UN environment programme

ASCOBANS

AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF SMALL CETACEANS OF THE BALTIC, NORTH EAST ATLANTIC, IRISH AND NORTH SEAS

ASCOBANS/AC30/NR.4
02 June 2026

30th MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Bonn, Germany, 1-3 September 2026
Agenda Item 2

2025 NATIONAL REPORT: UNITED KINGDOM

2025 ASCOBANS National Report

ASCOBANS

Online Reporting System

Party: United Kingdom

Submitted Date: 2026-05-29

2025 ASCOBANS National Report

Creation Date: 2026-01

Deadline: 2026-05-31

Language: English

Submitted Date: 2026-05-29

Introduction

Year 2 (2025) ASCOBANS National Report

1 January to 31 December 2025.

As outlined in ASCOBANS Resolution 10.1 *National Reporting 2025-2028*, this form will cover information from 2025 (Year 2), and the following topics included in the Annex to the Resolution:

- High-level Summary of Key Messages
- General Information (Section I)
- Bycatch (Section II A1)
- Resource Depletion (Section II A2)
- Marine Debris (Section II C9)
- Surveys and Research (Section III)
- Use of Strandings Records (Section IV)
- Other Matters (e.g. burning issues) (Section VII)

The National Reports submitted will inform discussions at the 30th Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee, 1-3 September 2026.

- All questions apply to the **reporting period from 1 January to 31 December 2025**.
- Region in the tables refers to the sub-regions as defined by the HELCOM and OSPAR, and Areas refers to the sub-areas as defined by ICES. An overview and maps of these can be found in Annex A. Species can be chosen from the drop-down list provided, based on ASCOBANS species list, see Annex B.
- Throughout the form, please include relevant web links and add rows where applicable.
- The deadline for the submission of National Reports is **31 May 2026**.

Where possible, National Coordinators should consult with, or delegate to, experts for particular topics so as to ease the reporting burden. The Secretariat has provided a list of potential country contacts as a starting point. Once the baseline information is in place, it should become easier to update in the future.

For any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Secretariat.

High-level Summary of Key Messages

In your country, for 2025 (Year 2), what does this report reveal about the most successful aspects of implementation of the Agreement?

(List up to five items related to the topics of Year 2: bycatch, resource depletion, marine debris, surveys and research, use of strandings records)

Continued long-term surveillance of bycatch and strandings and associated research plays a significant role in UK capacity to monitor current and emerging trends/risk.

In your country, for 2025 (Year 2), what does this report reveal about the greatest challenges in implementing the Agreement?

(List up to five items related to the topics of Year 2: bycatch, resource depletion, marine debris, surveys and research, use of strandings records - kindly note that challenges with regards to other topics can be reported on under Section VII.B *Difficulties in implementing the Agreement)*

In your country, for 2025 (Year 2), what does this report reveal about the main priorities for future implementation of the Agreement?

(List up to five items, ideally related to the topics of Year 2: bycatch, resource depletion, marine debris, surveys and research, use of strandings records)

Section I: General Information

A. Country Information

1. Name of Party / Non-Party Range State:

United Kingdom

2. Details of the Report Compiler

Details of the report compiler

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Does the Report Compiler act as ASCOBANS National Coordinator (i.e. focal point)?

Please select only one option

- ○ Yes
- ◉ No

3. Details of contributor(s)

Please provide the following details per contributor: Name, Function, Organization, Postal Address, Telephone, Email, and Topic(s) contributed to.

Topic(s) contributed to: (Section II) 9.2, 9.4, (Section III) 3.1, 3.3, (Section IV) 1.1,
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Section II: Habitat Conservation and Management (threats and pressures on cetaceans)

A. Fisheries-related Threats

1. Bycatch

AIM: to illustrate progress on understanding, monitoring and mitigating bycatch of small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: 10.4, 9.2 (Rev.MOP10), **8.5 (Rev.MOP9)**, 8.4 (Rev.MOP9), 8.3, 7.3, 7.1, 6.1, 5.8, 5.7, **5.5**, **3.3**

Bycatch, the entanglement of an animal in fishing gear, is identified as a major cause of mortality in small cetaceans. Every effort should be made to reduce bycatch towards zero as quickly as possible. Parties to ASCOBANS have agreed on a number of resolutions that highlight the importance of mitigating bycatch of small cetaceans in the Agreement Area, as available data indicates that levels of bycatch pose a considerable threat to their conservation status. Parties have agreed that modifications of fishing gear and relevant practices shall be applied in order to reduce negative impacts where data indicates unacceptable interaction. The Agreement Area requires improved monitoring, collation of data, and consideration of appropriate mitigation measures, while also taking into account similar work in other areas.

To better understand the extent of the impact of bycatch on small cetaceans, monitoring and mitigation measures in place, and ongoing work in the Agreement Area, countries are requested to provide relevant information.

Note: This section includes bycatch in recreational fisheries.

1.1. How is bycatch assessed/monitored in your country?

	Used? (Yes/No)	Percentage (% by monitoring method, of total bycaught animals, by gear type if applicable)
Dedicated observer schemes	Yes	
Fisheries observes	Yes	
Remote Electronic Monitoring	Yes	
Self-reporting by fishermen	Yes	
Pathological investigation	Yes	
Assessment at stranding site	Yes	

Comments:

Dedicated bycatch observers and validated electronic monitoring efforts are focused in areas/gears with known or perceived sensitive species interactions, through continuation of the UK Bycatch Monitoring Programme. The programme mainly focused on midwater trawls in ICES regions IV, VI and VII, static net fisheries in ICES areas IV and VII, longlines in ICES areas IV, VI and VII and purse seines in ICES areas IV and VII.

Catch sampling observer effort are focused mainly on fisheries associated with commercial species discards but sampling protocols now include requirements for observers to record and report sensitive species bycatch.

The MMO have a condition in all fishing vessel licences requiring vessels to report incidents where a vessel's activities have caused or contributed to marine mammal injury or death, or where marine mammals have been caught as bycatch, within 48 hours of the end of a fishing trip. The reporting form asks for information on the vessel, interaction date, approximate time of interaction with the marine

mammals, approximate location of the interaction, species of marine mammal involved, number of marine mammals killed or injured, gear type, target species of fishing vessels, if an observer was present, and if any actions were taken in reaction to the interaction (e.g., moved fishing grounds, hauled gear). The information supplied by fishers is reported at an aggregated level to NOAA.

The Clean Catch programme continues to trial and monitor mitigation measures for cetacean bycatch. The self-reporting mobile application was formally launched in November 2025. This is now being used in a cetacean bycatch mitigation trial.

In May 2024 Defra released the response to the consultation on the wider use of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) in English waters (Summary of responses and Government response) and started implementing the outlined plan in collaboration with Cefas and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). The consultation had proposed a stepwise approach to the implementation of REM, starting with volunteer vessels in what was termed an "early adopter" phase, which would provide time to learn how the fishery operates and how to monitor. This phase started with the installation of REM equipment onboard an over 24m fishing vessel targeting pelagic species in 2024. Monitoring objectives included identifying and quantifying interactions with sensitive species. After ~18 months of collecting data from the vessel, the early adopter phase in the over 24m pelagic fishery has concluded (although data analysis will continue for a while).

The Cetacean Investigation Programme (CSIP) and the Scottish Marine Animals Stranding Scheme (SMASS) recover a number of UK stranded cetaceans each year for investigation at necropsy and diagnose numerous cases of bycatch. Additional and more detailed data on UK strandings and necropsies is available in the relevant CSIP and SMASS annual reports.

The Bycatch Evidence Evaluation Protocol (developed by the Marine Strandings Network Cornwall) is also used to identify evidence of bycatch on dead stranded animals. Trained volunteers from both the Scottish Marine Animals Stranding Scheme (SMASS) and UK Cetacean Investigation Programme (CSIP) assess stranded carcasses in for lesions potentially related to bycatch.

There has been an additional review of the risk and evidence of bycatch in Scottish waters (contracted by Scottish Government) with a view to targeting specific monitoring in the future.

DAERA Marine and Fisheries Division log stranding records for Northern Ireland and inspect carcasses where possible for signs of bycatch.

Welsh Government have contracted Liverpool University to survey and review incidences of bycatch of protected species (including cetaceans) in shore-based netting around Wales. This contract is currently underway.

1.2. Which species of small cetaceans were recorded as bycatch by commercial fishing in the reporting period?

Please provide details in this table - download and then attach it using the blue 'clip' button.

Tick all that apply

- [ ] AWSD - Atlantic white-sided dolphin
- [ ] BBW - Blainville's beaked whale
- [ ] BD - Bottlenose dolphin
- [ ] CBW - Cuvier's beaked whale
- [x] CD - Short-beaked Common Dolphin
- [ ] FKW - False killer whale
- [ ] GBW - Gervais' beaked whale
- [x] HP - Harbour Porpoise
- [ ] KW - Killer Whale
- [ ] LFPW - Long-finned pilot whale
- [ ] NBW - Northern bottlenose whale
- [ ] PKW - Pygmy killer whale
- [ ] PSW - Pygmy sperm whale
- [ ] RD - Risso's dolphin
- [ ] RTD - Rough-toothed dolphin
- [ ] SBW - Sowerby's beaked whale
- [ ] SD - Striped dolphin
- [ ] SFPW - Short-finned pilot whale
- [ ] TBW - True's beaked whale
- [ ] WBD - White-beaked dolphin

- [ ] Not Applicable
- [ ] Others _____

1.3. Which species of small cetaceans were recorded as bycatch by recreational fishing in the reporting period?

Please provide details in this table - download and then attach it using the blue 'clip' button.

Tick all that apply

- [ ] AWSD - Atlantic white-sided dolphin
- [ ] BBW - Blainville's beaked whale
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- [ ] LFPW - Long-finned pilot whale
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- [ ] PSW - Pygmy sperm whale
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- [ ] RTD - Rough-toothed dolphin
- [ ] SBW - Sowerby's beaked whale
- [ ] SD - Striped dolphin
- [ ] SFPW - Short-finned pilot whale
- [ ] TBW - True's beaked whale
- [ ] WBD - White-beaked dolphin
- [x] Not Applicable
- [ ] Others _____

1.4 Has there been any notable incidents/issues related to bycatch during the reporting period in your country?

Please select only one option

- (●) No
- ( ) Yes

1.5. Are there any mitigation measures in place?

If you select 'Yes', please provide details in this table - download and then attach it using the blue 'clip' button.

Please select only one option

- (●) No
- ( ) Yes

980/Sec-II_A_1.5_0_UK.xlsx

1.6. Have there been changes in fishing effort (for fisheries known to have an impact) in the reporting period?

Please select only one option

- ( ) No
- ( ) Unknown/not applicable
- (●) Yes

Please provide details:

Declines in netting effort over the last decade and most other gear types are also showing declines in most ICES divisions.

1.7. Relevant new research/work/collaboration on bycatch in your country.

List initiatives/ projects (incl. PhD, MSc); publications (reports, theses, papers in journals, books) from any study; web links to other relevant information

Trials of mitigation measures are ongoing through the Clean Catch programme, including the use of passive acoustic reflectors. As of 17th December 2025, the partnership was established and design schematics shared for the manufacture of the pearls utilising an injection moulding tool. Initial co-design consultation with skippers in Cornwall was also completed, giving feedback on design, configuration & further testing needed for both PAR floats and pearls. Acoustic testing of PAR floats and pearly planned for early 2026.

The Clean Catch Programme are also running a cetacean bycatch mitigation trial which currently has 9 active skippers recording with REM and 1 pending, across four locations (Plymouth, Mevagissey, Helford and Newlyn). 6 vessels are using the self-reporting application, with 449 control hauls and 344 pinger hauls recorded as of 17th December 2025.

