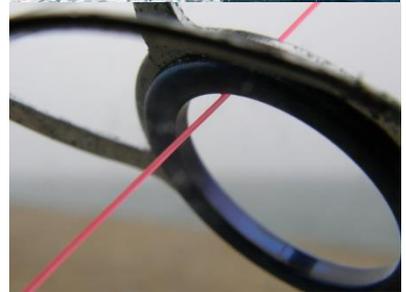


Recreational Sea Angling Strategy 2017



1. Aim and Vision of the Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) Recreational Sea Angling Strategy

The Sussex coast has been an attractive place for sea angling for many years, the climate and excellent diverse fishing grounds draws anglers from all over the country to fish from boats or from one of the many angling hotspots along the coast. Recreational Sea Angling (RSA) is enjoyed by a reported 40,000 residents and visitors to Sussex and it contributes £94m to the local economy (Hargreaves *et al.*, 2012; MRAG, 2014).

The significant economic activity generated by recreational sea angling in Sussex can be predominantly attributed directly to angling charter vessel businesses, of which there are at least 30 in Sussex, commercial businesses associated with supplying anglers with equipment and bait or the wider economic benefits to the tourism business.

The sea angling community faces increased regulation as pressures are put on the marine environment by commercial (food supply) and recreational fishing communities and as marine conservation sites come under fisheries management measures. All sectors need to understand the wider implications of fisheries management, as they all have a vital role in protecting our marine environment for generations to come.

The Sussex IFCA has a duty to balance the needs of commercial and recreational fisheries. This is complex when the needs of the sectors can differ and at times compete against one another. Positively there are many common objectives between inshore commercial fishers and the RSA sector, most importantly those associated with healthy stocks and a well-functioning marine ecosystem.

Sussex IFCA can play a key role in both enabling the recreational fishing community to participate in the development of management and raising awareness of marine issues and regulation. Within its District Sussex IFCA is able to implement RSA management that helps to achieve sustainable fisheries. In addition the IFCA will enforce National and local regulations as placed on the RSA fisheries.

The aims of this strategy are to:

- **Identify IFCA management and planning decisions that can better support RSA.**
- **Establish how Sussex IFCA can better raise awareness on RSA matters.**

Vision

The UK Marine Policy Statement states the UK vision for the marine environment is for 'clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas'. Marine Planning will ensure that different and potentially competing activities are managed in such a way that they contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. A key principle will be to promote compatibility and reduce conflict.

The Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority 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.

In 2015 Sussex IFCA carried out an RSA survey that generated 144 responses. Those responses have helped shape the strategy. Results of the survey are referenced in the following document, and a summary of results can be found on the Sussex IFCA website. For the strategy to be successful it is imperative that RSA stakeholders are involved in the production of the strategy, and therefore have some form of ownership of it. <http://www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk/recreational-fishing>

2. Strategic Focus and Actions

Our first strategic focus is to identifying management decisions that support RSA as part of a sustainable Sussex marine fishery in terms of environment, community and economy. What is a successful angling experience? Each angler will have their own take on the answer. In the 2015 RSA survey conducted by Sussex IFCA the following points were highlighted where anglers thought that improvements could be made to the angling experience;

- a. A greater variety of fish species.
- b. A healthy range of sizes and ages within species.
- c. A growing RSA sector including more and younger anglers.
- d. An increase in revenue generated from RSA activities.
- e. Better communication and fewer conflicts between those using the marine environment for sport and for profit.

The following areas of focus and corresponding actions will help us to shape the future of recreational sea angling in Sussex IFCA district.

Angling Development Officer

Sussex IFCA has allocated the role of Angling Development Officer to one of its staff. This role will become the focus of angling expertise and liaison.

Development and intensification of fisheries

Technological developments and the scale of commercial and recreational fishing activity place increasing pressure on fish stocks. The IFCA intends to maintain important existing regulatory constraints on fisheries during its present regulatory review process. The size of vessels (14 metres overall length) that conduct commercial fishing remains a key management measure to prevent over exploitation and industrialisation. Through its adopted policy toward the development of new fisheries it will ensure that any new fisheries that require regulatory changes demonstrate they are sustainable in the context of internationally agreed principles for sustainable fisheries.

Protecting important areas for key RSA species

There are specific areas within the Sussex District that are important for juvenile, spawning and migrating fish. In conducting its management the IFCA seeks to identify opportunities to better protect these locations, to promote better fish stocks and in so doing support RSA fisheries. Examples are natural harbours and transitional areas of Sussex rivers. Sussex IFCA currently manages much commercial fishing in these locations. As part of its management review process opportunities will be identified to further protect these areas whilst permitting sustainable recreational rod and line fisheries.

Protecting mature and spawning fish important to RSA

Some fish species are particularly vulnerable to fishing pressure due to their reproductive behaviour or physiology (e.g. their large size or age of maturity). Often these species are also important RSA species e.g. some of the large ray species, including blonde and undulate. As part of its management review process opportunities will be identified to further protect these species whilst permitting sustainable recreational rod and line fisheries.

Bass Nursery Areas (BNAs)

BNAs provide sanctuary for juvenile sea bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) during important life stages of the fish. Currently Chichester Harbour is our only BNA and the management placed on this area includes prohibitions on fishing for bass and the use of sand eel by both commercial and recreational fishers during crucial times of year. Further information can be obtained from the Sussex IFCA website. The IFCA is currently involved in the national Defra BNA review and is supporting further BNAs in a several locations in Sussex which are important for the species juvenile stages. Evidence from our own small fish surveys shows the prevalence of bass in Sussex estuaries and forms an important part of this process.

