

# Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture

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**Isle of Man**  
**Government**

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## **Summary of Responses to Consultation**

### **Consultation on the Future Management of the Isle of Man Crab & Lobster Fisheries in Isle of Man Territorial Waters**

# Contents

Part 1. Introduction .....	3
Background .....	3
Proposals for consultation.....	4
Part 2. The consultation exercise.....	4
Part 3. Responses.....	5
Question 1 – Licences and Latency.....	2
Q1.1 Do you support the introduction of a cap on the number of licences issued in respect of Isle of Man commercial crab and lobster fisheries?.....	2
Q1.2 i) Do you support a cap on licences at the existing number? .....	3
Q1.2 ii) Do you support reducing the number of licences issued in respect of the fisheries to those vessels with an appropriate track-record within a specified reference period. ....	4
Question 2 – Reference period and eligibility criteria .....	5
Q2.1 The Department’s preferred reference period is 1 January 2016 to 30th June 2018; please select which reference period you prefer? .....	5
Q2.2 a) Do you support a minimum number of days (track-record) fished within a reference period as above, as a means of determining eligibility for a crab and lobster fishing licence for Isle of Man waters (0-12 NM)? .....	6
Q2.2 b) The Department’s preferred track-record is for 1 days fishing within the preferred reference period; what is a suitable number of days? .....	7
Question 3 – Pot allocation.....	7
Q3.1 Should the number of pots allocated to each vessel be set at the same amount (fixed) or variable? .....	7
Q3.2 If you answered ‘variable’ to Q3.1, what metric should be used to allocate a variable pot limit? .....	8
Question 4 – MCRS Change .....	10
Q4.1 Do you support an increase in the Minimum Conservation Reference Size(MCRS) of European lobster within Isle of Man territorial waters?.....	10
Q4.2 Do you support an increase in MCRS of European lobster within Isle of Man territorial waters to 90mm?.....	10
Q4.3 Do you support an increase in MCRS (Lobster) being introduced in a single step or phased approach?.....	11
Q4.4 Are there any seasonality considerations for an introduction you think should be taken into account? .....	12
Q4.5: Do you support an increase in the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) of brown crab within Isle of Man territorial waters? .....	13
Q4.6: Do you support an increase in MCRS for brown crab within Isle of Man territorial waters to 140 mm, 150 mm, Other? .....	14
Q4.7 : Do you support an increase in MCRS (Crab) being introduced in a single step or phased approach? .....	15
Q4.8: Are there any seasonality considerations for an introduction you think should be taken into account? .....	15
Question 5 – New Entrant Scheme .....	16
Q5.1: Do you support the future development of a new-entrant scheme to the crab and lobster commercial fishing industry, should scientific evidence support such, to facilitate those wishing to get started in the industry?.....	16
Q5.2: If yes, do you have any specific ideas or proposals on how you would like to see a new-entrant scheme introduced and managed? .....	17
Question 6 – Spatial Management .....	18
Q6.1: In principle, do you support the establishment of spatial management measures for the enhancement of pot fisheries? .....	18
Q6.2: If yes, what issues do you envisage as being important in establishing and managing such areas? .....	19
Q6.3: Do you have any specific suggestions, ideas or proposals in relation to the location and management of such areas? .....	20
Q7 – Industry-supported Research Development .....	22
Q7.1. Do you support the development of a scientific study, in partnership with key stakeholders, for the crab and lobster fisheries within Isle of Man territorial waters? .....	22
Q7.2: Appendix 4 highlights the research themes that the Department and Bangor University consider priorities for inclusion within a long-term scientific programme. What other priorities do you consider important for inclusion within an industry-supported long-term scientific programme? .....	23
Q8 – Velvet crab fishery .....	24
Q8.1: Do you support the future enablement of a commercial velvet crab fishery?.....	24
Q8.2: If yes, do you have any specific ideas or proposals on how you would like to see a Velvet crab fishery managed and regulated, e.g. ....	25
Q9 – Pot-tags.....	26
Do you support the requirement for commercial pots to be fitted with pot tags and escape gaps throughout the territorial sea (0-12 NM)?.....	26
Q10 – Requirements for marking and setting gear .....	27
Q10.1: Do you support the introduction of requirements relating to the marking of pots, to include the type of marker and form and method of marking? .....	27
Q10.2: Do you support the introduction of measure to prevent interference with another’s pots or stock cages? .....	27
Q11 – Declaring the number of pots on each string .....	28
Q11: Do you support the principle of requiring crab and lobster strings to clearly display a declaration of the total amount of pots on that string for enforcement purposes, which must be visible alongside vessel ID marks required under setting and marking requirements (Q10)?.....	28
Q12 – Recreational Licensing .....	29
Q12.1: Do you support having a new initial annual licence fee of £20, increased annually in line with the rate of inflation (CPI), for recreational crab and lobster pot fishing within the 0-3 NM? .....	29
Q12.2: Do you support charging half the cost to renew the licence where the applicant applies for renewal and submits their annual catch return by a set deadline? The Department’s preferred deadline for annual catch returns is 31 January following the year fished – would you support this, or have an alternative date? .....	30
Q13 – Any other proposals / ideas for consideration.....	31
Q13: Do you have any other proposals or ideas which you feel should be considered within the current or future policy in relation to the crab and lobster fisheries within Isle of Man territorial waters? .....	31

## **Part 1. Introduction**

### **Background**

Crab and lobster fishing is allowed all year round in Manx territorial waters and landings of these species in 2018 was worth around £1.7m to the Manx economy.

The fishery is managed through regulations made under the Fisheries Act 2012 and conditions of licence associated with the Isle of Man Sea Fishing Licence. To be licensed to commercially fish for these species in Isle of Man territorial waters (12 nautical miles) requires the vessel to be a British registered and licensed fishing vessel with entitlement to catch shellfish and have an Isle of Man Sea Fishing Licence with a specific licence to catch crab and lobster.

Crab and lobster fishing involves baited pots anchored to the seabed and soaked for a period of time before being hauled to empty, rebaited and the process repeated.

Data shows commercial landings of both brown crab (*Cancer pagurus*) and European lobster (*Homarus gammarus*) from Manx waters were relatively stable between 2012 and 2017, but subsequent fishing effort (measured as the number of pots hauled) and landings in the brown crab fishery increased significantly during 2018. Effort continued to increase into 2019 where total landings of crab decreased and lobster increased.

Fishing capacity authorised but not used (latent capacity) was significant in the commercial fishery in waters around the Island (ICES statistical rectangles 36E5, 37E5 and 38E5) between 2016 and June 2018. With around 7,100 pots allocated to these vessels, which equated to 30 per cent of the total number of allocated pots. Effective fisheries management is challenged when fishing effort cannot be effectively known or controlled.

Ministerial decision was taken in 2018 for the Department to review the crab and lobster fisheries for the purpose of adapting current management measures to better suit the species and industry, and a temporary moratorium on issuance of new Isle of Man licences for crab and lobster was extended, having been in place since the 2016 king scallop consultation due to concern over displacement of vessels to the crab and lobster fisheries.

A working group was set up in 2018 to assist the Department to review the crab and lobster fisheries, which included representatives from processors as well as Manx and Northern Ireland catching sectors.

Consideration was given to addressing latency within the commercial fishery, and other measures such as increasing landing sizes of crab and lobster and undertaking scientific research. The Department also considered management of recreational crab and lobster fishing within the 0-3 nautical miles, which is a licensed fishing activity based on requirements set down by regulation.

In 2015, the Isle of Man Government approved a five year strategy (Future Fisheries) for the sustainable development of the Isle of Man's sea fisheries and marine environment. The strategy identified a number of priority themes, including:

- Managing sea fisheries
- Safeguarding the marine environment
- Developing our sea fisheries
- Managing resources

Proposals to advance priority action areas arising from these themes lists to achieve sustainable

stocks, effective local enforcement, marine spatial management, and increase economic value of sea fisheries.

Addressing the future management of the Island's crab and lobster fisheries also links to the Isle of Man Programme for Government and government's responsibilities to protect the marine environment, habitats and species, as outlined in its Biodiversity Strategy.

### **Proposals for consultation**

The measures proposed were informed by review of current measures, recommendations from industry, and recommendations from the School of Ocean Sciences at Bangor University arising from scientific data.

The proposals included:

- The capping or restricting the number of commercial licences issued.
- Determine support for a pot-allocation mechanism for commercial licences linked to vessel metric criteria.
- Consider increase of the Minimum Conservation Reference Size for crab and lobster.
- Determine support for development of spatial management for pot fisheries.
- Implement conservation and technical measures in support of fishery management.
- Establish priorities and options for a long-term industry-supported scientific research programme.
- Obtain views on a new-entrant scheme should scientific evidence support increased effort.
- Obtain views and options on static-gear fishery diversification to include a velvet crab fishery.
- Improve the licensing/monitoring process for recreational crab and lobster pot fishing.

Existing management measures would remain and it is envisaged that the crab and lobster fisheries would continue to be managed through a combination of regulations made under the Fisheries Act 2012 and conditions of licence, associated with the Isle of Man Sea Fishing Licence.

## **Part 2. The consultation exercise**

A public consultation process was undertaken between 26th October and 7th December 2020. The objectives of the consultation were:

- To inform industry and other interested stakeholders of the Department's commitment to address future management of the crab and lobster fisheries within Manx waters, in line with the Department's strategic objectives.
- To seek views on a range of proposed management measures – chiefly in respect of the commercial fisheries, to cap access and reduce the level of latent fishing effort for crab and lobster, but additionally to:
  - determine support for a pot-allocation policy linked to vessel metric criteria;
  - increase the Minimum Conservation Reference (Minimum Landing) Size for crab and lobster;
  - implement conservation and technical measures in support of fisheries management;
  - review support for a new-entrant scheme;
  - establish priorities and options for a long-term industry-supported scientific research programme;
  - development of spatial management for pot fisheries;
  - options for static-gear fisheries diversification to include a velvet crab fishery, and
  - improve the licensing/monitoring process for recreational crab and lobster pot fishing.

The consultation document was posted on the government Consultation Hub website, notified to

working group industry representatives and communicated to the UK fisheries administrations;

- DEFRA
- Marine Scotland
- DAERA (Northern Ireland)
- Welsh Assembly Government

A government press release was made, and the consultation process was covered by Manx Radio, BBC News, and other media organisations.

At the close of the consultation, a total of 37 responses had been received, and are categorised as commercial and non-commercial stakeholder groups (see below).

