

Agenda Item 6.1

Project Funding through ASCOBANS  
Progress of Supported Projects

Document 6-07

**Tursiops SEAS Project Proposal  
Progress**

**Action Requested**

- Take note of the report
- Comment

Submitted by

United Kingdom



**NOTE:**  
IN THE INTERESTS OF ECONOMY, DELEGATES ARE KINDLY REMINDED TO BRING THEIR  
OWN COPIES OF DOCUMENTS TO THE MEETING



## **Tursiops SEAS project proposal progress**

The funding received to support the building and submission of a LIFE+ proposal is intended to be used to hire a part-time assistant to help with liaising between colleagues and agencies during the preparation of the project proposal. The proposal planning has been delayed further due to staffing constraints and appointment problems. Since 2010 plans to hire staff have failed on three occasions. This has been due to the short term and part-time nature of the work and sourcing a relevantly skilled researcher for this work. In all cases the agreed researcher has either withdrawn before appointment due to other work offers or in one case become unavailable due to pregnancy. In the light of this the project is to be built around an intended submission for LIFE+ funding in 2013. The main structure of the project will be similar to previous reports with a scaled down project aiming to focus on integrating existing data and augment previous studies with directed sampling in shelf edge waters and a few additional sites such as Cardigan Bay, Wales and the Southwest England where there is limited existing data.

We intend to submit a bid for grant funding under the LIFE+ initiative in 2013. The current project plan is somewhat reduced in scope and ambition compared to original ideas partly due to the recent progress in some of the coastal areas and partly due to the recent economic downturn and the challenge of raising the 50% matching costs required under the LIFE+ initiative. Since the conception of the Tursiops SEAS project plan, several partner regions have progressed with separately funded work investigating the abundance, movements and genetic population structuring in various parts of the NE Atlantic region. Some of these studies are currently coming to fruition and results are indicating a high degree of structuring at relatively small spatial scales (Mirimin et al., 2011; Fernandez et al., 2011). The Tursiops SEAS project will facilitate collaboration of workers between partner regions to integrate their findings into a regional framework. The project will also aim to provide support to gather data (particularly for genetic analysis) from poorly sampled coastal and shelf regions such as the inshore waters of Wales. In addition the project will aim to provide data from animals using the pelagic, shelf edge region from west of Ireland/Scotland to Northern Spain since the relatively large number of *Tursiops* using this habitat are, to date, poorly understood and may provide a genetic link between coastal populations in different regions. This work will represent a significant contribution to our understanding of the role of regional SACs in providing a network of protected areas in accordance with Natura2000.

## **The project region**

The project is intended to cover coastal and shelf sea areas including key sites in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, England, France, Spain and Portugal. Offshore areas will include data from the Canaries, Madeira and the Azores islands and the shelf edge region from NW of Ireland/Scotland to NW Spain.

## **Project General Aims**

- Integrated estimate of abundance of *Tursiops* derived using mark-recapture analysis of photo-identification data across the NE Atlantic EU region.
- Assess the population structure of *Tursiops* in the waters of EU sector of the NE Atlantic
- Examine inferences of population partitioning from dietary signals (stable isotope ratios)

- Evaluate the role of current SAC designations in the context of the population structure of Tursiops throughout Atlantic EU waters

### **Project Specific Objectives**

- Survey of poorly known areas concentrating on the shelf edge region. Survey effort will include photo-id and biopsy sampling of encountered bottlenose dolphins.
- Integration and matching of existing recent photo-identification data within and between partner states.
- Molecular genetic analysis including (mtDNA and nuclear) of existing samples from each partner state and offshore area.

### **Planned activities (with suggested timeline necessary for submission on July 2013)**

- 1) Re-establish contact with potential regional project partners and compile a directory of relevant data held for each coastal area. (March/April 2012)
- 2) Contact regional competent authorities to communicate the project objectives (May 2012)
- 3) Re-establish contact and work with theme leaders for each activity to build the relevant sections of the proposal including budgets. (July 2012)
- 4) Calculate the matched funding required to support the submission (August 2012)
- 5) Appoint part-time assistant to manage the proposal writing activities and to communicate with regional project representatives. (March 2013)
- 6) Draft proposal for circulation (May 2013)
- 7) Submission of proposal (July 2013)