



Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes Review - Call for Information

Summary of Responses

July 2021

Title: Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes Review - 'Call for Information'

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About this document: This document has been developed to summarise the 'Call for Information' undertaken by the Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority ("the Authority") between the 24th of May and the 20th of July 2021 to gather additional evidence to support and inform a Review of Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes (MCRS) in the Southern IFC District ("the District"). The 'Call for Information' was open to all stakeholders and members of the community who have an interest in the management of fisheries in the District and was widely advertised via social media, posters, direct communication with stakeholder groups and by Officers on the ground.

Responses were provided via an online survey, email, and verbal communication with Officers. The responses received by the Authority have been summarised in this document. In determining the most suitable next steps, Members of the Authority will have access to the full package of responses received, together with any accompanying evidence.

Further Copies:

This document is available in electronic format from the Southern IFCA website at <https://www.southern-ifca.gov.uk/ongoing-reviews>

Alternatively, a hard copy can be obtained from the Southern IFCA Office:

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Authority have established priorities for the management of fishing activities within the District through an agreed five-year legislative forecast¹. Within this forecast it has been agreed that the Authority will formally review its Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes (MCRS) between 2021 and 2023. In May 2021 an 8-week 'Call for Information' was launched to gather additional evidence to support and inform the Review. Prior to the 'Call for Information' an extensive literature review was conducted to summarise best available evidence for the size at maturity for over [50 species](#) within the District. Best available evidence on reproductive biology, life history and the social and economic value of 25 species was also summarised in individual '[Species Profiles](#)'.

MCRSs, previously known as Minimum Landing Sizes or Minimum Legal Sizes prevent fish or shellfish below a set size from being removed from a fishery. Sizes are often set based upon the size at which 50% of the population reaches maturity. This ensures at least 50% of juveniles have an opportunity to sexually mature and reproduce at least once before potential capture. Additional factors such as market size, existing legislation, stock status and reproductive strategies can also influence whether and how a MCRS is set. MCRSs are recognised as an effective tool for the sustainable management of fisheries.

^[1] Southern IFCA Authority Meeting 21st March 2019.

1.2 Current Management

The MCRS Review 'Call for Information' focuses on sizes included within the Minimum Conservation Reference Size Byelaw and minimum sizes for cockle, mussels and oysters that sit within separate byelaws. A summary of all Southern IFCA byelaws associated with minimum sizes has been included in Table 1. Additional national measures may also apply within the District.

In June 2020, Southern IFCA made the Minimum Conservation Reference Size Byelaw which amalgamated sizes for species covered by (1) EU MCRS legislation, (2) existing Southern IFCA minimum size byelaws and (3) introduced new sizes for crawfish, grey mullet, and wrasse species. The creation of this Byelaw took place before the planned MCRS Review because urgent action was required to replace the powers lost in enforcing minimum sizes due to reforms in the Common Fisheries Policy. In July 2019, Council Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 of the European parliament established that MCRSs applied only in relation to commercial fishing and removed the IFCA's ability to enforce minimum sizes throughout the supply chain and for recreational fisheries for all species not listed under a Southern IFCA minimum size byelaw. The new [Minimum Conservation Reference Size Byelaw](#) was confirmed by the Secretary of State on the 28th July 2021.

Table 1 – Southern IFCA byelaws related to Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes		
Byelaw Name	Description	Further Info
Minimum Conservation Reference Size Byelaw	Prohibits the taking, retention on board, transshipping, landing, transporting, storing, selling, displaying, or offering for sale of specified marine organisms below specified sizes.	https://secure.toolkitfiles.co.uk/clients/25364/sitedata/Redesign/Byelaws/SIFCA-MCRS-Byelaw.pdf
Mussels	Prohibits the removal of any mussel less than 50mm in length from a fishery within the Southern IFC District. Exceptions apply for the relaying of mussels for cultivation purposes.	https://secure.toolkitfiles.co.uk/clients/25364/sitedata/Redesign/Byelaws/Mussels.pdf
Fishing for cockles	A person must not take from a fishery a cockle which will pass through a gauge having a square opening measuring 23.8mm along each side. Additional gear restrictions apply.	https://secure.toolkitfiles.co.uk/clients/25364/sitedata/Redesign/Byelaws/Fishing-for-Cockles-FINAL.pdf
Oysters	No person shall remove from a public or regulated fishery any oyster (other than Portuguese oysters and Pacific oysters) which will pass through a circular ring of 70mm in internal diameter.	https://secure.toolkitfiles.co.uk/clients/25364/sitedata/Redesign/Byelaws/Oysters.pdf

Note – Table 1 only shows Southern IFCA byelaws related to minimum conservation reference sizes. Other voluntary and national legislation relating to MCRSs do apply within the District.

