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Association of German Wind Farm  
Operators (BWO)  
formerly  
Arbeitsgemeinschaft Offshore Win-  
denergie e.V. (AGOW)

## Press Release

To the Representatives of the Media

### **Follow-up study confirms: Pile driving for offshore wind farms with no measurable effects on harbour porpoise population in the German Bight**

**Berlin, June 26, 2019.** A comprehensive study conducted by the research institutions BioConsult SH, IBL Umweltplanung and IFaOe has investigated the noise-related effects of offshore wind farm pile driving on harbour porpoises in the German Bight. In summary, it can be stated that no negative impact of the noise-mitigated construction works could be measured on the harbour porpoise population.

The Association of German Offshore Wind Farm Operators (BWO) commissioned the study “Effects of noise-mitigated offshore pile driving on harbour porpoise abundance in the German Bight 2014-2016” (in short: GESCHA 2) for ten companies of the offshore wind industry. The study builds on a broad data base of underwater noise measurements as well as aerial surveys in the German Bight between 2014 – 2016. Furthermore, the researchers incorporated the available data of a previous study from 2009 – 2013. A total of 2.557 days of data were analysed and evaluated all together.

The participating companies decided to commission the GESCHA-2-study after the positive response to the results of the GESCHA-1-study in 2017. The aim was to make a further contribution to the on-going debate about noise-mitigating measures with a scientifically valid approach, considering that possible effects on population level must be examined over a longer period.

Harbour porpoises are the only whale species which can be found year-round in the German North and Baltic Sea. Thus, making them of special importance for nature conservation measures in Germany. Harbour porpoises are also classified as an endangered species. Hence, the study results are a positive sign for a successful co-existence between offshore wind activities and wildlife preservation. Temporary avoidance behaviour could be observed in an area of up to 10-20 km during construction work despite the existing effective noise mitigating measures. Yet, the animals returned within 24 hours after its termination. The fact that detection rates at the long-term underwater measurement stations did not decrease over the whole investigation period, allows the conclusion that effects of offshore construction works on the harbour porpoise population are extremely unlikely.

“The good news for wildlife conservation can equally be considered as good news for the energy transition”, says Uwe Knickrehm, managing director of BWO, “the study results show that the urgently required extension of the offshore wind energy sector for a successful energy transition and wildlife

protection do not have to be in conflict. Climate and nature protection can be harmonized by taking the right actions.”

The study aims at supporting the dialogue between the offshore wind sector and public authorities as well as environmental associations by serving as a transparent and comprehensive basis for discussion.

Technical background: Offshore wind turbines are set on cylindric foundations, so called monopiles, that are driven into the ocean floor. The foundations can reach a height of up to 40m. Complex measures are taken to mitigate the temporary noise emissions that unavoidably accompany offshore construction works. One standard method is the so-called “bubble curtain”, which reduces noise emissions extensively. The offshore industry is furthermore constantly developing new techniques and procedures such as “vibrating” monopiles into the ocean floor or “the suction bucket”-method.

### **About the Association of German Wind Farm Operators**

The Association of German Wind Farm Operators (BWO) is the national organisation for all businesses that develop, construct and operate wind farms in Germany. This allows us to combine forces to achieve a successful energy turnaround in Germany and Europe. BWO was initially founded in 2015 as “Arbeitsgemeinschaft Offshore-Wind (AGOW)” and has today 18 members.

The study was commissioned by BWO for the following companies:

EnBW Energie Baden-Württemberg AG, E.ON Climate& Renewables GmbH, Equinor Deutschland GmbH, Iberdrola Renovables Deutschland GmbH, innogy SE, Northland Deutsche Bucht GmbH, Ørsted, Offshore Forum Windenergie GbR, TenneT Offshore GmbH und Vattenfall Europe Windkraft GmbH

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