An acoustic monitoring project was also being run through the Clean Catch Programme, with seven acoustic monitoring devices for cetaceans deployed in Cornwall. This ran from July 2023 to July 2025 and collected a total of 54,272 hours of acoustic data. Dolphins were detected in 10% of recorded hours, while porpoise were detected in 7% of recorded hours. Detection rates were higher during October to March. Dolphin detections were more frequent at night than during daylight hours, whereas porpoises were detected relatively consistently throughout the 24-hour period.

Under the Bycatch Monitoring Programme, single channel hydrophones (soundtraps) have been deployed regularly on static nets to help inform on how relative cetacean density relates to bycatch probability. This work is ongoing and the acoustic dataset is being analysed and will continue to expand.

Under the Bycatch Monitoring Programme and the EU CIBBRiNA project, four channel hydrophone arrays have been deployed numerous times to track the fine scale movements of small cetaceans around fishing nets. This work has led to unique findings that will be published in 2026.

An analysis of bycatch rates from the Bycatch Monitoring Programme for harbour porpoise and common dolphins was published in the ICES Journal of Marine Science in 2025 (Moyes et al)

A Fisheries Industry Science Partnership project with Bangor/Liverpool Universities was completed in 2025. Prior to 2025 report preparation period, the project observed and mapped inshore netting fisheries in Wales, recorded incidences of bycatch and mapped areas of potential bycatch risk in Wales. Reports are currently in preparation.

Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales are currently drafting a report reviewing Acoustic Deterrent Impacts on Marine Mammals and Mobile Fish Species in Welsh Waters. A report is currently in preparation.

Ongoing PhD project on bycatch is using data from CSIP strandings and necropsies- collaboration between University of Exeter and CSIP (see Section **A1.10**)

The Scottish Entanglement Alliance (SEA) a collaborative partnership involving industry, research, and NGO sectors has continued its work to better understand and reduce marine megafauna entanglement in Scottish fisheries. Since 2022, creel fishers across Scotland have been evaluating the use of negatively buoyant groundline as a practical mitigation measure. Reception has been very positive: several fishers have expressed a preference for sinking rope over conventional floating rope, and trials have demonstrated particular efficacy in fisheries carrying the highest entanglement risk. Nonetheless, the findings also highlighted that single solution cannot serve all fishing contexts equally, with cost, timescale, and regional variation all emerged as important considerations. In recognition that sinking groundline is incompatible with certain gear configurations and fishing practices, the approach currently being advanced for wider rollout does not seek to mandate its use. Instead, the strategy centres on achieving cost parity between negatively buoyant and floating rope, removing the economic barrier to adoption and enabling fishers to make an informed, voluntary transition where it is operationally viable

1.8. Is the perceived level of pressure from bycatch in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same or unknown?

Status relative to previous years. Please provide the nature of the evidence and describe per species (Annex B) where applicable.

Species	Increasing/Decreasing/Staying the same/Unknown	Nature of the evidence (e.g. strandings,

		observer schemes)
CD Short-beaked Common Dolphin	Increasing	Rates appear to be increasing in nets based on observer data; although the number from strandings/necropsies are staying the same
HP Harbour porpoise	Decreasing	Rates appear to be decreasing in nets based on observer data; although the number from strandings/necropsies are staying the same

2. Resource Depletion

AIM: to determine areas where, and to what extent, depletion of fish stocks have occurred during the reporting period. In addition, identify ongoing mitigation efforts regarding detrimental implications for small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: 10.3, **9.4**, 8.9, 8.3, 7.1, 6.1

Depletion in fish stocks due to overfishing and other factors generates pressure on the favourable conservation status of small cetaceans (through possible food shortage). More integrated management and reductions in fishing effort (also prompted by concern about fish stock depletion or other ecosystem considerations) have been encouraged, especially in areas of known risk. Further research, effective fishery regulations and innovation within certain fishing methods are considered to be helpful steps towards mitigating this pressure.

Parties to ASCOBANS have agreed on a number of resolutions that (1) determine the impact of the depletion of fish stocks on small cetaceans, (2) encourage fishing effort reductions and (3) review new information on these depletions to make recommendations. Resource depletion in the Agreement Area requires improved monitoring, collation of data, and consideration of appropriate mitigation measures, while also taking into account similar work in other areas.

It is of particular interest to ASCOBANS to understand the extent of prey depletions, any related ongoing work, monitoring and mitigation measures in the Agreement Area. Countries are requested to provide relevant information.

2.1 Based on the latest stock assessments, are there any notable depletions of fish species which would be a concern for small cetaceans?

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ◉ Yes

Please provide details:

An evaluation of the sustainability of fisheries catch limits negotiated by the UK (both individually or as international negotiations) occurs annually. For 2025, the review highlighted that for several species the agreed Total Allowable Catches (TACs) exceeded ICES advice. For example, agreed TACs of cod stocks in the Irish Sea, West of Scotland, Rockall Cod, Celtic Sea, Eastern Channel and North Sea, herring stocks in the Celtic Sea, Irish and North Sea (bycatch) and A-fleet herring (North Sea and Eastern Channel), whiting stocks in the Irish Sea, West of Scotland and Celtic Seas, and mackerel in the North Sea & Western Channel all exceeded advice set by ICES. Several of these TACs have also exceeded ICES advice at least multiple times over the last 5 years. For more details, please see Cefas (2024). The TAC for herring stocks in the Irish Sea was consistent with ICES advice in 2024 however, ICES reduced their advice to zero due to uncertainty in the mixing between Celtic Sea herring with Irish Sea herring for 2025. The TAC for sole stocks in the Irish Sea and Western Channel exceeded ICES advice in 2024 but the TAC agreed for 2025 is consistent with ICES advice.

Gilmour, F., Bell, E., O'Brien, CM. 2025. Assessing the sustainability of negotiated fisheries catch limits by the UK for 2025. Cefas project report for Defra. 32pp https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67d97ff65bad4b1a7f01ed6d/Assessing_the_sustainability_of_fisheries_catch_limits_negotiated_by_the_UK_for_2025.pdf

2.2. Where are these depletions in national waters occurring?

Please choose the sub-Regions from Annex A as defined by OSPAR & HELCOM.

Tick all that apply

- [ ] OI Norwegian Sea
- [ ] OII Dogger Bank
- [ ] OII Southern North Sea
- [ ] OII Northern North Sea
- [ ] OII Channel
- [ ] OII Norwegian Trench
- [ ] OII Skagerrak
- [ ] OIII Celtic Sea
- [ ] OIII Irish Sea
- [ ] OIII Irish & Scottish W. Coast
- [ ] OIV N. Bay of Biscay
- [ ] OIV Iberian Sea
- [ ] OIV Gulf of Cadiz
- [ ] OV Wider Atlantic
- [ ] H Bothnian Bay
- [ ] H Bothnian Sea
- [ ] H Archipelago Sea
- [ ] H Aland Sea
- [ ] H Gulf of Finland
- [ ] H Northern Baltic Proper
- [ ] H Western Gotland Basin
- [ ] H Eastern Gotland Basin
- [ ] H Gulf of Riga
- [ ] H Gdansk Basin
- [ ] H Bornholm Basin
- [ ] H Arkona Basin
- [ ] H Kattegat
- [ ] H Belt Sea
- [ ] H The Sound
- [ ] Not Applicable

Please choose the sub-Areas from Annex A as defined by ICES.

Tick all that apply

- [ ] 27.3 Skagerrak, Kattegat, Sound, Belt and Baltic Seas
- [ ] 27.3.a Skagerrak and Kattegat
- [ ] 27.3.a.20 Skagerrak
- [ ] 27.3.a.21 Kattegat
- [ ] 27.3.b,c Sound and Belt Sea
- [ ] 27.3.b.23 Sound

- [ ] 27.3.c.22 Belt Sea
- [ ] 27.3.d Baltic Sea
- [ ] 27.3.d.24 Baltic West of Bornholm
- [ ] 27.3.d.25 Southern Central Baltic – West
- [ ] 27.3.d.26 Southern Central Baltic – East
- [ ] 27.3.d.27 West of Gotland
- [ ] 27.3.d.28.1 Gulf of Riga
- [ ] 27.3.d.28.2 East of Gotland
- [ ] 27.3.d.29 Archipelago Sea
- [ ] 27.3.d.30 Bothnian Sea
- [ ] 27.3.d.31 Bothnian Bay
- [ ] 27.3.d.32 Bay of Finland
- [ ] 27.4 North Sea
- [ ] 27.4.a Northern North Sea
- [ ] 27.4.b Central North Sea
- [ ] 27.4.c Southern North Sea
- [ ] 27.6 Rockall, NW Coast of Scotland and N. Ireland
- [ ] 27.6.a NW Coast of Scotland and N. Ireland
- [ ] 27.6.b Rockall
- [ ] 27.6.b.1 Rockall / NEAFC Reg. Area I
- [ ] 27.6.b.2 Rockall / Non-NEAFC Reg. Area
- [ ] 27.7 Irish Sea, West of Ireland, Porcupine Bank, Eastern and Western English Channel, Bristol Channel, Celtic Sea North and South, and Southwest of Ireland – East and West
- [ ] 27.7.a Irish Sea
- [ ] 27.7.b West of Ireland
- [ ] 27.7.c Porcupine Bank
- [ ] 27.7.c.1 Porcupine Bank / NEAFC Reg. Area
- [ ] 27.7.c.2 Porcupine Bank / Non-NEAFC Reg. Area
- [ ] 27.7.d Eastern English Channel
- [ ] 27.7.e Western English Channel
- [ ] 27.7.f Bristol Channel
- [ ] 27.7.g Celtic North Sea
- [ ] 27.7.h Celtic Sea South
- [ ] 27.7.j SW of Ireland – East
- [ ] 27.7.j.1 SW of Ireland – East – Parts of the NEAFC Reg. Area
- [ ] 27.7.j.2 SW of Ireland – East – Non-NEAFC Reg. Area
- [ ] 27.7.k SW of Ireland - West
- [ ] 27.7.k.1 SW of Ireland – West – Part of the NEAFC Reg. Area
- [ ] 27.7.k.2 SW of Ireland – West – Part of the Non-NEAFC Area I
- [ ] 27.8 Bay of Biscay
- [ ] 27.8.a Bay of Biscay North
- [ ] 27.8.b Bay of Biscay Central
- [ ] 27.8.c Bay of Biscay South
- [ ] 27.8.d Bay of Biscay Offshore
- [ ] 27.8.d.1 Bay of Biscay Offshore – Part of the NEAFC Reg. Area
- [ ] 27.8.d.2 Bay of Biscay Offshore – Non-NEAFC Reg. Area
- [ ] 27.8.e Wet of Bay of Biscay
- [ ] 27.9 Portuguese Waters

- [ ] 27.9.a Portuguese Waters – East
- [ ] 27.9.b Portuguese Water - West
- [ ] 27.9.b.1 Portuguese waters – West Part of the NEAFC Reg. Area
- [ ] 27.9.b.2 Portuguese waters – Non-NEAFC Reg. Area

2.3 What measures are being taken to manage pressures on depleted fish stocks, including relevant regulations/guidelines (current / planned / year of implementation)?

