

Update from the Strandings Initiative

IWC Secretariat, Chair of Strandings Expert Panel, Chair of Strandings Steering Group

The Commission is requested to:

- **Note** the intersessional progress made by the Strandings Initiative (SI)
- **Adopt** the proposed workplan for 2025-2028 (Appendix 2)
- **Endorse** the continuation of the Strandings Coordinator position for the next two years to end March 2027 (Appendix 1)
- **Endorse** the updated Terms of Reference and membership for the Strandings Steering Group (Appendix 3)
- **Endorse** the updated Terms of Reference and membership for the Strandings Expert Panel (Appendix 4)
- **Endorse** the Strandings Expert Panel Workshop Report and its recommendations ([SC 69B E 15.pdf](#)).
- **Welcome** the report of the CAMAC Strandings Workshops and encourage the SI to maintain communication with SPAW-RAC and use this project as a template for similar capacity building in other regions ([SC 69B E 14.pdf](#)).

ABSTRACT

This paper provides a progress update to the Scientific Committee (SC) from the IWC Strandings Initiative (SI) from August 2022 - July 2024 and details of planned upcoming works.

INTRODUCTION

Following a successful in-person workshop held in Venice and subsequent online meetings, the IWC Strandings Expert Panel (SEP) has established a clear set of objectives along with defined strategies for achieving them. Funding secured by the SEP enabled a series of training workshops held across seven Caribbean countries in October 2023. This project served as a successful pilot test of the operational model and identified topic areas where the IWC and SEP can offer the most effective support in the future.

- A paper outlining progress between May 2022-April 2023 was submitted to the Scientific Committee ([SC/69A/E/12](#)) by the Chair of the Strandings Expert Panel (SEP).
- A progress report was presented to the Whale Killing Methods & Welfare Issues Working Group (WKM&WI) at IWC68 and subsequently the Commission endorsed the following recommendations:
 - *note the intersessional progress made by the Strandings Initiative*
 - *endorse the new Strategic objectives and SI structure ([SC/68C/E/15](#))*
 - *adopt the proposed workplan for 2021-2024 ([SC/68C/E/17](#))*
 - *support a funding application for an in-person SEP workshop in spring 2023*
 - *support funding application for Strandings Coordinator salary*
 - *supply details of strandings network contact details to the Secretariat*
- A paper outlining progress between May 2023-April 2024 was submitted to the Scientific Committee ([SC/69B/E/18Rev1](#))

FUNDING

Funding proposals for continuation of funding for Strandings Coordinator to IWC69 ([SC20126](#)) and an in-person SEP workshop in May 2023 were prepared and subsequently endorsed at IWC68. Following this, the proposals were endorsed by Commission.

In late 2022, funding applications were submitted to both the Darwin Initiative Round 29: Capability & Capacity Project and the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund for "Capacity Training to establish Emergency Cetacean Strandings Regional Response Networks". Both applications were for about £200k and aimed to develop a comprehensive training package to help build local capacity and capability in strandings responses in under-resourced and data deficient areas. Unfortunately, both applications were unsuccessful, but following feedback from the Darwin Initiative, a new proposal is being finalised for capacity building and training in the Indian Ocean region and will be submitted to Round 30 in October 2024.

In August 2023, the SEP was funded at €89,950 by the Caribbean Marine Megafauna and Anthropogenic Activities (CAMAC) Project to deliver capacity building workshops within the Caribbean region (CARI'MAM). As of July 2024, the project has spent €42,000, and has one workshop still to be held in Suriname. The remaining funds are for ongoing support and equipment in the region. The Strandings Coordinator is currently in discussions with the local networks to finalise an equipment and resources pack for each region.

In late 2023, OceanCare donated 20,000CHF to the Strandings Initiative for the furtherance of the IWC's strandings work, including investigations, stranding response trainings and rescue efforts. Some of these funds will be used to cover international travel expenses for two SEP members to deliver strandings response training in Colombia in August 2024. The SSG and SEP will be working together to draw up a proposal for remaining funds

Funding bids were also submitted in late 2023 for Mauritius strandings response training and a marine debris database project, both unsuccessful. The Strandings Coordinator continues to explore suitable funding opportunities with the IWC Projects Coordinator.

STRANDINGS STEERING GROUP

Following a membership review after SC68D, the Strandings Steering Group (SSG) has been meeting virtually on a regular basis. There are still some nominations to be made for members of observer organisations, however discussions are ongoing within the SSG on the best way to move this forward. At each SSG meeting, the Chair of SEP and Strandings Coordinator update members on progress as well as encourage discussion and agreement on future plans. The Steering Group has completed a review of the Terms of Reference and Membership documents for both Steering Group and Expert Panel to bring them in alignment with other steering groups and expert panels within the IWC. Both documents are in the Appendices for endorsement. The Steering Group requests that the Commission approves and endorses both ToRs.

STRANDINGS EXPERT PANEL

Sandro Mazzariol stepped down as Chair of the Strandings Expert Panel in September 2022 and Andrew Brownlow was unanimously voted in as the new Chair for the next two years. The next SEP membership review and appointment of the Chair-ship will take place directly following IWC69.

An in-person SEP workshop took place in Venice in May 2023 when five SEP subgroups were established to further work on the key themes of emergency response, capacity building, databases, samples and shipment, and diseases. The groups have met virtually and helped shape the 2025-2028 Workplan using existing recommendations and outcomes from the workshop. Implementation of the agreed tasks and objectives are underway. One key action was establishing pathways to enable the rapid release of funding to support emergency response and capacity building requests coming into the SEP and following meetings between the Strandings Coordinator, Chair of SEP and Nikki Bartmeier (Head of Finance) options are now in place with next steps being to draw up a protocol for agreement with the SSG.

One of the main strengths of the SEP is a wide interconnected network of experts and to support this the SEP meets quarterly via Zoom to build knowledge exchange and support within the SEP group. Following SEP quarterly meetings, both the Chair and Strandings Coordinator have verbally updated the SSG on progress.

STRANDINGS EXPERT PANEL WORKSHOP 2023

The SEP workshop took place in Venice between 8-10 May 2023 with the main aims being to:

- i) Define a strategy to develop and implement the tasks identified within the four-year work plan;
- ii) Allow an exchange of ideas, strategies and resources which could support the IWC SEP, specifically to draw on existing expertise, resources and knowledge.

A final report was released and presented at SC69B ([SC 69B E 15.pdf](#)).

EMERGENCY RESPONSE & CAPACITY BUILDING

Virtual, 'real-time' strandings support for remote assistance and advice has been provided in the Black Sea region, Sri Lanka, Norway, Cambodia, Canada, Mauritius, India, Peru, Brazil, Chile, Aruba and the islands at 51°40'-53°00'S, 57°40'-62°00'W. SEP members also have an active WhatsApp group for exchange of knowledge and advice during strandings investigations within their own networks. These include unusual mortality events, mass strandings, epizootics, specifically HPAIV, live strandings and out of habitat animals.

