Reporting under the Habitat Regulations (as amended)[1]

2019-2024

Conservation status assessment for the species:

S1350 - Common dolphin

(*Delphinus delphis*)

United Kingdom

[1] **Habitat Regulations (as amended):**

- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), Regulation 9A
- The Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), Regulation 6A
- Report under The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended), regulation 3ZA
- The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), regulation 3ZA

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Important note - Please read

- The information in this document represents the United Kingdom Reporting under the Habitat Regulations (as amended)[1], for the period 2019-2024.
- It is based on supporting information provided by Joint Nature Conservation Committee and UK Country Nature Consevation Bodies (CNCBs), which is documented separately.
- The Habitats Regulations reporting 2019-2024 Approach Document provides details on how this supporting information contributed to the UK Report and the fields that were completed for each parameter.
- Map showing the distribution and range of the species is included.
- Explanatory notes (where provided) are included at the end. These provide additional audit trail information to that included within the assessments. Further underpinning explanatory notes are available in the related country reports.
- Some of the reporting fields have been left blank because either: (i) there was insufficient information to complete the field; (ii) completion of the field was not obligatory; and/or (iii) the field was not relevant to this species (section 12 National Site Network coverage for Annex II species).

Further details on the approach to the Habitats Regulations Reporting 2019-2024 are available on the JNCC website.

Assessment Summary: Common dolphin

Distribution and Range Map

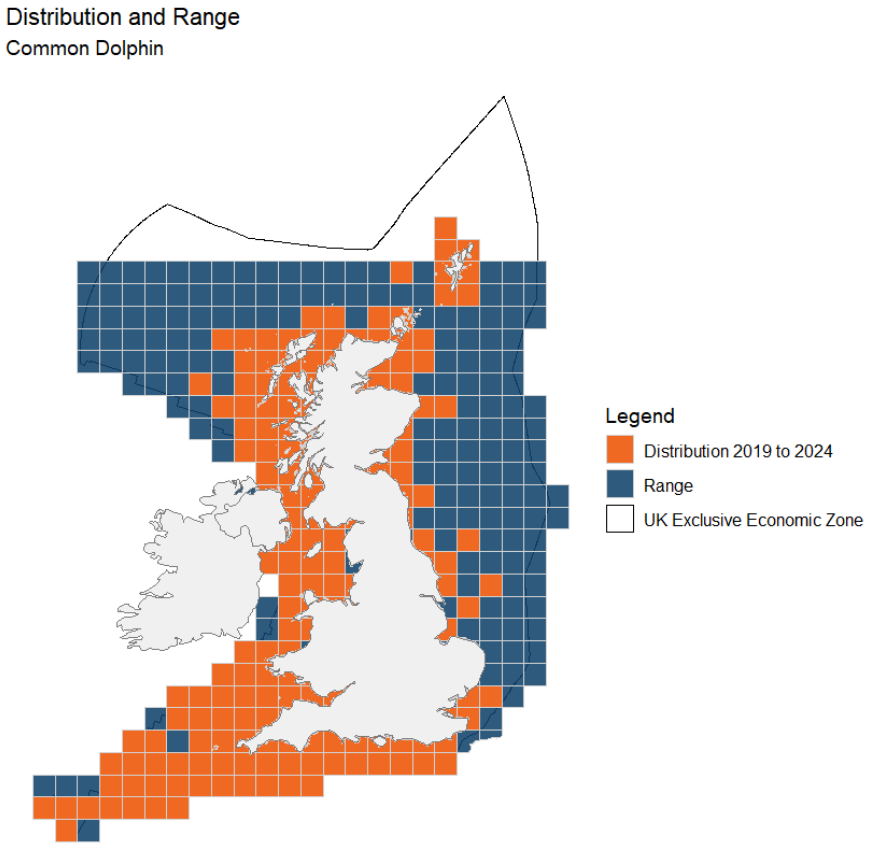

Figure 1: United Kingdom distribution and range map for S1350 - Common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*). The 50km grid square distribution map is based on available species records within the current reporting period.

Table 1: Table summarising the conservation status for S1350 - Common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*). Overall conservation status for species is based on assessments of range, population, habitat for the species, and future prospects.

