

## **WiSe CETACEAN CODE OF CONDUCT.**

Increasingly, whales and dolphins (cetaceans) around the world are facing modern pressures upon their environment – pollution, accidental capture in fishing nets, and disturbance from vessels, particularly high-speed craft.

Recreational activities in inshore waters have burgeoned recently, and can pose a major threat to whales and dolphins either by direct injury when animals are accidentally cut by the boat's propeller, or by interference or stress caused from the high frequency sounds made by the vessel's motor.

There is no reason why boats and whales and dolphins should not be able to co-exist if care is taken to observe the following rules:

**IF YOU SIGHT CETACEANS AT A DISTANCE, MAKE FORWARD PROGRESS MAINTAINING A STEADY SPEED, SLOWING DOWN TO SIX KNOTS OR LESS WHEN YOU ARE WITHIN A KILOMETRE OF THEM. ONCE WITHIN THIS CAUTION ZONE DO NOT APPROACH CLOSER THAN 100 METRES OF THE ANIMALS, AND DO NOT REMAIN IN CONTACT WITH THE ANIMALS FOR LONGER THAN 15 MINUTES.**

**DO NOT CHASE CETACEANS, DRIVE A BOAT DIRECTLY TOWARDS THEM, OR ENCIRCLE THEM; WHEREVER POSSIBLE, LET THEM APPROACH YOU. IF THEY CHOOSE TO APPROACH YOUR VESSEL, OR BOW-RIDE, MAINTAIN A STEADY SPEED AND COURSE**

**DO NOT RESPOND TO THEM BY CHANGING COURSE OR SPEED IN A SUDDEN OR ERRATIC MANNER; SLOWING DOWN OR STOPPING SUDDENLY CAN CONFUSE AND ALARM CETACEANS AS MUCH AS SUDDEN ACCELERATION.**

**WHEN LEAVING THE VICINITY OF CETACEANS IT IS IMPORTANT TO ESTABLISH WHERE ALL OF THE ANIMALS ARE, BEFORE DEPARTING AT SLOW SPEED. ONLY RESUME MAXIMUM SPEED WHEN YOU ARE ONE KILOMETRE AWAY.**

**ALLOW GROUPS OF CETACEANS TO REMAIN TOGETHER. AVOID DELIBERATELY DRIVING THROUGH, OR BETWEEN, GROUPS OF CETACEANS**

**AVOID CLOSE APPROACH TO CETACEANS WITH YOUNG. YOU RISK DISRUPTING MOTHER-CALF BONDS AND EXPOSE INEXPERIENCED YOUNG TO STRESS AND POSSIBLE BOAT STRIKES**

**DO NOT SWIM WITH, TOUCH OR FEED WHALES OR DOLPHINS, FOR YOUR SAFETY AND THEIRS. BESIDES THE STRESS YOU CAN CAUSE THEM, REMEMBER THAT, JUST AS IN HUMANS, DISEASES CAN BE SPREAD BY CLOSE CONTACT, AND CETACEANS ARE LARGER THAN HUMANS AND CAN CAUSE UNWITTING INJURY**

**ENSURE THAT NO MORE THAN TWO VESSELS ARE WITHIN A KILOMETRE OF CETACEANS AT ANY ONE TIME AND NO MORE THAN ONE BOAT WITHIN CLOSE PROXIMITY. REFRAIN FROM CALLING OTHER VESSELS TO JOIN YOU.**

**ALWAYS ALLOW CETACEANS AN ESCAPE ROUTE. AVOID BOXING THEM IN BETWEEN VESSELS**

**MOVE AWAY SLOWLY IF YOU NOTICE SIGNS OF DISTURBANCE, SUCH AS REPEATED AVOIDANCE BEHAVIOUR, ERRATIC CHANGES IN SPEED AND DIRECTION, OR LENGTHY PERIODS UNDERWATER**

**POSSIBLE SOURCES OF NOISE DISTURBANCE CAN BE AVOIDED BY ENSURING SPEEDS ARE NEVER GREATER THAN TEN KNOTS, AND BY KEEPING THE ENGINE AND PROPELLER WELL-MAINTAINED. ON THE OTHER HAND, CARE SHOULD BE TAKEN TO AVOID COLLISION WITH DOLPHINS WHEN USING SAILING BOATS OR BOATS WITH A LOW ENGINE NOISE AS THE ANIMALS ARE LESS LIKELY TO HEAR THE VESSEL UNTIL IT IS CLOSE**

**PEOPLE REGULARLY USING VESSELS IN AREAS WHERE CETACEANS ARE KNOWN TO OCCUR SHOULD CONSIDER FITTING PROPELLER GUARDS TO MINIMISE THE RISK OF INJURY TO CETACEANS**

**PLEASE NOTE THAT UNDER UK LAW, IT IS AN OFFENCE TO KILL, INJURE OR TAKE ANY WHALE OR DOLPHIN; OR TO INTENTIONALLY OR RECKLESSLY DISTURB ANY WHALE OR DOLPHIN. WITH THE NEW CRoW ACT AMENDMENTS, ANYONE COMMITTING SUCH AN OFFENCE COULD FACE UP TO 6 MONTHS IN PRISON.**

Remember that whales, dolphins and porpoises use sound as a daily part of their life, for locating and capturing food, locating and communicating with one another, detecting predators, and forming a picture of their underwater environment in often very dim light. Many of the sounds made by craft directly overlap the frequencies used by dolphins and porpoises, particularly those caused by cavitation of the propeller blade, producing a very loud broadband, high frequency noise. This causes interference with their daily activities, sometimes excluding them from preferred feeding or nursery areas. It can also lead to undue stress, particularly when mothers are pregnant or with small young. Scientific studies have shown that dolphins respond negatively to craft moving directly at them, increasing the time they spend underwater and often swimming rapidly away from the sound source.