

Contract to deliver a review of alternative gears available to replace gillnet fisheries for purposes of minimising cetacean and other marine bycatch, with a specific focus on UK fisheries.

Project title: Shifting Gear – moving away from gillnet fisheries

Background/context:

Globally it is estimated that 300,000 cetaceans are caught incidentally in fishing gear each year. Different gear types represent varying threats for different cetacean species. One of the gear types that causes most problems for harbour porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena*) and other species is gill net fishing.

A previous review commissioned by WWF identified that Harbour porpoise bycatch in gillnets is a major welfare and conservation problem in the UK. Where harbour porpoise presence and gillnet use overlap, bycatch appears to be inevitable. The levels of bycatch occur at a rate which create a high risk of localised depletion in some areas.

Globally there have been efforts made to mitigate bycatch in gillnets and the use of pingers has been identified as the only method which has been shown to consistently work with gillnets, producing significant reductions in bycatch with little evidence of habituation in porpoises. However, in the UK in 2017, of the 1256 vessels using static nets, only 24 vessels were obliged to deploy pingers by EU requirements. Furthermore, their effectiveness relies on high levels of enforcement and compliance, there are some concerns over possible displacement from suitable habitat with some devices on the market, and they are most effective when used in combination with other mitigation methods such as time/area closures.

As a result there is now a view that the real long term solution lies in focussing on changes in fisheries practices and management which seeks to limit gillnet use rather than continuing to attempt to mitigate gillnet bycatch with technologies such as pingers. Gillnet catch value amounts to just 2.4% of the UK total, and the areas of highest harbour porpoise bycatch risk are spatially concentrated (SE England, SW England and NW of Shetland, although data are lacking, especially in Shetland), making changes to fisheries a viable proposition. It is thought that at least some gillnet fisheries could be suitable candidates for shifts to alternative gear - primarily hooks (long and hand lines), but also potentially pots/traps and light trawls.

The aim of this review is to provide information to support advocacy work that will encourage a shift of gear in fisheries where high harbour porpoise bycatch is recognised, demonstrating how this contributes to sustainable fisheries management, including linkages with the effective management of UK harbour porpoise cSACs. This will be achieved by identifying:

- i) the range of alternative gears, plus costings, that may be deployed to replace gill net use in UK waters
- ii) examples of where these have been used successfully elsewhere, including the financial implications for the fishery
- iii) a case study of what it would take to apply the adoption of an alternative gear in one of the potentially high risk areas such as the southwest of England. What steps are needed

to bring about this change in terms of engagement, policy support, resources and incentives.

Deliverables: Production of a compelling and well evidenced report for external publication. The report should deliver a workable vision for managers and fishermen as to whether a shift of gear can be achieved and if so how, and what the implications would be for the fishery. It should also outline the benefits, and any possible concerns that would be associated with such a shift.

This report will be used to promote the recommendation to shift gear away from gillnets towards more cetacean (and other wildlife) friendly gear and in turn help deliver more sustainable fisheries in UK waters.

Target Audience: Decision makers/fisheries stakeholders

Timeframe: TOR agreed with consultant by beginning March, delivery of first draft by early May, comments on first draft by mid-May. Final report delivered to WWF mid-June 2020.

Budget: £7,000 including travel expenses and VAT where applicable.

Ways of working:

- A project kick off meeting to be held via video conference or at one of the WWF offices in Woking, Cardiff or Edinburgh.
- Close working relationship with WWF main contact throughout the development of the report.
- Adherence to GDPR requirements and data confidentiality.

Tender procedure: Please submit a tender of no more than 4 pages (excluding CV's) by the **26th February 2020** which includes:

- How you plan to meet the requirements of this contract.
- Your vision for the report structure/content.
- Suggested methods for creating the case study.
- Details of who would be working on the project, including names, job titles, roles and their C.V.s.
- Examples (links are fine) of previous work that would demonstrate that you are able to meet the aims of this contract.
- Final detailed costs, including budgets for travel and VAT.
- A suggested timeframe (broken down into milestones if possible).

Contact: Helen McLachlan (HMclachlan@wwf.org.uk) or Sarah Young (syoung@wwf.org.uk), who will be working with Ruth Williams of Cornwall Wildlife Trust to steer this project and agree final text of this report.

HMCL/08/01/20