



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

# Establishing Permitting Regimes for the Recreational Targeting of Bluefin Tuna in UK waters

Consultation on the design of permitting regimes for  
the recreational targeting of bluefin tuna in each UK  
Administration and on the operational design for a  
recreational fishery for bluefin tuna in England

Date: July 2023

We are the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We're responsible for improving and protecting the environment, growing the green economy, sustaining thriving rural communities and supporting our world-class food, farming and fishing industries.

We work closely with our 33 agencies and arm's length bodies on our ambition to make our air purer, our water cleaner, our land greener and our food more sustainable. Our mission is to restore and enhance the environment for the next generation, and to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.



© Crown copyright 2023

This information is licensed under the Open Government Permit v3.0. To view this permit, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-permit/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-permit/)

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/government/publications](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications)

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

[recreational-seafishing.@defra.gov.uk](mailto:recreational-seafishing.@defra.gov.uk)

## Contents

Introduction.....	5
1. High level vision for BFT fisheries .....	7
1.1 Our vision.....	7
1.2 Our implementation approach .....	7
2. Creation of recreational permitting regimes for BFT .....	9
2.1 Legal basis.....	10
2.2 Scope .....	10
2.2.1 Prohibition .....	10
2.2.2 Permitting regimes .....	11
2.3 Permitting approach .....	12
2.3.1 Permit characteristics .....	12
2.3.2 Determining the number of permits available .....	14
2.3.3 Eligibility criteria .....	14
2.3.4 Allocation criteria .....	15
2.3.5 Operating conditions.....	15
2.3.6 Approach to charging for access to BFT fisheries .....	17
2.3.7 Economic and social impact .....	18
3. Consultation information .....	19
4. Responses .....	21
5. Confidentiality and data protection .....	22
6. Next steps.....	23
Annex 1 - Glossary.....	24
Annex 2 - Context for recreational access to BFT .....	26
1. Recreational fishing.....	26
2. Characteristics of the recreational fleet .....	26
3. Rules and regulations.....	27

3.1 ICCAT .....	27
3.2 Fisheries Act 2020 (UK).....	28
3.3 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) .....	28
3.4 Environment Act principles .....	29
4. Recreational access to BFT in 2021 and 2022 .....	29
5. Our plans for 2023.....	30
6. Proposal for the future.....	30
2.3.8 High level design principles for CRRFs .....	30
Annex 3 – How a permitted recreational fishery for BFT supports the Fisheries Act 2020 objectives.....	32

# Introduction

The UK is now an independent coastal State with rights and duties under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, to control and manage the resources in our waters. This includes negotiating with the European Union (EU), other coastal States and Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) for a fairer share of fishing opportunities. We have committed to explore new methodologies for apportioning and allocating any additional quota that is negotiated as a result of the UK's new independent status.

Eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna (BFT) (*Thunnus thynnus*) is present again in UK waters after an absence of many years, most probably due to changes to environmental or prey conditions. This is not an isolated development. In 2021, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) changed their entry for BFT from [“endangered”](#) to [“least concern”](#) reflecting the improving state of the stock.

The increasing abundance of BFT in UK waters is generating interest from both commercial and recreational fishers as well as the science community and environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). BFT is highly regulated at an international level, through the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). In 2021, after leaving the EU, the UK established its own BFT quota for the first time. This presents an opportunity to develop BFT fisheries in UK waters, that meet the interests of the commercial and recreational sectors while respecting the environment and ensuring compliance with both international standards and domestic legislation.

The UK Fisheries Administrations (FAs) have initially taken a cautious and measured approach to managing their BFT quota, working closely with the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas), the Agriculture, Fisheries and Biosciences Institute (AFBI), Swansea University, and Recreational Sea Fishing (RSF) stakeholders to run scientific catch and release tagging (CHART) programmes. These programmes demonstrated that BFT can be caught and released with a very low incidental mortality rate while providing data on the social and economic benefits associated with recreational access to BFT.<sup>1</sup>

In autumn 2022 Defra consulted on options for managing BFT quota in the future in [‘Fisheries: Managing our quota in 2023 and beyond’](#). The majority of [consultation responses](#) supported the UK's approach to date, as well as the future development of catch and release recreational fisheries (CRRFs) and/or the exploration of a targeted commercial BFT fishery.

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cefas.co.uk/media/u2earzpq/20221026\\_chart2021\\_evaluation\\_final\\_defra\\_report-dl.pdf](https://www.cefas.co.uk/media/u2earzpq/20221026_chart2021_evaluation_final_defra_report-dl.pdf)

Defra is now progressing the introduction of a small, UK-wide, trial commercial BFT fishery in summer 2023 alongside the development of legislation to enable the development of new CRRFs for BFT across the UK, with a view to opening a CRRF for BFT, in English waters, in 2024.

The 2023 UK-wide trial commercial BFT fishery will enable up to 10 under-15 metre commercial fishing vessels to fish for BFT using low impact rod and reel gear. This consultation does not cover the design of the trial commercial fishery, for which separate targeted engagement is being undertaken by Defra.

The first part of this document outlines our high-level vision for the use of BFT quota and the establishment and management of BFT fisheries across the UK. We expect work to deliver this vision to take place over several years. As BFT fisheries are new to the UK, we will evaluate operational learning, refining our quota management approach and fisheries designs based improved understanding.

The second part of the consultation focuses on the legislation needed to meet ICCAT's requirement for vessels participating in a recreational BFT fishery to be authorised,<sup>2</sup> by establishing permitting regimes for recreational vessels to target BFT in each of the UK's FAs. Without this new legislation, it will not be possible to establish recreational BFT fisheries however much quota is available. We are seeking views on the principles for the establishment of the new permitting regimes across the UK and on the operational design of the English CRRF for BFT.

This consultation is set out in the following way:

- Part 1 - High-level vision for BFT fisheries
- Part 2 – Proposals for permitting regimes for recreational vessels to target BFT in each of the UK's FAs and proposals for the operational design of an English CRRF for BFT

Supporting information is provided in the following annexes:

- Annex 1: Glossary
- Annex 2: Context for establishing recreational BFT fisheries
- Annex 3: Fisheries Act 2020 objectives

**Note on language usage in this document:** “permitting”, “licensing” and “authorisation” all refer to the granting of permission for an activity to be undertaken. We have used the terms “permitting” and “permit” to describe this activity in relation to recreational fishing for BFT, but the terms can be used interchangeably.

---

<sup>2</sup> [2022-08-e.pdf \(iccat.int\)](#) paragraph 38

# 1. High level vision for BFT fisheries

## 1.1 Our vision

We want to make best use of the UK's BFT quota, in-line with Fisheries Act 2020 (FA2020) objectives (read Annex 3), so that fishers, their communities, and the wider economy, can benefit from the continued presence of this iconic species in our waters, for decades to come. We want to ensure that any new commercial and recreational BFT fisheries are environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.