2. MCRS Review ‘Call for information’

2.1 Call for Information

The Authority have agreed in its five-year legislative forecast that it will review all its MCRSs between 2021 and 2023. The first step in the review process is to undertake an evidence gathering exercise via a ‘Call for Information’. This period of engagement seeks to provide an opportunity for stakeholders and the local community to contribute evidence to the Review and helps to address any evidence gaps. The information received during this process will form an integral part of the evidence base, in combination with any other evidence gathered, and will enable the Authority to make informed decisions on future management options relating to MCRSs.

The MCRS Review ‘Call for Information’ took place over 8-weeks from Monday 24th May to Tuesday 20th July 2021. Instructions on how to participate in the Review were made available on the Southern IFCA website alongside evidence packages summarising (1) maturity literature reviews for more than 50 species in the District and (2) best available evidence on reproductive biology, life history and the social and economic value of 25 species in individual ‘Species Profiles’. Participants were able to respond to the ‘Call for Information’ in the following ways:

- Via an online questionnaire accessed via the Southern IFCA website
- In writing either by email or letter
- In person/ by phone to an Officer

The ‘Call for Information’ was widely advertised through the following methods:

- Via the Southern IFCA website and social media platforms
- Posters advertised in key areas within the District and provided to Charter boats to share with customers
- Directly via email to stakeholder groups including 47 Angling Trust member clubs within the District; the Recreational Angling Sector Group; South Coast Fishermen’s Council and individual Fishing Associations; Professional Boatmans Association; and Conservation sector groups such as the relevant Wildlife Trusts.
- In person whilst Officers were on the ground or attending relevant stakeholder meetings

2.2 Scope of MCRS Review ‘Call for Information’

The Review aims to (1) assess existing MCRS limits, which are currently applicable across the District, and (2), to consider whether there is a need to introduce MCRSs for additional species, which are not currently subject to a MCRS within the District. The ‘Call for Information’ was open to all stakeholders and members of the community who have an interest in the management of fisheries in the District. As a guide six questions were provided in the online questionnaire for participants to respond to:

1. **Southern IFCA have gathered best available evidence for size at maturity for over 50 species in the District (as seen [here](#)). Do you know of any additional studies or information that could be added to our evidence base? Please state species and provide details of the source.**
2. **Do you think the information in the individual Species Profiles is accurate? If not please provide comments (Profiles available [here](#))**

3. **The size at which 50% of a population reaches maturity is often used to help set a MCRS. Are there any other factors that should be considered? (e.g., economical/social). Please provide reasons why and specify species of interest.**
4. **Are there other fisheries management measures that you feel may compliment MCRSs in furthering the sustainability of a fishery in the District? Please state species and reasons why.**
5. **Are there any species that currently do not have a MCRS that you feel would benefit from having one? Please state species and reasons why. View Annex B for species listed in the IFCA's MCRS byelaw.**
6. **Please provide any additional evidence that you think will benefit the review process.**

2.3 Responses to the 'Call for Information'

In total 11 individuals responded to the 'Call for Information'. Of these 11 respondents, five completed the online questionnaire, three responded via email and two spoke directly to Officers who recorded verbal communications via the questionnaire. Respondents were reasonably representative of the different sector groups with responses received from two recreational anglers, four charter boats, three commercial fishers and two conservation non-governmental organisations.

The responses have all been logged by officers and are kept securely by Southern IFCA, this document will summarise both the verbal and written responses to provide the Authority with the information provided by participants.

3. Summary of Responses

3.1 Additional studies or information

Respondents were asked to share any studies regarding the maturity or life histories of species that had not been captured in the maturity literature reviews conducted by Southern IFCA. Several studies by the universities of Southampton, Glasgow and Aberdeen were cited for tope, smoothhounds and common skate as well as a report for black seabream which was undertaken by Southern IFCA in 2014. This report has been referenced in the existing black seabream 'Species Profile' on the Southern IFCA website. Further resources provided by respondents included an upcoming study on the size at maturity of edible brown crab in Berwickshire, which will be provided to Southern IFCA once it is published; a link to the NOAA website concerning Atlantic Pollock and the Shark Trust's resource for Shagreen ray (*Leucoraja fullonica*) to provide size at maturity values.

