



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **New dolphin protection zone declared as tuna season opens**

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Climate Change (DEHCC) has announced the creation of a Dolphin Protection Zone in the north of BGTW within the Bay of Gibraltar. This area will form part of the conservation measures intended to provide a refuge for dolphins which frequent our waters. As such, the practice of 'popping' for tuna, which has been seen to cause serious injury to dolphins will not be allowed in the Bay within BGTW approximately north of Rosia Bay. Popping involves casting lines and lures with hooks into shoals of tuna which are often mixed with dolphins. Other fishing methods will continue to be allowed within the newly created Dolphin Protection Zone.

Meanwhile the open season for Bluefin tuna in BGTW commences on Saturday 16th June 2018 and ends on the 14th October 2018 or until the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) is reached. Anglers are reminded that a Class K licence is required to fish for Bluefin tuna. There will be a total allowable catch of 15.5 tonnes after which the season will close. The Department would also like to inform anglers that this year will see the introduction of a number of further conservation measures including the possibility of temporary technical season closures. In addition, anglers are now required to report any recreational catches of Billfish species, such as the Mediterranean Swordfish, which are locally classified as Species in Need of Strict Protection.

A dedicated office and landing point has once again been created by the DEHCC within the North Mole (No. 1 Jetty). Anglers are advised that all tuna and billfish catches **MUST** be reported and weighed at the landing point where vessels will be able to dock. The landing point will be manned from 09:00 to 14:30 (Monday-Saturday). Any catches landed from 14:30 to sunset must also be reported and weighed at the landing point by contacting the on-call landing point staff on mobile number 54020033. This service will also be operational on Sundays and public holidays. Landing point staff will assist anglers in completing the required catch form and should be contacted as soon as a fish is landed on board a vessel. Anglers are reminded that the minimum size of Bluefin tuna that can be caught is 30kgs and 115cm fork length. The minimum size for Mediterranean Swordfish is 90 cm excluding the sword length. Further information on minimum sizes can be found online by accessing the Department's Species Identification Booklet ([https://www.gibraltar.gov.gi/new/sites/default/files/HMGoG Documents/Species Identification Booklet.pdf](https://www.gibraltar.gov.gi/new/sites/default/files/HMGoG_Documents/Species_Identification_Booklet.pdf)).



The Department's Environmental Protection & Research Unit (EPRU) will be working very closely with both the Royal Gibraltar Police and HM Customs during the open season in order to monitor vessel activity in BGTW and ensure that the requirements of the Tuna Preservation Regulations are adhered to. As part of its duties, the EPRU will be emphasising the need to adhere to the Cetacean Protocol. The objective of the Protocol is to protect dolphins and whales in BGTW. It can be viewed online from

<http://www.thinkinggreen.gov.gi/biodiversity/marine>.

Vessels are required to maintain a minimum distance of 60 metres from any dolphin or whale whilst navigating in BGTW. The Protocol also establishes a 500 metre radius from the animals within which vessels must travel at a constant speed of no more than 4 knots or no greater than the slowest animal in the group. Anglers targeting Bluefin tuna are advised that casting any lines close to dolphins, which are protected species, may result in their fishing licenses being revoked.

For further information on the Bluefin tuna open season please contact the DEHCC on Tel: 200 48450.