

REPORT OF THE 2ND MEETING OF THE ASCOBANS COMMON DOLPHIN GROUP

**Online
3 December 2020**



**Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans
of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas**

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REPORT OF 2ND MEETING OF THE COMMON DOLPHIN GROUP

1. Opening of the Meeting

Jenny Renell (Secretariat) opened the 2nd meeting of the Common Dolphin Group¹ (CDG), announcing that the proceedings would be recorded to assist in report writing. She reminded the meeting of the protocol for conduct at virtual meetings, requesting participants to mute themselves when not speaking and to request the floor through the chat function.

1.1. Welcome and announcements

Ms. Renell (Secretariat) welcomed the participants, noting the presence of some new participants from Ireland, Portugal, Spain, and the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

The Co-Chair of the CDG, Sinéad Murphy (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology) commented that holding meetings online helped to boost attendance. She noted that it was a busy time and thanked participants for joining the meeting. The previous meeting of the CDG had taken place a year before, and a great deal of work had been undertaken since then. Another major development concerned the [ICES special request advice regarding emergency measures for the Common Dolphin](#).

1.2. Adoption of the Agenda

Ms. Murphy (Co-Chair) read out the main items on the agenda, which included national reports and bycatch; other pressures would be considered at future meetings. There would be a presentation on pinger use from France and Sarah Dolman (Whale and Dolphin Conservation - WDC) would give a presentation from the NGO perspective. Ms. Murphy expected some recommendations to be made, but these might have to be finalized through a correspondence process after the meeting. She noted that, at the previous CDG meeting, the recommendations cross-referenced those made by the North Sea Group (NSG) relating to Harbour Porpoises. She suggested that this year the CDG adopt stand-alone recommendations, even if they were similar to those made by other groups.

The draft agenda had been circulated in advance of the meeting. As there were no requests for any changes apart from minor reorganization of the running order, it was adopted as presented.

2. Overview of progress in SAP implementation

France

Florence Caurant (Co-Chair) presented the achievements table (Annex 2) for France with its 'traffic light' colour-coding; the table would be completed over the next few weeks. Tasks included identifying and monitoring high risk fisheries and conducting aerial surveys.

A PhD study of bycatch was assessing sex/age ratios and the National Bycatch Working Group was meeting regularly, led by the Ministry of the Sea. L'Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la Mer (Ifremer) was conducting the LICADO² project (European Maritime and Fisheries Fund) on minimizing the bycatch of Common Dolphins in the Bay of Biscay.

Two new publications on Common Dolphins had been published and there had been much media coverage of cetacean strandings. Two major post-graduate studies had been carried out, one investigating the [influence of oceanographic processes on Common Dolphin bycatch in the Bay of](#)

¹ Steering Group for the ASCOBANS Species Action Plan for the North-East Atlantic Common Dolphin

² Limitation des captures accidentelles de dauphins communs dans le Golfe de Gascogne

[Biscay](#) (by Lola Gilbert et al.) and another on [Common Dolphin Ecology and Population Dynamics within French Atlantic Waters](#) (by Etienne Rouby).

United Kingdom

Nikki Taylor (UK) described the British achievement table (Annex 2) highlighting that there was a dedicated bycatch observer programme, a pilot scheme for self-reporting in the south-west of England and trials of mitigation measures in some inshore fisheries. More post-mortem analysis was being done to identify where the bycatch risk was highest.

The Sea Mammal Research Unit (SMRU) had issued a report focusing on the drivers of bycatch of Harbour Porpoises in the North Sea. Information on the cause of death had been provided by the Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme (CSIP) and the Scottish Marine Animal Strandings Scheme (SMASS). Video-monitoring was being used on smaller vessels and a new scheme called 'Clean Catch UK' led by the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS), had been initiated. Gear modifications were being examined and more regular surveys were being considered along the lines of SCANS (at greater frequency than once a decade). Further, the UK was currently the Co-Chair of the ICES working group on bycatch (WGBYC).

The JNCC's Joint Cetacean Data Programme obtained three years of funding to develop a platform to collate all relevant at-sea aerial and vessel-based data within the entire North-east Atlantic and should be operational in the spring of 2022. Data on human activities impacting on cetaceans were being collated and, where opportunities arose, the content of cetaceans' stomachs were being examined via the UK CSIP and SMASS; the number of such examinations would be increased if more funds were available. The Natural Environmental Research Council (NERC) funded a PhD study looking at strandings data as a sentinel for climate change. The [Best practice on cetacean post-mortem investigation and tissue sampling](#) protocol elaborated by ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS was in place. Some drift modelling had been undertaken following the 2018 mass / prolonged strandings of many beaked whale species along the western seaboard of UK and Ireland in collaboration with SMASS. The drift modelling was still ongoing, results not yet available.

Peter Evans (Sea Watch Foundation) referenced a few further projects, including risk mapping for the European Commission in the Atlantic part of the ASCOBANS, and a project comparing models for bycatch indicators. Mr. Evans' data on sightings were being shared with the JNCC and OSPAR, where those data providers had agreed. Funding came from the NERC and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and it is anticipated that the results would be published in March 2021. Mr. Evans pointed out that the NRW tended to focus on its immediate waters (i.e. the Celtic Sea) and was negotiating whether NRW could scale up to the population level.

Allen Kingston (University of St Andrews) said that funding from DEFRA to develop a 3D cetacean tracking system to investigate interactions with fishing gears would end in March 2021 and it was hoped to develop the hardware and start field tests in early 2021, with equipment tested on actively fishing vessels. The deployment would probably start with larger inshore vessels but there were still some technical and deployment issues to resolve.

Eunice Pinn (Seafish) said that there was no further information available in relation to the introduction of inshore vessel monitoring (iVMS) and, following consultation, the timetable had been altered with implementation not expected before 2021. Since then, COVID-19 had delayed various work areas, and the UK now had a Fisheries Act which provided the framework for fisheries management from 1 January 2021. It was likely that iVMS would be dealt with as new policies and management procedures were introduced through the Act.

Ireland

Ms. Murphy (Co-Chair) said that the Irish ObSERVE aerial project that had been carried out between 2015 and 2017 had difficulty in distinguishing Common from Striped Dolphins. Abundance estimates had been made with 13,632 Common Dolphins and a combined estimate of 33,000 individuals for

Common Dolphins and undifferentiated Common/Striped Dolphins for July 2016. For the latter it was assumed that most undifferentiated individuals were Common Dolphins. Ms Murphy reminded the CDG that the one of our recommendations from the first meeting was to undertake a review of *'aerial survey monitoring techniques to better discriminate small delphinid species to ensure explicit estimates of population size and uncertainty'*. Mr. Evans said that he had used data from vessel-based surveys to establish ratios between Common and Striped Dolphins. Mr. Ridoux said it was usual for large groups to be assigned to one species rather than several, and that a technique was being developed using video cameras and observers to distinguish similar species of both birds and cetaceans. Mr Ridoux will update the group on this work in the future.

Simon Berrow (Irish Whale and Dolphin Group - IWDG) asked whether 2016 was an unusual year. Mr. Evans (Sea Watch Foundation) confirmed that 2016 had been atypical and Ms. Murphy said that there had been a much more southerly distribution of the Common Dolphins at that time.

Mr Berrow (IWDG) gave a further update saying that the strandings scheme had been operating for 30 years and had revealed a clear increase in the incidents involving Common Dolphins, with the period December to February being worst. The drivers were not known, but the higher numbers might result from better reporting.

In 2017, there had been a meeting between fisheries agencies and stakeholders. There were no set procedures for post-mortems. Between 2017 and 2019, 117 Common Dolphins had been subjected to post-mortem along with smaller numbers of Striped Dolphins and Harbour Porpoises. Some training was being conducted on marine mammal pathology with support from Paul Jepson and Rob Deaville of the Zoological Society of London and the UK CSIP post mortem protocol was employed in Ireland. The proportion of deaths attributed to bycatch seemed low. Though the peaks of strandings were found to coincide with times of the greatest presence of fishing fleets (large trawlers).

Ms Murphy added to this and noted that based on the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group dataset, there were 881 reported strandings of common dolphins and 124 strandings of undifferentiated common dolphins/striped dolphins during the period 2010 to 2020. The majority of the common dolphin strandings were in the first quarter of the year, with 44.8% of strandings at that time. So far this year there was 142 strandings of common dolphins, up from 104 strandings in 2019 and 119 strandings in 2018, mirroring what was happening on the British and French Atlantic coasts.

The Irish vertebrate necropsy project was funded between June 2017 to December 2019 by the Marine Institute/European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), during which 84 common dolphins were necropsied to determine cause of death, and for collection of samples including samples for life history, pollutants and diet, etc. As outlined at the first SAP meeting in 2019, for the period June 2017 - March 2018, bycatch only accounted for 3 per cent% of mortality, with disease and starvation causing higher percentages. And many individuals during that period were found to be in a poor nutritional condition. No funding has been made available to continue the necropsy project since then, though it might be made available in the future. The final report from the 2017 to 2019 period has been delayed due to COVID-19.

Further funding that was obtained through the EMFF enabled the continued appointment of a Scientific and Technical Officer Ms Ailbhe Kavanagh to look at the impacts of fisheries on habitats and species in coastal European marine sites/Natura sites. However, due to COVID-19, sampling under the enhanced Irish observer sampling scheme which is run under the Data Collection Framework paused in March of this year.

Ms. Murphy summarised information from the recent ICES WGBYC reports for Ireland. A total of seven common dolphins (non-extrapolated data) were observed bycaught during 1,635 observed days at sea in pelagic trawls under EC 812/2004 monitoring between 2005 and 2017. Of these, 219 days were carried out as part of dedicated independent observer programmes from 2010 to 2012 in a range of pelagic trawl fisheries, with no cetacean bycatch observed. Ms. Murphy noted as well, that in 2017, three unidentified dolphins (one of which was released alive) were reported as bycatch

in three separate events by demersal otter trawls. The inshore tangle-net fishery switched to a self-reporting system in 2018 and no cetacean bycatch was reported for 89 trips/days at sea. Additional data for the year 2018 increased this effort to 122 days at sea, with no cetacean bycatch observed, though 43 grey seals were reported bycaught.