Information on the size at maturity of the American hard-shell clam (*Mercenaria mercenaria*) in aquaculture was provided whereby broodstock as small as 25mm were said to be regularly used in hatchery production to produce seed. It was also noted that virtually all the wild American hard-shell clam fisheries on the eastern seaboard of the USA enforce a MCRS of 50mm.

The Angling Trust's list of advised voluntary minimum sizes based on sizes at maturity for recreational anglers was also provided.

3.2 Species Profiles

Southern IFCA have produced [25 Species Profiles](#) for key species within the District. These Profiles contain best available evidence on reproductive biology, size at maturity, social and economic value, and associated management. Participants were asked to comment on the Profiles and of the 11 respondents, four provided no comments, one commented the Profiles were 'somewhat?' accurate without further explanation and five agreed they were accurate including two respondents citing the Profiles were 'excellent' and 'useful materials'.

One respondent highlighted an inaccuracy in the [black seabream profile](#) in which a reference was cited incorrectly in the reference list, this has since been corrected. An objection was also made to information in the [smooth-hound profile](#) that suggests, based on the published literature and advice from Cefas, that the common smooth-hound (*Mustelus mustelus*) is absent from UK waters. The respondent provided a Sea Fish Record document 'British Record (rod caught) Fish Committee 2020' where the shore-based record for the common smooth-hound is recorded as being captured at Hillhead Sea Wall, Hampshire in 2000. Details of appropriate contacts were also provided for Southern IFCA to request further information.

A second respondent found the Species Profiles useful but was concerned that Southern IFCA do not hold catch or effort data for a number of species and also highlighted that some of the life history information is based on 'fairly old information which may no longer be valid and may not be very specific to the District'. Therefore, they welcome the primary research being conducted for grey mullet, whelks and gilthead bream and suggested the inclusion of more local knowledge into the Profiles. They would also like to see Species Profiles for cuttlefish and scallop.

3.3 Factors to consider besides 50% size at maturity

Of the 11 responses received eight provided information on factors to consider, besides size at 50% maturity, when setting an MCRS. Three respondents stressed that 50% size at maturity should be considered as the minimum value for an MCRS and a figure in excess of 50% maturity would be more appropriate to provide long term benefits to both commercial and recreational fishers due to larger individuals generally exhibiting greater reproductive capacity. Suggested approaches for setting an MCRS above 50% maturity ranged from increasing all sizes by 10% to aiming for sizes that represent 100%+ maturity.

The remaining responses have been categorised by the suggested factors raised by respondents:

Market value

Four respondents highlighted that the market value and ability to sell at market should be considered as some species at their current MCRS either have little value at market or are unsellable. Cited species included dover sole, black bream, and brown/edible crab although it was noted that there may be objections to increasing the size of brown crab as they tend to be smaller inside the 6nm limit, but the respondent also stated that all crab caught inshore were a good size 30 years ago.

One respondent suggested the consideration of reducing the MCRS for American hard-shell clams from 63mm to 50mm due to the current size being far in excess of sexual maturity, highlighting that the Southern IFCA literature review shows 100% maturity is reached by 50mm. If the MCRS was reduced to 50mm the respondent stated that there would be a strong market and an increased price for these smaller clams, which would benefit fishers.

Gear type

One respondent mentioned the need to consider gear types providing an example of mesh sizes and the increased risk of discards when using a smaller mesh size in combination with an increased MCRS.

Species role in the ecosystem

One respondent emphasised the importance of the common whelk's (*Buccinum undatum*) role in the ecosystem particularly the species link to the large hermit crab (*Pagurus bernhardus*). The respondent explained that large hermit crabs rely upon the empty shells of the common whelk as they are the largest gastropod in our waters however, the number of empty shells and large shells available to the large hermit crab has greatly reduced due to the harvesting of whelks. It was highlighted that the importance of the large hermit crab is unknown, but they may form an important part of the diet for smoothhound sharks. The respondent would welcome some investigation into the impact of the whelk fishery on hermit crabs.

Align with voluntary/neighbouring MCRSs

Two respondents highlighted the voluntary sizes of charter boats in the District are often higher than Southern IFCA's MCRSs. They recommended that Southern IFCA align their sizes with these voluntary sizes that have been developed to promote sustainable fishing in the Charter industry (table 2). An additional respondent also provided a document which cited the size of sexual maturity for 70 species based on best available evidence as reviewed by the [Angling Trust](#). The document also provided recommended MCRSs based on this evidence and comparisons to the maximum IFCA MCRS.