To realise this vision, we have developed 5 BFT management principles to guide our approach to managing both the UK's BFT quota and BFT fisheries:

- 1) Fishery management regimes must be designed to be fully compliant with international and domestic legislative requirements, including ICCAT Recommendations<sup>3</sup>
- 2) Use of BFT quota and the design of BFT fishery management regimes should seek to maximise the environmentally sustainable delivery of social and economic benefits, particularly within coastal communities
- 3) Fishers should contribute towards managing fisheries – to promote sustainable use of natural resources.
- 4) Fishery management regimes should be operable and enforceable – ongoing operational evaluation and learning should be a key part of BFT fishery design and development.
- 5) Fishery management regimes should be designed coherently across the 4 UK FAs but should also accommodate the differences inherent in a devolved policy area.

If implemented successfully, these design principles will incentivise good behaviours and innovation and create a template for future fisheries. As environmental conditions change, other species that are not currently commonly found in our waters may become increasingly prevalent, potentially opening-up further fishing opportunities.

## 1.2 Our implementation approach

Adherence with the 5 principles for BFT fisheries management, set out above, will enable the UK to demonstrate its capability in managing its BFT fisheries well.

---

<sup>3</sup> ICCAT recommendations: [2022-08-e.pdf \(iccat.int\)](https://www.iccat.int/Docs/2022-08-e.pdf)

Currently the UK has a BFT quota allocation of 65.42 tonnes which is 0.16% of the overall Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for Eastern Atlantic BFT. In the short term we expect that domestic demand for the available quota will exceed supply.

We know that demand from recreational fishers to fish for BFT is high. CRRFs, which use relatively limited amounts of quota, will help address that demand. The introduction of a small-scale trial UK-wide commercial BFT fishery in summer 2023 will help us to understand whether a commercial BFT fishery can be run successfully with a relatively small amount of quota.

Decisions on how to utilise the UK's BFT quota in 2024 will take into account the outcome of the 2023 commercial BFT fishery trial and the anticipated interest in any 2024 recreational BFT fisheries, as well as analysis of the potential social and economic contribution and environmental impacts of each fishery.

The approach for deciding how to utilise BFT quota beyond 2024 will be informed by learning from previous years.

In parallel with effectively managing the BFT quota that the UK currently holds, we will continue to make the case for the UK to receive a greater share of the overall Total Allowable Catch for Eastern Atlantic BFT, in future years.

As we develop Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) to help achieve our FA2020 objectives for sustainable stocks, a thriving fishing sector, and a healthy marine environment, and as we gather more information from the BFT fisheries, we will consider whether preparing a FMP for BFT would support the effective management of BFT fisheries. This consideration will be aligned with the statutory review cycle for the Joint Fisheries Statement<sup>4</sup>, which sets the direction of UK fisheries management, and includes a list of FMPs.

---

<sup>4</sup> [Joint Fisheries Statement JFS 2022 Final.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)



## 2. Creation of recreational permitting regimes for BFT

ICCAT requires vessels participating in a recreational BFT fishery to be authorised (see Annex 2 section ICCAT 3.1 below). However, in the UK, recreational vessels are currently exempted from fisheries licensing (see Annex 2 section 3.2 below). Therefore, to enable the establishment of CRRFs for BFT, we propose introducing new secondary legislation to prohibit the unauthorised targeting of BFT across the UK and to introduce permitting regimes for the recreational targeting of BFT, for each of the UK's 4 FAs. The key design principles for the UK's permitting regimes are as follows:

- **All permitted recreational fishing for BFT will be on a catch and release only basis.** The new permitting regimes will be constrained to issuing non-transferable, time-limited permits, for catch and release purposes only. Catch and release fishing means that BFT can potentially be caught more than once, allowing more fishers to target BFT to increase the associated social and economic benefits. There will be no provision for the recreational boarding, retaining or keeping of BFT.
- **It will be for each UK FA to determine if, and when, to introduce a CRRF in its waters.** Eligible vessels registered anywhere in the UK will be able to apply to participate in any of the UK's CRRFs, to comply with the FA2020 equal access objective.
- **Quota will be held centrally,** at either the UK or FA level, to allow it to be used more efficiently and effectively. A successful fishing trip will not use any quota, but quota will be required to account for incidental BFT mortality, so the amount of quota available will determine the maximum number of permits offered.
- **Permits will be chargeable,** to cover costs associated with the fishery.
- **It will be an offence to target BFT without a permit.**

In order to prepare for implementation in 2024 we have developed a more detailed operational design for the English CRRF. The key design principles for the English CRRF are as follows:

- **Defra and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) will seek to co-design the fishery with the RSF sector,** to build a fishery culture where individual fishers and the wider RSF community perform a key role as stewards of the fishery.
- **The fishery will initially operate within a relatively light touch regulatory framework.** Voluntary measures to protect fish welfare and minimise environmental impacts will be set out in a code of conduct. This will be supported by mandatory operating requirements set out in secondary legislation and permitting conditions, which the relevant authorities will be able to enforce.
- **Defra and MMO will take a phased implementation approach** to this novel fishery, initially prioritising access for vessels that will be operated by those with proven experience in the successful release of BFT.
- **Over time, the fishery is expected to be opened up to more vessels,** this will maximise social and economic benefits, improve fishery operability and support fishers to embrace their role as stewards of the BFT fishery.

We are now consulting on both:

- The design of the new secondary legislation, which will cover the whole of the UK; and
- The operational design for the English CRRF for BFT.

Our overarching consultation question is:

**Q1: Do you broadly support the design for the new UK permitting regimes for the recreational targeting of BFT? Yes or no**

**If no, why not:**

More detailed questions can be found immediately after the section they relate to. Contextual information that informs the proposed design can be found in Annex 2.

## 2.1 Legal basis

Defra propose to use powers under section 36 of the FA2020 to introduce secondary legislation that will:

- Prohibit recreational BFT targeting, without a permit; and
- Enable each of the 4 UK FAs to issue permits for the recreational targeting of BFT

The powers under section 36 of the FA2020 would require the use of a statutory instrument which would be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure. This means that the legislation must be actively approved by both Houses of Parliament before it can become law. As the legislation will cover the UK, in accordance with the Sewell Convention, consent will be sought from each of the devolved administrations.

Once the legislation is in place, it will be for each FA to decide if, and when, they wish to introduce a CRRF and therefore to issue permits for the recreational targeting of BFT in their waters.

