

NORTH EASTERN INSHORE FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING 06 FEBRUARY 2026

Present:

Prof Mike Elliott
 Councillor David Chance
 Councillor Neil Swannick
 Councillor Tracy Henry
 Councillor Johnathan Owen
 Councillor Rachel Creevy
 Mr Michael Montgomerie
 Miss Rebecca Lynam
 Mr Graham Collins
 Dr Stephen Axford
 Kevin Woodcock

Representing:

Chair
 North Yorkshire County Council
 North Yorkshire County Council
 Hull City Council
 East Riding of Yorkshire Council
 Hartlepool Borough Council
 MMO appointee
 MMO appointee
 MMO appointee
 MMO appointee
 MMO appointee

Mr Stephen Hunt, Clerk, Mr David McCandless, Chief Officer, Mr David Kirven, Treasurer, Ms Liz Smith, Incoming Treasurer and Dr Ralf Bublitz, Senior Environmental Officer also attended the meeting.

The Committee met at The County Hall, Beverley, members were also able to attend the meeting via Teams. The meeting started at 13:30pm

58.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
	Apologies for absence were received from MMO members Andrew Faichney & Will Jenkinson and Council Members Cooke, Farren, Cawley & Norman.
59.	DECLARATION OF PERSONAL OR PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS
	Resolved –The Clerk asked Members to declare any personal or prejudicial interests in items on the Agenda and the nature of such interests. No declarations were received.
60.	TO CONSIDER THE MINUTES OF THE AUTHORITY MEETING HELD ON 26 JUNE 2025
	Resolved – The minutes of the Authority meeting held on 26 June 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
61.	TO TAKE THE MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON 04 SEPTEMBER 2025
	Resolved – The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 04 September 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
62.	BUDGET MONITORING 2025/2026

	<p>The Treasurer, David Kirven, presented a report to advise Members of the budget position at the end of month 07 (October) in 2025/26. At the end of October 2025, the Authority had a net expenditure of £719,239 against an expected £810,168 underspending by £90,929. The forecast outturn underspend was £347,940. The majority of the underspend was a consequence of slippage in the completion of the build of the new patrol vessel. The new build has been technically complex requiring close interplay with a wide range of associated suppliers and technicians which has caused a short delay in the completion of trials, sign off and formal acceptance, however since the report was produced, acceptance of the vessel has now taken place.</p> <p>The forecast underspend was increased by a further £80,000 following notification in November 2025 of the award of additional Defra 'grant in aid', made up of £50,000 allocated to support the Marine Protected Area and delivery towards 'good environmental status' and £30,000 towards Marine Sustainable Development. Members asked if the delay in acceptance of the boat has caused any additional costs to be incurred, the treasurer explained that there have been no additional expense to NEIFCA with the main issues being external contractors.</p>
	<p>Resolved –</p> <p>a) The budget monitoring forecast outturn underspend at 31 March 2026 of £347,940 is noted.</p> <p>b) The Chief Officer is approved to increase the one-off payment to East Riding of Yorkshire Council towards the new patrol vessel by up to £350,000, funded from a combination of the forecast 2025/26 outturn underspend (£290,178) and increased balance on the Renewals Fund at the end of 2024/25 financial year (£59,822).</p> <p>c) The forecast £57,762 remaining underspend at outturn be transferred to the Renewals Fund.</p>
63.	LEVY 2026/2027
	<p>The Treasurer, David Kirven, presented a report to determine the levy on member local authorities for 2026/27. At its meeting on 5 December 2024, the Authority agreed to increase the levy for the 2025/26 financial year by 11.5% to a total of £1,712,499 (Minute 29 refers). The increase was the final year of a phased increase to fund the additional cost of the annual finance lease repayment for the build and commission of a new 24.5m Fisheries Patrol/Research vessel due to be operational in 2025. An indicative increase of 2% in 2026/27 and 2% in 2027/28 was proposed but not agreed. Members were assured that the Clerk, Treasurer and Chief Officer were mindful that authorities were facing financial pressures of their own, in particular the pressure from higher employee costs, funding constraints and increasing demand for public services. The current outlook remained uncertain for local government due to reduced income from fees and charges due to the increase in cost of living, inflationary pressures and delays in the reform of local government funding. With this in mind, Members were asked to consider the proposed 3% levy increase for 2026/27 as shown in Appendix A in the reports. In seeking this increase the Authority commits to undertake a further review for the 2027/28 levy when the costs of operating the new vessel will be clearer.</p>