No recent pinger mitigation trails have been undertaken in relation to common dolphins within Irish fisheries. The EMFASIS (Ecosystem-based management of fisheries: Advancing stakeholder involvement and sustainability) proposal submitted to the Horizon 2020 blue sky call, led by CSIC, Spain proposed a task on 'measures to reduce bycatch of protected, endangered and threatened species' that would be led by Ms Murphy. This task included the further assessment of pingers as a mitigation tool in Irish fisheries.

Regarding mitigation, the amount of pinger use was unknown, but both Denmark and Ireland had previously applied for a temporary derogation, though this was not renewed.

Ireland had recently appointed Ms. Murphy to serve on the OSPAR Marine Mammal Expert Group (OMMEG), which was developing indicators for marine mammal bycatch, abundance and persistent chemicals.

Spain

Graham Pierce (Spain) gave a [presentation](#) prepared by Camilo Saavedra (Instituto Español de Oceanografía - IEO). The IEO reported to the Spanish Government on issues relating to fisheries and marine mammals.

Various Spanish programmes existed dealing with both coastal and oceanic cetaceans, bycatch and strandings and reporting under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). Abundance estimates covered five zones: the North Atlantic coast, the Canaries, the South Atlantic coast, the Straits of Gibraltar/Alborán Sea and the Balearics/Mediterranean.

The Spanish response to the emergency measures was a Ministerial Order concerning pingers for bottom trawl fleets, dedicated observers on board, trials of on-board cameras, rules on landing cetaceans and 'move-on rules'. The responses by France and Portugal were along similar lines.

Spanish activities - IIM CSIC

Mr. Pierce [presented](#) a summary of ongoing projects at IIM CSIC³ (the Spanish National Research Council). The TRANSITION project was scheduled to run from 2019 to 2021. The acronym stood for the 'Transfer of Anthropogenic and Natural Stressors Involving Trophic Interactions of Ocean Nekton'. Paula Gutierrez was looking at dolphin distribution (not just Common Dolphins) while Alberto Hernandez researching into dolphin diet using 800 data sets of stomach contents.

The CetAMBICion project had been submitted under the EU [MSFD⁴ call](#) and had successfully passed the first phase of the evaluation.

SeaChanges Innovative Training Network

Ms. Petitguyot (University of Vigo) [presented](#) her research on current and historical threats to dolphins in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. She was considering archaeological, zoological, marine ecological and conservation biological aspects.

The chapters of the study covered the historical status in the Mediterranean; a review of Common and Striped Dolphins bycatch in the Northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean; body condition analyses of Common and Striped Dolphins in the Northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean; health status and

³ Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas

⁴ Marine Strategy Framework Directive

respiratory tract microbiota; and an assessment of changes in trophic ecology. There had been some delays in the work because of COVID-19.

Mr. Ridoux (France) commented that in France in the period 1930-1960, there were financial incentives to kill cetaceans to reduce competition for fish. He asked whether this was also the case in other countries and how many cetaceans had been taken. Further in France, cetaceans had been deliberately taken for food from the 1960s to 1980s. Fish factories were producing canned dolphin meat in southern Brittany as late as in the 1990s. Only in the late 1970s were cetaceans protected but taking continued into the 21st century and bycatch was becoming more common.

Ms. Petitguyot could not predict what the archives might reveal. Mr. Evans confirmed that dolphin meat had been on sale in the Isle of Man in living memory.

Antonio Teixeira (Portugal) had studied in the 1970s, when it had been legal to catch and sell Common Dolphins, with the most common gear types responsible being trawls and purse seines. Even after it was made illegal under the Bern Convention and EU legislation, it still happened. Bycatch was a waste, and it could become targeted catch again as it had been in the 1970s.

Portugal

Catarina Eira (Portugal) [briefed](#) that there had been a study of Common Dolphin strandings on the north coast of Portugal (representing 312km of the mainland's 835km coast). Resources were limited but data were being obtained from Common Dolphin strandings. The years 2017-2020 showed a steady increase in the number of incidents (125, 133, 289, and, for 2020 up to September, 315). The proportion of cases linked to bycatch 48 % (confirmed) and 52 % (including suspected), but both of these figures were probably underestimates. Some of the doubtful cases might have drifted in and were too decomposed for proper examination. Gill and trammel nets were linked to both bycatch and strandings.

In 2019 the ConMar project had provided pingers for beach seines, a seasonal and geographically limited fishery with high bycatch rates. The level of self-reporting varied, with some fishers more cooperative than others. Animals caught alive were returned to the sea, but not always in the most appropriate way, so more training was needed (Ms. Eira was aware of the joint ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS protocol *Best practice on cetacean post mortem investigation and tissue sampling*). Generally, fishers tended to be wary of new regulations, and the captains were very influential, and cooperation largely depended on them.

Mr. Evans (Sea Watch Foundation) said that there were links to increase bycatch as a result of climate change and suggested that more surveys be done to examine population shifts.

Ms. Murphy (Co-Chair) asked if the CDG wished to suggest any recommendation concerning this agenda item, and requested Range States that had not yet signed up to the Action Plan to submit their data so that the achievement table could be completed.

3. Activities contributing to implementation of the Common Dolphin SAP

3.3. Overview on 2019 conservation status reports for the Common Dolphin

Ms. Murphy (Co-Chair) gave a presentation on the reporting requirements under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive, outlining the structure of the report. The definition of Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) was contained in Article 1 of the directive as a situation where a species is prospering (in both quality and extent/population) and with good prospects to continue to do so in the future. The Conservation Status objective of the directive is defined in positive terms, oriented towards a favourable situation, which needs to be defined, reached and maintained. It is therefore aimed at achieving far more than trying to avoid extinctions. The biogeographic region considered for Common Dolphins was the Marine Atlantic.

The parameters included range, population, habitat, pressures and threats and future prospects. Pressures are those that have acted within the current reporting period and they have an impact on the long-term viability of the species or its habitat(s), and threats are future/foreseeable impacts (within the next two reporting periods) that are likely to affect the long-term viability of the species and/or its habitat(s). The status could be assessed as: favourable (good); unfavourable-inadequate; unfavourable-bad or unknown.

It was noted in the ‘explanatory notes and guidelines for the period 2013-2018’ document that in cases where *species may have a ‘population which is shared between two or more Member States, those Member States are encouraged to undertake a common assessment and to agree on data and assessments, but each Member State reports the results for their territory, i.e. a respective proportion of the regional population and range and corresponding trends’*. Further it was noted that *‘for some marine species, population estimates have been made by sea area and not by Member State; for example, the SCANS surveys of small cetaceans in the European Atlantic and North Sea. In such cases it may be appropriate for all Member States involved to produce a regional assessment of status for range and population (but each Member States should report respective proportion of population size and range area, as stated above). In addition, a coordinated assessment of pressures and threats, conservation measures and future prospects, should be undertaken if appropriate. As combined assessments may be based on diverse data sources it is important that field 13.2 ‘Transboundary assessment’ includes information on how the assessment was carried out.’*

With the UK leaving the EU, transboundary issues dealt with under ASCOBANS would become more relevant, and some marine species such as the Common Dolphin were monitored jointly at sea rather than by individual Member States (e.g. SCANS).

Only in Ireland was the status of common dolphins in the Marine Atlantic considered to be Favourable for the 2013-2018 reporting period. In France and Portugal, it was considered unfavourable-inadequate and unknown in Spain and the UK. Thus, the overall status for the Marine Atlantic was considered ‘unknown’.

Country	2007	2013	2019
UK	Unknown	Favourable	Unknown
Ireland	Favourable	Favourable	Favourable
France	Unknown	Unfavourable-Bad	Unfavourable-Inadequate
Spain	Unknown	Unfavourable-Bad	Unknown
Portugal	Favourable	Unfavourable-Inadequate	Unfavourable-Inadequate
Marine Atlantic	“Unknown”	“Unfavourable-Inadequate”	“Unknown”

Table 1. EU Member States Conservation Status Assessments for common dolphin, undertaken for reporting under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive.

Ireland

The status for the Common Dolphin in Irish waters was considered favourable for the 2013-2018 reporting period. The population size for the species in Irish waters varied greatly during that period and should be considered snapshots or exhibiting seasonality. Due to difficulties distinguishing visual records of this species from other smaller dolphins, particularly Striped Dolphins, only those estimates derived from confirmed sightings of the species (i.e., Common Dolphin) were assessed, and the most robust of these four seasonal estimates (i.e., those with the lowest CV = 0.39; winter

2015) was presented (47,108-123,886 (95% CI)). Ms Murphy noted that this estimate from winter 2015 ObSERVE study (of 76,388 Common Dolphins) was notably higher than the July 2016 ObSERVE estimate discussed earlier.

Pressures were thought to act on a temporary and/or regional scale, and some likely to continue to act as pressures into the future. However, they were not considered to be of sufficient magnitude to cause an adverse impact on the Common Dolphin in Irish waters. These conclusions were largely drawn from expert judgement, and the report did not fully consider pressures and threats on the species outside of Irish waters.

Ireland was also the only Member State to have reported the species as 'favourable' in all three rounds of assessment. Though aspects were not addressed within those reports, including references to the recent review papers led by Ms Murphy on the species in the region discussing aspects such as population structure, information on life history and stranding, and threats and pressures (including pollution) on the North-east Atlantic population.

France

Ms. Caurant (France) said that an assessment had been carried out in 2019 and the next one was due in 2024. Patterns of change in marine megafauna relative abundance at the community level was documented thanks to the integrated ecosystemic PELGAS survey carried out in spring in the Bay of Biscay over more than a decade (2004-2016). The species' distribution exhibited a slightly increasing trend during the study period: the pattern was a decrease before 2008 and after 2011 with an increase between these two periods (Authier et al, 2008⁵).