Two respondents referred to the need for the sizes of four species to be increased to align with the neighbouring Devon and Severn IFCA. The species and sizes outlined are included in table 3 below.

Species	Southern IFCA	Devon & Severn IFCA
Brown/edible crab (<i>Cancer pagurus</i>)	140mm	Female 150mm Male 160mm
Lobster (<i>Hommarus gammarus</i>)	87mm	90mm
Spinous spider crab (<i>Maja squinado</i>)	Male 130mm Female 120mm	Male 130mm Female 130mm
Whelk (<i>Buccinum undatum</i>)	45mm	65mm

Species identification

One response focused on grey mullet and the difficulty in identifying between the three species. The respondent highlighted that thick-lipped grey mullet (*Chelon labrosus*) often have a yellow mark on their gill covers and are easily misidentified as golden grey mullet (*Chelon aurata*) therefore it would make sense if the MCRS for all three species was the same.

Historical size at maturity

One respondent highlighted the need to recognise species that have developed reduced sizes at maturity over time due to the over exploitation of larger specimens in a stock. The removal of larger individuals can result in a reduction in the average size at maturity for a stock because only smaller specimens are left. The respondent provided cod as an example whereby the average size of cod in the North Sea stocks has decreased significantly from historical sizes. The respondent went on to state that it is likely that maturity sizes recorded for cod in studies that are more than 15 years old are likely to be somewhat reduced by now and a reduction in the MCRS should be avoided as it would promote a continued reduction in size.

Reproductive cycle

One respondent highlighted the fact that Conger eels only mature/breed when they have left UK waters therefore it is not appropriate to set a local MCRS for them based on maturity. However, there is a clear need to adopt some form of conservation and voluntary sizes adopted by the Angling Trust would provide an appropriate base to work from. Suggested sizes included in table 2.

3.4 Complimentary fisheries management measures

Seven respondents suggested management measures to compliment MCRSs in furthering the sustainability of fisheries in the District. Responses have been categorised by measure type below:

Discards

One respondent stated that discards need to be re-appraised

Netting restrictions

One respondent stated that the National Mullet Club support a ban of all netting of any kind in tidal rivers and their estuaries to protect grey mullet and emphasised that grey mullet numbers have decreased alarmingly in recent years because they are easy to net in estuaries and around marinas and boat moorings. A second respondent would like to see a ban on 'wreck netting' as they stated the practice causes pollution in the form of lost nets and causes ghost fishing.

Inshore towed gear restrictions

One respondent suggested towed gear should be banned within at least 3 miles (preferably 12 miles) of the shore as it is believed that this would allow the seabed environment to recover and thereby stocks improve.

Bag limits

One respondent supports the introduction of bag limits for certain species as they currently recommend a voluntary bag limit for black bream on their vessel.

Escape gaps

The introduction of mandatory escape gaps (84x46mm) for crab and lobster to replace the voluntary measures in place and ensure parity across the sector was suggested by one respondent.

Catch reporting

One respondent thought that the introduction of a catch reporting system for crab would be beneficial to help better understand landings from the recreational fishery and to identify hotspots of activity.

Pot limits

Pot limits were suggested by one respondent including a whelk pot limit of 600 for the District as a whole with a further limit to 500 pots within the Lyme Bay Fisheries and Conservation Reserve to maintain the low levels of fishing within the protected area.

Maximum landing sizes

Two respondents suggested maximum landing sizes could be beneficial for certain species with one respondent recommending a maximum landing size of 145mm for female lobster to increase the reproductive potential of the stock.

Prohibitions

One respondent would like to see a District ban on retaining crawfish both recreationally and commercially to protect the species from local collapse. Two further respondents highlighted the management of wrasse species with one respondent suggesting the requirement to return cuckoo wrasse alive under the Live Wrasse Fishery Guidance should be extended to the entire District. The second respondent emphasised the Recreational Angling Sector's stance against the wholesale harvesting of wrasse species and would support a restriction of wrasse harvesting via an MCRS or a complete prohibition.

Catch per unit effort (CPUE)

One respondent emphasised the need for a good understanding of catch per unit effort (CPUE) to help indicate how successful the MCRS approach is and whether additional management measures are required. Measures could include restrictions in effort if the CPUE is too low and/or to allow a reserve of larger breeding individuals to build up.

