The aim of this guide is to provide a brief introduction to the Northumberland Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority and the existing regulations relevant to recreational sea angling within the NIFCA district.

Included in this guide:

- About us
- Fish Minimum Landing Sizes
- Bait use regulations
- Bait collection regulations

The IFCA vision is to:

‘lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry’
About us

- Northumberland Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (NIFCA) is one of 10 IFCAs in England established in April 2011 to replace the Sea Fisheries Committees, with extended responsibilities to achieve sustainable inshore fisheries, but also to help achieve conservation objectives.

- Our district extends from the River Tyne to the English/Scottish border out to 6 nautical miles and up to the normal tidal limit within estuaries (Map 1).

- The aims of NIFCA are:
  - To ensure sustainable exploitation of sea fisheries resources.
  - To balance the social and economic benefits of exploiting the sea fisheries resources of the district with the need to protect the marine environment.

- These aims are achieved through:
  - The creation and enforcement of byelaws (as well as other European and national legislation) to manage fishing activity within the district.
  - Monitoring of fishing activity and fish/shellfish stocks within the district.
  - Monitoring of marine protected areas and fishing activity within them.

![Fisheries Patrol Image](image-url)
- You might see our officers patrolling the coast. They may want to have a look at what you have caught and make sure it is above the legal minimum landing size and not subject to any restrictions. Our primary objective however is to positively engage with our stakeholders and we are always happy to answer any questions you might have.

- Officers will usually be in a blue uniform and will always carry a warrant card.

- We also carry out patrols at sea on board our new patrol vessel the St. Aidan, equipped with a 5.3m RIB (once delivered, due late April/early May 2015) and on our 7m shore-based RIB Bravo 1, which is capable of being launched at numerous sites throughout the Authority’s district.
Minimum Landing Sizes

The principle regulations that anglers must adhere to when fishing in Northumberland are the EU minimum landing sizes (MLS) for finfish and shellfish. Additional national legislation that may also apply to anglers in the Northumberland district is listed on page 61.

- The statutory minimum landing sizes for finfish and shellfish currently in force within the NIFCA district are set out in Tables 1 & 2.

- These are the EU minimum sizes as listed under Council Regulation EEC 850/98.

- It is an offence for any person to take any fish/shellfish below the MLS.

- Fish minimum landing sizes are given as ‘fish length’ in centimetres. Fish length is measured as the distance from the tip of the snout to the end of the tail fin:

- Shellfish minimum landing sizes are given as ‘carapace length’ for lobsters and ‘carapace width’ for crabs:
### Table 1 | EU Minimum Landing Sizes (fish length) for fish commonly landed in the North Sea

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>MLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seabass</td>
<td>36cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cod</td>
<td>35cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haddock</td>
<td>30cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herring</td>
<td>20cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ling</td>
<td>63cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackerel</td>
<td>30cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollack</td>
<td>30cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalfish</td>
<td>35cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiting</td>
<td>27cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megrim</td>
<td>20cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaice</td>
<td>27cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sole</td>
<td>24cm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 | EU Minimum Landing Sizes for shellfish commonly landed in the North Sea

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>MLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lobster</td>
<td>87mm carapace length</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown crab</td>
<td>130mm carapace width</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velvet crab</td>
<td>65mm carapace width</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NIFCA byelaws also prohibit landing a lobster with a v-notched or mutilated tail, berried brown crab, soft-shelled brown crab or lobster and parts of lobster, brown crab or velvet crab. For full details see NIFCA guidelines on recreational fishing for shellfish.

1Additional regulations:

- **European Commission Council Regulation 2015/523:**
  - Recreational fishermen may only keep 3 seabass per day.

- **Sea Fisheries England, Statutory Instrument No. 691: The Tope (Prohibition of Fishing) Order 2008:**
  - There is a national restriction on landing tope caught from a boat by rod and line. Any boat-caught tope are legally required to be released as soon as possible after capture.

- Any angler aged 12 years or older, fishing for salmon, sea trout, freshwater fish or eels in Northumberland (except the River Tweed) must have an Environment Agency rod licence
  - For more information visit [www.gov.uk/fishing-licences](http://www.gov.uk/fishing-licences)
  - For information on the River Tweed visit: [www.rtc.org.uk/](http://www.rtc.org.uk/)

- Shad are protected under the EU - Berne Convention and all fish must be returned.
Bait use

There are some restrictions on bait collection and the use of bait that apply to anyone planning on going sea angling in Northumberland:

➢ Northumberland Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority Byelaw no. 9: Prohibition on Use of Edible Crab (Cancer pagurus) for bait

- It is an offence to use edible crab for bait throughout the NIFCA district

*This byelaw is proposed for revision to allow use of edible crab as bait for recreational rod fishing, but pending confirmation (such use remains an offence).


- There is a national minimum landing size in place for velvet crab of 65mm carapace width which prohibits the landing, selling or possession of velvet crabs under this size.

- Using velvet crab under the MLS as bait is therefore prohibited.
Bait collection

- The collection of intertidal fish, molluscs, crustaceans and worms is a public right, however these rights may be regulated under byelaws and there are a number of regulations in Northumberland that bait collectors must be aware of.

- It must also be noted that bait collection is limited to **personal use only** and collectors have no legal right to take worms commercially without the permission of the landowner.

- **Northumberland Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority Byelaw no. 17: Seagrass Protection Byelaw**

  - This byelaw prohibits any person from digging or hand gathering for any sea fisheries resources in or from the specified areas (Map 2) where seagrass (*Zostera* spp.) is situated within the Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast Special Area of Conservation.

  - The purpose of this byelaw is to protect seagrass beds which provide important nursery grounds for many important commercial fish species and support large numbers of birds of national and international importance.

- Additional byelaws restricting bait gathering are implemented by other authorities in several parts of the district, notably:

  - **Lindisfarne NNR (Natural England)**

  - **Boulmer Haven (Northumberland County Council)**

  - **Cullercoats (North Tyneside Council)**

  - **Newton Haven (National Trust)**

- **For full information on these byelaws contact the relevant authorities.**
Map 2| Map of seagrass areas within Berwickshire and Northumberland Coast SAC where Seagrass Protection Byelaw no. 17 applies.

If you have any questions regarding recreational sea angling within the NIFCA district do not hesitate to contact us.

For full information on our byelaws visit: www.nifca.gov.uk

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