## 2.2 Scope

### 2.2.1 Prohibition

The proposed legislation will prohibit the targeting, removal from the water, retention or landing of BFT without a permit, anywhere in UK waters, whether on a vessel or from a shore. It will apply to all recreational UK fishing vessels, anywhere in the [ICCAT Convention Area](#) (this includes UK waters).

The proposed legislation will include penalties for a breach of the law which will be an offence.

Crown Dependency recreational vessels will also be prohibited from targeting BFT in UK waters.

The proposed prohibition will not explicitly apply to vessels registered outside of the UK (such as those from the EU or Norway), because all foreign fishing vessels already require a licence to fish in UK waters under FA2020 16(1).

## 2.2.2 Permitting regimes

### 2.2.2.1 Geographic scope

The maximum geographic scope of BFT CRRFs introduced by the 4 UK FAs, and the associated permitting regimes, will be the extent of British Fishery Limits<sup>5</sup> (were all 4 of the UK FAs to introduce a fishery in their waters).

Each FA will be responsible for permitting BFT recreational fishing activities within its waters should it choose to establish a CRRF, regardless of where in the UK participating vessels are registered. This is in line with the FA2020 equal access objective where section 1(7) says:

The “equal access objective” is that the access of UK fishing boats to any area within British fishery limits is not affected by— (a) the location of the fishing boat’s home port, or (b) any other connection of the fishing boat, or any of its owners, to any place in the United Kingdom.

This approach deviates from commercial licensing (where vessels are licensed by their ‘home’ FA to fish anywhere), but we consider it to be appropriate and easier to implement and operate, given the nature of the fishery.

Vessels registered in the Crown Dependencies and Crown Dependency territorial waters will be out of scope for the UK recreational permitting regimes. The UK’s membership of ICCAT is not currently extended to any Crown Dependency. If Crown Dependencies were to join ICCAT and to secure additional BFT quota, any recreational BFT fisheries would need to be established in their waters.

### 2.2.2.2 Vessel scope

The proposed permit regimes will apply to UK recreational fishing vessels only. Commercial fishing vessels will not be eligible for recreational BFT permits.

**Q2: Do you support this approach to commercial fishing vessel access to catch and release recreational fisheries (CRRFs)? Yes or no**

**If no, what would you propose instead?**

---

<sup>5</sup> The waters within the UK’s exclusive economic zone (EEZ) which extends out to 200 nautical miles or at the median line between other coastal States

### 2.2.2.3 Species scope

Both the prohibition and permitting regimes legislation will only apply to BFT, as required by ICCAT in order to manage the fishery.

Should ICCAT adopt new measures which extend management to recreational activity for other ICCAT regulated stocks then the UK would consult, as necessary, before introducing any further recreational permitting regimes.

### 2.2.2.4 Purpose scope

The proposed permitting regimes will be constrained to the issuing of permits for the recreational targeting of BFT for catch and release purposes, to maximise the social and economic contribution of the recreational fishery, given the UK's limited quota.

Fishers will be prohibited from removing BFT from the water, retaining BFT onboard their vessel or landing BFT (subject to the possibility of some exceptions for pre-authorised scientific research purposes or for specific vessels expressly operating under pre-approved scientific research projects). Fishing technique will be limited to rod and line only, the use of other gears will not be allowed. These overarching constraints on fishing gear and BFT handling are intended to minimise BFT mortalities and enable a larger number of recreational fishers to access the fishery, in-line with the principle to maximise social and economic benefit from the species and quota.

## 2.3 Permitting approach

Any FA that opens a CRRF will be responsible for issuing permits to UK recreational fishing vessel owners or charterers who seek to fish BFT recreationally within its waters, meet the eligibility criteria and have been successful in their permit application.

### 2.3.1 Permit characteristics

The following characteristics will apply to each CRRF permit:

- Recreational BFT fishing permits will be non-transferable between vessels, owners or charterers and cannot be sold by the vessel owner or charterer.
- Permits will be subject to conditions which may include detailed constraints on when, where and how BFT could be fished to minimise environmental and ecological impacts.
- Permits will be chargeable (read section 2.3.6 below) to fund costs associated with the permitting regimes.
- Permits will be time limited, to ensure that fishing capacity does not exceed available quota in any given year.

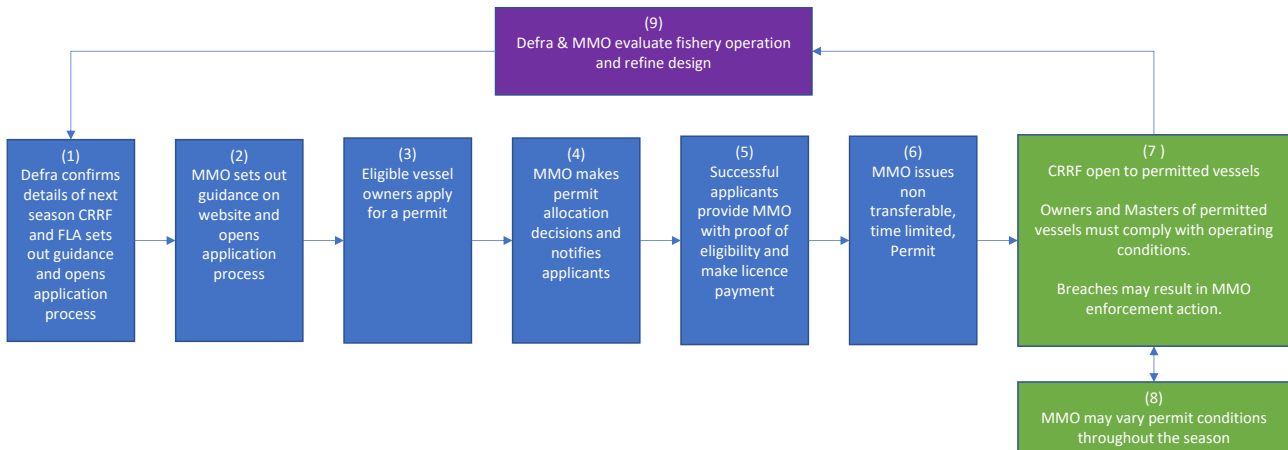
### 2.3.1.1 Permitting process in the English CRRF

Permits for the English CRRF will initially be valid for one fishing season only (roughly July until December) while Defra and MMO improve our understanding of the fishery, through regular evaluation. In future years Defra and MMO may consider issuing multi-season permits, noting the need for compatibility with ICCAT's annual planning and reporting cycle.

