

# UK-wide Research Partnership to Monitor Underwater ‘Soundscape’™



The UK Centre for the Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) has teamed up with Marine Scotland Science and the University of Exeter to analyse underwater noise data from subsea sound recorders located around the UK coast. Sources of noise in the ocean include shipping, seismic exploration and construction activity, such as port extensions or offshore wind farms. There is concern that rising levels of underwater noise pollution worldwide may have an impact on marine life by interfering with communication, causing changes in behaviour and raising stress levels.

For the first time ever, marine scientists will work together to produce an initial baseline assessment of background noise levels in UK coastal waters, including seasonal and annual patterns, as well as spatial differences. The work, funded by Defra and Marine

Scotland, will help to inform the development of a UK-wide noise monitoring strategy, as part of the UK's commitment to the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), which seeks to attain Good Environmental Status in European seas by 2020.

A range of government, academic and marine science organisations in the UK are being consulted to scope the potential for a partnership-based approach to establishing a noise-monitoring programme. The findings and recommendations of the project will be available early next year.

According to Dr Ian Davies, Renewables and Energy Programme Manager, Marine Scotland Science, scientists in his organisation have several years' experience of monitoring noise levels in the sea and using underwater noise to research the distribution of key marine mammal species such as bottlenose dolphins and harbour porpoise. An acoustic network for UK seas is an ambitious target best addressed through a partnership approach, and is expected to contribute to meet international monitoring requirements and also to manage protected marine mammal species.

*Image: Deployment of a subsea noise recorder as part of the Marine Scotland Science (MSS) ECOMMASS project, which is contributing data to the UK network. Image courtesy: MSS.*