

Report of the Working Group on Ship Strikes

Submitted by the Chair of the Working Group on Ship Strikes (WG-SS)

The Conservation Committee is requested to:

- *note the intersessional progress made by the Working Group on Ship Strikes (WG-SS) and the Scientific Committee*
- *endorse the new workplan on Ship Strikes as a living document subject to further refinement before IWC68*
- *provide views on staffing in support of delivery of the Ship Strikes workplan including a new Data Manager post*
- *note the estimated costs in the workplan and (as appropriate) support a funding application to the relevant IWC voluntary funds for a Data Manager position*

Intersessional Activity

Intersessional Activity since IWC68 has focused on engagement with other organisations, work on ship strikes and Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs), collaboration with the IWC Scientific Committee (SC) and development of new proposals regarding the Ship Strikes Strategic Plan and Workplan, including on staffing needs for delivery.

Engagement with other organisations

The Secretariat has maintained a dialogue with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Secretariat on ship strike issues and attended the 74th session of the IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) in May 2019. The MEPC 75 meeting was due to be held in March 2020 but was postponed due to COVID-19 to a remote meeting in November 2020.

The Secretariat and the Convenor of the Sub-committee on Non-deliberate Human Induced Mortality of Cetaceans (HIM) are in discussions with MarineTraffic to develop a Memorandum of Understanding between IWC and this organisation- an Automatic Identification System (AIS) data provider. IWC could then pass on data requests in a standardised format which would minimise the work for the data provider. MarineTraffic has generously donated data for previous papers that have been discussed by the Committee and has continued to provide data for ship strike related analyses.

Engagement with the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) cetacean agreements –ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS included the joint IWC-IUCN-ACCOBAMS workshop on ship strikes and IMMAs (see below) convened 5-6 April 2019. Members of the IWC Conservation Committee and Scientific Committee attended and participated in this workshop. The Secretariat has recently discussed further opportunities for collaboration on this topic with the ACCOBAMS Secretariat. In addition, the ship strike data coordinators (under an SC-funded contract for 2020) maintained contacts with the ACCOBAMS and the Pelagos Sanctuary Executive Secretariats, ASCOBANS and other IGOs to discuss possible synergies in assessing and mitigating ship strikes.

Two IWC information banners on ship strikes were presented during the World Marine Mammal Conference in Barcelona in December 2019.

Ship Strikes and IMMAs

A joint IWC (CC and SC)-IUCN-ACCOBAMS workshop was held 5-6 April 2019 (Greece) to evaluate how the data and process used to identify Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) can assist the IWC to identify areas of high risk for ship strikes (SC/68A/HIM/07 and CC/68A/INFO/02). The workshop was funded by a donation from the SC research fund and a further contribution from the Voluntary Conservation Fund (VCF). Recommendations from the meeting will help support the delivery of the IWC's Ship Strikes Strategic Plan. The workshop found that IMMAs represent a systematic and biocentric approach to identifying key cetacean habitats that can be helpful in determining potential high-risk areas for ship strikes. In particular, if an IMMA contains a species or population (or other

defined unit of management concern, e.g. subpopulation) that is vulnerable to ship strikes, and it is transited by significant shipping, the area can be ‘flagged’ for further investigation and potential actions to reduce ship strikes. The workshop also outlined a series of steps that could be taken to help identify high risk areas for ship strikes based on IMMAs and asked the IWC Working Group on Ship Strikes to develop some illustrative case studies that demonstrate the benefits, challenges and anticipated and actual costs of implementing measures to reduce ship strikes. The report and recommendations of this workshop were endorsed by the SC at its meeting in May 2019.

In direct response to the recommendations at the workshop, WWF initiated a GIS project to examine the overlap between ship traffic and IMMAs, at a global scale, to identify potential high-risk areas. The report (SC/68B/HIM/03 and <https://www.marinemammalhabitat.org/mmpatf/activities/geospatial-analysis-of-threats/>) is divided into two main parts: 1) a broad-scale overview of vessel activity in each of the 114 IMMAs identified to date; and 2) two case studies that examine the nature of vessel traffic and co-occurrence with marine mammal distribution on a finer scale in two IMMAs that were selected on a number of agreed criteria. Results of this work were presented to the Scientific Committee at SC68b (SC/68b/HIM03).

