Northumberland IFCA
Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

RECREATIONAL SEA ANGLING STRATEGY 2026–2029

Building sustainable fisheries through partnership, participation and evidence

Published September 2026

Review Date September 2027

Contents

1. Summary 1

2. Why Recreational Sea Angling Matters 1

3. Our Vision 2

4. Strategic Priorities 2

5. Delivery Plan 2026 – 2029 4

6. Success Measures 6

7. Partnerships and Engagement 6

8. Future Opportunities 7

9. How to Get Involved 7

1. Summary

Recreational sea angling (RSA) is an important social, economic and environmental activity within the Northumberland Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority's (NIFCA) district. Thousands of residents and visitors enjoy sea angling from the shore, kayaks, spear fishing, private vessels and charter boats, contributing to local businesses, coastal communities and the wider understanding of marine ecosystems.

Since the publication of the NIFCA Recreational Sea Angling Strategy in 2021, significant progress has been made in strengthening relationships with anglers, improving communication and developing recreational fisheries data. Initiatives including the NIFCA Species Challenge, the Bass Scale Project, increased angling-focused patrols and enhanced stakeholder engagement have all helped build stronger partnerships and improve understanding of recreational fisheries within the district.

This strategy sets out NIFCA's priorities for 2026–2029. It focuses on four key areas:

1. Engaging with the recreational sea angling community to strengthen communication and partnership working.
2. Improving evidence and understanding of recreational fisheries including finfish abundance and distribution.
3. Promoting responsible and sustainable angling practices.
4. Representing the RSA community locally and nationally.

By working collaboratively with anglers, clubs, businesses, partner organisations and local communities, NIFCA aims to ensure recreational sea angling continues to make a positive contribution to sustainable fisheries and the coastal economy.

2. Why Recreational Sea Angling Matters

Recreational sea angling is a popular marine leisure activity within the United Kingdom that provides social, health and wellbeing benefits while supporting local businesses through expenditure on tackle, bait, charter boats, accommodation, food and transport. Research undertaken in the UK in 2017 estimated that recreational sea angling generated approximately £1.94 billion in economic impact and supported 16,313 jobs (Hyder et al., 2020). More recently, the Catchwise study reinforced the importance of recreational sea angling, reporting an estimated 2.7 million fishing trips and 11 million hours spent fishing in England during 2024 (Catchwise, 2026).

In addition to its economic importance, the recreational sea angling community plays a valuable role in improving understanding of local fish populations. Anglers spend considerable time on the coastline and at sea and are often among the first to observe changes in species abundance, distribution and behaviour. Through partnership working, recreational sea anglers can contribute valuable data that supports evidence-based decisions for sustainable recreational sea angling activity (as and when required).

NIFCA also recognises the importance of ensuring the views, knowledge and experiences of recreational sea anglers are considered alongside ecological, social and economic factors when considering inshore fisheries resources.

3. Our 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.

This strategy is built upon the foundations of the NIFCA's Sea Angling Strategy from 2014 and 2021, while taking account of the wider national picture. It incorporates the former strategy's aim to gain insight into local important issues, and the National Angling Strategy's (2019- 2024) delivery plan aim 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.

4. Strategic Priorities

Priority 1 – Engage and Collaborate

Engaging with the recreational sea angling community to strengthen communication and partnership working.

Objectives

- Improve understanding of NIFCA's role and responsibilities.
- Maintain regular engagement opportunities with anglers across the district.
- Increase participation in stakeholder engagement activities and events.

Priority 2 – Improve Evidence and Understanding

Strengthen the evidence base relating to recreational sea angling activity and fish populations within the district. Improving evidence and understanding of recreational fisheries including finfish abundance and distribution.

Objectives

- Continue collecting recreational finfish data.
- Support the ongoing development of the Bass Scale Project.
- Collaborate with NEIFCA to undertake a sea bass tagging programme.
- Review and further develop citizen-science initiatives such as the NIFCA Species Challenge.
- Improve understanding of changes in species composition, distribution and abundance.

Priority 3 – Promote Sustainable Angling

Encourage responsible recreational fishing practices that contribute to the long-term sustainability of marine resources.

Objectives

- Improve awareness of minimum conservation reference sizes (MCRS).
- Promote best practice fish handling and catch-and-release techniques.
- Support initiatives that reduce marine litter and environmental impacts.
- Work with clubs and organisations to encourage responsible fishing practices.
- Improve understanding between RSA and hand gathering for bait.

Priority 4 – Collate and Represent

Improve information sharing across the sector and opportunities to gather local sea anglers' views to contribute to local and national consultations.

