re-emergence of some historic survey areas and an additional area of stock.

This is therefore considered a change in the spatial distribution and extent of the cockle stock, rather than the addition of background or residual cockle that has historically fallen outside the stock assessment. The additional area was, therefore, included because it represented a material redistribution/extension of an established stock associated with changes in bed/channel geography, consistent with previous survey practice, rather than because additional biomass was required to meet the threshold.

Previous comparable changes to the extent of cockle beds have been incorporated into the historic biomass dataset without corresponding increases to the CFMP biomass thresholds. On this basis, the area met the established rationale previously used for extending survey boundaries and was therefore surveyed and incorporated into the 2026 stock assessment without amendment to the CFMP thresholds.

The September survey identified sufficient additional size cockle biomass for the opening of a fishery to be considered. However, because this survey was undertaken approximately two months after the main June/July surveys, the September biomass cannot be directly added to the July biomass without accounting for growth and changes in size composition during this period.

The following sections therefore distinguish between biomass identified during the June/July surveys and additional biomass identified during the September survey. The September results have subsequently been adjusted to provide an estimate of the biomass likely to have been present at the time of the main summer surveys, allowing comparison with the CFMP thresholds on a consistent basis.

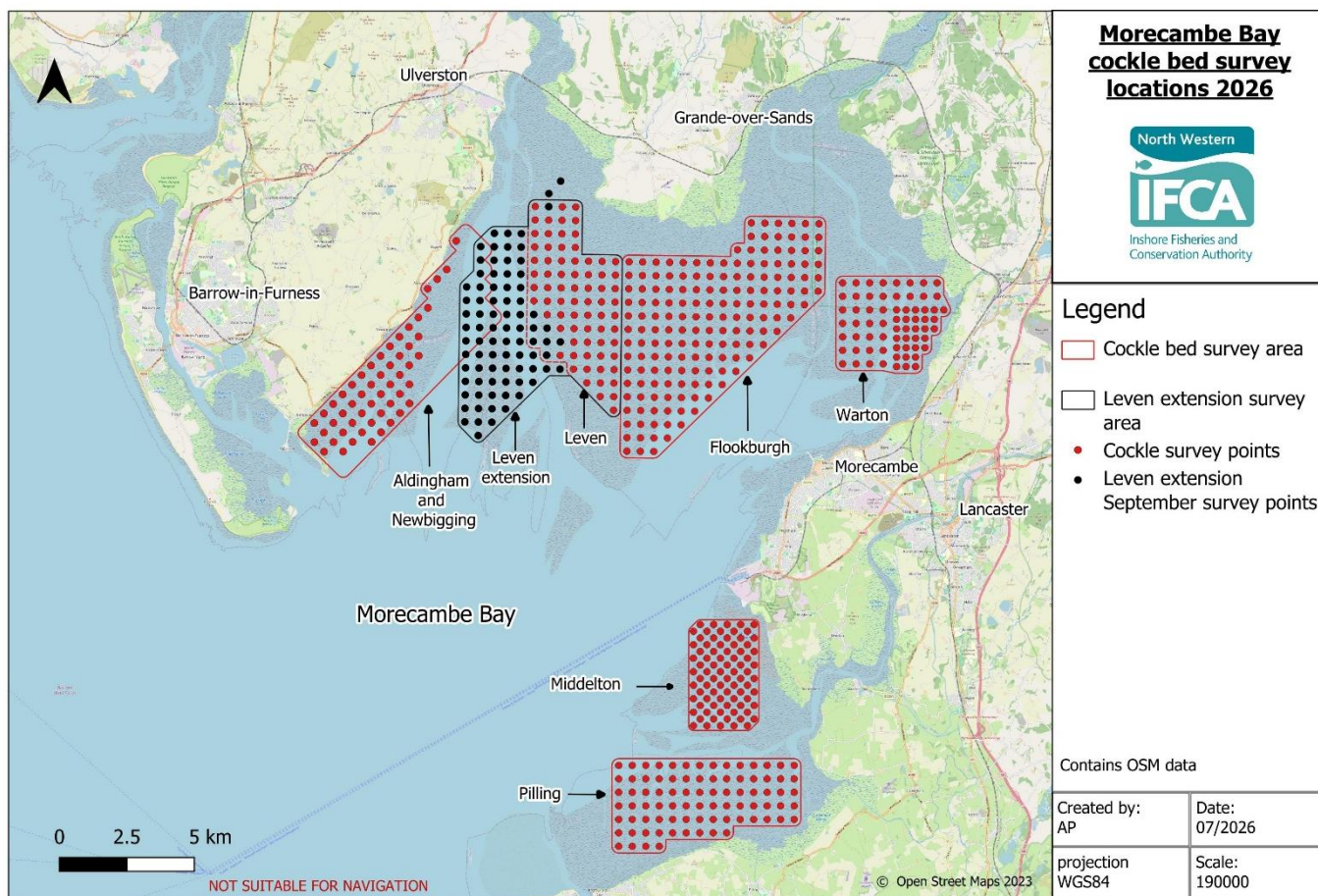


Figure 2 The location of sample points across Morecambe Bay cockle beds 2026. The red points show points surveyed in July, the black show the additional sample points surveyed in September as an extension to Leven cockle bed.