While short-term trends seemed were stable, long-term trends were unknown. The population as assessed in 2011-2012 was between 143,000 and 403,000 individuals during the winter period in the Bay of Biscay (Laran et al 2007⁶),

There were few data on the status of Common Dolphin habitat. The main pressures and threats were bycatch, deteriorating quality and quantity of prey and climate change.

The conclusions were for 2007-2012 that the species' status was unfavourable (bad), and unfavourable (inadequate) for the period 2013-2018.

United Kingdom

Ms. Taylor (UK) said that the status of the population was listed as unknown in the last Article 17 UK assessment for the Common Dolphin, because of new guidance on carrying out the assessments. The new guidance amended the assessment approach and as a result, with too few data points over the timeframe (i.e. large-scale survey events) with which to apply in identifying a population trend, the population status was deemed to be unknown.

Ms. Murphy (Co-Chair) said that it was interesting how different countries had interpreted the reporting requirements and the definitions. Mr. Evans had worked on definitions for the European Commission and had reviewed several of the Member States' assessments and agreed that interpretation of the definitions was inconsistent. Many reports did not contain information, even though it was available.

Ms. Murphy suggested that the CDG should recommend that a transboundary approach should be adopted as the whole range covering areas even greater than SCANS should be surveyed to assess population changes and distribution variations.

Ms. Murphy requested that the reports for Portugal and Spain be submitted.

⁵ Progress in Oceanography. September 2018, Volume 166, Pages 159-167.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pocean.2017.09.014>

⁶ Deep-Sea Research Part II 141 (2017) 31-40.

3.2. Reports from relevant meetings

ACCOBAMS 7th Meeting of the Parties

Joan Gonzalvo (ACCOBAMS) said that a draft action plan for the Common Dolphin had been presented at the 7th Meeting of the Parties (MOP7) to the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS) in 2019 and it was intended to convene a workshop to use the IWC model for action plans, but the pandemic and lack of funding had caused delays. There would be no physical meetings in 2021, but some online seminars could be organized instead. Because of a clash between the annual conference of the European Cetacean Society (ECS) and the Society of Marine Mammalogy meeting scheduled to take place in Florida, the prospective host, Israel, had agreed to postpone the ECS conference until 2022, which meant that the joint ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS workshop on the Common Dolphin would be postponed as well. Dates would be confirmed as soon as possible.

ASCOBANS Resolutions from the 9th Meeting of the Parties

Ms. Renell (Secretariat) reported on the 9th Meeting of the Parties to ASCOBANS, which had been held online from 7 to 11 September 2020. A revised [Resolution 8.4 \(Rev.MOP9\)](#) on conservation of Common Dolphins, [Resolution 9.3](#) on Marine Debris, [Resolution 9.4](#) on Food Availability and Resource Depletion, revised [Resolution 8.5 \(Rev.MOP9\)](#) on Monitoring and Mitigation of Small Cetacean Bycatch, and revised [Resolution 8.10 \(Rev.MOP9\)](#) on Small Cetacean Stranding Response (including the *Best Practice on Cetacean Post-mortem Investigation and Tissue Sampling* protocol) had been adopted.

ICES Working Group on Marine Mammal Ecology 2020

Mr. Pierce (Spain) said that consideration of the emergency measures was one of five main items on the agenda of the 2020 meeting of the ICES WGMME. A statistical analysis showed that strandings of Common Dolphins in the Bay of Biscay were worst in the period January to March, and that recent years had shown a number of stranding incidents higher than average. Potential biological removal (PBR) limits were being exceeded, and the question was how this could be addressed. Fisheries closures and other options were considered.

ICES Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species

Mr. Kingston (UK) gave a [presentation](#) on work of the ICES WGBYC on the special request on bycatch emergency measures for the Common Dolphin. He said that a sub-group of eight members including Ms. Peltier and Mr. Evans had considered the situation of the Common Dolphin in the Bay of Biscay. The group had looked at the fishing effort in the area in question by vessels from France and Spain (the most active in the area) as well those from Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, and the UK. The group had also considered bycatch rates in the Bay of Biscay (2005-2018) and the Celtic Sea (2016-2018) and estimates for strandings.

The proposed measures for spatial and temporal closures had been reviewed. There was a high correlation between fishing effort with specific gear types and areas of mortality. There was some confusion over the areas concerned, particularly regarding which ICES areas were covered by the Bay of Biscay (6-8 or 7-8) emergency measures request.

Technical measures proposed in the NGO emergency measures request included 'move-on procedures' and daylight setting. There was no evidence in the wider literature on how effective these might be if applied in the Biscay situation, no detail describing which fisheries daylight setting referred to, and it was not clear whether fishers would comply or accept monitoring. WGBYC concluded that there was no evidence to support the use of these measures until further testing had been carried out. Most of the EU fleet (80 %) was under 15-metres but most monitoring occurs on over 15m vessels, and pilot requirements for monitoring under 15m vessels under the (now repealed)

812/2004 Regulation were not transferred across to the Technical Conservation Regulation (EU 2019/1241).

OSPAR MMEG

Ms. Murphy (Co-Chair) had recently joined the OSPAR Marine Mammal Expert Group which was developing indicators for OSPAR, including biodiversity indicator M4 on abundance and distribution of cetaceans (including for Common Dolphins) for which a single-species approach was preferred, than dealing with species groups, and M6 indicator on marine mammal bycatch, which had a provisional threshold of 1 % of the best available abundance estimate, though management framework procedures were also being explored.

A candidate marine mammal PCB indicator would be based on trends and status. Thresholds were still to be defined for the status assessment. All work was still in progress but the deadline for finalization was the end of 2021/beginning of 2022.

3.3. ICES Special Request Advice regarding the emergency measures to prevent bycatch of Common Dolphin in the Bay of Biscay

Fiona Read (WDC) who was scheduled to make a presentation on the new regulation concerning the use of pingers was unable to attend the meeting.

Emergency Measures Workshop and ICES Advice

Mr. Ridoux (France) [reported](#) on the Workshop on Emergency Measures on Bycatch (WKEMBYC). This working group had two subgroups, one for the Common Dolphin in the Bay of Biscay and another for the Harbour Porpoise in the Baltic Sea.

Originally scheduled to take place in Copenhagen, the meeting was held virtually throughout April 2020 with 26 participants taking part, building on the work of WGMME and WGBYC. It was a response to the request for emergency measures submitted by 26 NGOs, and its terms of reference were to assess the proposed measures and, if appropriate, propose alternatives.

EU legislation had conservation objectives, including the minimization of the impacts of fisheries, contained within the MSFD and the provisions against bycatch in Article 12 of the Habitats Directive. The most recent abundance estimates suggested a common dolphin population of 634,286 individuals in the North-east Atlantic (a combined estimate using sightings of Common Dolphins and undifferentiated Common/Striped dolphins. Using Common Dolphin only data, SCANS-III estimated 467,673 animals in July 2016, and the Irish ObSERVE project estimated an additional 13,633 common dolphins for Irish waters).

Maps plotted a seasonal pattern of mortality in the period 2016-2018 in the Bay of Biscay, and the patterns of fishing effort for different types of boat and métier, which showed little variation.

The group of NGOs had called for the closure of fisheries responsible for bycatch from December to March in the North-east Atlantic, more technical measures and enhanced monitoring. The WKEMBYC had agreed that closures would work, but also that other measures should be examined. Fifteen scenarios had been elaborated, with a number of objectives to reduce bycatch tested, as well as efforts to minimize bycatch.

The ICES Bycatch Advice Drafting Group concerning emergency measures (ADGBYC) found that the NGO proposals for the Common Dolphins in the Bay of Biscay were appropriate to reduce bycatch, including the temporal closures for all métiers of concern, the use of pingers in pair trawlers, and enhanced monitoring to assess effectiveness of management measures and improve population and bycatch estimates. It was noted that ICES advocated both emergency and long-term measures and recommended that the EU's conservation objectives should be defined more quantitatively. The four management objectives were tested (management objective 1 was to reduce bycatch to PBR

(where the population as 50 % of carrying capacity 95 % of the time); management objective 2 was to reduce bycatch to <75 % of PBR; objective 3 to <50 % of PBR; and objective 4 to <10 % of PBR). Adapting the same table used by the WGBYC, the fifteen scenarios were assessed against the four management objectives.

Using onboard observer data for bycatch per métier in Bay of Biscay and Iberian coast as well as strandings data, it was estimated that 3,199 Common Dolphins had died as a result of bycatch using at-sea observer data, whereas 6,620 Common Dolphins were estimated using strandings data. The working group had looked at seasonal patterns, examining two-week blocks of time to assess the likely effect of temporal closures. A PBR limit of 4,927 was determined for the North-east Atlantic common dolphin population. Bycatch at 50 % of the PBR limit equated to 2,462 animals, and 10 per cent equated to 493 Common Dolphins. The working group estimated the effects of the NGO proposals, and it was found that scenarios F and K would perform worst, B was the least efficient, while A, M, N and O performed best for the proposed management objectives but were less good for efficiency. The others were moderately effective with limited closures. Scenario L fared best for the 50 % threshold, while scenario N was best for the 10 % threshold.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
Scenario	NGO proposed 4 month closure (Dec-Mar) all métiers	Annual effort reduction of 40% all métiers	2 month closure (mid Jan - mid Mar) all métiers	6 week closure (mid Jan - end Feb) all métiers	4 week closure (mid Jan - mid Feb) all métiers	2 week closure (mid Jan - end Jan) all métiers	Pinger PTM / PTB all year & same 6 week closure all other métiers	6 week closure (mid Jan - end Feb) all métiers and pinger PTM / PTB rest of year	Pinger PTM / PTB all year and same 4 week closure all other métiers	Pinger PTM / PTB all year and same 2 week closure all other métiers	Pinger PTM / PTB all year	2 month closure all métiers + pinger PTB / PTM rest of year	4 month closure all métiers + pinger PTM / PTB rest of year	3 month (Jan-Mar) + 1 month (mid-Jul-mid-Aug) closure all métiers + pinger PTB / PTM rest of year	3 month (Jan-Mar) + 1 month (mid-Jul-mid-Aug) closure all métiers
total resulting bycatch - monitoring mortality	441	1919	833	1357	1928	2488	1268	1026	1624	1972	2412	630	334	299	397
total resulting bycatch - strandings mortality	914	3975	1726	2811	3992	5152	2627	2125	3363	4085	4996	1306	693	619	822
Bycatch reduction obtained	0.86	0.40	0.74	0.58	0.40	0.22	0.60	0.68	0.49	0.38	0.25	0.80	0.90	0.91	0.88
Effort reduction needed	0.3	0.40	0.17	0.12	0.08	0.04	0.11	0.12	0.07	0.04	0.00	0.17	0.3	0.3	0.3
Efficiency Score	2.6	1.0	4.4	5.0	5.2	5.8	5.5	5.7	6.7	10.4	N/A	4.8	2.7	2.7	2.6

% of PBR	<10%	<50%	≥50% and ≤PBR	>PBR
Number bycaught	<493	<2464	2464 - 4927	>4927

Source: ICES WKEMBYC Report on Special Request in Bycatch Emergency Measures.

