

Clean Catch UK: Joint Action to Reduce Wildlife Bycatch

Report for Local Focus Group Meeting



Meeting Date and Time: 22 July 2021, 13:00-16:00

Location: The Alverton Hotel, Truro

Welcome & Introduction

Stu Hetherington, Cefas, welcomed attendees to the meeting. He provided a brief update on CCUK to the fishing industry representatives present, explaining this is a broader umbrella initiative covering bycatch of all wildlife marine species. The LFG was formed prior to CCUK, but now sits under its remit – this change happened during the pandemic.

Cat Bell, Defra, provided a brief update on the policy landscape for the group. Many things have changed: the UK is no longer under the Common Fisheries Policy and is operating under the Fisheries Act (2020). This Act contains an ‘ecosystem objective’ where, for the first time in domestic legislation, a commitment to ‘minimise and where possible eliminate bycatch’ of sensitive species is articulated. The Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) (detailed in the Act) is currently being drafted by Defra and the Devolved Administrations.

Communications strategy: LFG toolkit

A discussion was held around a draft ‘communications toolkit’ provided to the LFG by Katrina Ryan, Mindfully Wired Communications. This had been drafted following discussions in February 2020 around the need for common messaging and an agreed approach to respond reactively to bycatch incidences in local and national media. It was agreed that both proactive and reactive approaches to engaging the media may be useful: using concrete ‘moments’ in the LFG studies (such as the deployment of a new mitigation device for the first time) to create positive stories about the group’s work.

The key themes and messages within the document were seen as useful.

Additional methods to ensure skippers involved in the bycatch mitigation studies feel equipped to respond to ad-hoc media inquiries were discussed, including sharing contact information for Katrina Ryan and Maria Wild, Cefas, and developing ‘champions’ amongst fishing participants who are briefed on how to respond to media inquiries.

Actions:

- Members to provide any direct text amends to Katrina Ryan via email.
- Katrina Ryan to add extra content to the toolkit, differentiating between using the toolkit as an individual member / organisation speaking using CCUK messaging, and the CCUK LFG as a combined entity issuing its own statements.

- Katrina Ryan to add her work contact details, and contact details for Maria Wild, to the bottom of the toolkit for use in supporting ad-hoc media inquiries.
 - Katrina Ryan to produce a laminated one-page version of the agreed messaging.
 - CCUK to identify ~three 'champions' – fishermen who can respond to media inquiries about the group's work.
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Update on skippers self-reporting study

Maria Wild and Stu Hetherington provided an update on the use of the self-reporting bycatch app and Electronic Monitoring data collected so far. Data for 2019 and 2020 had been collated: initially indicating 8 incidences of cetacean bycatch in 2019, and 4 in 2020 (although these data are to be validated and finalised before confirmation).

Barry Preston provided input on use of the self-reporting bycatch app, which was noted by Stu Hetherington and Maria Wild. Gus Caslake, CSMA, suggested the app could be further adapted to better incorporate ad-hoc observations and sightings during fishing activity.

Actions:

- Barry Preston, Stu Hetherington and Maria Wild to discuss app functionality – including specific issue with recording hauls which are over 24 hours in duration.
 - Stu Hetherington to enact Gus Caslakes's suggestions regarding the app, better incorporating observations.
 - Stu Hetherington and Maria Wild to present validated and finalised data to the LFG at the next meeting.
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Update on acoustic C-pod deployment

Maria showed the LFG a C-pod: which detects cetacean acoustic activity within a range of 900m. Consultation and work has been underway to establish plans to deploy C-pods in Mevagissey Bay, to monitor cetacean presence/ absence in the bay.

Following concerns from local fishing communities, Cat Bell had agreed to provide written assurance that the data gathered from these C-pods is to be used within the Clean Catch UK project to understand the overlap between fishing activity and cetaceans, rather than to establish new closed areas to fishermen. A license for the C-pod deployment had been garnered from the Crown Estate, and an MMO license had been applied for and is pending. A 28-day consultation period is open, and providing no appeals against the activity are received, the deployment should go ahead in the near-term.

Ruth Williams, CWT, asked about the possibility of using the C-pods to secure 'real time' information on cetacean activity in fishing areas, and warn fishermen of their presence in order to help mitigate bycatch. It was noted that dolphins often pass through areas rapidly and this may not be workable.



Although C-Pods are not equipped for this real-time transfer of data, other acoustic technology is available, but possibly prohibitively expensive.

Ruth Williams said an update on the C-pod deployment should be taken to the national-level group.

