

Recreational Sea Angling Strategy



NORTHUMBERLAND INSHORE FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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Summary

The Northumberland Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority (NIFCA) has drafted an Angling Strategy to strengthen and improve engagement with recreational sea angling stakeholders in the Northumberland district. The angling community are an important link to fisheries stock management and bring significant socio-economic benefits to the local coastal communities and the wider economy. In addition, we hope to promote NIFCA's work while gaining insight into the RSA community's knowledge and concerns.

This document has been drafted by NIFCA staff and will be reviewed as the Authority works with the RSA community.

Overview

The Northumberland Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority (NIFCA) is one of ten Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) in England, established in 2011 under Section 150 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009¹. IFCAs duties include the management of sea fisheries resources to ensure it is carried out in a sustainable way, and to balance the social and economic benefits with the need to protect the marine environment.

The NIFCA district extends from the centre of the River Tyne to the Scottish border, out to 6 nautical miles and to the normal tidal limit of estuaries (Figure 1).

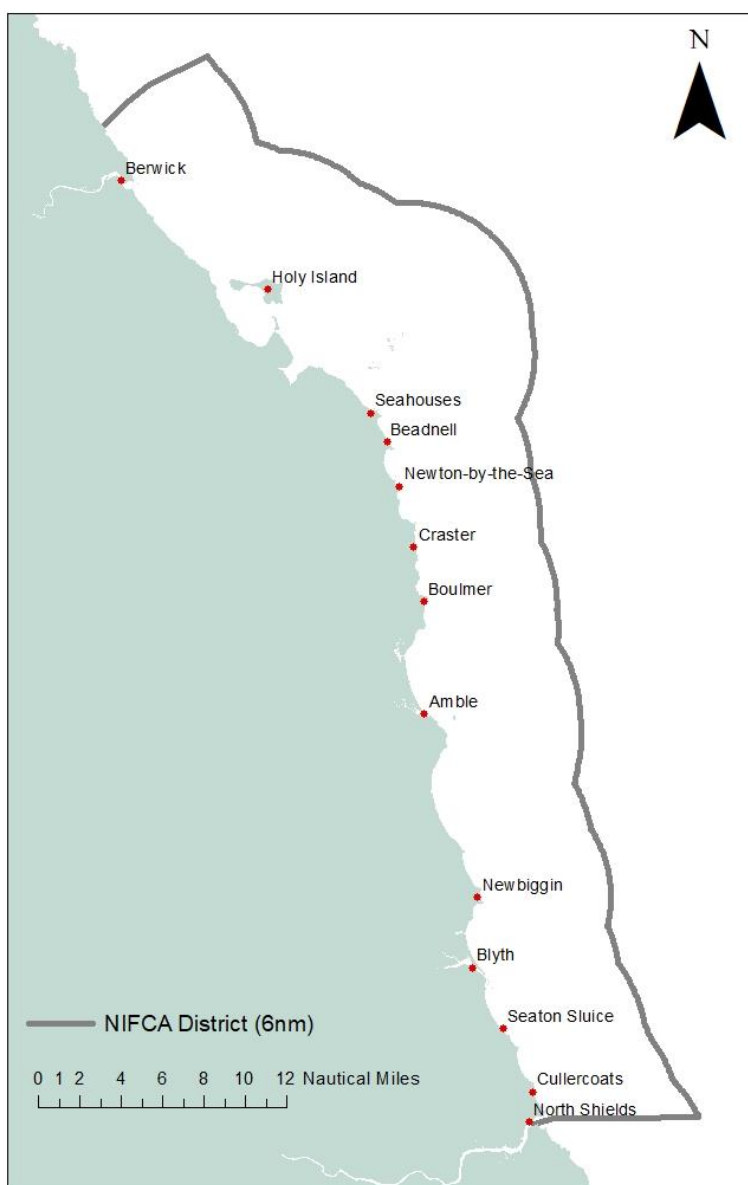


Figure 1: Boundaries of the NIFCA district.