Measure	Timeframe information	Relevant driver
Fishery Management Plans	5 more FMPs introduced in 2025	Fisheries Act 2020. The Joint Fisheries Statement proposed 43 FMPs throughout UK waters. https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fisheries-management-plans
Seasonal fisheries closures	Varied	All fisheries restrictions currently in place can be seen here: Kingfisherrestrictions.org
MMO Byelaw work	Unknown	English MPAs (outside 6nm) are/will be subject to new fishing bylaws prohibiting certain activities. Similar fishing bylaws in areas of MPAs within 6nm are being developed by the relevant Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authorities.
Sandeel fishery closure		UK Marine Strategy (EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive) and achievement of Good Environmental Status (GES). Prohibitions on fishing for sandeel in English waters of the North Sea and all Scottish waters were implemented

		before the start of the 2024 fishing season. An EU Arbritration Tribunal found that the measures taken to close English and Scottish waters were based on the best available science and had sufficient regard to the principle of non-discrimination. The tribunal also found that the Scottish measures had sufficient regard to the principle of proportionality. For the English North Sea, the UK completed a further decision-making process in for sandeel fishery closure in the English North Sea. Following this, the prohibitions remain in place and updated advice was published in 2025. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/response-to-arbitration-tribunal-final-report-uk-sandeel-the-european-union-v-the-united-kingdom-of-great-britain-and-northern-ireland
Sandeel MPAs	Designated in 2014	Marine Scotland Act 2014 Sandeels are also a protected feature of four MPAs: Mousa to Boddam NC MPA, North-west Orkney NC MPA,Turbot Bank NC MPA and the North East Lewis MPA.

		Several MPAs also aim to conserve sandeel habitat to ensure the continued supply of young recruits to other sandeel grounds around Scotland and the rest of the UK.

2.4 Is there any evidence within your country's national waters that resource depletion may be impacting small cetaceans (e.g. evidence of starvation)?

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ◉ Yes

Please provide details

Evidence of starvation in several stranded cetaceans through necropsies performed under the strandings monitoring programme. However, it is not possible to confidently link this with resource depletion, as there are multiple drivers for nutritional loss e.g. disease; maternal separation etc

2.5 Are there any national efforts to evaluate cetacean body condition at sea (e.g. surveys)?

Please select only one option

- ◉ No
- ○ Yes

2.6 Relevant new research/work/collaboration on resource depletion in your country.

List initiatives/ projects (incl. PhD, MSc); publications (reports, theses, papers in journals, books) from any study; web links to other relevant information

2.7. Is the perceived level of pressure from resource depletion in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same or unknown?

Status relative to previous years. Please provide the nature of the evidence and describe per species (Annex B) where applicable.

Species	Increasing/Decreasing/Staying the same/Unknown	Nature of the evidence
All	Unknown	

B. Disturbance (incl. potential physical impacts)

3. Noise (impulsive i.e. piling and continuous/ambient i.e. shipping)

AIM: to illustrate progress on understanding, monitoring and mitigating negative effects on small cetaceans from underwater noise during the reporting period.

Relevant Resolutions: 10.3, 9.2 (Rev.MOP10), **8.11 (Rev.MOP9),** 8.9, 8.6 (Rev.MOP10), 8.4 (Rev.MOP9), 8.3, 7.1, **6.2 (Rev.MOP10)**, 6.1

Small cetaceans are especially susceptible to underwater noise due to their high responsiveness to sound and wide hearing range. Good environmental status, as defined by the European Union, suggests that the introduction of energy, including underwater noise, is at levels that do not adversely affect the marine environment. Anthropogenic noise pollution has generally increased in recent times and generates a broad range of frequencies due to a wide variety of human activities. Impulsive and continuous noise present different impacts on small cetaceans, which include communicative masking, behavioural response and physiological injury. Noise in marine environments potentially impedes communication, affects distribution and hence feeding and reproduction of small cetaceans. Studies show that not only cetaceans but also fish and other marine life may be negatively impacted by anthropogenic noise.

Parties to ASCOBANS have agreed on implementation of measures through a number of resolutions that (1) highlight the potential impact that noise pollution may have on small cetaceans in the Agreement Area and (2) commit to reduce the pressure presented by underwater noise. The Agreement Area requires improved monitoring, collation of data, and consideration of appropriate mitigation measures.

To better understand the extent to which noise negatively impacts the health of small cetaceans, and to learn about new work relevant to the topic, countries are requested to provide related information.

3.1. To which noise registers/databases has your country contributed to date?

ICES Impulsive Noise Register (for HELCOM and OSPAR Parties)

Please select only one option

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Not Applicable

National registry

Please select only one option

- ○ Yes, please specify (e.g. JNCC noise registry) _____
- ○ No
- ○ Not Applicable

Other

Please select only one option

- ○ Yes, please specify: _____
- ○ No

3.2. Any instances/issues in the reporting period including information on planned or completed significant developments/activities, including the details of monitoring in place before, during and after the project:

If you selected 'Yes', please provide details in this table - download and then attach it using the blue 'clip' button.

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ○ Yes

3.3. Relevant new research/work/collaboration on underwater noise in your country.

(List initiatives/ projects (incl. PhD, MSc); publications (reports, theses, papers in journals, books) from any study; web links to other relevant information)

3.4. Report on noise management for cumulative impacts, including relevant regulations and guidelines, seismic shot point densities and level of impact deemed acceptable.

3.5. Is the perceived level of pressure from underwater noise in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same or unknown?

Status relative to previous years. To be done per species basis (Annex B) where applicable.

Species	Increasing/Decreasing/Staying the same/Unknown	Nature of the evidence

4. Ocean Energy

AIM: to understand the extent and development of current and planned ocean energy projects, and progress in monitoring and mitigation of their negative effects on small cetaceans during the reporting period.

Relevant Resolutions: 8.11 (Rev.MOP9), 8.9, **8.6 (Rev.MOP10)**, 8.3, 6.2 (Rev.MOP10)

Renewable energy is a necessary component of the efforts to supply the energy needs of human populations while combatting climate change. Efforts to harness renewable energy sources, however, should be conducted in a way that does not have a harmful impact on biological diversity and the marine environment. There are potential adverse effects of ocean energy on small cetaceans from such energy projects. In regard to small cetaceans, this can include potential lethal interactions or injury, negative behavioural impacts from displacement and changes in fecundity, calf survival and juvenile and adult mortality. There remains uncertainty regarding quantifying the (magnitude of the) pressure from ocean energy production on small cetaceans.

Parties to ASCOBANS have agreed to introduce precautionary measures and procedures for activities surrounding the development of renewable energy in marine environments in order to minimise and mitigate possible effects on small cetaceans, by following best practices. Parties have committed to investigating such pressures and robustly monitoring and mitigating them through environmental impact assessments. Addressing all aspects relevant to the conservation of protected species in regard to ocean energy and collaboration with other organizations working on or potentially interested in the issue is to the benefit of small cetaceans in the Agreement Area.

It is of particular interest to ASCOBANS to understand current and ongoing renewable energy projects in the Agreement Area, mitigation measures and procedures in use and other work relevant to the topic. Countries are requested to provide information relevant to their activities.

4.1. Were there any new wind energy farms in development/construction during the reporting period?

If you select 'Yes', please provide details in this table - download and then attach it using the blue 'clip' button.

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ○ Yes. Please provide details in the table.
- ○ Not Applicable.

Comments: _____

4.2. Were there any new wave power installations in development/construction during the reporting period?

If you select 'Yes', please provide details in this table - download and then attach it using the blue 'clip' button.

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ○ Yes. Please provide details in the table.

- Not Applicable.
  Comments: _____

4.3. Were there any new tidal energy installations in development/construction during the reporting period?

If you select 'Yes', please provide details in this table - download and then attach it using the blue 'clip' button.

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes. Please provide details in the table.
- Not Applicable.
  Comments: _____

4.4. Were there any new tidal lagoon/barrage installations in development/construction during the reporting period?

If you select 'Yes', please provide details in this table - download and then attach it using the blue 'clip' button.

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes. Please provide details in the table.
- Not Applicable.
  Comments: _____

4.5. Has there been any other instances/issues related to ocean energy during the reporting period in your country?

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes

4.6. How is the pressure managed, incl. relevant regulations / guidelines and the year of implementation (current and planned)?

4.7. Relevant new research/work/collaboration on ocean energy in your country.

(List initiatives/ projects (incl. PhD, MSc); publications (reports, theses, papers in journals, books) from any study; web links to other relevant information)

Comments:

4.8. Mark the perceived level of pressure from ocean energy in your country to the table below.

Status relative to previous years. For example, active construction of new developments could increase the pressure, while decommissioning or addition of mitigation measures to pre-existing projects could decrease the pressure.

	Status in year relative to previous years [Increasing, Decreasing, Staying the same, Unknown, Not Applicable]	Nature of the evidence

Wind energy		
Wave power		
Tidal energy		
Tidal lagoon/barrage		

Comments:

5. Cetacean Watching Industry

AIM: to determine if the developing cetacean watching industry poses a threat to small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: 10.3, 8.9, 6.1, 5.4

Whale and dolphin watching is a global industry that can provide socio-economic benefits to local communities by attracting tourism, as well as strengthening public awareness of conservation needs. However, it also has the potential of being harmful when it interferes with the behaviour of animals in their natural environment and may even lead to injury or death. As the cetacean watching industry is still scarcely developed in some countries, collecting this data now allows tracking the development of the industry.

It is of particular importance to ASCOBANS to obtain an overview of the current scale of the activities and to monitor the development of the industry in the future. This is done by quantifying the number and locations of operators, reporting negative interactions and providing information on the development and implementation of any guidelines regarding cetacean watching.

Filling out this section accurately and completely will help to detect any indications of potential threats, allow timely mitigation action and enable Parties and Non-Party Range States to work towards a coordinated approach regarding the development of cetacean watching guidelines in the Agreement Area.

Note: We are here only addressing commercial cetacean watching activities which take place from vessels and include viewing of small cetacean species. Operators are defined as those offering trips with a primary focus: they advertise specifically with the aim to see small cetaceans, or a secondary focus: they advertise either for other taxa, such as birds or seals, or large cetaceans, or more general for wildlife, but mention the opportunity to see small cetaceans.

5.1 Do you have any commercial small cetacean watching industry operating in your country?

Please select only one option

- ○ No.
- ○ Yes.

5.3. Does your country have a definition of the term 'harassment' in general and/or as it relates to the Cetacean Watching Industry?

For example, the US Marine Mammal Protection Act uses the term harassment, and defines two levels:

- Level A harassment means any act of pursuit, torment, or annoyance that has the potential to injure a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild.
- Level B harassment refers to acts that have the potential to disturb (but not injure) a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild by disrupting behavioural patterns, including, but not limited to, migration, breathing, nursing, breeding, feeding, or sheltering.

NB. The UK uses the term 'disturbance' in its legislation.

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ○ Yes

5.4. Have there been any incidents of harassment towards small cetaceans in the context of commercial cetacean watching reported to authorities during the reporting period?

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ○ Yes

5.5. Does your country have any operators that offer swimming with dolphins (or other small cetaceans)?

In some parts of the world this has become an important tourism industry with potential impacts for both small cetaceans and swimmers. Although scarcely developed, it has occurred within the ASCOBANS Agreement Area, and requires at least background monitoring. Sometimes incidents occur and can lead to harm for small cetaceans and/or swimmers.

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes

5.6 List any incidents of harassment to small cetaceans during the reporting period in your country in the context of swimming with small cetaceans reported to authorities – and the outcome if known (behavioural response, injury, death, any court proceedings).

Date (dd/mm/yy)	Context of incidence	Outcome for (a) the animal or (b) human (e.g. behavioural response, injury, death)	Legal procedures/ court proceedings/ convictions that took place	Responsible authority for such reports	Link to websites or documentation of this report

5.7. Are there any solitary sociable dolphin interactions in your country?

Occasionally, individual solitary dolphins may associate with humans, resulting in increased interactions between the two which may lead to impacts upon either. Sometimes incidents occur and can lead to harm for small cetaceans and/or swimmers.

Please provide details in this table - download and then attach it using the blue 'clip' button.