Morecambe Bay cockle surveys were conducted between June 29th and July 16th, with the additional areas identified on Leven surveyed on September 16th, 2 months later. All survey reports are provided in Annex 1. Results have been standardised and the size of the pie charts corresponds to set values, making them comparable between beds and future surveys.

In June/July, officers collected and analysed 15,118 cockles from 453 sample points across approximately 7,753ha of Morecambe Bay. A further, 4,093 cockles were then sampled from an additional 83 survey locations on the extended portion of Leven cockle bed (see Figure 2).

A summary of the June/July survey results is provided in table 3

Table 3. Biomass calculations of size, undersize and combined biomass of cockles on Morecambe Bay cockle beds June/July 2026. *figures represent the max estimated cockle biomass

Cockle bed	Date surveyed	Area of cockle present (ha)	Size cockle (tonnes)	Undersize cockle (tonnes)	Total cockle biomass (tonnes)
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Aldingham and Newbiggin	June 29 th 2026	1,050	1,189	883	2,072
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Middleton	June 30 th 2026	747	378	897	1,275
Pilling	July 7 th 2026	1,450	1,091	621	1,712
TOTAL	n/a	-	4,327	7,382	11,709

The June/July surveys estimated a total size-cockle biomass of 4,327 tonnes across Morecambe Bay, 113 tonnes below the CFMP threshold of 4,440 tonnes.

Results of the September Leven extended area:

The survey area on Leven extension is made up of a mix of the historically surveyed Leven bed, the Aldingham bed, and a new area between the beds. The split in biomass and area is provided in table 4.5.2.

Table 4. Biomass calculations of the different size classes for the additional survey locations identified on Leven extension cockle bed in September 2026. The figures also distinguish between points originally part of other bed areas, that are now incorporated into the Leven bed. *figures represent the max estimated cockle biomass

NWIFCA Bed	Area (ha)	5-15 Class (tonnes)	15-20 Class (tonnes)	20-25 Class (tonnes)	25-35 Class (tonnes)	>35 Class (tonnes)	Size Cockle (tonnes)¹	Undersize Cockle (tonnes)²
Leven	150	2	6	3	83	9	92	104
Aldingham	400	272	138	65	661	0	632	504
New Area	1300	453	478	930	2878	139	3035	1843
Total	1850	727	622	998	3622	148	3759	2359

¹In regards to biomass size cockle defined as cockle which will not pass through a square gauge 20 x 20mm in size.

²The biomass of undersize cockle does not include any estimates of cockle less than 5mm due to the high variability of survival of this size class.

In September, the additional cockle surveyed on the extended portion of Leven came to **3759 tonnes of size**, and **2359 tonnes of undersize** (Table 4). However, these figures need to be adjusted for the two months of summer growth that will have occurred between July and September, to make them comparable with the July survey results.

Adjusting data for the timing of the survey:

The historic biomass data underpinning the CFMP are based predominantly on surveys undertaken during the summer survey period. As the additional Leven survey was undertaken on 16 September, approximately two months after the main 2026 surveys, the observed September biomass cannot be directly compared with the CFMP thresholds without considering changes that may have occurred during the intervening period.

During this period, individual cockles will have increased in size and weight, some will have moved between size classes, and mortality may also have occurred. Consequently, directly adding the September biomass to the June/July estimate would be likely to overstate the biomass that was present at the time of the main surveys.

There are insufficient repeat survey data to model these changes precisely. The most relevant available dataset is from Flookburgh in 2023, when the bed was surveyed in July and again in early October. The observed changes between these surveys are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Biomass of different size classes on Flookburgh cockle bed between July and October survey in 2023.

Size Class	July (tonnes)	October (tonnes)	+/- (tonnes)	+/- (%)
5-15mm	148	734	+586	+396
15-20mm	1644	1323	-321	-20
20-25mm	2131	3623	+1492	+70
25-35mm	778	1784	+1006	+129
>35mm	29	16	-13	-45
Size ¹	746	1821	+1075	+144
Undersize ²	3984	5659	+1675	+42
Total	4730	7480	+2750	+58

¹In regards to biomass size cockle defined as cockle which will not pass through a square gauge 20 x 20mm in size.

²The biomass of undersize cockle does not include any estimates of cockle less than 5mm due to the high variability of survival of this size class.

Flookburgh provides the best available local evidence for estimating seasonal changes in cockle biomass over a broadly comparable period. However, there are limitations to applying these changes to Leven. Growth, mortality and movement between size classes will vary according to factors including initial size distribution, density and local environmental conditions. The resulting estimates should therefore be treated as an approximation rather than a precise reconstruction of July biomass.

