

Marine Scotland

Outer Hebrides Inshore Fisheries Group –
Consultation on new Management Measures on
Crabs and Lobster Landings into the Outer Hebrides

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Executive Summary

This consultation seeks views on:

- Increasing the MLS (minimum landing size) for brown crab (*Cancer pagurus*) landed into the Outer Hebrides from 140 mm to 150 mm carapace width
- Increasing the MLS of velvet crab (*Necora puber*) landed into the Outer Hebrides from 65 mm to 70 mm carapace width
- Increasing the MLS of lobsters (*Homarus gammarus*) landed into the Outer Hebrides from 87 mm to 88 mm carapace length for one year and then 90 mm thereafter
- Decreasing the maximum landing size of female lobsters (*Homarus gammarus*) landed into the Outer Hebrides from 155 mm to 145 mm carapace length
- Prohibiting the landing of female lobsters (*Homarus gammarus*) missing claws – so called ‘crippled lobsters’
- Whether there should be carriage restriction around the Outer Hebrides to support these new arrangements

These proposals were developed and proposed by the Outer Hebrides Inshore Fisheries Group and are intended to help improve the sustainability of these fisheries through the regulation of harvesting controls.

Landings of these species were worth £2.7 million to the economy of the Outer Hebrides in 2012 and more when processing and other related activities are included.

Around the Outer Hebrides these stocks are estimated to be fished at levels close to or above the F_{MSY} proxy (F_{MSY} is the fishing mortality consistent with the largest average yield that can continuously be taken from a stock under existing environmental conditions). Where stocks are fished above F_{MSY} , it is advisable that measures be introduced to reduce fishing mortality. The latest assessments show:

Lobster

- Males are currently fished above F_{MSY}
- Females are currently fished below F_{MSY}

Brown Crab

- Females are currently fished above F_{MSY}
- Males are currently fished below F_{MSY}

Velvet Crab

- Females are currently fished above F_{MSY}
- Males are currently fished below F_{MSY}

Background on the Consultation Process

The purpose of this consultation document is to seek the views of those with an interest in shellfish fisheries in the Outer Hebrides, in order to inform policy decisions. The consultation will last for 8 weeks, commencing on **Friday 4 July 2014** with a deadline of **Friday 29 August 2014** for responses.

The views and suggestions received in consultation responses will be analysed and fed into the decision making process. Final decisions on the issues under consideration will also take account of a range of other factors, including any other available information and research evidence.

Please send your returns or address any queries to:

ohifgconsultation@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

or

OHIFG Consultation

Area 1B South
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

If you have any queries contact the Inshore Fisheries and Communities Branch on 0131 244 4421

The Scottish Government may make the responses to this consultation paper available to the public and to the Scottish Parliament. We will acknowledge responses and may publish an analysis of the responses after the consultation. If you respond to this consultation you are requested to complete the enclosed responded information form attached at Annex A. This will ensure that we handle your responses appropriately.

Consultation Document

Background on the Outer Hebrides IFG

The management proposals contained in this document were developed by the Outer Hebrides Inshore Fisheries Group.

Inshore Fisheries Groups (IFGs) are non-statutory bodies whose purpose is to help improve the management of Scotland's inshore fisheries out to 6 nautical miles. A key aim of IFGs is to put commercial fishermen, assisted by government agencies and others with an interest in the marine environment, at the heart of developing initiatives for sustainable and profitable fisheries.

The membership of the Outer Hebrides IFG includes:

- Clyde Fishermen's Association
- Orkney Fisheries Association
- Mallaig & North West Fishermen's Association
- Scallop Association
- Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association Ltd
- Scottish White Fish Producer's Association Ltd
- Western Isles Fishermen's Association

With advice from:

- Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)
- Marine Scotland Science
- Marine Scotland Compliance
- Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar (CNES)
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency
- Scottish Environmental LINK

After reaching consensus within its membership, the Outer Hebrides IFG has asked Marine Scotland to legislate to help secure the long-term sustainability of the brown crab, lobster and velvet crab fisheries in the area by increasing the minimum landing size of all three species and prohibiting the landing of 'crippled' female lobsters and larger female lobsters.

