

Species and Habitat Action Plan Assessment Form

Please refer to the accompanying guidance for information about how to complete this form and an explanation of terms used

Field 1: Action Plan details

Species/Habitat Action Plan	Harbour porpoise
Lead Partner/Agency	Sea Mammal Research Unit
Steering Group/Other organisations	<p><i>Steering group in existence? Please state yes or no. Please list the organisations represented.</i></p> <p>YES:-</p> <p>Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (MAFF) Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department (SERAD) Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) English Nature (EN) Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) Environment Agency (EA) Wildlife Trusts Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDACS) World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) Sea Mammal Research Unit (SMRU) Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) Institute of Zoology (IoZ) International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) Seawatch Foundation Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) Cornish Fish Producers Organisation (CFPO) Federation of Highlands and Islands Fishermen (FHIF) Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association. (SPFA)</p>
Work programme in existence?1	<p><i>Please state yes or no. If in existence, please use the agreed work programme to update Field 3 and Table B.</i></p> <p>NO</p>

Field 2: Objectives and targets overview

Please list the targets for the action plan, indicating in which country/region the target is applicable, and additional comments including the rationale for new targets. For each new target please add new sequential paragraph numbers and target text. Please provide information about progress and country disaggregation in Table A for all targets.

Number and text	UK	E	NI	S	W	Comments
4.1 etc	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maintain the current range and abundance with a longer term aim of ensuring that no anthropogenic factors inhibit a return to waters that previously held the porpoise	X1	X 1	X 1	X 1	X 1	There is no simple way to monitor this target.1

Field 3: Proposed actions overview

Please list the proposed actions for the action plan, indicating in which country/region the action is applicable. For each new action please add new sequential paragraph numbers and action text. If the action is regarded as significant (please see guidance) indicate this in the box and provide further details in Table B. For actions not regarded as significant simply state if the action is ongoing or complete. Remember any action which is being dropped from the workplan will be regarded as significant for the first round of reporting.

Number and text	UK	E	NI	S	W	Action significant?	Action complete or ongoing? (Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)
5.1.1. Extend the ASCOBANS boundary to include the Western Approaches and the Irish Sea through a bilateral treaty with the Republic of Ireland and agreement of ASCOBANS Parties. (ACTION: DETR, EHS(NI))	X	1		1	1	No	Ongoing
5.1.2. Seek to improve coastal water quality by reducing the discharge of substances, which are toxic, persistent and liable to bioaccumulate, giving priority to phasing out identifiable PCBs, and reducing discharges of organohalogenes to safe levels. (ACTION: DANI, MAFF, EA, SEPA, SERAD)	X					No	Ongoing
5.1.3. Continue the duty on sea fisheries regulators to take account of potential wider impacts on wildlife and habitats (in addition to target species) when deciding fishery management measures. (ACTION: DANI, DETR, MAFF, SERAD).	X					No	Ongoing
5.1.4. Consider, in the light of research at 3.2, the possible need to monitor and control gill nets and other set net fisheries. (ACTION: DANI, MAFF, SERAD, EDNAW).	X					No	Ongoing
5.1.5. Continue to introduce agreed codes of conduct to reduce disturbance from acoustic sources and physical pressures. (ACTION: CCW, EN, EHS(NI)), JNCC, SNH).	X					Yes	Ongoing/Complete