Collaboration with the Scientific Committee

Delivery of the Ship Strikes Strategic Plan has been undertaken in collaboration with the SC and its HIM subcommittee.

The seventh and eighth terms of work by the ship strikes data coordinators were carried out between May 2018 and April 2020. As part of this work, special attention was dedicated to validation of records in the database, while at the same time continuing the data review process and updating of the database. The review process for ship strikes reports has now been completed in consultation of the Data Review Group. All available reports, historical and recent, are now listed as cases (n=933) in the database with 250 of these assessed in the last year. Through collaboration between the IWC and the Galway-Mayo Institute for Technology (GMIT), the IWC secured services of a student to populate the database- to complement the existing data with a large number of ship strike incidents, and to produce an updated summary and statistical analysis of the complete data set held in the ship strike data base. A summary of this work was presented at SC68B (SC68B/HIM/09_rev1).

Efforts continue to secure a bulk upload of ship strike data from the USA and Australia. There is an ongoing effort to organise the many existing regional databases in the USA into a format that can be submitted to the IWC database.

Proposals for future work

Ship Strikes Strategic Plan and Workplan

The Strategic Plan provides background, information and recommendations to help the IWC develop approaches and solutions to achieve a permanent reduction in ship strikes of cetaceans, both regionally and on a global scale. The current Strategic Plan (“Strategic Plan to Mitigate the Impacts of Ship Strikes on Cetacean Populations: 2017-20”) is due to expire at the end of this year (2020). A new Strategic Plan will be presented for endorsement by the Commission at IWC68.

A new Ship Strikes Workplan 2020-2022 (CC/68A/09.3/01) has been developed by the WG-SS. A draft was presented to the SC (SC68B) and revised based on SC comments. The Workplan sets out priority activities in support of the objectives of the Strategic Plan, establishes timelines, and proposes roles and responsibilities. The Workplan allocates responsibilities to existing IWC bodies, and proposes establishing a Ship Strikes Expert Panel and establishing a new Data Manager post to develop and deliver work related to the ship strikes database and other IWC programmes (see further details below).

Initial comments during SC68B suggested that the following items be considered for inclusion in the workplan: (1) assessments of cryptic mortality, incorporating drift dynamics in trajectory models, for

populations most at risk and in proximity to shipping lanes as related to Item 1.1 in the Workplan and (2) co-ordination of information and results from groups using the IMO MEPC and 'EBSA' (Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas under the Convention on Biological Diversity) as well as 'PSSA' (Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas) process that 'are relevant for assessment of ship strikes impacts as related to Workplan Item 1.2.

(see: https://www.acops.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Report_EBSA-to-inform-application-for-IMO-Measures_24Nov2019_ForComments.pdf).

It was also noted that: (1) 'Whale Alert' has been updated into a new format called 'Ocean Alert' as related to Workplan Item 4.4; and (2) an infographic developed for Oman and Arabian Sea humpback whales is available as an example of public outreach as related to Item 6.3.

The WG-SS proposes to continue its role of oversight of the actions and products as identified in the Strategic Plan, in liaison with the Secretariat.

The Conservation Committee is invited to comment on and endorse this new Workplan as a living document for further refinement up to IWC68.

Ship Strikes Expert Panel

It is proposed that the implementation of the Ship Strikes Workplan would be aided by a dedicated panel of experts to offer assistance and advice to the SC and Conservation Committee.

Terms of Reference for the Expert Panel, and the process for its appointment will be developed by the WG-SS in liaison with the Chair of HIM and the Secretariat, drawing on best practice developed for appointment of other IWC Expert Panels e.g. for the Bycatch Mitigation Initiative. Proposed responsibilities for the Ship Strikes Expert Panel are briefly set out below.