Mr. Pierce (Spain) said that Spain would try the ‘move-on’ procedure. Pilot schemes had been discussed but had not been included in the final draft advice.

Ms. Taylor (UK) said that a critical time had been reached and saw a mismatch between what ICES had advised and what Member States would put in place. She asked whether it would be appropriate to put pressure on the European Commission, France and Spain.

Mr. Ridoux said that the working group had been asked to advise on emergency (i.e. short-term) measures for immediate implementation, but Ms. Murphy noted that the ICES press release⁷ reiterated the need for a longer-term view.

Mr. Ridoux said that the French minister could not justify management measures proposed by ICES because the data were inadequate. Ms. Murphy (Co-Chair) recognized that ICES was trying to

⁷ <https://www.ices.dk/news-and-events/news-archive/news/Pages/EmergencyBycatchMeasures.aspx>

provide advice on the basis of insufficient data. Actions could be proposed on the precautionary principle.

Mr. Evans (Sea Watch Foundation) added that whether a population was increasing, declining or stable depended on the definition of the units. Mr. Pierce said that definitions of genetic populations had been discussed with strong and conflicting views, but it was agreed that there was a North-east Atlantic population.

Mr. Teixeira (Portugal) said that PBR was calculated on a percentage of the population, but often it was not clear what figure represented 100 % of a population. He also questioned the exclusion of the Azores and the geographic limitation to the Bay of Biscay.

Ms. Murphy said that as the species moved over a large geographic area, it was difficult to predict where animals would be. It was not clear how far west the population extended, and the abundance estimate used by ICES covered the continental and adjacent waters of the North-east Atlantic, i.e. not restricted to the Bay of Biscay. It was also noted that the increased number of strandings might be linked to there being more animals present due to recent large-scale movements in the population rather than increased fishing effort, per se.

As reported at MOP9, Vedran Nikolic of DG Env had said that infringement action was being taken against some against Member States. The European Commission could accept or reject Member States' proposed measures but could not amend them.

Whale and Dolphin Conservation

Sarah Dolman (WDC) [briefed](#) that a number of European NGOs had been involved in national engagement in their Member States. Collectively, comments had been provided on two versions of Joint Recommendations through the South West Waters Advisory Committee and on the draft Spanish Order. Engagement with the European Parliament included providing briefs for the PECH⁸ and ENVI⁹ Committees and hosting two Parliamentary events, one focusing on bycatch and the other on the Control Regulation, which included Remote Electronic Monitoring.

The NGOs had had various engagements with Commissioner Sinkevičius, and had launched a targeted [public-facing campaign](#) with 'count down clock', videos and media releases. Blue Planet Society's petition had reached more than 315,000 signatures and Sea Shepherd would be on the water this winter. Future plans were currently under discussion.

France's Response to the Emergency Measures

Mr. Expert (France) described the measures being undertaken in France in response to the European Commission's formal request regarding the Common Dolphin in the Bay of Biscay (ICES Area VIII) in relation to the obligations set out in Article 12 of the Habitats Directive. The response involved the Ministries of Ecological Transition, Territories and the Sea and the main actions would take place in the winter of 2020-2021.

The French Government was working with all stakeholders to understand and limit bycatch of Common Dolphins in the Bay of Biscay and preventative measures were being taken including the use of pingers (as contained in ICES scenario 'K') which should lower bycatch by 21 %. Understanding of bycatch should improve by making reporting incidents mandatory. The OBSMER programme would result in observers going onboard vessels. Population data were being updated under the MSFD through the SAMM2 Atlantic winter campaign. Work would continue to prevent negative interactions, with cameras fitted to vessels, and the CetAMBICion project, if approved, should lead to greater sharing of knowledge at the European level.

⁸ Committee on Fisheries

⁹ Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

Article 12 paragraph 4 of the Habitats Directive required Member States to undertake monitoring and this was being done in conjunction with monitoring of Bottlenose Dolphins and seal colonies and through aerial surveys of marine megafauna and marine waste conducted by Ifremer, and through collaboration with SCANS and with similar initiative in the Mediterranean with ACCOBAMS. The Observatoire Pelagis was continuing its work on strandings.

Good environmental status would be accorded when bycatch had fallen below the level where it posed a threat to the North-east Atlantic Common Dolphin population (<1 %).

The Minister for the Seas (Annick Girardin) had announced in October the creation of a working group on bycatch and a decree was in preparation making the reporting of bycatch mandatory, placing of observers on vessels, establishing a fishermen's charter, trials of cameras on board trial, and aerial surveys to map dolphin distribution. Although the data available were better than ever before, the Minister had said that they were generally insufficient as a basis for a decision. It was pointed out that as Member States had an obligation to gather data for 15 years, they were failing in their duty.

The CetAMBICion project was being coordinated by Spain and would assess cetacean populations in the Bay of Biscay and along the Iberian Coast. It was planned to last two years and involved 15 partners from France (including the University of La Rochelle, the Ministry of Ecological Transition and the Office français de la biodiversité), Portugal and Spain. If approved, the project would start in 2021.

Ms. Dolman (WDC) referred to the joint recommendations and noted that the measures being proposed did not correspond with the advice from ICES. She asked when the outcome of the review by the European Commission was expected and when the measures would be finalized. She also sounded a warning, saying that in her experience trials were rarely extended beyond the pilot phase to the whole fleet. Mr. Expert did not have information on the timeline of the review. Ms. Dolman also congratulated France on the CetAMBICion project.

Mr. Evans (Sea Watch Foundation) recalled that at MOP9 it had been suggested that the next SCANS survey would be confined to the continental shelf, which would be a limitation with regard to the range of Common Dolphins in the Bay of Biscay and off Iberia. Mr. Ridoux said that a revised plan now extended further but not to the same area covered by earlier SCANS surveys. Mr. Teixeira (Portugal) said that there were no plans for a full-scale survey off Portugal, but previous surveys had shown that Common Dolphins congregated at the edge of the shelf.

Ms. Murphy (Co-Chair) noted that it was not currently obligatory to take observers on board but asked whether there was a target for the percentage coverage, and whether static gear and/or pelagic fleet were the main focus. Mr. Expert noted that a percentage existed, but was not sure what it was. He also wasn't sure about the main focus. Mr. Ridoux suspected there was improvement in both pelagic and set nets.

Mr. Ridoux (France) said that the pingers were the dolphin deterrent devices (DDD) considered in the ICES advice, and work was continuing on a new but not yet operational design. Based on earlier projects and trials on different pingers, DDDs were considered the best for Common Dolphins, despite being noisy. Only one or two pingers were needed for trawl nets. There were concerns about adding further noise to the environment.

Mr. Kingston (UK) said that DDDs did not meet the acoustic specifications and had to be used under derogation. These devices were used in the UK with wide spacing and were considered effective for Harbour Porpoises at a range of 2km. There were concerns about habitat exclusion but DDDs had been used successfully in Portugal for Bottlenose Dolphins. The revised Regulation was very similar to Regulation 812 but with a few loopholes closed, such as requiring masters to ensure that pingers were operational throughout deployment. The provisions on monitoring were, however, weaker.

Ms. Murphy said that no design specifications had been included in the ICES advice and thought that more tests and an environmental impact assessment were needed for DDDs.

OSPAR/HELCOM - Meeting of the Intersessional Correspondence Group on the Coordination of Biodiversity Assessment and Monitoring

Mr Evans (Sea Watch Foundation) said that the CoBAM meeting reviewed the data presented to it but had not yet reached any conclusions. The meeting held in Copenhagen in September 2019 had considered thresholds for all marine mammal and bird species. BirdLife had suggested percentages for adult birds, but there were some objections.

The meeting followed the ICES ecoregions rather than OSPAR ones. The annex to the pre-meeting document showed the state of knowledge of abundance, trends, life history and parameters as basis for setting thresholds and which species were regularly present and which were vagrants. Member States were not achieving 'Good Environmental Status' because of poor data.

3.4. International bycatch project proposal

Anne-Marie Svoboda (Netherlands) gave a [presentation](#) on the draft proposal for an international bycatch project and encouraged further potential participants to express an interest in joining.

The proposal for an international bycatch project had first been suggested at the 25th Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee in 2019 as a result of the NGO request for emergency measures and Commissioner Sinkevičius's letter to environment ministers.

The project, which would need a coordinated approach to avoid duplication, was intended to complement existing actions and build on the Benthic Ecosystem Fisheries Impact Study which had had 33 partners from 12 countries and a budget of €7.78m. It had examined the effects of sea floor fisheries, but its scope had been very broad. The proposed project would be narrower, focusing on small-scale fisheries and their effects on protected, endangered and threatened species. It would be important to engage with those fishers open to using innovative gear types, to ensure wide regional representative and achieve 'buy-in' from environment and fisheries ministries (and even environment and fisheries departments within the same ministry in some cases). Synergies should be sought with projects being undertaken in the Mediterranean and Black Seas, and cross-border cooperation among fishers should be encouraged.

Fishers were wary especially after false accusations that they had been responsible for the death of mutilated Harbour Porpoises, which had in fact been killed by seals. Danish fishers had contacted their Dutch counterparts and persuaded them to cooperate with the project if they had nothing to hide. Participating fishers were offered incentives and relations had improved.

