



Offshore Petroleum Regulator
for Environment & Decommissioning

Department for Energy Security & Net Zero

AB1 Building

Crimon Place

Aberdeen AB11 1BJ

E: opred@energysecurity.gov.uk

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UK MARINE NOISE REGISTRY AND CLOSE-OUT REPORT REQUIREMENTS

This note is intended to update industry on the UK Marine Noise Registry and close-out report requirements for applications relating to geological survey consents, marine licences and screening directions that relate to seismic surveys, piling operations or the use of explosives.

UK Marine Noise Registry (MNR)

The MNR was developed by JNCC on behalf of Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the UK devolved administrations to record human activities in UK seas that produce loud, low to medium frequency (10Hz – 10kHz) impulsive noise.

The MNR was established as a commitment made in the UK Marine Strategy. MNR records data on human activities in UK seas such as seismic surveys, sub-bottom profiling, impact pile driving, explosive detonations, military sonar, acoustic deterrent devices, and multibeam echo-sounders.

The MNR has been upgraded including improvements to the data input user experience as well as several additional prototype features such as:

- Disturbance Assessment Tool
- Cooperation Discussions Tool
- Downloadable data outputs

Please note that the upgraded MNR is a [Beta](#) release. Feedback can be provided by email to mnr@jncc.gov.uk or directly within the MNR by clicking on the 'Provide Feedback' button.

Most of the data from the old system has been migrated to the new one. Exceptions include applications with long overdue close-out dates (before 2020) and member/organisation data for users that have not logged on the MNR in four years. For guidance on how to navigate the new system and its features, please refer to the MNR Help Guide and Accessibility Statement. Minor changes to the [Terms and Conditions](#) and [Privacy Notice](#) have also been made, mainly to reflect that all data in the MNR, except personal data, is now readily available to all users.

MNR Accounts

Further information about the MNR can be found here <https://mnr.jncc.gov.uk/>. Please register for an account here <https://mnr.jncc.gov.uk/account/register>

Disturbance Assessment Tool

The newly upgraded MNR includes a tool for exploring future scenarios of noisy activities (alone and in combination with other activities) in relation to the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies' (SNCBs) noise [guidance](#) thresholds for harbour porpoise Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The Disturbance Tool also identifies which projects are contributing to the noise in the sites in each period (e.g., Summer 2024).

The disturbance tool will aid environmental assessment, in particular Habitats Regulations Assessments; however, its outputs should not be seen as substitute to a more meaningful, case-specific, detailed assessment with more accurate scenarios of where and when the activities will take place if this information is available. Regulators will still expect a detailed assessment to be submitted in support of licence applications or condition discharge requests. The Disturbance Tool is to be used as a starting point for assessment of noise levels and to highlight saturation points (i.e., when the SNCB's advised area-time thresholds are being reached).

The tool's outputs are based on a series of worst-case assumptions and relatively coarse data on location and timings. The main source of uncertainty arises from the fact that the data on planned activities submitted to the MNR often does not have the exact locations of the operations. Even when that information is available, it is not known in advance on which days and locations the operations will take place. Therefore, the results from the Disturbance Assessment tool are subject to change as other projects are consented and work schedules are confirmed closer to the activities commencing. Regulators may also be privy to forecasted data, which might be commercially sensitive and not yet included in the MNR. Therefore, noise threshold assessments may differ between the tool and those in Regulator's assessments. For a description of how the tool works and its assumptions please consult the MNR Help Guide.

Cooperation Discussions Tool

A new functionality - 'Cooperation Discussions' - allows members of different organisations to communicate with each other regarding their planned activities, for example with the aim to manage noise disturbance footprints in harbour porpoise Special Areas of Conservation.

Downloadable data outputs

With the release of the upgraded MNR in 2023, anyone can directly obtain custom data from the MNR in the form of figures, tables and shapefiles compiled and produced by JNCC. All data except personal data and draft data (including hypothetical projects) are available for download.

When using and/or interpreting the MNR outputs users should particularly consider the caveats in the document: MNR_Outputs_Caveats.docx., downloaded with tables and shapefiles.

Users are free to re-use the maps and data subject to the terms of the Open Government Licence 3.0: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/>, and using the following attribution: Contains data collated by JNCC and Oil and Gas Authority data © copyright and database right 2023.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The upgraded MNR allows Operators to directly input data to the MNR of proposed noise-producing activities followed by the submission of a close-out report providing an accurate account of the activities after completion.

It is a condition of all environmental approvals relating to activities such as seismic surveys, piling operations or the use of explosives, that a close-out report is submitted following completion of the activities.

Currently, Operators use an excel spreadsheet (available on gov.uk) to submit close-out reports to the Department, Schlumberger Integrated Solutions and Marine Environmental Data and Information Network (MEDIN). The upgraded MNR presents an opportunity to improve the close-out report reporting mechanism.

Moving forward, Operators must submit

- Close-out reports directly through the MNR. It should be noted that the requirement to submit close-out reports to the Department or Schlumberger Integrated Solutions will no longer be necessary.
- Site survey data directly to Marine Environmental Data and Information Network (MEDIN) using the form available on MEDIN website at: https://medin.org.uk/medin/sites/medin/files/documents/MEDIN_submit_site_survey_BGS.xlsx which Operators can use to input the information directly rather than complete the close-out form.

REPORTING REQUIREMENT TRANSITION

The change will apply to new environmental approvals issued with close-out reporting requirements from 30th April 2024.

Any variations for existing environmental approvals which are valid beyond the 30th of April, will on approval have the conditions amended.

Where existing environmental approvals require returns to be made under the previous process, we would recommend that the returns are made through the MNR where possible. It should be noted that there is no requirement to have uploaded pre-activity information to make such a return.