For 2024 at least, we expect the seasonal CRRF cycle in England to operate as follows:

1. Ahead of the season, Defra will confirm details of the CRRF with the (MMO)
2. MMO will provide online permit application guidance, in advance of the season start. This guidance will specify:
  - How and when the number of permits available will be determined
  - The eligibility criteria for a BFT fishing permit
  - Permit allocation criteria, in the event of oversubscription
  - Key operating conditions of the fishery
  - Any fee for a recreational BFT permit
  - The application and decision timeline
3. Eligible vessel owners/charterers will be able to apply for permits in accordance with the legislative requirements and guidance
4. Defra/MMO will determine permit numbers and who will get a permit, in accordance with legislative requirements and the guidance. MMO will notify applicants of the outcome of their application
5. Successful applicants will provide MMO with proof of eligibility and make payment for their permit
6. The MMO will issue permits to vessel owners/charterers
7. When the fishery opens, permitted vessels will be able to target BFT on a catch and release basis, in line with fishery operating conditions. The vessel owner or charterer and master will be liable for any breaches of operating conditions. MMO and IFCA will have powers to enforce against any vessel owner or charterer or master found to breach operating conditions
8. The MMO will have powers to vary or introduce permit conditions pre-season or in-season and will notify permit holders of any such changes
9. Defra and the MMO will evaluate fishery operation regularly and refine the design based on learning

Diagram 1: Permitting process in the English CRRF



[Text description: Diagram 1 is a flowchart showing the process between steps 1 to 9. The steps flow from 1 to 7. Step 7 flows to step 8 in one direction and in the other direction it joins to step 9 (evaluation) and then back to step 1 to start the process again.]

### 2.3.2 Determining the number of permits available

A successful CRRF fishing trip will not use any quota, but quota will be required to account for incidental BFT mortality in CRRFs, so the amount available will determine the maximum number of permits offered by each participating UK FA. The UK’s BFT quota will be shared between different fisheries following the principles and approach set out in sections 1.1 and 1.2.

#### 2.3.2.1 Determining the number of permits available, in the English CRRF

In the English CRRF, a fisheries model calibrated with best available data will be used to determine the number of permits available, based on estimated incidental mortality rates. Vessel level effort controls may be applied to limit the amount of fishing activity each vessel is permitted to undertake in order to increase the number of permits available and maximise social and economic benefits. Defra have committed to work with RSF sector stakeholders to refine the fisheries model.

**Q3: Do you support the proposed approach to determining the number of permits available in the English catch and release recreational fishery (CRRF)? Yes or no**

**If no, what alternative approach would you suggest?**

### 2.3.3 Eligibility criteria

Applicants for recreational BFT permits will need to demonstrate that they meet the eligibility criteria, set out in secondary legislation.

It will be a requirement for vessels to be registered in the UK under Part 2 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995. This level of registration is comparable with that required for commercial fishing vessels and appropriate for both charter and private recreational

vessels. It provides certification of the registered vessel ownership and dimensions and means that that permits can be definitively linked with a single vessel and owner.

### 2.3.3.1 Eligibility criteria in the English CRRF

As illustrated in diagram 1, applicants for the English CRRF will not be asked to provide all proof of eligibility until they know their permit application has been successful. It will be incumbent on the vessel owner/charterer to maintain compliance with the eligibility criteria throughout the season.

### 2.3.4 Allocation criteria

UK FAs operating a CRRF will need to determine how permits will be allocated if the fishery is oversubscribed (if a fishery is undersubscribed then any vessel that meets the eligibility criteria will be awarded a permit).

#### 2.3.4.1 Allocation in the event of oversubscription, in the English CRRF

In the English CRRF, in the event of oversubscription Defra/MMO will initially consider whether vessel level effort controls could be used to limit vessel level fishing activity and increase the number of permits available. If the fishery remains oversubscribed following this action, then MMO will rank applications based on allocation criteria. A lottery will be used as a last resort.

**Q4: Do you support the approach to allocating permits in the event of oversubscription, proposed for the English catch and release recreational fishery (CRRF)? Yes or no**

**If no, what alternative approach would you suggest?**

Defra intends to set the following allocation criterion to prioritise applications, in the event of oversubscription:

**Proof of training/competence in catch and release techniques for BFT.** In the first year of operation proof of training is likely to be through providing evidence of participation in a CHART programme, while in future years, this requirement may be modified to reflect alternative training options and/or experience.

Further allocation criteria may be added in future years, based on experience and in order to maximise delivery of FA2020 objectives.

**Q5: Do you support the allocation criteria proposed for the English catch and release recreational fishery (CRRF)? Yes or no**

**If no, what alternative allocation criteria would you propose?**

### 2.3.5 Operating conditions

The vessel owner or charterer and master will be responsible for ensuring that all BFT fishing trips are carried out in line with operating conditions, which will comprise 2 parts:

- 1) Fixed operating conditions, set out in secondary legislation and would require a legislative change to vary

The scope constraints related to the permitting regimes, detailed in section 00, will be set out in secondary legislation, as will catch reporting to meet ICCAT requirements (see Annex 2, section 3.1)

- 2) Additional operating conditions, set through permit conditions could be varied by Fisheries Licensing Authorities (FLAs) before, during and between seasons.

FLAs will be able to grant permits subject to specific conditions, for example:

- The mechanism and timing for catch reporting
- Where fishing can take place (within scope set out in section 0)
- When fishing can take place
- How fishing should be undertaken (within scope set out in section 00)
- Effort restrictions

FLAs will be able to vary permit conditions before, during or between seasons, based on operational need (for example, where a particular area of the sea needs to be closed to fishing for conservation or other purposes). It is intended that permit holders would be notified by text message and email in addition to permit variations being posted on the website of each relevant FLA.

Vessel owners or charterers and masters would be liable for any breaches of operating conditions, including breaches of permit conditions. The relevant FLA would have powers to enforce against any Owner/Charterer or Master found to breach operating conditions. The relevant FLA would also have the powers to revoke permits if operating conditions were breached.

### **2.3.5.1 Permit conditions in the English CRRF**

Defra are taking a co-design approach to developing the English CRRF, together with RSF sector representatives. The intention is to develop a voluntary “code of conduct” and positive fishery culture, to drive fisheries best practice. In England, permit conditions will only be used where relying on voluntary measures, set out in the “code of conduct” is considered to be insufficient. Regular evaluation will allow Defra/MMO to improve the CRRF design, generally in consultation with stakeholders.

Participants in the English CRRFs will be incentivised, through the “code of conduct”, to go beyond the legislative reporting requirements and to report all fishing activity in a timely manner, even if unsuccessful. Reporting mechanisms are still to be determined and will be specified through permit conditions. An app-based system, with a combination of mandatory and voluntary fields, is currently envisaged for the English CRRF.