Overall Conservation Status (see section 11)

Favourable (FV)

Breakdown of Overall Conservation Status

Range (see section 5)	**Favourable (FV)**
Population (see section 6)	**Favourable (FV)**
Habitat for the species (see section 7)	**Unknown (XX)**
Future prospects (see section 10)	**Favourable (FV)**

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National Level

1. General information

1.1 Country	United Kingdom
1.2 Species code	S1350
1.3 Species scientific name	*Delphinus delphis*
1.4 Alternative species scientific name	
1.5 Common name	Common dolphin
Annex(es)	IV

2. Maps

2.1 Sensitive species	No
2.2 Year or period	2019-2024
2.3 Distribution map	Yes
2.4 Distribution map; Method used	Complete survey or a statistically robust estimate

2.5 Additional information

Common dolphins are less common in northern UK waters, and occur in highest densities around the south-west (Murphy et al., 2013; Hammond et al, 2021; Gilles et al, 2023; Evans and Waggit, 2023). As with previous assessments, though common dolphins are found in the North Sea, densities are typically low and this is reflected in the distribution data obtained. The species is found in both offshore waters, but due to low survey effort, their presence in these areas is not apparent from the distribution and the map more closely resembles the species distribution in coastal and shelf waters.

The distribution map is based on verified sightings data of common dolphin between 2019 and 2024. The sightings were collated from SCANS IV, Pelagis French surveys, NBN Atlas, European Seabirds at Sea, the Joint Cetacean Data Programme, POSEIDON project, University of Aberdeen, The Crown Estate Marine Data Exchange, Whale and Dolphin Conservation, Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust, ORCA, Sea Watch Foundation, Marine Discovery Penzance, Sussex Dolphin Project, Cornwall Seal

Group Research Trust, Cardigan Bay Marine Wildlife Centre, Natural England, Sea Trust and The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

3. Information related to Annex V Species

3.1 Is the species taken in the wild / exploited?

3.2 What measures have been taken?

a) Regulations regarding access to property

b) Temporary or local prohibition on the taking of specimens in the wild and exploitation

c) Regulation of the periods and/or methods of taking specimens

d) Application of hunting and fishing rules which take account of the conservation of such populations

e) Establishment of a system of licences for taking specimens or of quotas

f) Regulation of the purchase, sale, offering for sale, keeping for sale, or transport for sale of specimens

g) Breeding in captivity of animal species as well as artificial propagation of plant species

Other measures

Other measures description

3.3: Hunting bag or quantity taken in the wild for Mammals and Acipenseridae (Fish)

a) Unit

Table 2: Quantity taken from the wild during the reporting period (see 3.3a for units). For species with defined hunting seasons, Season 1 refers to 2018/2019 (autumn 2018 to spring 2019), and Season 6 to 2023/2024. For species without hunting seasons, data are reported by calendar year: Year 1 is 2019, and Year 6 is 2024.

	Season/ year 1	Season/ year 2	Season/ year 3	Season/ year 4	Season/ year 5	Season/ year 6

b) Minimum	-	-	-	-	-	-
c) Maximum	-	-	-	-	-	-
d) Unknown	-	-	-	-	-	-

3.4: Hunting bag or quantity taken in the wild; Method used

3.5: Additional information

No additional information

Biogeographical Level

4. Biogeographical and marine regions

4.1 Biogeographical or marine region where the species occurs MATL

4.2 Sources of information

See section 14 References

5. Range

5.1 Surface area (km²) 742,996

5.2 Short-term trend; Period 2013-2024

5.3 Short-term trend; Direction Increasing

5.4 Short-term trend; Magnitude

a) Estimated minimum

b) Estimated maximum

c) Pre-defined range

d) Unknown	
e) Type of estimate	
f) Rate of decrease	
5.5 Short-term trend; Method used	Complete survey or a statistically robust estimate
5.6 Long-term trend; Period	1994-2024
5.7 Long-term trend; Direction	Increasing
5.8 Long-term trend; Magnitude	
a) Minimum	
b) Maximum	
c) Rate of decrease	
5.9 Long-term trend; Method used	Complete survey or a statistically robust estimate

5.10 Favourable Reference Range (FRR)

a) Area (km²)	736,019
b) Pre-defined increment	
c) Unknown	No
d) Method used	Model-based approach
e) Quality of information	high