5.2.1	Review existing UK marine site protection to determine how it might be improved. If appropriate, introduce additional protection and emergency designation to benefit the species. (ACTION: DETR, EHS(NI), JNCC, SERAD).	X	1	1	1	1	No	Ongoing
5.3.1	Work with fishers with the aim of reducing and avoiding by-catches in active and passive gear, and to dispose of discarded gear safely. (ACTION: DANI, MAFF, SERAD, EDNAW).	X					Yes	Ongoing
5.3.2	Introduce codes of practice to reduce disturbance from whale-watching. (ACTION: CCW, EHS(NI), EN, JNCC, SNH).	X					Yes	Complete
5.5.1	Expand research on the areas frequented by harbour porpoise to identify waters which may qualify for further protection as SACs or Marine Nature Reserves. (ACTION: EHS(NI), JNCC).	X	1	1	1	1	No	Ongoing
5.5.2	Establish long-term research on population and conservation needs of all small cetaceans in UK waters, co-ordinated through ASCOBANS. (ACTION: DETR, EHS(NI), JNCC).	X					No	Ongoing
5.5.3	Subject to the results of the research at 3.2, consider monitoring of UK population and reporting of by-catches of small cetaceans (including observers on vessels, where feasible). (ACTION: DANI, JNCC, MAFF, SERAD).	X					Yes	Ongoing
5.5.4	Seek to minimise the by-catch of small cetaceans by promoting research into fishing gear and other possible mechanisms. (ACTION: DANI, MAFF, SERAD).	X					Yes	Ongoing
5.5.5	Promote research into the causes of death of the harbour porpoise within UK waters to determine the context and need for future conservation action. (ACTION: CCW, DANI, EHS(NI), EN, JNCC, MAFF, SNH, SERAD, EDNAW).	X					Yes	Ongoing
5.5.6	Pass information gathered during survey and monitoring of this species to JNCC and BRC in order that it can be incorporated in a national database and contribute to the maintenance of an up-to-date Red List. (ACTION: CCW EHS(NI), EN, SNH).	X					No	Ongoing

Number and text	UK	E	NI	S	W	Action significant?	Action complete or ongoing? (Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)
5.6.1 Subject to the results of research at 3.2, consider the need to encourage fishermen to report sightings and by-catches through an awareness programme. (ACTION: DANI, DETR, MAFF, SERAD).	X					No	Complete
5.6.2 Encourage international exchange of information to assess and, if appropriate, reduce by-catches. (ACTION: DANI, DETR, JNCC, MAFF, SERAD).	X					No	Ongoing
5.6.3 Continue to publicise reporting schemes for strandings and live-sightings. (ACTION: CCW, EHS(NI), EN, SNH, SERAD).	X					No	Ongoing

Field 4: Assessment of status

Please tick the appropriate category to indicate the assessment of status of the species or habitat, for each country/region where appropriate, and provide a statement supporting the category selected.

	Not appropriate	Recovered	Signs of recovery	No change	Declining	Lost	Insufficient information
UK ₁	1	1	1	1	1	1	X ₁
England ₁	1	1	1	1	1	1	X ₁
Northern Ireland ₁	1	1	1	1	1	1	X ₁
Scotland ₁	1	1	1	1	1	1	X ₁
Wales ₁	1	1	1	1	1		X

Brief text description justifying assessment of status: (~ no more than 100 words for each country/region)

There has only been one population assessment for harbour porpoises around the UK, in 1995. This has not been repeated so we have no information on trends in abundance anywhere. There is currently no other way to assess status without information on trends in population size. Monitoring populations is already covered by Action point 5.5.3, but no specific full scale population surveys have been proposed as these are extremely expensive.

Field 5: Summary statement

Please provide an overview of plan implementation, including new factors affecting the species or habitat which will accelerate or constrain progress towards meeting of the targets. Where a factor results in new action(s) please cross-reference back to the relevant numbers under Field 3 and Table B.

Much of the Biodiversity Action Plan is being addressed under ASCOBANS and other initiatives. Many of the Proposed Actions are therefore directed towards the continuation of existing schemes, and these are all being addressed. It is the nature of this and other highly mobile marine species that population monitoring is extremely difficult and expensive. There is therefore no easy way to measure the overall effectiveness of the Plan in achieving its Target.

Field 6: Signing off

Please 'sign off' the form below to confirm that steering group members or key contacts have been consulted and agreed the information provided.

