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Ferry Company Comes to the Aid of Dolphins in the North Sea

Dolphins and whales living throughout the North Sea will receive further aid in 2012 when the ferry company, DFDS Seaways, provides free passage for MARINElife's surveyors who are discovering how many of these little-known and secretive sea-faring mammals are living there.

MARINElife, the UK-based marine wildlife charity, will be able to extend its vital marine conservation research on existing freight routes operating from Immingham in Lincolnshire to Scandinavia – and it's hoped they may spot the rare White-beaked Dolphin which has its last remaining stronghold here.

DFDS Seaways already supports MARINElife, a charity set up to monitor the populations and movements of cetaceans (the collective name for whales, dolphins and porpoises), seabirds and other marine life on two routes from Felixstowe to Vlaardingen and Rosyth to Zeebrugge but has agreed to provide additional support on routes from Immingham to Cuxhaven in Germany, Brevik in Norway and Esbjerg in Denmark.

MARINElife will run monthly scientific surveys starting in February 2012 on the three routes with sightings and a research surveyor blog being posted on the MARINElife website (www.marine-life.org.uk). The data collected will contribute to a better understanding of the distribution and abundance of whales, dolphins, porpoises and seabirds in the North Sea. The research with DFDS Seaways contributes to a larger project operating on ferries around the UK coastline.

Roy Kersey, DFDS Seaways Plc representative involved in the project, said: "We are delighted to expand our help to MARINElife so they can further develop the understanding of the wildlife in the area. We look forward to hearing more about the wildlife encountered on these routes".

Jo Wharam, Trustee for MARINElife, said: "We really appreciate the continued support of DFDS Seaways. Ferries, or Ships of Opportunity as we refer to them, are a very convenient way of carrying out off-shore surveys. They allow us to access the same areas of ocean and monitor for changes over time – vital information which forms the basis of conservation decisions".

MARINElife Research Director Dr Tom Brereton, said "The routes across the North Sea are particularly important as the area is the last strong-hold of the White-beaked Dolphin. This is a species which is impacted negatively by climate change. We currently study this and other marine species in the North Sea through the North East Cetacean Project".




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Editors' notes:

1.  MARINElife is a charity, established to co-ordinate and develop a growing portfolio of cetacean and seabird research and monitoring projects, chiefly in European Waters. Focal areas of work include whale, dolphin and seabird monitoring from ferries and other 'ships of opportunity', and research on Balearic Shearwaters, Bottlenose Dolphins and White-beaked Dolphins. Through these projects and collaborations, we aim to further the conservation of the wildlife of oceans and coasts through scientific investigation and educational activities.

MARINElife continues to work in partnership with a number of other research groups, spearheading an international initiative, the *Atlantic Research Coalition* (ARC) that aims to describe changes in the status of whales and dolphins at a European scale. Further information on MARINElife can be found by visiting our website at marine-life.org.uk and further information on the North East Cetacean Project can be found at northeastcetaceans.org.uk

2.  DFDS is Northern Europe's leading integrated shipping and logistics network. DFDS Seaways passenger ferries and cruise-ferries operate between Copenhagen and Oslo, on the North Sea (Amsterdam-Newcastle and Esbjerg-Harwich), English channel (Dunkirk-Dover), and the Baltic Sea (Kiel-Klaipeda/Karlshamn-Klaipeda/Sassnitz-Klaipeda). The roll-on roll-off freight service operates across the North Sea, English Channel and Baltic Sea with additional container transport services operating through DFDS Logistics. Further information on DFDS Seaways can be found by visiting our website at dfsseaways.co.uk

3. DFDS Seaways' passenger routes offer members of the public, as passengers, opportunities to see dolphins for themselves in the North Sea en route.

4. MARINElife is particularly interested in the White-Beaked Dolphin, a cold water species which is threatened with warming sea temperatures brought about through climate change. The cold, deep waters of the North Sea are



suspected to be an important area for this dolphin species, but current data is lacking. Other important species regularly recorded off the North East coast include Bottlenose Dolphin, Harbour Porpoise, Minke Whale, whilst rarer species recorded have included Pilot Whale, Common Dolphin and Humpback Whale.

5. Members of the public can report their own sightings of dolphins and whales seen off the north-east coast of England at northeastcetaceans.org.uk.