The July–October interval at Flookburgh is also longer than the July–September interval being estimated for Leven. **Using the full July–October change is considered likely to result in a greater downward adjustment than would arise over the shorter July–September period and has therefore been adopted as a precautionary assumption.**

The percentage changes observed for each size class at Flookburgh were subsequently applied to the September Leven results to estimate the biomass that may have been present during the July survey period (Table 6). Calculations were undertaken by size class rather than using the aggregated size and undersize categories, as this represents the highest resolution available within the dataset.

Table 6. Leven cockle survey data adjusted biomass based on percentage change from the Flookburgh 2023 July and October surveys.

Size Class	September (tonnes)	+/- (%)	+/- (tonnes)	July (tonnes)
5-15mm	727	-80	- 580	147
15-20mm	622	+24	+ 151	773
20-25mm	999	-41	- 412	587
25-35mm	3622	-56	- 2042	1580
>35mm	148	+81	+ 120	268
Total	6118	-45	- 2763	3355

¹In regards to biomass size cockle defined as cockle which will not pass through a square gauge 20 x 20mm in size.

²The biomass of undersize cockle does not include any estimates of cockle less than 5mm due to the high variability of survival of this size class.

It should be noted that the size composition of cockles at Flookburgh differed from that observed on the Leven extension. At Flookburgh, a greater proportion of cockles were close to the boundary between the 20–25 mm and 25–35 mm size classes during both the July and October surveys. In comparison, cockles within the 25–35 mm size class on the Leven extension were generally larger, with many measuring approximately 30 mm. Therefore, it is more likely that the change between cockles in the Flookburgh survey was greater. As a result, applying the change observed at Flookburgh directly to the Leven data is likely to overestimate the reduction in 25–35 mm cockle biomass when back-calculating from September to July. The resulting estimate for this size class is therefore considered precautionary.

The >35 mm size class has been treated separately. Only a low density of cockles within this size class was recorded at Flookburgh, resulting in a calculated increase in biomass when the Flookburgh percentage change was applied to the Leven data. Given the small amount of data underpinning this adjustment, the resulting estimate is considered unreliable. The >35 mm biomass has therefore been excluded from the adjusted size-cockle estimate as a precautionary measure.

Cockles within the 25–35 mm size class are expected to meet the definition of size cockle. Taking account of the best available evidence, the precautionary reduction applied to the 25–35 mm size class, and the exclusion of the >35 mm size class, an adjusted estimate of **1,580 tonnes of size cockle** and **1,507 tonnes of undersize cockle** is considered appropriate for the additional Leven survey area.

For management and HRA purposes, NWIFCA considers that these adjusted figures should be used when considering the stock against the CFMP biomass thresholds and when determining an appropriate TAC for a fishery.

In conclusion, the September area represents the same type of dynamic redistribution/expansion of significant stock that has historically been incorporated into the survey dataset; therefore, its inclusion is

consistent with the approach previously applied to comparable changes in stock distribution, while adjusting the later survey results to maintain comparability with the FMP baseline.

Adjusted 2026 Survey Results and Stock Status

The following description of cockle biomass in Morecambe Bay includes the addition of the back-calculated biomass of Leven extension area. Any reference to the biomass of the beds beyond this point includes the additional back calculated biomass, and will be highlighted where possible.

Biomass of size and undersize cockle across Morecambe Bay

Table 7 and Figure 3 provides yearly maximum cockle biomass figures from 2017 to 2026. The majority of surveys presented here were undertaken between June/July each year (or adjusted for suitable comparison, as described above) and are therefore comparable.

The adjusted 2026 estimate is 14,796 tonnes of cockle across 9,603 ha of surveyed habitat in Morecambe Bay, comprising 5,907 tonnes of size cockle and 8,889 tonnes of undersize cockle.