Contact details	Lead Partner	Contact Point
Name ₁	Simon Northridge ₁	Dominic Whitmee ₁
Organisation	Sea Mammal Research Unit University of St Andrews	European Wildlife Division DETR ₁
Assessment date (dd/mm/yy) ₁	31/11/99 ₁	1

Completed forms should be submitted to JNCC

Biodiversity Information Service
Joint Nature Conservation Committee
Monkstone House
City Road
Peterborough PE1 1JY
Tel: 01733 562626
Fax: 01733 555948
E-mail: lpr99@jncc.gov.uk

Table A: Action Plan objectives and targets (Copiable table)

For each target please state how, if applicable, it has been disaggregated to the country level. Please insert the paragraph number, UK target and country-specific disaggregated target(s) into the table. Please tick the appropriate category to indicate progress against published and disaggregated targets. For each target please copy the table and detail the (existing or new [new paragraph numbers should run sequentially, under relevant headings in the published volumes]) paragraph number, target text and an assessment of progress.

Objective/target (For new or revised targets please provide the new paragraph number and target text.)	4.1				
Country	Not appropriate	Target achieved	Some progress	No progress	Insufficient information
<i>UK</i>	1	1	1	1	X1
<i>England</i>	X1	1	1	1	1
<i>Northern Ireland</i>	X1	1	1	1	1
<i>Scotland</i>	X1	1	1	1	1
<i>Wales</i>	X	1	1	1	1
Text description of target progress (separate for each country/region):					
<p>Maintaining the current range and abundance is not an easy task either to achieve or to monitor for a highly mobile marine species. We know the number of porpoises present in the North Sea and part of the Celtic Sea in July 1995, but we do not know the range of these animals, nor do we know whether numbers of porpoises in these two areas have increased or decreased since 1995. We are not clear whether there are any anthropogenic factors that are currently preventing the recovery of porpoises in the southern North Sea and Channel, because we do not know enough about the rates of movement, or the range of this species.</p> <p>1</p>					

Table B: Proposed actions (Copiable table)

For each significant action please copy and complete the table below.

Published action/organisation(s) responsible <i>(For new or revised actions please provide the new paragraph number and action text.)</i>	5.1.5 Continue to introduce agreed codes of conduct to reduce disturbance from acoustic sources and physical pressures. (ACTION: CCW, EN, DoE(NI), JNCC, SNH).	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible <i>(Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)</i>	A code of conduct for seismic survey operations has been agreed and introduced by JNCC under the aegis of ASCOBANS. This was not therefore the result of a BAP work plan.	
Action/workplan undertaken? <i>(Please state yes or no.)¹</i>	Yes ¹	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible:	<i>Please provide details of progress to date, including information about outputs, deadlines, which organisations and where action is being undertaken.</i>	
Output and timescale¹	JNCC has published guidelines for seismic survey operators <i>:¹ Guidelines for minimising acoustic disturbance to marine mammals from seismic surveys. 1998. Originally 1995 by DoE</i>	<i>Action by JNCC with CCW,EN,DoE(NI), SNH¹</i>
Constraints to action <i>(Please provide an explanation of the significant issues or difficulties encountered and how they have been or will be resolved. Any constraints which the steering group are unable to resolve should also be detailed.)</i>	None	
Action complete or ongoing? <i>(Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)¹</i>	Yes? Action partially complete; the Steering Group was not clear what 'physical pressures' were intended to be addressed under this Action. ¹	
Next steps¹	<i>Please outline future action/work including an indication of expected output, timescale and organisation responsible.</i>	
Output and timescale¹	Other guidelines may be developed under ASCOBANS, but no timescales have been agreed on yet. ¹	<i>Action by JNCC/DETR¹</i>

Table B: Proposed actions (Copiable table)

For each significant action please copy and complete the table below.