The project would comprise nine separate 'work packages', including mitigation and data collection to be phased over six years. Mitigation measures would be designed to fit local circumstances.

As mentioned at previous ASCOBANS meetings, it had been decided to make an application for LIFE funding. The next call for LIFE projects would be made in April 2021. Concept notes (10-page documents) would have to be submitted in July, approval would be given in the autumn of 2021, triggering the preparation of the formal full proposal. The share of EU funding was a maximum of 60 % and the matching 40 % could be made up of in-kind contributions. The estimated total budget lay between €10m and €20m. Expressions of interest in participating had been received from Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK. Ms. Svoboda asked for the contact details of ministry officials and said that it would be advantageous if national groups were established.

Ms. Svoboda intended to talk to ministries to discuss budgetary issues, with an opportunity arising at the ad hoc meeting of fisheries directors of the Scheveningen group.

Mr. Ridoux (France) asked whether in addition to the mitigation methods being trialled such as REM, observers and pingers, consideration would be given to spatial closures.

Mr. Evans (Sea Watch Foundation) said that such a wide project would have activities that were being undertaken by others, so the project needed a distinct niche to reduce the risk of duplication and to fill any gaps. Projects should be bottom up and not top down, and the participation of the affected fishers should be sought. Ms. Svoboda said that no analysis of gaps had been made, but LIFE did require positive actions and not just research.

The Dutch fisher in the remote electronic monitoring (REM) scheme had advised focusing on a few people who showed an interest rather than trying to convert large numbers. Ms. Murphy agreed saying that Ireland had had good experience in some results-based agri-environment payment schemes that had started with just a small number of participating farmers. This model of building projects had been widely emulated.

Ms. Svoboda undertook to circulate a reminder in the new year to build up the list of expressions of interest.

4. Priority SAP Actions for next year

Ms. Murphy (Co-Chair) asked for initial thoughts but suggested that this item should be dealt with by correspondence.

Mr. Evans (Sea Watch Foundation/NSG) suggested that the CDG might follow the example of the NSG and establish a 'league table' for the Range States. The table would have to be adapted, as only two Range States (France and the UK) were Party to ASCOBANS, and Non-Parties (Ireland, Portugal and Spain) would only be requested to complete relevant parts of the table.

Ms. Murphy suggested a 'traffic light' system to identified gaps and priorities and undertook to consult Ms. Caurant (Co-Chair) in the next few days.

5. Review and update of recommendations

Ms. Renell (Secretariat) undertook to compile a draft list of recommendations with the Co-chairs, and then circulating them among the CDG2 participants. Ms. Renell suggested that some of the obsolete recommendations from the previous meeting would not be carried over to CDG2 recommendations.

Ms. Murphy (Co-Chair) noted that there were several cross-references to other forums and asked whether any progress had been reported from them. More research should be done into the species' life history and into thresholds. OSPAR would continue to consider thresholds, and ASCOBANS should consider convening a workshop on this subject to follow-up on the workshop on unacceptable interactions.

Ms. Dolman (WDC) agreed that more work should be done on thresholds and noted that ASCOBANS had the aim of achieving zero bycatch and that thresholds should act as triggers for great mitigation efforts. No level of bycatch was 'acceptable'.

6. Any Other Business

Ms. Renell (Secretariat) noted that Begoña Santos had left the IEO and had said she could no longer continue to serve on the CDG.

Ms. Renell said that at the end of the four-year budgetary period it would become clear whether the Secretariat would have enough reserves to consider appointing a part-time coordinator, as coordination of the conservation plans had been identified as a priority. The same model as used for the North Sea Group and Jastarnia Group could be followed (where Peter Evans/Sea Watch Foundation and Ida Carlén/Coalition Clean Baltic fulfilled the role). A transparent recruitment process would have to be conducted.

The draft report of the meeting would be posted on MS Teams, so that participants could make edits directly. Ms. Caurant added that participants were requested to send the slides of their presentations to the Secretariat so that they could be posted on the meeting's webpage, as well as list of achievements, and ideas for recommendations from the meeting.

7. Date and venue of the 3rd meeting of the Common Dolphin Group

The Secretariat undertook to issue a poll to decide when the CDG should next meet. It was noted that the Advisory Committee would take place 8-12 November 2021, and the CDG should meet before then, possibly in September if clashes with ICES events could be avoided. The meeting would be held virtually over two days.

8. Close of the Meeting

Ms. Murphy (Co-Chair) said that some loose ends could be tied up in the time before the Christmas and New Year break. After proceedings were closed at 18:02 CET, the Secretariat organized an online group photo.

Annex 1:**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE
2ND MEETING OF THE ASCOBANS COMMON DOLPHIN GROUP (CDG)**

(to be presented to the 27th Meeting of the Advisory Committee)

1. For reporting under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive, it is recommended that a transboundary assessment should be undertaken by Member States in conjunction with third countries; an assessment that could be undertaken by the ASCOBANS CDG and consider marine mammal common indicators developed by OSPAR.
2. The CDG endorses ICES advice on Emergency Measures for the Common Dolphin in the North-east Atlantic, subject to minor amendments to reflect ASCOBANS conservation objective '*to allow populations to recover to and/or maintain 80% of carrying capacity in the long term*'.
3. While emergency short-term measures are imperative to reduce bycatch of Common Dolphins in the North-east Atlantic, a strategic long-term population level plan is recommended to ensure the favourable conservation status of this European protected species in the long term. The strategic bycatch reduction plan, detailing monitoring and mitigation requirements, could be co-developed by the ASCOBANS CDG in association with other stakeholders, including Advisory Councils and the fishing industry.
4. Parties are encouraged to continue to review and test a range of mitigation options to reduce bycatch of Common Dolphins, including acoustic deterrents, gear modifications, fishing practices, time-area closures, move-on procedure etc., mitigation measures that could be implemented at the fleet level.
5. Parties are encouraged to conduct further analysis towards fine-scale risk-mapping to better understand factors determining high bycatch and to direct resources to high-risk areas and times.
6. Parties are encouraged to consider the geographic coverage of largescale transboundary surveys, such as SCANS, as it is crucial to cover as much range of the North-east Atlantic population as possible, to assess population shifts resulting from environmental change.
7. Recommend that North-east Atlantic-wide information on life history parameters be collected and analysed from strandings and bycaught animals to assess for evidence of temporal changes in those parameters that may have resulted from anthropogenic activities.
8. A review should be undertaken of aerial survey monitoring techniques to better discriminate small delphinid species to ensure explicit estimates of population size and uncertainty.
9. The Steering Group should identify the added value of its scientific advice compared to the other scientific fora, in order to avoid duplication of effort.
10. Letters of invitation to be sent from the Secretariat to request Non-Party Range States' participation in implementation of the SAP on Common Dolphins.
11. SAP Range States to complete the 'Achievements Table' by end of the year to identify data gaps, as well as actions and funding that are required going forward. The Steering Group should then set priorities for each country. Gaps to be potentially addressed by the CetAMBICion EMFF project led by Spain and any relevant national projects.

Annex 2: SAP Implementation - Parties - Achievements Table (December 2020)

Actions /Tasks	Code	Description	Priority	France	United Kingdom
Action	RES-01	Identify the priority bycatch issues	essential		
Tasks	1	Identify and monitor medium-to-high-risk fisheries activities with a high risk of common dolphin bycatch in order to ascertain more accurate assessments of bycatch rates in order to meet the agreed objective of Resolution 3 MOP 3 and Resolution 5 MOP 8.	essential	on-board observer programme by Ifremer ; increased observer effort on pair trawls in winter; spatial analysis of stranding (areas of mortality and overlap with fishing effort for 2010-2019)	<p>Dedicated protected species observer bycatch monitoring conducted by SMRU under historic Council Regulation 812/2004 (now Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 ANNEX XIII). Effort is flexible depending on the identified risk/need. Analysis of data to identify spatial and activity-based risk; UK Cetacean Bycatch Initiative aims to identify and then target high-risk areas in England for bycatch. Initially trialling an "Expert Response Group" in the SW of England will include testing self-reporting of bycatch by UK fishers in SW England;</p> <p>Dedicated UK strandings analysis project conducting post-mortem analysis and spatial data analysis of strandings dataset for identification of bycatch risk.</p>
	2	Progress development of a management framework procedure for common dolphin in order to meet the agreed objectives of Resolution 5, MOP 8.	essential	1% and 1.7% threshold in MSFD	JNCC has commissioned a report from SMRU to develop a Removals Limit Algorithm: Hammond, P.S., Paradinas, I. & Smout, S.C. (2019) Development of a Removals Limit Algorithm (RLA) to set limits to anthropogenic mortality of small cetaceans to meet specified conservation objectives, with an example implementation for bycatch of harbour porpoise in the North Sea. JNCC Report No. 628, JNCC, Peterborough, ISSN 0963-8091

Actions /Tasks	Code	Description	Priority	France	United Kingdom
	3	Facilitate the identification of factors influencing bycatch rates; including an assessment of temporal (seasonal) and spatial, gear characteristics, fishing practices and target/non-target species.	essential	on-going projects : PERTUIS 2019-2022 (seasonal change in dolphin distribution); CAPECET 2020 (high resolution changes in dolphin distribution); LICADO 2019-2022 (gear characteristics, fishing practices); MSc student (relationship between fine scale oceanography and mortality areas);	SMRU research from 2016 aiming to identify the drivers of bycatch: Northridge S, Coram A, Kingston A, Crawford R. Disentangling the causes of protected-species bycatch in gillnet fisheries. Conserv Biol. 2017 Jun;31(3):686-695. doi: 10.1111/cobi.12741. Epub 2017 Apr 29. PMID: 27109749.
	4	Facilitate research in order to assess evidence of bycatch selectivity of age-sex groups in different fishing operations (e.g. gears, target species, seasons). (fisheries directorate)	essential	on-going PhD project on demography of common dolphin based on stranded animal age structure	Analysis of the strandings dataset supports this action, with further data interrogation possible. Consideration of developing a licence adjustment to allow animals bycaught at sea to be landed for post mortem analysis.
	5	Monitor causes of death in the population through strandings programmes for aiding assessments of spatio-temporal relationships and trends in bycatch, aiding implementation of the agreed objectives of Resolution 10, MOP 8 on strandings.	essential	included in the stranding network protocol. Part of the national bycatch working group	Cetacean Strandings and Investigation Programme (CSIP) & Scottish Marine Animal Strandings Scheme (SMASS). Long standing UK strandings programme with data from 1990 onwards for use in analyses. Quarterly summaries and annual reports detail causes of death. CSIP submit data on strandings and post-mortem examinations to the UK annual national report for ASCOBANS
Action	RES-02	Improve estimates of bycatch rates to support development of conservation strategy	essential		
Tasks	1	Ensure that existing regulations with respect to bycatch reduction measures are being effectively implemented and to collect data on their efficacy in reducing bycatch to meet the agreed objectives of Resolution 3, MOP 3 and Resolution 5, MOP 8	essential	part of the national bycatch working group	The bycatch monitoring programme fulfils UK monitoring obligations under Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 ANNEX XIII (superseding Council Regulation 812/2004) as well as contributing to the surveillance requirements of Article 12 of the Habitats Directive and other international agreements including ASCOBANS, the International Convention on the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) and OSPAR.

