

Dr Sonia Mendes

MSc • 2000



What did you do at the Lighthouse ?

I did my Master's project at the Lighthouse Field Station in 2000, looking at the influence of the tidal cycle and tidal front on the presence and distribution of bottlenose dolphins in the inner Moray Firth. This involved many days of sitting by the Kessock Bridge with a theodolite mapping the surface frontal features and dolphin locations as well as some days on a small boat collecting data on temperature and salinity. The dolphins' occurrence seemed to be associated to the presence of the front. This suggested that the dolphins were using a predictable tidal feature to help with capturing prey.

What are you doing now ?

I am now a senior scientific adviser working for JNCC, with 14+ years of experience advising the UK government, at the interface of science, policy and regulation, particularly with regards to the effects of offshore industries on marine mammals and their habitats. I collaborate with regulators, academia, the navy, NGOs and several industries on projects related to the effects of underwater noise, the associated risk assessment processes, mitigation and monitoring. I also manage the UK marine noise registry, a database collating spatial and temporal data on noise such as that resulting from seismic surveys or pile-driving of wind turbine foundations.

What was your best experience at the Lighthouse ?

I fondly remember the regular tea breaks, not just because of the yummy cakes from the Cromarty bakery (I hope it's still running!), but because these were occasions for relaxed exchanges of ideas, scientific and otherwise, where you could share the challenges you were having with the statistics or GIS and there would always be a helping hand. There were staff and students from all over the world which brought with them diverse perspective and a great dynamic.