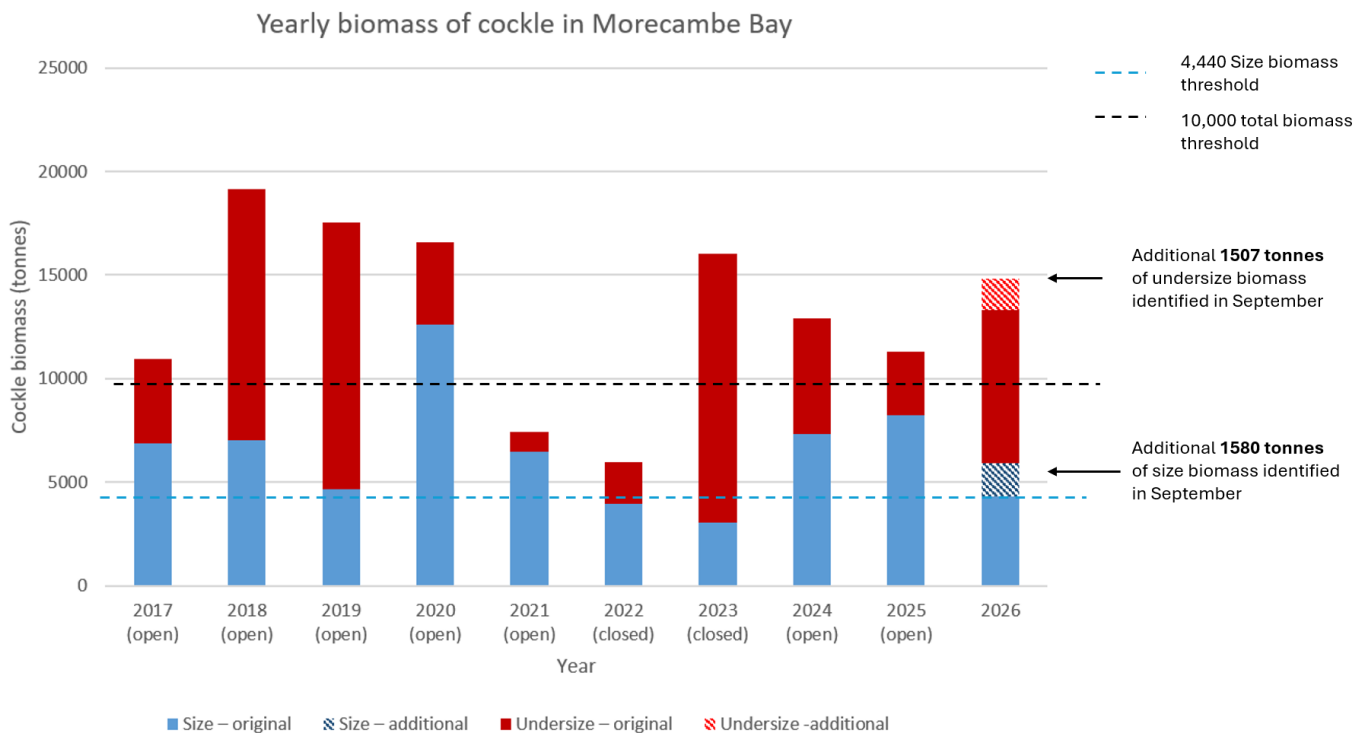


Figure 3. Stacked bars show size and undersize cockle biomass for Morecambe Bay (which together represent total biomass) from 2017 to 2026. The hashed red and blue shows the additional biomass identified in September (adjusted for growth) for size and undersize respectively.

Table 7. The yearly biomass of figures for size, undersize and total biomass of cockles on Morecambe Bay cockle beds from 2017 to 2026 (inclusive of 2026 September adjustment). *figures represent the max estimated cockle biomass

Year	All surveyed Morecambe Bay cockle beds				Beds opened
	Area (ha)	Size cockle (tonne)	Undersize cockle (tonne)	Total cockle (tonne)	
2017	5177	6847	4097	10,942	Flookburgh Leven Pilling
2018	6088	7000	12140	19140	Flookburgh Leven Pilling Newbiggin
2019	6705	4635	12900	17535	Flookburgh Leven Pilling Newbiggin
2020	8085	12580	3975	16555	Flookburgh Leven Pilling Newbiggin
2021	7089	6460	955	7415	Pilling
2022	6582	3950	1990	5940	None
2023	7730	3035	12975	16010	None
2024	7247	7308	5586	12894	Flookburgh Leven Pilling
2025	7598	8,243	3,057	11,300	Flookburgh Pilling Newbiggin
2026	9,603	5,907	8,889	14,796	Newbiggin Leven

This year, the total biomass of cockle across Morecambe Bay has increased from 11,300 tonnes in 2025 to 14,796 tonnes.

The total biomass of size cockle has decreased from 8,243 tonnes in July 2025, to 5,907. However, this is 1467 tonnes above the size biomass threshold set out in the NWIFCA CFMP for Morecambe Bay.

Figure 4 indicates the trend in the biomass of size (blue) and undersize (red) cockle for Morecambe Bay as a whole since 2017. High levels of undersize cockle in 2018 and 2019 preceded an increase in the biomass of size cockle, one to two years later. In 2023, there was a significant increase in the biomass of undersize cockle, which was expected to grow on in 2024 to support an increased biomass of size cockle. Size biomass did increase up to 2025, but this year has declined again, though the overall biomass of cockle in Morecambe Bay remains high.