5.11 Change and reason for change in surface area of range

a) Change	Yes
b) Genuine change	Yes
c) Improved knowledge or more accurate data	Yes
d) Different method	No
e) No information	No
f) Other reason	No

g) Main reason	Genuine change

5.12 Additional information

The distribution map is based on verified sightings data of common dolphin between 2019 and 2024. The sightings were collated from SCANS IV, Pelagis French surveys, NBN Atlas, European Seabirds at Sea, the Joint Cetacean Data Programme, POSEIDON project, University of Aberdeen, The Crown Estate Marine Data Exchange, Whale and Dolphin Conservation, Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust, ORCA, Sea Watch Foundation, Marine Discovery Penzance, Sussex Dolphin Project, Cornwall Seal Group Research Trust, Cardigan Bay Marine Wildlife Centre, Natural England, Sea Trust and The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

Common dolphin range has been extending northward, with increasing observations around the Shetland Isles based on provided validated sightings between 2019 to 2022.

The FRV range was based on an analysis of effort related survey data spanning 1994-2010 compiled for the Joint Cetacean Protocol (JCP) undertaken by Paxton et al. (2016). The estimated range was based on a modelled prediction of common dolphin distribution during August 2010 and adapted based on additional sightings data and expert knowledge (see Paxton et al., 2016 for further detail).

Since the 2019 Habitats Directive Article 17 assessments, the FRR has changed due to the removal of the EEZ extension into offshore waters west of Scotland. This area has been removed due to lack of data for all species, and subsequent impact on confidence in assessments. This does not represent genuine change in FRR.

6. Population

6.1 Year or period	2022

6.2 Population size (in reporting unit)

a) Unit	number of individuals
b) Minimum	75,052
c) Maximum	149,183
d) Best single value	105,813
6.3 Type of estimate	95% confidence interval
6.4 Quality of extrapolation to reporting unit	moderate

6.5 Additional population size (using population unit other than reporting unit)

a) Unit	
b) Minimum	
c) Maximum	
d) Best single value	
e) Type of estimate	
6.6 Population size; Method used	Complete survey or a statistically robust estimate
6.7 Short-term trend; Period	2016-2022
6.8 Short-term trend; Direction	Increasing
6.9 Short-term trend; Magnitude	
a) Estimated minimum	
b) Estimated maximum	
c) Pre-defined range	Increasing 51 - 100%
d) Unknown	No
e) Type of estimate	95% confidence interval
f) Rate of decrease	
6.10 Short-term trend; Method used	Complete survey or a statistically robust estimate
6.11 Long-term trend; Period	2005-2022
6.12 Long-term trend; Direction	Increasing
6.13 Long-term trend; Magnitude	
a) Minimum	
b) Maximum	
c) Confidence interval	
d) Rate of decrease	

6.14 Long-term trend; Method used	Complete survey or a statistically robust estimate

6.15 Favourable Reference Population (FRP)

ai) Population size	29,373
aii) Unit	number of individuals
b) Pre-defined increment	
c) Unknown	No
d) Method used	Model-based approach
e) Quality of information	high

6.16 Change and reason for change in population size

a) Change	Yes
b) Genuine change	Yes
c) Improved knowledge or more accurate data	No
d) Different method	No
e) No information	No
f) Other reason	No
g) Main reason	Genuine change

6.17 Additional information

Common dolphin abundance has not significantly varied since 2005 in European Atlantic waters, but there are strong interannual spatial variations driven by prey availability (Gilles et al 2023). However, in UK waters there was a considerable increase in the abundance of common dolphin between 2005 and 2022, indicating that the proportion of the Atlantic population using UK EEZ waters has increased. It is suggested that the increase is driven by distribution changes most likely in response to prey availability.

A similar increase was observed in the southern Celtic Sea regions of Ireland from the ObSERVE programme (Giralt Paradell et al., 2024) suggesting the increase in abundance is widespread across the southern Celtic Seas. But the overall abundance of common dolphin from the wider European Atlantic waters from SCANS IV declined

between 2015 and 2022 (Gilles et al 2023) suggesting the change is likely to be driven by a shift in distribution rather than an increase in total abundance.

