

**Agenda Item 5.3: Preparation and implementation of the new abundance survey
 (“SCANS II”)**

**Report to ASCOBANS on
Preparation of the SCANS II Proposal**

Submitted by: Secretariat



NOTE:
**IN THE INTERESTS OF ECONOMY, DELEGATES ARE KINDLY REMINDED TO BRING
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**REPORT TO ASCOBANS ON
PREPARATION OF THE SCANS II PROPOSAL**

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1. Background

In 1994, the Sea Mammal Research Unit (SMRU) coordinated the Small Cetacean Abundance in the North Sea and adjacent waters (SCANS) project. The main aim of the survey was to estimate abundance of small cetaceans, particularly harbour porpoises, throughout the ASCOBANS region to contribute to an assessment of the impact of known bycatch. Abundance was estimated using methods developed as part of the project for the harbour porpoise, white-beaked dolphin and minke whale (Hammond *et al.* 2002).

Ten years on, these estimates need to be updated and estimates of abundance are still needed for areas that have not yet been systematically surveyed. To this end, a second SCANS project has been planned. The medium term aim is to obtain robust estimates of abundance for the main species of cetacean in all waters of the European Atlantic.

The first phase of this is the current SCANS II project, Small Cetacean Abundance in the European Atlantic and North Sea, which focuses on estimating harbour porpoise abundance in European continental shelf waters in 2005. Other primary objectives are to develop a scientific framework to set safe bycatch limits and to develop a suite of methods for monitoring small cetacean populations in between major decadal SCANS-type surveys.

The aim is that SCANS II will be followed by additional phases to estimate the abundance of common dolphins (and other cetaceans) in offshore waters and to estimate the abundance of bottlenose dolphin populations along the entire European Atlantic coast.

The area being covered by SCANS II includes all European Atlantic shelf waters from 62° N to the ACCOBAMS boundary in the south. Future phases aim to survey waters with 200nm fishing limits. This much larger area is consistent with the larger ASCOBANS area adopted at MOP4 in 2003.

ASCOBANS was a major driving force for SCANS and has directly supported the development of the proposal for the SCANS II project through the allocation of funding.

2. ASCOBANS support

ASCOBANS allocated USD 69K (~ GBP 38K) to SMRU, University of St. Andrews to help preparation of the SCANS II project proposal. The funding was allocated for a 12-month period, 1 April 2003 – 5 April 2004. This report summarises activities using those funds; a financial report will follow.

3. Activities

3.1 Assistant co-ordinator

From 1 April – 30 November 2003, Dr Kelly Macleod, was employed at SMRU as assistant coordinator, to assist the SCANS II project coordinator Dr Philip Hammond in the preparation of the project proposal. Dr Macleod's time was spent assisting the writing of the proposal, preparing the project budget, maintaining and facilitating regular updates on the project to all project partners, organising and rapporteuring project meetings, preparing documents for international meetings, and attending the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee meeting in April 2003. She has continued to work on preparation of the SCANS II proposal since November 2003, funded from other sources.

3.2 Meetings

3.2.1 *Project planning meeting – April 2003*

In August 2002 a first planning meeting had been held to discuss objectives, personnel, logistics, etc of a second SCANS project. In April 2003, a second planning meeting was held in Roskilde, Denmark, hosted by Dr. Jonas Teilmann at the Natural Environment Research Institute (NERI). Thirteen participants attended the two-day meeting from Denmark, Eire, France, Germany, Norway and the UK.

The second meeting established working groups to focus on five broad project phases: development of methodologies; testing of methodologies and equipment; at-sea surveying; analysis of data; and interpretation/recommendations. Decisions were made on survey timing, focal species and desired geographical coverage.

3.2.2 *Monitoring methods workshop – July 2003*

The April 2003 planning meeting identified a programme of work for SCANS II and established preliminary Working Groups. A primary objective of SCANS II is the development of monitoring methods for small cetaceans and a Workshop was held 7 July 2003 at SMRU to discuss the anticipated work needed. The Workshop was preceded by a meeting in Sweden between the two convenors of the Working Group: Dr P Berggren, University of Stockholm and Dr J Teilmann, NERI (who could not attend the Workshop). The main output of the workshop was a set of methods for monitoring that should be considered in the project and the amount of developmental and evaluation work to be done to assess them.

