



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Fisheries: UK Celtic Sea *Nephrops*- directed fisheries technical measures

July 2021

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We work closely with our 33 agencies and arm's length bodies on our ambition to make our air purer, our water cleaner, our land greener and our food more sustainable. Our mission is to restore and enhance the environment for the next generation, and to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

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or

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1. Your opportunity to contribute

This is an opportunity for you to help shape how we manage and improve the selectivity and management of fisheries targeting *Nephrops*, also known as Norway lobster or langoustine, in UK waters of the Celtic Sea in 2021 and beyond.

About you

First name:

Last name:

Organisation (if applicable):

Are you responding formally on behalf of this organisation? (Yes/No)

Postal address:

Email address:

Telephone number:

Do you wish for your name to be published alongside your response in any documents we make available to the general public as a result of this call? (Yes/No)

Summary of questions

- Q1. Please briefly describe your interest in this consultation.**
- Q2. What are your views on the proposed changes to the selectivity device options in proposed amendment 1?**
- Q3. Are there any additional selectivity device options for *Nephrops*-directed fisheries we should consider in proposed amendment 1?**
- Q4. What are your views on the proposed prohibited use and carriage of strengthening bags for *Nephrops*-directed fisheries in proposed amendment 2?**
- Q5. What are your views on increasing the percentage catch composition threshold to define *Nephrops*-directed fisheries in the Celtic Sea in proposed amendment 3?**
- Q6. What percentage do you think would be appropriate (15%, 30% or other), and why?**

- Q7. Do you have any other points on the management of *Nephrops*-directed fisheries in the Celtic Sea which you would like to raise?**
- Q8. Do you feel this consultation has allowed you to effectively share your views on technical measures for UK Celtic Sea *Nephrops*-directed fisheries (yes/no)? Can you suggest any further ways we could engage you on the issues raised in the consultation?**

How to respond

To submit your response, please complete the questionnaire available from the Citizen Space website at the following link:

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/marine-and-fisheries/nephrops-celtic-sea>

Alternatively, you can send us your comments by post to:

Fisheries: UK Celtic Sea *Nephrops*-directed fisheries technical measures
Consultation Coordinator, Defra
2nd Floor
Foss House
Kings Pool
1-2 Peasholme Green
York
YO1 7PX

Or directly to our dedicated email account: nephrops.consultation@defra.gov.uk

Please let us have your comments by **Friday 13th August 2021**.

We will share responses received with Welsh Government.

2. Confidentiality and data protection information

1. A summary of responses to this consultation will be published on the Government website at: www.gov.uk/defra. An annex to the consultation summary will list all organisations that responded but will not include personal names, addresses or other contact details.

1.1 Defra may publish the content of your response to this consultation to make it available to the public without your personal name and private contact details (e.g. home address, email address, etc).

1.2 If you click on 'Yes' in response to the question asking if you would like anything in your response to be kept confidential, you are asked to state clearly what information you would like to be kept as confidential and explain your reasons for confidentiality. The reason for this is that information in responses to this consultation may be subject to release to the public or other parties in accordance with the access to information law (these are primarily the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs), the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA)). We have obligations, mainly under the EIRs, FOIA and DPA, to disclose information to particular recipients or to the public in certain circumstances. In view of this, your explanation of your reasons for requesting confidentiality for all or part of your response would help us balance these obligations for disclosure against any obligation of confidentiality. If we receive a request for the information that you have provided in your response to this consultation, we will take full account of your reasons for requesting confidentiality of your response, but we cannot guarantee that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances.

1.3 If you click on 'No' in response to the question asking if you would like anything in your response to be kept confidential, we will be able to release the content of your response to the public, but we won't make your personal name and private contact details publicly available.

1.4 There may be occasions when Defra will share the information you provide in response to the consultation, including any personal data with external analysts. This is for the purposes of consultation response analysis and provision of a report of the summary of responses only.

1.5 This consultation is being conducted in line with the Cabinet Office "Consultation Principles" and be found at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>.