	<p>**Discussions were held amongst the committee about attendance to NEIFCA authority meetings, in particular the local authority Councillors having a statutory duty to attend on behalf of their council. A letter to all members was agreed to remind members of their obligations and responsibilities, with Chief Officer, Clerk and Chair to collaborate on a draft for this**</p>
	<p>Resolved –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) The proposed 3% levy increase for 2026/27 is unanimously approved by the Authority and the Clerk be authorised to issue demands on the relevant local authorities as presented at Appendix A. b) The Authority acknowledges the issues affecting NEIFCA and their effect upon the levy for 2027/28 and 2028/29. c) A detailed budget for 2026/27 will be brought to the Authority for approval at the Executive meeting in March 2026. d) The Chief Officer to draft a letter to members about their statutory duty to attend meetings.
64.	NEIFCA BYELAWS UPDATE
	<p>The Chief Officer presented a report to inform members on progress with the following byelaws:</p> <p>XXVIII Shellfish Permit Byelaw 2022</p> <p>In line with the statutory process, the draft byelaw regulation and supporting documentation was sent to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) for a Quality Assurance (QA) assessment on 11 January 2024 with a recommendation that it be further considered for formal confirmation by Defra. The draft regulation and its supporting RIA have subsequently gone through six phases of QA checking with the MMO and on 9 July 2025 it was finally submitted to Defra for formal confirmation. On 8 August 2025 Defra advised that it had been passed onto the Ministerial department for final review and signing with an expectation of receiving the signed off byelaw by March 2026.</p> <p>Discussions held amongst members on the number of permits to be offered when the byelaw comes into force. Since the making of this byelaw in 2022, 20 permits have been surrendered which is indicative of the general decline of the inshore fleet being seen nationally. Original number of permits suggested was established based on number of permit holders plus 10%. New figure to be looked at once the byelaw is signed off as part of the flexible conditions.</p> <p>Cllr Owen suggested that Council Members lobby their own MP's to try to support the sign off of the byelaw. Chief Officer, David McCandless agreed to draft a letter that all Council Members can send to their respective MP with unanimous agreement from the Councillors in attendance.</p> <p>XXIX Humber Estuary Fishing Byelaw 2022</p> <p>At the Authority meeting held on 1 December 2022 members supported the making of a new byelaw XXIX Humber Estuary Fishing Byelaw 2022. Whilst retaining all existing management measures in relation to fishing activities within the boundaries of the Humber Estuary the new byelaw included a revision to the boundaries of an existing protected area to support the expansion of eel grass habitat. In line with the statutory process the draft byelaw regulation and supporting documentation was sent to the Marine Management Organisation for</p>

	<p>a Quality Assurance (QA) assessment on 11 January 2024 with a recommendation that it be further considered for formal confirmation by Defra. The draft regulation and its supporting RIA had subsequently gone through four phases of QA checking with the MMO and on 28 February 2025 it was submitted to Defra for formal confirmation. On 7 August 2025 officers received written confirmation from Defra that the byelaw had been signed by the Fisheries Minister on 28 July 2025. The provisions of the new byelaw regulation had now been implemented, and a copy of the new regulation was attached to this report for members' information.</p> <p>Byelaw in Progress – Mobile Gear Senior Environmental Officer, Ralf Bublitz updated members on the creation of a new mobile gear byelaw which incorporates many of NEIFCA's outdated byelaws, using the flexible byelaw model. Currently at informal consultation stage, with a plan for making this at the June Authority Meeting.</p>
	<p>Resolved – (a) The report is noted. (b) The chief officer to draft a letter for all Councillors to send to their respective MP's to gain support for the byelaw sign off.</p>
65.	CHIEF OFFICERS OPERATIONAL REPORT
	<p>The Chief Officer presented a report to provide members with a comprehensive and detailed operational summary covering the period June 2025 to November 2025. Following the award of contract to Whitby based shipbuilders, Parkol Marine Ltd, on 6 October 2023, to build and commission a new vessel to replace North Eastern Guardian III, fabrication work commenced during February 2024. North Eastern Guardian IV was formally named and blessed at a quayside ceremony held at the Parkol shipyard in Whitby, North Yorkshire on Saturday 21 June 2025. Following the official naming ceremony, there had been ongoing equipment commissioning, testing and adjustment, focused primarily on the anchoring, air conditioning and steering/navigational systems. These post-construction works had taken much longer than expected due in part to the complexity of the build and onboard systems and the degree of associated, specialist sub-contractor involvement. The vessel was formally accepted on 31st January 2026 by NEIFCA.</p> <p>The Chief Officer reflected on enforcement and compliance work throughout the district, with the emphasis being on an emerging recreational blue fin tuna fishery. DEFRA are moving to manage the fishery both commercially and recreationally with the NEIFCA region hosting the largest tuna in the UK. Discussions have been held on the safety of recreational fishers with no current legislation in place on the type of gear being used. The Chief Officer added that the jurisdiction for the fishery falls on DEFRA and the MMO but NEIFCA need to be proactive in this from a compliance point of view. Putting in an emergency byelaw was discussed by members but decided this was not suitable in this instance due to it not being unforeseen. MMO member Kevin Woodcock, an associate of the Angling Trust, advised he would ask a colleague who deals with the tuna fishery to provide an update to the Chief Officer. Councillor David Chance proposed NEIFCA seriously consider NEIFCA creating legislation against fishing method in order to enforce the type of gear that must be used by the recreational industry. Senior Environmental Manager, Ralf Bublitz to look into this.</p>

