

# Mobile marine species conservation: Current challenges



**Dr Lissa Batey**

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## “Mobile marine species”

- Whales
- Dolphins
- Porpoises
- Basking sharks
  - All sharks
- Seals
- Seabirds
- Fish
- Planktonic life stages



.....all can be considered ‘mobile’



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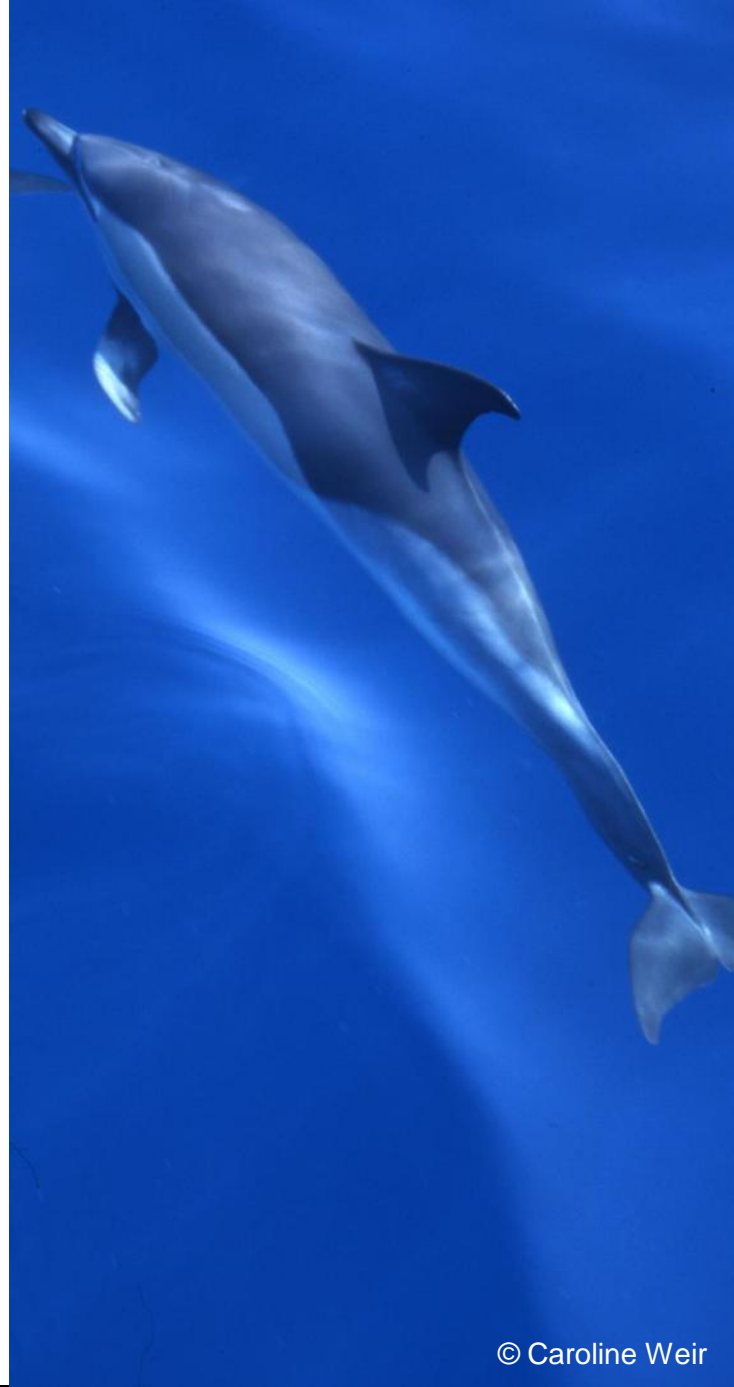
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## Charting Progress 2 (2011)

- Only 5 species considered to be in 'favourable conservation status'
- 6 species unknown due to lack of data
- Remaining 17 species considered rare or vagrant



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- Cetaceans are considered to be in good condition in the North Sea
- In poor condition in the Eastern Channel
- In moderate condition in the Western Channel and Celtic Sea, the Irish Sea and the Minches and Western Scotland waters
- Unknown status in the Scottish Continental Shelf area and offshore waters north and west of Scotland

## Basking sharks

- Like cetaceans, basking sharks were also hunted during the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries.
- Records show that more than 80,000 basking sharks were killed in the north-east Atlantic during this period.
- Populations have declined from historic records by 95%.



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Conservation of these ocean giants is desperately needed, not least in the light of increasing pressures.....