The Expert Panel will provide scientific and technical advice to the Secretariat, Conservation and Scientific Committees, WG-SS and (where requested) IWC Contracting Governments and other stakeholders in support of implementation of the Ship Strikes workplan by:

- Supporting the development and use of the ship strikes database, including through undertaking review of database records (as per the TOR of the existing data review group);
- Collation of information on high risk populations and areas and on monitoring of impacts of measures taken;
- Input of technical expertise to support development and application of mitigation measures and the review of technological approaches available for reducing ship strikes;
- Work with the Secretariat, SC and others to develop tailored advice specific to different shipping sectors and related training/capacity development programmes;
- Support development and review of IWC papers presented to IMO and other bodies (e.g. follow up on paper presented to IMO MEPC in 2016); and
- Provision of advice and support to states bringing forward mitigation proposals, including in relation to stakeholder engagement, design considerations for routing or other measures, and the needs and requirements of proposals being submitted to the IMO.

The Expert Panel could initially be formed from the existing Ship Strikes Data Review and Ship Routing Groups within the Scientific Committee, but also include those with expertise on management of shipping and knowledge of the shipping industry and potential shipping related noise. There will also be an aim of geographic and diversity/inclusion balance.

Staffing needs for delivery of the Ship Strikes Strategic Plan and workplan

The new Ship Strikes Workplan presents an ambitious body of work, for which effective implementation would be aided significantly by dedicated staff time to implement the Workplan represent the IWC in other fora, and to develop the necessary expertise across all aspects of this issue.

At SC68B, and at a subsequent meeting of the Conservation Committee Planning Group (CCPG) a proposal was discussed for a dedicated Ship Strikes Co-ordinator (attached to the Secretariat) to implement and coordinate the ship strikes programme of work. A set of responsibilities was proposed for this post. Whilst the SC and CCPG both agreed with the need for this resource, they noted strong synergies with priorities on other topic areas including strandings and underwater noise and that potential could be explored for combining posts.

Subsequently, the Chair of the WG-SS asked the Secretariat to review the staffing requirements for supporting delivery of the ship strikes workplan and provide advice on how this support could be delivered. Full details of this advice from the Secretariat are in Annex 1.

In summary, the Secretariat identified the following priorities for Ship Strikes support and suggestions for how this might be provided.

- *Ship strikes database*
There is strong synergy with the work required on the ship strikes database and proposed priorities for other work areas, particularly under the Strandings Initiative and ongoing work by the Secretariat (e.g. to improve provision of information through national progress reports and other means). A Data Manager position could be recruited to the Secretariat to deliver objectives on the Ship Strikes database and strandings (in the first instance) whilst also co-ordinating with Secretariat IT developments and related work on other topics. This would be a 1 FTE fixed term contract (ideally two years initially, depending on funding). Recruitment would take place as soon as possible to ensure delivery of the work needed on the ship strikes database during 2021. (This would replace the previous arrangement whereby services for data coordination for the ship strikes database have been procured through a consultancy contract funded by the SC).
- *Identification of populations and areas at risk from ship strikes and development of mitigation measures.* It is proposed that the Secretariat further review its capacity to support this work and that any further recommendations be made to IWC68.
- *Engagement with other IGOs and organisations and ship strikes*
It is suggested that the Secretariat lead this work area during 2020-2021, working with the convenor of HIM and other members of the IWC community as appropriate, and that progress is reviewed at IWC68.
- *Fundraising*
This is a priority across all Conservation Committee and other IWC work areas. Whilst the Secretariat has some capacity to support fundraising efforts this capacity is limited. The need and justification for a dedicated fundraiser post could be further considered intersessionally and any recommendations proposed at IWC68.
- *Co-ordination and reporting*
It is proposed that the Secretariat continue to work to ensure co-ordination between the ship strikes work of the Scientific Committee and Conservation Committee. Co-ordination could also be assisted through discussions in the joint Conservation Committee-Scientific Committee working group and review of implementation of recommendations using the IWC Database of Recommendations.

On the basis of this review, the Ship Strikes WG invites the Conservation Committee to:

- (1) Consider the recruitment of a Data Manager post as soon as is possible.
- (2) Agree to further consideration of a dedicated fundraiser post, in liaison with other working groups including the Intersessional Correspondence Group on Strengthening IWC Financing (ICGSF). Any recommendations on this would be proposed at IWC68.
- (3) Request the Secretariat to provide support for other key areas of ship strikes work programme, and review progress at IWC68.

