



# South West brown crab (*Cancer pagurus*) Harmonisation of minimum conservation reference size (MCRS): Online survey decision

## Background

Marine Management Organisation (MMO) was commissioned by the Department of Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to deliver **proposal three** of the **Crab and Lobster Fisheries Management Plan (FMP)**. The aim of the trial was to test management on a regional scale following a co-design approach.

The **South West Crab Trial Group** was set up to help MMO deliver proposal three. There was unanimous support for the harmonisation of brown crab (*Cancer Pagurus*) **minimum conservation reference size (MCRS)** in the South West trial area (see map). Brown crab is also known as edible crab, MCRS is also known as minimum landing size (MLS).

Given the significant stakeholder support and anticipated long-term benefits to crab stocks in the South West, the government proposed the harmonisation of MCRS should be a **permanent** measure in the South West.

## Online survey

MMO, on behalf of Defra, launched an online survey to consult stakeholders on harmonising the MCRS as a permanent measure in the South West. The survey ran from **31 July 2025 to 17 August 2025**; **78 responses were received**. **82%** of respondents were **in favour** of the measure and let us know that no time needed to adapt to the change.

Considering the strength of support for the measure and feedback provided for how long is needed to adapt to the change - MMO will implement the harmonise brown crab via a licence condition.

This means that from **1 February 2026** the new brown crab MCRS will be **160 millimetres (mm) for male brown crab** and **150 mm for female brown crab** in all English waters in the South West.

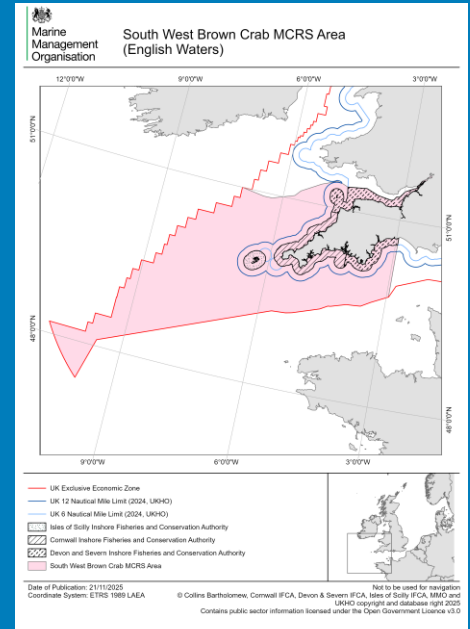
The measure will apply to **all UK and EU vessels using all gears** that are working in all English waters of the South West (west of 2°.56.78 W longitude and south of 52 °00.00 N latitude – map above).

## Further information

Please see the South West crab trial [options paper](#), [summary of online meetings](#) and [online survey overview](#) documents available on [South West Regional Fisheries Group \(RFG\)](#) website for further information.

## Contact us

If you have any queries or need any further information, then contact us using the email address provided: [FMP@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:FMP@marinemanagement.org.uk).



Map of the South West area.