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/23/contents>

Recreational sea angling

Recreational sea angling (RSA) is a popular and high-value leisure activity for locals and visitors throughout the NIFCA district. People can choose between a variety of sea angling activities, including fishing on the shore and from kayaks, private or charter boats.

The sport provides people with an opportunity to socialise and connect with the marine environment, whilst encouraging people to consider the protection and sustainability of sea fisheries resources (Armstrong *et al.*, 2013). Sea anglers contribute to rod and line fisheries sustainability by complying with minimum conservation reference sizes (MCRSs) and submitting catch data to initiatives such as the Sea Angling Diary App² (Hyder *et al.*, 2017).

Recreational sea angling brings significant economic benefits to regions, by boosting spending at bait and tackle shops, charter boat hire, club membership and local hospitality facilities. During 2017, expenditure in England amounted to £1.94 billion on sea fishing, and was estimated to support over 16,000 jobs (Hyder *et al.*, 2020).

NIFCA previously contributed to the UK's largest sea angling survey conducted by the Centre for Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) in 2012 titled, Sea Angling 2012 (Armstrong *et al.*, 2013). NIFCA collected social and economic data from recreational sea anglers within the NIFCA district. The study was designed to help local and national policy makers develop well-balanced decisions on the sustainable development of sea fishing. It also allowed the UK to estimate and submit the recreational sector catch information for protected species, including the European seabass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) and Atlantic cod (*Gadus morhua*), as required under the European Commission's Data Collection Framework³. Regional data was collected through face-to-face interviews with anglers and online surveys. The findings noted frustration from anglers towards the commercial fishing fleet, particularly those involved in trawling activity and the setting of gill nets, as well as stakeholders feeling they were unfairly looked upon as a result of the actions of a small minority, who have been responsible for littering and the removal of undersize fish.

Following the Sea Angling 2012 data collection, NIFCA completed an in-house survey to develop links with angling stakeholders (NIFCA., 2017). The Engaging with Anglers document led by a dedicated NIFCA Officer, furthered our understanding of sea angling in the district and strengthened the stakeholder relationship. Signs were placed along the coast displaying minimum reference conservation size information, an angling guide was published and a wide variety of promotional

² <https://www.seaangling.org>

³ (EU) 2019/472: Multiannual plan for fish stocks in the Western Waters and adjacent waters.

material was distributed. In 2019, NIFCA began supporting the Anglers National Line Recycling Scheme (ANLRS) and purchased recycling bins for discarded line along the coast.

Currently, NIFCA officers meet recreational sea anglers at a variety of local and regional angling events (Figure 2), and during district (onshore and offshore) patrols to ensure fishing activity follows all regulations. Compliance checks with local anglers primarily focus on minimum conservation reference sizes of a number of protected species within the district (NIFCA Byelaw 3).



Figure 2: NIFCA Officers attend the 2020 Amble Sea Angling Clubs' annual Amble Open Competition.

By speaking with recreational sea anglers more regularly, officers hope to strengthen and improve stakeholder relationships. The increases engagement will also offer an opportunity to promote NIFCA's responsibilities and regulations while gaining insight from the recreational sea angling community to ensure informed decision-making. Stakeholder engagement will now be reviewed and developed further by creation of the Recreational Sea Angling Strategy.

Purpose of this strategy

The IFCA Vision

IFCAs will 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.

NIFCA aims to continue to meet its statutory duty to balance the needs of all stakeholders including recreational sea anglers engaged with sea fisheries resources in the district.

Improved involvement and engagement with the recreational sea angling sector will result in gathering more information and data that can aid balanced decision-making.

This strategy is built upon the foundations of the NIFCA's 2013-14 Sea Angling Strategy, while taking account of the wider national picture. It incorporates the former strategy's aim to gain insight into local important issues with the National Angling Strategy's (2019- 2024) delivery plan to increase angler engagement.

The strategy is intended to be a living document enabling NIFCA to continually edit it with regards to the needs and duties of NIFCA and the RSA stakeholders.

Aims and Outcomes of the Strategy

Aims:

- To build strong relationships with recreational sea angling stakeholders within the NIFCA district; and
- To gather information that will ensure evidence-based decisions for sustainable recreational sea angling activity.