Stranding response training in the Caribbean CARI'MAM region (Jamaica, Dutch Islands, St Kitt and Nevis, Puerto Rico, Haiti, Dominican Republic, and Suriname) was conducted between August and November 2023. The primary objectives were to enhance skills, organisation, cohesion, and equipment as well as to evaluate the standard protocol and training kit developed by the CARI'MAM network. These workshops were based around a core protocol and harmonised suite of training materials but tailored to each country and participants needs. The IWC Strandings team presented an appraisal of the training toolkit developed by CAMAC at the "Interactions Between Human Activities and Marine Megafauna of the Caribbean: Progress Made Through the CAMAC Project and Potential for Future Actions" workshop held at the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute Annual Meeting (GCFI76) on 4th November in Nassau, Bahamas. Feedback from workshop participants and recommendations were used to shape Phase II of this project which is still awaiting funding approval but may further involve input from the SEP. A final report was produced and circulated at the end of 2023 and will be presented separately ([SC 69B E 14.pdf](#)).

Additional requests for stranding response training have been received from Mauritania and Colombia. The Strandings Coordinator has been in discussions with representatives from both countries to tailor training to their specific needs as well as sourcing funding. Strandings response training is scheduled to be delivered in Colombia alongside large animal disentanglement training on 15th and 16th August 2024.

The capacity building training delivered on behalf of CAMAC and Colombia has developed, and validated, the delivery of a suite of modular training materials on a range of topics. These resources are available for subsequent emergency response and capacity building initiatives.

STRANDINGS DATABASE

Scoping the development of a global strandings database has been carried out by the IWC Database Manager in collaboration with a range of regional data holders including CARI'MAM, ASCOBANS, ACCOBAMS and the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (also known as the Helsinki Commission, HELCOM).

The Strandings Coordinator and Chair of SEP attended the 'Scoping the development of a European marine strandings database' workshop at the European Cetacean Society conference (ECS) in April 2023 and a follow-on

workshop at ECS in April 2024. The IWC Database Manager and the Chair of SEP met regularly with ASCOBANS and ICES in the summer of 2023 to develop a proposal, which was endorsed at the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee (AC28), for a regional strandings database that can be expanded to include global strandings data. This database would be developed in stages, the initial phase including high-level, widely available data as a proof-of-concept and then expanded to more detailed data with complex data access requirements. It was identified as advantageous for IWC to collaborate with ASCOBANS and ICES on this due to the overlap in reporting with ASCOBANS and the hardware and software infrastructure already in place with ICES. The databases subgroup of the SEP met in March 2024 to finalise a proposal for a global strandings database and add the development tasks into the new 2025-2028 workplan.

MARINE DEBRIS

Marine debris has remained an active topic of discussion throughout the period. In April 2023, both the Strandings Coordinator and Chair of SEP as well as some members of the SEP and SSG participated in the joint ASCOBANS-ACCOBAMS marine debris workshop held in April 2023 in Spain. The overarching aim of the workshop was to achieve a better understanding of the effects of marine debris on cetaceans, including the relationship between marine debris and fisheries, improving data collection from stranded cetaceans and considering the relationship between marine debris and other factors. The Strandings Coordinator and Chair of the SEP are active members of the Marine Debris intersessional working group and have taken part in several meetings progressing discussions to formalise recording of marine debris in strandings. Further updates and information should be provided by the marine debris intersessional working group. The Strandings Coordinator also attended the 2-day ACCOBAMS workshop on ingested marine litter monitoring and entanglement evidence in Sicily, Italy in early April 2024.

COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

The Strandings Initiative has actively engaged and collaborated with several organisations over the reporting period on a range of strandings-related topics:

Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and its daughter agreements ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS

The Strandings Coordinator actively participated in the joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS marine debris workshop Steering Group and attended the workshop in Galicia, Spain on 15th April 2023. In addition, the Strandings Coordinator participated in two further ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS workshops associated with the ECS conference. These included the “Scoping the development of a European marine strandings database” to identify the possible benefits and challenges associated with developing and curating a European wide strandings database for the ASCOBANS region, and a workshop focused on bycatch, “Current cetacean bycatch issues in European waters: ACCOBAMS-ASCOBANS Joint Bycatch Working Group (JBWG) Workshop”.

Global Strandings Network (GSN)

The SEP continued to develop its collaboration with the GSN in 2023, focusing on discussions about emergency response and capacity building at the SEP workshop in May 2023. This partnership will be further solidified through a joint workshop at the Society for Marine Mammalogy conference in Perth, Australia, November 2024. Entitled "Tools for a global network of strandings responders," the workshop aims to create resources and guidelines to enhance stranding response capabilities worldwide, particularly for developing networks and those with limited resources. By fostering global collaboration and knowledge sharing, the GSN seeks to significantly improve marine mammal stranding response, welfare, research and conservation.

IndoCet

Progress has been made on developing a capacity building project within the IndoCet region (Indian Ocean). This includes in-depth discussions on project scope and objectives. A funding proposal will be prepared for submission to the Darwin Initiative Capability and Capacity Fund to support the implementation of the proposed project.

SPAW of the Cartagena Convention for the Wider Caribbean

On 18 January 2023, a virtual meeting convened between the SPAW Biodiversity Project Officer, the IWC Strandings Coordinator, and the IWC Data Manager to explore potential collaborations within the Caribbean Marine Megafauna and Anthropogenic Activities (CAMAC) Project. Key areas identified for joint efforts included capacity building and knowledge enhancement related to marine mammal strandings, entanglement, and bycatch. Building upon this, the SEP secured CAMAC funding for capacity building workshops targeting marine mammal stranding monitoring networks in the Caribbean delivered in October 2023. The IWC Stranding Coordinator also participated virtually in COP12.

CITES

The Strandings Coordinator is a member of the CITES working group on rapid movement of wildlife diagnostic samples and of musical instruments on behalf of the SEP. The SEP sub-group on Samples and Shipment has been actively involved in reviewing the simplified permitting procedures outlined in [Resolution Conf. 12.3 \(Rev. CoP19\)](#), and the so-called 'scientific exchange' process outlined in [Resolution 11.15 \(Rev. CoP18\)](#) on *Non-commercial loan, donation or exchange of museum, herbarium, diagnostic and forensic research specimens*.

UN

The Strandings Coordinator attended the webinar series "Increasing Circularity of Plastics in the Economy" and "Eliminate and restrict hazardous chemicals and intentionally added microplastics" organised by the High Ambition Coalition (HAC). The Strandings Coordinator is also exploring ways in which the SEP and Strandings Initiative could collaborate with the Ocean Decade programme.

Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR)

The Strandings Coordinator attended the meeting of the SCAR's Expert Group on birds and marine mammals (EGBAMM) in July 2023 giving a short presentation on the Strandings Initiative followed by discussions around improving marine strandings response capacity to groups working in and around the Southern Ocean/ Antarctica. The highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) was also discussed and the key request for IWC was for guidelines or protocols on dealing with HPAI in cetaceans. These have been developed by the World Organization for Animal Health and are publicly available at [Practical guide for Authorised Field Responders to HPAI Outbreaks in Marine Mammals](#).

Asian Marine Mammal Stranding Network

Several members of the SEP, including the SEP Chair and the SEP Asia section Chairs, attended the 4th Asian Marine Mammal Strandings Network workshop in Okinawa in July 2024 to present the IWC and the Strandings Initiative. This workshop provided a good opportunity to promote the objectives of the SEP and to enhance the SEP network and foster collaborations with individuals and organisations within the Asian strandings network community.