Funding considerations

The Update on the Voluntary Conservation Fund (VCF) (Document CC/68A/17.2/01) details voluntary donations for and expenditure on ship strikes to date. The costs of delivering the new workplan are outlined in the costed workplan. Some activities can be undertaken by the Secretariat using core funds. Additional costs would be met by allocations from the Scientific Committee (for work on the Ship Strikes database), the VCF and other relevant IWC voluntary funds and external fundraising.

A significant additional cost of delivering the proposed workplan would be the estimated cost of a Data Manager at £76,000 for a two-year FTE fixed term contract. Existing funding which could be allocated to this post includes:

- £10, 000 allocated by the Scientific Committee at SC68B for work on the ship strikes database and related scientific priorities in 2021. It is proposed that this funding be put towards the costs of a Data Manager position if recruitment can proceed within the necessary timeframe.
- £17, 361 earmarked for ship strikes in the VCF.
- (With endorsement of the Strandings Expert Panel and Steering Group) approximately £18,000 unspent from earmarked Strandings Initiative funding due to the early departure of the Strandings Coordinator before the expected termination of their contract in October 2020

Additional funding could be sought from the VCF and from IWC welfare funds (voluntary funds for welfare work, which support work on strandings) as well as through additional voluntary contributions.

Should the Conservation Committee approve the proposal for a Ship Strikes Data Manager it is also invited to:

- *request that the Chair of the WG-SS make the relevant applications to IWC voluntary funds for the additional funding needed for the Data Manager post;*
- *note there may be further (modest) funding needs from the VCF (e.g. for communications and outreach) and request that costed projects be developed as needed and applications submitted intersessionally to the VCF; and*
- *invite additional voluntary contributions from Contracting Governments and Observer Organisations.*

Annex 1

Secretariat review of staffing needs for delivery of the Ship Strikes Strategic Plan and workplan

Introduction

The new Ship Strikes Workplan proposed by the Ship Strikes Working Group with input from the Scientific Committee, presents an ambitious body of work, for which effective implementation would be aided significantly by dedicated Secretariat staff to deliver actions in the Workplan represent the IWC in meetings of IGOs and other organisations, and to develop the necessary expertise across all aspects of this issue.

At SC68B, and at a subsequent meeting of the Conservation Committee Planning Group (CCPG) a proposal was discussed for a dedicated Ship Strikes Co-ordinator to implement and co-ordinate the ship strikes programme of work. A set of key responsibilities was proposed for this post (see SC/68B/HIM/13). Whilst the SC and CCPG were both supportive of the need for this resource, it was also noted that there were strong synergies with priorities on other topic areas including strandings and underwater noise and that potential could be explored for combining posts.

This discussion comes at the same time as staffing needs are also being considered for other IWC work areas. Following the departure of the IWC Strandings Co-ordinator in December 2019, it was decided to let a contract to review progress to date and to propose a new four-year workplan for how the initiative could develop in future. The report is currently being considered by the Strandings Expert Panel and Steering Group and includes proposals on staffing required to deliver the new Strandings Workplan. At the same time, the Secretariat is developing its own Strategic Plan including restructuring of staff posts around key delivery themes. This brings the opportunity and need to review staffing requirements across IWC programme areas.

The Secretariat has reviewed the staffing requirements for delivering the Ship Strikes Workplan, including the proposed responsibilities for a co-ordinator position along with proposals for other work areas and provides the following information and recommendations for implementing the Ship Strikes Strategic Plan and Workplan against key areas (below).

In summary the Secretariat invites the Ship Strikes WG and Conservation Committee to:

- 1) Consider recruitment of a data manager post as soon as is possible (instead of the Ship Strikes Co-ordinator post)
- 2) In liaison with other relevant working groups (including the Intersessional Correspondence Group on Strengthening IWC Financing), give further consideration to the suggestion of a dedicated Fundraiser post, and propose further recommendations to IWC68
- 3) Request the Secretariat to prioritise support for other key areas of ship strikes work programme and review progress at IWC68.

