

UK Dolphin and Porpoise Conservation Strategy

Consultation document

March 2021



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to consider this consultation paper. We would welcome your views on the UK Dolphin and Porpoise Conservation Strategy.

This strategy has been developed by Scottish Government in collaboration with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Welsh Government (WG), Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Northern Ireland (DAERA) and the UK Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies (Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), Natural England (NE), Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)).

Questions

This consultation seeks your views on the following questions:

1. Do you support the implementation of the UK Dolphin and Porpoise Conservation Strategy?
2. Do you agree that the evidence presented supports the case for the strategy?
3. Do you have any comments on the vulnerability assessments and the conclusions reached?
4. Do you have any comments on the actions that have been identified in the strategy?
5. Do you have any comments on the accessibility of the information in the documents?

What documents should I read to answer these questions?

The strategy has been divided into three supporting documents:

- The High Level Strategy – This document includes the aims and objectives of the strategy; summary tables of the results of the vulnerability assessments and the actions derived from those. The document refers to the relevant sections of the technical report and the action plan for further details.
- The Technical Report – This document provides the methodologies for the vulnerability and confidence assessments; full tables of results and further detail on existing measures.
- The Action Plan – This document provides a table for each of the actions to detail what action will look to address, the lead organisations, a description of the issue, links to other ongoing work and delivery partners.

How to respond to this consultation

You are invited to respond to this consultation by 14 June at 23:59.

Please respond to the consultation using the Scottish Government's consultation hub, Citizen Space (<https://consult.gov.scot/>). Access and respond to this consultation online at <https://consult.gov.scot/marine-conservation/uk-dolphin-and-porpoise-conservation-strategy/>.

You can save and return to your responses while the consultation is still open. Please ensure that consultation responses are submitted before the closing date of 14 June at 23:59.

If you are unable to respond using our consultation hub, please complete the Respondent Information Form (as shown in [Appendix B](#)). Without this form we will not know how you would like your response processed. Please send the completed form with your response to:

marine_conservation@gov.scot

OR

Marine Conservation
Scottish Government
Area 1B North
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

If you have any enquiries please direct them to marine_conservation@gov.scot

Handling your response

If you respond using the consultation hub, you will be directed to the About You page before submitting your response. Please indicate how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are content for your response to be published. If you ask for your response not to be published, we will regard it as confidential, and we will treat it accordingly.

All respondents should be aware that the Scottish Government is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and would therefore have to consider any request made to it under the Act for information relating to responses made to this consultation exercise.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy: <https://www.gov.scot/privacy/>.

The UK Dolphin and Porpoise Conservation Strategy

Aims and objectives

The strategy aims to ensure effective management to achieve and/or maintain favourable conservation status for eight of the most commonly found dolphin and porpoise species in UK waters. In addition, the minke whale was included as the ninth species in the strategy. These species have been selected because they occur predictably in UK waters and have similar characteristics and conservation needs. The collective name for all species of dolphins, porpoises and whales is cetaceans.

The strategy provides a summary of existing management measures and obligations which help to manage pressures on the nine species of dolphins, porpoises and minke whales.

The strategy seeks a joined-up approach to management, with both site and wider measures working together to conserve dolphin, porpoise and minke whale populations. It proposes a series of high-level actions to deliver these outcomes.

The strategy's purpose is to deliver and/or maintain favourable conservation status by:

- addressing existing and emerging pressures in the marine environment, with a view to conserving UK dolphin, porpoise and minke whale populations
- acknowledging where work is already planned or underway to meet conservation targets
- creating opportunities for sectoral collaboration

The strategy has the following objectives:

- identify vulnerabilities and the relevant pressures on the populations of the nine species of dolphins, porpoises and minke whales in UK waters
- identify current management measures and obligations and opportunities for improvement
- prioritise the management of key pressures that pose the greatest risk to achieving and or maintaining favourable conservation status
- initiate new actions, where necessary, to maintain or improve conservation status
- improve understanding of population status and trends
- raise public awareness and understanding of dolphin, porpoise and minke whale populations in UK waters