### **Part 3. Responses**

The consultation received 37 responses from both commercial (23) and non-commercial (14) stakeholders. The range of commercial and non-commercial interests can be categorised in the following way:

#### **Commercial:**

Isle of Man commercial fisher	(16)
Manx Fish Producer Organisation <sup>1</sup>	(1)
Isle of Man Processor / Vessel Owner	(2)
UK commercial fisher	(3)
UK Producer Organisation <sup>2</sup>	(1)

#### **Non-commercial:**

Recreational (crab / lobster) fisher	(11)
Diver	(1)
Isle of Man Politician	(1)
Retired fisher	(1)

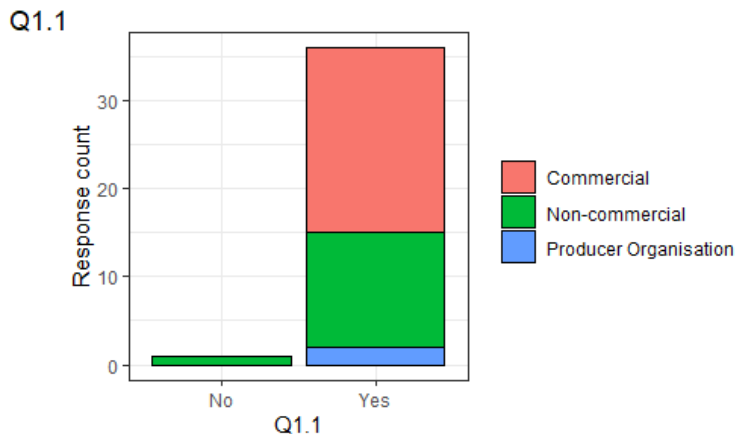
<sup>[1]</sup> The Manx Fish Producers Organisation (MFPO) responded on behalf of 11 vessels with Isle of Man Crab and Lobster licences, 8 of which submitted their own responses either individually or as part of a single business/operator that owns multiple vessels. The MFPO also has 27 mobile-gear members that fish for Queen Scallop, King Scallop and *Nephrops* in Isle of Man territorial waters.

<sup>[2]</sup> The UK Producer Organisation (PO) represents approximately 40 commercial fishing vessels based in Northern Ireland. These range from large pelagic trawlers to under-10 m vessels targeting Brown Crab and Lobster. The PO has 7 full-time fishing vessels employed on Brown Crab and Lobster fisheries, including those in waters around the Isle of Man.

A subsample of explanatory comments are highlighted that broadly capture the range of responses received during the consultation. POs represent and respond on behalf of multiple stakeholders, therefore their responses are highlighted separately from other commercial consultation responses.

## Question 1 – Licences and Latency

Q1.1 Do you support the introduction of a cap on the number of licences issued in respect of Isle of Man commercial crab and lobster fisheries?



### Responses:

Yes: 36

No: 1

### Comments:

#### Yes

"Yes. There appears to be more gear than ever before certainly in the south of the island. In my opinion it is now more difficult to earn a living than I can remember. Catches are the worst I have seen and I believe it is not sustainable." – Commercial stakeholder

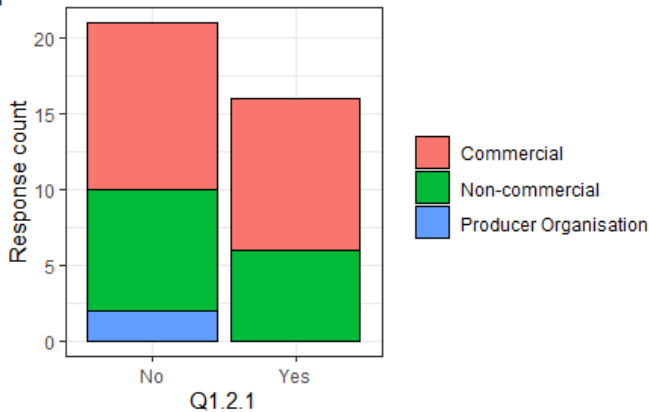
"Across the Irish Sea scientific evidence is clearly suggesting that as a result of too much effort being deployed or displaced into the Brown Crab and Lobster fisheries the stocks are under growing pressure. As more and more pots are deployed catches have remained static. It is clear that urgent and co-ordinated action must be taken to limit any further exploitation of the stocks before the decline in catches becomes more pronounced." – UK PO

"There is potentially a huge problem with unused entitlements.... The fishery needs to be protected for those that depend on this fishery for their income ... There are a small number of Manx boats that have an entitlement to this fishery but have not recently participated... but have recently been encouraged to diversify into other fisheries ... The owners may well have purchased boats with a business plan based on all of their entitlements which could include occasional crab and lobster entitlements ... Their potential impact on the crab and lobster stocks may be minimal but could help their businesses to survive in the future. Would removing entitlements from these few boats result in a large gain for the crab and lobster fisheries? It is important that if these boats are excluded that there is an appeals process which can be accessed and their case heard." – MFPO

If you answered yes to question 1.1, please answer the question below;

Q1.2 i) Do you support a cap on licences at the existing number?

Q1.2.1



**Response:**

Yes: 16

No: 21

**Comments:**

**Yes**

“Yes, at least this way the current stock levels will increase opposed to decreasing. However the young people are the future coming behind us all so would it not make more sense to make available some licenses to new entrants into fishing for example under 30's.” – Commercial stakeholder

“The number of licences available at present does not seem excessive – Commercial stakeholder

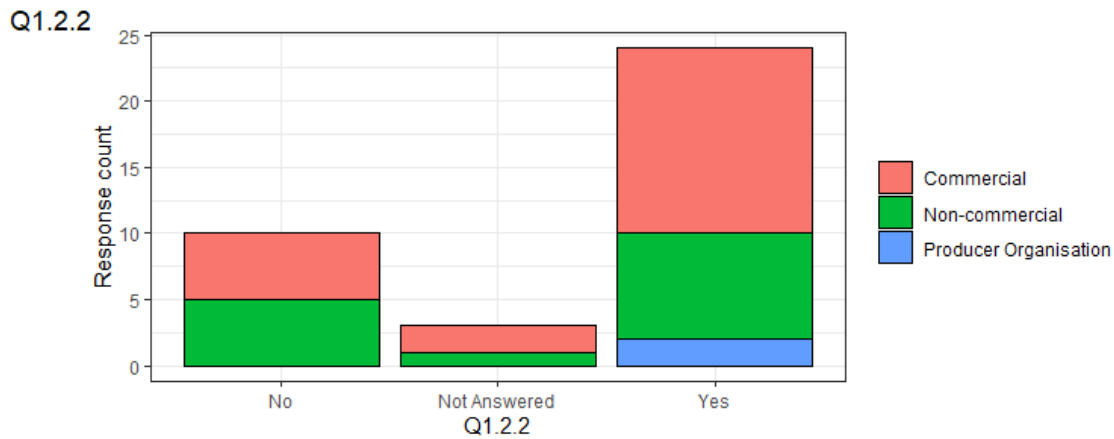
**No**

“At the lower catch over the last few years, I would like to see it capped at what creels are currently being fished until an increase in catch is recorded to show it is viable for more effort.” – Commercial stakeholder

“This does not remove any of the latent effort. If there is a problem with the crab or lobster fishery and catch rates are gradually declining then having a large amount of latent effort (in terms of pot numbers) does mean that future management measures could be easily undermined by a sudden increase in pots numbers through the activation of the unused entitlements.” – MFPO

“There has already been too much expansion into the fishery and there is too much latent capacity. If this was to become active then an already urgent situation would become critical for the shellfish stocks concerned.” – UK PO

Q1.2 ii) Do you support reducing the number of licences issued in respect of the fisheries to those vessels with an appropriate track-record within a specified reference period.



**Responses:**

Yes: 24  
 No: 10  
 Not Answered: 3

**Comments:**

**Yes**

“Use it or lose it”. – Non-commercial stakeholder

“The fishery needs to be mainly for those that historically depend on these fisheries for their income. This can be demonstrated by fishing activity. It is a fact that Manx potters will rely almost entirely on fishing in Manx waters and these businesses must be protected” – MFPO

“There is a lot of latent effort in the fishery which if it was to be fully utilised it would have a big increase in the number of pots deployed and hence a decline in stock” – Commercial stakeholder

**No**

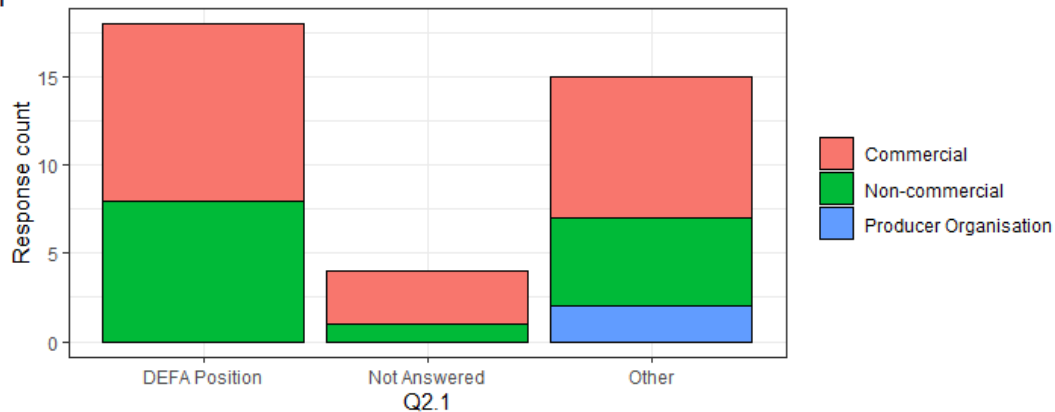
“With all due respect I feel my licence is of equally high importance as anyone else fishing the same grounds assuming they’re adhering to the current regulations. A working day at sea each day is no easy task whilst trying to provide for one’s family...”. – Commercial stakeholder



## Question 2 – Reference period and eligibility criteria

Q2.1 The Department's preferred reference period is 1 January 2016 to 30th June 2018; please select which reference period you prefer?

Q2.1



### Responses:

DEFA position: 18  
Other: 15  
Not answered: 4

### Comments:

#### DEFA Position

"As long as the track record can be passed from one boat to another" – Commercial stakeholder

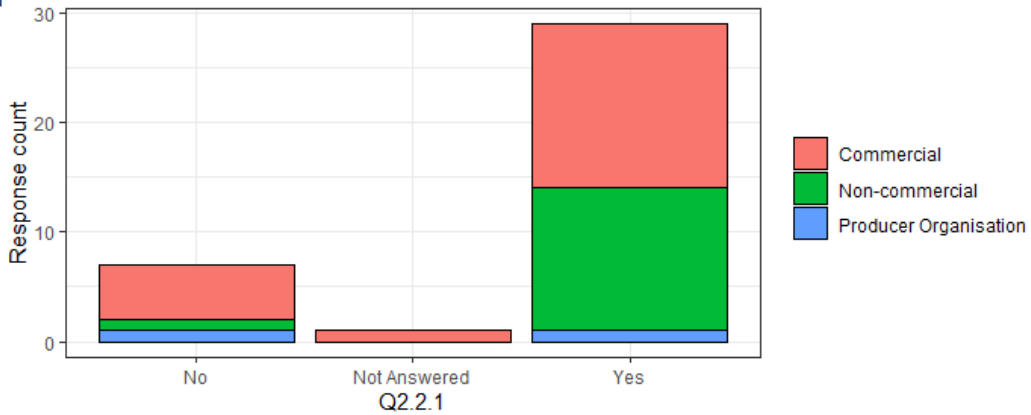
#### Other

"Three year reference periods are used in a variety of other fisheries management tools. 2018 should be excluded from the reference period as during that year significant expansion was being made into the fishery". – UK PO

"Whatever end date is set there does need a to be a robust appeals process as some boats may have fished outside this period but have a genuine case for retaining their entitlements .... It is perhaps more logical to insist on a higher number of days fishing activity but a wider period rather than a restricted period but a low or insignificant number of days – MFPO

Q2.2 a) Do you support a minimum number of days (track-record) fished within a reference period as above, as a means of determining eligibility for a crab and lobster fishing licence for Isle of Man waters (0-12 NM)?

