

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### SAC Noise Management Regulators Working Group Updated August 2022

#### Aim

To share information on industry operations and work towards strategic planning and the management of impulsive noise across industries in 5 harbour porpoise Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), which include the Southern North Sea, North Anglesey Marine, Bristol Channel Approaches, North Channel and West Wales Marine.

#### Objectives

The objectives of the SAC Noise Management Regulators working group will include the following:

- Work together as Regulators and collaborate to investigate opportunities to manage impulsive underwater noise in the harbour porpoise SACs in line with their Conservation Objectives.
- Maintain an Activity Tracker for all consented underwater noise generating activities within the SNS harbour porpoise SAC (i.e. piling, seismic surveys etc) to be updated by Regulators and publicly available for applicants.
- Using the Activity Tracker and the best available evidence of the time, identify and implement a strategic planning framework and process to effectively manage noise and achieve an oversight of activity within the SNS harbour porpoise SAC across sectors.
- Periodically review the strategic planning regulatory and management process and ensure that lessons learnt are captured and implemented.
- Work should focus on the SNS harbour porpoise SAC in the first instance and discuss considerations and implications for other SACs. Practices will be implemented for other sites where appropriate.
- Liaise with Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies (SNCB) in relation to the implementation and adaptive management of underwater noise in the harbour porpoise SACs in line with the site Conservation Objectives.
- Provide a forum to discuss and address individual Regulator/ Industry issues regarding the implementation of the guidance for assessing the significance of noise disturbance against the conservation objectives of harbour porpoise SACs<sup>1</sup>, and management of underwater noise in the harbour porpoise SACs.
- Work together to support and facilitate research and development, including the opportunity to work strategically to inform our decision-making and noise management/reduction policy.
- Provide internal and external communications/ lines to take around management of noise within harbour porpoise SACs.
- Hold quarterly meetings with the relevant SNCBs to discuss common issues.

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<sup>1</sup> JNCC (2020). Guidance for assessing the significance of noise disturbance against Conservation Objectives of harbour porpoise SACs (England, Wales & Northern Ireland). JNCC Report No. 654, JNCC, Peterborough, ISSN 0963-8091.

## Structure

The working group will comprise representatives from relevant Regulators that have an interest in offshore activity and are responsible for regulation of activities in or affecting the harbour porpoise SACs. The current representatives are as follows:

<b>Organisation</b>
BEIS-OPRED
BEIS-EIP
BEIS - RED
MMO
MOD
Natural Resources Wales (Regulation & Permitting)
Defra (Marine Fisheries Directorate)
DAERA
SNCBs – (NE, JNCC, NRW, DAERA) invited on a Quarterly Basis

## Resources and roles of the working group

Each organisation has the responsibility to chair on a rolling basis

*The Chair will be responsible for:*

- Preparing the agenda of each meeting. Agenda to be circulated at least 1 week prior to meetings
- Facilitation of meetings so that they run to agenda;
- Agreement of responsibility for actions and resolution of issues;
- Ensuring, that the relevant stakeholders are updated on progress.

*The minute taker will be responsible for:*

- Taking the minutes of the meeting;
- Ensuring the meeting summary and action log is updated and circulated to the working group in a timely manner;

*Group members will be responsible for:*

- Providing input on matters considered by the working group,
- Supporting and providing input of deliverables and any actions agreed at meetings.
- Agree external key messages for distribution to relevant stakeholders.

## **Meetings**

Meetings will be by MS Teams, but there may be a requirement for the working group to meet face-to-face on occasion.

At the working groups discretion there may be a requirement to invite interested parties to attend any meeting to maximise participation in the working group process.

## **Timetable and frequency of meetings**

Meetings will initially be scheduled monthly. This will be reviewed by the working group as appropriate.

From October 2020, representatives from each of the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies (SNCBs) will be invited to every third meeting.

## **Stakeholder engagement and reporting**

Stakeholders will be updated on progress when the working group decides it is relevant to do so. The chair will be responsible for drafting 'key messages' and sending to recipients once agreed by the working group.

An annual note will be produced by the working group to provide an overview of the underwater noise management measures and the number of activities that have been consented within or potentially impacting the harbour porpoise SACs.