- bring together organisations to implement the actions

The strategy covers all UK waters, from the coast out to the extent of UK continental shelf (see Figure 1) and encompasses existing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Actions set out in the strategy are intended to support the development of any conservation measures, required across UK waters, and the achievement of site-based conservation objectives. As part of achieving and/or maintaining favourable conservation status across UK waters, the strategy recognises local/regional variations in populations and pressures where appropriate (Table 4, Technical Report).

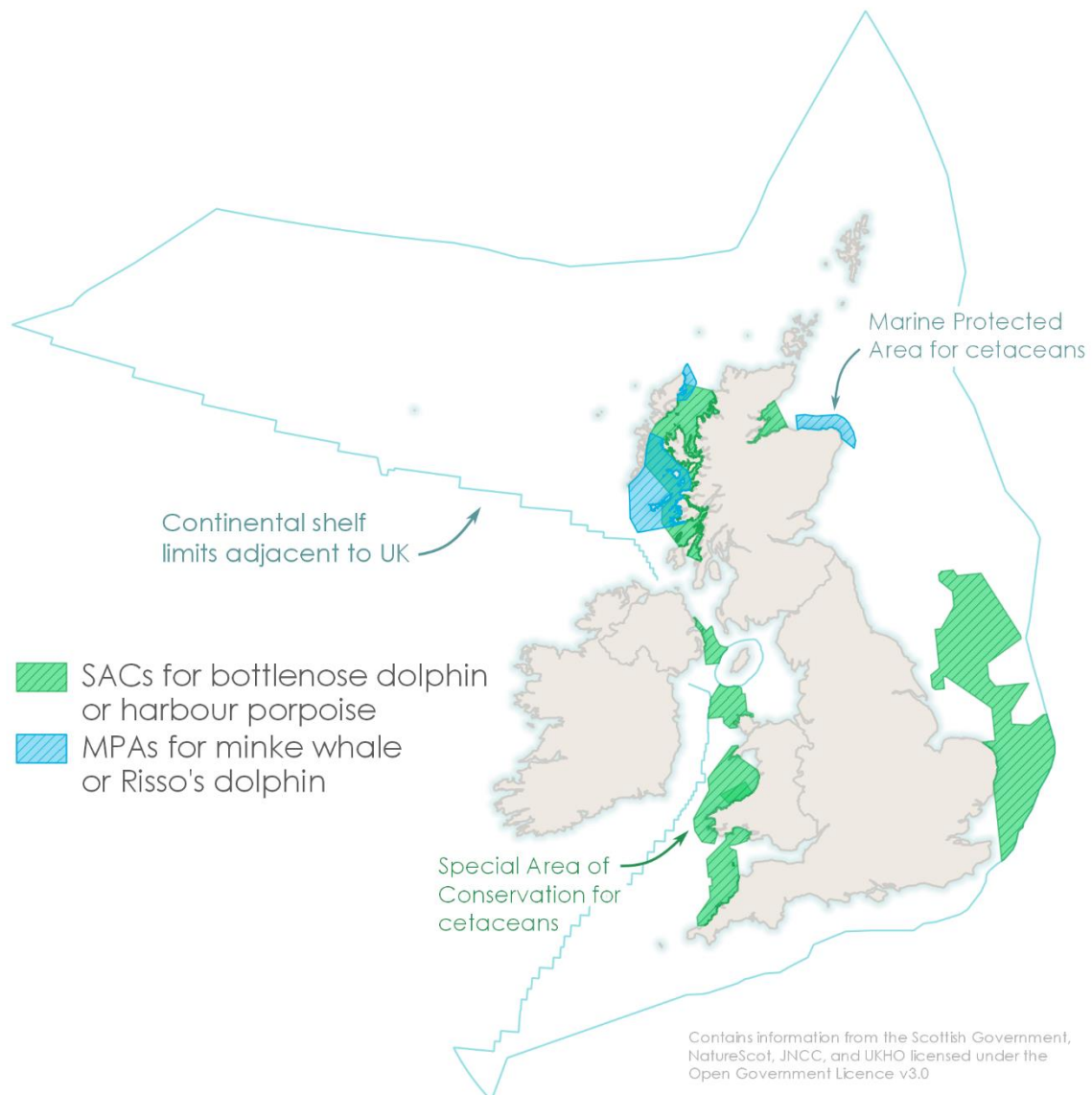


Figure 1: Map of the protected sites over which this strategy applies.

The species covered by the strategy are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Species of dolphins, porpoises and minke whales covered by the strategy

Common name	Scientific name
Harbour porpoise	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>
Common dolphin	<i>Delphinus delphis</i>
Atlantic white-sided dolphin	<i>Lagenorhynchus acutus</i>
Bottlenose dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>
White-beaked dolphin	<i>Lagenorhynchus albirostris</i>
Risso's dolphin	<i>Grampus griseus</i>
Killer whale	<i>Orcinus orca</i>
Long-finned pilot whale	<i>Globicephala melas</i>
Minke whale	<i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i>

Guiding Principles

In developing the strategy, the following guiding principles were applied:

- the strategy aims to achieve and/or maintain the favourable conservation status of populations through management informed by research and monitoring
- the strategy will achieve and or maintain favourable conservation outcomes for species either through delivery of direct practical measures or improved understanding through research
- the strategy will be implemented in partnership with stakeholders and will be reviewed regularly and updated to reflect changing priorities, new knowledge, and available resources - the existing valuable contribution from stakeholders is recognised and we will continue to develop opportunities for future collaborative delivery of the strategy actions
- existing commitments for dolphins, porpoises and minke whales will continue to be pursued - evidence collected under this strategy will contribute to delivery of those commitments
