

## **Consultation on New Controls in the Queen Scallop Fishery in ICES Divisions VIa and VIIa**

**Consultation undertaken by Scottish Government on behalf of the 5 Devolved Administrations, closed 3 January 2017.**

**Question 1 - Do you support increasing the MCRS of queen scallops in ICES Divisions VIa and VIIa?**

Yes

**Please expand on your answer**

Natural Resources Wales supports the consultation proposal to increase the minimum conservation reference size for queen scallops in the Irish Sea. Currently, the minimum conservation reference is 40mm.

The evidence presented as part of the consultation suggests that queen scallops, due to different growth rates, become sexually mature between 22 – 45mm. Increasing the minimum conservation reference size beyond the upper limit of sexual maturity will allow all queen scallops to become sexually mature and provide additional opportunities for scallops to reproduce, with queen scallops being more sexually fecund the older and larger they become.

**Question 2 - If YES, what size should the MCRS be increased to?**

50 mm 55 mm 60 mm

**Please expand on your answer**

Based on evidence, the minimum conservation reference size for queen scallops should not be below 45mm.

It is for managers to decide on the additional rationales presented within the consultation e.g. meat yield, for choosing either 50mm, 55mm or 60mm.

**Question 3 - What impacts would increasing the MCRS of queen scallops have on your business? What would the likely costs be?**

None

**Question 4 - Do you support an annual spawning closure for queen scallops in ICES divisions VIa and VIIa?**

Yes

**Please expand on your answer**

Natural Resources Wales supports the principle of closing the queen scallop fishery while stocks are spawning. This measure will protect the queen scallops and allow them to spawn before potentially being fished. This is consistent with the management measures adopted for the king scallop fishery throughout the UK Devolved Administrations.

The evidence presented suggests there are multiple spawning periods throughout the year with the spring spawning being the most significant in terms of juvenile settlements.

**Question 5 - If YES, which of the following closure options is preferred? Note: all of the following have a valid scientific basis, but differ primarily in their extended biological (positive effect) and economic effects (negative effect) (option b), or complexity of implementation (option c).**

- a) One annual closure between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 31<sup>st</sup> May (i.e. same as statutory Isle of Man Closure).
- b) One annual closure between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 30<sup>th</sup> June.
- c) One annual flexible closure between March and June, with specific timing determined by the fisheries management agencies, in consultation with industry representatives, and with reference to biological and commercial considerations.

**Please expand on your answer**

Option C allows the management of the queen scallop fishery to be flexible and responsive to the current biological and environmental conditions.

Natural Resources suggest that the beginning and end dates are not specified within legislation but rather an adaptive management mechanism is produced that allows Devolved Administrations to close the fishery to protect spawning aggregations of scallops as necessary throughout the year.

**Question 6 - Should fishery closures be implemented on a voluntary or a compulsory basis (statute or licence condition)?**

Compulsory

**Please expand on your answer**

Compulsory, transparent and flexible legislation should be adopted that applies equitably to all UK vessels prosecuting the queen scallop fishery in the Irish Sea.

**Question 7 - Do you support the introduction of entry restrictions to the UK queen scallop fishery?**

Yes

**Please expand on your answer**

Natural Resources Wales supports the principle of entry restrictions on vessels intending to prosecute the UK queen scallop fishery in the Irish Sea.

Entry restrictions are a method of controlling effort within the fishery through limiting the number of vessels able to participate, this should then contribute to limiting the environmental footprint of the fishery as a whole.

**Question 8 - Do you support the introduction of additional data collection as a condition of receiving a queen scallop entitlement?**

Yes

**Please expand on your answer**

Natural Resources Wales considers additional data collection essential. This will enable the Devolved Administrations to deliver informed environmental assessments and natural resource management of the fishery.

**Question 9 - What is the preferred 3-year reference period for determining eligibility for the fishery in future? (see Figure 4)**

- a) 2013-2015 - would tend to maintain current vessel numbers
- b) 2012-2014 - would tend to maintain current vessel numbers
- c) 2011-2013 - would tend to maintain current vessel numbers
- d) 2010-2012 - would tend to reduce current vessel numbers

**Please expand on your answer**

This is for managers to decide.

