



Harbour Porpoise Bycatch Management Option 5: Voluntary changes to fishing practices

This option is to incentivise fishers to undertake voluntary changes to fishing practices within the Stage 4 harbour porpoise MPAs or wider MMO waters. This includes an array of bycatch mitigation options.

Voluntary changes to fishing practices 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.

Examples of possible changes:

- **Changes to current gillnet fishing operations or gear** e.g. reducing soak time, number or nets and/or net length, changing depths of nets in water.
- **Switching gear:** from gillnets to another gear type with lower bycatch risk e.g. longlines/traps.
- **Trial emerging technologies for gillnets:** passive acoustic reflectors, lights on nets, coloured nets etc.
- **Industry codes of conduct and industry training:** codes of practice, training programme on best practice for release of mammals and gear deployment to minimise bycatch.
- **Modified gear and/or bycatch reduction devices (for trawl gear):** escape hatches and grids in trawl nets etc.

Advantages	Disadvantages
• Relative to other options, limited costs to fishers (except for gear switching) • Opportunity for collaboration, for example, could include fisher experience to develop a code of conduct or toolbox of options • Some options may reduce porpoise bycatch • Gear switching could increase catch quality	• Gear switching may not be feasible given that UK fishers use multiple gear types • Uncertainty in bycatch effectiveness and/or lack of proof of concept (passive acoustic reflectors). • Switching gears would be high cost, require retraining and possible loss of traditional knowledge • Potentially reduced target catch quantity (e.g., if reducing soak time or net height)



Other considerations:

- No one size fits all – testing in local fisheries is required
- Consider incentives for fishers
- Could combine with monitoring to understand mitigation effectiveness.

Summary

Voluntary changes to fishing practices includes multiple mitigation methods, each with advantages and disadvantages and considerations. Some methods currently seem more viable than others. Changes to fishing practices also present an opportunity to collaborate with fishers and incorporate fisher experience to develop mitigation methods. However, it is noted that there is no universal solution; what works in one area may not work in another.

Questions to discuss

- 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?

Voluntary changes questions:

- Do you have additional evidence on other voluntary options to reduce porpoise bycatch from gillnets?
- Do you have additional evidence on other voluntary options to reduce porpoise bycatch from bottom towed gear?
- Do you have additional evidence on the effectiveness of voluntary options for reducing porpoise bycatch?
- What are your concerns on the use of voluntary options to reduce bycatch (e.g., practical/logistical and environmental concerns).
- What are you already doing to try and prevent bycatch?
- Any suggestions for gear modifications or changes to practices which would be most effective at preventing bycatch?

- Would you be interested in the ability to report harbour porpoise sightings (not just bycatch) to assist in highlighting high and low risk areas?