Actions:

- Deployment of C-pods to be complete within 2-3 months.
 - Report progress back to LFG and NSG as appropriate.
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Update on acoustic reflectors

Al Davies, Arribada Initiative, provided an update on the development of new acoustic reflector devices – planned to be trialled in South-west net fisheries. Since the February 2020 LFG meeting, work had been underway to assess different float materials and their reflective qualities, as well as looking at factors such as shape and size in impacting acoustic ‘visibility’ of the reflectors. Al Davies had been working with Loughborough University to test different floats and reflectors – including re-visiting designs from trials previously conducted in the early 1990s.

A discussion was held on the reflective impacts of rope. It was agreed all different types of rope used to attach floats to gear would need to be tested for their acoustic ‘visibility’ to cetaceans.

Fishermen present underlined that floats are rarely changed – they last for many years. The new acoustic reflectors would need to match this: swap-in interchangeably with old floats and provide the same benefits, and potentially be developed to the same specs in terms of size and buoyancy.

Actions:

- Gus Caslake to provide Al Davies with details on different rope types to test – including a sample of ‘floating rope’.
 - Al Davies to continue trials with Loughborough University, testing the acoustic visibility of the ropes and different designs for reflectors – aiming to have something to deploy within 2-3 months.
 - Cefas to deliver a statistical analysis to assess the number of vessels and deployments necessary to test the effectiveness of the acoustic reflectors.
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AOB – Seabird Safe Toolkit

Katrina Ryan presented a draft ‘seabird safe toolkit’, developed for JNCC and Defra to provide practical information to fishermen on avoiding seabird bycatch and safe handling of bycaught birds.

LFG members commented on the ID guide within the toolkit – this was seen as a positive feature and something that should be replicated across wildlife species covered by CCUK.



It was agreed that the toolkit should be presented in A5 size, and available in a booklet form. Modular sections could be 'clipped in' for specific sea areas – e.g. the SPA for divers in St Austell bay.

Gus Caslake suggested the toolkit should be reduced to 2-3 pages maximum.

Ruth Williams let the group know that the RSPB had confirmed a local trial of the 'looming eyes buoy' in St Austell bay – a device designed to deter seabirds and prevent bycatch.

Next meeting

Stu Hetherington provided a re-cap of actions from the day.

It was agreed that the next meeting should take place in Mevagissey, during October 2021.

Attendees

| Attendees | | | |
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| Katrina Ryan (Secretariat) <i>Mindfully Wired Communications</i> | Stu Heatherington <i>Cefas</i> | Maria Wild <i>Cefas</i> | Gus Caslake <i>Cornish Sardine Management Association / Seafish</i> |
| Ruth Williams <i>Cornwall Wildlife Trust</i> | Al Davies <i>Arribada</i> | Cat Bell <i>Defra</i> | Barry Preston <i>Mevagissey fisherman, trial participant</i> |

Full Schedule of Actions

| | ACTION | Responsibility |
|---|--|----------------------------|
| 1 | Direct text amends to be provided to Katrina Ryan via email. | Members |
| 2 | Extra content to be added to the toolkit, differentiating between using the toolkit as an individual member/ organisation speaking using CCUK messaging, and the CCUK LFG issuing its own statements as a combined entity. | Katrina Ryan |
| 3 | Contact details for Katrina Ryan and Maria Wild to be added to the toolkit for use in supporting ad-hoc media inquiries. | Katrina Ryan Maria Wild |



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| 4 | A laminated, one-page version of the agreed messaging to be produced. | Katrina Ryan |
| 5 | Three fishermen to be identified as 'champions', who can respond to media inquiries related to the group's work. | Members |
| 6 | App functionality to be discussed, including with regard to the specific issue with recording hauls which are over 24 hours in duration | Barry Preston Stu Hetherington Maria Wild |
| 7 | Gus Caslake's suggestions regarding the app better incorporating observations, to be enacted. | Stu Hetherington |
| 8 | Validated and finalised data to be presented at the next meeting. | Stu Hetherington Maria Wild |
| 9 | Deployment of C-pods to be completed. | Cefas/ Defra |
| 10 | Report C-pod progress back to LFG and NSG as appropriate. | Cefas/ Defra |
| 11 | Al Davies to be provided with details on different rope types to test - including a sample of 'floating rope'. | Gus Caslake |
| 12 | Acoustic reflector trials to be continued with Loughborough University, to test the acoustic visibility of ropes and different designs for reflectors. | Al Davies |
| 13 | Statistical analysis to be delivered, to assess the number of vessels and deployments necessary to test the effectiveness of the acoustic reflectors. | Cefas |