1.6 Please find our latest privacy notice uploaded as a related document alongside our consultation document.

1.7 If you have any comments or complaints about the consultation process, please address them to:

Fisheries: UK Celtic Sea *Nephrops*-directed fisheries technical measures
Consultation Coordinator, Defra
2nd Floor, Foss House, Kings Pool,
1-2 Peasholme Green, York, YO1 7PX

Or email: consultation.coordinator@defra.gov.uk

3. Introduction

The government's objectives in the Celtic Sea mixed fishery are to improve selectivity in the fishery as a whole, help enable depleted stocks such as cod and whiting to recover, and to enable the continuation of a sustainable fishery. Following engagement with industry, the UK developed a package of technical measures for otter trawl and bottom seine vessels in UK waters. These measures are expected to be introduced on 5 September 2021¹. The alterations to the technical measures in the Celtic Sea planned for September do not affect *Nephrops*-directed fisheries. This consultation is about a possible further set of technical measures that does affect vessels targeting *Nephrops*.

This consultation focusses on possible changes to technical measures relevant to vessels targeting *Nephrops*, also known as Norway lobster or langoustine, in UK waters in the Celtic Sea. We would like to invite your views and responses in relation to the proposed changes and we will consider these in detail in deciding whether to implement changes to existing measures and if so, what the changes should be. We anticipate that amendments to these measures will be implemented later this year.

Q1. Please briefly describe your interest in this consultation.

We are working closely with Welsh Government on this, as the technical measures are relevant to both the English and Welsh zones of British Fishery limits in the Celtic Sea. We will share the responses to this consultation with them, as well as keeping Scottish Government and Northern Ireland Executive informed.

This consultation will run for 4 weeks from 16 July to 13 August 2021.

4. Current measures under review

The following technical measures, applied to *Nephrops*-directed fisheries in the Celtic Sea area in UK waters², are under review:

“By way of derogation from baseline measures within UK waters of the Celtic Sea Protection Zone area (7f, 7g, the part of 7h North of latitude 49° 30' North and the part of 7j North of latitude 49° 30' North and East of longitude 11° West, see Fig.1) vessels

¹ MMO 2020 [New Fisheries Technical Measures](#)

² These measures are currently applied through legislation (retained EU regulation 2019/2239) but as of 5 September 2021 will be applied through vessel licence conditions; this follows from other changes to retained EU law to allow selectivity improvements in the Celtic Sea otter trawl and bottom seine fisheries to be applied in UK waters.

operating with bottom trawls or seines with catches comprising more than 5% of *Nephrops* shall use one of the following gear options:

- 300 mm square mesh panel with a cod-end of at least 80 mm mesh size; vessels below 12 meters in length over all may use a 200 mm square mesh panel;
- Seltra panel;
- Sorting grid with a 35 mm bar spacing as referred to in Annex VI Part B to Regulation (EU) 2019/1241;
- 100 mm cod-end with a 100 mm square mesh panel;
- Dual cod-end with the uppermost cod-end constructed with T90 mesh of at least 90 mm and fitted with a separation panel with a maximum mesh size of 300 mm."