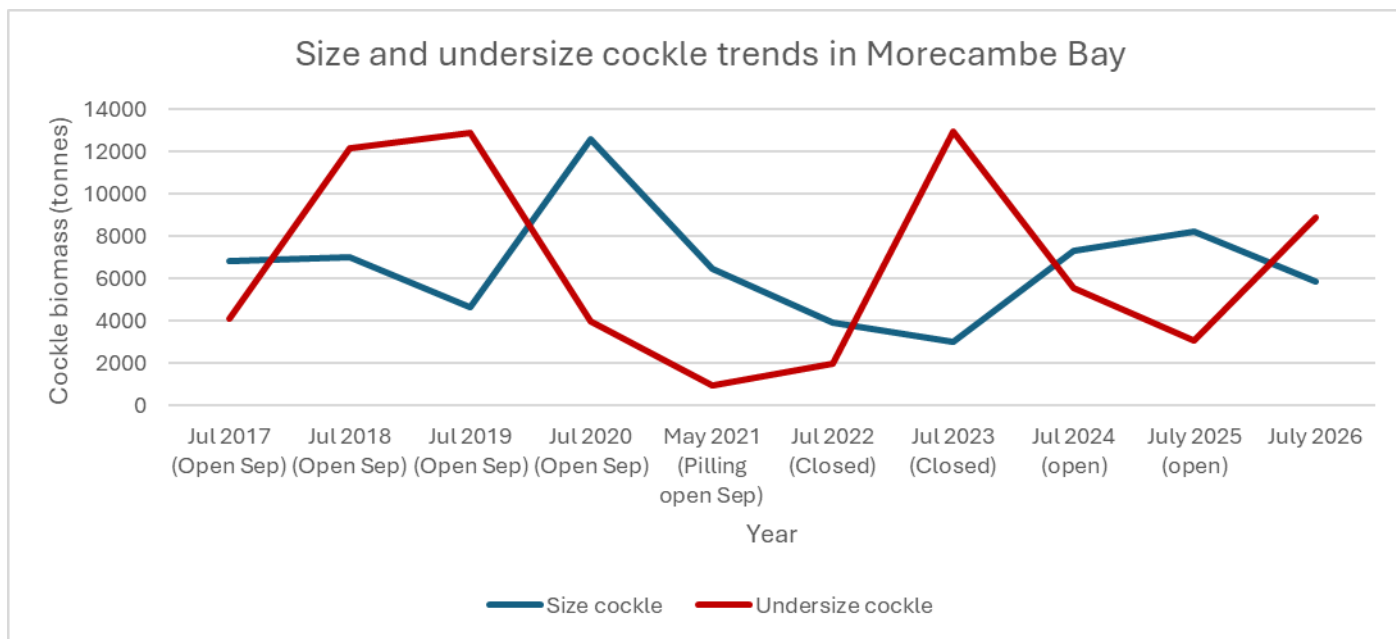


Figure 4. The lines show size and undersize cockle biomass for Morecambe Bay from 2017 to 2026.

Individual beds

An analysis of survey data for each of the main cockle beds in Morecambe Bay is presented below.

Survey results for each cockle bed are provided in Annex 2. It is also important to consider all information provided when building a recommendation for a fishery, and not any one piece in isolation. For example, understanding the composition of size and undersize on a bed, distribution of cockle, and total overall biomass can help with determining an appropriate recommendation.

Table 8. Biomass of size cockle for each Morecambe Bay bed from 2017 to 2026 (inclusive of September Leven adjustment).

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Aldingham and Newbiggin		900	820	3200	1900	1050	535	846	1432	1189
Leven	2202	1200	500	3100	700	500	400	573	470	2062
Flookburgh	4074	2700	1700	3300	1000	850	825	3629	2609	1064
Pilling	571	2200	1200	2400	2300	1200	800	1742	3143	1091
Warton	na	na	65	280	110	na	na	na	na	123
Middleton	na	na	350	300	450	350	475	518	589	378
Morecambe Bay all beds	6847	7000	4635	12580	6460	3950	3035	7308	8243	5907

The above is presented in figure 3.

Biomass of size and undersize cockle for individual beds

Figure 5 shows the biomass of size cockle for each surveyed Morecambe Bay cockle bed from 2017 to 2026, and which beds were opened for fishing that same year.

- **Flookburgh:** has seen a >50% decrease in size cockle from 2,609 tonnes to 1,064 tonnes. Total biomass (size + undersize) remains consistent.
- **Leven:** Overall biomass has increased from 470 tonnes to 2062 tonnes, and the spatial extent of the stock has also increased.

- **Pilling:** has significantly decreased in both size and undersize. Size cockle has decreased >50% from 3,143 tonnes in 2025 to 1,091 tonnes in 2026.
- **Newbiggin:** remains relatively stable in comparison to 2025, though some areas have now been incorporated into the biomass of Leven.
- **Middleton:** remains consistent with previous years though slightly increased.
- **Warton:** This bed has not seen significant stock since 2020. Recent surveys, however, have identified it has approximately 123 tonnes of size, and 1,941 tonnes of undersize cockle. The high undersize biomass indicates potential for recruitment to the size-cockle stock in subsequent years, subject to survival and future survey results.
- Biomass of undersize is high this year, with some stock available to grow on for the following years fisheries.

