

Agenda Item 6.1

Project Funding through ASCOBANS

Progress of Supported Projects

Document 6.1

**Progress of Projects Supported
through ASCOBANS**

Action Requested

- Take note
- Comment

Submitted by

Secretariat



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

Progress of Projects Supported through ASCOBANS

1. In this document, the Secretariat reports on the progress of the projects that were funded through the Agreement. The document contains details of projects concluded since AC20 as well as the status of those underway. Previous reports can be accessed as [AC19/Doc.6-01 rev.1](#) and [AC20/Doc.6.1.a](#).

Finalized Projects

2. One project has been completed since AC20.

A. Enhanced detection of harbour porpoises prior to ramming, seismic blast and ammunition clearance: design and construction of a PAL-porpoise detector (PPD)

3. This project was chosen by AC19 for funding and a contract was concluded with Forschung. Fakten. Fantasie. F³ in 2012. The project aimed at real-time detection of harbour porpoises prior to hazardous operations such as ammunition clearance (blasting), seismic exploration or pile ramming (as in offshore wind parks) and other hazardous activities. The following activities were agreed under this contract:
 - Design and building of a programmable, easy to use click-and click-train generator combined with a detector for these signals enable the user to modify frequency, ramp-up, click-train duration and pause intervals of the stimulating signal and to achieve rapid optimization
 - Design of a detector that will automatically filter animal signals from the surrounding acoustic environment what is important in areas with intensive marine traffic, such as offshore wind park construction etc.
 - Development of a software-based analysis tool to graphically display click activity over time
4. The final project report has been published as [AC21/Inf.6.1.a](#).

Current Projects

5. Four projects are currently being implemented.

B. Preparations for SCANS-III

6. This project was prioritized for funding by AC20, and arrangements (SSFA/2014/1) were subsequently made with the University of St. Andrews (UK) to carry out the following activities:
 - Establish a focal point for organisation and communication at the Sea Mammal Research Unit (SMRU), St Andrews
 - Co-ordinate all administrative and technical preparatory work on behalf of project partners
 - Organise and support workshop to discuss and finalise project work (administrative and technical)
 - Undertake analysis of existing data to determine how much survey effort (and therefore resources) are required

- Secure support (financial and in-kind) from range states
 - Liaise with other survey initiatives (T-NASS 2015; ACCOBAMS Mediterranean survey)
 - Draft and submit proposals to the European Commission, Eurofleets and other bodies, as appropriate
 - Prepare an interim project report
 - Prepare final project reports (technical and financial)
7. The output of this work will be a robust, thorough and well-constructed proposal, submitted to the EU for consideration under the 2014 round of LIFE+ funding.
 8. The final project report is due in October 2014. An interim report on the baseline data collected so far has been published as [AC21/Inf.6.1.c](#).

C. Pollutant exposure in coastal top predators: assessing current levels of exposure and toxic effects

9. This project, selected for funding by AC17, is covered by SSFA/2010/03, which was concluded with the Zoological Society of London in January 2011. Activities to be carried out under the lead of Paul Jepson include:
 - Determine and analyse existing pollutant exposure data for PCBs and organochlorine pesticide levels within the ASCOBANS range.
 - Compare the levels of PCBs in bottlenose dolphins and killer whales with levels of PCBs in healthy and diseased harbour porpoises in UK waters and to a proposed threshold of toxicity for total PCBs of 17mg/kg lipid weight. PCB levels will also be compared with those associated with reproductive impairment in bottlenose dolphin studies in the US.
 - Using data from UK harbour porpoise strandings, generate the first dose-response curve for risk assessments of lethal effects of PCBs (i.e. infectious disease mortality) in exposed populations using empirical cetacean data.
 - Undertake a risk assessment for the toxic effects of PCB exposure in bottlenose dolphins and killer whales in European waters within the ASCOBANS range.
10. The output expected from this project is a final report to be submitted to the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee assessing the levels of exposure in UK/European bottlenose dolphins and killer whales and their likely toxicological impacts.
11. Thanks to additional funding provided by Defra (United Kingdom), ZSL was able to substantially increase the sample size and geographic range of samples analysed. In order to accommodate this opportunity, an extension of the time period for this project was agreed.
12. The final project report is due in December 2014.

D. Approaches to an Impact Indicator in the Light of Descriptor 11 (MSFD)

13. Thanks to funding from the German Environment Ministry, a funding agreement for the project (SSFA/2011/02) was concluded with the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS Germany, now Whale and Dolphin Conservation, WDC) in August 2011. Agreed activities include researching all available methods to analyse the impact of noise on marine biota and drafting a technical paper with a group of experts which can be used as

a guideline in order to develop a concept for a biological indicator for Good Environmental Status under the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

14. Based on further discussions and the progress made so far by the Descriptor 11 Task Group, an extension of the project duration has been agreed with WDC. The final project report is therefore now due in December 2014.

E. Examine habitat exclusion and long term effect of pingers

15. This project was prioritized for funding by AC19, and arrangements (SSFA/2012/1) were subsequently made with Aarhus University (Denmark) to carry out the following activities:
 - Deployment of three Loggerhead DSG noise loggers together with three C-PODs already installed in order to quantify pinger noise exposure simultaneously (co-funding from AgriFish Agency and Aarhus University, as part of a larger study on pinger effects on harbour porpoise presence
 - Recording of pinger sounds and analysing the noise logger files which measure both porpoise presence and pinger exposure
 - Comparison and analysis of the measurements made with both C-PODs and noise loggers
16. The project will thus aim to evaluate two hypotheses: a) that porpoises are displaced by pinger sounds by comparing the two measurements; and b) that porpoises habituate to pingers over time by analysing changes over time.
17. Due to delays in the deployment of pingers, for the last two years only the baseline data could be collected by means of C-PODs. Once pingers get deployed, which is expected to take place later this year or in the first half of 2015, the noise loggers, already purchased with the project funds, will be deployed, too. Data will be collected for two years: one with pingers operational in the area, and one with only C-PODs and noise loggers.
18. An interim report on the baseline data collected so far has been published as [AC21/Inf.6.1.b](#). The final project report is due in December 2017.