3.2.3 *ASCOBANS 10th Advisory Committee Meeting – April 2003*

Macleod attended the 10th Advisory Committee Meeting in Bonn, 9-11 April 2003. She gave a short presentation to inform participants of the plans for a SCANS II project. The intention was also to assess the level of support for the project among Member States of the European Community. In general, the project was well received but there were reservations as to whether national governments could commit funds to the project, especially for the offshore component of the proposed project. Macleod attended the financial meeting to discuss how the amount of funding needed from each country involved with the survey could be decided. No decision was reached at that meeting but was agreed that countries involved with the previous SCANS project should contribute a similar proportion of the overall project cost.

A resolution on surveying was drafted at the meeting that indicated support for a SCANS-type project to update harbour porpoise abundance estimates and provide baseline estimates in previously un-surveyed waters (e.g. west of Britain and Ireland). A resolution on the extension of the ASCOBANS area was also established, which was consistent with the proposed offshore survey areas of the SCANS II project.

3.2.4 *ASCOBANS 4th Meeting of Parties – August 2003*

Hammond attended ASCOBANS MOP4, 18-22 August 2003 at Esjberg, Denmark. A shortened version of the full proposal was presented to participants and further requests to support the project were made. During this meeting, Hammond was advised that the most likely source of European funding for the project was through the LIFE Nature programme, the deadline for which was 30 September 2003.

3.2.5 *European Cetacean Society 18th Annual Conference – March 2004*

Macleod attended the 18th ECS Annual Conference took place 28-31 March 2004 in Kolmården, Sweden. Over 300 participants attended this year's conference, which is an important occasion for the exchange and discussion of information on cetacean research in a European context.

At the conference Macleod convened an *ad hoc* meeting of participants in the SCANS II project. She gave an update on the current situation regarding funding for the project. The other main

topic of discussion was the objectives, timing and location of the pilot survey to test the survey and monitoring methodologies.

Macleod also attended the ECS Workshop on Estimation of $g(0)$ in line transect sampling surveys. This was particularly relevant to the SCANS II project and provided an excellent overview of field and analytical methods for shipboard and aerial cetacean surveys.

3.3 Website design

A project website is key to the dissemination of information about the SCANS II project, its progress and results. A website designer was employed to design a SCANS II website under Macleod's supervision. The provisional website includes information on SCANS 1994 (including species distribution maps), the rationale for another SCANS-type project and the proposed work. It also includes a more general page with short descriptions of cetaceans occurring in the ASCOBANS region. The website will be launched when LIFE Nature formally confirms its support for the project (see below). The website will be further developed and regularly updated throughout the project.

3.4 Proposal to LIFE Nature

Since ASCOBANS MOP4, activities have concentrated on preparing the SCANS II proposal to the LIFE Nature programme, and responding to subsequent requests from the Commission.

LIFE Nature funding is awarded to nature conservation projects with strong management implications for habitats and species listed under Annex I and II of the Habitats Directive. This focus and the very short period of time before the submission deadline necessitated some modification to the objectives of the original proposal as presented to ASCOBANS MOP4. The objectives to estimate abundance of cetaceans in offshore waters and of bottlenose dolphins in coastal waters using photo-identification methods were dropped, as was the objective to investigate relationships between cetaceans and the marine environment. The objective to develop a scientific framework for the conservation and management of small cetacean species subject to bycatch was expanded and given greater prominence.

The proposal was submitted via Defra (UK) on 30 September 2003. It was then passed to the Commission, which judged it as relevant and competent. In March, the Commission sent a (long) list of questions about the proposal, which were duly answered in detail. The proposal and our response were considered at the Habitats Committee meeting on 24 March 2004, the outcome of which was that the SCANS II proposal was included on the list of projects that the Commission intends to fund in 2004.

The Commission has now requested a revised proposal taking into account the responses to points raised last month. A draft will be submitted 23 April 2004 and the final revised proposal will be submitted by 18 May 2004. All being well, the Commission will approve its co-financing of the project in the first half of June.

A copy of the revised proposal submitted to the Commission will be available from Hammond <psh2@st-andrews.ac.uk> or Macleod <km53@st-andrews.ac.uk>.

4. Current situation

The SCANS II project officially began on 1 April 2004 in the expectation of the Commission's support through the LIFE Nature programme. Activities until formal Commission approval will be underwritten by the Defra (UK) contribution to the project. ASCOBANS will be kept fully informed of progress and will be invited to relevant project meetings. Information will also be available on the project website to be launched in June 2004.