Objectives

- Maintain and develop recreational sea angling information on the NIFCA website.
- Increase communication through digital platforms and publications.
- Share project findings and fisheries information with stakeholders.
- Ensure recreational sea anglers have opportunities to contribute to local and national consultations including fisheries management plans discussions.

5. Delivery Plan 2026 – 2029

Strategic Priority	Action	Timescale	Outcomes
Priority 1 - Engage and Collaborate	Attend competitions, club meetings and events	Ongoing (reviewed annually)	Number of engagement opportunities delivered will be reported in the RSA Annual Report.
Priority 1 - Engage and Collaborate	Maintain stakeholder contact network	Ongoing (reviewed annually)	Stakeholder database maintained internally.
Priority 2 - Improve Evidence and Understanding	Continue recreational finfish data collection – measure catch during patrols and sea angling competitions	August, 2027	Number of fish records collected internally and used for other NIFCA annual reports such as Annual Monitoring and Control Plans and to support national Fishery Management Plans (FMP).
Priority 2 - Improve Evidence and Understanding	Continue the Bass Scale Project to increase the number of samples	August, 2027	Number of scale samples to increase to improve confidence in the analysis of results
Priority 2 - Improve Evidence and Understanding	Launch and deliver the Bass Tagging Programme	December, 2027	NIFCA staff be trained appropriately and have several bass tagged.
Priority 2 – Improve Evidence and Understanding	Review and develop Species Challenge	December, 2027	Species Challenge successfully delivered.
Priority 3 - Promote Sustainable Angling	Deliver MCRS awareness campaigns	Ongoing	Multiple patrols, signage updates, website updates and social media posts.

Priority 3 - Promote Sustainable Angling	Promote responsible fishing and bait collection guidance	Ongoing	Multiple patrols, signage updates, website updates and social media posts.
Priority 4 – Collate and Represent	Publish annual recreational sea angling report	December. 2027	Publication produced
Priority 4 – Collate and Represent	Share information through digital platforms	Ongoing	Communications output maintained on the NIFCA website and social media.
Priority 4 - Collate and Represent	Ensure recreational sea anglers have opportunities to contribute to local and national consultations including Fisheries Management Plans	As plans and policies are published for consultation	Data is captured and consultations are submitted.

6. Success Measures

Progress against this strategy will be monitored through the series of outcomes above and performance indicators.

By 2029 NIFCA aims to:

Engagement

- Maintain regular engagement opportunities with recreational sea anglers throughout the district.
- Increase participation in recreational sea angling initiatives.
- Maintain active communication channels with stakeholder groups.

Evidence Collection

- Increase annual recreational fish records collected.
- Continue development of the Bass Scale Project dataset.
- Maintain and review citizen science initiatives.

Awareness and Communication

- Improve stakeholder awareness of regulations and fisheries developments.
- Continue publishing recreational sea angling information and updates.
- Maintain an accessible and up-to-date recreational sea angling section on the NIFCA website.

Partnership Working

- Strengthen relationships with clubs, businesses and partner organisations.
- Increase opportunities for stakeholder input into sustainable fisheries discussions.

7. Partnerships and Engagement

Partnership working remains essential to achieving the aims of this strategy.

NIFCA will continue to work closely with:

Recreational sea anglers

Angling clubs and associations

Tackle retailers

Charter vessel operators

Boat clubs and marina

The Angling Trust

Other IFCAs

Cefas

Marine Management Organisation (MMO)

Academic institutions

Environmental organisations

Collaborative working helps ensure recreational sea anglers are represented in discussions regarding sustainable fisheries and marine conservation.

8. Future Opportunities

The recreational sea angling sector has an increasingly important role in supporting sustainable fisheries.

Opportunities during the lifetime of this strategy include:

- Expansion of citizen science projects.
- Development of additional fish monitoring programmes.
- Investigation of emerging species within the district.
- Greater use of digital engagement and data collection tools.
- Increased collaboration with universities and research organisations.
- Further development of recreational fisheries evidence to support future decisions.

NIFCA will remain flexible in its approach and adapt activities where new opportunities or challenges emerge.

9. How to Get Involved

Recreational sea anglers play a vital role in the success of this strategy.

There are many ways to get involved:

- Share observations, catch information and concern with us by emailing nifca@nifca.gov.uk or calling 01670 797 676
- Participate in the Bass Scale Project.
- Attend stakeholder meetings and engagement activities.
- Follow NIFCA updates through the website and social media channels.
- Participate in consultations relating to fisheries management for example Fisheries Management Plans.

Whether fishing from the shore, a kayak, private vessel or charter boat, every angler can contribute to the sustainable future of recreational sea angling within the Northumberland IFCA district.

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