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The Wildlife Trusts are working with industry:

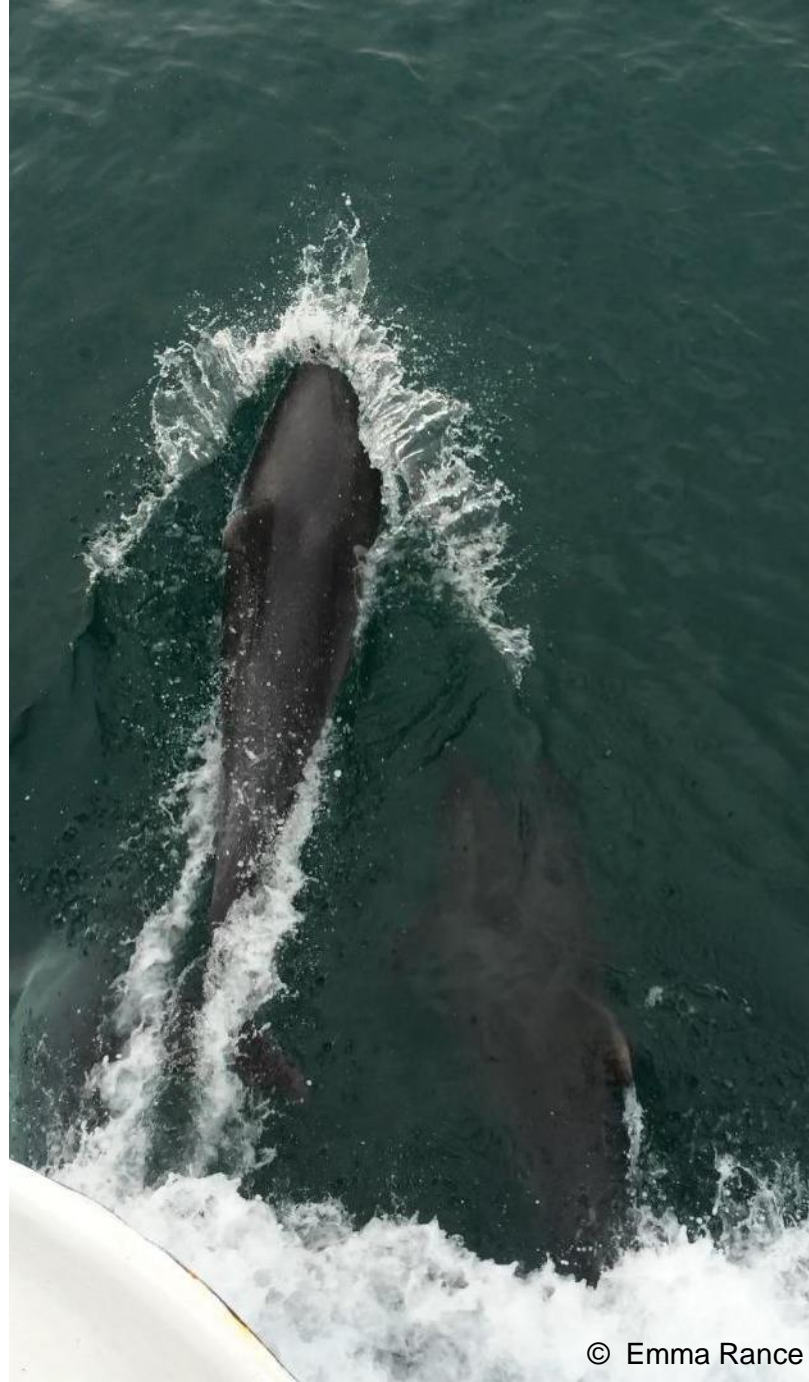
- On individual projects, planning applications
- On species/gear specific issues

Identifying mitigation measures and solutions.....



Conserving whales, dolphins, porpoises and basking sharks requires a knowledge and understanding of their:

- life history,
- population ecology,
- migration routes,
- breeding and
- mortality



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Direct conservation measures - mitigating the impact – include:

- use of acoustic deterrents, i.e. pingers
- observers; soft starts, etc.

Are reasonably well accepted.

But spatial protection, such as Marine Protected Areas, have always been considered controversial.