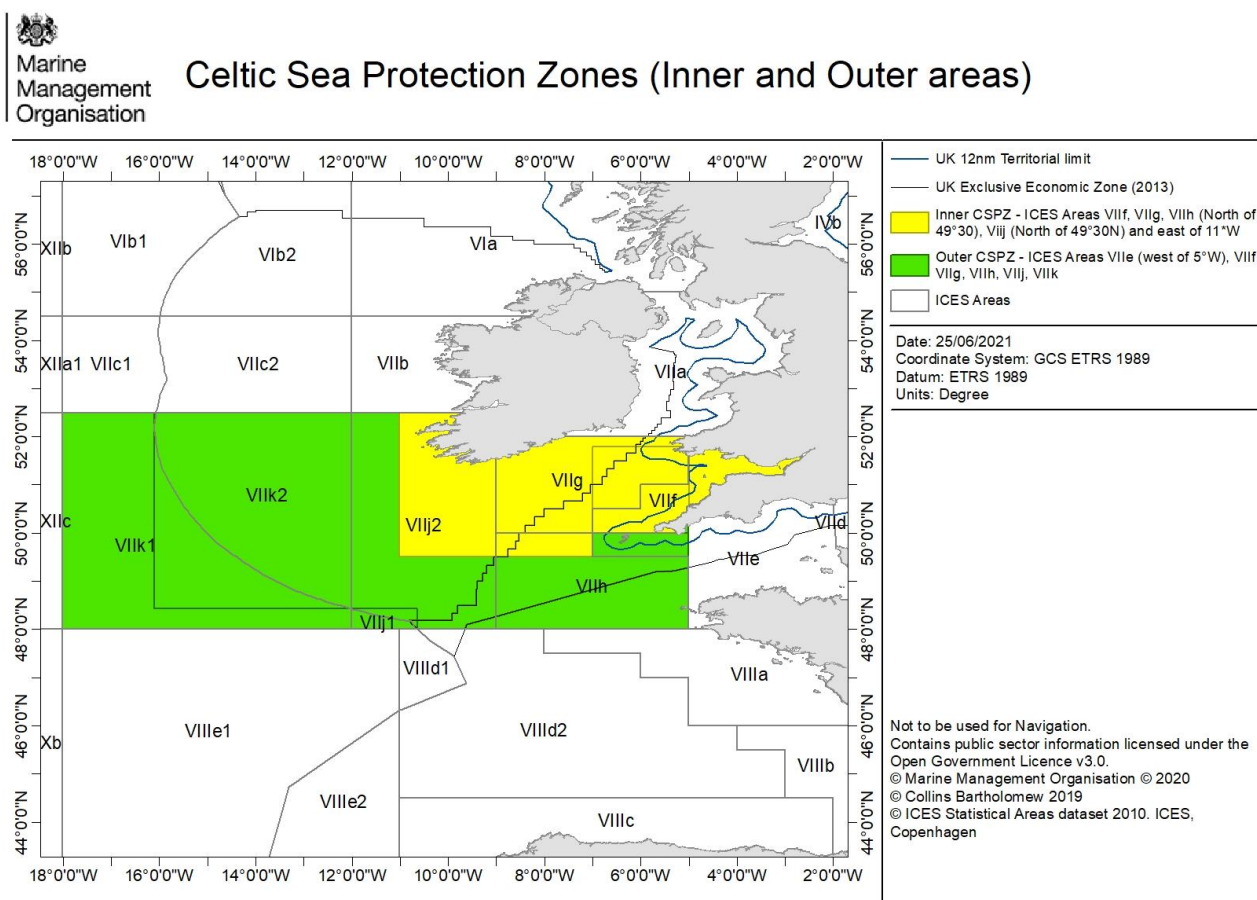


Figure 1 Celtic Sea Protection Zone inner and outer areas chart.

5. Proposed amendments to measures in 2021

Proposed amendment 1: Selectivity device options

We propose to allow the use of only the most selective devices which currently apply within UK waters of the *Nephrops*-directed fishery in the Celtic Sea and to consider the use of additional devices with an appropriate level of selectivity.

Specifically, based on scientific advice, we propose to amend the options to apply only the following selectivity devices:

- (a) Seltra panel³;
- (b) Sorting grid with a 35 mm bar spacing as referred to in Annex VI Part B to Regulation (EC) 2019/1241;
- (c) New option - Netgrid selectivity device⁴ (as legislated in North Sea);
- (d) New option - SepNep⁵ (as legislated in North Sea).

The Seltra panel and sorting grid with 35mm bar spacing are proposed to be retained from the current list of options. The Netgrid selectivity device and SepNep, as legislated in the North Sea, are being considered as new options. While other devices do provide selectivity benefits for some species (e.g. the currently listed 300mm square mesh panel for whiting and haddock), all of the proposed options have demonstrated selectivity benefits for a wider range of species, including for cod, which is of particular relevance for these measures.

Q2. What are your views on the proposed changes to the selectivity device options in proposed amendment 1?

Q3. Are there any additional selectivity device options for *Nephrops*-directed fisheries we should consider in proposed amendment 1?

³'Seltra panel' means a selectivity device which: consists of a top panel of at least 270 mm mesh size (diamond mesh) or a top panel of at least 300 mm mesh size (square mesh), placed in a four-panel box section, in the straight section of a cod-end; is at least 3 metres long; is positioned no more than 4 metres from the cod line; and (d) is the full width of the top sheet of the box section of the trawl (i.e. from selvedge to selvedge).

