

BLUE CONNECT



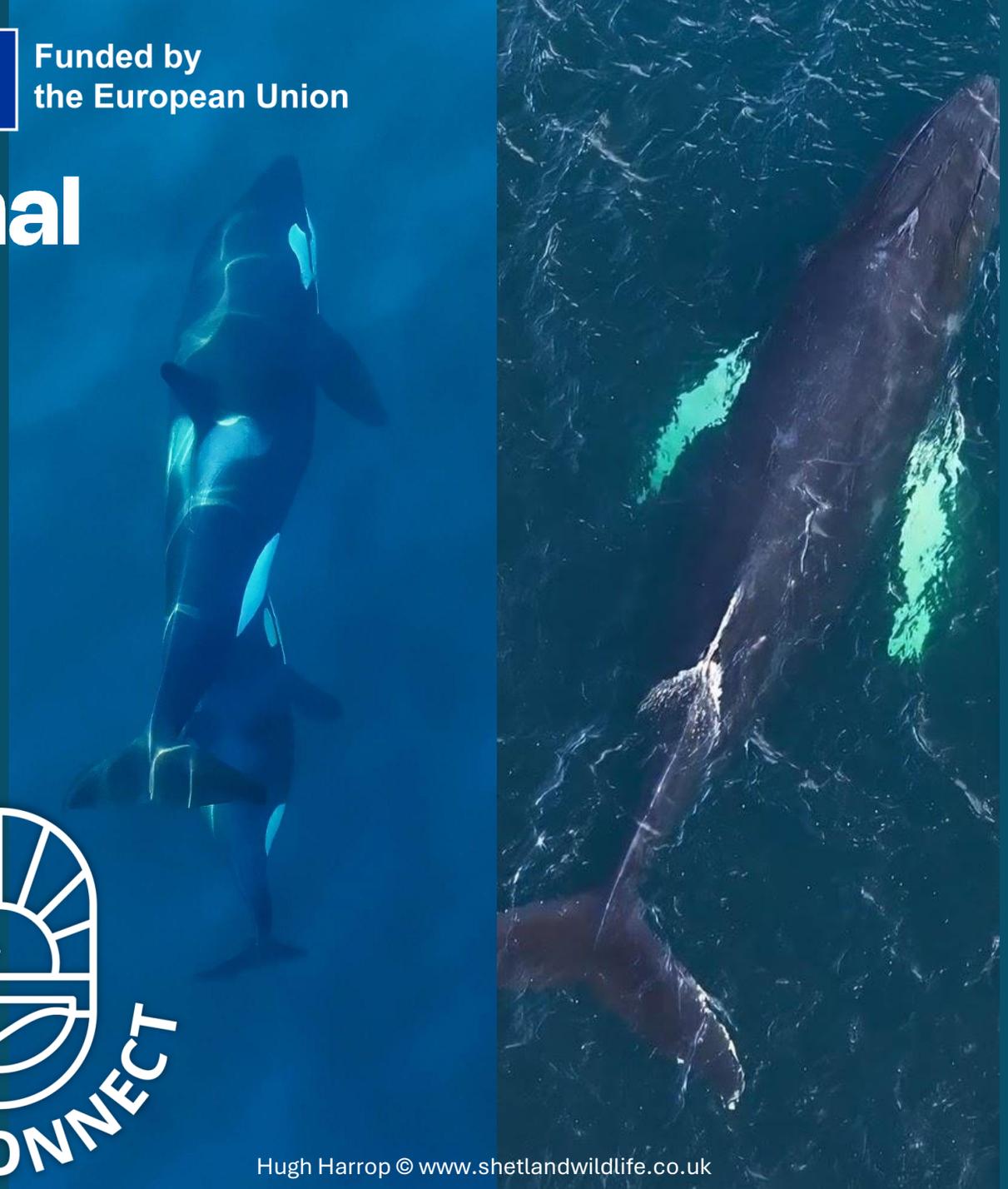
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Collecting marine mammal data within the Shetland and Fair Isle Important Marine Mammal Area

