

**NOC Association Steering Board
MRC Offices, 25th October 2017**

Attending

Professor Peter Liss, CBE, FRS, University of East Anglia, Chair (PL)
Professor Ed Hill, OBE, National Oceanography Centre (EH)
Dr Mark James, Marine Alliance for Science & Technology Scotland (MJ)
Dr David Marshall, University of Oxford (DM)
Professor Rachel Mills, University of Southampton (RM)
Professor Steve de Mora, Plymouth Marine Laboratory (SdM)
Professor Andrew Watson, FRS, University of Exeter (AW)

Professor Tony Clare, University of Newcastle – by teleconference (TC)

Jackie Pearson, Secretariat, National Oceanography Centre (JP)

Item 1 Chairman's welcome and apologies

- 1.1 Peter Liss welcomed the group and noted apologies had been received from Professor Angela Hatton, Professor Gideon Henderson, Professor Hilary Kennedy, Professor Jon Sharples, Julie Pringle Stewart and Professor Andrew Watson. Gideon Henderson is on sabbatical and David Marshall will be next year.
- 1.2 The importance of NOC Association will increase once the NOC becomes independent.

Item 2 Meeting minutes 29th March 2017

- 2.1 **Minute 4.2** – replace '*The problem is that studentships is that they are not*' with '*The problem is that studentships are not...*'

Minute 7.2 – replace '*Should we think about a working group and identify some topics? Angela asked if we could we come up with ideas of evidence for skills needed in the future? David Marshall agreed that a working group would be useful. Angela suggested the group consider some discussion topics.*' with,

*'Should we think about a **modelling** working group and identify some topics? Angela asked if we could we come up with ideas of evidence for skills needed in the future? David Marshall commented that a working group **would not be useful now as this has been superceded**. Angela suggested the group consider some discussion topics.*

Minute 4.3 – replace '*the Association*' with '*the NOC Association Steering Board*'

Minute 5.5 – replace '*NERC has requested an observer status as NERC can't be a member unless NOC remains in the public sector.*' With '***NERC has requested observer status to avoid the risk that its membership could be***

construed as a form of control and therefore risk public sector classification by the Office of National Statistics (ONS).'

2.2 Actions

Heads of Department need to do more to spread the word about the NOC Association. A presentation had been given to the NERC Science Board, relating to NC elements of the programme and a member of the Board had criticised the NOC Association, noting that a lack of communication is an issue. PL noted that one way to improve is to have an active newsletter. NOC news? We need to reinstitute the bulletin. Advertise the availability of the NOC news letter and circulate the newsletter link to the group. Maybe circulate information through the Challenger Wave newsletter. We need to be mindful of data protection. We could add links about activities to the NOC Association web site and provide updates through the NERC marine listserver. MJ agreed to add a link to the NOC Association webpage to the MASTS website and RM agreed to cut and paste info from the NOC Association web site and reproduce in Challenger Wave **Action:** Rachel Mills, Mark James and **Secretariat.**

Item 3 Update on *Compendium of capability*

- 3.1 There was a suggestion to make a hard copy of the database and a You Tube video to show how to use it. The Board thanked Jackie Pearson and Mikael Suominen for their work.
- 3.2 EH said that the NOC Association is one mechanism for building research around NC facilities. We could focus some activities around the NC dimension although this needs to be thought through. AW said that it is appreciated that the NOC is welcoming research around NC capabilities. EH said that the NC funding stream maintains long-term capability and this is now being rebid. Capability is national, should be available for all and enable other science platforms to be built.
- 3.3 AW noted the experience with the [RoSES programme](#). For long-term science projects that involve cruises, there used to be problems in achieving funding. For example, there needed to be a strategic initiative, e.g. this is our NC funding and here is funding for the community. This has been a source of frustration.
- 3.4 PL said that studentships are an example outside NC that is held by Swindon. He asked what the MSCC and G7 are doing. NOC is the big player. EH said we have lost some focus on the NC dimension and that it would be good to renew this. Studentships will still be handled by NERC once NERC and NOC separate.
- 3.5 EH said that members of the NOC Association don't seem to be feeling part of it all. This may just be one opinion, however, we do need to be mindful of this. There is a lack of focus on NC, a lack of understanding about what NC is and how to access NC. MJ suggested perhaps arranging a webinar of EH talking about NC.