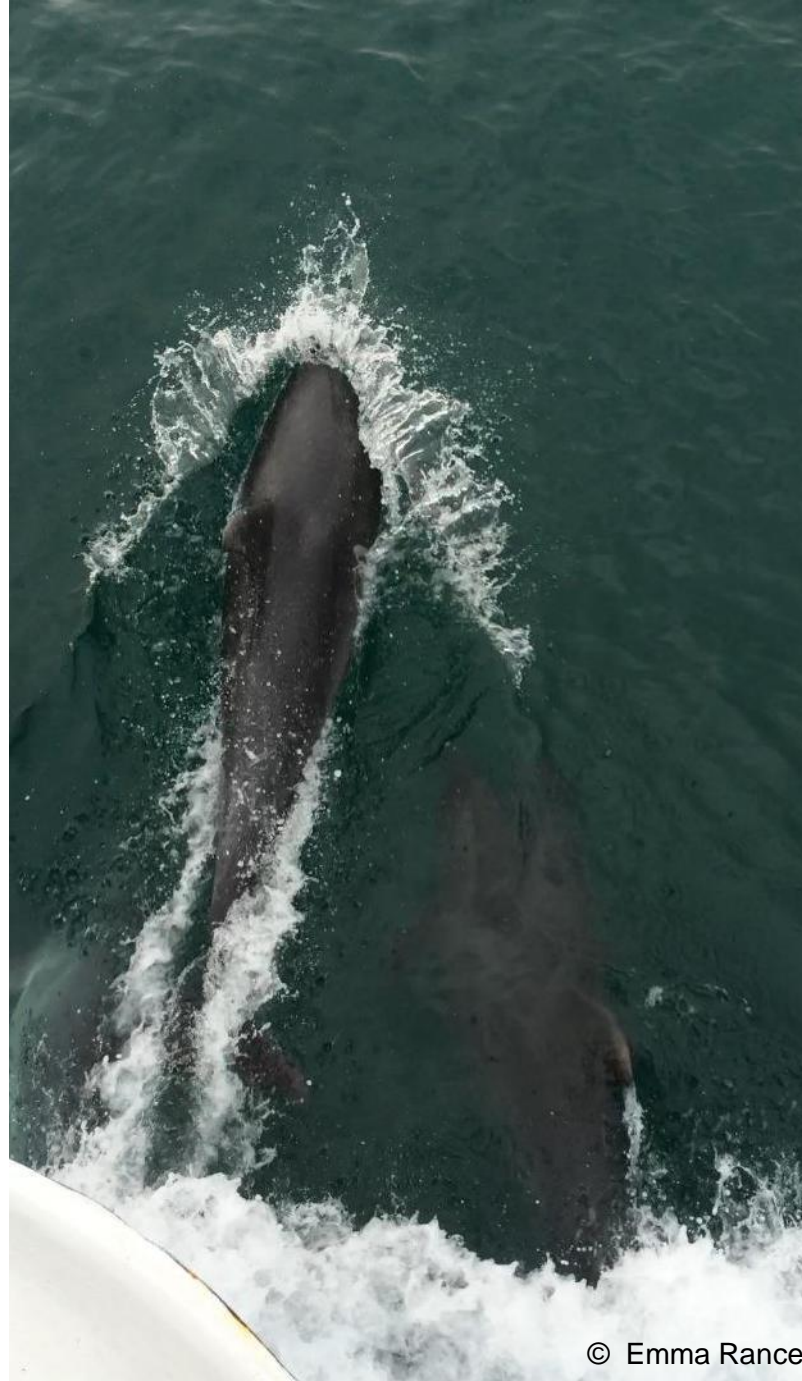


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But where we can identify feeding, breeding, social aggregations that occur on a regular basis we CAN identify sites worthy of spatial protection.



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## Current spatial protection

- Across the UK, three SACs (primary designation):
  - Moray Firth, Scotland – bottlenose dolphin
  - Cardigan bay, Wales – bottlenose dolphin
- No sites in English waters
- WWF made a complaint to the EU for lack of designation of SACs for harbour porpoise.
- Work in Scotland, summer 2014, announced areas of search for mobile species.