Q2.2.1



**Responses:**

Yes: 29  
 No: 7  
 Not Answered: 1

**Comments:**

**Yes**

“This would show a history of pot fishing and would demonstrate that the applicant has the inclination and a suitable vessel to do the job” – Commercial stakeholder

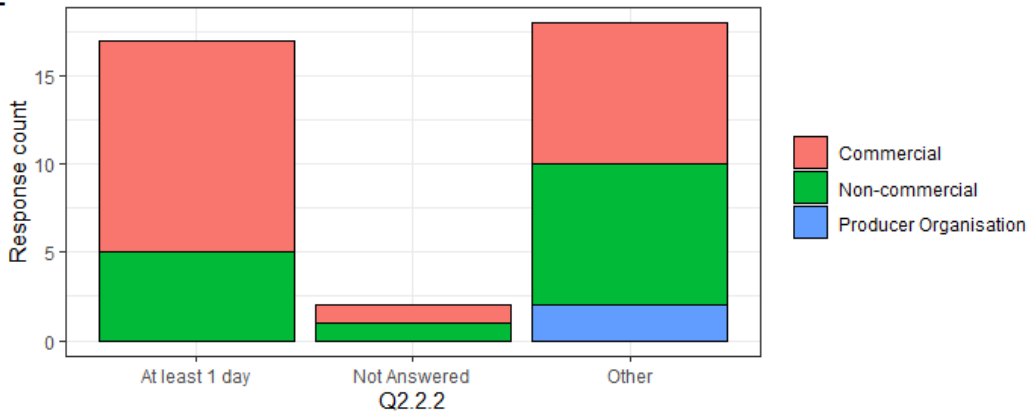
“A minimum number of fishing days in a chosen reference period is essential or there would be no potential to remove any of the latent effort with all the dangers that could bring” – MFPO

**No**

“Because my vessel was laid up for a period of time due to family reasons. It needs to be more current now back dated” – Commercial stakeholder

Q2.2 b) The Department’s preferred track-record is for 1 days fishing within the preferred reference period; what is a suitable number of days?

Q2.2.2



**Responses:**

At least 1 day: 15  
 Other: 18  
 Not Answered: 4

**Comments:**

**At least 1 day**

“Any period longer than a day could be challenged as somehow having been arrived at to suit a particular applicant.” – Commercial stakeholder

**Other**

“30 days” – Commercial stakeholder

“40 days” – Commercial stakeholder

“15 days” – Commercial stakeholder

“This should be set at a far higher level than just 1 day. This would effectively mean just 1 day fishing out of 912 days ... A single day does not reflect a business need for a fishery entitlement. It should be a minimum of 20-30 days and if there were to be any compromise on this then perhaps extend the reference period as indicated previously. If the DEFA preferred reference period is used then if any genuine boat has recent activity only **outside the reference period** then a higher level of days, e.g. **50 days** could be used for any appeals process ...” – MFPO

“We do not believe a days based track record to be appropriate. Rather a minimum volume or quantity of Brown Crab or Lobster landed represents a more transparent way of assessing eligibility” – UK PO

**Question 3 – Pot allocation**

Q3.1 Should the number of pots allocated to each vessel be set at the same amount (fixed) or variable?

### Q3.1



#### Responses:

Fixed: 14

Variable: 23

#### Comments:

##### Fixed

"Fixed, each should be a fair just because smaller boats don't have the capacity or funds to buy a larger vessel to cope with a larger number gives them all the same chance makes it a fair and sustainable fishery. Not because people have been in the industry for years and can have numerous licenses to fund a larger vessel." – Commercial stakeholder

##### Variable

"Whilst it is true that a 15ft boat would not have the capability to fish 300 pots, if the licence is reduced to 100 pots then what capacity will the owner have to get a larger vessel at some point if the licence is capped at 100? There should be a pool of pot allocation which is kept by the Department for this eventuality." – Commercial stakeholder

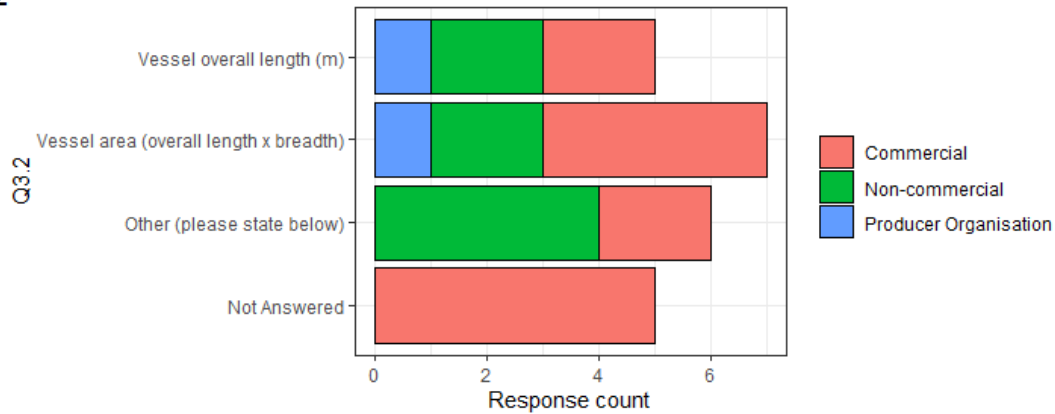
"If the same number of pots was allocated it might create a target number for some vessels that currently do not fish that number. There might be a temptation on some to deploy more pots than what they can practically fish, purely to establish a track record." – UK PO

"... there seems to have been no robust policy for pot allocations in the past. Given that there is no fixed amount per entitlement at present then a fixed allocation system could result in an increase in the number of pots being issued. Conversely if there is a variable system based on certain metrics then boats may end up with pots being taken away. It would seem grossly unfair to take pots away from any used entitlement unused pots (within an active entitlement)" – MFPO

"Starting out you may not be financially able to fully invest in pots so there has to be some leeway, also single handed vessels would never be able to move up the ladder or be viable to employ crew." – Non-commercial stakeholder

Q3.2 If you answered 'variable' to Q3.1, what metric should be used to allocate a variable pot limit?

### Q3.2



#### Responses:

Vessel overall length (m):	5
Vessel area (overall length x breadth):	7
Other:	6
Not Answered:	5

#### Comments:

##### Vessel Area

"While vessel area has been selected as a possible metric this is only for future use and not to be backdated. There are a number of historical issues with the current pot allocations which mean that changing to a new metric for current used entitlements could result in changes to an entitlement that seriously undermine a person's business" – MFPO

##### Vessel Length

"A pot limit should reflect the size (length) of a fishing vessel. Many newer vessels have increased breadth which provides a more stable and safer working environment. However, we do not believe this dimension should be used to further complicate what should be a straight forward equation to allocate a maximum number of pots based on three length bands; 0 to 6.99 metres, 7 to 11.99 metres and 12 metres and above." – UK PO

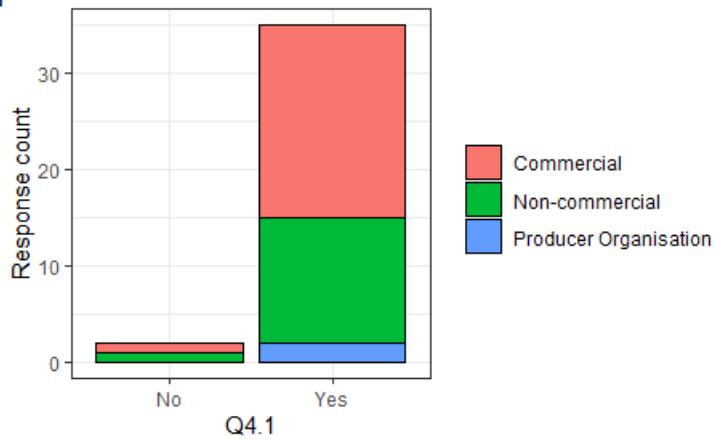
##### Other

"You cannot expect a vessel that is two or three handed to work the same number of pots as a vessel that is single handed. Is there a workable system where a vessel is allocated pots relative to how many people work on it with a maximum of three hundred pots?" – Commercial stakeholder

## Question 4 – MCRS Change

Q4.1 Do you support an increase in the Minimum Conservation Reference Size(MCRS) of European lobster within Isle of Man territorial waters?

Q4.1



### Responses:

Yes: 35

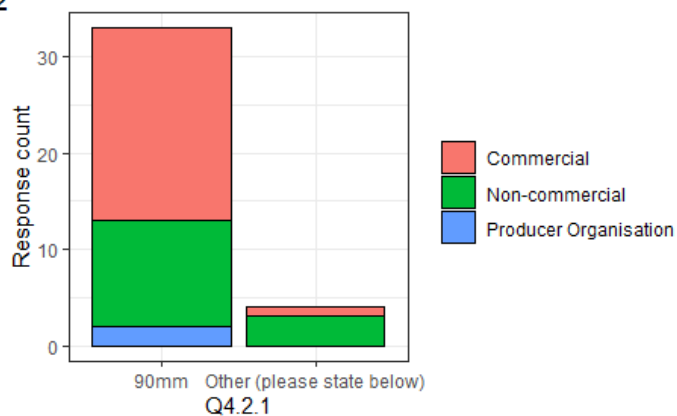
No: 2

### Comments:

[No comments]

Q4.2 Do you support an increase in MCRS of European lobster within Isle of Man territorial waters to 90mm?