Hong Kong Cetacean Strandings Response Programme

In July 2024 members of the SEP including the Chair were invited to present the work of the IWC SI to the Hong Kong strandings response team and to engage with local governmental agencies with a view to build on and enhance strandings capacity throughout the Great Bay Area (GBA), which is located in southern China.

FUTURE PLANS

The SEP subgroups on emergency response, capacity building, databases, samples and shipment, and infectious diseases continue to meet and progress work outlined below. Each subgroup has a set of objectives and deliverables but collaboration with other subgroups is emphasised, recognising the interconnected nature of various tasks

Emergency Response Subgroup

The SEP plans to enhance the emergency response capabilities by ensuring comprehensive geographical coverage and tailored assistance to regions with diverse needs. Measures include establishing local contacts, creating bespoke communication channels such as WhatsApp groups to respond to specific events and provide easily accessible, simple procedures for emergency response. Developing regional expertise and curating a database of online digital resources are current priorities. Securing funding for operational response, including travel remains an ongoing objective of this subgroup.

Capacity Building Subgroup

Key issues and future plans discussed include the role of the Global Strandings Network (GSN) in capacity building and the need to curate information effectively. There is a consensus to utilise existing resources like GSN with a focus on creating easily accessible and multilingual response guides. Improving website layout and search engine ranking is also important to aid easy location and dissemination of information during time-critical events., Diagnosis of human-induced mortality (HIM) and interactions such as bycatch, entanglements, and ship strikes, have been identified as an important objective and the group plans to producing guidance on diagnosing interactions and utilizing existing training materials like CAMAC resources, potentially developing handbooks and providing advanced training for veterinarians. Collaboration with networks, diagnostic facilities, vet schools, and governments is deemed crucial for effective capacity building for response and diagnosis.

Databases Subgroup

A global cetacean strandings database will enable better and more responsive and timely monitoring of emerging threats across species and regions. The subgroup members have specific knowledge on the data lifecycle of strandings data: from generating data to quality control measures to integrating datasets to analysing data. The subgroup aims to support the development of a global database through identifying data providers, implementing quality control measures, guiding the database schema, and providing input on data access and use requirements. The shape of this project remains in the scoping stages, and some key decisions are still to be made, including a decision as to how, and by whom the database might be hosted (e.g. by the IWC or an external organization like ICES). Nonetheless there is a consensus for a collaborative approach. The group emphasize the database's role in complementing existing networks rather than replacing them, suggesting a phased approach involving stakeholder engagement and database development over several years. Collaboration between the global database and national or network-specific databases is also highlighted as crucial for effective real-time data collection and response to cross-border events.

Diseases Subgroup

There is a recognition by the SEP that adoption of an ecosystem-wide 'one health' approach is essential to adequately understand and evaluate the threats to cetacean populations, and the group called for closer collaboration, or merging between CDOC and SEP. There was also a desire to ensure diseases affecting cetaceans receive adequate attention within the SC especially with changes in meeting frequency. Consideration will be given to merging the two groups to streamline communication and understanding. The subgroup would like to take the

opportunity to request SC recognises the need to have an emphasis on adopting an ecosystem-based approach to disease surveillance, acknowledging the role of various taxa as sentinel species. The subgroup also highlights the need to elevate the discussion around disease as a significant threat to cetaceans, on a par with other threat-based issues such as bycatch and entanglement.

Sampling & Shipments Subgroup

The timely and efficient movement of diagnostic samples across borders is often a core requirement of strandings investigations, but gaining required permits and permissions can be time consuming or present barriers. Issues identified by the subgroup centred around difficulties with CITES, licensing, and sample movement. Overall, the discussion emphasized the need for collaboration and discussion with CITES and WOA, addressing regulatory challenges, and finding practical solutions to streamline sample movement for diagnostic purposes. The subgroup would like to take the opportunity to highlight the CITES issue to SC and requests that they consider recommending to the Commission that they open a dialogue with CITES to try and overcome issues and improve linkages in order to expedite the transborder movement of samples for diagnostic purposes

PLANNED WORK FOR SEP

Future work is outlined in the draft Strandings Initiative 2025-2028 Workplan accompanying this report. Key activities to be completed prior to the commencement of the new workplan include:

- Continue to hold quarterly virtual meetings of the SEP and provide updates on progress to the SSG at their quarterly meetings.
- Complete annual review of SEP membership and identify and fill geographical and expertise gaps within Expert Panel.
- Appoint new members to the SEP immediately following annual review or as identified.
- Continue working with the local partners from the CAMAC strandings response training to finalise resources and equipment.
- Continue working with the SEP subgroups to push forward work on the five main themes in preparation for the new workplan.

PLANNED WORK FOR SSG PRIOR TO NEW WORKPLAN

- Complete membership review and identify and fill geographical and expertise gaps within Steering Group.
- Recruit relevant new members to the Steering Group.
- Develop a sustainable fundraising strategy for the Strandings Initiative and SEP.

APPENDIX 1

VWF Project Proposal and Budget

Project Title

IWC Strandings Initiative – continuation of funding for Strandings Coordinator to 31 March 2027.

Lead Working Group

Please note which Working Group has recommended the project be taken forward.

Additionally, if other Working Groups or Subcommittees have interests in the work of this project, please list them here.

- Whale Killing Methods & Welfare Issues Working Group
- Scientific Committee
- Strandings Steering Group
- Conservation Committee
- Environmental Concerns sub-committee
- Non-Deliberate Human Induced Mortality sub-committee

Project Description

A very brief overview of the project proposal and its expected outcomes.

The purpose of this proposal is to request continuation funding for the Strandings Coordinator role at 0.8 FTE until 31 Marc 2027. This would support the advancement of the 2025-2028 workplan (Appendix 1 in [SC/69B/E/18Rev1](#)) of the IWC Strandings Initiative through the salary and travel costs of the Strandings Coordinator. None of the activities in the workplan will be possible without securing the essential role of the Strandings Coordinator to coordinate and implement the Initiative and pursue external funds. The Strandings Coordinator is instrumental in all aspects of programme coordination by managing program activities, supporting the Strandings Expert Panel, and liaising with key stakeholders. Additionally, through administrative tasks like communication, data management, and fundraising, the Strandings Coordinator will ensure efficient operations and effective reporting to IWC committees and working groups.

Project Justification

Demonstrate connections to relevant recommendations and Resolutions endorsed by the Commission including, where relevant, the Conservation Committee's Strategic Plan.

The IWC Strandings Initiative was established at IWC66 following Commission endorsement of recommendations of the Scientific Committee (SC) and the Whale Killing Methods and Welfare Issues Working Group (WKM&WI) with respect to establishing an IWC Strandings Initiative. Since its inception, the Initiative has made significant progress, including the development of a strategic workplan, the formation of an Expert Panel, and the implementation of capacity-building programmes and emergency response protocols.

In May 2020, the SC endorsed the strong need for a Strandings Coordinator position in the IWC Secretariat to support the Strandings Initiative through the Steering Group (SSG) and Expert Panel (SEP) and a new coordinator was recruited and commenced employment in late March 2022. The Strandings Coordinator is central to the Initiative's success. This role is essential for driving progress, coordinating stakeholders, and ensuring the effective implementation of the workplan. The Coordinator's expertise is vital in organising capacity building programmes, developing emergency response protocols, facilitating knowledge sharing, and securing necessary resources. None of the activities in the workplan will be possible without securing the essential role of the Strandings Coordinator to coordinate and implement the initiative and pursue external funds.