The population estimate for 2022 is based primarily on density estimates from the SCANS IV survey. However, there is a gap in the 2022 SCANS survey effort in offshore waters west of Scotland, a high-density region for this species which accounted for 13% of the UK population during SCANS III (Gilles et al., 2013; Hammond et al., 2021). The population estimate provided here has therefore been corrected using the % of the UK population sighted in the missing block during SCANS III. While necessary, such extrapolation introduces uncertainty and decreases confidence in the population estimate produced.

The FRV for population (29373; CV: 0.333; CI:15563-55439) was calculated based on estimates from SCANS II in 2005 (Hammond, et al., 2021) and CODA in 2007 (Hammond, et al., 2009), supplemented with density estimates from neighbouring regions to fill data gaps within the UK EEZ and limit extrapolation where possible; ObSERVE in Irish waters (Rogan, e al., 2018), NASS and T-NASS (Pike, et al., 2019a; Pike, et al., 2019b) and NILS (Leonard and Øien, 2020a; Leonard and Øien, 2020b) surveys in the NAMMCO region.

Since the 2019 Habitats Directive Article 17 assessments, the FRV has changed due to the removal of the EEZ extension into offshore waters west of Scotland. This area has been removed due to lack of data for all species, and subsequent impact on confidence in assessments. This does not represent genuine change in FRV.

As short-term trend in population has been determined as increasing, the pre-defined range field has been used to indicate a magnitude. However, population estimates have been calculated from large-scale surveys at approximately decadal intervals, and the confidence intervals associated with population estimates are wide. Thus, confidence in the magnitude is low.

6.18 Age structure, mortality and reproduction deviation	Unknown

7. Habitat for the species

7.1 Sufficiency of area and quality of occupied habitat (for long-term survival)

a) Is area of occupied habitat sufficient?	Unknown
b) Is quality of occupied habitat sufficient?	Unknown

c) If No or Unknown, is there a sufficiently large area of unoccupied habitat of suitable quality?	Unknown

7.2 Sufficiency of area and quality of occupied habitat; Method used

a) Sufficiency of area of occupied habitat; Method used	Based mainly on expert opinion with very limited data
b) Sufficiency of quality of occupied habitat; Method used	Based mainly on expert opinion with very limited data

7.3 Short-term trend; Period

7.4 Short-term trend; Direction	Unknown
7.5 Short-term trend; Method used	Based mainly on expert opinion with very limited data

7.6 Long-term trend; Period

7.7 Long-term trend; Direction	Unknown
7.8 Long-term trend; Method used	Based mainly on expert opinion with very limited data

7.9 Additional information

Direct evidence of cetacean habitat quality is limited as presently, a comprehensive understanding of the key elements important to the species is undetermined. In some cases, conclusions for species range and population could be indicative of habitat quality by proxy, however confidence in assessment outputs would be low.

The population of common dolphin using the UK EEZ waters has increased since 2005 with the range remaining stable.

8. Main pressures

8.1 Characterisation of pressures

Table 3: Pressures affecting the species, including timing and importance/impact ranking. Pressures are defined as factors acting currently and/or during the reporting period (2019–2024). Rankings are: High (direct/immediate influence and/or large spatial extent) and Medium (moderate direct/immediate influence, mainly indirect and/or regional extent).

Pressure	Timing	Ranking
Residential, commercial and industrial activities and structures generating noise, light, heat or other forms of pollution	Ongoing and likely to be in the future	Medium (M)
Marine fish and shellfish harvesting causing reduction of species/prey populations and disturbance of species (professional)	Ongoing and likely to be in the future	Medium (M)
Bycatch and incidental killing (due to fishing and hunting activities)	Ongoing and likely to be in the future	High (H)
Decline or extinction of related species (e.g. food source / prey, predator / parasite, symbiote, etc.) due to climate change	Ongoing and likely to be in the future	Medium (M)
Mixed source marine water pollution (marine and coastal)	Ongoing and likely to be in the future	Medium (M)
Geotechnical surveying	Ongoing and likely to be in the future	Medium (M)
Plant and animal diseases, pathogens and pests	Ongoing and likely to be in the future	Medium (M)

8.2 Sources of information

See section 14 References

8.3 Additional information

PG13: Primary area of concern is the southwest approaches.

PC07: Regional pressure in the North Sea and the Irish Sea.