Outcomes:

- For recreational sea anglers to develop their understanding and support of NIFCA.
- To share recreational sea angling news and information on a variety of online platforms.
- Working with recreational sea anglers to gather sea angling activity information to better understand the recreational sea angling sector.
- Establish a Recreational Sea Angling Group to improve communication and knowledge between NIFCA and stakeholders, and to ensure stakeholders are represented and have an opportunity to voice their views and/or concerns.

How to achieve the RSA strategy aims

Good engagement is key to the effectiveness of this strategy. Effective engagement involves presenting meaningful information and understanding within the sector, as well as listening and learning from individuals and organisations/clubs.

RSA Strategy aims will be achieved by the actions detailed below:

Aim: To build strong relationships with recreational sea angling stakeholders within the NIFCA district

Engage with recreational sea angling stakeholders

- Develop links with sea angling clubs and organisations which represent a broad range of individuals.
- Develop a Recreational Sea Anglers Call for Information questionnaire.
- During routine sea and shore patrols talk to recreational sea anglers and direct them to the Call for Information questionnaire.
- Attend angling meetings, events, and competitions.
- Join recreational sea angling forums online to introduce NIFCA and improve stakeholder links.
- Develop a database to contact interested stakeholders with recreational sea angling matters.
- Promote the Authority's website and social media accounts by encouraging anglers to visit them for angling updates and news.
- Ensure more sea angling posts are published from the Authority's social accounts and website. Promote angling news/events/festivals/meetings that align with NIFCA's vision.

Develop recreational sea angling information material

- Review and update where necessary the NIFCA guidelines for recreational sea angling.
- Review and update the Angling section of the NIFCA website.
- Review and update permanent signage along the coast to inform recreational sea anglers of our work, regulations and contact details.
- Distribute MCRS informational resources to charter boats, RSA retailers and individuals along the coast.

Workshops/Talks/Events

- Deliver workshops shore-side during times of increased RSA activity to inform anglers (and the wider public) of NIFCA's work, as well as listen to stakeholders' views and/or concerns.

- Organise meetings at sea angling clubs/associations to promote NIFCA's work, gain insight into the current situation of RSA activity and create interest in future involvement of a NIFCA Recreational Sea Angling Group.
- Attend RSA events and competitions throughout the district to engage with the RSA community.

Establish a NIFCA Recreational Sea Angling Group

- Hold meeting(s) to gather opinions about how NIFCA could work more effectively with the recreational sea angling sector and decide where to pinpoint actions and resources.
- Provide an initial point of contact for all angling related enquiries to NIFCA.
- Offer an opportunity to collect stakeholders' opinions on regional (and if relevant national) fisheries management decisions and work on shared solutions. NIFCA can support the RSA sector and discuss any initiatives they would like to see in the district.

Aim: To gather information that will ensure evidence-based decisions to safeguard the longevity of recreational sea angling activity

Gathering important knowledge and data

- Develop an online Recreational Sea Anglers Call for Information document to gather quality data of the regional community and create a stakeholder database for future communications.
- Whilst out on the coast, NIFCA officers will be encouraged to record recreational sea angling activity and any information they gather during engagement using the Survey123 app.

Monitoring and measuring success

Fair and transparent engagement will be evidenced through;

- a) Increased contact with the recreational sea angling sector through the RSA Forum Group, NIFCA website, Twitter account, Facebook page and via direct contact with NIFCA staff.
- b) A better understanding of our work and its effect on the recreational sea angling sector, demonstrated through the above contact and patrols.
- c) Increased information from the sector; and
- d) Increased participation in public events, calls for information and consultations by the recreational sea angling sector.

Continuous feedback directly from stakeholders means issues will be highlighted and addressed early on.

Looking forward

The more stakeholders that are willing to engage with this strategy, the stronger the working relationship becomes, the better the quality of the information gathered and the better represented the recreational sea angling sector will be. It is hoped that through this RSA Strategy, both the RSA sector and NIFCA will benefit from the increased engagement and strengthened working relationships.

References

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