Q4.2

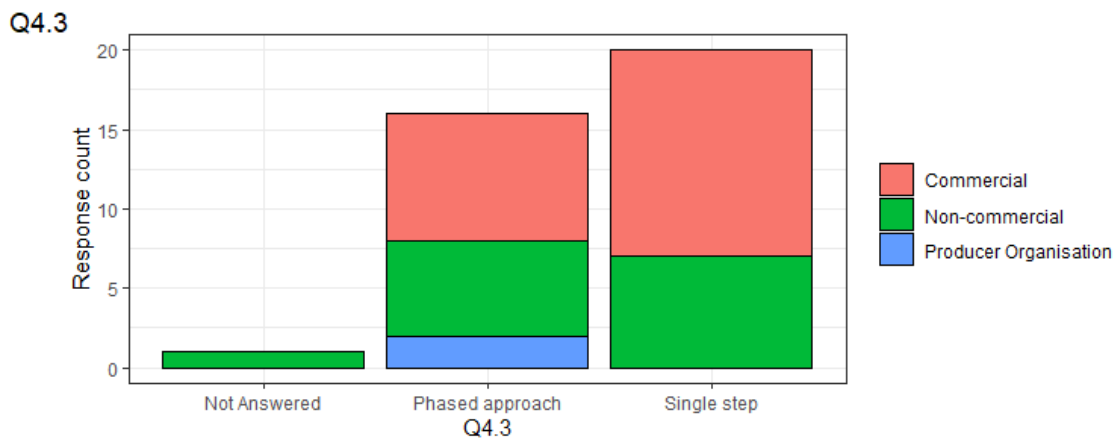


### Responses:

90 mm: 31

Other: 6

Q4.3 Do you support an increase in MCRS (Lobster) being introduced in a single step or phased approach?



### Responses:

Single-step: 20  
 Phased approach: 16  
 Not Answered: 1

### Comments:

#### Single-step

“The quicker it’s increased the quicker the benefits” – Commercial stakeholder

“Get it over and done as quickly as possible and stop dithering. At this rate we will be the only area in the British Isles with an 87mm MLS” – Commercial stakeholder

“Single step, we are possibly 1 of the last places in the British Isles to introduce this increase in size. Slightly larger lobster has more time to reproduce. More sustainable fishery.” – Commercial stakeholder

#### Phased approach

“A single step approach would present a significant and unacceptable loss of catch to fishermen at the outset. Whilst resulting in some financial loss a phased approach would resolve this problem.” – UK PO

“The change from 87mm to 90mm will seriously impact some businesses. Only a limited number of boat owners currently land only 90mm and above. The remaining businesses will be impacted to a lesser or greater degree. The data presented in the appended paper on MCRS changes suggests this impact will be low across the board. In the presented graphs, it is a very simplistic approach with many assumptions. There are, however, large regional differences in the size distribution of lobsters landed around the island. Personal examination of landed stocks from two areas around the island indicate that 40-50% of landings are within the 87-90mm size range. In other areas it is 10-20%. The impact on the fishermen targeting certain areas would be financially extremely challenging if the change was implemented through a single step. It would be far more sensible to consider a phased approach with an analysis carried out before and after an initial step, in each area around the Isle of Man. This would then help to decide when the next step should be brought in. It should not be automatically assumed that it will be in the next year without examining the impact of the first step. It needs to be understood that what appears to be a low percentage impact on landings may mean a huge impact on profitability.” – MFPO

Q4.4 Are there any seasonality considerations for an introduction you think should be taken into account?

This question received a low number of responses (8), and may have been misunderstood by some stakeholders to be a question on seasonal closures or a seasonal variation in the MCRS. Of those responses that were relevant to the question, there was a consensus that a size-change should occur after the Easter market, and before the summer fishery.

### Comments

"Perhaps consider bringing in the initial step change **after the Easter market**. Businesses work to the current regulations and will be basing their sales on past landings. Anything that could impact that should be done at the most favourable time of year for the established businesses" – MFPO

"A size increase **before June**, to allow berried hens to have one more season producing" – Commercial stakeholder

"Raise it **before summer preferably in winter right now**. That would protect small hens and males that will be breeding. Hens will shed their eggs late spring and through summer. Raise it so they can breed another season then be caught above 90mm." – Commercial stakeholder

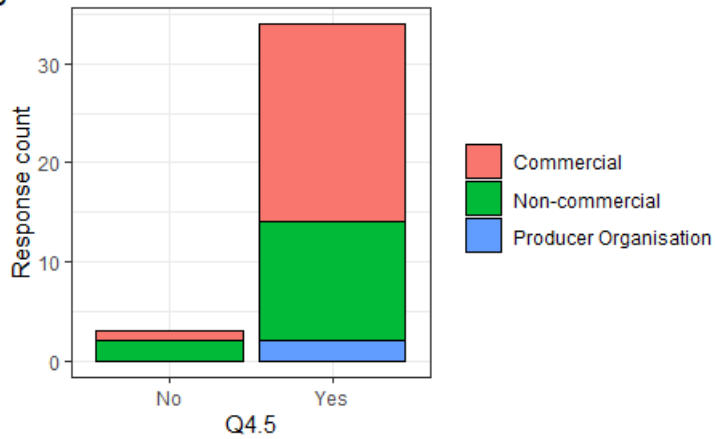
"June" – Commercial stakeholder

"Straight away, the stock is under pressure" – Commercial stakeholder



Q4.5: Do you support an increase in the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) of brown crab within Isle of Man territorial waters?

Q4.5



**Responses:**

Yes: 34

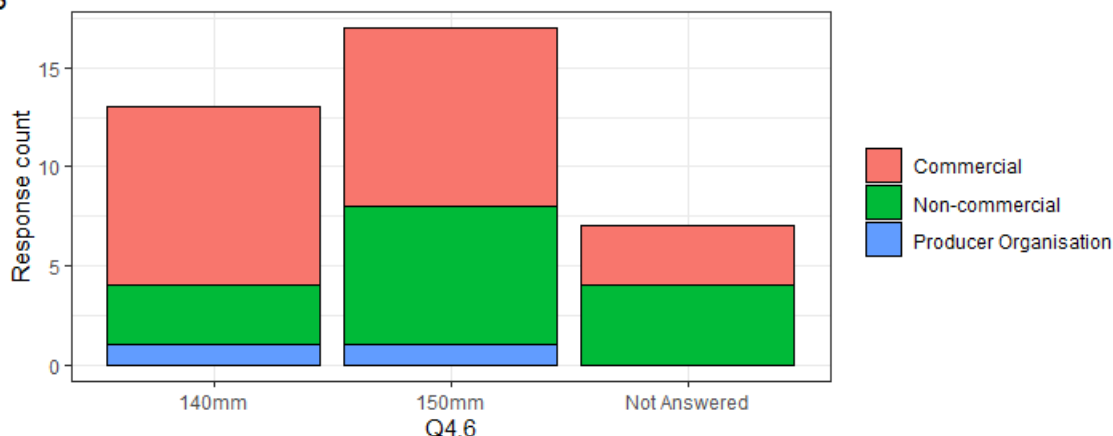
No: 3

**Comments:**

[There were no comments on this question]

Q4.6: Do you support an increase in MCRS for brown crab within Isle of Man territorial waters to 140 mm, 150 mm, Other?

Q4.6



**Responses:**

140 mm: 13  
150 mm: 16  
Not answered: 8

**Comments:**

**140 mm**

“Firstly the change to 140mm still allows for the 400-600g market to be met. Changing to 150mm would affect that market and should not be considered at this point. A single step change should be possible although the cock crab landings may be affected by a single step change.” – MFPO

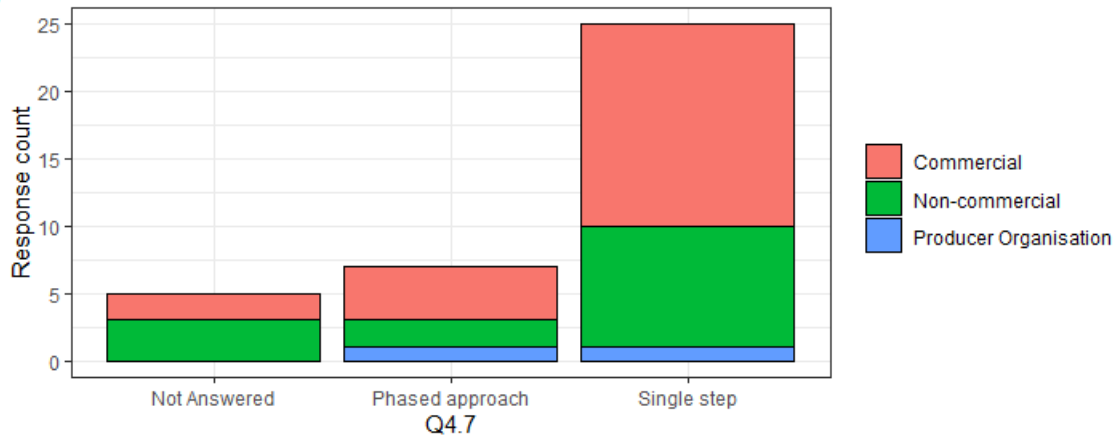
**150 mm**

“An increase in the MCRS to 140mm has already been applied in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It makes sense to have a consistent approach throughout at least the western Irish Sea...Adopting a 150mm MCRS would be appropriate from Summer 2022.” – UK PO

“I think the current size of 130mm is much too low and Isle Of Man should be brought to the same parity as the rest of the UK to 150mm.” – Commercial stakeholder

Q4.7 : Do you support an increase in MCRS (Crab) being introduced in a single step or phased approach?

Q4.7



**Responses:**

Single-step: 25  
Phased approach: 7  
Not Answered: 5

**Comments:**

**Phased approach**

“Same as lobster, doing a sudden large increase in minimum landing size will have a massive effect on fisherman’s profit” – Commercial stakeholder

**Single-step**

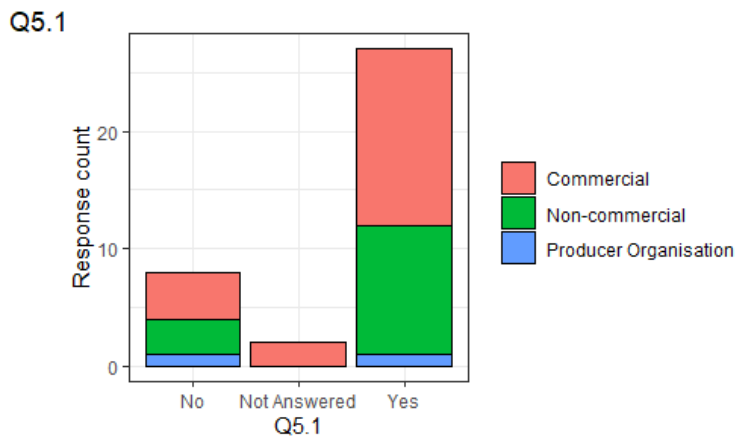
“This would give a year or 2 of growth in the crab inshore.” – Commercial stakeholder

Q4.8: Are there any seasonality considerations for an introduction you think should be taken into account?