9. Conservation measures

9.1: Status of measures

a) Are measures needed?	Yes
b) Indicate the status of measures	Measures identified and taken
9.2 Main purpose of the measures taken	Maintain the current range, population and/or habitat for the species

9.3 Location of the measures taken	Both inside and outside National Site Network
9.4 Response to measures	Medium-term results (within the next two reporting periods, 2025–2036)

9.5 List of main conservation measures

Table 4: Key conservation measures addressing current pressures and/or anticipated threats during the next two reporting periods (2025–2036). Measures are ranked by importance/impact: High (direct/immediate influence and/or large spatial extent) and Medium (moderate direct/immediate influence, mainly indirect and/or regional extent).

Conservation measure	Ranking
Control/eradication of illegal killing, fishing and harvesting of wild plants, fungi and anmals	High (H)
Reduce bycatch and incidental killing of non-target species	High (H)
Reduce impact of mixed source pollution	High (H)
Adapt/manage exploitation of energy resources	High (H)
Adapt/manage renewable energy installation, facilities and operation (excl. hydropower and abstraction activities)	High (H)
Management of professional/commercial fishing, shellfish and seaweed harvesting (incl. restoration of habitats)	High (H)

9.6 Additional information

This species is not an Annex II species and therefore the designation of SACs is not required, as stipulated in the Habitats Regulations. However, as a European Protected Species, protection is provided throughout UK waters and it is an offence to kill, injure or disturb. The UK remains committed to the conservation of marine mammals in UK waters and the implementation of measures to mitigate the impact of pressures and conservation measures have been undertaken in the UK and adjacent waters as part of the requirements of the Habitats Regulations. Such measures include monitoring bycatch, monitoring strandings data to monitor current and identify emerging pressures, application of appropriate management measures, and noise monitoring and mitigation with regards to offshore industry. This is reflected in the list of conservation measures under field 9.5. The UK also supports a range of international agreements and conventions on the conservation of marine mammals and the marine environment. For example: The Convention on Migratory Species; the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR). A UK Cetacean Conservation

Strategy is currently in development, due for publication shortly. The strategy is intended to support decision making and identify actions necessary to maintain or improve the conservation status of cetaceans in UK waters. Defra and devolved administrations fund national strandings schemes for cetaceans which aim to: collate, analyse and report data for all cetacean strandings around the coast of the UK; determine the causes of death (both natural and anthropogenic) in stranded cetaceans, including bycatch and physical trauma and; undertake surveillance on the incidence of disease in stranded cetaceans in order to identify any substantial new threats to their conservation status.

10. Future prospects

10.1a Future trends of parameters

ai) Range	Positive - increasing <=1% (one percent or less) per year on average
bi) Population	Very Positive - increasing >1% (more than one percent) per year on average
ci) Habitat for the species	Unknown

10.1b Future prospects of parameters

aii) Range	Good
bii) Population	Good
cii) Habitat for the species	Unknown

10.2 Additional information

No additional information

11. Conclusions

11.1 Range	Favourable (FV)
11.2 Population	Favourable (FV)
11.3 Habitat for the species	Unknown (XX)
11.4 Future prospects	Favourable (FV)
11.5 Overall assessment of Conservation Status	Favourable (FV)

11.6 Overall trend in Conservation Status	Stable

11.7 Change and reason for change in conservation status

a) Change	Yes
b) Genuine change	Yes
c) Improved knowledge or more accurate data	Yes
d) Different method	No
e) No information	No
f) Other reason	No
g) Main reason	Genuine change

11.7 Change and reason for change in conservation status trend

a) Change	Yes
b) Genuine change	Yes
c) Improved knowledge or more accurate data	Yes
d) Different method	No
e) No information	No
f) Other reason	No
g) Main reason	Genuine change

11.8 Additional information

Conclusion on Range reached because: (i) the short-term trend direction in Range surface area is increasing and (ii) the current Range surface area is greater than the Favourable Reference Range.

Conclusion on Population reached because: (i) the short-term trend direction in Population size is increasing; and (ii) the best estimate for population size is greater than the Favourable Reference Population.

Conclusion on Habitat for the species reached because: (i) it is unknown whether the area of habitat is sufficiently large; (ii) it is unknown if habitat quality is sufficient for the

long-term survival of the species; and (iii) the short-term trend in area and quality of habitat is unknown.