- 3.6 SdM asked whether this issue was about NC or the NOC Association? EH said that NC does not seem to be widely known about by the community and neither is the fact that the NOC Association has a role in commenting on NC. Should we take 'NOC' away from the title of the NOC Association? SdM asked whether it could be funded by NC rather than the NOC? EH advised that there is no NC funding available for this. AW noted that the page on NC lacks information on how to access it. Should the NOC Association be funded by NERC Swindon? EH advised that this would not happen. There is a cost of around about £50,000 p.a. PL asked whether NERC centres should fund it. EH replied no, this activity is funded from National Public Good which is currently being re-bid for. PL added that the NOC Association needs more independence than it has at the moment and more financial resource. EH explain that there are three choices 1) Status quo and NOC continues to fund it 2.) a membership subscription or 3) NERC funds it but 3) won't happen.
- 3.6 MJ said we need to define what need the NOC Association should do. What are its core functions? A membership fee may facilitate buy in. The Scottish Funding Council supports MASTS. Is your focus maintaining links between NC and the community? EH said that NOC has a clear leadership role around NC. Above this, we want to be a good and well-engaged member of the community alongside everyone else. A subscription model could generate £3K each? £1k each? This would get more community membership. DM added, however, that this would be impossible for a small department to fund. RM added that we should not have the NOC Association asking for a membership fee. EH added that if the was a membership fee, there would have to be a name change. PL suggested we consider the model for the Foundation for Science and Technology (FST). The costs would have to be differential. EH said that there is clear focus in terms of resources and in terms of our purpose. This is around engaging the community around NC, plus international. There needs to be a defined set of statements about what the NOC Association is designed to deliver. **Action: Steering Board**
- 3.7 EH said a similar issue existed with the Marine Science Coordination Committee (MSCC) and PL said that the same problem existed with MEDIN although the task is well defined. We thus need to define what is going to happen with the NOC Association and whether there should be a subscription fee for members. EH said we can define part of the problem, for example, NC, what it costs and what we will get out of it. That would define the minimum expectation. Anything beyond this would require subscription. PL said that a pure subscription model won't work. EH added that when the NOC Association started, NC was a big proportion of our budget but today it isn't. NC used to be 70% of our science budget, now it is 30%. MJ asked whether it would be possible to write a refreshed aims and objectives of the NOC Association for the future. EH explain that, at the moment, the NOC is keeping the MSCC afloat and that Anne Brazier is running the MSCC from NC. The MSCC is about science for policy. JP advised the board that ~ 60 – 70% had fed back into the database. PL return to the question about what should the NOC Association be in the future? EH agreed to write a paper with AH around the NC dimension. SdM and PL offered to help. This exercise may conclude that the Association needs a subscription model. **Action: EH, PL, AH, SdeM.**

- 3.8 EH explained the NOC Funding Envelope, showing the NC element. PL agreed to construct a brief document which outlines what the NOC Association will do in the future, with defined activities and a consideration as to whether the title of the Association may need to be changed. At the moment, the name does not reflect what we are supposed to do.
- 3.9 EH referred to JPI Oceans and explain that NOC, in terms of NERC and Defra, is on the verge of pulling out of this. The subscription is significant and NOC will not be able to support this. MJ suggested that we explore areas where we can act more effectively as UK PLC. The UK needs to improve its knowledge in terms of operating internationally. PL added that we shouldn't change the membership at this point as we are on the verge of making changes to the Association.

3.9.1 Membership

DM agreed to talk to Prof Gideon Henderson about membership, off-line.
Action DM We need to do something about gender balance on the NOC Association. **Action: Board**

This section concluded with the action to create a document about what the NOC Association will do in the future and consider membership.