	<p>During May and June two new staff were recruited into the offshore operational team and during October one of NEIFCA's longstanding staff members, John Mallette, retired from his role following 18 years' service in the offshore operational team. The vacancy resulting from John's retirement was filled by Dean Grason, an experienced member of the NEIFCA shore operational team, and a recruitment process is underway to fill his vacant post.</p> <p>Thanks were given to MMO member Mike Montgomerie for his work on the Fishing News article concerning the new vessel. The Chief Officer commented that he would distribute the article amongst all members.</p>
	<p>Resolved – (a) The report is noted. (b) That NEIFCA look into legislating against the type of method used by recreational anglers for tuna fishing within the NEIFCA district.</p>
66.	SCIENCE ADVISORY GROUP UPDATE
	<p>The Environmental & Scientific Manager presented a report to update members on the most recent proceedings of the Science Advisory Group (SAG) following meetings held on 15 October 2025. A summary of the items discussed at the last Science Advisory Group meeting held in June 2025 was included in the report for members information.</p>
	Resolved - The report is noted.
67.	FISHERIES MONITORING REPORT 2025
	<p>The Environmental & Scientific Manager presented a report to update members on the most recent outcome of the preliminary stock monitoring analysis for lobster, crabs, beam trawling and fixed nets in 2025. Accurate data collection and stock assessment are essential for maintaining sustainable fisheries. In recent years, the Environmental and Scientific team has focused on enhancing data collection and stock assessment processes. Mandatory catch returns for shellfish, dredging, beam trawling, and intertidal fixed net permit holders capture essential landings and effort data. In 2022, NEIFCA introduced an in-house online catch return system for shellfish permit holders, improving the accuracy and reliability of catch and effort data while providing greater spatial detail on fishing areas. The new catch return system represented a major step forward for NEIFCA and encouraged other IFCAs to adopt similar approaches. NEIFCA aims to produce and publish annual stock monitoring reports for each fishery following the close of its season. For this meeting, preliminary findings for the lobster and crab fisheries were presented, with the full report scheduled for publication in March 2026 once all 2025 catch returns have been submitted and analysed. Data on lobster and crab landings and fishing effort were analysed only for the period January to September, as catch returns for October to December were incomplete at the time this report was finalized. Lobster landings in 2025 had generally followed the trends of the previous two years, with a slight decline noted in July and August. This decrease appeared to be linked to a reduction in the number of pots hauled in 2025 (2.1 million) compared</p>

	to 2024 (2.5 million) and 2023 (2.8 million). Although both landings and the number of pots hauled were lower, the landings per unit effort (LPUE) in 2025 showed an increase compared to previous years. Edible crab landings had continued to decline over recent years, reaching their lowest levels in 2025. Between January and September, total landings from NEIFCA permit holders fell from 419 tonnes in 2023 to 272 tonnes in 2025. Similarly, landings per unit effort (LPUE) dropped from 18.5 kg per 100 pots in 2023 to 14.8 kg per 100 pots in 2025. Although lobster stocks remain relatively stable, the status of edible crab populations is a growing concern both locally and nationally. Declines have been observed in both inshore and offshore areas, with inshore stocks showing the greatest impact. A recent report by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) confirms that this trend extends across the UK and Europe.
	Resolved - The report is noted.
68.	FISHERIES STATUTES AND REGULATIONS
	The Clerk submitted a report on the fisheries enforcement activities taken by the Authority for the period 1 June 2025 to 30 November 2025.
	Resolved - The report is noted.
69.	NEIFCA ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024
	The Chief Officer provided members with a copy of the Annual Report covering the period, 2024/2025, summarising the Authority's outputs and activities during the year.
	Resolved - The report is noted.
70.	REPORTS FROM PARTNER AGENCIES AND BODIES
	None received.
71.	ANY OTHER BUSINESS
	The Chief Officer thanked outgoing treasurer David Kirven for his service and welcomed new NEIFCA treasurer Liz Smith onto the Authority. Cllr Swannick informed members that the Maritime Training Hub based in Whitby is nearing completion and may be a suitable space to hold NEIFCA meetings in the future. The Chair to make contact with partner agencies about their obligation to provide reports for NEIFCA Authority meetings.

	The meeting closed at 15:45

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