In collaboration with the SSG, the SEP has produced a costed 2025-2028 workplan (Appendix 1 in [SC/69B/E/18Rev1](#)) which was endorsed by the SC at SC69B. They highlighted "the importance of the work of the steering committee for the IWC Strandings Initiative and its efforts in helping to develop consistent and effective

responses to cetacean strandings, data collection, and sample analysis worldwide. These efforts are critical to the work that the Committee does as well as for understanding ecosystem health, however, this work requires continued funding. The precarity of funding presents an existential threat to this initiative and the Committee encourages contracting governments to further support this work”.

In addition to progressing the various Recommendations relevant to the Strandings Initiative, the Strandings Coordinator will continue to take an active role in collaborating with the Marine Debris Intersessional Correspondence Group and any pertinent work towards the Plastics Resolution. This includes encouraging strandings networks to record evidence (or lack of) of marine debris in strandings and ensure that this aspiration is included in any discussions regarding a global strandings databases. The SEP intends to ensure that any updated strandings investigation protocol should include the recording of ingested or entangled marine plastics or the absence of them and strandings networks will be encouraged to record this information.

Relevant IWC Voluntary Funds

Please list all relevant IWC Voluntary Funds and which criteria this project meets.

Voluntary Welfare Fund

Criteria: This project is considered high priority as it was recommended by the WKMWI WG/IWGW and has been endorsed by the Commission. In addition, this project supports the objectives of the Welfare Action Plan.

Voluntary Conservation Fund

There are close links between Strandings and marine debris and associated work in response to the Plastics Resolution. Therefore, the VCF should also be considered as a possible funding source.

Relevant External Funding Opportunities

Please list all relevant funding opportunities identified.

Following the successful award of €89,950 by the Caribbean Marine Megafauna and Anthropogenic Activities (CAMAC) Project to deliver capacity building workshops within the CARI’MAM region under Phase 1, the SEP intends to bid for future capacity building work in the region if Phase 2 of the project is successfully funded by INTERREG. Built into this would be a provision for the strandings coordinator to increase working hours by one day per week to cover the increased workload project managing the project.

In late 2023, OceanCare donated 20,000CHF to the Strandings Initiative to the furtherance of the IWC’s strandings work, including investigations, strandings trainings and rescue efforts. Any use of this donation for salary would be subject to the agreement of OceanCare. It has been agreed also that some of this funding will be used to cover international travel expenses for two SEP members to deliver strandings response capacity building training in Colombia in August 2024.

A funding proposal (c. £200k) in partnership with IndoCet is to be submitted to the Darwin Initiative Capability & Capacity fund in October 2024 to provide a comprehensive strandings training programme for the IndoCet region. Again, provision for additional hours for the Strandings Coordinator will be built into the application.

It is envisaged that any future external funding application will have funding for additional hours for the Strandings Coordinator built into any proposals.

Overview of activities

Activity	Expected Results	Timeline	Budget Implications	
			Type (Salary, Travel, Meeting Services, Equipment, Other)*	Estimated Cost (GB pounds)
1. Stranding Coordinator Administrative Roles and Project Management				
<i>Develop funding strategy for Strandings Initiative with SSG. Develop project proposals for IWC projects officer to source funding.</i>	<i>Increased access to funding and a more stable future for the SI.</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>	Salary	£36,000
<i>Progress reports of IWC SI to the Commission, Working Group on Whale Killing Methods and Welfare Issues (WKM&WI) and updates to Scientific Committee (SC)</i>	<i>Increased and more effective communication between SI and various Committees/Commission.</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>		
<i>Convene quarterly SSG and SEP meetings and report progress of SEP to SSG on a regular basis</i>	<i>Increased and more effective communication between SEP and SSG.</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>		
<i>Complete annual review of SEP membership</i>	<i>Any knowledge gaps or geographical gaps filled. SEP remains active and engaged.</i>	<i>Annual</i>		
<i>Develop and implement a communication strategy for the SI for engagement with other IWC work areas, national governments (contracting and non-contracting), strandings networks and broader outreach</i>	<i>Increased communication, engagement with and awareness of Strandings Initiative. Production of marketing materials and updated website.</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>		
<i>Ongoing discussion and collaboration with the Bycatch Mitigation Initiative, Ship Strikes and Entanglements to provide combined training/advice where appropriate including sourcing funding for projects</i>	<i>Provision of strandings training alongside other projects to create a cost-effective package where applicable and required.</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>		
<i>Convene biennial in-person SEP workshop - In-person workshop should coincide with marine mammal conferences / capacity building activities to aid logistics/funding with a hybrid option.</i>	<i>Increased effectiveness of SEP, increased motivation of SEP. Production of training resources.</i>	<i>End 2025</i>	Travel (Travel, Accommodation, Per Diem)	£2000 (£1000, £500, £500)
<i>Attendance at Scientific Committee in 2026</i>	<i>Increased and more effective communication between SI and SC. Networking opportunities.</i>	<i>2026</i>	Travel (Travel, Accommodation, Per Diem)	£2000 (£1000, £500, £500)
2. Strandings Expert Panel workplan 2025-2028				
<i>Drive progress of emergency response section of workplan in collaboration with SEP Emergency Response subgroup</i>	<i>Enhanced emergency response capabilities by formalising the role of the Strandings Expert Panel and Regional Focal Groups. A comprehensive resource map and a robust funding and travel policy will be developed to support on-site response efforts. Additionally, a digital platform will be created to provide essential tools and resources for effective emergency stranding response.</i>	<i>Top Priority</i>	Salary	£36,000
<i>Drive progress of capacity building section of workplan in collaboration with SEP Capacity Building subgroup</i>	<i>Refined training needs assessment and expanded access to stranding resources through partnerships, development of a tailored capacity building package, and stronger collaborations with relevant institutions. These efforts will enhance the IWC Strandings Initiative's capacity to provide training and support to member states, ultimately increasing its visibility as a leading authority in stranding response.</i>	<i>Top Priority</i>		
<i>Drive progress of databases section of workplan in collaboration with SEP Databases subgroup</i>	<i>Establishment of a global cetacean stranding database by identifying existing databases, overcoming data submission barriers, and developing</i>	<i>Top Priority</i>		

	<i>efficient data management procedures. It will also explore opportunities for collaboration with other IWC working groups and incorporate marine debris documentation into the database, ultimately enhancing data analysis and utilisation for improved cetacean conservation.</i>			
<i>Drive progress of samples/shipments response section of workplan in collaboration with SEP Databases subgroup</i>	<i>Establishment of efficient sample management systems, including standardised protocols for collection, shipment, and processing. Identification and connection of relevant expertise and laboratory facilities, development of cost-recovery mechanisms for emergency response investigations, and creation of an overview of tissue archives. These actions will facilitate cross-border sample transfer for diagnostic and research purposes, enhancing the ability to investigate cetacean health and mortality events.</i>	Ongoing		
<i>Drive progress of diseases response section of workplan in collaboration with SEP Diseases subgroup</i>	<i>Stronger collaboration between the Committee on Diseases of Cetaceans (CDOC) and the SEP to elevate disease issues within the IWC. Development of an annual disease summary report, enhanced communication on cetacean diseases, and the creation of IWC-specific guidelines for high-impact pathogens.</i>	Ongoing		
TOTAL				£76,000

*Salary costs should include salaries for additional staff to be recruited but exclude staff time of existing Secretariat staff (core time), which is outlined below. Travel costs should include a breakdown of flights, accommodation and subsistence. Please contact the Secretariat for guidance on subsistence rates.