The Board noted that Professor Kennedy is retiring from Bangor so we will need to look for Welsh dimension to the membership of the board.

Item 4 NERC Marine Studentships

- 4.1 PL spoke about the action on the number of marine studentships awarded each year. There had been some concern about numbers. PL agreed to write a letter at the last meeting but Peter felt this wasn't worth it at that point as only one year of data but now may be a good time to write this letter and get two years of data. **Action: PL**
- 4.2 MJ advised that there is another DTP call coming out next year. PL agreed to send a letter in next few days. RM added that this data is in JES already. The students enter the data but their perception may not match what their supervisors have determined. We need to get what data we can from NERC but RM noted that there is a problem around terrestrial and earth.

Doctoral training programmes (DTPs)

- 4.2 In 2017 the CTD was awarded to Cardiff - *Fresh water in a changing world*. In November we will be shortlisting for the next CDT call. There will be an open DTP call in January 2018. The closure date will be in May and the result will be known by Autumn for an intake in 2019. There is an Oxford and Southampton model which can show how partners will work together. The timeline for the entire process is on the website. Previously announcements were made before recruitment which had not been ideal. RM agreed to pass this on. **Action: RM**

RM advised that most people try to deliver DTP that covers the NERC remit. We want more marine studentships but it is a risk to write a marine-focus DTP. It needs to be multi-disciplinary. RM agreed to check the time line and give PL the contact at NERC. **Action: RM**

Item 5 – Progress on NOC demerger from NERC

- 5.1 EH advised that at the end of March 2017, the NOC submitted the business case to NERC and BEIS and these were then resubmitted at the end of June 2017 for Ministerial sign off. The BEIS commercial team reviewed the cases. BEIS set up a committee, entitled *Project, Finance and Risk*, which was chaired by the DG and there was then a meeting with EH, Prof Duncan Wingham (NERC) and Prof Mark Bailey (CEH) in August. Then an iteration with Treasury about whether the case was inside or outside the Public Sector and it was concluded that the case would be outside the Public Sector. The case was approved to go the Minister. It is now destined to be seen by Sir Mark Walport, the DG for Science and Innovation and Permanent Secretary of BEIS, Alex Chisholm. Soon Ed will write to membership boards to provide the update.
- 5.2 The preparatory work to set up an independent NOC will be set in motion and would, for example, authorise the setting up of a shadow board and would trigger the NOC exit from NERC. A final business case will be provided then and then the drafting of the legal entity of the new NOC. The NOC Board, NERC Council and Science Minister need to all agree which will then trigger the new organisation. The British Geological Survey will remain within government on one form or another. The National Centre for Atmospheric Science is out of scope because they are not owned by NERC. We need to know what the NOC Association is going to be about – this will be important in the new organisation. EH advised that the new Board of directors will be formed in Jan 2018, thus there is only a three month window now for NOC A to decide what it is going to be. A letter to all is imminent.

Item 6 Training opportunities, courses and working groups – MEDIN

- 6.1 PL thought that the NOC Association should support MEDIN running a course of post-graduate students so they know how to access data. JP wrote to Mike Webb about this. The answer was no but we should go ahead and do it. Students will have to find money from training support grant. Claire Postlethwaite as agreed to organise. There will be no fee for the course, just T & S expenses. The course will be underpinned by NC funding. There is also MEDIN funding available. The [2018 Advanced Training Course fund](#) could be used for this. (Post meeting note - the next competition is expected to open in September 2018 for 2019-20 funding.) PL suggested that we should run the course once, see what demand is, then decide how to support in the future.

Item 7 Update on the Marine Science Coordination Committee

- 7.1 There is a sense that Defra is withdrawing support and there are on-going concerns on the resourcing of the Secretariat. Henry Ruhl has been re-

drafting the marine strategy refresh document. JP advised that Anne Brazier had copy-edited the original draft [post-meeting note: copy-edited down from 44 pages to 20.]

