A fairlead 20 guides the cable 14 downstream of the drum 18. The fairlead 20 constitutes the last element to guide the cable 14 before it drops down into the water. During towing, the inclination of the cable 14 may vary with respect to the longitudinal axis of the ship 10. The variations in inclination are caused notably by changes in the heading and speed of the ship and also in the sea state. One of the functions of the fairlead 20 is to guarantee that the radius of curvature of the cable 14 does not drop below a lower limit. The cable 14 for example comprises a core formed of electrical and/or optical conductors that allow energy and information to be transmitted between sonar equipment situated onboard the ship 10 and the antennas 12 and 13. The core of the cable 14 is generally covered by strands of metal wires that provide the cable 14 with its mechanical strength, notably its tensile strength. Below the lower limit of curvature, there is a risk of permanent deformations or breaks of parts of the cable 14.

Figures 2, 3 and 4 depict the fairlead 20 when a fish 12, attached to the cable 14, passes through it. Figure 2 is a perspective view, figure 3 is a view in a plane in which the cable 14 bends and figure 4 is a view in cross section in a plane perpendicular to the cable 14.

According to the invention, the fairlead 20 comprises at least two sectors articulated to one another. In the example depicted, the fairlead 20 comprises three sectors 21, 22 and 23. Of course a higher number of sectors is possible without departing from the scope of the invention.

Each of the sectors comprises a groove 24 for sector 21, 25 for sector 22 and 26 for sector 23. These grooves guide the cable 14 along the entire length of the fairlead 20. They are more or less in the continuation of one another. Each of the sectors 21, 22 and 23 runs substantially in the direction of the cable 14 while at the same time allowing the cable 14 to bend. Each of the sectors 21, 22 and 23 is dimensioned in such a way as to limit the maximum curvature of the cable 14.

In addition, the fairlead 20 comprises an articulation 27 connecting the sectors 21 and 22. The articulation 27 has just one degree of freedom to rotate about an axis 28 substantially perpendicular to a direction in which the cable 14 runs substantially through the fairlead at the articulation 27. ~~An~~ The