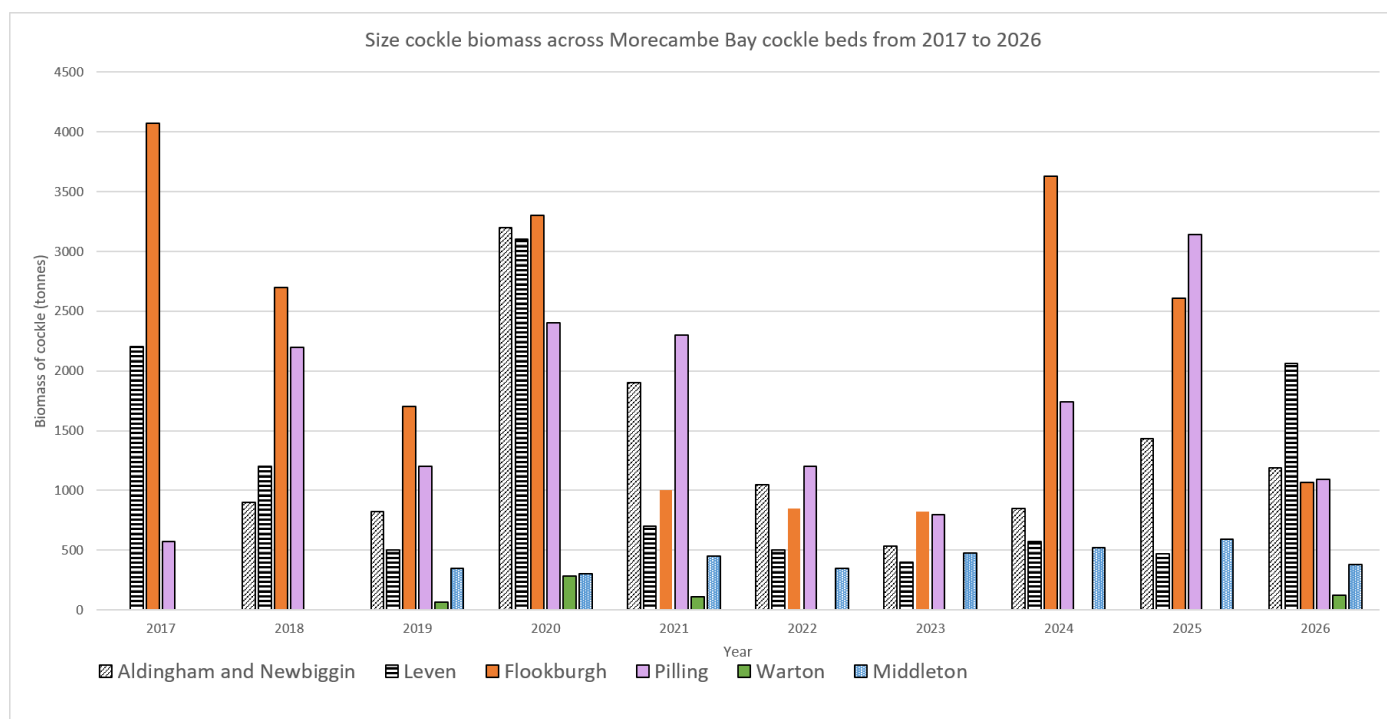


Figure 5. Biomass of size cockles on the individual Morecambe Bay cockle beds from 2017 to 2026

Biomass of cockle size classes on each bed

Figure 6 shows the biomass of cockles in each size class (5-15 mm, 15-20mm, 20-25mm 25-35mm and 35+mm) for the main Morecambe Bay cockle beds in July 2026.

For Leven cockle bed, cockle in the 25-35 size class (which are predominantly size cockle) contributes to a significant proportion of the total biomass on the bed. Similarly, Newbiggin cockle bed has high 25-35 mm cockle biomass, comparable with the 2025 dataset when it was opened that year.

All other cockle beds have incurred a noticeable decline in the biomass of size cockle. The biomass of undersize cockle is relatively high for most beds, indicative of a potential 2027/28 fishery should these grow on over the next year.

