

12 MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL, SCIENCE AND BYELAW SUB-COMMITTEE (TSB) ON TUESDAY 4TH NOVEMBER 2025 AT TRUCKHAVEN, CARNFORTH 10:00

PRESENT MEMBERS

T. Jones	Chair	MMO Appointee
S. Brown	Vice-Chair	MMO Appointee
G. Pidduck		MMO Appointee
N. Baxter		MMO Appointee
K. Thompson		MMO Appointee
L. Stainton		MMO Appointee
B. Leigh		MMO Appointee
S. Johnston		MMO
J. Turner		Environment Agency
L. Browning		Natural England

NWIFCA OFFICERS ATTENDING

M. Taylor (CEO), J. Haines (Acting Head of Science), I. Dixon (SIFCO), S. Reid (Admin Officer).

OTHERS PRESENT

S. Isles (Natural England), M. Rowlings, S. Ward.

13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

J. Turner, P. Capper, G. de Jong Cleyndert

14 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (Agenda Item 1)

The Chair extended a welcome to all members present and gave apologies for J. Turner, P. Capper and G. de Jong Cleyndert.

The Chair welcomed all other members of industry and explained that they would be invited to ask questions or make comments but requested that they introduce themselves before speaking.

The Chair reminded members to sign the attendance register and complete declarations of interest slips if required.

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

T. Jones declared an interest in all Items.

L. Stainton declared an interest in Item 8, subject to Byelaw 7 being discussed.

B. Leigh declared an interest in Item 8, subject to Byelaw 7 being discussed.

16 MINUTES OF TSB MEETING 5th August 2025 (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record.

Proposed: S. Brown, Seconded: K. Thompson, 1 Abstention, Carried

17 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES (Agenda Item 4)

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

18 SURVEY AND INSPECTION SCIENCE REPORT (Agenda Item 5)

The Chair asked for feedback from members on the Survey and Inspection Report presented. The Chair commented on discrepancies between written survey dates and the dates on photographs throughout the report. The Chair drew attention to the histogram, Page 9 Figure 3 and requested for the results to be presented in a way which was clearer to read. S. Brown questioned the accuracy of the image taken at Rossall Scar in the Fleetwood inspection.

Discussion took place around the use of the drone to aid inspections. The AHOS explained that progress is being made with using the drone, however the team is restricted by flight distances. The CEO said that the HOE is exploring the possibility of applying to the CAA which would enable the IFCA to fly the drone beyond visual line of sight. Science and Enforcement drone usage is different due to requiring different permissions and the specification of the individual drones. Furthermore, a second Science Officer is currently completing the drone training as this will provide the Science Team a greater opportunity to use the drone. L. Stainton enquired if the IFCA knew about the changes in drone laws which are being introduced in January 2026. The AHOS said that the IFCA had received a notification about the changes and didn't think it would have implications on how we fly drones.

Further discussion took place around the methodology used for mussel inspections and if the use of a hovercraft would assist in reaching locations which could not be accessed. The Chair asked why Perch Scar had not been surveyed at the same time as Black Scar and it was explained there was only limited time due to daylight hours.

The Chair asked for further information on cockle surveys in the Solway. The AHOS gave possible future methodologies which could be used to undertake a cockle survey in the Solway. Future surveys would provide the IFCA with information on stock levels in that location. Discussion took place around the restrictions of using the day grab for cockle surveys in the Solway.

RESOLUTION A: TO RECEIVE THE REPORT AND RELATED SURVEY AND INSPECTION NOTES SUBJECT TO AMENDMENTS

Proposed: K. Thompson, Seconded: L. Stainton, all in favour, carried

19 SCIENCE REPORT (Agenda Item 8)

Agenda Item 8 was not discussed.

20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda Item 9)

The date of the next meeting was set at Tuesday 10th February 2026 subject to the Authorities approval.

21 AOB (Agenda Item 10)

S. Brown noted that while attempting to contact the office outside of working hours, there was no answerphone facility.

The CEO gave updates on staffing with Jon Haines acting as Head of Science while Anna Plumeridge is on Sabbatical.

Further updates were given on the progress of Byelaws. Byelaw 7 is now with DEFRA to be scrutinised. The application process has been launched, and stakeholders are now able to apply for a Byelaw 7 permit. Further communication on Byelaw 7 is planned.

An initial consultation on Byelaw 10, Mobile Netting, is due to be launched. The information provided from the consultation will feed into the Byelaw Working Group.

There is a consultation open to stakeholders on the Byelaw 3 Minimum Use Policy.

On Friday 31st October the Cockle Management Plan was published and feedback on the plan is being requested from stakeholders and members. There will be chance for stakeholders to give their feedback on the early cockle season which has been trialled this year. The feedback provided will be used to decide the 2026-2027 cockle season opening.

There is a call for evidence for the washup of smooth-hound on the Wirral Coastline. This will potentially feed into a research project in 2026.

The initial consultation for the River Dee has now closed and Natural Resources Wales are analysing the responses. The responses will inform the application and the management plan. Natural Resources Wales have assigned Sian Hughes as the lead officer, and she will lead on the Dee Cockle Fishery.

Discussion took place around the proposed Byelaw 3 Minimum Use Policy and the appeals process. The policy aims to maximise the use of the Byelaw 3 permits and will be applied in a flexible manner to reflect fishing conditions. A minimum use threshold would be decided at the end of a fishing season to discourage false declarations of fishing activity.

Further questions were asked about Byelaw 7. The CEO said there would not be a limit to the number of tags which a fisher could have but there would be a limit to the total amount of net. Details on the total length of net and the placement of tags can be found in the flexible byelaw conditions. Further clarification was requested on the 26 Bass Entitlements which form Category 2 of Byelaw 7. The CEO explained that it would be 26 permit holders who will be given the entitlement of retaining bass as a bycatch in one net. B. Leigh suggested that the IFCA could provide guidance on the best practice for tending nets to remove undersize bycatch. The placement of tags on nets and buoys was

discussed. The information regarding tags will be communicated in the flexible working conditions.

S. Ward expressed his concerns around the Pilling HRA and the impact it is having on fishers' ability to fulfil orders. The CEO explained that Byelaw 3 permit holders had been consulted on which days the fishers would prefer Pilling cockle bed to be open. A majority of stakeholders voted to keep the Pilling fishery open Monday to Friday.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending – meeting closed at 11:35.