- appropriate standards and information systems will be used in data collection and management - this will include Quality Assurance (QA) measures and ensure discoverability and accessibility of data
- spend on achieving the actions resulting from the strategy should be balanced with other relevant programmes that may improve our understanding of population status and trends, and key pressures

- the actions proposed within the strategy should be integrated as far as possible with other activities to minimise resource requirements - we will work to achieve better co-ordination, share costs and avoid duplication where possible

The Technical Report

The Technical Report provides detail of the vulnerability and confidence assessments that have been undertaken. These provide the basis for determining whether new or improved action is required.

The assessments consider how vulnerable the species are to pressures and considers existing management measures in place. From this potential issues for each species can be identified and be taken into account when determining what actions should be taken forward.

Required actions

This section identifies the actions considered necessary to:

- maintain or/and improve the conservation status of dolphins, porpoises and minke whales (management actions)
- help improve our understanding of the species, the issues that affect them and awareness raising (research, monitoring and communication actions)

The results of the technical report's existing management analysis identify where further action is necessary. These have been condensed into actions covering all of the species which should enable better delivery of management, research, monitoring and communication.

Tables 3 and 4 below list these actions, summarises the rationale for inclusion, and on implementation will identify the lead organisation responsible for taking forward the action. The scores referenced in the 'Rationale' column of Table 3 are detailed in the technical report. The Action Plan document has been developed to provide a more detailed description of the problem and the proposed steps to resolve it. Each action is displayed in an Action Sheet, which is based on the model used within OSPAR.

