

Clean Catch UK: Joint Action to Reduce Wildlife Bycatch Report for 5th meeting of the National Steering Group

Meeting date and time: 23 May 2023, 10:30 - 15:30

Location: Design West, 16 Narrow Quay, Bristol

Summary points

- Slides for the 5th meeting of the National Steering Group (NSG) can be found [here](#).
- Updates were provided by several members and non-members of the NSG on activities highly pertinent to the work of CCUK, including:
 - **The Bycatch Monitoring Programme.** This is coordinated by the University of St Andrews and carried out collaboratively by a number of UK government agencies, research institutes and fishing industry representative bodies. Following the issuance of a new contract for the BMP and the UK's departure from the EU, going forward the focus of the programme will be to improve the comprehensiveness and quality of bycatch data, and to explore the potential of Electronic Monitoring (EM) to supplement existing data collection activities. A project summary and update was provided to the NSG in advance of the meeting. The update was given by Al Kingston (University of St Andrews).
 - **Insight360.** This multi-stakeholder collaboration aims to develop an affordable and efficient electronic monitoring system for bycatch events, whereby cameras capture footage and microphones allow fishermen to provide spoken accounts which will annotate the video footage in real time. The system has been installed on five vessels, and these will be tested over the next 12 months, with continued software and hardware development and in-depth discussions with fishermen to gather their feedback. The update was given by Shauna Young (ZSL) and Ben Tutt-Leppard (Arribada).
 - **PhD supported by the Centre for Doctoral Training in Sustainable Management of UK Marine Resources (CDT SuMMer).** This PhD is a transdisciplinary research project aiming to improve understanding of bycatch in the Southwest of the UK and enable targeted action in terms of spatial and temporal patterns and differences between fishing gears. The PhD will officially commence in September 2023. As a first step, a paper is being written providing a 30-year (1991-2020) review of small cetacean bycatch in the UK. The update was given by Helen Chadwick (University of Exeter).
 - **Coordinated Development and Implementation of Best Practice in Bycatch Reduction in the North Atlantic Region (CIBBRiNA).** This international consortium seeks to collaborate with fishers and between countries to put in place measures and improve monitoring and assessment for addressing bycatch of marine mammals, birds, turtles, and elasmobranchs in the Northeast Atlantic, the Baltic, and the Mediterranean. The EU Commission approved the LIFE project in March

2023, and the Grant Agreement is expected to be signed in July with a project start date of 1 September 2023. The consortium consists of 45 partners from 13 countries and the project will run for six years. The update was given by Anne-Marie Svoboda (Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality - the Netherlands).

- In breakout groups, members **mapped bycatch work underway in the UK and areas which should be prioritised for future research**. Key points were as follows:
 - While **much bycatch monitoring and mitigation work is underway** across the UK, **coverage is inconsistent** in terms of data quality, region (e.g. Wales may be less well represented) and species groups (e.g. seals and elasmobranchs may be less well represented, particularly skates and rays).
 - Top priorities for research and action were identified as: i) holding **international knowledge exchanges to inform and enable action** in the UK; ii) enabling fishermen to **more easily and effectively report bycatch** via streamlined systems; iii) enabling a more **adaptive management approach to bycatch** that can respond to cumulative human effects, climate change effects, and emerging bycatch hotspots; iv) enabling **access to mitigation methods** (e.g. based on low-cost, open source technology); and v) consider **expanding CCUK's remit** in terms of geography and species groups.
- Cefas team members gave updates on team changes and recent CCUK activities including:
 - Current work on the **CCUK self-reporting app**, which has been developed by Cefas, Applied Satellite Technology (AST), and fishermen. "Gear groups" for different fisheries are being developed, and are now at the point where they are ready to be tested by volunteer fishermen. Through the gear groups, the app has potential to be expanded to maximise the impact of data collected. The update was given by Joanna Murray.
 - **Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM)**, an ongoing trial which is being used to confirm the quality of data collected via the CCUK self-reporting app. So far, the trial has generated high-resolution data. Going forward, emerging technical issues will be addressed, and there will be a focus on validating and assuring the quality of data. The update was given by Hannah Wolstenholme.
 - **Acoustic monitoring of dolphins and porpoises via "C-POD" and "F-POD" arrays** in two Cornwall bays, to provide data on the presence of these animals to support CCUK's Cetacean Bycatch Mitigation Study. The arrays have yielded a variety of data insights, and Cefas is working with Cornwall Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (CIFCA) to address technical challenges. New arrays will be deployed to support the visualisation of trends of cetacean activity in the area. The update was given by Emily Roebuck.
 - **Development of a Passive Acoustic Reflector (PAR)** with Arribada Initiative and fishermen with a view to testing the PAR device for practicality and robustness. Following testing, a prototype has been selected. 100 of these will be manufactured

and applied to commercial gillnets, to test them in a pilot study prior to a larger trial. The update was given by Joanna Murray.

- Cefas gave an update on the **Cetacean Bycatch Mitigation Study**, currently being undertaken in the Southwest to investigate whether pingers are practical, robust, and effective at reducing dolphin and porpoise bycatch in an inshore net fishery. Since the study was last discussed by the NSG in March 2022, lights as a mitigation method have been withdrawn owing to practical difficulties with their use. Members discussed options for improving the study design and attracting more fishermen to volunteer to participate. Concerns were raised on the following points: i) the decision taken in 2022 (following the 4th NSG meeting) to remove lights as a mitigation measure from the study design; ii) the low statistical power of the trial resulting from a low rate bycatch since the trial began; and iii) challenges in recruiting a sufficient number of fishing vessels to take part, which has also contributed to the low statistical power of the trial. **It was decided that going forward: i) the study would be simplified by removing one of the two pinger devices due to lack of practicality for fishermen, with CCUK consulting with the NSG further as needed; and ii) CCUK would aim to recruit additional vessels to participate in this trial.**
- A final update was given on **plans for Clean Catch 2**, which when initiated will have a variety of aims including supporting the implementation of the UK Government’s [marine wildlife Bycatch Mitigation Initiative](#) (BMI) and taking forward recommendations from the [Hauling Up Solutions 2 workshop](#). The next NSG meeting is expected to be held online and scheduled to coincide either with the start of Clean Catch 2 or six months from the 5th meeting, whichever is sooner. The update was given by Emma Kelman (Defra).
- The JNCC gave an update on an early-stage **proposal to establish a ‘Bycatch Strategic and Technical Advisory Group’ (‘STAG’)**, a group which would sit separately to CCUK, would be national-level and UK-wide, and would provide advice on bycatch of all wildlife species. Further discussion is needed on the development and scope of the group. The update was given by Nikki Taylor (JNCC).

Full schedule of actions

#	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE
1	Cetacean Bycatch Mitigation Study: simplify to focus on a single pinger device and consult with NSG members further as needed.	Cefas
2	Cetacean Bycatch Mitigation Study: aim to recruit additional participants.	Cefas