Restrictions to fishing areas are likely to be driven by a desire to minimise environmental and ecological impacts of the fishery. The intention for the English CRRF is to introduce best practice gear use through the voluntary code of conduct, in the first instance. If this is unsuccessful, gear restrictions could be set through permit conditions, in the future.

Initially, the fishing season for the English CRRF is likely to run from July/August until November/December, when BFT are most abundant in our waters. This will be reviewed if



migration patterns change. The fishing season will be set through permit conditions, as it is key to ensuring the fishery does not exceed quota.

Effort restrictions will only be introduced if the fishery is oversubscribed, to allow more vessels to participate and benefit from the UK's limited BFT quota, as described in section 2.3.4.1. These restrictions could take a variety of forms including restricting the number of fishing days in a season or the number of hook-ups permitted per trip. If required, effort controls will be set through permit conditions, as they're key to ensuring the fishery does not exceed quota.

It is anticipated that in the first instance permit conditions would be generic across all permitted vessels within the English CRRF.

**Q6: Do you support the approach to permit conditions proposed for the English catch and release recreational fishery (CRRF)? Yes or no**

**If not, what alternative approach would you propose?**

In addition to setting out best practice reporting and gear selection the voluntary code of conduct is expected to cover fishing techniques and vessel set up.

**Q7: Do you support the idea of a voluntary code of conduct to drive best practice in the English catch and release recreational fishery (CRRF)? Yes or no**

**If yes, please provide details of further areas you'd like to see covered:**

**If no, please explain why not:**

## **2.3.6 Approach to charging for access to BFT fisheries**

Taking into account BFT management principle 3 (section 1.1), that 'fishers should contribute towards managing fisheries to promote sustainable use of natural resources', it is intended that recreational fishers will be charged for their BFT permit, to contribute toward the costs associated with the permitting regimes, in line with managing public money principles.<sup>6</sup>

**Q8: Do you support the concept of the recreational BFT permits being chargeable? Yes or no**

**If no, explain why not and comment on whether you would suggest an alternative approach to contributing to fishery access:**

Application of this principle to the commercial fleet may be considered in due course. Noting that commercial fishers will not necessarily require a new licence to target BFT,

---

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 6 of Managing Public Money:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1153523/Managing\\_Public\\_Money\\_-\\_May\\_2023\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1153523/Managing_Public_Money_-_May_2023_.pdf)

alternative charging mechanisms, such as the auctioning of BFT quota, may be considered. However, that is outside of the scope of this consultation.

### **2.3.7 Economic and social impact**

The proposed CRRF seeks to align the UK's regulation with its international counterparts. This will enable more recreational vessels to catch and release BFT, thereby utilising economic and social opportunities associated with a recreational BFT fishery.

In 2021, after leaving the EU, the UK received BFT quota from ICCAT for the first time. UK FAs initially took a cautious and measured approach to managing their BFT quota by running scientific CHART programmes in 2021 and 2022. This restricted the number of vessels that could access the quota, so the quota was not fully utilised. Government intervention is needed to align the UK's regulation with international ICCAT requirements, allowing for more vessels to access a new BFT recreational fishery. As a result of this, recreational fishers' welfare will be increased, and resources will more efficiently allocated.

The proposed intervention is likely to impact directly on the vessels which opt into the fishery. In the first instance, we anticipate that around 75 charter vessels and 40 private vessels will be interested in joining CRRFs across the UK. These vessels and fishers will face familiarisation costs and licensing costs and we expect charter vessels to become involved in the fishery if it is profitable to do so. The profits will likely arise from recreational fishers paying for the experience (as a form of tourism). As any BFT that are caught will be released back into the sea, there will be no profits relating to the commercial value of BFT. As such, the direct net economic impact of opening the fishery is likely to be relatively small and net positive – equal to the profit of the vessels who opt into, and are granted permits for, the fishery.

There will also be indirect economic impacts associated with the opening of a recreational fishery. These include tourism spending in local restaurants and hotels as well as in local shops for the appropriate fishing gear. The size of these impacts is positively correlated with the size of the recreational fishery.

**Q9: Do you agree with our estimate of likely levels of interest in catch and release recreational fisheries (CRRFs)? Yes or no**

**If not, please provide your assessment of interest levels:**

**Q10: Do you broadly agree with the direct and indirect economic impacts associated with the opening of a recreational fishery? Yes or no**

**Q11: Do you have any data or evidence which identifies and values the economic impacts associated with the opening of a recreational fishery? Yes or no**

**If yes, please provide this:**

**Q12: Is there anything else you would like to add?**

### 3. Consultation information

#### Your opportunity to contribute

This is an opportunity for you to help shape and influence our quota policies in 2023 and beyond.

#### About you

First name:

Last name:

Organisation (if applicable):

Interest in the fishery (can tick multiple boxes):

Recreational fishing charter vessel owner/charterer – may want to participate in future fishery

Private recreational fishing vessel owner/user – may want to participate in future fishery

Recreational Fisher

Commercial Fisher

Conservationist

Other, please details.....

Postal address:

Email address:

Telephone number:

Would you like your response to be confidential? (Yes/No)

If you answered yes to this question, please give your reason:

Are you happy for Defra to contact you in the future regarding fisheries? (Yes/No)

## Summary of questions

### **Part 2 - Questions relating to the new, UK level, legislation**

These questions will be prioritised for consideration. Responses will be analysed and, if necessary or appropriate, the legislation will be amended, to reflect the consultation outcome.

**Q1: Do you broadly support the design for the new permitting regimes? Yes or no**

**If no, why not?**

**Q2: Do you support this approach to commercial fishing vessel access to CRRFs? Yes or no**

**If no, what would you propose instead?**

**Q8: Do you support the concept of the recreational BFT permits being chargeable? Yes or no**

**If no, explain why not and comment on whether you would suggest an alternative approach to fishery access**

**Q9: Do you agree with our estimate of likely levels of interest in CRRFs? Yes or no**

**If not, please provide your assessment of interest levels**

**Q10: Do you broadly agree with the direct and indirect economic impacts associated with the opening of a recreational fishery? Yes or no**

**Q11: Do you have any data or evidence which identifies and values these impacts economic impacts associated with the opening of a recreational fishery? Yes or no**

**If yes, please provide this:**

**Q12: Is there anything else you would like to add?**

### **Part 3 - Questions relating to the wider CRRF design for the English CRRF**

These responses will be considered by Defra and MMO as they develop the design and prepare to implement the English CRRF. Defra and MMO are already working collaboratively with representatives from the RSF sector to design the English CRRF. If appropriate, other parties will be invited to join the design team.