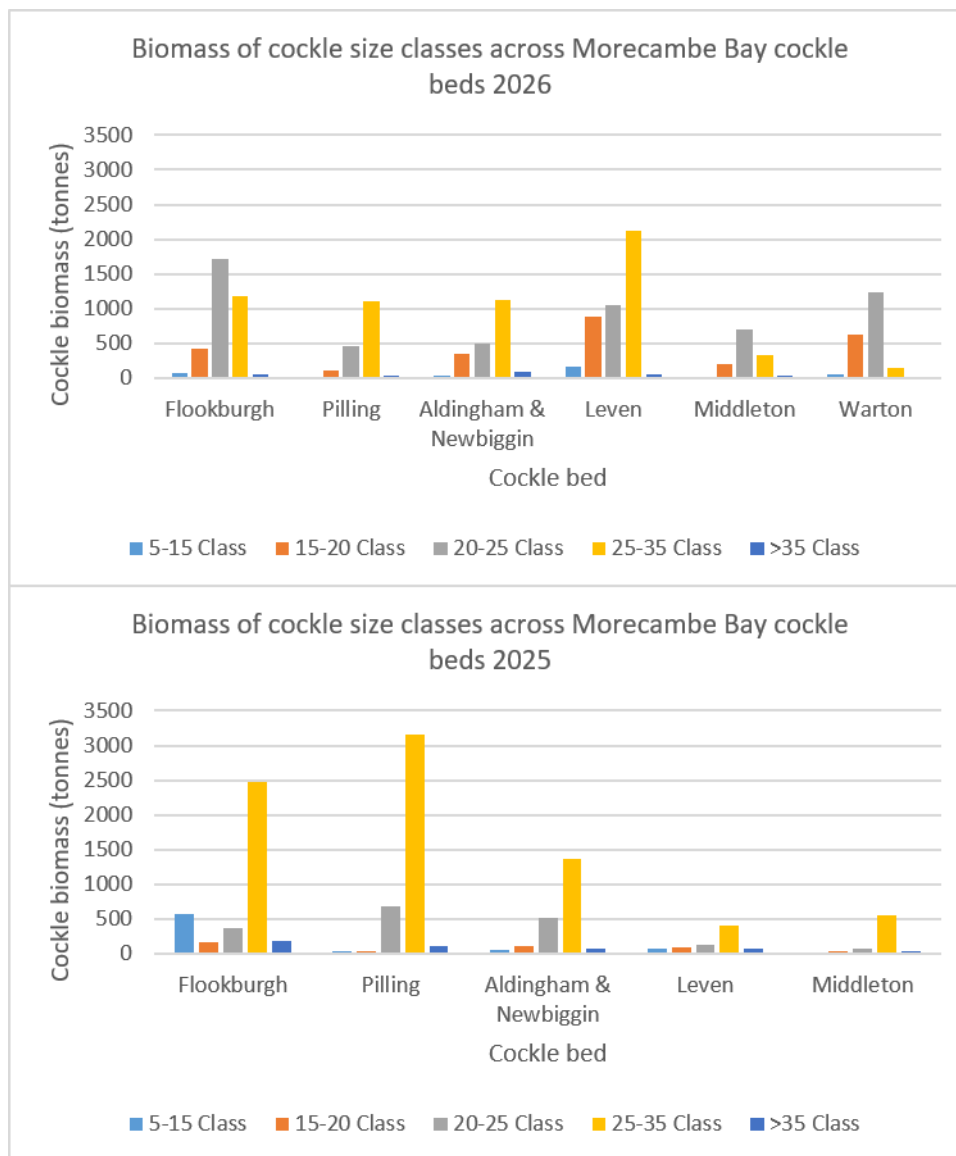


Figure 6 The biomass of different size classes of cockle for each of the Morecambe Bay cockle beds in 2025 and 2026 respectively (inclusive of the September adjustment).

Composition of size classes on individual beds

The spatial distribution and size composition of stock within individual beds are important considerations when determining whether a bed is suitable to support a fishery. In particular, the degree of mixing between size and undersize cockle influences the potential for undersize cockle to be disturbed during fishing and subsequently returned through riddling.

At Leven and Newbiggin, the 2026 surveys identified some areas of mixed stock (size composition and distribution figures for each bed are provided in Annex 1). However, size cockle is predominantly in the 25+mm category, this cohort is significantly larger than the majority of undersize which is within the 15-20, and 20-25 mm category. This size separation provides greater opportunity for undersize cockle encountered during fishing to be effectively separated through riddling.

Flookburgh, Middleton and Warton have a higher proportion of undersize cockle, which is likely to grow to size for the following year. Middleton cockle bed seems to be remaining consistent each year, with mixed

size cohorts and stable biomass. This is likely indicative of a natural cycle of regular settlements growing on to size over the course of several years.

Summary:

Overall, the 2026 survey results indicate that total cockle biomass within Morecambe Bay remains high, although the biomass of size cockle has decreased by approximately 29% compared with 2025. Following incorporation of the precautionarily adjusted estimate for the Leven extension, the estimated Morecambe Bay size-cockle biomass is 5,907 tonnes, exceeding the CFMP minimum threshold of 4,440 tonnes.

The distribution of exploitable stock is not uniform between beds. Leven and Newbiggin support substantial biomass of larger cockle, whereas the remaining beds either contain lower size-cockle biomass or a greater proportion of undersize stock.