Emily Hague and Rachel Shucksmith

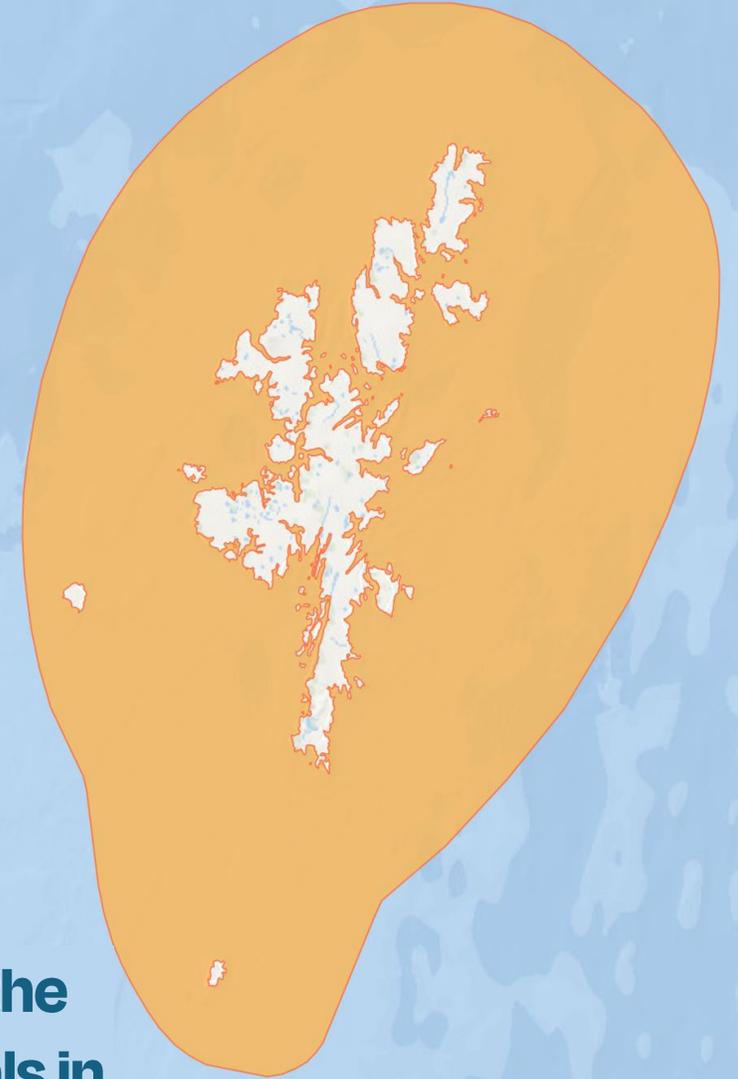
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With thanks to our Local Stakeholder Working Group, which includes Alice Walters, Katie Dyke (both WDC Shorewatch), Carole Davis, Bernard Siddle (volunteers with WDC Shorewatch), Karen Hall (NatureScot and Shetland Cetacean Group), Hugh Harrop (Shetland Wildlife and Shetland Cetacean Group) and many more..



In 2024, the waters around Shetland and Fair Isle were identified as an IMMA, meaning it was identified by a team of experts as critically important habitat for a number of marine mammal species, including

- Harbour seal (selkie, taing fish) – *Phoca vitulina*
- Harbour porpoise (neesick) – *Phocoena phocoena*
- Grey Seal (selkie, haaf fish) – *Halichoerus grypus*
- Killer whale (spekkhogger) – *Orcinus orca*
- Minke whale (herring hogs) – *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*
- Humpback whale – *Megaptera novaeangliae*
- Risso's dolphin – *Grampus griseus*
- Atlantic white-sided dolphin (looperdogs) – *Lagenorhynchus acutus*
- White-beaked dolphin – *Lagenorhynchus albirostris*



Uniquely, the evidence gathered to aid IMMA identification, and the data that contributes to long term monitoring of marine mammals in Shetland, is largely comprised of community collected data

To enhance community collected data on marine mammals in Shetland, BLUE CONNECT aims to support the further bolstering of community research efforts. This includes..

- A new programme of vessel-based marine mammal surveys, with community members participating as survey crew
- Recording local ecological knowledge of local marine mammal memories, to establish a historic baseline
- Collecting data aboard mainland and inter-island ferries
- Working with fishers to investigate pelagic fisheries interactions with large whale species
- Trialling thermal drones to support national seal monitoring
- Developing a remotely operated paddleboard platform for data collection
- Supporting efforts to reduce threats to marine mammals (e.g. in collaboration with the Scottish Entanglement Alliance)



Putting communities at the forefront of conservation

Learn more at

www.shetlandmarinemammals.com

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With thanks to project funders



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