**Q3: Do you support the proposed approach to determining the number of permits available in the English catch and release recreational fishery? Yes or no**

**If no, what alternative approach would you suggest?**

**Q4: Do you support the approach to allocating permits in the event of oversubscription, proposed for the English CRRF? Yes or no**

**If no, what alternative approach would you suggest?**

**Q5: Do you support the allocation criteria proposed for the English CRRF? Yes or no**

**Q6: Do you support the approach to permit conditions proposed for the English CRRF? Yes or no**

**Q7: Do you support the idea of a voluntary 'code of conduct' to drive best practice in the English CRRF? Yes or no**

**If yes, please provide details of further areas you'd like to see covered:**

**If no, please explain why not:**

## **4. Responses**

To submit your response, please complete the questionnaire available from the Citizen Space website at the following link: [consult.defra.gov.uk/recreational-aquaculture-and-migratory-team/bft-recreational-fishery](https://consult.defra.gov.uk/recreational-aquaculture-and-migratory-team/bft-recreational-fishery)

Alternatively, you can send us your comments by post to:

Consultation Coordinator,

Defra 2nd Floor

Foss House Kings Pool 1-2

Peasholme Green

York YO1 7PX

Or directly to our dedicated email account: [recreational-seafishing@defra.gov.uk](mailto:recreational-seafishing@defra.gov.uk) Please let us have your comments by 4 September 2023.

## 5. Confidentiality and data protection

This consultation is being conducted in line with the Cabinet Office “Consultation Principles” and be found [here](#).

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent and where relevant who else they have consulted in reaching their conclusions when they respond.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal data, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes these are primarily the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs), the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). We have obligations, mainly under the EIRs, FOIA and DPA, to disclose information to particular recipients or to the public in certain circumstances.

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, as a public authority, the Department is bound by the Freedom of Information Act and may therefore be obliged to disclose all or some of the information you provide. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information, we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

Defra will process your personal data in accordance with the law and in the majority of circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties. A full privacy notice is included the parts above.

Defra may publish the content of your response to this consultation to make it available to the public without your personal name and private contact details (e.g. home address, email address, etc).

If you have any comments or complaints about the consultation process, please address them to:

Consultation Coordinator,  
Defra 2nd Floor,  
Foss House,  
Kings Pool,  
1-2 Peasholme Green,  
York YO1 7PX

Or email: [consultation.coordinator@defra.gov.uk](mailto:consultation.coordinator@defra.gov.uk)

## 6. Next steps

A summary of responses to this consultation will be published on the Government website at: <http://www.gov.uk/defra>.

An annex to the consultation summary will list all organisations that responded but will not include personal names, addresses or other contact details. The response to the consultation is expected to be published in autumn 2023.

# Annex 1 - Glossary

## Organisations and Governance

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Biosciences Institute (AFBI):** Sponsored by the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). They provide scientific research and services to government, non-governmental organisations, and commercial organisations

**Appropriate Authority:** Authority responsible for carrying out assessment of potential impacts of an activity on Marine Conservation Zones

**Competent Authority:** Authority responsible for carrying out assessment of potential impacts of an activity on European Marine Sites

**Cefas:** Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science. An executive agency of the UK government that carries out research, advisory, consultancy, monitoring and training activities

**Defra:** Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. UK Government Department.

**Fisheries Administrations (FAs):** Defra, Scottish Government, Welsh Government, the and the Northern Ireland Department

**International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT):** Sets Total Allowable Catch (TAC) levels for BFT each year and allocates TAC to members. Sets rules for fishing BFT TAC. Broad membership, including UK

**Fisheries Licensing Authorities (FLAs):** the Scottish Ministers, the Welsh Ministers, the Northern Ireland department, or the MMO<sup>7</sup>

**Marine Management Organisation (MMO):** an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Defra. MMO's purpose is to protect and enhance our precious marine environment and support UK economic growth by enabling sustainable marine activities and development

## Individuals

**Nominee:** person nominated to receive information about the permit. This could be the owner, charterer or someone else

**Master:** in relation to a fishing boat, includes the person for the time being in command or charge of the boat\*

**Vessel Charterer:** person who charters a recreational fishing vessel from its owner, as evidenced through its UK ships register entry

**Vessel Owner:** person who owns vessel as evidenced by UK ships register entry

## Fishing related terms

---

<sup>7</sup> \*These definitions are taken from the interpretation section of the Fisheries Act 2020



**British Fishery Limits:** The waters within the UK's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) which extends out to 200 nautical miles or at the median line between other coastal States \*\*8

**CRRF:** Catch and release recreational fishery – a fishery where fish are returned to the sea, unharmed, after being caught

**CHART:** Catch and release tagging programmes for BFT run under the oversight of a scientific institution. CHART programmes ran in England and Wales in 2021 and England, Wales and Northern Ireland, in 2022. Further CHART programmes are planned for 2023

**Charter fleet:** The collective terms for recreational charter vessels (see below)

**Commercial fishing vessels:** Big and medium-sized vessels that are used to catch fish and marine life for large-scale selling

**Incidental mortality:** where the fish dies after being caught, but before being fully released

**Private fleet:** The collective terms for private recreational fishing vessels (see below)

**Private recreational fishing vessel:** A vessel from which recreational fishing takes place, that does not involve a financial transaction

**Recreational charter vessel:** A vessel used to take paying customers out to fish, as a leisure activity

**Recreational Sea Fishing (RSF):** Any fishing activity, carried out in or on the sea, solely for pleasure

**Total Allowable Catch (TAC):** The total amount of fish that can be caught annually (or simply, an overarching fishing limit)

### **Quota related terms**

**Allocation:** Sharing out quota between different users, within an administration  
Total Allowable Catch:

### **Legislative terms**

**Fisheries Act 2020 (FA2020):** Primary legislation that sets out the UK framework for fisheries management

**FA2020 objectives:** 8 objectives set out in section 1(1) of the FA2020 that should drive fisheries management decisions. They are explained further on page 16 of the FA2020 explanatory notes: [72271 Chapter 22 EN 2020 Cover.indd \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

**Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs):** Plans required to be developed under the FA2020 and defined in section 2(6) of the FA2020. See [Fisheries management plans - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

**Statutory instrument:** Statutory instruments are the most common form of secondary (or delegated) legislation

---

<sup>8</sup> \*\*These definitions are taken from the glossary of the explanatory notes to the Fisheries Act 2020

# Annex 2 - Context for recreational access to BFT

## 1. Recreational fishing

Recreational Sea Fishing (RSF) is a popular, high value, high participation activity within the UK, currently enjoyed by over 700,000 individuals annually. This figure is made up of fishers who go to sea on charter and private fishing vessels, as well as those fishing from the shore. Angling using rod and line is by far (> 80%) the most common form of recreational fishing.

