

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Southern North Sea (SNS) Regulators Working Group

Aim

To share information on industry operations and work towards strategic planning and the management of impulsive noise across industries in protected sites, with an initial focus on the SNS harbour porpoise Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Objectives

The objectives of the SNS Regulators working group will include the following:

- Work together as Regulators and collaborate to manage impulsive underwater noise in the SNS harbour porpoise SAC in line with the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies (SNCB) noise guidance;
- Maintain an Activity Tracker for all consented underwater noise generating activities within the SNS harbour porpoise SAC (i.e. piling, seismic surveys etc) that is 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 framework and ensure that lessons learnt are captured and implemented;
- The working group would focus on the SNS HP SAC in the first instance with the view to implement any practices across other HP SACs.
- Work closely with SNCBs in relation to the implementation and adaptive management of the SNCB noise guidance;
- Provide a forum to discuss and address individual Regulator/ Industry issues regarding the implementation of the SNCB noise management guidance and any other related industry issues;
- Provide internal and external communications/ lines to take around UK Government management of noise within HP SACs

Structure

The working group will comprise representatives from relevant Regulators that have an interest in offshore activity and are required to implement the SNCB noise guidance. The current representatives are as follows:

Organisation
BEIS-OPRED
BEIS-EIP
MMO
MOD
Natural Resources Wales
Defra
SNCBs 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;
- Facilitation of meetings so that they run to agenda;
- Agreement of responsibility for actions and resolution of issues;
- Ensuring the meeting summary and action log is updated and circulated to the working group in a timely manner;
- Ensuring, that the relevant stakeholders are updated on progress.

Group members will be responsible for:

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

Meetings

Meetings will be by teleconference, 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 measure and the number of activities that have been consented within or potentially impacting the SNS SAC.