Published action/organisation(s) responsible (For new or revised actions please provide the new paragraph number and action text.)	5.3.1 Work with fishers with the aim of reducing and avoiding by-catches in active and passive gear, and to dispose of discarded gear safely. (ACTION: DANI, MAFF, SOAEFD, WOAD).	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible (Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)	The Cornish Fish Producer's Organisation, the Wildlife Trusts and the Sea Mammal Research Unit have been collaborating under an EC funded project (with additional funding from MAFF) in attempts to find ways of reducing porpoise bycatch. This had progressed independently of the BAP process. The Steering Group established a fisheries sub-group, which proposed the inclusion of fisheries organisations on the steering group.	
Action/workplan undertaken? (Please state yes or no.) ¹	1 Yes	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible:	Please provide details of progress to date, including information about outputs, deadlines, which organisations and where action is being undertaken	
Output and timescale:	A report to the European Commission on the ongoing bycatch reduction trials is due in June 2000. Three fishermen's organisations have joined the Steering Group	Action by MAFF, SOAEFD ¹
Constraints to action (Please provide an explanation of the significant issues or difficulties encountered and how they have been or will be resolved. Any constraints which the steering group are unable to resolve should also be detailed.)	Actions are already underway to try to find and implement means of reducing porpoise bycatch. There is no easy or straightforward solution. The inclusion of three fishermen's organisations on the Steering Group will help in furthering discussions about these issues. Ultimately this Action will only achieve its implicit goal after much more dedicated research on the matter.	
Action complete or ongoing? (Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.) ¹	1 Ongoing	
Next steps	Please outline future action/work including an indication of expected output, timescale and organisation responsible.	
Output and timescale:	A Conservation Strategy for Harbour Porpoises is being drafted and is intended to focus on especially on bycatch issues. ¹	Action by DETR, MAFF ¹

Table B: Proposed actions (Copiable table)

For each significant action please copy and complete the table below.

Published action/organisation(s) responsible <i>(For new or revised actions please provide the new paragraph number and action text.)</i>	5.3.2 Introduce codes of practice to reduce disturbance from whale-watching. (ACTION: CCW, DoE(NI) EN, JNCC, SNH).	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible <i>(Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)</i>	Two codes of conduct have been published by DETR in collaboration with JNCC, CCW, DoE(NI) EN, SNH and the Department of Culture media and Sport, under the aegis of ASCOBANS.	
Action/workplan undertaken? <i>(Please state yes or no.)</i> ¹	1 YES	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible:	<i>Please provide details of progress to date, including information about outputs, deadlines, which organisations and where action is being undertaken.</i>	
Output and timescale:	<i>Minimising disturbance to cetaceans from whale-watching operations. 1999</i> <i>Minimising disturbance to cetaceans from recreation at sea. 1999</i>	<i>Action by DETR₁</i>
Constraints to action <i>(Please provide an explanation of the significant issues or difficulties encountered and how they have been or will be resolved. Any constraints which the steering group are unable to resolve should also be detailed.)</i>	None	
Action complete or ongoing? <i>(Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)</i> ¹	1 Complete	
Next steps:	<i>Please outline future action/work including an indication of expected output, timescale and organisation responsible.</i>	
Output and timescale:	1 Guidelines to be reviewed early 2000.	<i>Action by DETR₁</i>

Table B: Proposed actions (Copiable table)

For each significant action please copy and complete the table below.

Published action/organisation(s) responsible (For new or revised actions please provide the new paragraph number and action text.)	5.5.3 Subject to the results of the research at 3.2, consider monitoring of UK population and reporting of by-catches of small cetaceans (including observers on vessels, where feasible). (ACTION: DANI, JNCC, MAFF, SOAEFD).	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible (Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)	MAFF is funding an ongoing on-board observer scheme to monitor porpoise bycatch in several fisheries, but this Action has been progressed independently of the BAP process. No significant progress has been made on the issue of monitoring the UK porpoise population.	
Action/workplan undertaken? (Please state yes or no.) ¹	1 Yes, in part.	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible:	<i>Please provide details of progress to date, including information about outputs, deadlines, which organisations and where action is being undertaken.</i>	
Output and timescale:	¹ SMRU due to report to MAFF June 2000. Interim report presented to the IWC Scientific Committee in May 1999.	Action by MAFF ¹ SO AEFD
Constraints to action (Please provide an explanation of the significant issues or difficulties encountered and how they have been or will be resolved. Any constraints which the steering group are unable to resolve should also be detailed.)	None for bycatch reporting scheme. Monitoring population status is usually done by estimating abundance at discrete time intervals. The only previous population estimate was made in July 1995, at a cost of over £1 million. This only assessed about half of the relevant UK sea area. Clearly the expense of such surveys constrains regular monitoring,	
Action complete or ongoing? (Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.) ¹	1 Ongoing	
Next steps:	<i>Please outline future action/work including an indication of expected output, timescale and organisation responsible.</i>	
Output and timescale:	1 To be decided	Action by 1