# Save our Ocean giants

The protected areas we need  
for dolphins, whales and basking sharks



**Take  
action  
now**  
[wildlifetrusts.org/  
act4giants](http://wildlifetrusts.org/act4giants)  
#oceangiants

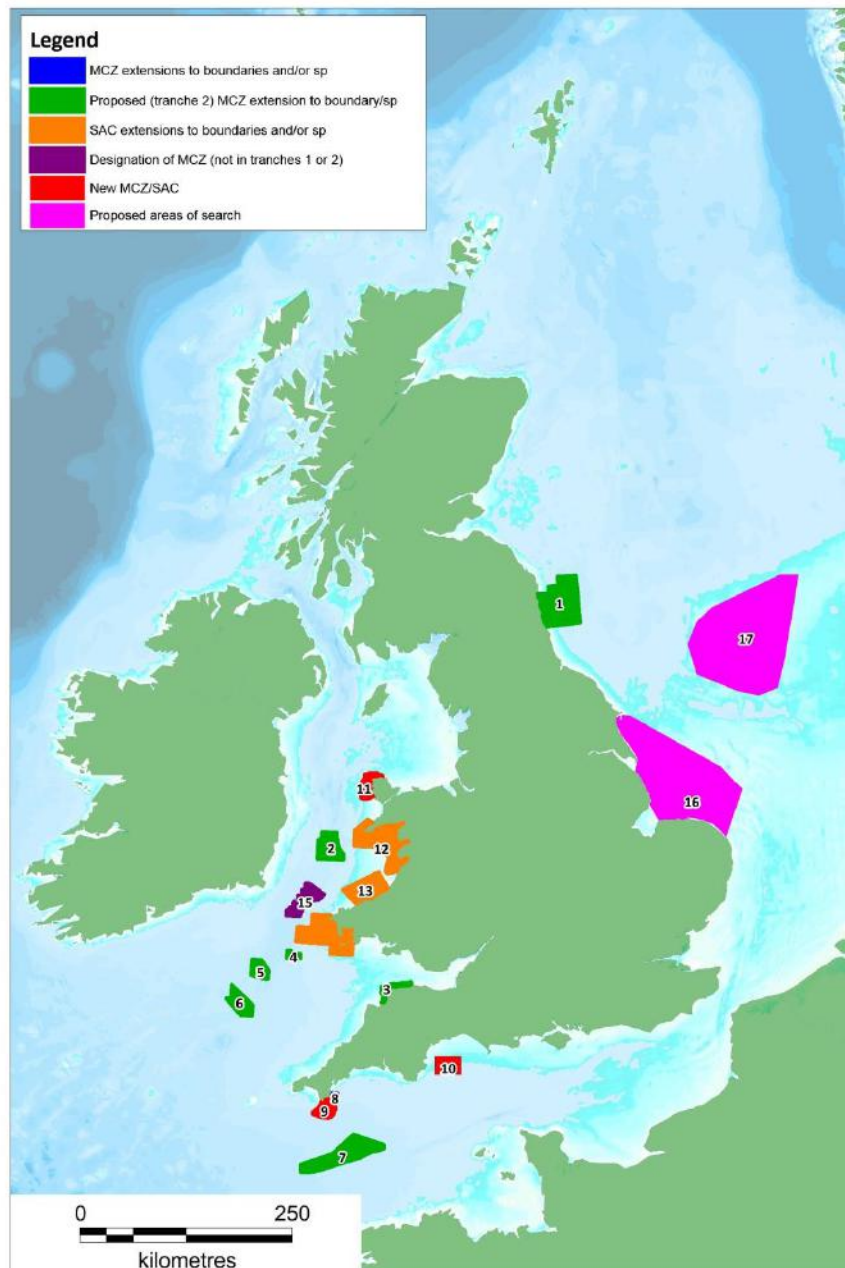
Megafauna such as whales, dolphins and basking sharks are the UK's most spectacular marine wildlife.

Long-lived and slow to reproduce, they are acutely vulnerable to pollution, industrial fishing and other human activities.

We can protect them in the few special places where they gather to eat, breed and socialise.