Background on Fisheries in the Area

Commercial fishing in the Outer Hebrides has changed significantly over the past 30 years. Previously, the industry had been built around larger vessels targeting white fish and pelagic species. However, changes in catching opportunities and decommissioning schemes have seen the structure of the industry change significantly to one which, on the whole, sees a smaller class of vessel targeting shellfish.

Shellfish now account for virtually all landings by value into ports in the Outer Hebrides and the majority are landed by boats that are owned and crewed by local residents. In places such as Barra and Grimsay, over 10%¹ of the population is involved in fish-catching activities. In addition to supporting the catching sector, the shellfish fisheries around the Outer Hebrides also sustain processors and export businesses throughout the island chain. It is therefore vital that the shellfish populations around the Outer Hebrides are harvested sustainably and at a level consistent with high long term yield.

The species involved in this consultation account for three of the five most profitable species landed into the region:

- Lobster (landings worth £1.2 million in 2012);
- Brown crab (landings worth £827,000 in 2012); and
- Velvet crab (landings worth £700,000 in 2012).

The figures below show the tonnage and value of crab and lobster landed into the Outer Hebrides from 2008 to 2012.

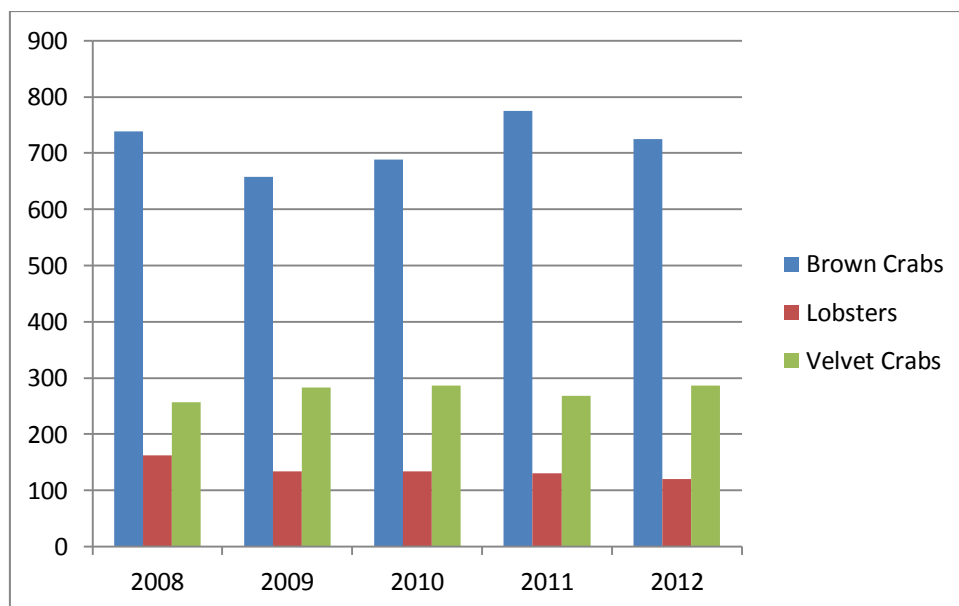


Table 1: Tonnage of brown crab, lobsters and velvet crab landed into the Outer Hebrides 2008-2012

¹http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/documentation/studies/regional_social_economic_impacts/stornoway_en.pdf