Conclusion on Future prospects reached because: (i) the Future prospects for Range are Good; (ii) the Future prospects for Population are Good; and (iii) the Future prospects for Habitat for the species are Unknown.

Overall assessment of Conservation Status is Favourable because two or more conclusions are Favourable.

Overall trend in Conservation Status is based on the combination of the short-term trends for Range - increasing, Population - increasing, and Habitat for the species - unknown.

Evidence suggests trends in distribution are becoming apparent for this species likely driven by climate change, which is contributing to some uncertainty in conclusions for future prospects for this species.

12. UK National Site Network (pSCIs, SCIs, SACs) coverage for Annex II species

12.1 Population size inside the pSCIs, SCIs and SACs network

a) Unit	
b) Minimum	
c) Maximum	
d) Best single value	
12.2 Type of estimate	
12.3 Population size inside the network; Method used	
12.4 Short-term trend of population size within the network; Direction	
12.5 Short-term trend of population size within the network; Method used	

12.6 Short-term trend of habitat for the species inside the pSCIs, SCIs and SACs network; Direction

12.7 Short-term trend of habitat for the species inside the pSCIs, SCIs and SACs network; Method used

12.8 Additional information

No additional information

13. Complementary information

13.1 Justification of percentage thresholds for trends

No justification information

13.2 Trans-boundary assessment

No trans-boundary assessment information

13.2 Other relevant information

No other relevant information

14. References

Biogeographical and marine regions

4.2 Sources of information

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Main pressures

8.2 Sources of information

No sources of information

15. Explanatory Notes

Field label	Note
8.1: Characterisation of pressures	PF12 Industrial or commercial activities and structures generating noise, light, heat or other forms of pollution. Used to identify risk of the cumulative effects of noise on cetaceans. Cetaceans rely on echolocation for navigation, foraging and communication, making them sensitive to noise in the marine environment. Although different sources of disturbance have been identified as potential pressures in the pre-defined EU list, many of these pressures independently have not been identified as Medium or High risk to common dolphins in UK waters. The cumulative impact of these and other sources of noise disturbance may, however, be greater when combined, which may impact distribution and communication as shown for similar species (Heiler et al, 2016; Murphy et al., 2021; Todd et al., 2015; Tillin et al., 2011).
8.1: Characterisation of pressures	PG01 Marine fish and shellfish harvesting (professional, recreational) causing reduction of species/prey populations and disturbance of species. A lack of food has a direct and immediate influence on the individual. Starvation is identified as an important cause of death for common dolphins in UK waters, with a rising percentage of post mortem analyses (32 of 510 individuals examined) between 2000 and 2023 confirming starvation as the cause of death (Deaville 2011:20204; Murphy et al., 2021). It should be noted, however, that prey depletion can result from both natural and anthropogenic causes. No link has been identified between commercial fishing practices and the cases of cetacean starvation recorded through the UK Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme.
8.1: Characterisation of pressures	PK02 Mixed source marine water pollution (marine and coastal): The general impact of contaminants on cetaceans is well documented, including impacts on the immune system and reproduction (Jepson et al., 2016). The concentration is highly dependent on the age, sex, reproductive state and nutritional condition of the animals in

	addition to the intake via the food web. Analysis conducted as part of the investigation into a mass stranding event in the south-west of England indicated that levels of harmful algal toxins and organochlorines (e.g. DDT) were relatively low, with lower values than animals analysed that stranded in the same area between 1990 - 1992 (Jepson et al, 2013). However, all mature females in the 2013 analysis (5 out of 26) were lactating and therefore likely to be offloading any burden and more recent studies have highlighted that while PCB levels in common dolphin may be lower than in other species, there may still be impacts such reduced foetal survival, mid- and late-term abortions, reproductive failure and newborn mortality (Murphy et al., 2018; 2021). Further, studies have noted that PCBs concentrations and other contaminant levels are falling at much slower rates in common dolphin population than in other species (Williams et al., 2023). Williams et al. (2023) hypothesise that this is linked to high spatial overlap with industrialised areas. High zinc levels have been correlated with stranded animals and death due to infectious disease on Irish coasts (Gosnell et al., 2024).
8.1: Characterisation of pressures	PJ12 Decline or extinction of related species (e.g. food source / prey, predator / parasite, symbiot, etc.) due to climate change. The effects of climate change on common dolphins is likely to be mediated through variation in prey resource initially. Common dolphins are opportunistic feeders (Young & Cockcroft 1994) and tend to select prey based on energy densities (Santos et al., 2004; Brophy et al., 2009; Spitz et al., 2010). They show seasonal changes in prey preferences (Murphy et al. 2013) indicating they are likely to be able to adapt to changes in prey as a result of changes in climate. A rising percentage of post mortem analyses (32 of 510 individuals examined) between 2000 and 2023 confirm starvation as the cause of death (Deaville 2011:20204; Murphy et al., 2021). It should be noted, however, that prey depletion can result from both natural and anthropogenic causes.