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes. Please provide details in the table.

5.12. Is the perceived level of pressure from commercial small cetacean watching in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same or unknown?

Status relative to previous years. To be done per species basis (Annex B) where applicable.

Species	Increasing/Decreasing/Staying the same/Unknown	Nature of the evidence

6. Recreational Sea Use

AIM: to determine whether recreational sea use is detrimental to small cetaceans and, if so, to identify types of activity and areas of concern.

Relevant Resolutions: **10.6**, 10.3, 8.9, 8.3, 7.1, 6.1, 5.4

Recreational use of the sea by humans includes a wide variety of activities, some of which are known to have a potential negative impact on small cetaceans. This includes the use of RIBs (rigid-hulled inflatable boats), hard-hulled boats exceeding 10 knots in speed, yachts and personal watercrafts such as jet skis, kayaks and surfboards; and excludes recreational fishing and sea-angling.

Interactions can cause animals to change behaviour and move away, but can also have more serious impacts, such as injury or even death due to collision. ASCOBANS has agreed on a number of resolutions that highlight the importance to review all available information on recreational use of the sea. Obtaining an overview of best practices and guidelines will enable comparisons to be made across the Agreement Area, and ultimately may lead to the provision of overall, consistent guidelines that might be developed at a regional or national level. In this section we strive to obtain an overview of potential risk areas and national sources that have data on incidents with small cetaceans related to recreational sea use.

6.1 Are data on recreational sea use available for your country?

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes

6.3. Were there any incidents of disturbance or harassment to small cetaceans in relation to recreational sea use in your country?

Please select only one option

- No
- Unknown
- Yes

6.4. Does your country have any mitigation measures (codes of conducts/ guidelines/ laws/ rules) in place in the event of disturbance or harassment of small cetaceans through recreational sea use?

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes

6.5. Relevant new research/ work/ collaboration on disturbance or harassment of small cetaceans through recreational sea use in your country.

(List initiatives/ projects (incl. PhD, MSc); publications (reports, theses, papers in journals, books) from any study; web links to other relevant information)

6.6. Have there been any other instances / issues related to recreational sea use in your country during the reporting period?

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes

6.7. Is the perceived level of pressure from recreational sea use in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same or unknown?

Status relative to previous years. To be done per species (Annex B) where applicable.

Species	Increasing/Decreasing/Staying the same/Unknown	Nature of the evidence

7. Other Sources of Disturbance

AIM: to identify new sources of disturbance that could be a threat to small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: 10.7, 10.3, 8.9, 8.3, 7.1, 6.1

Overlap of small cetacean and human habitat use is not covered by the questions above, while human activities in the seas are increasing, particularly in the coastal zone. Human activities can, for example, cause a small cetacean to change behaviour, or it can cause physical harm or death. This section aims to identify new sources of disturbance that could be a threat to small cetaceans. The issue of noise is covered under section B3.

7.1. Have there been any incidents of disturbance to small cetaceans in your country during the reporting period, not covered in the items above?

Any incidents of disturbance to small cetaceans not covered in Sections B5 or B6 by the report.

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ○ Unknown
- ○ Yes. Please provide information.

7.2. Relevant new research/work/collaboration on other sources of disturbance in your country.

List initiatives/ projects (incl. PhD, MSc); publications (reports, theses, papers in journals, books) from any study; web links to other relevant information

C. Habitat Change and Degradation (incl. potential physical impacts)

8. Unexploded Ordnance

AIM: to provide information on the mitigation, management and potential negative impacts of unexploded ordnance on small cetaceans during the reporting period.

Relevant Resolutions: 8.11 (Rev.MOP9), 8.9, **8.8**, 8.3

Unexploded chemical and conventional munitions present a threat to small cetaceans. Hazards exist from unexploded munitions, which release chronic contaminants, and upon detonation, which is physically hazardous from extreme underwater noise and a sudden release of toxic substances. Unexploded ordnance is a notable threat in many areas, such as the Baltic Sea, where the quantity is unknown, though estimates are high. Information on disposal, state of corrosion and quantities of dumped munition is limited, as are meaningful data on the measured environmental impacts. The significance of this pressure's impact on small cetaceans requires further quantification. However, it is clear that mitigation measures are necessary to support alternatives to detonations, and when no alternative is feasible, to reduce negative impacts on small cetaceans.

In the ASCOBANS Area, millions of tons of unexploded ordnance are present in the marine environment and thousands of sea users, such as fishermen, encounter such munitions every year. Parties have agreed on resolutions to support (1) research investigating the pressure on marine animals and habitat and (2) mitigation measures regarding effects of disintegrating submerged munitions on the marine environment. Parties are to strive towards providing relevant information to required bodies and supporting efforts to address the negative implications from this pressure in other regional and international organizations and waters.

8.1. To which registers/databases covering conventional and chemical munitions has your country contributed to date?

Please select only one option

- ○ OSPAR
- ○ HELCOM
- ○ None

- Unknown
- Other, please state: _____

8.2. How many UXOs were detonated / released at sea?

Provide link to database if available.

Please select only one option

- 1-9 _____
- 10-49 _____
- 50-99 _____
- 100+ _____

8.3. Have there been any other instances/issues related to the issue of unexploded ordnance during the reporting period in your country?

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes

8.4. How is the issue of unexploded ordnances being managed?

(incl. mitigation measures, relevant regulations/guidelines, year of implementation; may include planned management – please distinguish between a) management of single UXOs and b) management of big amounts of ammunitions in one place e.g. munition dumpsites)

8.5. Is your country monitoring the chemical contaminants released from discarded munition material and unexploded ordnance? (including at munition dumpsites, war wrecks carrying ammunition, UXO detonation zones)

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes

8.6. Relevant new research/work/collaboration on the issue of unexploded ordnance in your country.

(List initiatives/ projects (incl. PhD, MSc); publications (reports, theses, papers in journals, books) from any study; web links to other relevant information)

8.7. Is the perceived level of pressure from unexploded ordnance in your country:

Please select only one option

- Increasing
- Decreasing
- Staying the same
- Unknown
- Not applicable.
  Comments: _____

Please provide the nature of the evidence where applicable:

9. Marine Debris (ingestion and entanglement)

AIM: to illustrate progress, during the reporting period, on understanding, monitoring and mitigating impacts of marine debris on small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: 10.3, 10.4, **9.3**, 8.8, 8.3, 7.1, 6.1

Marine debris, such as macroplastics and discarded fishing gear, poses a threat to small cetaceans due to the potential for these materials to be ingested or to cause entanglement. Commercial fishing operations, recreational fishing and cargo shipping are notable sources of this material, of which the majority is plastic and ghost nets. However, it is assumed that most of the marine litter worldwide comes from land, although this differs per region. Even small amounts of macroplastics that have been ingested may present serious effects on small cetaceans, such as detrimental influence on the gastrointestinal tract or leaching pollutants into the body, potentially leading to mortality or reduced body condition. Entanglement is well-established as a threat to small cetaceans as plastic debris continues to accumulate in aquatic environments, and may cause physical injuries, reduced survival or drowning.

To better understand the impact of marine debris on small cetaceans and measures in place to mitigate these effects, countries are requested to provide relevant information.

Note: Includes macroplastics and discarded fishing gear. Microplastics are covered under Section C10 Pollution and Hazardous Substances.

9.1. Does your country have monitoring in place to assess levels of marine debris?

Please select only one option

- ○ No (Go to Question 9.3)
- ◉ Yes

Provide information below:

Include parameters provided through monitoring (e.g. type of litter (size, shape, material), amount, impacts on species, geographical location, etc.)

Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) coordinate and undertake benthic trawl surveys within UK EEZ, which captures benthic litter data. Trawl surveys are a practical way to monitor seafloor litter because they are already ongoing for fish stock assessments, cover a wide surface, and collect a suitable quantity of litter for analysis. For each survey the following information was recorded: the definition and specification of the survey, the positions of stop and start of each trawl and its technical specification, such as wingspan, mesh size of net, cod end and blinders. After each tow, fish were deposited in the fish pound or hopper before being sorted, then all litter items were manually picked from the entire net, including ground ropes, lines, hopper and cod end, and classified according to the Cefas classification system which was adopted in the guidance document on Monitoring of Marine Litter in European Seas (OSPAR Commission, 2017 - https://www.ospar.org/documents?d=37515).

https://moat.cefas.co.uk/pressures-from-human-activities/marine-litter/seafloor-litter/

Beach litter

The Marine Conservation Society (MCS) organises Beachwatch surveys, where volunteers note down all the items they find in a 100m stretch of beach. The MCS analyses and collates all recorded litter data gathered to produce an annual report on marine litter on UK beaches. https://moat.cefas.co.uk/pressures-from-human-activities/marine-litter/beach-litter/

Floating litter

Floating litter is assessed through necropsy examinations of corpses of dead beached birds which are collected by volunteer networks and processed at laboratories. At dissection, in addition to the date, the discovery location is specified by a system of area codes and geographical coordinates for the area. Based on several internal and external anatomical characteristics, birds are classified as either adults or non-adults. Stomach contents are carefully rinsed in a sieve with a 1mm mesh and then transferred to a petri dish for sorting under a binocular microscope. Two types of plastic categories are distinguished in the OSPAR Common Indicator. Industrial plastic pellets are separated from consumer debris such as sheets, foams, threadlike materials and hard fragments.

https://moat.cefas.co.uk/pressures-from-human-activities/marine-litter/floating-litter/

Marine debris ingestion/entanglement

As part of its contract with UK and Scottish governments, the UK Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme and Scottish Marine Animal Stranding Schemes routinely record and summarise evidence of marine debris ingestion and/or entanglement found in UK stranded cetaceans which were subjected to post-mortem examination (see section 9.2). Programmes suchs as the Cornwall Wildife Trust Marine Stradings Network work in partnership with the wider strandings schemes to record and photograph all stranded marine mammals to better understand threats, including marine debris entanglement. Further, the Scottish Marine Animal Stranding Scheme (SMASS) has developed an app which records levels of litter noted on surveyed sections of coastline. The Scottish Entanglement Alliance, a collaborative funded project with the aim of engaging with the Scottish inshore fishing industry, is also aiming to better understand the incidence of marine animal entanglements which may be in active or discarded gear, and to develop sustainable, proportional mitigation strategies.

Some research NGOs (e.g. HWDT, SWF) systematically record marine debris during dedicated cetacean surveys.

Alongside monitoring, there are also several national and devolved strategies which aim to reduce the levels of marine litter including:

- Scottish Marine Litter Strategy – monitoring of beaches, seabed and water column https://www.gov.scot/publications/marine-litter-strategy-scotland-2/
- Northern Ireland beaches https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/marine-litter
- Welsh Government strategy to tackle marine plastic waste

9.2. Are these data publicly available?

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes (please provide web link)

Marine litter data from trawl surveys can be found on the ICES Database of Trawl Surveys (DATRAS). Data from other monitoring is not publicly available online but information on marine litter in various regions of the UK can be found in publicly available reports (e.g., CSIP and SMASS annual reports, Marine Litter Reports for Northern Ireland [https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/marine-litter-report-2025]). Cases of entanglement recorded by SMASS can be found here: https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fbatchgeo.com%2Fmap%2Fd737084d818832c5760e19c55d366a50&data=05%7C02%7CEmily.Martin%40jncc.gov.uk%7C4ff4768fed714795688408deac2a2025%7C444ee4e8b2fd491d8c318b0508370a6b%7C0%7C0%7C639137494134172938%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=xFxrgp%2BOFRaXIxw6SolBDQL3mT95Rf%2BhntUCYAbyNA0%3D&reserved=0

9.3. What species of small cetaceans were found to have been impacted by marine debris? Please provide details in the table.

