



**Comments On North Western IFCA New Byelaw 5:
Prohibiting All Fishing In Heysham Bass Nursery Area**

February 2013

The Angling Trust has consulted anglers in the North West of England over the new bylaw 5 prohibiting fishing of any method within the bass nursery area at Heysham in Lancashire. We asked them to respond to four questions and provide any further comments. The results of the questions asked are set out below.

	No	Yes
Do you fish in the Heysham bass nursery area?	24	10
Have you witnessed the removal of significant quantities of undersized bass from the Heysham bass nursery area?	23	10
Do you, or anyone you know, fish for any species, other than bass, within the Heysham bass nursery area?	24	9
Do you object to the bylaw banning fishing of any kind and for any fish species within the Heysham bass nursery area?	31	12
Total Number of responses (full and partial)	47*	

*Some comments were received without responses to these questions

These results indicate that, while anglers widely support the protection of juvenile and vulnerable bass stocks, for those who fish within the Heysham bass nursery area (HBNA), and respect the regulations, the bylaw represents a loss of access to a popular angling location where responsibly practiced 'catch and release' angling has negligible impact on bass mortality.

It should also be noted that 90 per cent of those who indicated that they do fish within the HBNA also fish for other species. Access to these recreationally important species will be restricted by the bylaw without these anglers targeting, or impacting, bass within the nursery area.

Based on the responses, and further comments we have received to our questionnaire, the Angling Trust supports the bylaw's overarching objective to protect juvenile and vulnerable bass and increase the availability of bass at, or above the minimum landing size, within the wider area. This support is provided on the following conditions:

- A. That the circumstances at Heysham are seen as an isolated case which will not set a precedent for further bans on fishing in nursery areas around the country.
- B. That the NW IFCA considers mitigation measures (beyond the long term objective of the bylaw) to compensate recreational anglers for the recognised social cost of a loss of access to a popular angling mark.
- C. That the bylaw, when enacted, is thoroughly enforced for all forms of fishing, and at all times in order to achieve policy objective 4, "*promote good relations and understanding between the various users of the bass fisheries in the NWIFCA*".
- D. That any review of the bylaw allows for more progressive management if or when more evidence or options become available.
- E. That the IFCA makes more of an effort to recognise the value of the recreational fishery within the district (see Success Criteria below).

Further Comments:

Evidence base, Problem under consideration;1

“Allowing fishing of any sort in a nursery area is contrary to good fisheries management”.

We disagree with the quote above taken from the evidence base. Fishing activities, such as recreational angling that do not adversely impact on the defined objectives of nursery areas can be allowed to continue. This constitutes sophisticated fisheries management and enforcement.

8. Policy Objectives

“ii. To promote a greater adult population of bass and increased supply of sized bass for commercial exploitation outside the HBNA...”

At the current minimum landing size of 36cm the bylaw will do very little to promote a greater population of adult bass as exploitation outside the HBNA will continue to take place two years before female bass reach maturity. In addition, it is disappointing that the IFCA's objectives do not include promoting an increased supply of sized bass for recreational AND commercial fishing given that the 4th policy objective is to *“promote good relations and understanding between the various users of the bass fisheries in the NWIFCA”*.

21. Enforcement Benefits

“The proposed byelaw would make all fishing illegal, thus removing the enforcement problem.”

Further comments received by respondents to our survey indicated that better enforcement would help to solve the problem. Although we recognise the published problems with enforcement of the HBNA we do not support the bylaw as a way of simply facilitating enforcement by NWIFCA officers. Furthermore, while the bylaw will make any fishing activity illegal the desired objective of the bylaw can only be achieved if resources are provided to ensure that it is enforced.

26 Costs of this bylaw

The NWIFCA recognises that there may be social costs for recreational anglers (28). Our questionnaire results indicated that a high proportion of those anglers who currently fish within the Heysham bass nursery area fish for species other than bass. The social cost to recreational anglers may therefore be considerably more than described in the impact assessment.

Annex 1, Post Implementation Review (PIR) Plan

Success Criteria

There is no mention within the success criteria of compliance with, and endorsement of, the measures by the recreational angling sector. Similarly, there is no mention of the recreational fishery benefitting from increased catches of larger fish in the area outside the HBNA. Despite our support for the bylaw's objective of protecting juvenile bass the drafting of it, and the NWIFCA's approach, is very much weighted in the interests of the commercial fishery with little recognition of the significantly valuable recreational bass fishery within the district.

Angling Trust

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