Similarly to Q4.4, this question was not answered, or may have been misunderstood by the majority of consultation respondents to be a question on seasonal closures. Of those consultation responses that addressed the question, there was a general consensus that the MCRS should change after the spring crab fishery and before the autumn hen fishery (between June and August).

## Question 5 – New Entrant Scheme

Q5.1: Do you support the future development of a new-entrant scheme to the crab and lobster commercial fishing industry, should scientific evidence support such, to facilitate those wishing to get started in the industry?



### Responses:

Yes: 27  
No: 8  
Not Answered: 2

### Comments:

#### Yes

"Of course, as long as we can do it sustainably. If a young person can get a start at a career we must assist all we can." - Non-commercial stakeholder

"This is difficult. Young people should be encouraged into the job somehow ... However there is little point in removing theoretical latent effort and turning it into reallocated real effort. I strongly believe any new allocation must come from a reduction in allocation that is presently being fished, otherwise you are making a bad situation worse." – Commercial stakeholder

"Fishermen are part of the fishery ecosystem, so where we can and where it is scientifically justified it is an important component to encourage new entrants into the fishery. However, a new entrant scheme needs to be clearly defined. How long does one remain a new entrant? What happens when this period ends?" – UK PO

#### No

"In the present circumstances the answer must be no. It would be very difficult to justify removing some unused entitlements to reduce latent effort but then introducing more licences for a new-entrant scheme. If the changes that are proposed are introduced and the measures were deemed to be successful then that would be the time to consider new entrant scheme." – MFPO

Q5.2: If yes, do you have any specific ideas or proposals on how you would like to see a new-entrant scheme introduced and managed?

This question gathered qualitative responses that are difficult to categorise. A range of comments are presented below:

"We need to consult with DfE on this and indeed Treasury." – Non-commercial stakeholder

"Requirements must include having been at sea for experience 1-2 years, and include a business plan" – Commercial stakeholder

"I think to do this fairly there must be a reduction in fished effort across the board. Reallocating theoretical latent effort will result in more real-time effort." – Commercial stakeholder

"Reorganisation of current licence numbers could free up a good number of unused licences of which a percentage could be used for redeployment to a new entrant scheme. Formal application, Business case and interview. Financial support by way of grant or loan. Mentorship / apprentice scheme introduced to ensure best chance of success whilst ensuring optimum Health and Safety. Particularly identify any current licence holders who are likely to retire in the not too distant future as part of mentorship / apprentice scheme... perhaps a ready market to sell a business and have licence reassigned?" – Non-commercial stakeholder

"Implement young fisherman's grants on a percentage bases example the new entrant pays 30% towards his/hers new boat and licence with the department raising the rest." – Commercial stakeholder

"Yes make licensing available with the unused pot allowance. On the condition they have a vessel" – Commercial stakeholder

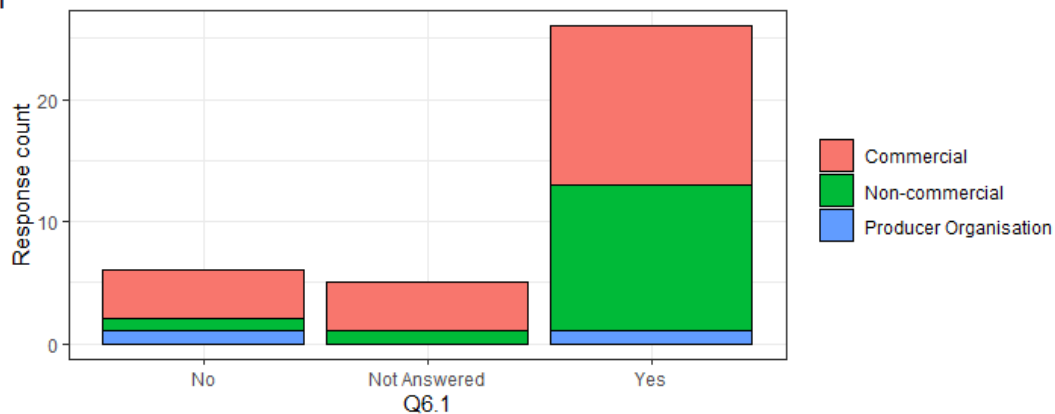
"The government need to develop a scheme to support up and coming skippers. Not all fishermen have descendants to obtain licences from and not all keen young fishermen have family to inherit vessels/licences from" – Commercial stakeholder

"If yes in the future, then perhaps the idea suggested earlier of having blue tags (for used pots) and red tags (for unused pots within a used entitlement) could be incorporated within this development. For example, any red tags not used for a period of, say 3 years, could be put into a pool which would be available to new entrants." – MFPO

## Question 6 – Spatial Management

Q6.1: In principle, do you support the establishment of spatial management measures for the enhancement of pot fisheries?

Q6.1



### Responses:

Yes: 26  
No: 6  
Not Answered: 5

### Comments:

#### Yes

"There is a tendency for the hobby pots to end up clustered in quite small areas"– Non-commercial stakeholder

"Fishermen should manage these areas as it's their future" – Commercial stakeholder

"Where spatial management can be used to manage potential gear conflict situations between pot fisheries and those for King and Queen Scallops this would clearly be a sensible approach, which should result in dividends for all the fisheries involved." – UK PO

"Spatial management is critical for delivering economic and environmental benefits which will be beneficial to the new younger generation coming through into the industry." – Commercial stakeholder

"The Baie Ny Carrickey crustacean fisheries management scheme showed that spatial management of pot fisheries definitely improves stock abundance over time... As this was the first scheme ever put in place there were inevitably teething troubles involving enforcement of the rules of membership. Future schemes would have to have robust sanctions in place with a legal backing to bar participants who failed to comply. If this could be achieved this would be by far and away the best way forward as all the participants benefit from good practice and conservation measures and can micro-manage their area by common agreement such as closing small areas all summer so that it can be fished in the lead up to Christmas when the price is high in the same way as Ramsey Bay is with scallops." – Commercial stakeholder

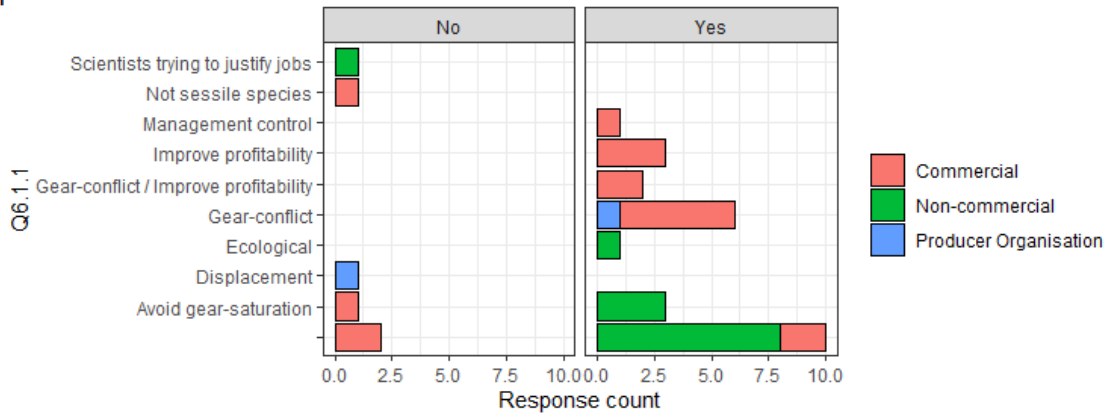
#### No

"This is not the same as the scallop fisheries whereby you have animals which largely remain in the same area and you can assess the impact of known fishing activity or where you can protect juvenile beds. Scallop fishermen are very mobile and can easily fish in other areas. Pot fishermen, in general, have their

own areas where they fish and forcing them out of their typically fished areas would cause huge displacement into other areas and a concentration of fishing. Pot fishermen know their grounds and have years of knowledge. They also tend to be near their home port - forcing them to move would affect catch rates and increase costs and create huge conflict amongst the industry. The key factors are to get the MCRS up, control pot numbers, tags in all areas to aid enforcement, remove latent effort and collect more detailed information on the fishery. The impact of these measures would change the fishery for the better.”  
 – MFPO

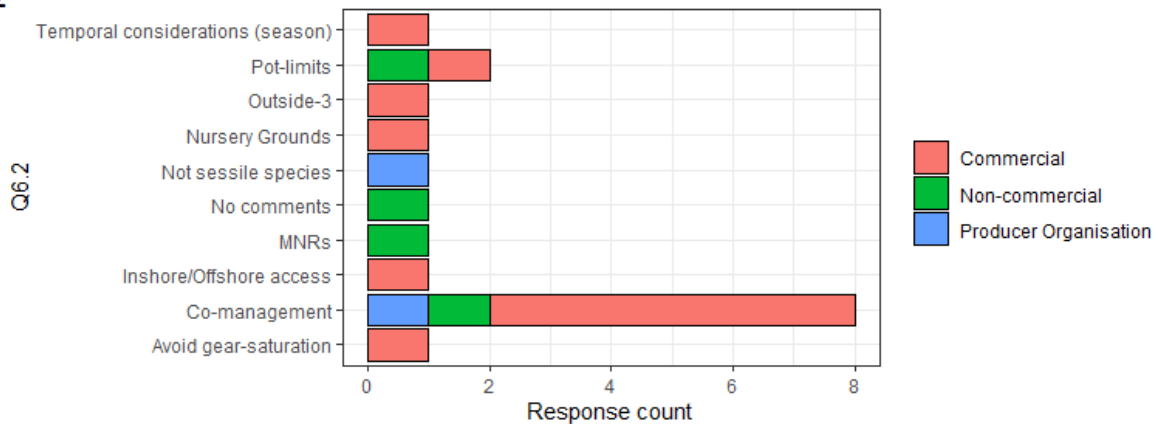
The reasoning behind responses on this issue can be summarised using the following categories:

**Q6.1.1**



Q6.2: If yes, what issues do you envisage as being important in establishing and managing such areas?

**Q6.2**



Most responses highlighted that co-management will be important in developing any spatial management proposals. Other comments included zonation of the already established Marine Nature Reserves with pot-limits to avoid gear-saturation, and to establish highly protected zones for nursery grounds. Others highlighted that spatial management must be dynamic as neither species is sessile. Several responses noted that spatial management must extend beyond the 3 nautical mile limit.