Table 3: Description of required management actions

Management Actions	Rationale	Project coordinator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Consolidate and improve knowledge on sources, pathways and impacts of pollutants, plastics and biotoxins on cetaceans to develop and implement better management. 	<p>The scores for activities within this action indicated varying levels of research and consideration of new management measures were required for all species.</p>	<p>Government and SNCBs</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Continue to develop and implement a UK bycatch mitigation initiative. 	<p>There is a need for more research on bycatch and in some instances, consideration of additional measures for species assigned a medium vulnerability to this pressure.</p>	<p>Government</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improve understanding of entanglements and work towards developing strategies to reduce this threat. 	<p>There is a need for more research on entanglement and in some instances, consideration of additional measures for species assigned a medium vulnerability.</p>	<p>Government</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Consolidate and improve our understanding of noise impacts on cetaceans to better inform management and conservation. – Develop an operational framework to manage the cumulative impact of acoustic disturbance in the context of environmental assessments. – Understand the pressures of increasing underwater anthropogenic noise and potential impact on cetacean populations. – Future trends in underwater noise: Consolidate and improve 	<p>Acoustic disturbance may result from numerous activities, from piling, to vessel noise and use of pingers. This action has been developed into three sections. The scores across the species indicate that further research is required, in some instances where there is no evidence of impact, but there is overlap of the species and pressure.</p>	<p>Government and SNCBs</p>

Management Actions	Rationale	Project coordinator
knowledge of increasing sources of underwater noise.		
– Establish approaches to managing wildlife tourism.	Recreational and wildlife tourism has been highlighted for four species (common dolphin, coastal bottlenose dolphin, killer whale and minke whale) as requiring further research and to consider management measures.	SNCBs
– Improve knowledge of the physical condition of supporting habitats and prey availability to inform management and conservation.	Reduction in prey availability requires further research for all nine species and some consideration for management measures for medium vulnerability.	SNCBs

Table 4: Description of required research, monitoring and communication actions

Action	Rationale	Project coordinator
– Develop a framework to prioritise research requirements.	Given the research requirements stated above, developing a prioritisation framework will allow the division of work and dedication of resources to undertaken required projects. Additional tailored projects (e.g. to investigate mortality from ship strike) may be required.	SNCBs
– Develop and implement an effective monitoring programme to provide a more robust	Working in parallel to the prioritisation framework, a monitoring programme can	Government and SNCBs

understanding of the conservation status of UK cetaceans.	continue to be developed that will support the management actions	
– Develop and implement communications with stakeholders to support conservation actions.	To keep stakeholders up to date, but also to enable data sharing with the working groups to assist in progressing the actions.	Government

Next steps in the process

Where respondents have given permission for their response to be made public, and after we have checked that they contain no potentially defamatory material, responses will be made available to the public at <https://consult.gov.scot/>. If you use the consultation hub to respond, you will receive a copy of your response via email. Following the closing date, all responses will be analysed and considered along with any other available evidence to help us. Responses will be published where we have been given permission to do so. An analysis report will also be made available.

Comments and complaints

If you have any comments about how this consultation exercise has been conducted, please send them to the contact address above or to marine_conservation@gov.scot.

The Scottish Government Consultation Process

Consultation is an essential part of the policymaking process. It gives us the opportunity to consider your opinion and expertise on a proposed area of work.

You can find all our consultations online: <https://consult.gov.scot/>. Each consultation details the issues under consideration, as well as a way for you to give us your views, either online, by email or by post.

Responses will be analysed and used as part of the decision making process, along with a range of other available information and evidence. We will publish a report of this analysis for every consultation. Depending on the nature of the consultation exercise the responses received may:

- indicate the need for policy development or review
- inform the development of a particular policy
- help decisions to be made between alternative policy proposals

- be used to finalise legislation before it is implemented

While details of particular circumstances described in a response to a consultation exercise may usefully inform the policy process, consultation exercises cannot address individual concerns and comments, which should be directed to the relevant public body.



UK Dolphin and Porpoise Conservation Strategy

RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please Note this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy:
<https://www.gov.scot/privacy/>

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual
 Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

Phone number

Address

Postcode

Email

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name
 Publish response only (without name)
 Do not publish response

Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

No



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