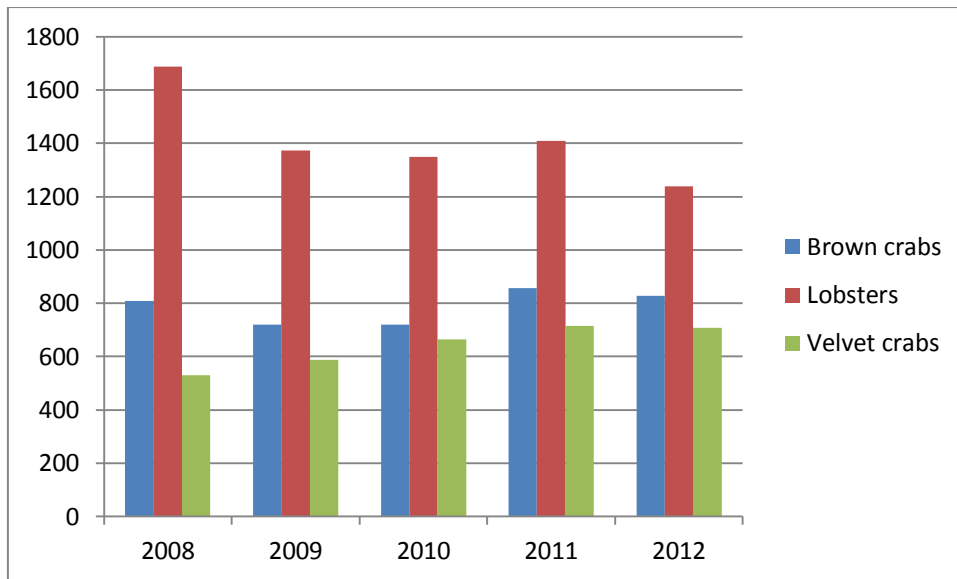


Table 2: Value (£000) of brown crab, lobsters and velvet crab landed into the Outer Hebrides 2008-2012

The three species involved in this consultation are all taken in creel fisheries and are managed under a broadly similar framework:

- They are not subject to quota control under the EU Total Allowable Catch system
- Vessels fishing commercially for these species must have a shellfish entitlement associated with their licence
- Landings must comply with an EU set minimum landing size for the species

In addition, there are a number of species specific measures. Such as: an effort cap at a UK level for vessels over 15 metres in length targeting brown crab on the west coast of Scotland and a maximum landing size for female lobsters in Scotland.

State of the Stocks in Hebrides Region

Lobster

The latest stock assessments from Marine Scotland Science show that female lobsters are currently fished below the F_{MSY} proxy (F_{MSY} is the fishing mortality consistent with the largest average yield that can continuously be taken from a stock under existing environmental conditions). However, male lobsters are currently fished above F_{MSY} (above the rate that maximizes long term average yield). The scientific advice is that increased long term average yield and biomass could be achieved if appropriate management measures were to be introduced.

Brown Crab

The latest stock assessments from Marine Scotland Science show that male brown crabs are currently fished below F_{MSY} proxy (F_{MSY} is the fishing mortality consistent

with the largest average yield that can continuously be taken from a stock under existing environmental conditions). However, female brown crabs are fished above F_{MSY} (above the rate that maximizes long term average yield). The scientific advice is that increased long term average yield and biomass could be achieved if appropriate management measures were to be introduced.

Velvet Crab

The latest stock assessments from Marine Scotland Science show that male crabs are currently fished below F_{MSY} proxy (F_{MSY} is the fishing mortality consistent with the largest average yield that can continuously be taken from a stock under existing environmental conditions). However, female velvet crabs are fished above F_{MSY} (above the rate that maximizes long term average yield). The scientific advice is that increased long term average yield and biomass could be achieved if appropriate management measures were to be introduced.

Benefits of MLS

The aim of an MLS (which varies from species to species) --is to help prevent the landing of juvenile individuals. This allows them the opportunity to grow and reproduce before being harvested. An increase in MLS would allow more individuals the opportunity to reproduce before capture, potentially increasing long term yield and biomass.

A 2009 study on the effectiveness of management measures adopted by English Sea Fisheries Committees (the bodies responsible for regional inshore management in England prior to the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities) supported the adoption of regionally specific MLS provisions for shellfish. It stated that:

*“In all cases regionally specific MLS byelaws have served the purpose for which they were designed and can be considered best practice for shellfisheries management”*²

Staggering the Increase in MLS for Lobster

The Outer Hebrides IFG has proposed that the increase in MLS for lobster be staggered over two years. This would see an immediate increase from 87 mm to 88 mm and then, a year later, a further increase in MLS to 90 mm. This would allow fishermen the opportunity to adjust over the course of two years to the 90 mm limit.