- 7.2 There are 27 different departments who have membership of the MSCC but not all turn up to the meetings. The Marine Industries Liaison Group has been proactive but is limited in terms of resource. The Underwater Sound Forum has also been very successful. This needs to be highlighted. There is too much use of acronyms and these should be clarified. SdeM talked about some reporting issues through MSCC which were 'patchy'. There is a concern about the visibility of the MSCC. There doesn't seem to have been a formal representation of MSCC to Ministers beyond 2014. In the early days, it did have a minister turn up to a meeting. There are some areas for improvement. SdeM was unhappy at the lack of attendance from some departments. Perhaps there should be a more thematic structure. The implementation of the Ballast Water Convention is an example.
- 7.3 EH said that the marine science strategy needs a refresh and needs to reflect new issues like, for example, Official Development Assistance and the global Challenges Research Fund and also, the interests of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the marine environment.
- 7.4 For the MSCC, we may need a more focused approach. Trying to get members to attend is challenging and it was queried whether there was a need for a more focused approach, in moving forward.
- 7.5 EH talked about the forthcoming *Future of the sea* report which will cover environmental and social issues and opportunities in marine industry. There is a need for a long-term perspective in dealing with issues in the marine environment. In the draft report, there were 18 recommendations. An overall report will be published by the end of the year. [Post-meeting note: the report, [Future of the sea](#) was published on 21 March 2018].

Item 8 The 8th Annual Meeting

- 8.1 It was suggested that the meeting be held on either 16th and 17th April or 30th April and 1st May in London. It was decided to hold the meeting on 30th April and 1st May 2018 with the Monday being allocated to the meeting of the NOC Association Steering Board and the Tuesday being devoted to the eighth annual meeting of the NOC Association.

PL suggested that inviting MP Jo Johnson to talk about his view on marine science from the perspective of the Government Office for Science as Mr Johnson has indicated he is interested in making a speech about oceans. Or we could approach Prof Ian Boyd, in his role as Chief Scientific Adviser at the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

- 8.2 other topics suggested include:

- Compendium of capability

- NOC demerger – Ed Hill
- MSCC marine strategy refresh – invite Simon Brockington and Scottish co-chair – Colin Moffatt
- Government Office for Science – how marine science issues are being taking forward. PL agreed to make the contacts necessary to Jo Johnson/Ian Boyd
Action: PL
- The shape of National Capability programme – Ed Hill
- Example of a successful GCRF project, the science, what worked, what didn't. It would be good to invite successful candidates to share their experience. Maybe have a poster session to be discussed during lunch, then highlight a couple for a presentation after lunch. E.g. three people to give 5 minutes on their projects, followed by Q and A. It would be good to have input from Prof Tim Wheeler and we should ask him to chair this session. We could allocate 45 minutes for this and include a panel discussion. We could possibly do a poster session before the lunch break.
- Considered including a presentation on MASTS but decided against this.
- The role of the NOC Association
- Industrial Strategy – Tim Wheeler

It was agreed to have a tea break that did not involve delegates leaving the meeting room in order to maintain continuity.

Actions

Increase visibility of NOC Association	Rachel Mills, Mark James and Secretariat.
There needs to be a defined set of statements about what the NOC Association is designed to deliver.	Steering Board
EH agreed to write a paper about the NOC Association and the NC dimension.	Action: EH, PL, AH, SdeM.
DM agreed to talk to Prof Gideon Henderson about membership, off-line.	DM
Do something about gender balance on the NOC Association.	Steering Board
Marine studentships - concern about numbers. Need to get two further years of data. Write a letter to NERC.	PL
DTPs Previously announcements were made before recruitment - not ideal. Pass this information on.	RM
Check the time line and give PL the contact at NERC.	RM
NOC Association 8 th Annual Meeting. PL agreed to make the contacts necessary to Jo Johnson/Ian Boyd	PL