3.5 Additional species to consider

Participants were asked whether there are any species currently without a MCRS within the Southern IFC District that would benefit from the introduction of one. Of the 11 respondents, eight provided comments on additional species. One respondent stated additional MCRSs should not be introduced without further consideration whilst a second respondent suggested any species that is robust enough to survive capture and return would benefit from inclusion in the MCRS byelaw. Two respondents recommended that species specifically targeted by the recreational sector should be given the same consideration as commercial species when setting MCRSs.

Additional species suggested included: Gilthead bream with one participant stating it should be the same size as black bream; bull huss; all gurnard species; smoothhound; periwinkles and cuttlefish. It was recommended that research is conducted to explore an appropriate MCRS for cuttlefish to reduce the number of juveniles targeted. Additional suggested complimentary measures to implement in combination with an MCRS included a pot limit of 300 pots per vessel in line with Sussex IFCA and the extension of cuttlefish guidance applied within Lyme Bay to the whole of the District – leave pots and traps encrusted with cuttlefish eggs in the sea until they have washed off/hatched. The respondent also suggested the introduction of temporal limits on cuttlefish landings for all gear types e.g. between August/September and October including beyond 6nm as recommended by MRAG (Marine Resources Assessment Group) and spatial restrictions for specific gear types to protect known concentrations of juvenile stocks. The respondent advised that these measures should be considered in tandem with measures to control fishing effort beyond 6nm by the relevant authorities.

Further species suggested for consideration within the MCRS byelaw that are not currently listed in the byelaw due to their inclusion in separate byelaws or national legislation included: cockles, oysters, mussels, haddock, hake, herring, ling, and megrim.

One respondent highlighted concern in introducing MCRSs for species that are not currently commonly landed such as cuckoo wrasse and large sharks as the inclusion in a byelaw could promote the removal of these species when deemed over a certain size. They recommended it would be better to encourage live return. Whereas a second participant cited an MCRS for large shark species such as porbeagle and thresher shark should be considered due to the recreational fisheries that exist in the District.

3.6 Further comments

Respondents suggested sizes for several species throughout their responses. Table 2 provides a summary of the species, suggested sizes and reasons why if given. One respondent stated that all sizes should be increased but especially for flatfish and skate and ray species as they are currently too small. Whilst a second respondent recommended a species-specific approach to MCRSs for skates and rays or a general MCRS of 50cm as the current MCRS is less than 50% size at maturity for blonde rays, small-eyed ray, spotted and thornback ray. A third respondent suggested the new MCRS byelaw should also refer to specific measures that prohibit the retention of some species such as tope, monkfish (*Squatina squatina*), European eel, bluefin tuna, shad etc.

Table 2. Suggested Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes (MCRS) for marine species in the Southern IFC District provided by respondents to Southern IFCA's MCRS 'Call for Information'		
Species	Suggested MCRS	Reason
American hard-shell clam (<i>Mercenaria mercenaria</i>)	50mm	Decrease the MCRS from 63mm to 50mm because the current MCRS is in excess of 100% maturity and there would be a strong market for smaller clams.
Bass (<i>Dicentrarchus labrax</i>)	45cm	Bring in line with respondents voluntary Charter size
Black bream (<i>Spondyliosoma cantharus</i>)	≥30cm	Current 23cm is in line with 50% maturity but respondent states it is too small
	28cm	Bring in line with respondents voluntary Charter size
Brill (<i>Scophthalmus rhombus</i>)	≥42cm	Charter boats in Weymouth operate a 42cm limit for this species which is thought to be more appropriate than the current MCRS
	34cm	Bring in line with respondents voluntary Charter size
Brown/edible crab (<i>Cancer pagurus</i>)	150mm (Female) 160mm (Male)	In line with Devon & Severn IFCA and Cornwall IFCA
Cod (<i>Gadus morhua</i>)	≥ 50cm	Cod catches have collapsed in the past few years, a minimum size below 50% maturity is wrong
	40cm	Bring in line with respondents voluntary Charter size
Conger eel (<i>Conger conger</i>)	65cm/75cm	Bring in line with respondents voluntary Charter size
	100cm	The Angling Trust promote a voluntary size of 3 feet for shore caught Conger eels and 4 feet for boat caught. The respondent suggested due to the low commercial value of small specimens a rounded 100cm could be acceptable for all.
Grey mullet spp. (<i>Chelon spp.</i>)	47cm	Respondent stated that the National Mullet Club would like to see a MCRS of 47cm for all three species of grey mullet
Lobster (<i>Homarus gammarus</i>)	90mm	In line with Devon & Severn IFCA and Cornwall IFCA
Mackerel (<i>Scomber scombrus</i>) and Horse mackerel (<i>Trachurus trachurus</i>)	At least 50% maturity	Both mackerel and horse mackerel numbers have declined
	22cm	Bring in line with respondents voluntary Charter size
Plaice (<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>)	28cm	Bring in line with respondents voluntary Charter size
Pollock (<i>Pollachius pollachius</i>)	≥40cm	n/a
Red mullet (<i>Mullus surmuletus</i>)	20cm	Bring in line with respondents voluntary Charter size
Sole (<i>Solea solea</i>)	27cm	Bring in line with respondents voluntary Charter size
Spinous spider crab (<i>Maja spp.</i>)	130mm (female)	In line with Devon & Severn IFCA
Turbot (<i>Scophthalmus maximus</i>)	40cm/42cm	Bring in line with voluntary Charter size
	≥42cm	Charter boats in Weymouth operate a 42cm limit for this species which is more appropriate than the current MCRS
Whelk (<i>Buccinum undatum</i>)	≥65mm	In line with Devon & Severn IFCA (x2 responses)