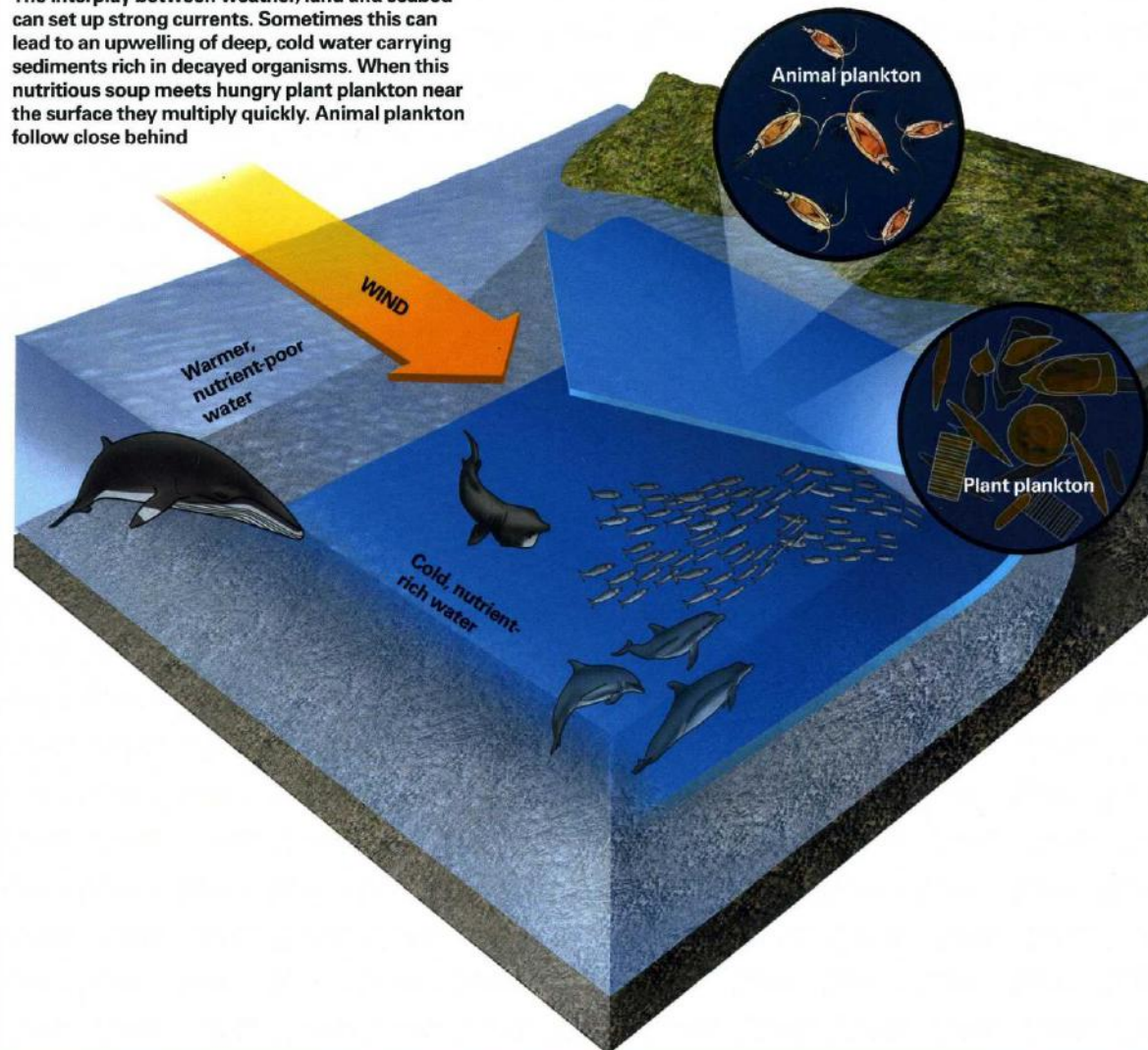
We are campaigning for the creation of 17 Marine Protected Areas around England and Wales to help save whales, dolphins and basking sharks



