

Implications of latest research into spiral seal lacerations for regulators and SNCBs

Date/Time/Venue - 11.30 to 15.00 hours Thursday 29 January 2015
Meeting Room 1B-42/43, Victoria Quay Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

1. Welcome and introductions

Present at the meeting:

John Baxter – SNH
Michael Coyle – MMO
Ian Walker – MS
Tim Roberts – MS-LOT
Rob Main – MS-LOT
Sonia Mendes – JNCC
Pauline McMillan – Ports & Harbours (SG)
[REDACTED]
Dave Thompson – SMRU
Amanda Chisholm – SEA (SG)

TC

Lindsay Booth-Huggins - MMO
Claire Bowers – MMO
Rachel Walker – NE
Richard Lowcock James – Welsh Government
Stephen Foster - DOENI
Tom Stringell – NRW

Apologies: Chris Wilcock (Ports and Harbours, Scottish Government), Val Ferguson (Ports and Harbours, Scottish Government)

1. Update on latest research - Dave Thompson

Dave Thompson answered questions on the latest observations of grey seal predation on grey seal pups resulting in “corkscrew” lesions. From a scientific perspective, it remains unconfirmed whether the same injuries seen on harbour seals and large juvenile/adult grey seals are also caused by grey seal predation. This issue is now under very close review.

DT mentioned that most of the corkscrew injuries observed in the past might be explained by grey seal predation. It still remains possible but, so far, unproven that ship propellers may be responsible for some cases. **It was however agreed that, the injuries caused by a certain type of ship propellers may not be as much of a concern as previously thought and that these are likely to be quite rare.**

2. Discussions of implications for regulators, developers and SNCBs

Revised SNCB guidance - SNH in consultation with JNCC, NRW & NE and DoENI will revise the guidance and issue a one page interagency advice note by Friday 6 February 2015. Consideration will also be given by SNCBs as to whether it would be beneficial to issue general guidance on the effects of

offshore industries on seals. The current SNCB corkscrew seal guidance will no longer apply. SNCB contacts to make sure the new advice is communicated across colleagues in their organisations.

Implications for regulators - to consider any new development licensing proposals in the new context

Implication for developers - developers will be informed about the new circumstances for EIA purposes. **AC confirmed that Chris Wilcock (Ports and Harbours) will attend a meeting with the Chamber of Shipping on Monday 2 February and he will bring this matter to their attention, but continue to encourage the industry to work together with regulators on this issue.**

3. Communication plan - publication and dissemination of results and next steps:

- MS will circulate a draft **press release** to those who attended the meeting (and their suggested contacts) for comments early on Friday 30 January. **All to provide comments by c.o.b Friday 30 Jan.**
- The press release will state that SNCBs have been consulted on this matter and were involved in discussions.
- SMRU intend to prepare the final research report for publication on **Tuesday 3 February 2015.**
- NGOs will be notified about the new research on the day of the press release.

4. Outline for future research

- SMRU has been asked to draft revised research plans to link grey seal predation to harbour seals and consider potential impacts on local harbour seal declines.