**Comments:**

**Against spatial management**

“As above the answer is “No” to spatial management. Please remember crabs move long distances - they

do not stay in managed areas.” – MFPO

### **Support spatial management**

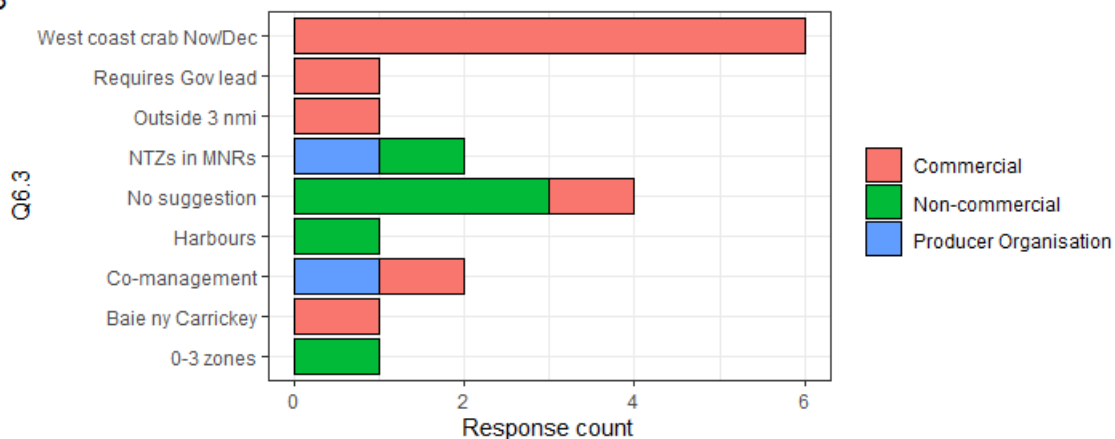
“Proper dialogue and communication between all parties involved in the fishery is key to spatial management. Fishermen should be at the core of this process. It has been repeatedly proven that where the industry is excluded from such a process then the result will be less than ideal. It is also important that fishermen from all administrations are included in such a decision making process.” – UK PO

“Static-gear fishers need to be able to talk to someone independent, who can be a go-between and communicate between static-gear interests and mobile-gear interests.” – Anon (Commercial fisher)

“Most important is having all parties on board and working together including joint management of such areas. Realistic and sustainable numbers of licences per spatial area as well as total pot numbers. Baie Ny Carrickey was abandoned because some participant didn't play by the rules whilst others did, those that don't cooperate should be the ones penalised not everyone. (e.g. catch returns submission). Choice of spatial management areas quite difficult as some licence holders fish multiple areas, maybe more realistic and achievable just using and within coastal 3 mile limit?” – Non-commercial stakeholder

Q6.3: Do you have any specific suggestions, ideas or proposals in relation to the location and management of such areas?

Q6.3



A majority of responses suggested an opportunity for spatial management on the West / South-west coast in November December, for the purpose of avoiding gear-conflict with the mobile-gear sector that target King Scallops in those areas from the 1<sup>st</sup> Nov, i.e. 'safe-zones'. These responses came from both UK and IOM commercial interests and a UK producer organisation. Although the MFPO was clear in not supporting spatial management in static-gear fisheries, it did suggest that further zonation of Marine Nature Reserves (MNR) and establishing a representative body for static-gear interests could facilitate greater co-operation and co-management;

“Enhance lobster populations by creating refuge areas in the MNR's closed to mobile fishing, once zonation of these areas has taken place. Develop the relationship between mobile and static sectors within the 0-3 mile. This would be best achieved by all potters having a representative body. The MFPO already exists and if all potters joined the MFPO (as all mobile fishermen have done) then co-operation between the two sectors would be far easier. This would also mean that DEFA would not necessarily have to be involved in the arrangements as they could be done in-house without using up valuable department time” – MFPO

Some responses qualified this specific suggestion that they would be willing to cease fishing for



crab (i.e. a closed season) for 4 months from January – April if they could safely access fishing grounds outside the 3 nautical mile limit during November and December.

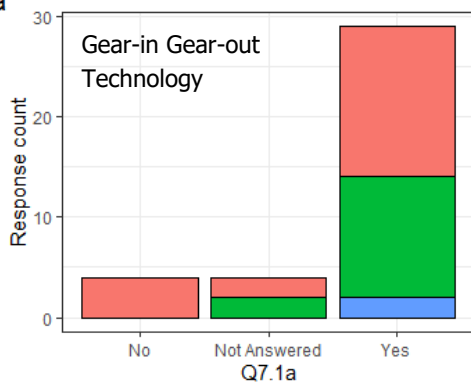
Baie ny Carrickey, and the other MNRs more generally, were also highlighted as areas to establish specific spatial management regimes such as limited pot-numbers in each area.

No-take-zones ('refuges') were also highlighted as an opportunity within MNRs, and more specifically in areas that create conflict with non-commercial sea-users such as in and around harbours as well as the tidal-race between Kitterland and the Calf of Man.

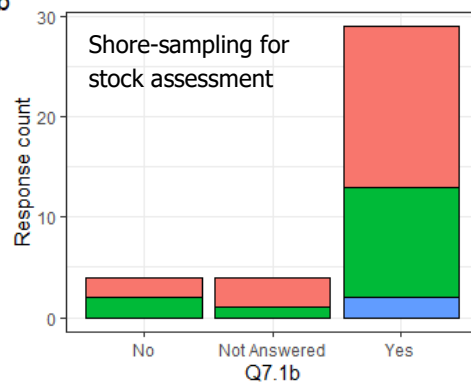
## Q7 – Industry-supported Research Development

Q7.1. Do you support the development of a scientific study, in partnership with key stakeholders, for the crab and lobster fisheries within Isle of Man territorial waters?

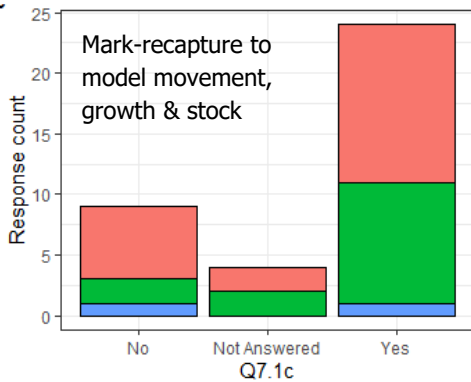
Q7.1a



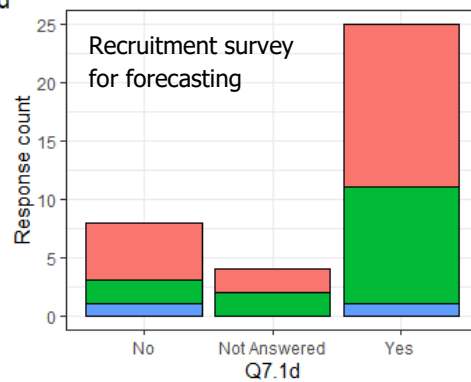
Q7.1b



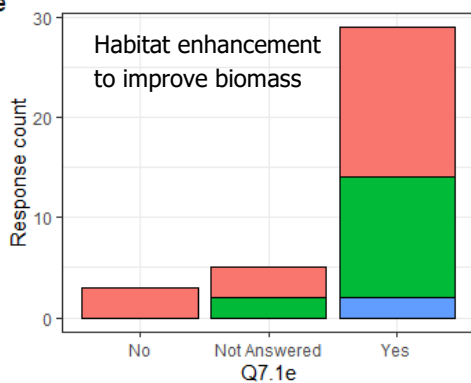
Q7.1c



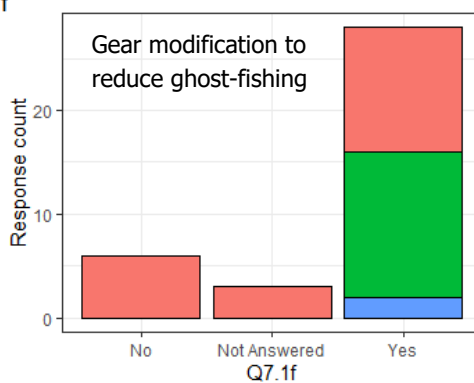
Q7.1d



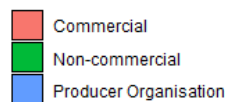
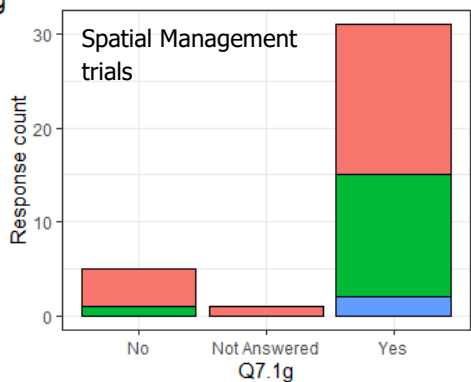
Q7.1e



Q7.1f

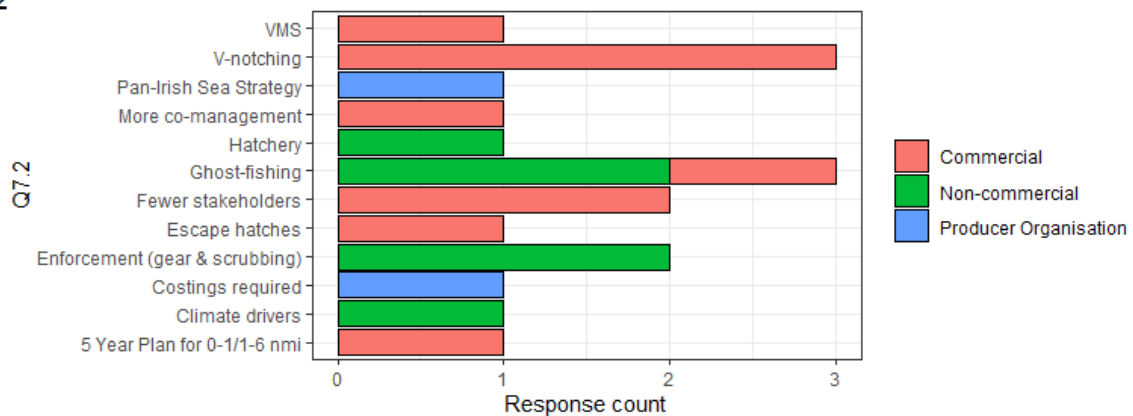


Q7.1g



Q7.2: Appendix 4 highlights the research themes that the Department and Bangor University consider priorities for inclusion within a long-term scientific programme. What other priorities do you consider important for inclusion within an industry-supported long-term scientific programme?