Actions /Tasks	Code	Description	Priority	France	United Kingdom
					Monitoring and enforcement guidelines are set out in Council Regulation 812/2004 and is conducted through an overall monitoring target of 425 days at sea for independent on-board observers for relevant fisheries set and drift gillnet fisheries, longlines and pingers.
	2	Drive coordination of bycatch monitoring observer programmes across Parties and non-Party Range States.one	essential	to be done	Active members (and currently co-chair) of the ICES WGBYC bringing expertise and data from the UK bycatch monitoring programme. ASCOBANS-ACCOBAMS joint bycatch working group. UK leads the OSPAR common indicator on bycatch mortality
	3	Increase reliability of fishing effort data, particularly for medium-to-high risk activities, supporting the wider work of ICES.	essential	VMS data analysed by Ifremer	Planned roll out of iVMS for the UK under 12m fleet.
	4	Support innovation and further monitoring methods, e.g. remote electronic monitoring (REM) and liaise with the newly created By-catch Inference from Stranding Working Group of IWC, to improve bycatch estimates in high risk fisheries.	essential	REM project by OFB being discussed; preliminary stage	Project proposal successful for development of REM equipment for bycatch monitoring through the Seafood Innovation Fund; Bycatch Mitigation Initiative (in development) will identify and facilitate innovations in monitoring and mitigation. Clean Catch UK steering group (Defra-led) provides a forum for knowledge share and review of innovations in bycatch monitoring and mitigation.
	5	Support OSPAR in the development of a pressure-state indicator for bycatch in order to meet the requirements of MSFD ^[1] .	essential	participat to OSPAR meeting, and MSFD national implementation	UK (JNCC) lead OSPAR indicator development for bycatch; JNCC lead marine mammal indicators for the MSFD.
Action	MIT-01	Implement and assess gear modifications and mitigation measures to reduce bycatch	essential		

Actions /Tasks	Code	Description	Priority	France	United Kingdom
Tasks	1	Evaluation of current gear modification and mitigation measures to identify effectiveness in the reduction of bycatch in high and medium-risk fisheries to meet the agreed objectives of Resolution 5, MOP 8.	essential	Project LICADO 2019-2022 (pinger on pelagic trawls)	UK Bycatch Monitoring Programme will continue to assess the utility of certain gear modifications. Mitigation trials ongoing with Cefas.
	2	Implement proven mitigation measures for all high and medium-risk fisheries that are appropriate to the nature of the vessels and their size, with subsequent monitoring to ensure effectiveness and the ongoing need to meet the agreed objectives of Resolution 5, MOP 8.	essential		Deployment of pingers required for all vessels >12m using bottom set and entanglement nets. Defra led Bycatch Mitigation Initiative under development.
	3	Identification of funding and collaboration for further gear innovation and/or other measures for medium to high-risk fisheries, and implementation of monitored trials of promising mitigation measures, in collaboration with the fishing industry.	essential	Project LICADO 2019-2022 (tests on reflectivity of set nets)	Clean Catch UK national bycatch steering group remit includes discussion of project proposals and identification of funding opportunities, facilitating collaboration.
Action	MON-01	Implement a wide-scale surveillance programme to monitor trends in distribution and abundance in the NE Atlantic	high		

Actions /Tasks	Code	Description	Priority	France	United Kingdom
Tasks	1	Encourage Parties and non-Party Range States to collaborate and fund regular systematic wide-scale surveys in order to establish trends in abundance and distribution relevant for transboundary reporting of conservation status in order to meet the agreed objectives of Resolution 7, MOP 4 and Resolution 7, MOP 5.	high	MMANA ? (application to EMFF funding to be reviewed)	SCANS survey ~decadally, with plans to consider increasing the frequency to enable detection of trends. UK has been a major funder of previous projects.
	2	Develop a mechanism for collation of all relevant, standardised data at a relevant spatial scale (e.g. JCP or MERP), including complimentary standardised data collection protocols, to enable seasonal trends to be evaluated to meet the agreed objectives of Resolution 7, MOP 4	high	CetAMBICion ? (application to EMFF funding to be reviewed)	JNCC Joint Cetacean Data Programme (JC DP) funding secured to deliver an resource of collated cetacean monitoring data fulfilling an agreed standard, from a variety of sources for collated use in analyses. Open access data products will be made available, as well as potential to download data for bespoke analyses.
	3	Ensure that the outputs of this action provide a suitable mechanism to enhance transboundary reporting of conservation status and good environmental status.	high	CetAMBICion ? (application to EMFF funding to be reviewed)	The Joint Cetacean Data Programme (JC DP) aims to achieve this by collating survey data from across northeast Atlantic waters for use at appropriate spatial and temporal scales.
Action	RES-03	Improve understanding of causes of seasonal and annual variation in abundance and distribution, particularly in relation to human activities	high		

Actions /Tasks	Code	Description	Priority	France	United Kingdom
Tasks	1	Review the collection and collation of appropriate standardised data on anthropogenic activities, and display in a format that will facilitate use in a geographic information system (GIS). This should aim to support implementation of the MSFD and assessment of good environmental status through OSPAR.	high	OFB ?	JNCC collate human activities data and update a GIS layer regularly.
	2	Complete seasonal risk assessment/risk mapping of relevant human activities and common dolphin distribution in order to meet the agreed objectives of Resolution 7, MOP 4, Resolution 7, MOP 5 and Resolution 5, MOP 8.	high	data of interest: PERTUIS 2019-2022 (aerial survey in BoB, Feb-May-Aug-Nov); CAPECET (2020, BoB, Jan to March); vessels survey in May and Nov (Pelgas; EVHOE)	None to date
	3	Collate and monitor data on important prey species of common dolphins to identify spatial areas of concern for fisheries management measures to meet the agreed objectives of Resolution 7, MOP 4 and Resolution 7, MOP 5.	high	Ifremer fish stock surveys (Pelgas, EVHOE; conducted annually in May and Nov respectively)	Stomach sample analysis completed ad hoc as part of the strandings programme. Plans to consider increase of funding for regular stomach analysis to increase evidence base.
	4	Regularly review of evidence for potential impacts of climate change on common dolphins to inform on appropriate mitigation measures.	high		NERC PhD project placement 2020 - exploring strandings data as a sentinel for climate change impacts. Project complete and paper under development.
Action	MON-02	Monitor health and nutritional status, diet, life history parameters, and causes of mortality in the NE Atlantic	high		

Actions /Tasks	Code	Description	Priority	France	United Kingdom
Tasks	1	Funding of national stranding and bycatch observer programmes for collection of carcasses, assessment of health status, cause of death, diet analysis and life history parameters to meet the agreed objectives of Resolution 10, MOP 8.	high	part of stranding network funded by MTS/OFB	Long-standing contracts for strandings and bycatch monitoring programmes. https://ukstrandings.org/ https://www.strandings.org/ http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&ProjectID=18535
	2	Ensure implementation the ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS/IWC strandings protocol to achieve standardised, comparable datasets.	high	yes	Co-authored the protocol, which is implemented in the UK
	3	Support strandings programmes to enable the analysis of diet, including tissue samples for fatty acids/stable isotope analysis, and life history parameters.	high	continuous sampling; discontinuous analysis	Stomach sample analysis completed ad hoc as a part of the strandings programme. Plans to consider increase of funding for regular stomach analysis to increase evidence base.
	4	Support expansion of drift prediction modelling capabilities for determining the origin of stranded common dolphins, e.g. MOTHY (Peltier <i>et al.</i> , 2016) to identify potential bycatch high risk areas/seasons.	high	yes; expansion around Iberian coasts (CetAMBITION) and Mediterranean	Drift modelling carried out in Scotland to identify source of stranded animals - further investment required
	5	Explore opportunities to sample live animals (e.g. photo analysis, swabs), in addition to samples from stranded animals, facilitating agreed objectives of Resolution 7, MOP 8 to help determine population structure species. Such information is fundamental to the development of the	high	no progress made this year	

Actions /Tasks	Code	Description	Priority	France	United Kingdom
		management procedure outlined in Action RES – 01 (Identify the priority bycatch issues).			
Action	RES-04	Further our understanding on population structure by assessing and developing suitable techniques for these highly mobile small delphinids	medium		
Tasks	1	To identify funding and develop a programme which can involve existing or potential new samples. This programme will identify areas from which we require improved information on population structure, e.g. differentiating groups within and beyond the continental shelf, and work required to delineate the population range. Strategic sampling approaches (i.e. temporal and spatial) and statistical power analysis should be undertaken to determine level of sampling required to detect appropriate units to conserve.	medium	has to be considered with partners; new opportunity with NL life+ project on bycatch ?	
	2	Actively support and encourage development of suitable techniques for discriminating population structure in highly mobile small delphinids.	medium	partly done	