A study on the benefits of various management measures in the English lobster fishery found that within two years of an increase in MLS to 90 mm those newly undersized lobsters could be harvested.³

² http://www.shellfish.org.uk/files/22622best_practice_guide.pdf

³ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130123162956/http://www.defra.gov.uk/marine/pdf/fisheries/cefes-lobsteradvice.pdf>

A Maximum Landing Size for Lobsters

There is evidence that as female crustaceans grow larger they produce a greater number of eggs which are of a larger size and better quality. This may result in greater recruitment to these fisheries. The maximum landing size provision for female lobsters affords protection for these larger animals which have a greater spawning potential.

This, plus a market preference against larger lobsters, was the rationale behind the introduction of a maximum landing size for female lobsters in 2004.

The current maximum landing size for lobsters into Scotland is 155 mm. The IFG wishes this restriction to be reduced to 145 mm for female lobsters being landed into the Outer Hebrides.

Prohibiting the Landing of 'Crippled' Female Lobsters

A 'crippled' lobster refers to one which has lost one or both claws. These animals do not achieve the same as lobsters with both claws and if returned to the sea have the ability to re-grow these missing limbs. There is anecdotal evidence that many 'crippled' lobsters are already returned to the sea but in order to help protect stock numbers and increase spawning stock biomass, the IFG wishes to prohibit the landing of 'crippled' female lobsters.

Carriage Restriction

The new restrictions outlined would apply only to those vessels *landing into* the Outer Hebrides IFG area. Unless these new controls are accompanied by restrictions on the carriage (or retention on-board) of animals which mirror these landing restrictions then this will present compliance issues.

We therefore propose that, in addition to the new landing provisions outlined above, they are accompanied by carriage provisions which make it illegal to retain on-board animals that are not compliant with these new restrictions in the waters around the Outer Hebrides.

It is proposed that the new carriage restrictions apply to the six nautical miles around the Outer Hebrides.

Consultation Questions

Do you support increasing the MLS for brown crab landed into the Outer Hebrides from 140 mm to 150 mm?

Do you support increasing the MLS of velvet crab landed into the Outer Hebrides from 65 mm to 70 mm?

Do you support increasing the MLS of lobsters landed into the Outer Hebrides from 87 mm to 88 mm for one year and then 90 mm thereafter?

Do you support decreasing the maximum landing size of female lobsters landed into the Outer Hebrides from 155 mm to 145 mm?

Do you support prohibiting the landing of 'crippled' female lobsters into the Outer Hebrides?

Should these new landing provisions also be accompanied by a restriction on carriage in the six nautical miles around the Outer Hebrides?

Consultation on New Landing Size Controls on Crabs and Lobster into the Outer Hebrides

RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM



Please Note this form **must** be returned with your response to ensure that we handle your response appropriately

1. Name/Organisation

Organisation Name

Title Mr Ms Mrs Miss Dr Please tick as appropriate

Surname

Forename

2. Postal Address

<input type="text"/>		
<input type="text"/>		
<input type="text"/>		
<input type="text"/>		
Postcode	Phone	Email

3. Permissions - I am responding as...

Individual	/	Group/Organisation
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Please tick as appropriate		

(a) Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site)?

Please tick as appropriate
 Yes No

(c) The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site).

(b) Where confidentiality is not requested, we will make your responses available to the public on the following basis

Please tick ONE of the following boxes

Are you content for your **response** to be made available?

Please tick as appropriate

Yes No

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

or

Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address

or

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

(d) We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Please tick as appropriate

Yes

No

5. CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

5.1 Do you support increasing the MLS (for brown crab landed into the Outer Hebrides from 140 mm to 150 mm?

5.2 Do you support increasing the MLS of velvet crab landed into the Outer Hebrides from 65 mm to 70 mm?

5.3 Do you support increasing the MLS of lobsters landed into the Outer Hebrides from 87 mm to 88 mm for one year and then 90 mm thereafter?

5.4 Do you support decreasing the maximum landing size of lobsters landed into the Outer Hebrides from 155 mm to 145 mm?

5.5 Do you support prohibiting the landing of 'crippled' female lobsters into the Outer Hebrides?

5.6 Should these new landing provisions also be accompanied by a restriction on carriage in the six nautical miles around the Outer Hebrides?



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ISSN: 2043-7722 ISBN: 978-1-78412-647-6 (web only)

Published by the Scottish Government, July 2014

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EH1 3DG

Produced for the Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
DPPAS33142 (07/14)

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