8.1: Characterisation of pressures	PG13 Bycatch and incidental killing (due to fishing and hunting activities). ICES have previously advised the EU that annual removals of common dolphin in the Northeast Atlantic exceed safe limits in terms of a sustainable population (ICES, 2016; 2021; Taylor et al., 2024) and consensus is growing that the pressure is potentially having an important direct and immediate influence on the population, operating across a large portion of the species range (Puente et al., 2023; Authier et al., 2024; Murphy et al., 2021). The UK Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme has identified bycatch as the most important anthropogenic cause of death in this species between 2000-2024 confirmed as bycatch cases (Deaville, 2011:2024). The UK Bycatch Monitoring Scheme also regularly records common dolphin bycatch, particularly in the south-west of England (Northridge et al. 2017).
8.1: Characterisation of pressures	PC07 Geotechnical surveying. JNCC advice on geotechnical surveying covers all marine mammals in UK waters (Stone, 2015; JNCC, 2017, 2010b, 2010c) and several studies suggest that loud, impulsive noises are likely to have an immediate influence on this species, with strong avoidance responses of small cetaceans noted by studies (Stone, 2015; Stone et al. 2017, Stone, 2003; Stone & Tasker, 2006; JNCC, 2007; Fernandez-Betelu et al., 2021). There is also the potential for temporary or permanent threshold shifts in response to some activities (Robinson et al., 2022). Close proximity to noise created by geotechnical activity also has potential to cause injury, although evidence for the impact and level of risk is limited. This is also mitigated through guidance on operations such as soft start and on board marine mammal observers. Pressures are likely to be higher in the North Sea and Celtic and Irish Seas.
8.1: Characterisation of pressures	PI04 Plant and animal diseases, pathogens and pests. Necropsies of stranded animals highlights consistent evidence of parasitic infestation and infection from pathogens (Deaville 2011:2024; Davison & ten Doeschate

	et al., 2021; Scottish Marine Animal Stranding Scheme, 2023).
9.5: List of main conservation measures	MG05 Reduce bycatch and incidental killing of non-target species: The UK is implementing the EU Technical Conservation Measures Regulation transposed into UK regulations which lays down measures concerning incidental catches of vulnerable species in fisheries, and more generally the bycatch obligations within the Habitats Regulations. Since 2004, a dedicated bycatch monitoring programme has been in place, with both dedicated and non-dedicated onboard observers collecting data on bycatch numbers. These data inform implementation and potential effectiveness of measures such as pingers. There is a requirement for all fishing vessels over 12m using gill nets or entanglement nets to use pingers under the criteria laid out in the regulation. Inshore Vessel Monitoring System (iVMS) devices are being implemented for under-12 metre fishing vessels, allowing data on latitude, longitude, course and speed to be recorded and help improve the management and sustainability of the marine environment. Legislation to make iVMS mandatory on under-12 metre vessels is expected to come into effect in 2024 in England. In Scotland, consultation on the introduction mandatory electronic tracking for under-12 metre vessels was carried out in late 2023. Legislation requiring iVMS for under-12 metre vessels operating in Welsh waters has been in place since 2022. Since February 2022 it has been mandatory for under-10 metre fishing vessels in English and Welsh waters to create and submit a catch record for every fishing trip through the Catch Recording Application (Catch App or Record your Catch). Data is collected on vessel, trip, gear, area fished and catch and can be used to inform on fishing activity by gear type and species. Furthermore, the UK Marine Wildlife Bycatch Mitigation Initiative (published August 2022) aims to improve our understanding of bycatch and entanglement of sensitive marine species through monitoring and scientific research, identify 'hotspot" or high-risk areas/gear types/fisheries in which to focus monitoring and mitigation, and develop and implement

