

Agenda Item 6.1

Project Funding through ASCOBANS
Progress of Supported Projects

Document 6-04

Update on the Tursiops SEAs project

Action Requested

- Take note of the report
- Comment

Submitted by

United Kingdom



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

Secretariat's Note

1. The Triennium Work Plan 2010-2012 requires the Advisory Committee to review the progress of the Tursiops SEAs project and provide guidance as required (Activity 11).
2. Accordingly, the Secretariat requested the JNCC, the Secretariat's legal counterpart in the Letter of Agreement, to provide a progress report for the consideration of the Committee, which is contained in this document.

Update on the Tursiops SEAs project

BACKGROUND

At the 13th Meeting of the Advisory Committee to UNEP/ASCOBANS (Tampere, Finland, April 2006), Parties agreed to assist in the development of a European-wide bottlenose dolphin project which would support UNEP/ASCOBANS in meeting its management and conservation objectives, and the resulting project would help meet European objectives in relation to bottlenose dolphins.

An initial workshop was held in October 2006 to identify research needs to improve the management and conservation of bottlenose dolphins throughout the Northeast Atlantic. Key aims and objectives identified were:

1. Identification of fine-scale population structure and the pattern of distribution and abundance, including the possible presence of parapatric coastal and offshore populations. Such information is essential for the appropriate management and conservation of the species, including obligations under the Habitats Directive.
2. Determination of key bottlenose dolphin habitat, including the relationship between distribution, key environmental variables, and regional variation in prey choice. Such work will enable managers to predict utilisation of particular areas in particular seasons aiding the Natura 2000 process.
3. Once the structure and dynamics of bottlenose groupings have been identified, reasons for the observed changes in distribution will be explored. Although such changes are primarily thought to be linked to food availability and dispersion, they could be modified by anthropogenic factors such as bycatch, pollutant contamination and disturbance. Recovery of populations to historical levels and distribution, where biologically feasible, is an aim of ASCOBANS and forms part of the non-obligatory aspects of the Habitats Directive

PROGRESS TO DATE

At a second workshop in March 2008, it noted that little progress had been made on the development of the workpackages associated with the project due to the work commitments of the participants. After discussion, there was general agreement that the best course of action would be to utilise the remaining funds to pay for a project coordinator to develop and write the proposal through a short term contract rather than to use them to host an extended second workshop. This was envisaged that this amendment to the planned use of the funds would greatly invigorate the project.

This change to the original MOU between JNCC and ASCOBANS was finally agreed in October 2008. Subsequently, JNCC developed a tender specification for a project coordinator, which was awarded to Dr Simon Ingram (Plymouth University) in November 2008. An MoA was developed between Plymouth University and JNCC in January 2009, and the funds were transferred in May 2009.

The time frame available between May 2009 and October 2009 (Life + submission deadline) were insufficient to develop the project. Consequently, a strategic delay was agreed. Simon has subsequently employed a researcher to collate the work packages and build the proposal. As part of this development, an third meeting of the participants is organised in March 2010, at the European Cetacean Society Conference in Stralsund, Germany. Proposal submission is now expected in October 2010.