Please provide details: download this table and then attach it using the blue 'link' button.

Details in attached table.

981/Sec-II_C_9.3_0_UK.xlsx

9.4. Are there any mitigation measures in place?

Mitigation measures might include changes in gear to prevent loss, entanglement response, adoption of measures to reduce land-based/boat-based sources of marine debris, etc.

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes

9.5. How is marine debris managed?

(incl. relevant regulations / guidelines and the year of implementation, current and planned)

There are various litter strategies published, aiming to reduce waste entering the environment e.g.

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prevent-pollution-and-reduce-harmful-emissions-at-sea

https://www.gov.scot/publications/marine-litter-strategy-scotland-2/

UKMS Marine Litter indicator https://moat.cefas.co.uk/pressures-from-human-activities/marine-litter/

The UK has national and international commitments under the UK Marine Strategy (UKMS) (Marine Strategy Regulations 2010), the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR) and in relation to United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14, to reduce marine pollution and address marine litter impacts. Marine litter is currently assessed at a UK level through the UK Marine Strategy (UKMS), which requires the UK to achieve Good Environmental Status for marine litter (Descriptor 10), through reducing the amount of litter in the marine environment. Currently, beach litter, seabed litter and plastic particles in fulmar stomachs are assessed as the common indicators for reporting on marine litter for OSPAR and the UKMS.

Wales has a nationwide recycling scheme for end-of-life fishing gear, as part of broader Welsh Government strategy to tackle marine plastic waste. https://www.gov.wales/welsh-marine-environment-boosted-pioneering-fishing-gear-recycling-scheme.

Northern Ireland Fishers Against Marine Litter Pledge: https://thefishingdaily.com/latest-news/northern-ireland-fishing-industry-takes-a-stand-against-marine-litter/

9.6. Relevant new research/work/collaboration on marine debris in your country.

List initiatives/ projects (incl. PhD, MSc); publications (reports, theses, papers in journals, books) from any study; web links to other relevant information e.g. link to OSPAR reports

Ongoing PhD project on marine debris using samples from CSIP necropsies- collaboration between University of Exeter and CSIP (see Section **A1.10**)

9.7. Is the perceived level of pressure from marine debris in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same, or unknown?

Please select only one option

- ○ Increasing
- ○ Decreasing
- ◉ Staying the same
- ○ Unknown
- ○ Not applicable.
  Comments:

Please provide the nature of the evidence and describe per species (Annex B) where applicable:

Data from necropsies for both short-beaked common dolphin and harbour porpoise suggest that the level of pressure from marine debris is staying the same. Information for other species is unknown.

10. Pollution and hazardous substances (incl. microplastics)

AIM: to illustrate progress on understanding, monitoring and mitigating impacts of important current and emerging pollution-related hazards on small cetaceans. during the reporting period

Relevant Resolutions: 10.3, 10.4, 8.9, 8.8, **8.7**, 8.4 (Rev.MOP9), 8.3, **7.4**, 7.1, 6.1, 5.7

Marine environments have been subject to a wide range of different types of pollution over the last decades. Top predators, such as small cetaceans that feed on higher trophic prey, tend to accumulate many of these potentially hazardous substances. There are a number of contaminants and pathogens that are known, or suspected, to have impacts on small cetacean health, immune status or reproduction. These include, for example: polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and other persistent organic pollutants (POPs), oil pollution (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons), toxins from harmful algal blooms (HABs), sewage, radionuclides, toxic elements, tri-butyl tin (TBT), morbillivirus, and Brucella. In addition, micro- and nano-plastics are also present in marine environment and their impacts are presently poorly understood.

Monitoring can be done using body tissue from small cetaceans obtained from live animals through biopsies, or from dead animals that are generally found on the shore. Necropsies allow the sampling of different types of tissue such as blubber, muscle, kidney or liver and these can be analysed subsequently.

To better understand the impact of contaminants on small cetacean health, to detect new emerging hazards and to work towards a common protocol for analysing samples, countries are asked to provide information on their programs.

Note: Includes microplastics. Macroplastics and discarded fishing gear are covered under Section C 9 Marine Debris.

10.1. Does your country conduct monitoring of pollutants in small cetaceans?

Several pollutants have serious effects on individual small cetaceans and can threaten populations. The aim is to capture the nature of existing monitoring and identify gaps in terms of which pollutants are monitored, the extend of this monitoring and the establishment of securely funded long-term data series.

Please select only one option

- ○ No. (Go to Question 10.7.)
- ○ Yes

Comments:

10.2. Who is carrying out the pollutant monitoring program? Please provide information on the institution(s)/agencies that collect the samples and carry out the analyses.

Please provide the following information per institution(s)/agencies: name of institution/agency, role in monitoring (e.g. sample collection, analyses, other), postal address, contact person, telephone, email, weblink.

10.3. Identify the small cetacean species that were covered by your monitoring program during the reporting period.

Comments:

10.4. Select the source of your samples

(multiple answers possible)

Tick all that apply

- [ ] Necropsy from stranding
- [ ] Necropsy from bycatch
- [ ] Sample from live stranding
- [ ] Biopsy from live animal
- [ ] Other (specify in comments)

Comments:

10.5. Select the geographical coverage of your monitoring program

Tick all that apply

- [ ] OI Norwegian Sea
- [ ] OII Dogger Bank
- [ ] OII Southern North Sea
- [ ] OII Northern North Sea
- [ ] OII Channel
- [ ] OII Norwegian Trench
- [ ] OII Skagerrak
- [ ] OIII Celtic Sea
- [ ] OIII Irish Sea
- [ ] OIII Irish & Scottish W. Coast
- [ ] OIV N. Nay of Biscay
- [ ] OIV Iberian Sea
- [ ] OIV Gulf of Cadiz

- [ ] OV Wider Atlantic
- [ ] H Bothnian Bay
- [ ] H Bothnian Sea
- [ ] H Archipelago Sea
- [ ] H Åland Sea
- [ ] H Gulf of Finland
- [ ] H Northern Baltic Proper
- [ ] H Western Gotland Basin
- [ ] H Eastern Gotland Basin
- [ ] H Gulf of Riga
- [ ] H Gdansk Basin
- [ ] H Bornholm Basin
- [ ] H Arkona Basin
- [ ] H Kattegat
- [ ] H Belt Sea
- [ ] H The Sound
- [ ] Not Applicable

10.6. Select the contaminant / pathogen analyses you have conducted for small cetaceans.

Please select only one option

- ( ) POPs (e.g. PCBs)
- ( ) Oil (e.g. PAHs)
- ( ) HAB toxins
- ( ) Sewage
- ( ) Radionuclides
- ( ) Brucella
- ( ) Toxic elements
- ( ) TBT
- ( ) Morbillivirus
- ( ) Microplastics
- ( ) Nanoplastics
- ( ) Others: _____

Comments:

10.9. If applicable, list any additional evidence/ data of reduced impacts of pollutants on small cetaceans following implementation of national mitigation measures.

(e.g. decline of contaminant levels in blubber over time)

10.10. Have there been any instances/ issues related to pollution and hazardous substances in your country during the reporting period?

Please select only one option

- ( ) No
- ( ) Yes

10.11. Is the perceived level of pressure from pollution and hazardous substances in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same or unknown?

Status relative to previous years.

Please select only one option

- ○ Increasing
- ○ Decreasing
- ○ Staying the same
- ○ Unknown
- ○ Not Applicable.
  Comments: _____

Please provide the nature of the evidence and describe per species (Annex B) where applicable:

11. Ship Strikes

AIM: understanding the potential risk of ship strike as a cause of injury/death in small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: 10.6, 8.9, 6.1, 5.4

Ship strikes are collisions between vessels and cetaceans. In the last decades, evidence has emerged that ship strikes might occur more often than previously thought and can have a significant impact on small resident cetacean populations. Most research so far has focused on large cetaceans as those animals are often carried visibly into port at the bow of a vessel. For small cetaceans, ship strike events are not well documented.

Ship strike occurrence is directly linked to the frequency of shipping activity, including such directed at cetaceans, i.e. cetacean watching. To quantify this pressure, it is important to know what kind of vessels are involved in the strike, as well as the type, size and speed of the vessel. But it is also important to have information on the small cetaceans involved, in particular if the animals were engaged in certain behaviour such as feeding.

Ship strike can cause direct death or injury in cetaceans. Even collisions that are non-fatal might leave individuals with a reduction in their chance of survival. To determine the occurrence of ship-strikes, different sources are used. For small cetaceans, direct observations are the rarest. Necropsies of stranded animals can find evidence of characteristic trauma and photographs of animals that survived ship strikes can show typical injuries, such as marks left by propellers. One way to quantify how many animals in a population are impacted by ship strike is to assess the percentage of animals in a photo-identification catalogue that bear ship strike marks.

As this is still a not well documented threat, this section aims to obtain an overview of what kind of data and research is available and ongoing in the countries.

11.1 Are there reports available in your country of ship strikes with small cetaceans from visual observations?

Table available here: please download, complete, and then attach it using the blue 'link' button below.

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ○ Yes. Please provide details in the table.

11.2. Are there reports in your country of vessel strikes from necropsies of stranded animals for the reporting period?

Table available here: please download, complete, and then attach it using the blue 'link' button below.

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ○ Yes. Please provide details in the table.

11.3. Does your country have a protocol in use to determine that a cause of death in post-mortem examination is due to a vessel strike?

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ○ Yes

11.4. Is there evidence in your country from existing photo-identification catalogues of small cetaceans of any non-lethal ship strike during the reporting period?

For populations of small cetaceans, such as bottlenose dolphins, one can identify those animals in photo-identification catalogues of animals that show ship-strike evidence (e.g. scars). Monitoring the % of animals that show ship strike evidence can be a useful tool to monitor the development of this threat.

If you select 'Yes', please provide details in this table - download and then attach it using the blue 'link' button below.

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ○ Yes. Please provide details in the table.

11.5. Do you have any other photographs or evidence of ship strikes outside of photo-identification catalogue?

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ○ Yes

11.6. Relevant new research/work/collaboration on ship strike and its possible effects on small cetaceans in your country.

(List initiatives/ projects (incl. PhD, MSc); publications (reports, theses, papers in journals, books) from any study; web links to other relevant information)

11.7. List any management/ policy actions/ relevant regulations/ guidelines related to mitigating ship strike for small cetaceans (re-routing, tracking animals, ship speed limits) in your country and the year of implementation (current and planned).

Provide web links if available.

11.8. Have there been any other instances / issues of ship strike on small cetaceans in your country in the reporting period?

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ○ Yes

11.9. Is the perceived level of pressure from ship strikes on small cetaceans in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same or unknown?

Please select only one option

- ○ Increasing
- ○ Decreasing
- ○ Staying the same
- ○ Unknown
- ○ Not Applicable.
  Comments: _____

Please provide the nature of the evidence and describe per species (Annex B) where applicable:

12. Climate change (incl. ocean acidification)

AIM: to illustrate progress on understanding, monitoring and mitigating negative effects of important and emerging climate change related impacts on small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: 10.3, 8.9, 8.4 (Rev.MOP9), 8.3, 7.4, 7.1, 6.1, 5.7

It is certain that climate change is altering the habitat of cetaceans. However, our understanding of how the predicted changes will impact different species and populations can be further developed by identifying issues and trends through reporting. CMS[1] highlights the importance of addressing potential issues through the engagement of (1) researchers to better understand the underlying processes, as well as (2) conservation managers and policy makers to monitor changes and to mitigate negative impacts. Focus should be given to understanding tangible climate change effects relevant to cetaceans, such as changing ocean temperatures, prey depletion / prey range shifts, ocean acidification, increased frequency and intensity of ocean storms, changes in sea ice and weakening of the North Atlantic Drift. Such occurrences require that we gather evidence on the existence and nature of climate change effects on small cetaceans and evaluate current monitoring programmes and mitigation measures.