Table B: Proposed actions (Copiable table)

For each significant action please copy and complete the table below.

Published action/organisation(s) responsible <i>(For new or revised actions please provide the new paragraph number and action text.)</i>	5.5.4 Seek to minimise the by-catch of small cetaceans by promoting research into fishing gear and other possible mechanisms. (ACTION: DANI, MAFF, SOAEFD).	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible <i>(Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)</i>	The Cornish Fish Producer's Organisation, the Wildlife Trusts and the Sea Mammal Research Unit have been collaborating under an EC funded project (with additional funding from MAFF) in attempts to find ways of reducing porpoise bycatch. This had progressed independently of the BAP process.	
Action/workplan undertaken? <i>(Please state yes or no.)</i> ¹	1 YES	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible	<i>Please provide details of progress to date, including information about outputs, deadlines, which organisations and where action is being undertaken.</i>	
Output and timescale	<i>1 A report on the above work will be submitted to the European Commission in June 1999</i>	<i>Action by</i> 1
Constraints to action <i>(Please provide an explanation of the significant issues or difficulties encountered and how they have been or will be resolved. Any constraints which the steering group are unable to resolve should also be detailed.)</i>	No organisational constraints, but severe research constraints: porpoise bycatch events happen relatively rarely so that studying them is extremely difficult. There is very little understanding of the bycatch process. There are no obvious simple solutions.	
Action complete or ongoing? <i>(Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.)</i> ¹	1 Ongoing	
Next steps	<i>Please outline future action/work including an indication of expected output, timescale and organisation responsible.</i>	
Output and timescale	1 cons	<i>Action by</i> 1

Table B: Proposed actions (Copiable table)

For each significant action please copy and complete the table below.

Published action/organisation(s) responsible (For new or revised actions please provide the new paragraph number and action text.)	5.5.4 Promote research into the causes of death of the harbour porpoise within UK waters to determine the context and need for future conservation action. (ACTION: CCW, DANL, DoE(NI), EN, JNCC, MAFF, SNH, SOAEFD, WOAD).	
Work plan/organisation(s) responsible (Summary of work plan agreed by the steering group, broken down by year if possible.)	DETR is funding the Institute of Zoology, the British Museum (Natural History) and the Scottish Agriculture College to collect all stranded porpoises in Britain and research causes of death. This work has proceeded independently of the BAP process.	
Action/workplan undertaken? (Please state yes or no.) ¹	1 YES	
Description of work taken and organisation responsible:	<i>Please provide details of progress to date, including information about outputs, deadlines, which organisations and where action is being undertaken.</i>	
Output and timescale:	<i>1 Several papers have already been published by IoZ, NHM and SAC. A high proportion of porpoises found stranded appear to have died in fishing gear.</i>	<i>Action by</i> 1
Constraints to action (Please provide an explanation of the significant issues or difficulties encountered and how they have been or will be resolved. Any constraints which the steering group are unable to resolve should also be detailed.)	None discussed.	
Action complete or ongoing? (Please state yes, not started, or ongoing.) ¹	1 Ongoing	
Next steps:	<i>Please outline future action/work including an indication of expected output, timescale and organisation responsible.</i>	
Output and timescale:	Current priorities lie in addressing the health status and pollution burdens of stranded animals. ¹	<i>Action by</i> DETR ¹