On the basis of the 2026 biomass estimates, stock distribution and size composition, Leven and Newbiggin are therefore proposed as the beds suitable for consideration for opening to a cockle fishery.

The NWIFCA proposes to authorise a hand-gathered cockle fishery on Leven and Newbiggin cockle beds from November 2026 to April 30th 2027. Both beds will be open **for one tide per day, 7 days per week**. The total area encompassed by the Leven and Newbiggin cockle beds will be subject to a **1867 tonne TAC**.

The proposed TAC has been calculated from the adjusted Morecambe Bay size-cockle biomass of 5,907 tonnes. Allowing 4,040 tonnes of size cockle to remain following exploitation (the CFMP minimum residual biomass of 4,000 tonnes plus a 40-tonne buffer) provides a maximum TAC of 1,867 tonnes (5,907 – 4,040 = 1,867 tonnes).

The area proposed for opening is detailed in Figure 7 and identified in the blue and red areas. Currently, the hashed area is prohibited under shellfish classification.

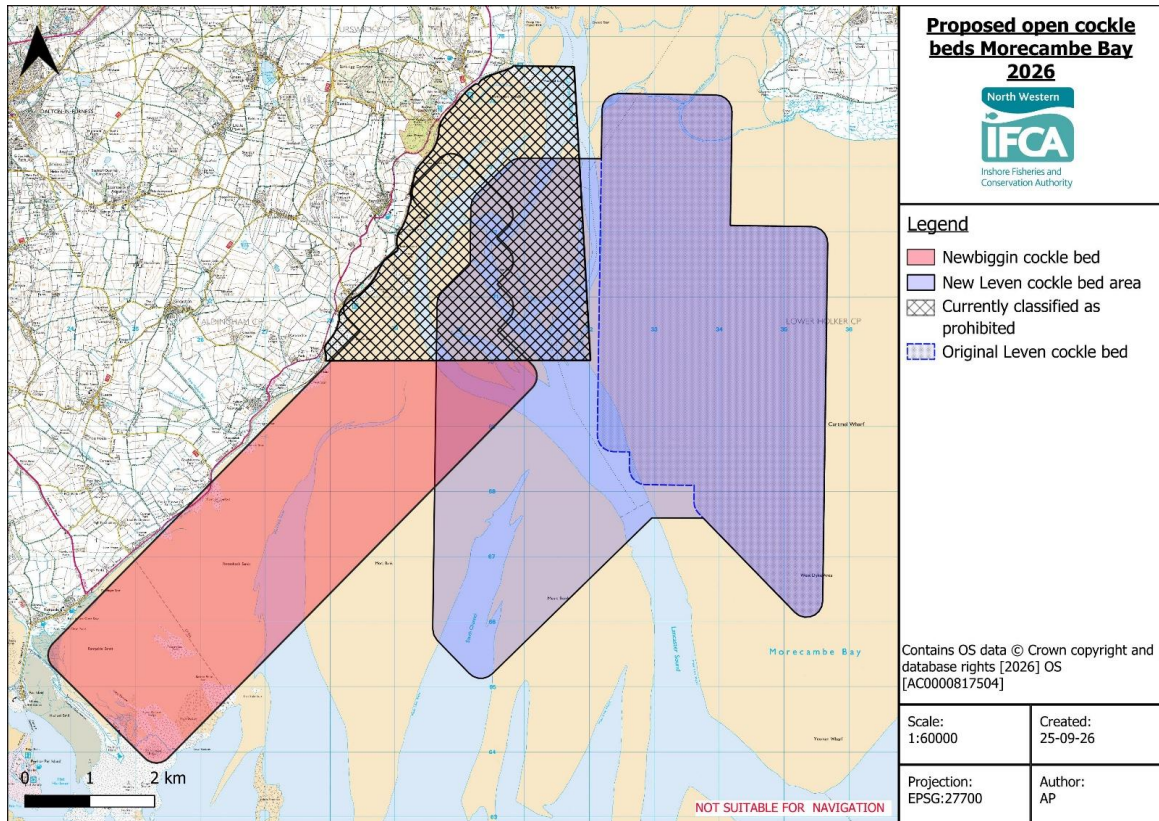


Figure 7. The cockle beds proposed open for the 2026/27 fishing season. The red area is the Newbiggin cockle bed, and hashed grey the Aldingham cockle bed (to remain closed). The blue area demonstrates the Leven cockle bed, with the dotted blue to the right highlighting the original area, and the rest being the new area identified in 2026 September surveys.

Morecambe Bay cockle fishery recommendation:

Officers recommend that:

1. Leven and Newbiggin cockle beds be opened as early as practicable, for one tide a day, 7 days a week until April 30th, with a 1867 tonne TAC, under Byelaw 3 Flexible Permit Conditions.
2. All other District cockle beds, including Middleton, Warton, Pilling, Flookburgh, and Aldingham, remain closed under paragraph 15 of Byelaw 3.

29th September 2026