Actions /Tasks	Code	Description	Priority	France	United Kingdom
	3	Facilitate the provision of dead bycaught animals for population structure assessment and other appropriate studies. This may require repeal of national legislation to facilitate landing of bycaught common dolphins for research.	medium	no progress made this year	Analysis of the strandings dataset supports this action, with further data interrogation possible. Consideration of developing a licence adjustment to allow animals bycatch at sea to be landed for analysis.
Action	MIT-02	Improve understanding of and develop mitigation for the risks of anthropogenic sound	medium		
Tasks	1	Parties and non-Party Range States should coordinate and support research on the effects of underwater noise on common dolphins to meet the agreed objectives of Resolution 4, MOP 5, Resolution 2, MOP 6 and Resolutions 6, 8 and 9, MOP 8.	medium	Participation to JONAS project (INTERREG Atlantic Area-funded research project with partners from Ireland, the UK, France, Portugal, and Spain to address the transboundary issue of underwater noise)	
	2	Parties and non-Party Range States should introduce precautionary guidance on measures and procedures for all activities surrounding the development of renewable energy production and other noise-producing industry to minimise risks to populations and mitigate possible effects following current best practice as agreed in Resolution 2, MOP 6.	medium	effort focused on harbour porpoise in eastern Channel and southern North Sea	JNCC have produced mitigation guidelines to reduce the risk of injury to marine mammals that might occur a result of the development of renewable energy production and other noise-producing industries. These guidelines are regularly reviewed

Actions /Tasks	Code	Description	Priority	France	United Kingdom
	3	Annually monitor and assess knowledge of the effects of anthropogenic sound through review of literature, including behavioural responses of common dolphins and the effectiveness of mitigation technologies as agreed in Resolution 2, MOP 6 and Resolution 6, MOP 8.	medium		Criteria to predict the potential auditory injury thresholds was updated in 2019: Southall, B.L., Finneran, J.J., Reichmuth, C., Nachtigall, P.E., Ketten, D.R., Bowles, A.E., Ellison, W.T., Nowacek, D.P., and Tyack, P.L. 2019. Marine mammal noise exposure criteria: updated scientific recommendations for residual hearing effects. Aquatic Mammals, 45: 125-232.
	4	Where suitable samples exist, monitor the physical effects of exposure to anthropogenic sound, i.e. acoustic trauma, where access to stranded animals within the required timeframe is possible.	medium		CSIP & SMASS work collaboratively with scientists to develop methods of assessing the impact of acoustic trauma on cetaceans. Physical samples to identify acoustic trauma are collected within the required timeframe when possible, to investigate potential audio trauma. JNCC marine mammal mitigation guidelines describe a process for recording observed behavioural changes following possible noise exposure.
	5	Parties and non-Party Range States should engage with OSPAR and other relevant fora to encourage noise data provision appropriate for the assessment of good environmental status.	medium	Impulsive data for 2019 had been sent to OSPAR register.	JNCC developed, host and manage the UK Marine Noise Registry (MNR) to record human activities in UK seas producing loud, low to medium frequency (10Hz-10kHz) impulsive noise created by industry and defence activities. UK (JNCC) lead marine mammal indicators (including noise) for the MSFD.
Action	MON-03	Ensure screening and assessment of the occurrence and effects of hazardous substances	medium		

Actions /Tasks	Code	Description	Priority	France	United Kingdom
Tasks	1	Continue to monitor and assess emerging chemical pollutants and marine litter (including macro-, micro- and nanoplastics) in common dolphins through review of literature to progress agreed objectives of Resolution 4, MOP 7, Resolution 7, MOP5 and Resolution 7, MOP 8.	medium	work in progress	
	2	Monitor effects from exposure to legacy pollutants on immune, endocrine and reproductive functions in common dolphins against agreed thresholds, through continued analysis of strandings data to meet agreed objectives of Resolution 7, MOP 8.	medium	work in progress	Analysis of the strandings dataset supports this action. Tissue samples are collected from stranded individuals and assessed as part of CSIP and SMASS programmes.
	3	Encourage Parties and non-Party Range States to work through OSPAR and other relevant fora to aid the development of an indicator of GES to meet Criteria D8C2 in order to ascertain that the health of the species is not adversely affected due to contaminants including cumulative and synergetic effects.	medium	work in progress	UK (JNCC) lead marine mammal indicators for the MSFD.
Action	MON-04	Monitor for potential increases in anthropogenic activities that lead to incidences of death, injury or adverse health effects	low		

Actions /Tasks	Code	Description	Priority	France	United Kingdom
Tasks	1	Encourage Parties and Range States to continue to give their full support to the activities related to applying an ecosystem approach to the management of human activities under the frameworks of OSPAR, HELCOM, the European Union and the Convention in Biological Diversity as agreed in Resolution 9, MOP8.	low		
	2	Requests that Parties and Range States ensure that cross-sectoral and transboundary consultations take place as early as the planning stage of activities in marine areas (marine spatial planning) with the aim of identifying potential impacts and minimising or mitigating such impacts effectively as agreed in Resolutions 6 and 9, MOP8.	low		
	3	As part of the annual reporting for this plan, collect and review information to monitor changes in exposure to key anthropogenic pressures.	low		JNCC maintains GIS activities layers showing pressures such as aggregated fishing effort; vessel traffic; abrasion etc. which can be used against cetacean distributions to assess risk from pressures.
	4	Identify emerging pressures (e.g. wet renewables and ecotourism) and ensure monitoring is in place to establish risk.	low		Licenced activities such as renewable energy installations are monitored throughout development and operational phases, with developers required to monitor and assess risk, reporting to country agencies and regulators.
Action	AWA-01	Public awareness tasks	essential		

Actions /Tasks	Code	Description	Priority	France	United Kingdom
Tasks	1	All key milestones (e.g. timetables for actions; assessment of progress against objectives etc.) to be publicised through ASCOBANS and Range State media outlets in a coordinated manner agreed through the SG.	essential		No progress to date
	2	ASCOBANS webpages to host key documents and updates, to be publicised by SG members.	essential		No progress to date
	3	Presentation of the progress at relevant events and conferences.	essential		No progress to date
	4	Identification and publication of papers through journals and list servers/webpages to publicise lessons learned and successes.	essential	Peltier, H., Authier, M., Dabin, W., Dars, C., Demaret, F., Doremus, G., Van Canneyt, O., Laran, S., Mendez-Fernandez, P., Spitz, J., Daniel, P., Ridoux, V., 2020. Can modelling the drift of bycaught dolphin stranded carcasses help identify involved fisheries? An exploratory study. Glob. Ecol. Conserv. 21, e00843. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gecco.2019.e00843	No progress to date
	5	Wider circulation of articles and news items through the media/social media to support the dissemination of factual information to the wider public.	essential	https://www.observatoire-pelagis.cnrs.fr/actualites-240/	No progress to date
	6	Coordination with relevant NGO's with an interest in common dolphins, to join up approaches for public information campaigns.	essential	FNE and LPO are members of national bycatch working group	No progress to date

Annex 3: SAP Implementation - Range States - Achievements Table (December 2020)

Actions /Tasks	Code	Description	Priority	Ireland
Action	RES-01	Identify the priority bycatch issues	essential	
Tasks	1	Identify and monitor medium-to-high-risk fisheries activities with a high risk of common dolphin bycatch in order to ascertain more accurate assessments of bycatch rates in order to meet the agreed objective of Resolution 3 MOP 3 and Resolution 5 MOP 8.	essential	An enhanced observer sampling scheme is being run under the Data Collection Framework, funded by the EMFF programme. A marine mammal necropsy strandings project was funded by the EMFF between June 2017 and December 2019. Provision of data on bycatch and fishing effort to ICES datacalls.
	2	Progress development of a management framework procedure for common dolphin in order to meet the agreed objectives of Resolution 5, MOP 8.	essential	Participation in OSPAR's MMEG and the development of a marine mammal bycatch indicator
	3	Facilitate the identification of factors influencing bycatch rates; including an assessment of temporal (seasonal) and spatial, gear characteristics, fishing practices and target/non-target species.	essential	Historical data available on assessing factors that influence bycatch rates in common dolphins in Irish fisheries, but no current studies
	4	Facilitate research in order to assess evidence of bycatch selectivity of age-sex groups in different fishing operations (e.g. gears, target species, seasons). (fisheries directorate)	essential	At sea sampling of bycaught cetaceans under the DCF. Assessment of cause of death of stranded common dolphins (2017-2019) to assess evidence of bycatch in stranded animals
	5	Monitor causes of death in the population through strandings programmes for aiding assessments of spatio-temporal relationships and trends in bycatch, aiding implementation of the agreed objectives of Resolution 10, MOP 8 on strandings.	essential	Stranding programme funded for monitoring COD, and collection of samples, between June to 2017 and Dec 2019
Action	RES-02	Improve estimates of bycatch rates to support development of conservation strategy	essential	
Tasks	1	Ensure that existing regulations with respect to bycatch reduction measures are being effectively implemented and to collect data on their efficacy in reducing bycatch to meet the agreed objectives of Resolution 3, MOP 3 and Resolution 5, MOP 8	essential	