Q7.2



### Comments

“All of the above measures where we have indicated approval need full costings before they are introduced. For example, gear in, gear out technology is expensive and is a continuing cost. Industry needs to know how this will be funded. Habitat enhancement could be low cost but would need the MNR’s to be zoned as per Ramsey Bay so that we know which areas will be available and permanently protected from mobile gear fishing. With ghost fishing it is essential to have tags on all pots in all areas so that we know how many pots are going missing. There also needs to be escape panels in each pot with sections that will deteriorate over time. Again this needs to be costed out. Spatial management for benefit of crab and lobster fishing is based on agreements being reached between mobile and static sector rather than a strict management of an area. The measures not approved need to be assessed to see how much time would be needed for the research and whether Bangor scientists would be better employed in other areas of work. Basically there needs to be a cost/time versus benefit analysis. Research shouldn’t be just for research sake but should have a calculated commercial benefit.” – MFPO

“We need more working groups & more government support for co-management in static-gear fisheries”  
– Commercial stakeholder

“Introduce spatial reporting with logbook data for all vessels and that will help build a scientific picture”  
– Commercial stakeholder

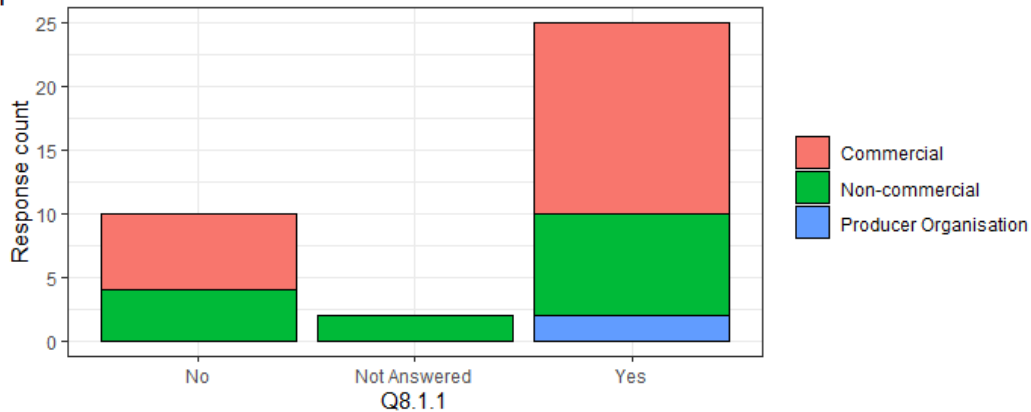
“An industry-supported long-term scientific programme is central to the development of a management plan for the stock. Ideally such a management plan should be agreed at an Irish Sea level, to reflect movement between Brown Crab” – UK PO

“There is anecdotal evidence that scrubbing of lobsters takes place to an unknown extent no doubt by the minority. Bangor University should follow the UK government lead and start to look at way of countering this issue with the severest of penalties for anyone caught.” – Non-commercial stakeholder

## Q8 – Velvet crab fishery

Q8.1: Do you support the future enablement of a commercial velvet crab fishery?

Q8.1.1



### Responses:

Yes: 25  
No: 10  
Not Answered: 2

### Comments:

#### Yes

"This would be good, if edible crab stopped for 3 to 4 months [Jan – Mar], we could diversify to velvets etc" – Commercial stakeholder

"Yes worth a try although the size of the velvets that are caught in the lobster pots appear to be much smaller than those of the commercial fishery in say the Hebrides." – Commercial stakeholder

"Providing economically viable and environmentally sustainable alternative fisheries is key to reducing fishing pressure on established fisheries" – UK PO

"This is a tentative Yes. Manx processors feel that there will be a market for cooked and frozen product for a limited time late in each year. Live transportation is a major issue for this species. There needs to be a trial fishery with a limited number of trusted and experienced potters with data collected on abundance and range before licences are issued on a permanent basis." – MFPO

Q8.2: If yes, do you have any specific ideas or proposals on how you would like to see a Velvet crab fishery managed and regulated, e.g.

- separate licensing to edible or brown crab/lobster
- a cap on the number of licences
- pot-limitations
- pot-tag requirements, and
- Technical measures including trap design, escape gaps mandates, MCRS (for velvet crab is currently set at 65 mm carapace width).

There were limited responses to this question out of those that responded in favour of enabling a velvet crab fishery (56%). There was general consensus that if a fishery trial demonstrated sufficient abundance of 'good' sized velvet crab, then the Department should manage the fishery with a species-specific licence as is already the case with edible crab and lobster. Other suggestions included looking to the Stangford Lough fishery data, and learning from the development of that fishery (including a revision of the MCRS, pot-limits, and specific escape-gaps).

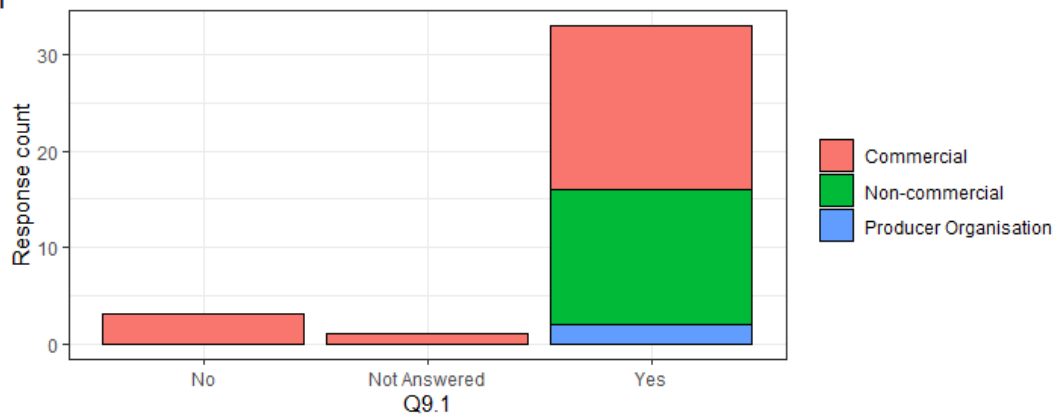
"As it is likely this fishery will be explored by those currently involved in other shellfish fisheries, this needs to be aligned with the measures that will be adopted for the Brown Crab and Lobster fisheries. Increasing the MCRS should be examined...Management measures straddling the 3 mile limit need to be carefully reviewed." – UK PO

"It would need to be a separate licence as there is, as yet, no idea of abundance or range. Initially there needs to be a low level experimental fishery with a limited number of users trialling different types of gear. Early analysis of the landings would indicate whether 65mm carapace width is the most appropriate MCRS. It needs to be remembered that the MCRS for most commercial shellfish species in the Territorial Sea is different to the UK." – MFPO

## Q9 – Pot-tags

Do you support the requirement for commercial pots to be fitted with pot tags and escape gaps throughout the territorial sea (0-12 NM)?

Q9.1



### Responses:

Yes: 33  
No: 3  
Not Answered: 1

### Comments:

"We strongly support the application of tags in these fisheries. Tags clearly identify legally deployed fishing gear. Unmarked gear should be removed. Nevertheless, we are aware of rumours around false tags being deployed on gear and this issue need to be further examined. Escape gaps are vitally important as they allow undersize of juveniles to escape. Evidence of small lobsters being unable to escape pots and then being damaged as the gear is hauled has been recorded. Escape gaps or hatches will help minimise such problems." – UK PO

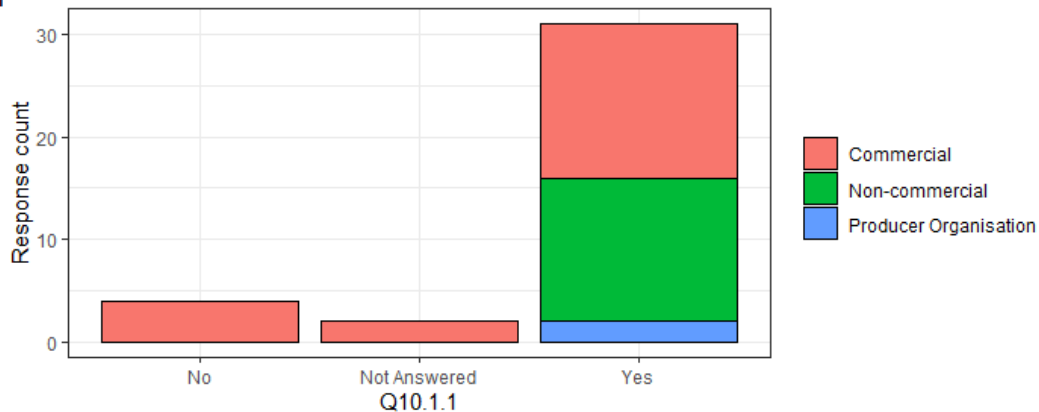
"It is essential for all pots to be tagged and have escape panels fitted. The effect of ghost pot mortality on stocks is unknown. This will also aid enforcement and assist in data collection." – MFPO

"Everything should have a tag and escape panel. Not difference fishing in 0-3 or the 3-12 they are still the same species" – Commercial stakeholder

## Q10 – Requirements for marking and setting gear

Q10.1: Do you support the introduction of requirements relating to the marking of pots, to include the type of marker and form and method of marking?

Q10.1



### Comments

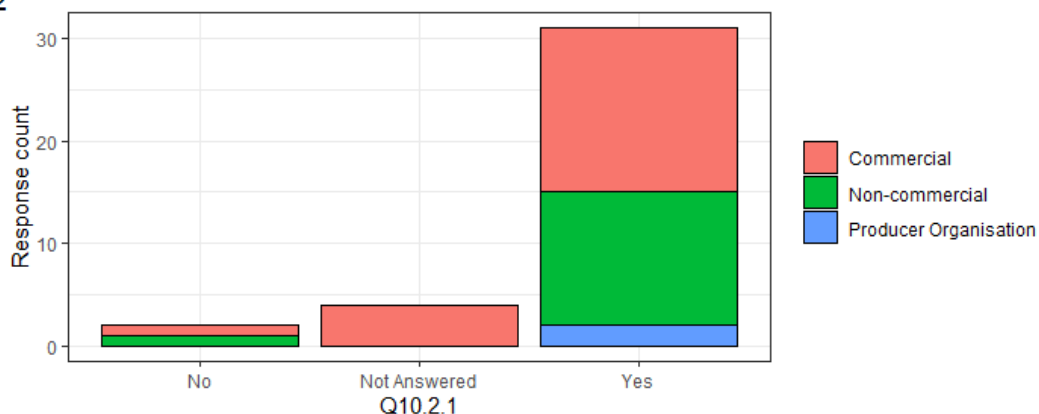
"All pots should be clearly marked to assist management (recording the number of pots), enforcement, and as an indicator to other fishers to avoid gear" – UK PO

"A flag or buoy with a reflective flashing AIS beacon making it known to commercial fishermen, fishery officers, coasters in or near the area." – Commercial stakeholder

"There needs to be a standardisation of marking equipment for pots. This has been brought in, in Scotland, recently. The owners of the pots and buoys etc should be easily identifiable. The gear should also be clearly visible to the mobile sector so gear conflict can be reduced. There also needs to be a code of practice and code of conduct in conjunction with the mobile sector." - MFPO

Q10.2: Do you support the introduction of measure to prevent interference with another's pots or stock cages?