4. Other consultations

4.1 Pot & trap fisheries 'Call for Information'

In 2019 Southern IFCA undertook a '[Call for Information](#)' to help inform the management of pot and trap fisheries within the District. Views on the use of minimum and maximum conservation reference sizes for pot and trap species were captured and are summarised below:

Crab and lobster

Four respondents were not in favour of any change to the MCRS for either species. Four fishers supported an increase in lobster landing size, suggesting an incremental increase. Two fishers

suggested a 120mm maximum landing size for female lobsters. One fisher suggested a 1mm per year increase up to a threshold of 90mm – the rationale underpinning this suggestion was that currently the lobster fishery is at its maximum potential (written in 2019), with few larger lobsters seen. Three respondents suggested a need to increase the MCRS for brown/edible crab by 10mm.

Whelk

Three of eight respondents supported an increase in the whelk MCRS. Of these, one fisher would like to see research undertaken to investigate the relationship between whelk height and width at sexual maturity. A second fisher suggested the MCRS should be based upon width rather than length. Of the five respondents who did not believe that an increase in MCRS was required, one stated that given the current composition of whelks (large numbers of small), an increase in the MCRS would make the fishery unviable.

Cuttlefish

Two participants suggested that cuttlefish require a MCRS to limit trawls taking small animals.

4.2 Net fishing management consultation

In 2019 Southern IFCA also conducted a public consultation on net fishing management for estuaries, harbours and piers within the District. Part of the consultation proposed five options for consideration regarding the MCRS of grey mullet. Since the consultation took place the size of grey mullet has increased from 30cm for all three species to 42cm for thick-lipped and thin-lipped grey mullet and 36cm for golden grey mullet with the intention to further review sizes during the Southern IFCA MCRS Review. In the 2019 netting consultation 76 responses were received in reference to the MCRS of grey mullet species. 32 of the 76 respondents supported an increase of all three species of grey mullet to 47cm. Several of these respondents also stated they would like to see a slot size introduced for grey mullet to protect larger spawning individuals. 14 respondents supported species specific sizes as they stated it is relatively easy to distinguish between the different species. Specific sizes was also supported as there was concern that increasing the size to 42cm or 47cm for all species would result in an increase in the number of thick-lipped grey mullet being removed from the fishery as this species is more likely to reach these larger sizes. There were however respondents who felt that species specific minimum sizes would not work as they felt that fish identification would be too difficult and therefore make any regulation more difficult to enforce. A few respondents outlined that consideration should be given to increasing the size in small stages as a large increase in one go would result in a large drop in income for fishers. For more details of responses received during the netting consultation in regards to grey mullet minimum sizes refer to the Summary of Responses [here](#).

5. Next Steps

This document will be presented to Southern IFCA's Technical Advisory Committee on 26th August 2021 and thereafter made available on the Authority's website.

It is the intention for select Members of the Authority to attend a Working Group in order to review all of the best available evidence gathered through the comprehensive maturity literature reviews and the 'Call for Information'. Based on the best available evidence, the Working Group will then report to the Technical Advisory Committee, as to whether there is a need, based on the best available evidence, to draft new MCRS measures within the District.

For any further information on the progress of this workstream please contact: enquiries@southern-ifca.gov.uk