Core Secretariat support required.

Type	Detailed description	Number of days
IT/database		
Communications		
Meeting Services		
Project management	Strandings Coordinator salary for 2 years	£72,000 (£35k for 2025, £37k for 2026)
Other		
Total		

Potential partners or funders

Please include a list of all potential partners and funders and their role in this project.

Global Strandings Network
NOAA
IFAW

Project requirements/Permits/Insurances

Please list any constraints or other considerations e.g. field work permits, CITES permits, welfare concerns, security considerations etc

Please confirm that all relevant insurances are secured.

Any permits, welfare concerns, security consideration etc of in-country emergency responses/training will be evaluated as they arise.

Possible Risks

This should include all possible risks or uncertain factors that might have a negative impact on the project and their possible consequences. Add mitigation options, if possible.

Appendix 1 – Strandings Coordinator Job Description

Job description and person specification

The Stranding Response Coordinator will work to further develop and implement the IWC Strandings Initiative. The Coordinator will convene the Strandings Expert Panel and will be the liaison between the Expert Panel, the Steering Group, the Regional Focal Points, the Conservation and Scientific Committees, the Whale Killing Methods and Welfare Issues Working Group, and the IWC Secretariat. The Strandings Coordinator will:

- Develop capacity building implementing training programmes for emergency response in case of live cetacean strandings and large scale and mass mortality events through specific guidelines and training workshops using IWC-endorsed curricula
- Organise and convene the IWC Expert Panel on Strandings
- Work with the Expert Panel to develop a strategy for handling requests received by the Secretariat for strandings training, analyses, investigation, and/or response
- Coordinate the IWC Expert Panel response to requests for unusual stranding events response assistance
- Prepare and disseminate reports on progress under the strandings initiative (including reports from Expert Panel meetings) to the Strandings Steering Group, the IWC Scientific Committee and the Whale Killing Methods and Welfare Issues Working Group and to other parts of the Commission as required.
- Work with the IWC Secretariat to expand coordination of IWC Stranding Initiative efforts with those of other Intergovernmental Organisations who share similar responsibilities and goals
- Assist the IWC with its work on other initiatives relevant to strandings as may be required (e.g. ship strike, entanglement)
- Assist the IWC with its work of fund raising to support training and emergency response
- Represent the IWC at relevant and appropriate events (e.g. meetings and conferences)
- Any other tasks that may be required by the organisation that are commensurate with the job role.

APPENDIX 2

IWC Strandings Initiative Four-Year Workplan 2025-2028

High level objective & Description of activity	Timeframe				Lead	IWC community involvement	Priority	Budget per year	Total budget	Potential funding source(s)
	2025	2026	2027	2028						
<i>Work Area 1: Coordination, Administration & Funding</i>										
1.1 Staffing Continuation of the Strandings Coordinator role to provide project support and administration.					IWC Secretariat		Core	1.0 FTE		Internal voluntary funds, OceanCare funding, external funds
1.2 Develop funding strategy for Strandings Initiative Develop a funding strategy for the SI including a range and source of funding sources that could be approached.					SSG	IWC Secretariat	Core	Included in Coordinator cost		
1.3 Implement agreed fundraising strategy for Strandings Initiative Pursue agreed fundraising strategy for IWC SI including development of project proposals for IWC projects officer to source funding					IWC Secretariat	SEP SSG	Core	Included in Coordinator cost		
1.4 Progress reports of IWC SI to the Commission, Working Group on Whale Killing Methods and Welfare Issues (WKM&WI) and updates to Scientific Committee (SC)					IWC Secretariat	SEP SSG	Core	Included in Coordinator cost		
1.5 Annual Review of Expert Panel Membership Review range and diversity of expertise, location and laboratory capacity.					IWC Secretariat	SEP	Core	Included in Coordinator cost		
1.6 Convene regular expert panel meetings Quarterly meetings to be held virtually					IWC Secretariat	SEP	Core	Included in Coordinator cost		
1.7 Convene regular steering group meetings Quarterly meetings to be held virtually					IWC Secretariat	SSG	Core	Included in Coordinator cost		
1.8 Convene biennial in-person SEP workshop In-person workshop should coincide with marine					IWC Secretariat	SEP	High	Admin included in	£12,000 for two meetings to include key	Various: Internal voluntary funds; external

High level objective & Description of activity	Timeframe				Lead	IWC community involvement	Priority	Budget per year	Total budget	Potential funding source(s)
	2025	2026	2027	2028						
mammal conferences / capacity building activities to aid logistics/funding with a hybrid option.								Coordinator cost	personnel travel/venue	funders, donations to SI
<p>1.9 Develop and implement a communication strategy for the SI for engagement with other IWC work areas, national governments (contracting and non-contracting), strandings networks and broader outreach</p> <p>Includes promotion of emergency response and capacity building activities, database development, raising awareness of SEP. Production of SI brochure to promote the initiative and the work undertaken. Work with IT Support to improve website ranking.</p> <p>Scope out opportunities to work collaboratively and encourage information exchange and collection of technical advice through existing IWC programmes.</p>					IWC Secretariat	SSG SEP	Core	Included in Coordinator cost		
Work Area 2: Emergency Response										
<p>1 Formalise role and mechanism of Strandings Initiative Expert Panel input into emergency response</p> <p>SEP to formalise the procedures for emergency response through the production of a flow chart outlining the process, key actions, contacts etc. This will include a process to set up a bespoke WhatsApp emergency response group to support an emergency response request.</p>					IWC Secretariat	SEP SEP Emergency Response subgroup	Core	Included in Coordinator cost		
<p>2 Formalisation of Regional Focal Groups to lead a more local response when required</p> <p>In conjunction with 2.1, SEP will expand the regional focal point roles and agree a list of roles/specialisms needed in each region for emergency response and capacity building.</p>					IWC Secretariat	SEP SEP Emergency Response subgroup	Core	Included in Coordinator cost		
<p>3 Complete development of resources map to aid with emergency response and capacity building</p> <p>Working with SEP members, a annotated map will be developed and shared internally outlining locations of</p>					IWC Secretariat	SEP	Core	Included in Coordinator cost		