This section aims to provide an overview of what kind of activities are already ongoing in the member states to address climate change. The focus is on those actions specifically regarding cetaceans as well as the most likely impacts on their habitat and prey. Climate change possibly represents one of the most important future threats to the status of cetaceans in the ASCOBANS region. Direct effects may arise due to ocean warming, resulting in distribution shifts (generally northward) so that the animals continue to occupy waters with temperature regimes compatible with their thermal niches. Key indirect effects will result from changes in prey distribution and abundance due to ocean warming, ocean acidification and changes in ocean current systems.

[1] CMS Resolution 12.21 (Rev.COP14) *Climate Change and Migratory Species.*

12.1. Does your country undertake monitoring that has potential to contribute to knowledge and identification of climate impacts on small cetaceans?

This refers to direct and indirect effects.

Climate change will have a multiplicity of possible direct and indirect effects on small cetaceans. Attempting to quantify this is challenging, these questions are aimed to provide an overview of the type of monitoring programmes that are conducted that may provide indirect evidence of climate change on small cetaceans.

Please select only one option

- ○ No. (Go to Question 12.3.)
- ○ Yes. (Go to Question 12.2.)

12.3. Relevant new research/ work/ collaborations which provide evidence/ data about climate change, including its emerging potential issues and effects, on small cetaceans in your country.

(List initiatives/ projects (incl. PhD, MSc); publications (reports, theses, papers in journals, books) from any study; web links to other relevant information); include the species concerned, the climate change effect observed, who did the work)

12.4. Have there been any instances / issues related to identified trends in small cetacean populations as a result of climate change in your country during the reporting period?

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ○ Yes

12.5. Is the perceived level of pressure from climate change to small cetaceans in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same or unknown?

Please select only one option

- ○ Increasing
- ○ Decreasing
- ○ Staying the same
- ○ Unknown

Not Applicable.
Comments:

Please provide the nature of the evidence and describe per species (Annex B) where applicable:

13. Physical Habitat Change (e.g. from construction)

AIM: human activities in the Agreement Area have the potential to impact upon small cetaceans. Tracking those activities that cause physical habitat change and improving our understanding of their relative impacts will help shape any necessary mitigation action required.

Relevant Resolutions: 10.3, 8.11 (Rev.MOP9), 8.9, 8.6 (MOP10), 8.4 (Rev.MOP9), 8.3, 7.1, 6.2, 6.1, 5.7

This section aims to review new information on physical habitat change, e.g. from construction, and its impacts on small cetaceans, their prey and their habitat, and make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.

The collation of this information will contribute to the development of risk maps showing the spatial and temporal (by season) distribution of activities that have an impact on small cetaceans, including information provided in National Reports, taking into account the work done by other organizations.

Note: In the term "physical habitat change", we include a) coastal/marine construction – artificial islands, harbours, bridges, oil/gas platforms, wind turbines, tidal turbines; and b) seabed damage – dredging, bottom trawling.

13.1. Provide spatial information on locations (in form of maps and/or links) of physical habitat change in your country by activity type (dredging, marine construction, coastal construction) for the reporting period.

Many range states are mapping human activities to fulfil obligations under the EU Maritime Spatial Planning Directive, MSFD, OSPAR, and HELCOM; this information is relevant (though often not readily accessible) to ASCOBANS in understanding the extent and trends of human activities potentially impacting small cetaceans.

Please provide per region (Annex A): the type of information (e.g. maps, GIS, reports), whether the data is available online, and web links to data, or comment on unavailability.

13.2. Does your country have any reported cases of physical habitat change (e.g. dredging, marine construction, coastal construction) impacting small cetaceans during the reporting period?

Please select only one option

No
Yes

13.3. Does your country have any mitigation measures (regulations/guidelines) to prevent impacts on small cetaceans during physical habitat change activities (e.g. dredging, marine construction, coastal construction)?

Please select only one option

No
Yes

13.4. Relevant new initiatives/projects/publications (reports, theses, papers in journals, books) in your country during the reporting period on impacts from physical habitat change on small cetaceans (incl. title, organization, lead author).

Provide web links if available.

13.5. Have there been any other instances/issues in your country regarding physical habitat change during the reporting period?

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes

13.6 Is the perceived level of pressure from physical habitat change in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same or unknown?

Please select only one option

- Increasing
- Decreasing
- Staying the same
- Unknown
- Not applicable.
  Comments:

13.6.1. Please provide the nature of the evidence and describe per species (Annex B) where applicable:

14. Other issues

14.1. List any other issues related to habitat change and degradation not mentioned above.

D. Management of Cumulative Impacts

15. Maritime Spatial Planning

AIM: to provide information on existing and proposed maritime spatial plans and processes during the reporting period that may impact small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions **10.5**, 10.3, 8.9, 8.6 (Rev.MOP10), 8.4 (Rev.MOP9), 8.3

A growing demand for use of maritime space increases pressure on ecosystems and marine resources. Marine ecosystems with good environmental status provide notable benefits to a number of economic outputs. Implementation of an integrated spatial planning and management approach can better mitigate negative impacts from maritime activities on marine environments. Spatial planning can support sustainable marine development through coordinated, coherent and transparent decision-making and the encouragement and identification of multi-purpose uses in relevant projects. Maritime spatial planning is essential when selecting the most appropriate siting for marine-based projects. Particular attention should be given to critical habitat and relevant species, such as small cetaceans, in order to achieve good environmental status.

ASCOBANS Parties have agreed on a number of resolutions that support the integration of maritime spatial planning into development processes. Small cetaceans benefit from good maritime spatial planning, and this is highlighted in the resolutions. Countries are requested to provide information relevant to their country in this regard.

15.1.1. Please provide information in regard to current and foreseen maritime spatial planning.

National plan(s) and processes in force:

15.1.2. Please provide information in regard to current and foreseen maritime spatial planning.

National plan(s) and processes in preparation:

15.1.3. Please provide information in regard to current and foreseen maritime spatial planning.

Further information, including links to online resources and maps where available:

15.2. Does your national MSP include a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)?

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes

15.3. Does your MSP include specific provisions such as reservation or priority layers for the management of one or more ASCOBANS listed species (e.g. such as the reservation areas for harbour porpoises in the German MSP)?

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes

15.4. Does your MSP include buffer zones between areas designated for particular economic use (e.g. offshore wind, shipping) and marine protected areas (including Natura 2000 sites) or areas of particular importance for ASCOBANS-listed species?

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes

15.5. Does your MSP include provisions for the mitigation of underwater noise with regards to ASCOBANS species (e.g. for shipping, during offshore wind park construction)?

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes

15.6.1. How many MSPs does your country have?

Please select only one option

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

E. Area-based Conservation / Marine Protected Areas

16. Protected areas, e.g. Natura 2000 sites

AIM: to provide information on existing and proposed marine protected areas with small cetaceans as part of the selection criteria.

Relevant Resolutions: 5.7

Marine protected areas (MPAs) are considered under numerous agreements (including the Convention on Biological Diversity, Habitats Directive, Bern Convention, Ramsar Convention, OSPAR Convention, HELCOM, ACCOBAMS, MSFD) as a tool to achieve conservation goals. Part of ASCOBANS remit is to provide expert advice on the conservation and management of small cetaceans. This includes inviting Parties and Range States to continue or initiate research aimed at locating areas of special importance to the survival (in particular breeding and feeding) of small cetaceans as suitable sites for the establishment of protected areas. This also includes advising on appropriate management measures in these areas, on their own or in the context of other intergovernmental bodies to ensure the protection of small cetaceans.

To monitor the progress of such work to fulfil the obligations of Resolution 5.7 and actions in the workplan, ASCOBANS requires information (e.g. location, species, status, spatial data, management plans and monitoring) on existing and proposed marine protected areas with small cetaceans

as part of the selection criteria.

It is of particular interest to ASCOBANS to obtain an overview of the current scale of marine protected areas and to review best practice approaches to management of marine protected areas, in order to make recommendations to Parties.

16.1. Does your country have MPAs (existing or proposed) where small cetaceans are the primary reason for the (proposed) designation?

If you select 'Yes', please provide details in this table - download and then attach it using the blue 'clip' button.

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes

16.2. Does your country have MPAs (existing or proposed) with small cetaceans are forming part of the selection criteria?

If you select 'Yes', please provide details in this table - download and then attach it using the blue 'clip' button.

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes

16.2.1 How many? Please also provide more details in the table.

16.3. Provide information on management measures, including regulations/guidelines, particularly relevant to small cetaceans in MPAs listed above. Including any temporal/spatial restriction of activities (i.e. seasonal fishery closures).

In order to monitor implementation of MPA management measures and make recommendations on best practice, we need to understand what management measures are being used and be aware of examples of what approaches are proving effective.

Site Name	Pressure (add pressures per site as applicable)	Measure (add measures per pressure per site as applicable)

16.4. Provide details of existing or proposed monitoring schemes related to the effectiveness of MPAs / management measures listed above for small cetaceans.

16.5. Relevant new research/work/collaboration relating to MPAs in your country.

In order to plan future approaches for MPA management and monitoring we need to be aware of current gaps and emerging issues.

List initiatives/ projects (incl. PhD, MSc); publications (reports, theses, papers in journals, books) from any study; web links to other relevant information; include the species concerned, who did the work.

Section III: Surveys and Research

A. Biological Information (per species)

1. Abundance estimates

AIM: to provide new information on abundance and life history parameters of small cetaceans during the reporting period.

Relevant Resolutions: 10.3, 8.5 (Rev.MOP9), 8.4 (Rev.MOP9), 8.3, 7.1, 6.1, 5.7, 5.5, **4.7**, **3.5**, 3.3

Abundance estimates and information on life history are of critical importance for the determination of broader species attributes such as populations levels, health and overall status. These parameters can contribute towards determination of GES and provide a reference for mortality events. Abundance and life history parameters are typically assessed from monitoring programmes. Fluctuations in these parameters can provide insight into trends in populations. Information on abundance and life history parameters can inform the need for mitigation measures, and regional assessment of these parameters allows for a more spatially targeted and concentrated response to support national assessments.

In the ASCOBANS Area, small cetacean abundance and life history should be monitored in response to a number of ASCOBANS resolutions. Continued monitoring of these parameters is essential to understanding current status and trends.

1.1. Did your country conduct national dedicated surveys on abundance and distribution during the reporting period?

If you select 'Yes', please provide details in this table - download and then attach it using the blue 'clip' button.

Attach maps separately, clearly marking which survey they apply to.

Note: Information relevant to SCANS-IV is to be provided in Question 1.2.

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ◉ Yes. Please provide details in table.

982/Sec-III_A_1.1_UK.xlsx

Relevant information on distribution during the reporting period:

Include species, method, time period, weblinks, and other relevant information.

Risso's dolphin, PAM, May-Oct 2025, pilot project of 6 acoustic broadband moorings in the North-east Lewis MPA to complement existing Scottish Passive Acoustic Network (SPAN, Scottish Government) moorings. Other cetacean species vocalisations recorded, including odontocetes, baleen whales, harbour porpoise. Occurrence and distribution.

All cetacean species, dedicated boat line transect, April – Dec 2025, west coast of Scotland (inner and outer Hebrides) coverage by HWDT's RV Silurian. Relative abundance and distribution, behaviour, and threats.

All cetacean species, dedicated land-based sightings Jan – Dec 2025, all round Scotland regional coverage by WDC Shorewatch programme. Occurrence and distribution, behaviour, and threats.