Ship strikes Database

There is a need for a co-ordinator to ensure comprehensive and accurate reporting of ship strike incidents into the Ship Strike Database and see to the objectives of the Workplan to develop the database and ensure its use. This work has strong synergies with proposed work of the IWC Strandings Initiative on the collation and dissemination of data, and the recommendation (from the strategic review of the Strandings Initiative) that the IWC could employ a Data Manager to accomplish this work and co-ordinate with other work areas of the IWC. There would also be value in whomever coordinates the ship strikes database curation and analysis co-ordinating much more closely with the Secretariat IT department, and its work to improve reporting through national progress reports and other database developments such as the proposed new Conservation Database. The SC has allocated £10,000 for work in 2021/2 for a series of activities to increase reporting of ship strike incidents into the database (see SC/68B/RP/29 and activities in the proposed Ship Strikes Workplan).

It is thus proposed that a Data Manager position could be recruited to the Secretariat to complete tasks associated with the Ship Strikes database and strandings objectives in the first instance, whilst also coordinating with Secretariat IT developments and work on other priority topics. This would be 1 FTE fixed-term contract (one or ideally two years initially depending on funding). Ideally recruitment would take place in time to deliver work needed on the ship strikes database by the end of 2021.

This position would be filled through open recruitment by the Secretariat, following the same process as for other recently appointed positions. A representative from both the WG Ship Strikes and the SC would be invited to serve on the selection panel.

Identification of populations and areas at risk from ship strikes and development of mitigation measures

There is significant work involved for the IWC to effectively identify at-risk populations and areas, work with relevant countries and stakeholders on the application and communication of ship strike-reduction measures and to monitor the effectiveness of implemented measures. This work is currently undertaken by the SC, assisted by a number of IWC experts working in particular countries and regions and in the future would be assisted by a new Ship Strikes Expert Panel. There would be value in additional staff to coordinate these efforts and to engage in follow-up work directly with individual countries. Though the Secretariat has the skills and opportunity to undertake this work it is currently limited by capacity given the demands of other work and responsibilities established by the Commission.

It is thus proposed that the Secretariat further review its own capacity to support this work through discussions associated with its Strategic Plan and any further recommendations on staffing be made to IWC68.

Engagement with other IGOs and organisations and ship strikes

The Ship Strikes workplan contains objectives for engagement with a range of intergovernmental and other organisations including IMO, CMS and its daughter agreements ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS, IUCN Protected Areas task force etc. To date, engagement with other organisations on ship strikes has been led by the Secretariat and the Convenor of the SC HIM subcommittee, working with others as needed. Ongoing priorities of the Secretariat include input to IMO on underwater noise from shipping, development of an MOU with UNEP-CEP SPAW, and work on ship strikes and IMMAs all of which are identified as priorities in the Ship Strikes workplan. The Secretariat can continue to give some priority to this work over the next year.

Therefore, it is suggested that the Secretariat could take a lead during 2020-2021, working with the convenor of HIM and other members of the IWC community as appropriate, and that progress is reviewed at IWC68.

Fundraising

Whilst there is Scientific Committee funding for work on the Ship Strikes and support that can be provided by core Secretariat staff, it is anticipated that additional funding for ship strikes work, including for the Data Manager would need to be met from Voluntary Funds and wider fundraising efforts. There is a need to provide advice to the WG-SS on funding needs and identify and pursue fundraising opportunities to support implementation of actions in the Ship Strike Strategic Plan. Whilst the Secretariat has some capacity to support fundraising efforts its capacity is limited. Emerging recommendations on other work areas (including the review of the Strandings Initiative), that also receive no core funding, including indications that a dedicated Fundraiser working across several IWC topics would be useful. Funding of this post would need to be met from voluntary funds.

The Secretariat therefore proposes that the need and justification for a dedicated fundraiser post could be further considered intersessionally and any proposal be presented to IWC68.

Co-ordination and reporting

There is a need for co-ordination of the work of the IWC's Scientific and Conservation Committees on ship strikes, and for reporting on progress to the relevant Committees.

It is proposed that the Secretariat continue to work to ensure inter-Committee co-ordination in the immediate term, and that co-ordination is also assisted through discussions in the joint Conservation Committee-Scientific Committee Working Group including review of implementation of recommendations using the IWC Database of recommendations.