Bass EU legislation

The European Union agreed to restrictions to aid the recovery of sea bass stocks which have suffered a significant decline. The management includes a 42cm size limit on bass and restrictions on daily catches. The Sussex IFCA is prepared to be part of a medium/long term management programme. The IFCA will play its part in compliance with bass regulations.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

Our seas are home to some of the most biologically diverse habitats and species in Europe. MPAs are one of the tools that can help us to protect the marine environment, whilst also enabling its sustainable use, ensuring it remains healthy and contributes to our society for generations to come. There are many types of protected areas and these are regulated under different legislation. Areas such as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protected Areas (SPAs) are designated under the Habitats Directive and Birds Directive. The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 provides the legal framework for the introduction and management of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs). The IFCA has a core role in delivering fisheries management in these designated sites. Current MCZ management includes bag limits for Black seabream on Kingmere. Sussex also has a number of marine Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCl), which are locally designated by the County Councils.

Angling zones

Our survey showed that the RSA community feel strongly about inshore commercial and recreational activity in particular the use of nets on or near beaches. We have already identified and created opportunities where angling is deconflicted from certain fishing activities including trawling and netting. We will continue to identify and develop these opportunities as part of the IFCA's management review process.

Bait Collection

The ability for RSA bait collection is important for many who fish recreationally. The Authority has a duty to ensure bait collection activity is sustainable. We have already introduced better management controls on unsustainable activities in some areas (Beachy Head West MCZ) whilst allowing activities for non-commercial needs. We will continue to identify and develop these opportunities as part of the IFCA's management review process.

Volunteers and Community Partnerships

Sussex IFCA has a number of ongoing research programmes and we encourage groups and individuals to show an interest in the marine environment. We regularly have volunteers assist on our surveys and will continue to encourage people to get involved, where practically possible. Members of the Angling Trust in Sussex carry out a small fish survey which aligns well with Sussex IFCA's research. We have links with local colleges and universities and we are continuously working to create partnership projects. The IFCA can provide support and technical advice to research projects carried out by volunteers.

3. How We Will Communicate

Sussex IFCA can raise awareness in the RSA community on all angling matters by using several communication methods as follows.

Website

In the 2015 Sussex IFCA sea angling survey 66% of the respondents felt it was important that the IFCA published the rules and regulations that are currently in place. The ideal, and existing, place for this is the Sussex IFCA website. Development of pages dedicated to the RSA community include:

- a. Provision of information on minimum sizes.
- b. Provision of information on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)/Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs).
- c. Best practice and codes of conduct supported by angling clubs and associations.
- d. Provision of basic information on commercial activities to reduce conflict with the commercial sector.
- e. Catch reports.

Liaison

Opinion formers from the RSA sector come from many areas; around 50% of those surveyed in our RSA survey belonged to an angling club or association. These organisations provide a platform for two way conversations about RSA issues including current legislation and hot topics. The use of RSA appointees to the committee also provides a link to these organisations and adds credibility to the IFCA management processes. Additionally there are around 30 charter angling boats and 30 tackle shops in Sussex that have a commercial interest in RSA and these provide a vital link in promoting messages for an economical and sustainable fishery for all those involved. Points of liaison will include:

- a. Attendance at angling club meetings and events.
- b. RSA volunteers working with Sussex IFCA research and survey officers.
- c. Boarding of boats involved in angling.
- d. Attendance at angling hotspots.

Literature

Production of quality posters or notices displayed in recognised angling hot spots, tackle shops, club houses and charter boats, providing information on topics such as current and proposed legislation relevant to the RSA community would broaden communications. These will also be available via the IFCA website. RSA sector publications will also be approached to publish stories of interest.

Media and Social Media

There are numerous website forums and publications dedicated to RSA and these too provide a vital link to the angling community. The IFCA will make use of credible sources (recognised publications) for passing on notifications and press releases. A dedicated officer will be allocated to monitor social media and make posts about items of importance and interest.

Mail shots

Sussex IFCA will hold contact details (i.e. e-mail) for RSA community stakeholders and send out relevant notices and letters. All of this will be controlled in accordance with current Data Protection legislation.

4. Education and topics of communication

Evidence

The RSA sector holds a wealth of local evidence, from anecdotal evidence to long term catch records held by clubs. This evidence base could be invaluable in understanding spatial fish populations and their trends in time along the Sussex coast. The IFCA will work with the RSA sector to collect high quality information and evidence.

Voluntary Codes of Conduct

Codes of conduct are a good way of raising awareness and improving behaviours. Current codes of conduct exist for black seabream fishing in Kingmere MCZ, fishing in Beachy Head West MCZ and bait digging. The IFCA will work with the RSA sector to identify where further codes of conduct will help protect the fisheries.

Compliance

Compliance with regulation starts with awareness. Educational awareness raising using quality information notices and educational material will promote existing regulatory requirements. This will encourage willing compliance with conservation measures, byelaws and EU regulations. Ensuring compliance with management measures is seen as a key part of helping to deliver sustainable fisheries. Sussex IFCA will seek to educate the RSA community about regulations, and enforce current legislation.

Fisheries and Conservation News

Sussex IFCA will provide quality, timely and relevant products to the angling community on topics including environmental issues or species specific issues.

5. Management of the strategy

We plan to work closely with the RSA sector on all aspects of fishery management and welcome any comments and suggestions. RSA specialists on the IFCA Committee and staff will add their expertise to our operations. Feedback will provide us with the information we need as we continually review how we support the RSA sector in Sussex.

Contact Sussex IFCA through our website at www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk or call 01273 454407