

# Bluefin tuna fisheries 2026

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**Skippers and masters who succeed in this year's application process for a bluefin tuna (BFT) catch and release permit for English waters will now have to undertake mandatory training.**

Applications for the catch and release fishery open today (24 March) and must be submitted by 23:59 13 April to be considered for this year's scheme.

The goal of the training scheme, run by the Angling Trust and supported by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), is to ensure the catch and release fishery operates to the highest standards of fish welfare, safety, and professionalism.

The UK's bluefin fishing plan has been endorsed by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), opening the way for this year's application process to start.

For 2026, the UK will use:

- 20 tonnes of quota for up to 230 recreational permits across UK waters, with approximately 140-150 of the authorisations to cover English waters. The quota level also accounts for incidental mortality.
- 120 tonnes of quota for up to 30 commercial licence authorisations for vessels using low impact rod and reel gear, supporting a sustainable and well managed commercial fishery.

These measures continue the UK's commitment to sustainable stock management while enabling both commercial and recreational participation in the UK BFT fishery.

MMO will open both fisheries in the middle of July under an authorisation/permit application process.

Andrew Wills, MMO's interim Head of Future Fisheries, said: "From this year we're introducing compulsory training for the catch and release fishery.

"This means all applicants offered a permit will have to ensure their named masters fully complete the Angling Trust-accredited BFT training, before receiving their authorisation.

"We are starting the catch and release permit process earlier this year to enable permit holders to take the training before the season begins in mid-July."

Jamie Cook, CEO of the Angling Trust and Fish Legal, comments: "The Angling Trust welcomes the introduction of mandatory training as a crucial step in the evolution of the UK's bluefin tuna fishery.

"This is a world class recreational opportunity, but it comes with a responsibility to operate to the very highest standards. By ensuring every skipper is properly trained, we are protecting the welfare of these remarkable fish, supporting angler safety, and helping to build a fishery that is sustainable and respected internationally.

"The Angling Trust is proud to be working with MMO, Defra and other stakeholders to deliver this programme, and we look forward to working with permit holders to set the benchmark for best practice in catch and release fisheries."

For full news, information and updates on the Bluefin tuna fisheries for 2026, go to <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bluefin-tuna-bft-fisheries-in-2026>

## Notes to editors:

1. On **Thursday 5 March** the UK governments Bluefin tuna fishing plan was agreed and endorsed by International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). The plan set out how the UK intends to utilise its quota allocation across 2026 to 2028 TAC cycle in both the commercial fishery and the recreational catch and release fishery.
2. **BFT Catch and Release Recreational Fishery (CRRF):** The UK have increased the number of recreational permits at a UK level to up to 230, although the MMO will operate with the same level of permit authorisations as last year at around 140-150, within English waters. Applicants with a vessel 5 metre or greater, registered in the United Kingdom (under the Merchant Shipping Act1995) are eligible to enter the MMO CRRF application process. However, the recreational permit is only applicable in English waters. Charter applicants will continue be prioritised, although some permits will still go to private vessel applicants too. Compulsory training run by the Angling Trust is approximately £450 per person, and the syllabus and modules cover key items such as 'Fish Welfare and best-practice handling', 'Bycatch mitigation and reducing marine disturbance', 'At-sea etiquette and angler safety' as well as legislative rules and reporting requirements. No other form of BFT training will be accepted as an alternative.
3. **BFT Commercial fishery:** There will be an increase of 30 authorised vessels able to target and land bluefin tuna, with each vessel allocated four tonnes each to use in the 2026 season. The application process for this fishery is expected early April. Our aim is to announce which applicants have been successful in a provisional offer in May. Once this stage has been completed, we will understand the geographical distribution of this year's fishery. For full news, information and updates on the Bluefin tuna fisheries for 2026 which includes the BFT commercial fishery, go to <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bluefin-tuna-bft-fisheries-in-2026>
4. **An applicant can apply to each fishery** (if they meet each eligibility criteria), but they cannot secure both a recreational BFT permit and a commercial BFT licence authorisation for the same vessel. If an applicant succeeded in both applications, they will be asked to choose their preferred fishery. If a multi-vessel owner happened to be successful in both applications, they can operate in both, but only through separate vessels within their application.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/bluefin-tuna-fisheries-2026>