Government assessment of the estimated expenditure by sea anglers in England and Wales each year, suggests sea anglers spend up to £1.3 billion on this sport, generating a direct impact of up to £847 million. In 2016-17, this resulted in a total economic impact of £1.6-£1.9 billion, supporting approximately 16,000 jobs.<sup>9</sup>

There is no national level permitting system for recreational sea fishers in the UK. However, recreational sea fishers are obliged to comply with some minimum landing sizes, fishing seasons, bag limits and gear design specifications set for fisheries under retained EU law, national byelaws and local byelaws. Generally, any accessible beach/coastline can be fished for free, although local fishing permits maybe required for fishing from structures such as piers and harbour walls owned by public or private bodies.

There is also no legal requirement for sea anglers across the UK to record and report their catches, but the UK is required to provide catch estimates for certain species to the International Council for Exploration of The Seas (ICES). A voluntary catch recording scheme is used to inform annual estimates of UK recreational catches.

## 2. Characteristics of the recreational fleet

The UK's RSF fleet comprises 2 parts: the RSF charter fleet, where professional skippers take paying customers out to fish, as a leisure activity; and the RSF private fleet, where fishing does not involve a financial transaction.

---

<sup>9</sup> [Sea angling in the UK report 2016 and 2017 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

The UK's RSF charter fleet is made up of approximately 335 small-medium scale vessels,<sup>10</sup> with around 75 vessels thought to be interested in fishing for BFT,<sup>11</sup> of which 50 or so are based in England. The UK's RSF private fleet is less well understood. It includes all vessels used for private RSF trips, but there is no central register for such vessels. RSF stakeholders estimate that initially around 40 private vessels may be interested in obtaining a permit to target BFT.

The Angling Trust<sup>12</sup> and Bluefin Tuna UK<sup>13</sup> are the key representative organisations for sea fishers interested in targeting BFT. On their members' behalf, they have articulated a vision of a recreational BFT fishery that is open to both charter and private fishing vessels.

## 3. Rules and regulations

### 3.1 ICCAT

ICCAT is the RFMO responsible for the management and conservation of tunas and tuna-like species in the Atlantic Ocean and its adjacent seas.

ICCAT agrees control and management measures between its 52 Contracting Parties which aim to ensure that the stocks it manages are fished sustainably, including appropriate measures to manage and minimise bycatch.

To ensure that BFT is managed sustainably, ICCAT sets fisheries management rules, which are updated annually, see [2022-08-e.pdf \(iccat.int\)](#)

In relation to recreational fisheries for BFT, the key requirements are

#### **(1) For vessels targeting BFT recreationally to be authorised:**

*38. Each CPC shall regulate recreational and sport fisheries by issuing fishing authorizations to vessels for the purpose of sport and recreational fishing.*

#### **(2) For quota to be allocated and used to account for any dead fish, resulting from recreational fishing activity**

*38. When CPCs allocate, where appropriate, a specific quota to sport and recreational fisheries; that allocated quota should be set even if catch and release is compulsory for bluefin tuna caught in sport and recreational fisheries to account for possible dead fish.*

---

<sup>10</sup> 266 England, 47 Wales, 14 Scotland, 8 NI (Substance 2023)

<sup>11</sup> Based on the level of interest expressed in CHART programmes across the UK

<sup>12</sup> [About Us - Angling Trust](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Who We Are | UK Bluefin Tuna Association Ltd \(ukbfta.co.uk\)](#)

42. *Dead catches from sport and recreational fisheries shall be counted against the quota allocated to the CPC in accordance with paragraph 5.*

**(3) A ban on sales of BFT caught recreationally**

40. *The marketing of bluefin tuna caught in recreational and sport fishing shall be prohibited.*

**(4) Reporting requirements**

41. *Each CPC shall take measures to record catch data including weight of each bluefin tuna caught during sport and recreational fishing and communicate to the ICCAT Secretariat the data for the preceding year by 31 July each year.*

45. *CPCs shall make available upon request from ICCAT the list of sport and recreational vessels which have received an authorization.*

46. *The format for such list referred to in paragraph 45 shall include the following information: a) Name of vessel, register number; b) ICCAT Record Number (if any); c) Previous name (if any); d) Name and address of owner(s) and operator(s)*

## **3.2 Fisheries Act 2020 (UK)**

Section 14 of the *FA2020* sets out the licensing requirements for fishing vessels. It lists the vessel types and activities that are exempt from licensing including all vessels fishing 'solely for pleasure'.

Section 36 of the *FA2020* provides the power to introduce new legislation to comply with international obligations. This enables Defra to introduce new permitting regimes for the recreational targeting of BFT to meet ICCAT's requirement for vessels targeting BFT recreationally to be authorised.

## **3.3 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)**

In England, MPAs are protected under both the Habitats Regulations 2017 and the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. Protections can cover both habitats and species. It is the responsibility of the lead regulators (known as the Competent Authority or Appropriate Authority, respectively) to ensure that any BFT fishing activity complies with the requirements of the relevant legislation. BFT are not a designated feature of any existing MPAs, so regulators would not be considering the impact of a CRRF on BFT, as a species, instead they would be considering the impact that a BFT CRRF could have on designated features of MPAs, including the risk of bycatching designated bird and cetacean species.

### 3.4 Environment Act principles

The design put forward in this consultation is aligned with the 5 environmental principles set out the in [Environment Act 2021](#), as described below.

Environmental Principle	Application
<b>Integration principle</b>	Environmental Impacts on MPAs will be considered by the relevant authorities and mitigating measures built into the final fishery design. In England, a voluntary “code of conduct” will be used to drive best practice – in relation to fishing, fish welfare and environment protection – above and beyond legislative requirements.
<b>Prevention principle</b>	CRRFs are contingent on quota availability, which itself reflects stock health. The opening of new CRRFs could lead to increased CO2 emissions, however the socio-economic benefits are considered to outweigh this risk. In England Fisheries and Seafood Scheme funding is available to support vessel operators to transition to more environmentally friendly engines.
<b>Rectification at source principle</b>	Where risk of damage to MPAs is identified, mitigations will be implemented.
<b>Polluter pays principle</b>	Permits will be chargeable to cover the administration costs associated with permitting this fishery.
<b>Precautionary principle</b>	Sufficient data is available to allow CRRFs to be operated with a high degree of confidence that they will not adversely impact Eastern Atlantic BFT stocks.

## 4. Recreational access to BFT in 2021 and 2022

In 2021, following the UK’s departure from the European Union, the UK secured a small amount of quota for Bluefin Tuna (BFT), raising considerable interest from both commercial and recreational fishers as well as the science community and environmental NGOs.