High level objective & Description of activity	Timeframe				Lead	IWC community involvement	Priority	Budget per year	Total budget	Potential funding source(s)
	2025	2026	2027	2028						
SEP members and other key experts, skill sets, key laboratories, collaborating vet schools, sample archive information, strandings networks. This will enable the identification of cold spots and SEP recruitment. This map will be utilised to build networks with the regions during peacetime in preparation for emergency response requests.						SEP Emergency Response subgroup				
4 Formalise funding mechanism and travel policy for on-site emergency response Following the recent discussions with the Secretariat, draft a formal funding/travel policy for emergency response and capacity building. This will be presented to Commission in 2026 for approval.					IWC Secretariat	SEP Emergency Response subgroup SSG	Core	Included in Coordinator cost		
5 Collate and develop toolbox of digital online resources for emergency response stranding response Working closely with the capacity building subgroup, a suite of resources will be developed including easy to use how-to guides (i.e. relevant, accessible and up to date guides which can be delivered in a format suitable for the point of need, e.g. responders on the beach) to support emergency strandings responses. These will be presented to Commission in 2026.					IWC Secretariat	SEP Emergency Response subgroup	Core	Admin included in Coordinator cost	Budget to include cost of printing / production etc (including staff time)	Various: External funders, OceanCare donation, voluntary donations
Work Area 3: Capacity Building Work										
3.1 Update strategies for identifying training needs and protocols for triaging requests for capacity building. Revise training prioritisation matrix on a regular basis taking into account current events, e.g. Emerging hazards, epizootics and mortality events					IWC Secretariat	SEP Capacity Building subgroup	Core	Included in Coordinator costs		
3.2 Work with existing resources such as the Global Stranding Network, NOAA and IFAW to enhance availability of strandings resources. Strandings Coordinator works closely with GSN to ensure links are built into both IWC and GSN webpages.					IWC Secretariat	SEP Capacity Building subgroup SEP SSG	Core	Included in Coordinator cost		

High level objective & Description of activity	Timeframe				Lead	IWC community involvement	Priority	Budget per year	Total budget	Potential funding source(s)
	2025	2026	2027	2028						
<p>3.3 Develop a comprehensive capacity building package to be offered by the IWC SI, identifying routes by which this can be funded and mechanisms for how the work is delivered, assessed and followed up. Building on the work carried out on behalf of CAMAC and GMast, produce a standardised modular training package covering all aspects of capacity building for stranding response.</p> <p>Develop a suite of ‘beach-friendly’ best practice/how to 1-page guides in a variety of languages which can be combined into a digital Handbook of reference cards.</p> <p>Investigate the development of a ‘Strandings Handbook’ featuring best practice, protocols, case studies etc to be hosted on the IWC website.</p> <p>Deliver capacity building training with an emphasis on ‘training of trainers’ and a long-term programme of support.</p> <p>Develop materials to aid improved diagnosis of HIM events.</p>					IWC Secretariat	SEP SEP Capacity Building subgroup GWERN Coordinator Bycatch Coordinator Contracting governments	High	Admin included in Coordinator cost	Budget to include cost of printing / production (including staff time)	Various: Requesting governments; external funders, collaborating partners
<p>3.4 Develop links and collaborations with institutions and organisations who deliver disaster response training or disease surveillance programmes. Develop synergies with external terrestrial and marine disease surveillance and wildlife veterinary response programmes. Identify shared skills, equipment or experience amongst terrestrial and marine wildlife veterinarians and strandings responders and encourage collaboration.</p>					IWC Secretariat	SEP SEP Capacity Building subgroup	High	Admin included in Coordinator cost		
<p>3.5 Publicise the capacity of the IWC strandings initiative as a training provider to member countries and scientific, welfare and conservation bodies. See 1.10</p>					IWC Secretariat	SEP Capacity Building subgroup SEP	Core	Admin included in Coordinator cost		

High level objective & Description of activity	Timeframe				Lead	IWC community involvement	Priority	Budget per year	Total budget	Potential funding source(s)
	2025	2026	2027	2028						
<p>Scope out opportunities to collaboratively deliver outreach and capacity building within IWC programmes.</p> <p>Develop a programme of virtual webinars presented by SEP members on a variety of topics to aid knowledge sharing and CPD.</p>										
<i>Work Area 4: Databases</i>										
<p>4.1 Liaise with international organisations, government liaisons and experts to identify existing regional, national and international databases on cetacean strandings</p> <p>Collaborate with international organisations/bodies holding existing cetacean mortality information; evaluate their utility to assist the IWC SI (particularly for metrics of assessing health and existing and emerging threats) and identify key gaps and opportunities to fill knowledge gaps.</p>					IWC Secretariat	Data Manager Scientific Committee SEP Database subgroup	High	Included in data mgmt role		
<p>4.2 Identify main barriers to submission of strandings data to a global cetacean strandings database</p> <p>Circulate a questionnaire to strandings networks and contracting/non-contracting governments to establish regional needs, any issues or barriers to submitting data etc.</p>					IWC Secretariat	Data Manager Scientific Committee	High	Included in data mgmt role / strandings coordinator costs		
<p>4.3 Identify the drivers for a combined 'global' database over existing national databases and establish who are the potential users of such a resource and for what purpose/goal.</p> <p>This would need liaison both internally within IWC (e.g. national reporting requests) and to external organisations/member countries.</p>					IWC Secretariat	Data Manager SEP Database Group Scientific Committee	High	Included in data mgmt role / strandings coordinator costs		
<p>4.4 Develop methods to streamline IWC cetacean stranding and mortality data reporting, validation and curation</p> <p>Investigate the best way to record mass strandings and unusual mortality events.</p>					IWC Secretariat	Data Manager SEP Conservation Committee	Core	Included in data mgmt role / strandings		

High level objective & Description of activity	Timeframe				Lead	IWC community involvement	Priority	Budget per year	Total budget	Potential funding source(s)
	2025	2026	2027	2028						
Establish regional champions to forge links with networks.						Ad Hoc Group on Databases SEP Database subgroup		coordinator costs		
4.5 Develop data analysis and visualisation methods Liaise with data users to develop data dashboarding and analysis of high level data, consider use of online mapping services to produce spatial visualisation of reports from member countries.					IWC Secretariat	Data Manager Ad Hoc Group on Databases SEP Database subgroup SEP Conservation Committee	High			
4.6 Work with the IWC data manager to develop global cetacean strandings database Work with ASCOBANS and ICES to initially develop a regional strandings database with a view to progressing this to a global database following a comprehensive review of needs.					IWC Secretariat	Data Manager SEP Database subgroup	Core		£35,000	Various: External funding, collaborating governments
4.7 Work with the IWC data manager to identify opportunities for crossover support between other working groups within IWC Provide support to relevant IWC workstreams where required to support/interpret relevant evidence derived from strandings and pathology, including but not limited to assessing impact of marine debris, HIM and shipstrike					IWC Secretariat	Data Manager SEP Database subgroup Marine Debris working group Shipstrike group	Core			
4.8 Investigate the need for recording evidence of marine debris in strandings and ensure that this aspiration is included in any discussions regarding a global strandings databases. Any updated strandings investigation protocol should include the recording of ingested or entangled marine					IWC Secretariat	Data Manager SEP Database Group Marine Debris Working group	Core			