# Why are these areas special

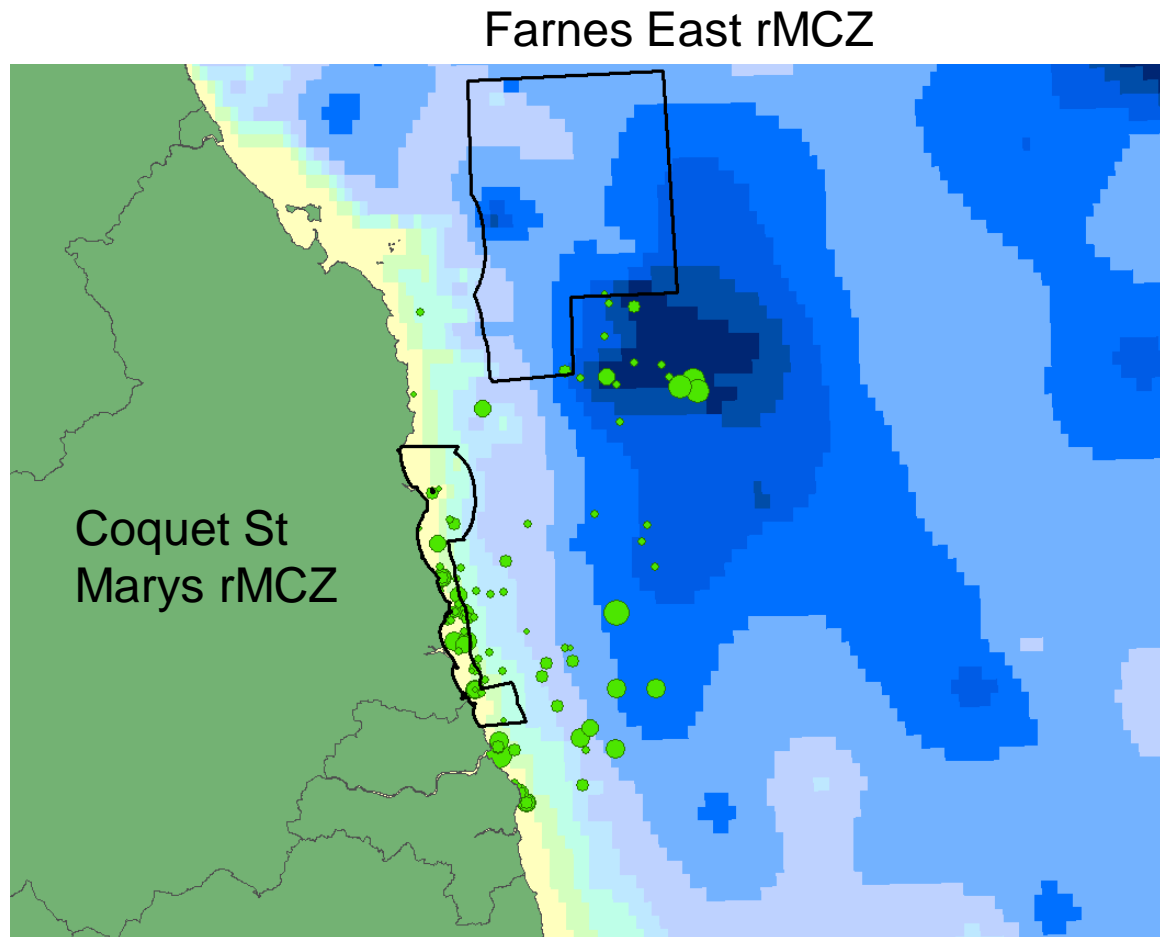
## How the sea creates areas of plenty

The interplay between weather, land and seabed can set up strong currents. Sometimes this can lead to an upwelling of deep, cold water carrying sediments rich in decayed organisms. When this nutritious soup meets hungry plant plankton near the surface they multiply quickly. Animal plankton follow close behind



# Uncovering new finds

- White-beaked dolphins



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If we are to achieve a *well managed* and *ecologically coherent network of MPAs*, and *Good Environmental Status*, we must not forget the top predators of our marine environment.



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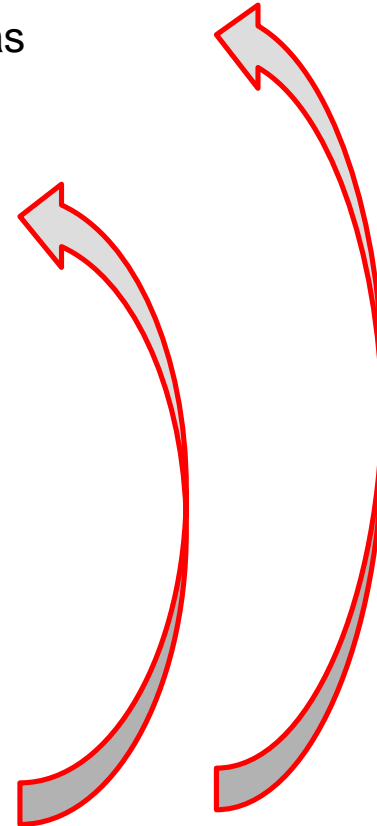


MPA are not the only answer, nor should they be seen as such.

They are part of a conservation toolkit required to conserve these ocean giants.

# Conservation toolkit

- Marine Protected Areas
  - Feeding, breeding, socialising and nursery areas
  - With management plans
- Threat-based management/mitigation:
  - Pingers on fishing nets
  - Acoustic deterrents (where appropriate)
  - Soft starts in seismic/pile driving operations
  - Speed restrictions in areas of known ship strike
- Research
  - There is still a lot we don't know about:
    - Species ecology
    - Threats and appropriate mitigation





# Thank you!

- Any questions?