Aerial survey of the Sea of the Hebrides MPA, August 2025, HiDef DAS line transect, all cetacean species.

There are various smaller scale/local projects conducting dedicated effort in Scotland including:

(1) Minke whale PAM Jun-Dec 2025 (ongoing) in the Southern Trench MPA, complementing existing Scottish Passive Acoustic Network (SPAN, Scottish Government) moorings, at 3 locations.

(2) Minke whale and bottlenose dolphin dedicated boat surveys in the Southern Trench MPA May-Oct 2025 (CRRU).

(3) Risso's dolphin dedicated boat photo-ID surveys in Shetland Sept-Dec 2025 (ongoing).

1.2. Other relevant new research/work/collaboration on abundance estimates in regard to small cetaceans in your country during the reporting period.

List initiatives/ projects (incl. PhD, MSc); publications (reports, theses, papers in journals, books) from any study and information relevant to SCANS-IV; web links to other relevant information.

Gilles, A, Authier, M, Pigeault, R, Ramirez-Martinez, NC, Benoit, V, Carlström, J, Eira, C, Geelhoed, SCV, Laran, S, Sequeira, M, Sveegaard, S, Taylor, NL, Saavedra, C, Vázquez-Bonales, JA, Hammond, PS (2025). Spatial models of cetacean density in European Atlantic waters based on SCANS-IV summer 2022 survey data. Final report published 14 May 2025. 31 pp plus Appendix. https://tinyurl.com/3rv246v

Species reporting under Regulation 6a and 9a of the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 was finalized in 2025. Reports published in January 2026 and are available on JNCC's website here: https://jncc.gov.uk/resources/15a481c0-ac7a-4762-af58-d81566781677 and NRW's website here: Natural Resources Wales / Habitats Regulations 9A Report for Wales 2019-2024: UK marine species data. Country level summaries (and Management Unit level assessments - unofficial) are also available – eg in Wales see: Natural Resources Wales / Habitats Regulations 9A Report for Wales 2019-2024.

The POSEIDON project continued, aiming to inform offshore wind development and nature conservation. As part of this project, digital aerial surveys were completed to better understand marine mammal distribution, abundance, and behaviour.

ORCA and JNCC are currently running a pilot programme aiming to collect data to address identified gaps for cetaceans in UK waters. The initiative aims to improve the evidence available for use in spatial management and industry advice to better inform effective and appropriate management decisions, and strengthen assessment and reporting capacity - including progress towards Good Environmental Status for marine mammals (the legal benchmark for European and UK marine waters to be clean, healthy and productive, ensuring sustainable use while maintaining biodiversity). All data collected will be made open-access through the Joint Cetacean Data Programme (JCDP), so government, regulators, industry, researchers and NGOs can apply it widely. The work is funded through the Healthy and Biologically Diverse Seas Evidence Group.

Natural Resources Wales completed a suite of Welsh SAC feature condition assessments in 2025 including marine mammal features such as bottlenose dolphin: Natural Resources Wales / Condition assessments for Welsh European marine sites (EMS)

1.3. Is the abundance of species in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same, or unknown?

Status relative to previous years. Please provide the nature of the evidence and describe per species (Annex B) where applicable.

Please select only one option

- ○ Increasing
- ○ Decreasing
- ○ Staying the same
- ○ Unknown
- ○ Not applicable _____

983/Sec-III_A_1.1_UK.xlsx

Please provide the nature of the evidence and describe per species (Annex B) where applicable:

Information by species is included in the attached table. Trends were calculated for reporting under the UK Habitats Regulations using data from SCANS-IV.

For bottlenose dolphin, the information in the attached table includes both the offshore and coastal ecotypes as a single species. However, for the coastal ecotype of bottlenose dolphin, the trend in abundance is unknown. The total population is a collation of the latest estimates from each of the coastal Management Units but latest population estimates available for each MU range from 2007 to 2023, therefore the confidence in the overall population estimate is low and it is not possible to assess trends over time. However, based on the increase of the coastal bottlenose dolphin population within key areas (e.g., east Scotland, Irish Sea) over this reporting period (2019 - 2025), it can be assumed that overall the coastal bottlenose dolphin population is increasing in abundance and range.

There are also regional trends in harbour porpoise abundance.

984/Sec-III_A_1.3_UK.xlsx

2. New information on life history parameters

2.1. Is there new information on the following life history parameters in the reporting period?

For each life history parameters, please identify the species and provide web links and details where applicable.

	Yes/No	Describe per species
Age of sexual and physical maturity	No	
Inter-birth intervals	No	
Calf and adult mortality rates	No	
Potential reproductive span/capacity	No	
Longevity	No	
Diet	No	
Age and sex structure	No	
Other relevant factors	Yes	Population structure of Risso's dolphin in UK; population modelling approaches for marine mammals in Wales

B. Monitoring and Survey Schemes

3. Overview of current monitoring and survey schemes

AIM: to provide information on the progress of monitoring programmes, relevant methodologies and aims thereof, and status of small cetaceans during the reporting period.

Relevant Resolutions: 10.3, 8.11 (Rev.MOP9), 8.9, 8.8, 8.5 (Rev.MOP9), 8.4 (Rev.MOP9), 8.3, 7.3, 7.1, 6.1, 5.7

Monitoring programmes provide important data on biological and environmental attributes, such as population status, abundance and spatial-temporal distribution. They create opportunities for new research and development, including potential improvements to methodology for monitoring in terms of accuracy, practicality and cost efficiency.

In the ASCOBANS Area, application of coherent monitoring programmes focused on small cetaceans, which collect and provide objective, robust and comparable data, is a key component in understanding and improving the conservation status of small cetaceans through appropriate management. Parties have agreed to design, implement and support relevant monitoring programmes through a number of resolutions. Such efforts are also supported by legislation from a number of bodies which identify monitoring as a requirement in management systems. Additionally, Parties have been encouraged to coordinate their monitoring programmes, which promotes international cooperation and synergies. Parties have also been encouraged to review such monitoring programmes and propose improvements for the betterment of conservation efforts.

It is the interest of ASCOBANS to understand the current monitoring programmes utilised, their outputs, and future activities in the Agreement Area. Countries are requested to provide information relevant to their activities as well as potential improvements to such programmes and efforts.

3.1. Did your country have national monitoring programmes that enabled assessment of the Conservation Status of small cetaceans in your waters (i.e. provides abundance estimates and/or life history parameters and information on pressures) during the reporting period?

If you select 'Yes', please provide details in this table - download and then attach it using the blue 'clip' button.

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ◉ Yes. Please provide an overview in the table.

985/Sec-III_B_3.1_UK.xlsx

3.2. Please provide the relevant information regarding aerial surveying activities.

Provide the number of surveys, area covered, relevant species, and timeframe of the survey.

2 aerial surveys, Sea of the Hebrides MPA, all cetacean species, August and September 2025.

3.3. Please provide the relevant information regarding Passive Acoustic Monitoring (PAM).

Provide the location of moored instruments, timeframe of the survey, the relevant species, and the make and model of instruments used.

Data collection has been ongoing since 2018 for the Skerries and Causeway (Portstewart Point; *55 11.829, -06 43.631*) and North Channel (Outer Copelands; *54 39.800, -05 24.000*). Each acoustic mooring includes two acoustic recording devices; an automated cetacean click detector (CPOD and FPOD, Chelonia Ltd) and a bottom-mounted broadband acoustic recorder (Soundtrap ST300; Ocean Instruments Ltd), together with an external battery pack for the broadband recorder, and an acoustic release unit (Vemco VR2AR; RSAqua) to facilitate mooring recovery. The Soundtrap is programmed to record at a sample rate of 96 kHz and a duty cycle of 20 minutes of active recording every 60 minutes, while the CPOD and FPOD units monitor continuously, recording metadata of all click like events (including echolocation clicks from dolphins and porpoises). Moorings are recovered and redeployed every 6-12 weeks using the AFBI RV Corystes. Concurrent deployments, of both automated cetacean click detectors, the predecessor CPOD and the currently supported FPOD, have been carried out as a transition period.

21 locations around the Scottish coastline within and outwith MPAs as part of the Scottish Passive Acoustic Network (SPAN, Scottish Government), various timeframes but deployment was throughout 2025 and since 2022 (building on ECOMMAS locations), all vocalising cetacean species detected and underwater soundscape monitoring, RTSys broadband recorders and PODs. NatureScot deployment of 6 acoustic moorings in the North-east Lewis MPA May-Oct 2025 as a pilot project, all vocalising cetacean species (targeted Risso's dolphins as MPA feature), Soundtraps ST600 HF. SAMS-offshore windfarm developer-NatureScot-Crown Estate Scotland collaboration, 2-year acoustic project campaign in the Southern Trench MPA year round (Jun 2025 onwards). All vocalising cetacean species (focus on minke whale as MPA feature).

3.4. Are any of these programmes carried out in collaboration with other countries?

Please select only one option

- (●) No
- ( ) Yes

3.5. Please provide details on any planned activities relevant to monitoring programmes.

Provide web links if available.

Planning and organisation for SCANS-V has started, with aims for survey effort in 2027.

3.6. Relevant outputs/findings from monitoring programmes to note.

Per species, please identify the relevant outputs. Provide web links if available.

The monitoring results from 2022-2024 NRW and Sea Watch Foundation annual bottlenose dolphin monitoring is in preparation in 2025. *Lohrengel, K., Waggitt, J.J., Baines, M.E., and Evans, P.G.H. (in prep) Bottlenose Dolphin Monitoring in Cardigan Bay and Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau Special Areas of Conservation: 2022-24. NRW Evidence Report.*

In addition to the national monitoring programmes highlighted in B3 3.1, there are many ongoing local scale projects (e.g., citizen science and/or developer surveys) which also collect data on marine mammals in UK waters.

C. Other Research

Please provide relevant information in regard to other research (not mentioned elsewhere in Sections II, III, IV).

Per project, please provide the institution, duration, aim(s) / objective(s), and the method.

Section IV: Use of Strandings Records

A. Stranding Networks and Strandings

AIM: to provide information on stranding events and demonstrate progress of stranding networks in understanding, monitoring and mitigating strandings of small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: 10.4, 10.3, **8.10 (Rev.MOP9)**, 8.7, 8.4 (Rev.MOP9), 8.3, 7.4, 7.3, 7.1, 6.1, 5.7

Stranding of cetaceans is an ever-present occurrence and analysis through necropsy and sampling can provide indications of reason for injury and death. Stranding numbers also provide information on population status, abundance and distribution. Effective response to strandings contributes to the maintenance of favourable conservation status of small cetaceans and also has implications for animal welfare. Comprehensive stranding networks are a critical asset in managing small cetacean strandings and have resulted in large numbers of animals rescued and returned to sea. These networks also have the capacity to guide the public on animal welfare, human health and safety considerations during stranding events.

In the effort to mitigate the anthropogenic causes of these occurrences, Parties have agreed to measures through a number of resolutions. Continued monitoring of stranding causation and further developing guidance for best practices in stranding response and necropsies was identified by Parties as important tasks to pursue, as was setting up stranding response networks. This information is to align with appropriate sampling practices and countries should ensure that the data is available for researchers. Additionally, development and support of international strandings databases and regular reporting is conducted through relevant research institutes and stranding schemes. ASCOBANS Secretariat encourages the ongoing funding and support of engagement with organizations for further development of guidelines, best practices and maintaining dataflow for capacity building across stranding networks.

To better understand the extent to which stranding events occur and how these events are managed, it is the interest of ASCOBANS for countries to provide the relevant information on these occurrences within the Agreement Area, procedures undertaken in response to stranding events, necropsies and information on stranding networks.