Q10.2



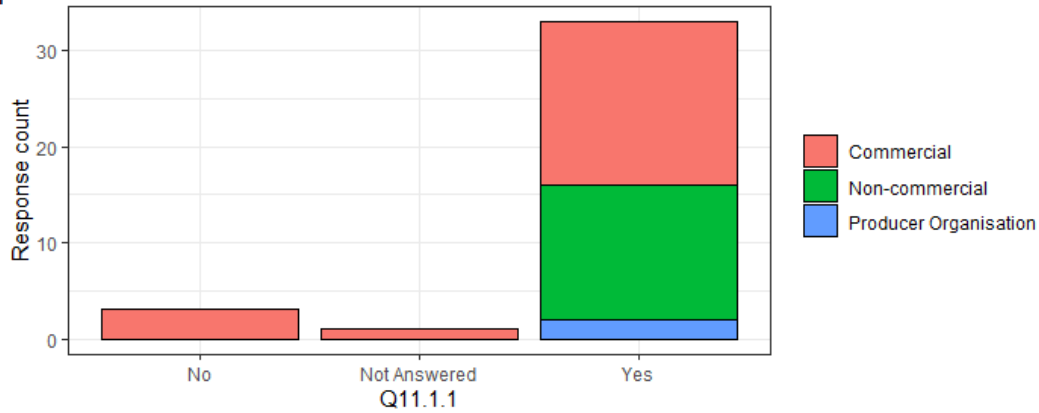
### Comments

"Stock cages are an important way of managing supply to the market. As with pots they need to be properly marked and recorded. There should be a zero tolerance approach to any unauthorised interference with stock cages." – UK PO

## Q11 – Declaring the number of pots on each string

Q11: Do you support the principle of requiring crab and lobster strings to clearly display a declaration of the total amount of pots on that string for enforcement purposes, which must be visible alongside vessel ID marks required under setting and marking requirements (Q10)?

Q11.1



### Responses:

Yes: 33  
No: 3  
Not Answered: 1

### Comments:

"Hard to keep permanent marker on buoys but tags would be good" – Commercial stakeholder

"Would be effective in helping the crew of the Barrule to monitor the number of pots fished by each licence holder" – Non-commercial stakeholder

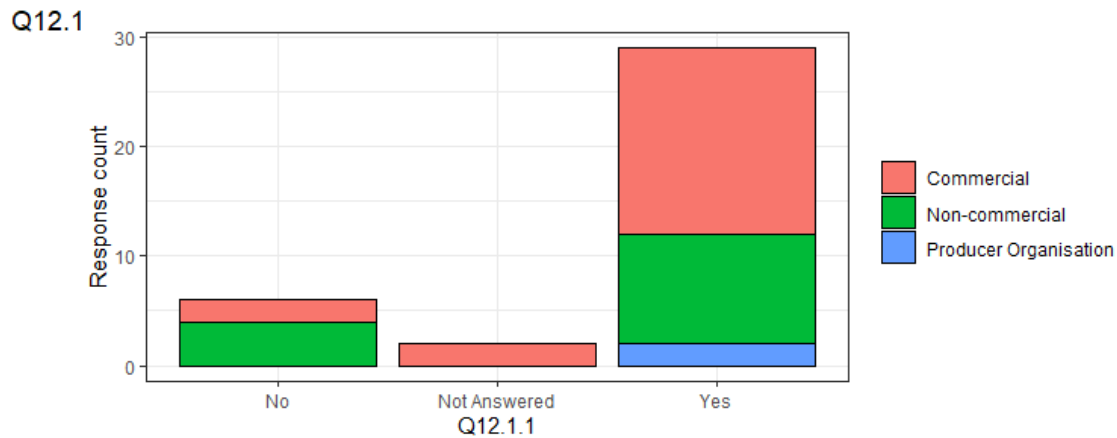
"This would provide valuable and transparent information to everyone involved in the fishery - from managers (including science), to enforcement agencies and ultimately fishermen." – UK PO

"The tag should have boat name or number and the number of pots on that string. It does however need to be variable as strings will have different numbers of pots depending on area and sea conditions as well as capability of the boat. This will help enforcement and also help to solve gear conflicts between the mobile and potting sectors." – MFPO



## Q12 – Recreational Licensing

Q12.1: Do you support having a new initial annual licence fee of £20, increased annually in line with the rate of inflation (CPI), for recreational crab and lobster pot fishing within the 0-3 NM?



### Responses:

Yes: 29  
No: 6  
Not Answered: 2

### Comments:

#### Yes

“Yes, I would be happy to pay £20 for my license” – Non-commercial stakeholder

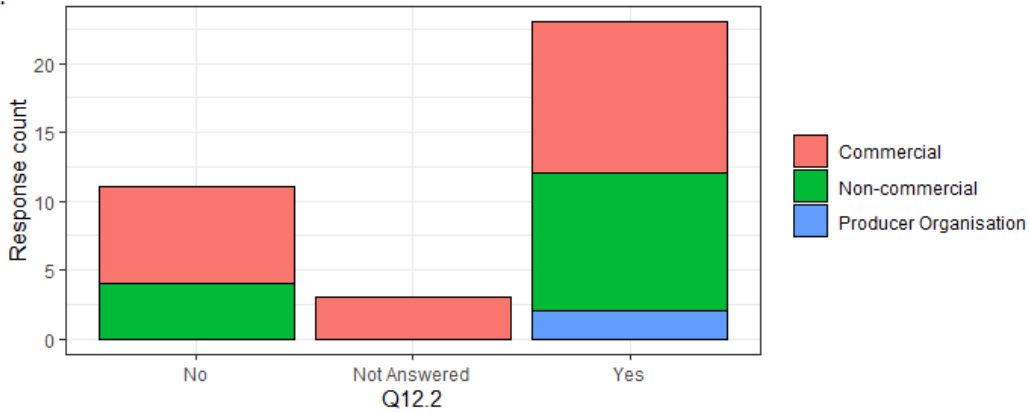
“I would prefer to be able to submit my hobby catch returns online I have done my best to remember to return the forms this year but would be a lot easier to this online] – Anon (hobby potter” – Non-commercial stakeholder

#### No

“The sea is fished by other sports fishermen who don't require a licences to do so, so why should hobby pot fishermen be singled out” – Non-commercial stakeholder

Q12.2: Do you support charging half the cost to renew the licence where the applicant applies for renewal and submits their annual catch return by a set deadline? The Department’s preferred deadline for annual catch returns is 31 January following the year fished – would you support this, or have an alternative date?

Q12.2.



**Responses:**

Yes: 23  
 No: 11  
 Not Answered: 3

**Comments:**

“Clearly such a step would encourage fishermen to provide their annual catch return in a more timely fashion. We would support the 31st January as the deadline” - UK PO

“So £20 first year and £10 p.a for every year after that assuming you do your catch return by 31st January for the preceding year? Previous comment re price increases bought further in to focus, we are talking pence!! Cost of administering on an annual basis, could it be done cheaper?” – Non-commercial stakeholder

“The proposed deadline is good but the renewal process must include a catch return as standard” – Non-commercial stakeholder

### **Q13 – Any other proposals / ideas for consideration**

Q13: Do you have any other proposals or ideas which you feel should be considered within the current or future policy in relation to the crab and lobster fisheries within Isle of Man territorial waters?

"I would say a combination of all would have to be evaluated and on an ongoing basis to find the correct balance that would give the best sustainable results. Probably heavily weighted to the Spatial management as we have seen for Scallops, which was effective, at least for the increase in larvae / eggs. Tried out and reviewed regularly for effectiveness - and flexible to meet different circumstances

- A marine farming experiment should be trialed out for both these species.
- Marine reserves - no go areas.
- Marine environment enhancement projects to improve habitat for these two species and increase the biomass of them in our waters.
- Closed areas for scallop fishing has shown an increase of eggs and larvae

What we should be aiming for is a thriving species in its own right, a fishery that is sustainable and meets our Biodiversity strategy and Biosphere status, and an industry that deploys sustainable methods in it's fishing activities that is bounded by rules and regulations and explanations, and with FULL industry liaison / consultation" – Bill Henderson, MHK

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"As in Question 4 temporary no landing crab for 3 to 4 months [Jan-Mar/Apr], and temporary close areas [to mobile gear] for crab to fish, as a give-and-take, better in the long run" – Commercial stakeholder

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"I can't comment on technical and commercial issues. I have completed this survey as a diver who has seen the negative impact of ghost pots on multiple occasions. This subject is only touched on amongst so many other issues you've asked for feedback on. Yet surely the impact of this is considerable (not to say inhumane and wasteful) and should be given greater thought" – Non-commercial stakeholder

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"Days at sea restrictions would have to based on an average of a number of years to cover things like periods of illness when an annual day count might be anomalously low, maybe this is how it is done? There could be merit in this although it would probably lead to transferred pressure on other stocks. ITQ's ... as I understand it they tend to lead to the eventual transfer of most of the quota to a few large operators such has happened in the North Irish Sea Herring Fishery. This can't be good for a diverse fishery and would make new entry into the fishery very difficult due to the cost of quota? Turf and spatial management do work as evidenced by BNC. An issue with closing any areas is that if it's within the range of a small vessel they are unable to fish elsewhere. Fishing effort reduction would seem a better way in this case. Offshore closed areas have shown to work in the scallop fishery. These can be temporal or permanent but as the larger vessels have the ability to fish elsewhere they will not be too restrictive." – Commercial stakeholder

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"Spatial management and temporal management would I imagine be very effective at improving the fishery" – Commercial stakeholder

"Total allowable catch and seasonal closures" – Non-commercial stakeholder

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"No just better policing of berried hens and raise size limits with strict policing of licence pot allocations should be enough." – Non-commercial stakeholder

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"We would reiterate our desire to see a common approach across the Irish Sea when it comes to the management of these (and other) stocks. Decisions taken by one jurisdiction can (and do) have consequences in another jurisdiction. Differences in MCRS can cause confusion amongst fishermen and with enforcement agencies. Effort can be displaced further complicating management. The Irish Sea is a geographically small area and further subdivision of the area (TURF) will not assist the sustainable management of the fisheries there. Whilst there may be political attractions to pursuing such a policy, this approach needs to be avoided if all parties are sincerely interested in managing the ecosystem that is the Irish Sea." – UK PO

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"Going forward a days at sea track record, and definitely a quota on crab and lobster but not depending on license size or length as it would be unfair" – Commercial stakeholder

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"The crab fishery is getting later each year and the crab migrate over the scallop grounds where they are subject to additional mortality that benefits nobody. Some closed boxes would work well for 1) extending the season and economic benefits of the crab fishery and 2) reducing gear conflict. The scallops are still going to be there the next month" – Commercial stakeholder

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"There is a large crab fishery which is stopped when the scallop season starts on the 1<sup>st</sup> Nov. It is 2020 and yet we still allow one fishery to destroy another." – Commercial stakeholder

## **Part 4 – Conclusions**

Conclusions from responses will now be considered by the Department for future management options for crab and lobster fisheries in Isle of Man territorial waters, with the aim of aligning these fisheries with the priorities set out in the Future Fisheries Strategy<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.im/media/1349730/future-fisheries.pdf>