



Harbour Porpoise Bycatch Management Option 2: Effort limitation

Reducing effort of high-risk gears could be considered for managing porpoise bycatch within the Stage 4 porpoise MPAs and/or wider MMO waters. The advantages, disadvantages and considerations listed below will vary depending on the scale at which the option is implemented. For further detail on spatial scales please see the handout on spatial scales for harbour porpoise bycatch management.

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allows some fishing activity to occur, reducing socio-economic impacts.• Can be effective for reducing bycatch. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires methods to define an effort and bycatch level that does not impact the favourable conservation status of the population, which would be highly challenging.• Displaced effort to peripheral areas with potentially high porpoise density (for MPA level management).• Socio-economic impacts as reduced effort may reduce profits.• High level of bycatch monitoring and reporting would be needed to validate effort level. |

Other considerations:

- Effort limits could be implemented through a permit scheme, would need to consider if this would be consistent with any wider fisheries management measures.
- Most effective if covers areas with consistent bycatch or porpoise aggregation.
- Could result in gear switching.
- Effort limitation measures introduced for gillnets in 2023 for two European MPAs in the North Sea¹.

¹ Examples of European MPAs utilising effort limitation: eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF (last accessed 08 April 2025).



Summary

Effort limitation has some advantages, in particular, potentially reducing bycatch while also allowing some fishing activity to continue. However, at both spatial scales a threshold would need to be developed for defining an amount of fishing effort that results in a bycatch level that does not impact the favourable conservation status of the population, which would be highly challenging. Additionally, Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies (SNCBs) do not favour the concept of defining an 'acceptable' level of bycatch, as all efforts should be made to minimise and, where possible, eliminate bycatch. As such this option would be highly challenging.

Questions to discuss:

- What methods could be used to determine a threshold for acceptable level of bycatch risks (above which effort limitation or dynamic closure would apply)?
- What are the main benefits of this option at either spatial scale?
- What are the main challenges of this option at either spatial scale?
- What are the socio-economic impacts of this option at either spatial scale?
- What are the environmental impacts of this option at either spatial scale?
- What are the practical implications of the option at either spatial scale?
- How feasible is this option to implement at either spatial scale?