Supported by 10 tonnes of quota p.a., scientific recreational CHART programmes were piloted in England and Wales in 2021 and expanded in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2022.

The largest CHART programme to date ran in England in 2022, where 25 vessels were licensed to fish for BFT between mid-August and mid-December. Fishing and fish-handling protocols were developed in collaboration with recreational fishing stakeholders to protect fish welfare and ensure compliance with the 2022 UK BFT ICCAT fishing plan. Data on fishing practice, BFT size and condition, environmental conditions and wildlife sighting

were captured on participating vessels through a mobile phone enabled reporting system. In total 1,079 BFT were tagged in 631 fishing trips. More than 1,700 paying anglers took part in the programme, with a direct impact of £1.3m, total economic impact of £2.6m, providing £733,000 of GVA and supporting approximately 24 FTEs<sup>14</sup>.

Despite the increase in scale in the English CHART programme, from 15 vessel in 2021 to 25 vessels in 2022, and in the number of captures, the BFT incidental mortality rate fell from 1.4% in 2021, to 0.4% in 2022, with only 5 BFT mortalities recorded in 2022.

## 5. Our plans for 2023

The UK's 2023 ICCAT fishing plan makes provision for further CHART programmes, supported by 10 tonnes of quota. The continuation of CHART programmes in 2023 will allow England and the Devolved Administrations to gather further information about the BFT in our waters and the impact of recreational fisher interactions with this species.

## 6. Proposal for the future

CRRFs for BFT will be a natural progression from the successful CHART programmes detailed above. The key drivers for CRRFs are social and economic – we want to give more people the opportunity to target BFT recreationally supporting more jobs, particularly in coastal communities.

### 2.3.8 High level design principles for CRRFs

Defra worked with English regulators and RSF stakeholders in summer 2022 to develop design principles that will guide the development of CRRFs for BFT. The principles listed below align with and complement the overarching BFT management principles set out in section 1.1 of this document:

- A. A fishery designed to operate within legislative constraints, available quota, and the obligations under the UK's ICCAT membership.
- B. A fishery positioned to optimise social and economic benefit to coastal communities through the sustainable use of the UK's BFT resource.
- C. A fishery designed to minimise ecological and environmental impacts (i.e. bycatch and BFT mortality).
- D. A fishery designed to promote fishers as stewards of the Catch and Release Recreational Fishery for BFT.

---

<sup>14</sup> Cefas estimate of the economic impact of CHART programme from angler expenditure in 2022

E. A fishery designed to include as many recreational fishers as the available quota allows.

## Annex 3 – How a permitted recreational fishery for BFT supports the Fisheries Act 2020 objectives

The fisheries objectives, as set out in the Fisheries Act 2020, collectively define sustainable fishing and are designed to help the FAs to balance the achievement of a thriving, profitable seafood sector with a healthy and resilient marine environment in the long term.

The fisheries objectives are complementary, and one policy may contribute to the achievement of several objectives. The fisheries objectives, and how BFT fisheries can contribute to them, are set out below.

**The Sustainability Objective** ensures that fish and aquaculture activities are environmentally sustainable in the long term and managed to achieve economic, social and employment benefits that are economically viable without over exploiting marine stocks.

- The operation of a recreational BFT fishery is fully aligned with scientific advice on levels of sustainable exploitation via 100% catch and release. The UK quota is currently less than 0.5% of the total allowable catch (TAC) issued annually by ICCAT
- The BFT management principles set out above include using quota and managing fisheries to “maximise the environmentally sustainable delivery of social and economic benefits, particularly within coastal communities”

**The Precautionary Objective** is applied to manage the exploitation of marine stocks above biomass levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield.

- All tuna programmes operating under allocated ICCAT quota, commercial or recreational, will be limited and closed once quota is exhausted
- Scientific tagging programmes, Thunnus UK, and CHART in 2021/22 and, potentially 2023, have and will continue to provide data supportive of informed stock management decisions

**Ecosystem Objective** ensures that activities are managed using an ecosystem-based approach to ensure negative impacts are minimised and where possible, reversed.

- The commercial trial will use low impact rod, and reel gear to reduce the risk of incidental catches of sensitive species. Training has been given to chart fishers to minimise mortality



- The voluntary ‘code of conduct’ for the English recreational fishery will set out best practice guidance on gear usage, which will take into account bycatch risk

**The Scientific Objective** is relevant to data collection of fisheries and aquaculture activities, and where appropriate fisheries authorities work together on the collection of and share such scientific data.

- The CHART tagging programmes have allowed recreational charter skippers to contribute data on the stock to inform management decisions
- For the trial commercial BFT fisheries landings data will be collected by the MMO
- The “code of conduct” for the English CRRF will set out best practice for voluntary reporting on BFT, in addition to mandatory reporting to meet ICCAT requirement

**The Bycatch Objective** ensures that the catching of fish that are below minimum conservation reference size is avoided or reduced, and that catches are recorded and accounted for where possible.

- The UK must allow for an ICCAT mandated by catch quota allocation for commercial fishing vessels. Commercial fishing vessels in England are permitted to sell landed bycatch but only one fish per trip per day. If the bycatch quota is exhausted, dead commercial bycatch must still be landed and will be sent for sampling and cannot be sold. Bycatch data will be provided to ICCAT
- The commercial trial will use low impact gear to reduce the risk of incidental catches

**The Equal Access Objective** relates to the access of UK fishing boats to any area within British fishery limits. And is therefore not affected by the location of the fishing boats, home ports, or any other connection of the fishing vessel or any of its owners to any place in the United Kingdom.

- The UK commercial BFT fishery trial is open to vessels from across the UK
- The CRRF design is such that eligible UK recreational fishing vessel can apply for a permit to fish in any UK CRRF regardless of where the boat is based

**The National Benefit Objective** ensures that fishing activities of UK fishing boats bring social or economic benefits to the United Kingdom or any part of the United Kingdom.

- BFT quota will be used to benefit the UK, following the principles set out above
- In 2023, recreational fishers may be able to participate in the CHART programmes across the UK
- In 2024, UK recreational vessels may be able to participate in CRRFs
- The UK commercial trial can be used as evidence to seek a greater share of the bluefin tuna quota at ICCAT, and evidence the potential benefit to the UK for future commercial trials or fisheries

**The Climate Change Objective** is one that seeks to minimise the adverse effect of fish and aquaculture activities on climate change and also helps fish and aquaculture activities to adapt to climate change.

- In England, funding is available from the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme to reduce carbon emissions of fishing activity
- If BFT behaviour and abundance changes as a result of climate change then the fisheries management will be adapted in response