1.1. Is there a national stranding network in place?

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ◉ Yes

Please provide details:

The Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme (CSIP) and the Scottish Marine Animal Strandings Scheme (SMASS) are contracted to collect/collate, analyse and report data on all cetacean strandings around the UK coast; and to undertake post-mortem examinations on a proportion of stranded animals to learn more about the anthropogenic pressures these species face in UK waters. The CSIP is contracted by Defra and the Welsh Government to investigate strandings around the coast of England and Wales. SMASS is contracted by Scottish Government to investigate strandings around the coast of Scotland. Partner organisations of the CSIP are the Institute of Zoology, Zoological Society of London (ZSL), the Natural History Museum (NHM), Marine Environmental Monitoring (MEM), Cornwall Wildlife Trust Marine Strandings Network (CWTMSN) and Cornwall Marine Pathology Team (CMPT). Additional data on strandings in Northern Ireland (collated by DAERA), Isle of Man (collated by Manx WT) and the Channel Islands (collated by various) are *ad hoc* contributed to the CSIP database/network.

1.2. Does the national stranding network cover the whole, or part of the reporting country's coastline?

Please select only one option

- ◉ Whole coastline
- ○ Part of the coastline

1.3. Are necropsies carried out to determine cause of death?

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ◉ Yes

Please provide details:

All cetacean post-mortem investigations (including tissue sampling) in the UK are conducted using standardized and systematic necropsy procedures. More details can be found at the following reference: ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS. 2019. "European Best Practice on Cetacean Post-mortem Investigation and Tissue Sampling." OSF Preprints. October 7. doi:10.31219/osf.io/zh4ra https://osf.io/zh4ra/

1.4. Is there a database of strandings?

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ◉ Yes

1.5. Is the data available online or downloadable on request?

Please select only one option

- ◉ No
- ○ Yes

1.6. Provide details for any new institution(s) responsible for a stranding database, responding to live-strandings, collection of carcasses, and for conducting necropsies.

Please identify the new responsible institution(s) and provide their: responsibility (responding to live-strandings, collection of carcasses, necropsies, stranding database), phone number, email, and website.

British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR, https://bdmlr.org.uk/) are the primary organisation responding to live strandings in the UK, with additional support from RSPCA and others, all operating under the aegis of the Marine Animal Rescue Coalition (MARC, https://marineanimalrescuecoalition.org/).

1.7. Were cases photographed, measured or sampled even if not collected for necropsy during the reporting period?

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ◉ Yes

Please provide details:

Stranded animals not recovered for necropsy are photographed wherever possible. Additional data and/or samples are collected by volunteers from the Cornwall Wildlife Trust Marine Strandings Network, SMASS and/or BDMLR.

1.8. Were there recorded stranding events in your country during the reporting period?

If you select 'Yes', please provide details in this table - download and then attach it using the blue 'clip' button. Provide details relevant for recorded stranding events during the reporting period.

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ◉ Yes

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How many strandings occurred during the reporting period?

(Specify live and dead)

736 dead and 56 live strandings. More details provided in the attached table.

Data on OSPAR regions and/or euthanasia methods available on request to CSIP/SMASS. Please note, an additional 118 cetaceans of indeterminate identity were also recorded stranded in the UK by CSIP and SMASS (not captured in the attached table).

1.9. Were any necropsies conducted during the reporting period?

Please select only one option

- ○ No
- ◉ Yes

Please provide information below:

Per necropsy, please provide: the protocol used or dissection / methodologies / collection of samples etc., number of carcasses necropsied, what causes of death sere identified (add percentage if available), and any additional comments.

All cetacean post-mortem investigations (including tissue sampling) in the UK are conducted using standardized and systematic necropsy procedures. More details can be found at the following reference: ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS. 2019. "European Best Practice on Cetacean Post-mortem Investigation and Tissue Sampling." OSF Preprints. October 7. doi:10.31219/osf.io/zh4ra https://osf.io/zh4ra/

Multiple necropsies were conducted on UK stranded cetaceans by CSIP and SMASS during 2025 and a wide range of samples and data were collected during each necropsy. Further details, including information on casues of death, will be available in the 2025 CSIP and SMASS annual reports.

1.10. Other relevant new research/work/collaboration on strandings and stranding networks in your country.

List initiatives/ projects (incl. PhD, MSc); publications (reports, theses, papers in journals, books) from any study; web links to other relevant information)

2025 Publications

- Garcia-Bustos, V., Rosario Medina, I., Cabanero-Navalon, M.D., Williams, R.S., Macgregor, S.K., John, S.K., Aznar, F.J., Gozalbes, P., Acosta-Hernández, B., (2025). Aspergillus Infections in Cetaceans: A Systematic Review of Clinical, Ecological, and Conservation Perspectives. Biology 14, 664.
- Lennon, R.L., Storm, J., Koger, R., Thompson, E., Williams, R.S., Dagleish, M.P., Babayan, S.A., ten Doeschate, M.T.I., Davison, N.J., Brownlow, A.C., (2025). The Dead Do Tell Tales: Using Pathology Data From Cetacean Necropsy Reports to Gain Insights Into Animal Health. Ecol. Evol. 15, e72119. https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.72119
- Lennon, R.L., Williams, R.S., Allan, K.J., ten Doeschate, M.T., Davison, N.J., Babayan, S.A., Brownlow, A.C., (2025). An approach to using stranding data to monitor cetacean population trends and guide conservation strategies. Sci. Rep. 15, 28417.
- Petitguyot, M.A., Fariñas-Bermejo, A., Brownlow, A., Ahola, M.P., Álvarez Neches, E., Arbelo, M., Authier, M., Balsera Riesgo, R., Berrow, S., Bjørge, A., (2025). European stranding networks as a tool for monitoring marine mammal populations (Part I): towards optimising the functioning of networks. ICES J. Mar. Sci. 82, fsaf194.
- Williams, R.S., Curnick, D.J., Baillie, A., Barber, J.L., Barnett, J., Brownlow, A., Deaville, R., Davison, N.J., ten Doeschate, M., Jepson, P.D., Murphy, S., Penrose, R., Perkins, M., Spiro, S., Williams, R., Williamson, M.J., Cunningham, A.A., Johnson, A.C., (2025). Sea temperature and pollution are associated with infectious disease mortality in short-beaked common dolphins. Commun. Biol. 8, 557. https://doi.org/10.1038/s42003-025-07858-7
- Williams, R.S., Curnick, D.J., Baillie, A., Barber, J.L., Barnett, J., Brownlow, A., Deaville, R., Davison, N.J., ten Doeschate, M., Penrose, R., Perkins, M., Spiro, S., Warford, L., Williams, R., Cunningham, A.A., Johnson, A.C., (2025). Temporal Increases in Mercury Concentrations are Associated with Increased Risk of Death by Infectious Disease in Harbour Porpoises (Phocoena Phocoena). Environ. Sci. Technol. 59, 25587–25599. https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.est.5c08346

PhD projects with ongoing support from CSIP;

- University of Exeter- Marine mammal bycatch in southwest England: Taking a holistic approach to assess causes, impacts and evidence-based solutions
- University of Exeter- Plastic pollution and ocean giants: Investigating the extent and impacts of plastic ingestion by marine megafauna
- University of Exeter- Developing a novel system to monitor the status of coastal ecosystems in Southwest England using a complementary approach: from remote sensing to marine top predators
- University of Bangor- Addressing critical knowledge gaps in the persistence, accumulation, and impact of antibiotics and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in marine food chains
- ATU Galway- Improving the knowledge on the conservation status of small cetaceans
- University of Portsmouth- the effects of endocrine disrupting chemicals on the male reproductive physiology of the harbour porpoise

Section V: Legislation

A. Overview of Legislative Framework

AIM: to provide information on national, regional and international legislation and guidelines relevant to small cetaceans during the reporting period.

Relevant Resolutions: 10.5, 10.3, 9.2 (Rev.MOP10), 8.10 (Rev.MOP9), 8.9, 8.8, 8.6 (Rev.MOP10), 8.5 (Rev.MOP9), 8.4 (Rev.MOP9), 8.3, 7.1, 6.2 (Rev.MOP10), 6.1, 5.7, 5.4

Legislation and guidelines are a key component of efforts to support favourable conservation status of small cetaceans in the ASCOBANS Area. A number of existing legislation and guidelines bear relevance to conservation efforts for small cetaceans on national, regional and international scales. Regular updating and adaptation of guidelines and legislation (where applicable) can ensure ongoing prevention, minimization and reduction of negative impacts of marine activities on small cetaceans. In addition, these actions support transparent and reliable management.

Parties to ASCBOANS have agreed to support the requisition, development and the implementation of legislation and guidelines to assess, minimize and mitigate pressures on favourable conservation status of small cetaceans in the Agreement Area. Parties have committed to these actions through a number of resolutions regarding pressures known to be detrimental to small cetaceans. It is in the interest of ASCOBANS for countries to provide information on current and foreseen national, regional and international legislation and guidelines relevant to small cetaceans in the Agreement Area.

1.1. Please provide the applicable information regarding legislation and guidelines relevant to small cetaceans for the following questions.

1.1.1. Are national guidelines relevant for small cetaceans currently in place in your country?

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes

1.1.2. Is national legislation relevant for small cetaceans currently in place in your country?

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes

1.1.3. Are regional and/or international guidelines relevant for small cetaceans currently in place in your country?

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes

1.1.4. Is regional and/or international legislation relevant for small cetaceans currently in place in your country?

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes

1.2. Have there been any instances/issues related to national, regional and/or international legislation during the reporting period in your country?

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes

Section VI: Information and Education

A. Education and outreach

AIM: to determine if there are gaps in the outreach and education activities and if additional material should be produced in your country or by the Secretariat (e.g. on certain themes, species, regions, languages, for certain target audiences).

Relevant Resolutions: 10.2, 5.8

The revised ASCOBANS Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) Plan (see ASCOBANS/MOP9/Doc.5.3 Annex 1) was endorsed by the 9th Meeting of the Parties (2020). The purpose of the CEPA Plan is to identify realistic activities relevant to ASCOBANS and mandated by Parties, to be undertaken by the Secretariat, Parties, and relevant partners. It seeks a clearer focus amongst Secretariat, Parties, Partners, and stakeholders regarding objectives. The purpose of this section is to highlight successes and to identify potential gaps in outreach and education activities and related materials.

1.1. List education/outreach activities in the reporting period in your country, which are of relevance to conservation of small cetaceans in the ASCOBANS Area.

e.g. activities during the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise in May

Organizer	Name of activity (incl. translation to English, where applicable)	Date(s)	Location	Target audience (general public, scientists, children, fishers; other – please state)	Links (for further information)

1.2. List current information/outreach materials produced in your country, which are of relevance to ASCOBANS Area and species.

Name of publication (incl. translation into English, where applicable)	Author(s)	Publisher	Year	Links (to download publication)	Can ASCOBANS distribute the link to publication for outreach purposes? (Yes/No)

1.3. List other organizations engaged in outreach relevant to the ASCOBANS Area.

Please include web links where applicable.

1.4. List other initiatives/work/collaboration relevant to the ASCOBANS Area that are not included above.

1.5. List any gaps in your country's outreach relevant to the ASCOBANS Area. What would be needed to fill these gaps?

1.6. Resources permitting, are there any materials that you think the ASCOBANS Secretariat should produce?

Please select only one option

- No
- Yes

Section VII: Other Matters

A. Other information or comments important for the Agreement:

Opportunity to include other information missing from the form.

B. Difficulties in implementing the Agreement:

Opportunity to describe any other issues that were not covered by the 2025 (Year 2) form - i.e. other topics than bycatch, resource depletion, marine debris, surveys and research, use of strandings records.

Resourcing and capacity.

C. Burning Issues:

Opportunity to highlight urgent or emerging issues.