Actions /Tasks	Code	Description	Priority	Ireland
	2	Drive coordination of bycatch monitoring observer programmes across Parties and non-Party Range States.one	essential	Irish appointed members to OSPAR's MMEG; various ICES working groups including ICES WGBYC; EC STECF and the ASCOBANS-ACCOBAMS Joint Bycatch Working Group.
	3	Increase reliability of fishing effort data, particularly for medium-to-high risk activities, supporting the wider work of ICES.	essential	Application of iVMS on some vessels <12m fleet
	4	Support innovation and further monitoring methods, e.g. remote electronic monitoring (REM) and liaise with the newly created By-catch Inference from Stranding Working Group of IWC, to improve bycatch estimates in high risk fisheries.	essential	GMIT researchers collabobrated in a funding proposal with the IWC Cetacean Bycatch Mitigation initiative, which included the development of a mobile app for reporting bycatch.
	5	Support OSPAR in the development of a pressure-state indicator for bycatch in order to meet the requirements of MSFD ^[1] .	essential	Participation in OSPAR's MMEG and the development of a marine mammal bycatch indicator
Action	MIT-01	Implement and assess gear modifications and mitigation measures to reduce bycatch	essential	
Tasks	1	Evaluation of current gear modification and mitigation measures to identify effectiveness in the reduction of bycatch in high and medium-risk fisheries to meet the agreed objectives of Resolution 5, MOP 8.	essential	
	2	Implement proven mitigation measures for all high and medium-risk fisheries that are appropriate to the nature of the vessels and their size, with subsequent monitoring to ensure effectiveness and the ongoing need to meet the agreed objectives of Resolution 5, MOP 8.	essential	No current mitigation trials; funding proposal submitted for such work
	3	Identification of funding and collaboration for further gear innovation and/or other measures for medium to high-risk fisheries, and implementation of monitored trials of promising mitigation measures, in collaboration with the fishing industry.	essential	
Action	MON-01	Implement a wide-scale surveillance programme to monitor trends in distribution and abundance in the NE Atlantic	high	

Actions /Tasks	Code	Description	Priority	Ireland
Tasks	1	Encourage Parties and non-Party Range States to collaborate and fund regular systematic wide-scale surveys in order to establish trends in abundance and distribution relevant for transboundary reporting of conservation status in order to meet the agreed objectives of Resolution 7, MOP 4 and Resolution 7, MOP 5.	high	Previous participation in Regional (SCANS type) surveys
	2	Develop a mechanism for collation of all relevant, standardised data at a relevant spatial scale (e.g. JCP or MERP), including complimentary standardised data collection protocols, to enable seasonal trends to be evaluated to meet the agreed objectives of Resolution 7, MOP 4	high	Provision of data to the MERP project, SCANS III, the JNCC JCDP and OSPAR's MMEG
	3	Ensure that the outputs of this action provide a suitable mechanism to enhance transboundary reporting of conservation status and good environmental status.	high	Provision of data to the MERP project, SCANS II, the JNCC JCDP and OSPAR's MMEG
Action	RES-03	Improve understanding of causes of seasonal and annual variation in abundance and distribution, particularly in relation to human activities	high	
Tasks	1	Review the collection and collation of appropriate standardised data on anthropogenic activities, and display in a format that will facilitate use in a geographic information system (GIS). This should aim to support implementation of the MSFD and assessment of good environmental status through OSPAR.	high	
	2	Complete seasonal risk assessment/risk mapping of relevant human activities and common dolphin distribution in order to meet the agreed objectives of Resolution 7, MOP 4, Resolution 7, MOP 5 and Resolution 5, MOP 8.	high	
	3	Collate and monitor data on important prey species of common dolphins to identify spatial areas of concern for fisheries management measures to meet the agreed objectives of Resolution 7, MOP 4 and Resolution 7, MOP 5.	high	PhD funding application submitted for undertaking a full assessment of dietary requirements of common dolphins in Irish waters.
	4	Regularly review of evidence for potential impacts of climate change on common dolphins to inform on appropriate mitigation measures.	high	
Action	MON-02	Monitor health and nutritional status, diet, life history parameters, and causes of mortality in the NE Atlantic	high	

Actions /Tasks	Code	Description	Priority	Ireland
Tasks	1	Funding of national stranding and bycatch observer programmes for collection of carcasses, assessment of health status, cause of death, diet analysis and life history parameters to meet the agreed objectives of Resolution 10, MOP 8.	high	Stranding programme funded through the EMFF programme for monitoring COD, and collection of samples, between June to 2017 and Dec 2019. Historical samples also available from EU and national funded projects.
	2	Ensure implementation the ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS/IWC strandings protocol to achieve standardised, comparable datasets.	high	
	3	Support strandings programmes to enable the analysis of diet, including tissue samples for fatty acids/stable isotope analysis, and life history parameters.	high	PhD funding application submitted for undertaking a full assessment of dietary requirements of common dolphins in Irish waters.
	4	Support expansion of drift prediction modelling capabilities for determining the origin of stranded common dolphins, e.g. MOTHY (Peltier <i>et al.</i> , 2016) to identify potential bycatch high risk areas/seasons.	high	
	5	Explore opportunities to sample live animals (e.g. photo analysis, swabs), in addition to samples from stranded animals, facilitating agreed objectives of Resolution 7, MOP 8 to help determine population structure species. Such information is fundamental to the development of the management procedure outlined in Action RES – 01 (Identify the priority bycatch issues).	high	GMIT-IWDG historical biopsy project
Action	RES-04	Further our understanding on population structure by assessing and developing suitable techniques for these highly mobile small delphinids	medium	
Tasks	1	To identify funding and develop a programme which can involve existing or potential new samples. This programme will identify areas from which we require improved information on population structure, e.g. differentiating groups within and beyond the continental shelf, and work required to delineate the population range. Strategic sampling approaches (i.e. temporal and spatial) and statistical power analysis should be undertaken to determine level of sampling required to detect appropriate units to conserve.	medium	

Actions /Tasks	Code	Description	Priority	Ireland
	2	Actively support and encourage development of suitable techniques for discriminating population structure in highly mobile small delphinids.	medium	UCC previously funded, through the EU NECESSITY project, a PhD focusing on the population structure of Common Dolphins in the NE Atlantic.
	3	Facilitate the provision of dead bycaught animals for population structure assessment and other appropriate studies. This may require repeal of national legislation to facilitate landing of bycaught common dolphins for research.	medium	At sea sampling of bycaught cetaceans under the DCF.
Action	MIT-02	Improve understanding of and develop mitigation for the risks of anthropogenic sound	medium	
Tasks	1	Parties and non-Party Range States should coordinate and support research on the effects of underwater noise on common dolphins to meet the agreed objectives of Resolution 4, MOP 5, Resolution 2, MOP 6 and Resolutions 6, 8 and 9, MOP 8.	medium	
	2	Parties and non-Party Range States should introduce precautionary guidance on measures and procedures for all activities surrounding the development of renewable energy production and other noise-producing industry to minimise risks to populations and mitigate possible effects following current best practice as agreed in Resolution 2, MOP 6.	medium	NPWS 'Guidance to Manage the Risk to Marine Mammals from Man-made Sound Sources in Irish Waters'.
	3	Annually monitor and assess knowledge of the effects of anthropogenic sound through review of literature, including behavioural responses of common dolphins and the effectiveness of mitigation technologies as agreed in Resolution 2, MOP 6 and Resolution 6, MOP 8.	medium	
	4	Where suitable samples exist, monitor the physical effects of exposure to anthropogenic sound, i.e. acoustic trauma, where access to stranded animals within the required timeframe is possible.	medium	
	5	Parties and non-Party Range States should engage with OSPAR and other relevant fora to encourage noise data provision appropriate for the assessment of good environmental status.	medium	GMIT study on 'Assessment and Monitoring of Ocean Noise in Irish Waters'.
Action	MON-03	Ensure screening and assessment of the occurrence and effects of hazardous substances	medium	

Actions /Tasks	Code	Description	Priority	Ireland
Tasks	1	Continue to monitor and assess emerging chemical pollutants and marine litter (including macro-, micro- and nanoplastics) in common dolphins through review of literature to progress agreed objectives of Resolution 4, MOP 7, Resolution 7, MOP5 and Resolution 7, MOP 8.	medium	Recent GMIT-UCC study assessing marine litter in common dolphins in Irish waters
	2	Monitor effects from exposure to legacy pollutants on immune, endocrine and reproductive functions in common dolphins against agreed thresholds, through continued analysis of strandings data to meet agreed objectives of Resolution 7, MOP 8.	medium	Ongoing EMFF-Marine Institute funded study assessing legacy pollutants; Ongoing work at GMIT assessing concentrations of legacy and emerging pollutants, looking at endpoints of reproductive toxicity.
	3	Encourage Parties and non-Party Range States to work through OSPAR and other relevant fora to aid the development of an indicator of GES to meet Criteria D8C2 in order to ascertain that the health of the species is not adversely affected due to contaminants including cumulative and synergetic effects.	medium	Participation in development of OSPAR's canditation mammal pollutant indicator
Action	MON-04	Monitor for potential increases in anthropogenic activities that lead to incidences of death, injury or adverse health effects	low	
Tasks	1	Encourage Parties and Range States to continue to give their full support to the activities related to applying an ecosystem approach to the management of human activities under the frameworks of OSPAR, HELCOM, the European Union and the Convention in Biological Diversity as agreed in Resolution 9, MOP8.	low	Participation in OSPAR's MMEG and the development of OSPAR Biodiversity indicators
	2	Requests that Parties and Range States ensure that cross-sectoral and transboundary consultations take place as early as the planning stage of activities in marine areas (marine spatial planning) with the aim of identifying potential impacts and minimising or mitigating such impacts effectively as agreed in Resolutions 6 and 9, MOP8.	low	
	3	As part of the annual reporting for this plan, collect and review information to monitor changes in exposure to key anthropogenic pressures.	low	
	4	Identify emerging pressures (e.g. wet renewables and ecotourism) and ensure monitoring is in place to establish risk.	low	NPWS 'Guidance to Manage theRisk to Marine Mammals fromMan-made Sound Sources in Irish Waters'.

Actions /Tasks	Code	Description	Priority	Ireland
Action	AWA-01	Public awareness tasks	essential	
Tasks	1	All key milestones (e.g. timetables for actions; assessment of progress against objectives etc.) to be publicised through ASCOBANS and Range State media outlets in a coordinated manner agreed through the SG.	essential	
	2	ASCOBANS webpages to host key documents and updates, to be publicised by SG members.	essential	
	3	Presentation of the progress at relevant events and conferences.	essential	
	4	Identification and publication of papers through journals and list servers/webpages to publicise lessons learned and successes.	essential	
	5	Wider circulation of articles and news items through the media/social media to support the dissemination of factual information to the wider public.	essential	
	6	Coordination with relevant NGO's with an interest in common dolphins, to join up approaches for public information campaigns.	essential	

Annex 4: List of Participants

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