High level objective & Description of activity	Timeframe				Lead	IWC community involvement	Priority	Budget per year	Total budget	Potential funding source(s)
	2025	2026	2027	2028						
plastics or the absence of them and strandings networks will be encouraged to record this information. Going forward, this data could be included in a separate portion of the Stranding Database.										
<i>Work Area 5: Samples/Shipment</i>										
5.1 Investigate and establish pipelines and mechanisms to facilitate cross-border shipping of samples for diagnostic and research purposes. Establish linkages with CITES/WOAH to scope mechanisms to streamline the movement of specimens and samples between laboratories to support both emergency response and diagnostic investigations.					IWC Secretariat	SEP Samples subgroup SEP Scientific Committee	Core	Included in Coordinator cost		
5.2 Production of guidance/protocols outlining sampling/shipment best practice. Working alongside the emergency response and capacity building subgroups, guidance is produced and published to outline 'best practice' samples to be taken/stored. This should be a tiered approach (basic samples through to full necropsy) and include information on what a basic sampling kit should contain.					IWC Secretariat	SEP Samples subgroup SEP	Core	Included in Coordinator cost		
5.3 Identify existing expertise/laboratory facilities available within the SEP and establish links. Internal SEP resources map should include a layer outlining essential labs that can do multiple tests or pass samples on, are registered with CITES etc.					IWC Secretariat	SEP Samples subgroup SEP	Core	Included in Coordinator cost		
5.4 Investigate methods for sample storage and processing (e.g. inactivation, extraction) to facilitate cross-border transfer for pathogen diagnosis and develop relevant procedures and capacity building material. Link with capacity building/emergency response subgroups to liaise with CITES and set up procedures for					IWC Secretariat	SEP Samples subgroup SEP	High	Included in Coordinator cost		

High level objective & Description of activity	Timeframe				Lead	IWC community involvement	Priority	Budget per year	Total budget	Potential funding source(s)
	2025	2026	2027	2028						
DNA/RNA extraction locally and include this information on the internal resources map being produced.										
5.5 Develop and incorporate a cost-recovery model for emergency response investigations undertaken at the request on member countries. Scope options on cost recovery for certain diagnostic test or investigations undertaken as part of strandings investigations and produce a proposal to be submitted to the relevant committees.					IWC Secretariat	SEP Samples subgroup SEP	Core	Included in Coordinator cost		
5.6 Establish an overview of tissue archive and availability of samples Investigate appetite and mechanism to collate data on tissue archives in order to encourage the use of such tissue banks on a wider and international scale.					IWC Secretariat	SEP Samples subgroup SEP	Medium	Included in Coordinator cost		
<i>Work Area 6: Diseases</i>										
6.1 Establish the relationship between CDOC and SEP to ensure diseases remain high on the agenda for SC and E. Forge closer links between CDOC and SEP and discuss and formalise the most beneficial relationship between both groups. This should include a discussion on whether merging CDOC into SEP would be possible.					IWC Secretariat	SEP Diseases subgroup SEP CDOC Scientific Committee	Core	Included in Coordinator cost		
6.2 Establish production of a Diseases of Concern Summary Annual Report to be circulated to relevant committees. Agree on a template and produce a summary annual report of cetacean disease data available which should be made available to SC and other relevant committees.					IWC Secretariat	SEP Diseases subgroup SEP CDOC	High	Included in Coordinator cost		
6.3 Increase communications regarding diseases of concern to SC and Commission as well as the wider arena. Alongside CDOC, evaluating and monitoring the risk of new and emerging diseases of concern Evaluating the risk and possible impact scenarios of these disease incursions on the health and resilience of marine mammal populations, particularly those under scrutiny by					IWC Secretariat	SEP Diseases subgroup SEP CDOC	Core	Included in Coordinator cost		

High level objective & Description of activity	Timeframe				Lead	IWC community involvement	Priority	Budget per year	Total budget	Potential funding source(s)
	2025	2026	2027	2028						
<p>other groups within IWC including a note of concern regarding HPAI and its potential impact for cetaceans and those communities reliant on cetaceans. An in-depth paper on HPAI will also be produced for SC in 2026 with the request that it be highlighted to Commission.</p> <p>Emphasising across IWC the importance to consider cumulative impacts of multiple stressors on individual and population health, resilience and vitality.</p>										
<p>6.4 Production of IWC-specific guidelines/best practice on HPAI and any other emerging epizootic pathogens with potential to impact cetacean population</p> <p>Protocols should include risk of transmission, investigation best practice, guidance on testing/sampling, implications for wider community i.e. whale watching, strandings networks, research</p>					IWC Secretariat	SEP Diseases subgroup SEP CDOC	Core	Included in Coordinator cost		

APPENDIX 3

Terms of Reference and Membership for the Strandings Steering Group

The Strandings Steering Group is responsible for the strategic development of the Strandings Initiative, delivering its aims, overseeing its work programme and the provision of relevant advice to the IWC and its subgroups.

The role of the Steering Group will be to:

- Oversee and provide strategic input to the implementation of the Strandings Initiative workplan, on the basis of quarterly reports from and advice requested by the Expert Panel and Secretariat.
- Oversee allocation and expenditure of the Strandings Initiative budget.
- Provide assistance in fundraising for the Strandings Initiative including through helping to identify sources of funding and assisting with fundraising applications where appropriate.
- Provide assistance to the Expert Panel and Secretariat, where appropriate, in facilitating emergency response assistance and training in IWC member and other countries.
- Help to promote the initiative, including to national and other international stakeholders.

Membership of the Steering Group will consist of any nominated representatives of IWC Contracting Governments and Observers and up to five additional nominees from the Scientific Committee. In nominating SC representatives, the SC is asked to avoid overlap between the Expert Panel and Steering Group. The Chair of the Strandings Expert Panel will be a member of the steering group and will represent the EP at its meetings. The Chair will be elected by the members of the Steering Group and may hold the position for a period of up to four years with the option of standing for a second four-year term. The Chair will serve no more than two terms.

Ex Officio members will include:

- Strandings Coordinator
- Chair/Vice Chair of the Whale Killing Methods and Welfare Issues Working Group
- Chair/Vice Chair of the Conservation Committee
- Chair/Vice Chair/Vice-Chair Elect of the Scientific Committee
- Convenor of the Environmental Concerns Sub-Committee of the Scientific Committee
- Chair of the Strandings Expert Panel
- IWC Secretariat member

Modus Operandi

The Steering Group will conduct much of its business electronically. Where possible, any in-person meetings will be held in the margins or adjacent to IWC or other meetings.

APPENDIX 4

Strandings Initiative Expert Panel Terms of Reference and Membership

The Expert Panel will assist the delivery of the IWC's Stranding Initiative by providing scientific and technical advice in stranding response and investigation; coordination of emergency response when requested at national or regional levels; provide expertise on operating procedures, diagnostics and response; support capacity building for regional and national networks; support for a centralised data repository; and the reporting of unusual cetacean events and responses at annual Scientific Committee meetings, and/or a summary of unusual cetacean events reported via the website.

Membership

Expert Panel membership shall ideally consist of individuals who offer a range of complementary expertise in both live and dead cetacean strandings response and have members with expertise in as diverse a range of geographical regions as possible.

- a. Regional experts in stranding response, including those leading the work on the Global Marine Animal Stranding Toolkit (GMAST);
- b. Diverse agencies and organizations (e.g. governmental, NGO, academia);
- c. Multi-disciplinary expertise (e.g. logistics, biology, medicine and rehabilitation, pathology, epidemiology, toxicology, database management, stranding management); and
- d. Administrative/coordinator staff

Selection Process

It is envisaged that the Expert Panel will be composed of a maximum of 25-30 experts who have committed to take a proactive role in the work of the strandings initiative. The panel should be of a manageable size whilst securing a sufficient level of representation of expertise and geographic coverage. Panel members will be asked to commit to active engagement in Expert Panel discussions and meetings. The process for agreeing the membership of the Panel is outlined in Annex 1 and the process for renomination is outlined in Annex 2.