	effective measures to minimise bycatch/entanglement. Currently work is progressing towards development of a bycatch risk framework across all PET species to apply all available evidence and support targeted monitoring.
9.5: List of main conservation measures	MC02 Adapt/manage exploitation of energy resources: Guidance for the protection of marine European Protected Species from deliberate injury, killing and disturbance has been drafted (JNCC 2010a; Marine Scotland, 2014). Marine Industries generate a variety of noise through activities such as geophysical surveys (e.g. seismic surveys (JNCC 2017)), construction (e.g. pile driving (JNCC 2010b)) and decommissioning (e.g. use of explosives (2010c)). As part of the licencing procedures, developers and operators are required to utilise JNCC guidelines to minimise the risk of injury to cetaceans when undertaking such activities (JNCC, 2010b, 2010c; 2017; 2023; 2025; JNCC, Natural England & Cefas, 2025). The guidelines advise on conducting marine mammal observations prior to and during the activity and, where suitable, utilising procedures such as soft start (gradual introduction of the sound) to reduce and avoid direct harm to animals. A review of the marine mammal observer data demonstrated the effectiveness of soft start approach (Stone et al, 2017).
9.5: List of main conservation measures	MH01 Reduce impact of military installations and activities: To reduce the risk of noise impact on marine mammals, the UK Ministry of Defence (MOD) has a Statement of Intent with UK Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies concerning conduct in relation to marine disturbance. The MOD has developed a real-time alert procedure for naval training operations. This enables localised information on cetacean sightings to be incorporated into the training schedule and for operations to be relocated if necessary.
9.5: List of main conservation measures	MG04 Control/eradication of illegal killing, fishing and harvesting: The Habitats Directive is transposed into UK law under the Habitat Regulations (HR) for England and Wales (as amended) and the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007 (as amended),

	which make it an offence to kill, injure, capture or disturb European marine protected species. Similar legislation exists for Scottish and Northern Irish inshore waters.
9.5: List of main conservation measures	MK01 Reduce impact of mixed source pollution: The impact of chemical pollution on short-beaked common dolphins remains an issue (Jepson et al., 2016), however, establishing measures beyond the historic ban on PCB use, has not been achieved to date. Further information is required to understand where exposure is occurring to be able to identify appropriate measures.
9.5: List of main conservation measures	MC03 Adapt/manage renewable energy installation, facilities and operation (excl. hydropower and abstraction activities): Guidance for the protection of marine European Protected Species from deliberate injury, killing and disturbance has been drafted (JNCC 2010a; Marine Scotland, 2014). Marine Industries generate a variety of noise through activities such as geophysical surveys (e.g. seismic surveys (JNCC 2017)), construction (e.g. pile driving (JNCC 2010b)) and decommissioning (e.g. use of explosives (2010c)). As part of the licencing procedures, developers and operators are required to utilise JNCC guidelines to minimise the risk of injury to cetaceans when undertaking such activities (JNCC, 2010b, 2010c; 2017; 2023; 2025; JNCC, Natural England & Cefas, 2025). The guidelines advise on conducting marine mammal observations prior to and during the activity and, where suitable, utilising procedures such as soft start (gradual introduction of the sound) to reduce and avoid direct harm to animals. A review of the marine mammal observer data demonstrated the effectiveness of soft start approach (Stone et al., 2017).
9.5: List of main conservation measures	MG01 Management of professional/commercial fishing, shellfish and seaweed harvesting (incl. restoration of habitats). Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) are currently being developed across all administrations for fisheries with perceived threats or pressures to the marine environment. FMPs are required under the Fisheries Act 2020 which provides the framework for management

fisheries outside the EU Common Fisheries Policy. The Joint Fisheries Statement (agreeing the delivery of the 8 objectives of the Fisheries Act 2020) sets out plans for 43 FMPs. Publication of FMPs started last year and is expected to continue for 2-3 years. Some are being jointly developed, others by a single authority for its own waters. 6 FMPs have now been published.