⁴ 'Netgrid selectivity device' means a selectivity device consisting of a four-panel section inserted into a two-panel trawl with an inclined sheet of diamond mesh netting with a mesh size of no more than 200mm, leading to an escape hole in the top of the trawl.

⁵ 'SepNep' means an Otter Trawl where: the net is separated horizontally by a panel which separates the trawl into two cod-ends. The mesh size of the separation panel must be 105 mm or less. The upper cod-end has a minimum mesh size of 120 mm and is fitted with a separation panel. The lower cod-end has a mesh size in the range 80 mm to 99 mm; an optional selection grid with a bar spacing of 17 mm or larger may be added. However, it must be constructed so as to allow small *Nephrops* (*Nephrops norvegicus*) to escape.

Proposed amendment 2: Prohibition of Strengthening Bags

The amended package of measures to be applied to otter trawl and bottom seine vessels on 5 September 2021 ensures that '*all otter trawl and bottom seine vessels are prohibited of the use/carriage of strengthening bags in ICES divisions 7e, f, g, h, and j.*' We propose to extend this aspect to apply to *Nephrops*-directed fisheries as defined by the percentage catch composition threshold (currently set at 5% but is also subject to consultation – see proposed amendment 3 for more information).

The cod-end is the section at end of a trawl which retains the catch, and the part of the net where most size-selection takes place. Strengthening bags are constructed of netting and placed around the cod-end to prevent it from bursting when it is lifted aboard the vessel. Having a netting bag surround the cod-end reduces its selectivity, allowing less fish to escape. The rationale for extending the prevention of strengthening bags to *Nephrops*-directed fisheries is to maximise the selectivity of the cod-end and reduce the catch of juvenile fish. Like the specification changes in minimum cod-end size, the goal of this change is to lower unwanted fish mortality and reduce the choke risk in the fisheries. This is expected to lead to healthier stocks and a more profitable fishing industry in the long term.

Q4. What are your views on the proposed prohibited use and carriage of strengthening bags for *Nephrops*-directed fisheries in proposed amendment 2?

Proposed amendment 3: Percentage catch composition threshold required to define a '*Nephrops*-directed fishery'

We propose to increase the catch composition threshold which defines a *Nephrops*-directed fishery in UK waters of the Celtic Sea. In UK waters of the Celtic Sea the current *Nephrops*-directed fishery measures apply to otter trawl and bottom seine vessels with catches comprising more than 5% of *Nephrops*.

Under the EU Regulation 2021/92, although previously 5%, a catch composition threshold of 30% is now applied to *Nephrops*-directed fisheries measures in EU waters of the Celtic Sea.

We propose to increase the percentage threshold within UK waters to ensure the relevant technical gear requirements will apply only to those vessels targeting *Nephrops*.

What specific threshold should be applied is under consideration. A 30% threshold would align with the threshold set within EU waters and would require only those with a higher catch composition of *Nephrops* to use the specified selectivity devices under this

derogation, therefore potentially would mean more vessels would need to adhere to the default Celtic Sea Protection Zone measures.

A 15% threshold reflects catches taken in the directed *Nephrops* fishery and would potentially require more vessels to take up the modified list of *Nephrops* selectivity devices. However, this would result in a different threshold being applied across UK EU waters.

Q5. What are your views on increasing the percentage catch composition threshold to define *Nephrops*-directed fisheries in the Celtic Sea in proposed amendment 3?

Q6. What percentage do you think would be appropriate (15%, 30% or other), and why?

Additional questions

Q7. Do you have any other points on the management of *Nephrops*-directed fisheries in the Celtic Sea which you would like to raise?

Q8. Do you feel this consultation has allowed you to effectively share your views on technical measures for UK Celtic Sea *Nephrops*-directed fisheries (yes/no)? Can you suggest any further ways we could engage you on the issues raised in the consultation?

6. Next steps

Following closure of the consultation a summary of responses to this consultation will be published on the Government website at: www.gov.uk/defra.