



Changes to procedures for recovery of certain marine licence decisions for Secretary of State determination

Response coordinator:

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Input:

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About us:

- [1] The **National Oceanography Centre** (www.noc.ac.uk) is part of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and is the UK national focus for Oceanography. It undertakes large-scale, long-term oceanographic research from coast to Deep Ocean. It provides national capability in oceanographic sciences, and advises government committees, industry and civil service departments on marine science issues.

Declaration of interests:

- [2] NOC welcomes the opportunity to briefly respond to this consultation. We are active participants in marine scientific research and would be impacted by changes to licensing that would place obstacles in the path of furthering the scientific understanding of the ocean.

Submission Deadline:

- [3] 25th February 2015

Consultation Response:

- [4] We recognise that increasing the role of Local Planning Authorities and IFCAS will be beneficial to local communities and encourage closer 'ownership' of licensing, and that enhancing the ability of the Secretary of State to be able to recall decisions is an important part of the democratic process. Existing legislation generally regulates marine research activities. We would caution that change to the criteria described for the recovery of marine licencing determinations could place harmless marine research activities into licence recovery categories, but in most instances the size of the projects that are under consideration and their closeness to the shore would mean that impact on science activities is minimal.
- [5] We would suggest that a **definition of 'novel activity'** [BOX 1] **and 'novel uses'** [paragraph 2.2] **is needed**. Research activity is frequently novel, although scientists use standard methodologies and equipment. Clarification would be helpful on the definition of 'novel', and for how long a given activity or use is deemed to be 'novel'.
- [6] Clarification on 'uses' and 'activity' would also be helpful. If this refers to non-invasive environmental research and observation, unlikely to need licencing as already covered by existing legislation and/or exemptions – different if it's a process such as ocean fertilisation experiments that can impact ecosystems. Where science activity has been undertaken outside an EEZ it is regulated by UNCLOS Part XIII and would fall outside the remit of MMO licensing in most instances.

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