



Minimum Conservation Reference Size Byelaw

Formal Consultation - Frequently Asked Questions

Closing Date: 24th July 2020

Q. Why has this byelaw been made?

A. The application of Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes (MCRS) is an effective way to sustainably manage fisheries. The byelaw has been made to align with the EU's reforms to the Common Fisheries Policy, without it there would be regulatory shortfalls in the district's fisheries.

Q. What changes have been made to existing regulations?

A. The byelaw amalgamates and adopts existing Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes for fish and shellfish species relevant to the Southern IFCA district. This includes sizes that already exist as standalone Southern IFCA byelaws and EU minimum sizes. As a consequence, old byelaws will be revoked to avoid duplication of legislation.

Q. Does the byelaw introduce any MCRS for new species?

A. Yes. A MCRS has been introduced for four wrasse species; ballan wrasse (18cm), rock cook wrasse (12cm), goldsinny wrasse (12cm) and corkwing wrasse (14cm). The relevant sizes have been adopted from the Authority's Wrasse Fishery Guidance measures and provide further management for the district's live wrasse fishery.

Q. Does the byelaw increase the MCRS for any species?

A. Yes. The byelaw increases the MCRS for crawfish from 95mm to 110mm to align with other IFCA districts in the South-West and to hopefully support the establishment of a sustainable crawfish population in the region. The MCRS for thick-lipped grey mullet and thin-lipped grey mullet is increased from 30cm to 42cm and for golden grey mullet from 30cm to 36cm.

Q. Why have the MCRS for grey mullet been increased?

A. Although the grey mullet stock is believed to be transient across fisheries boundaries, a high percentage of exploitation takes place within the inshore region, particularly within the Southern IFCA district. Research suggests that the size of maturity for grey mullet species, particularly thick-lipped grey mullet and thin-lipped grey mullet, is significantly greater than 30cm and these new MCRS will enhance the sustainability of these populations.

Q. The new measures will seriously impact my income through loss of earnings. Has this been considered?

A. Grey mullet are a valuable species to commercial and recreational fishers in the Southern IFCA district, this is why it is important that the Authority takes steps to protect the sustainability of this fishery. The byelaw is accompanied by an Impact Assessment which considers the costs and benefits of the new regulation. Data suggests that the new measures will lead to a loss of income for commercial fishers in the region of £12,000 per year for the first year through loss of catch. It is thought that the benefits of a more sustainable grey mullet fishery will outweigh the initial costs incurred through a greater number of larger fish which have a higher reproductive output. These fish will also be of greater market value to commercial fishers and will provide a greater social and economic value to recreational fishers.

Q. I do not believe that the evidence is sufficient to support the new grey mullet MCRS. Why hasn't a different MCRS been applied?

A. Grey mullet is not a widely researched species and, as a consequence, there are limited data relating to the biology and, in particular, size of sexual maturity for grey mullet species in English waters. It would be inaccurate to base management decisions on research carried out in warmer waters, such as in Mediterranean populations. Based on the data available, the Authority is confident that the new minimum sizes are equal to or greater than the size of maturity for both male and female golden grey mullet and thin-lipped grey mullet, as well as female thick-lipped grey mullet. The Authority will undertake additional research to build upon this existing evidence base and, if necessary, will make additional regulatory changes through its scheduled MCRS review between 2021 and 2023.

Q. I do not believe that the minimum sizes for species in the byelaw are appropriate. Why have the majority of these not been changed?

A. The Authority has committed to a full review of minimum conservation reference sizes between 2021 and 2023. The Authority is aware that changes to existing minimum sizes may increase the sustainability of the district's fisheries. This review will provide the opportunity to consider the suitability of existing minimum sizes and the process will be evidence-led, based on the best-available data. Where evidence gaps exist, the Authority will consider whether additional research could support management decisions.

Q. Why haven't more minimum sizes been changed or introduced in this new byelaw?

A. The primary focus of this byelaw is to urgently address regulatory gaps which have the potential to threaten the sustainability of the district's fisheries. The review and alteration of existing minimum sizes, if done correctly, will take additional time and resources to ensure that the best-available evidence is considered and the community is adequately consulted. This delay would potentially place the district's fisheries at unnecessary risk to over-exploitation. The Authority has therefore made a commitment to undertake a full and proper MCRS review between 2021 and 2023.

Q. Who does this byelaw apply to?

A. The minimum sizes in this byelaw apply to all fishery participants in the Southern IFCA district and throughout the onward supply chain.

Q. When do these regulations come into force?

A. The byelaw has been made by the Southern IFCA and, under Defra guidance, is now subject to a period of formal consultation. Following the conclusion of this formal consultation on 24th July 2020 the Authority will respond and, where appropriate, liaise with objectors with a view to resolving the objection prior to submitting the final byelaw to the MMO for confirmation by the Secretary of State. The MMO will make final quality assurance checks and assess the evidence prior to recommending the byelaw for confirmation by the Secretary of State. Any byelaw will only come into force following confirmation by the Secretary of State.

Q. How can I provide my views on this byelaw?

A. Any person wishing to respond to the formal consultation on the byelaw must write to the Marine Management Organisation at:

Marine Conservation and Enforcement Team, Marine Management Organisation, Lancaster House, Hampshire Court, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE4 7YH
(or IFCAbyelaws@marinemanagement.org.uk)

A copy of this response must also be sent to Southern IFCA at:

Southern IFCA, Unit 3, Holes Bay Park, Sterte Avenue West, Poole, Dorset BH15 2AA
(or enquiries@southern-ifca.gov.uk).

Responses must be received no later than the 24th July 2020.

Q. How can I participate in the future MCRS review?

A. The Authority welcomes and encourages community engagement and input throughout the byelaw making process. Prior to any byelaw being made community consultation will be informal and will directly inform the development of management measures. At the beginning of the process the Authority will publish a 'Call for Information' providing an opportunity for the community to submit evidence into the review. Additional, more tailored, consultation may follow this as management measures are refined. All details of public consultations are posted on the Authority's website and are shared through its social media platforms.