

Proposals for the Future Management of the Isle of Man Common Whelk Fishery



Isle of Man
Government

Reiltys Ellan Vannin

Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture

Rheynn Chymmyltaght, Bee as Eirinys

Executive Summary of Responses

June 2017

Executive summary of responses - Proposals for the Future Management of the Isle of Man Common Whelk Fishery

Introduction

This paper summarises the responses of the recent whelk consultation to inform the Policy and Strategy Committee of the consultation outcome.

The consultation ran for 6 weeks from 3rd April 2017 to 15th May 2017 and attracted 27 responses in total. 25 responses were received from local individuals or organisations and 2 received from off-island. 4 responses were returned with a nil response and 2 provided partial responses. The consultation sought views on various new management measures which included introducing licences to fish for whelks based on track record, vessel pot limits and an increase in the minimum landing size (MLS) for whelks.

Background

The whelk fishery between 3-12 nautical miles (nm) in the Isle of Man territorial sea is the last of the Isle of Man's five major local fisheries that does not require a species-specific license in order to fish for the species. There are currently effort and license restrictions within the 3 mile limit which allow a maximum number of 3600 pots to be fished by a limited number licensed vessels. However, no similar measures are currently in place between 3nm and 12nm when fishing for whelks.

Whelks are easily susceptible to over-exploitation due to recruitment and movement patterns. As a result there is potential, with the restrictions of all other major local fisheries and the challenges faced in the queen scallop fishery within the Irish Sea, that effort is displaced into the whelk fishery. This may pose a long term sustainability risk to this high value fishery; a concern which is shared by the local, and visiting, whelk vessels.

General response

The responses received were supportive of the proposals outlined in the consultation with only 2 of the 14 questions receiving less than 60% support towards the proposed management measures. There was strong support for introduction of licences for the whelk fishery within the territorial sea, issued on a reference period basis. The most commonly suggested reference period was the Departments preferred option of the 2016 calendar year which attracted 75% of respondents support. The remaining respondents suggested a 2015 year as this would reduce the number of eligible vessels.

The questions which attracted split responses related to the increase in the MLS and the amalgamation of management measures across both the 0-3nm and the 3-12nm limit. Forty one percent (41%) of respondents were against the increase in the MLS from 70mm to 80mm for whelks and suggested that if it must be increased, then an increase to only 75mm would be sufficient. The question relating to the amalgamation of management measures between both the 0-3nm and 3-12nm achieved a similar split of 58%/42% in favour of the proposal. Those against the change questioned the Department's ability to do this under the Fisheries Management Agreement.

Results - List of consultation questions and responses in percentage (unless otherwise stated).

Q1. Do you support the concept that the whelk fishery within the 3-12NM limit of the Isle of Man territorial sea should be a specific licenced fishery?

	Yes %	No %
Q1	100	0

Q2. Do you support the proposal that the whelk fishery should cap the number of licences issued within the territorial sea between 0-3NM, 3-12 NM or both?

	0-3 %	3-12 %	Both %
Q2	0	4	96

Q3. Do you support a cap on whelk fishing effort within the Isle of Man territorial sea as a measure to protect stocks within the 3-12NM limit?

	Yes %	No %
Q3	95	5

Q4. Do you support the concept that specific whelk fishing licences for the territorial sea should be issued by reference period for the 0-3NM, 3-12NM nm or both?

	0-3 %	3-12 %	Both %
Q4	0	10	90

Q5 The Department's preference is 1st January 2016 – 31st December 2016; please select which reference period you prefer?

	2016 year %	other %
Q5	75	25

Q6. Do you support a minimum number of days fished within the reference period, as above, as a means of determining eligibility for receipt of a whelk fishing licence for the 3-12NM limit and what do you think is a suitable number?

	Yes %	No %
Q6	95	5

Q7. Do you support the principle of a pot limit per vessel fishing for whelks in the territorial sea?

	0-3 %	3-12 %	Both %
Q7	0	0	100

Q8. If you supported the introduction of pot limits per vessel, how do you think the number of pots should be allocated?

	same number of pots per vessel %	based on vessel length %	Other %
Q8	76	5	19

Q9. Based on your answer above, please can you give details of how you believe a suitable number of pots per vessel should be calculated? E.g. X pots per vessel metre/X pots per kilowatt.

Q9	The most frequent suggestion was 1000 pots per vessel but also included other suggestions for calculating the pot allocations. It was suggested that whelk pot numbers should match allocated lobster pot licence numbers, however, not all fishermen hold lobster licences. It has also been suggested that there should be an allocation based on length and number of crew members and a maximum of 700 pots for smaller vessels.
-----------	--

Q10. Do you support an increase in the minimum landing size of whelks caught in the Isle of Man territorial sea to 80mm?

	Yes %	No %
Q10	59	41

Q11. Do you support the introduction of seasonal spatial and temporal closed areas within the territorial sea to protect whelk resources on the seabed through co-management with industry stakeholders?

	Yes %	No %
Q11	95	5

Q12. Do you support harmonising existing management measures proposed in this consultation document with the existing measures already in place between the 0-3NM limit?

	Yes %	No %
Q12	58	42

Q13. Should the need arise in the future, which of the following approaches would you support in relation to managing the whelk fishery within the Isle of Man territorial sea between 3-12NM ?

(Data is number of suggestions)

	effort based system	catch based system	closure based system	total pot limit	other
Q13	4	6	7	17	2

Q14. Do you have any other proposals or ideas which you feel should be considered within current or future policy in relation to the whelk fishery within the territorial sea? Please specify below.

Q14	Responses included questions on how the Department intends to police the new management measures and also regarding the introduction of deck logging equipment if trials prove successful. Suggestions were also received for greater data collection by fishery stakeholder.
------------	---