**Question 10 - What is the preferred reference point for 'reported landings quantity' during the 3-year reference period?**

- a) Up to one tonne landed during the 3 years would qualify.
- b) Minimum of one tonne landed during the 3 years would qualify.
- c) Minimum of 5 tonnes landed during the 3 years would qualify.
- d) Minimum of 10 tonnes landed during the 3 years would qualify.
- e) NONE - prefer use of Option 2 (landing frequency) or 3 (number of days of targeted fishing activity).

**Please expand on your answer**

This is for managers to decide.

**Question 11 - What is the preferred reference point for 'landing frequency' during the 3-year reference period?**

- a) Any recorded landing during the 3 years would qualify.
- b) Between 10 and 20 landings over the 3-year period would qualify.

- c) Between 20 and 30 landings over the 3-year period would qualify.
- d) Between 30 and 50 landings over the 3-year period would qualify.
- e) More than 50 landings over the 3-year period required to qualify.
- f) NONE - prefer use of Option 1 (landings quantity) or 3 (number of days of targeted fishing activity).

**Please expand on your answer**

This is for managers to decide.

**Question 12 - What is the preferred reference point for 'number of days at sea' of targeted fishing activity during the 3-year reference?**

- a) Any recorded days at sea during the 3 years would qualify.
- b) Between 10 and 20 days at sea during the 3 years would qualify.
- c) Between 20 and 30 days at sea during the 3 years would qualify.
- d) Between 30 and 50 days at sea during the 3 years would qualify.
- e) More than 50 days at sea during the 3 years would qualify.
- f) NONE - prefer use of Option 1 (landings quantity) or 2 (landing frequency)

**Please expand on your answer**

This is for managers to decide.

**Question 13 - Do you agree that effort controls should be introduced in the queen scallop fishery?**

Yes

**Please expand on your answer**

Natural Resources Wales supports the principle of controlling effort within the queen scallop fishery as a method to limit environmental impacts.

Effort control should be considered in terms of the total amount of gear that can be fished within a given time period.

We have already advised in our response to Proposal 3 (Question 7) that entry restrictions act as a method to help control the number of vessels operating within the fishery. Devolved Administrations should also consider limiting the amount of gear individual vessels can use in combination with time restrictions. This would have the effect of limiting the total amount of effort within the Irish Sea queen scallops fishery.

**Question 14 - If yes, which of the following is preferred for development as a future effort management option in the queen scallop fishery?**

- a) Days at sea scheme
- b) Temporal fishing activity restriction, e.g. weekend/overnight restrictions

**Please expand on your answer**

This is for managers to decide

**Question 15 - Do you support the principle of developing a long-term quota system for the queen scallop fishery?**

Yes

**Please expand on your answer**

Currently, there are no EU or UK quota allocations for queen scallops. Natural Resources Wales supports the proposed introduction of a UK quota system for the queen scallop fishery.

Any quota allocation should be underpinned by an accurate annual stock assessment and contribute towards the sustainable management of the natural resource.

**Question 16 - Do you support the principle of developing spatial management options (closed areas) for the queen scallop fishery?**

Yes

**Please expand on your answer**

Natural Resources Wales supports the principle of adopting spatial management measures for the queen scallop fishery. This would protect stocks and the wider marine environment. For example, closing areas containing highly sensitive Modiolus beds from scallop fishing. Queen scallops are associated with Modiolus beds, so protecting the Modiolus beds would also help to enhance the queen scallop fishery.

These measures should be supported by the introduction of a mechanism to close an area of the fishery at short notice. This would allow Devolved Administrations to react to any environmental constraints that may arise in the future.

**Question 17 - Do you support the principle of developing equivalent, gear specific management options for the queen scallop fishery?**

Yes

**Please expand on your answer**

Natural Resources Wales supports the principle of developing equivalent, gear-specific management options for the queen scallop fishery including but not limited to; gear, vessel size and engine power restrictions

Natural Resources Wales would encourage the Devolved Administrations to consider a range of fishery management methods and their impacts when considering the sustainable development and natural resource management of the queen scallop fishery.