

7.7 Dolphins, Porpoises and Basking Sharks – Lead Partner TCCT

Main Objectives & Key Actions:

- 1) **Maintain suitable conditions for the current populations of bottlenose dolphins and harbour porpoise in the Bay.**
 - Develop a joint conservation/monitoring strategy for dolphins and harbour porpoise with DWT and Seawatch.
- 2) **Minimise disturbance of visiting megafauna by boat operators.**
 - Promote the 'Dolphin Code of Conduct' by 2008.
- 4) **Increase knowledge and understanding of numbers that visit the Bay.**
 - Continue the yearly monitoring programme from Berry Head – ongoing.
 - Ensure data is disseminated to the appropriate bodies – ongoing.
- 5) **Raise awareness of the importance and the threats that face Torbay's dolphins, porpoises and basking sharks.**

7.7.1 Background & Current Status

A pod of up to 50 bottlenose dolphins range along the South Devon and Dorset coast and members of this group regularly visit Torbay. Groups of Harbour Porpoise are also frequent visitors and Basking sharks and seals can be seen in the Bay.

See Torbay Marine Biodiversity Action Plan for more information.

Current species and associated Habitat Protection

All species of cetaceans are given protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981. The bottlenose dolphin is listed in Annex 11 and IV of the EC Habitats Directive.

The harbour porpoise is listed on Appendix II of CITES, Appendix II of the Bern Convention and Annexes II and IV of the EC Habitats Directive. It is also on Appendix II of the Bonn Convention and is covered by the terms of the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas (ASCOBANS), a regional agreement under the Bonn Convention. It is protected under Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981. The global status is assessed as Vulnerable (A1a,d, A2d) in the 1996 IUCN Red List.

7.7.2 Current problems/threats to this species:

- Disturbance from leisure craft – physical damage, interference with navigation, food finding.
- Contaminants.
- Direct Harassment (Boat Operators).
- Reduction in food availability – over fishing.
- Lack of knowledge and awareness.

Table 19: Dolphins, Porpoises and Basking Sharks Action Plan. Actions shaded in grey indicate where further funding is required.

High priority actions are proposed for completion within the next 3 years (to end of 2009).

Medium priority actions are proposed for completion within the next 6 years (to end of 2012).

Low priority actions are proposed for completion within the next 10 years (to end 2016).

Actions for Dolphins, Porpoises and Basking Sharks Priority Action Plan	Priority (High, Medium and Low)	Objective	Partners	Ongoing Action
Policy & Legislation				
D1 - Enforce protection laws (CROW Act 2002).	H	1,2	NE	✓
Species & Site Management				
D2 - Follow Marine HAP actions on reducing the discharge/leaching of toxic chemicals and litter into the sea to safe levels.	M	1,5	Harbour Authority, NE, TC, SW Water	✓
Communication & Publicity				
D3 - Encourage boat operators, yacht owners and fishermen to report sightings to TCCT.	H	4,5	TCCT, Boat Operators, Yacht Owners, Fishermen	✓
D4 - Increase communication between TCCT, DWT and Seawatch and coordinate work.	H	4	TCCT, DWT, Seawatch	✓
D5 - Encourage volunteers to take part in Torbay whale & dolphin watches.	H	4,5	TCCT, Living Coasts	✓
D6 - Work closely with boat operators to raise awareness of the issues associated with direct harassment.	H	2,4,5	TCCT, Boat Operators	✓
Advisory				
D7 - Advise boat operators on dolphin code of conduct and WISE accreditation scheme.	H	2,4	TCCT	✓
Research & Monitoring				
D8 - Contribute towards national mega fauna stranding schemes and integrate with post mortem studies and analyses of important biological	H	4	TCCT, Living Coasts	✓

data.				
D9 - Monitor cetacean visits to Torbay using sonar recording equipment and visual recording and investigate possible breeding grounds.	M	4	TCCT, DWT	✓
D10 - Continue recording programme from Berry Head and ensure data is sent to Seaquest and other relevant bodies.	H	4,5	TCCT	✓

Abbreviations: Torbay Coast & Countryside (TCCT), Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT), Torbay Council (TC)