Strandings Correspondence Group

Former Expert Panel members and relevant experts who are not able to commit time to the Expert Panel will be invited to join the 'Strandings Correspondence Group' which will provide a means to have wider participation in key discussions and strandings events.

Terms of Service

The term of service will be four years, following which members may be reappointed according to the process set out in Annex 2. An annual evaluation of membership will be undertaken by the Strandings Coordinator in liaison with the Chair of the Stranding Expert Panel based on the availability and participation of members, and action taken to address any vacancies or gaps in expertise. New members can be appointed immediately following review by the Review Panel and endorsement from the Strandings Steering Group.

Modus Operandi

The membership of the Expert Panel shall select a Chairperson from among the membership to serve a two-year term of office following which the Chair may be reappointed or replaced by the Vice-Chair. The process for nominating and agreeing the Chair of the Panel is outlined in Annex 3. The membership of the Expert Panel shall

also select a Vice-Chair from among the membership to serve a two-year term of office following which they may be reappointed or promoted to Chair. The process for nominating and agreeing the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Panel is outlined in Annex 3. The Expert Panel formally reports to the Strandings Steering Group, via the Strandings Coordinator and Chair of the Expert Panel. The Expert Panel will, with co-ordination from the Strandings Coordinator, liaise and collaborate with the Conservation Committee, Scientific Committee and Whale Killing Methods and Welfare Issues Working Group, and seek input from these Committees on the relevant aspects of its work.

The Strandings Coordinator, in collaboration with the Chair of the Expert Panel, shall convene Expert Panel meetings as deemed necessary, either in person or via teleconference. The Expert Panel shall meet virtually at least quarterly and aim to have an in-person meeting (where resources allow) once every biennium, back-to-back with other meetings if possible. Meetings will be timetabled to enable a fair opportunity for attendance across time zones. The report of the Expert Panel's meetings shall be prepared by the Chair of the Expert Panel and the Strandings Coordinator, and the report will be distributed to the Expert Panel and Steering Group for comment and endorsement. Progress of the Strandings Initiative against its workplan, including summaries of EP meetings will be reported to the Scientific Committee and the Whale Killing Methods and Welfare Issues Working Group at their respective meetings (Commission years) or as requested.

The Expert Panel may establish groups of Expert Panel members, or their representatives, on an ad hoc basis as necessary, to respond to specific situations. Such groups shall report to the Expert Panel. As appropriate, the Strandings Coordinator shall provide support services to these groups.

Annex 1: Process for appointment of the membership of the Expert Panel

Nominations will be sought through a Circular to Contracting Governments, Members of the Scientific Committee, previous Invited Participants and the Conservation Committee and Accredited Observers. The circular will identify the specific gaps in areas of expertise and geography which would be a priority for the Expert Panel membership.

The Secretariat will send formal letters to other IGOs and follow this up with informal contacts and online mailing lists relevant to cetacean conservation and research.

Before making a nomination, people will be asked to discuss with the nominee that they are willing and able to commit to serving on the Panel. Panel members will be asked to commit to active engagement in Expert Panel discussions.

Nominations should be accompanied by a short supporting statement by the nominee (max. 500 words) and a CV setting out the prospective member's expertise, abilities and willingness to serve on the Expert Panel.

A review of nominations will be undertaken by review Panel consisting of:

- Chair of the Expert Panel
- Chair of the Strandings Steering Group
- Chair of the Scientific Committee (or a nominee)
- Strandings Co-ordinator
- IWC Secretariat

Candidates will then be presented to the Strandings Steering Group for endorsement.

Following the annual review of the Expert Panel needs, identified experts who fulfil geographical or skills gaps can be nominated for immediate inclusion on the panel, following review by the Review Panel and endorsement from the Strandings Steering Group.

Annex 2: Process for re-appointment of members of the Expert Panel

Prior to the end of the four-year appointment period for Expert Panel members, the Strandings Coordinator on behalf of the Chair of the Expert Panel will approach members to discuss their willingness to serve an additional 4-year term. All nominated members, old and new, will be presented to the panel described in Annex 1, and then the Steering Group for endorsement. Members stepping down from the Expert Panel will be invited to join the wider Strandings Correspondence Group.

Annex 3: Process for appointment of Chair of the Expert Panel

Prior to the end of the four-year appointment period for Expert Panel members, the Strandings Co-ordinator will approach Expert Panel members to request nominations for both the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Expert Panel for a 2-year term. Before making a nomination, people will be asked to discuss with the nominees that they are willing and able to commit to serving as Chair or Vice-Chair. Nominations should be sent to the Strandings Coordinator accompanied by a short supporting statement by the nominee indicating that they wish to be nominated and outlining their commitment.

Nominations will then be put to the Expert Panel for consideration and voting will take place virtually and anonymously. In the event of a tie, nominees will be given the opportunity to give a small presentation to the Expert Panel and a second round of voting will take place. The successful candidate will then be presented to the Steering Group for endorsement.

APPENDIX 5

MEMBERSHIP OF THE STRANDINGS STEERING GROUP 2022-2024 ¹

As of July 2024:

Fabia Lunas (D) Chair (Brazil)
Helena Herr (IP) (Germany)
Mark Simmonds (D) (UK)
Mdu Seakamela (D) (South Africa)
Silvia Frey (IP) (Switzerland) - *resigned March 2023*

Ex Officio

Jan Henderson, Chair of Whale Killing Methods and Welfare Issues Working Group
Alex Zerbini, Chair of Scientific Committee
Lindsay Porter, Vice-Chair of Scientific Committee
Jack Collier, Chair of Conservation Committee
Doug Demaster, Convenor of the Environmental Concerns Sub-Committee of the Scientific Committee
Tilen Genov, Co-Convenor of the Environmental Concerns Sub-Committee of the Scientific Committee
Andrew Brownlow, Chair of the Strandings Expert Panel
Emma Neave-Webb, IWC Strandings Coordinator
Imogen Webster, IWC Secretariat

¹ *This list indicates members of the steering group and whether they are representatives of the Scientific Committee (SC) and Strandings Expert Panel, Chairs of IWC subcommittees or members nominated by an IWC Contracting Government (country indicated) or Accredited Observer organisations.*

MEMBERSHIP OF THE STRANDINGS EXPERT PANEL

As of July 2024:

Andrew Brownlow, UK (Chair)
Andre Silva Barreto, Brazil
Nantarika Chansue, Thailand
Rob Deaville, UK
Antonio Fernandez, Canary Islands , Spain
Daren Glover, New Zealand
Frances Gulland, USA
Ailsa Hall, UK
Gabriela Hernandez Mora, Costa Rica
Lonneke Ijssedijk, Netherlands
Chalatih Junchumpoo, Thailand
Milton Marcondes, Brazil
Sandro Mazzariol, Italy
Katie Moore, USA
Stephanie Plön, South Africa
Lindsay Porter, Hong Kong SAR, China
Teri Rowles, USA
Carlos Sacristan, Brazil
Aviad Scheinin, Israel
Ursula Siebert, Germany
Raphaela Stimmelmayer, USA
Karen Stockin, New Zealand
Marcela Uhart, Argentina
Michel Vely, France
Kristi West, USA

Ex Officio

Emma Neave-Webb, IWC Strandings Coordinator