

**NOC Association Steering Board  
30 April 2018, Camden Lock, London**

**Attendees**

Professor Peter Liss, CBE, FRS, University of East Anglia, Chair (PL)  
Professor Ed Hill, OBE, National Oceanography Centre (EH)  
Professor Angela Hatton, National Oceanography Centre (AH)  
Professor Rachael James, University of Southampton (RJ)  
Professor Andrew Watson, FRS, University of Exeter (AW)  
Professor Hilary Kennedy, University of Bangor (HK)  
Professor Tony Clare, University of Newcastle (TC)  
Professor Jon Sharples, University of Liverpool (JS)  
Professor David Paterson, The Marine Alliance for Science and Technology for Scotland  
Professor Icarus Allen, Plymouth Marine Laboratory (arrived at 2.45pm) (IA)  
Jackie Pearson, Secretariat, National Oceanography Centre

**Item 1      Chairman's welcome and apologies**

- 1.1      Apologies had been received from Professor Steve de Mora (Professor Icarus Allen represented Prof de Mora), Professor David Marshall, Professor Gideon Henderson and Julie Pringle Stewart. Professor Henderson is on sabbatical and Professor Marshall will be next year. PL welcomed Rachael James who attended to represent Professor Rachel Mills.

**Item 2      Minutes and actions October 2017**

- 2.2      Correct spelling of webinar at 3.5.
- 2.3      Actions on updating the minutes from March 2017 have been completed. [*Post-meeting note: the minutes from March 2017 will now be published*]. Actions for Professor Rachel Mills have been completed.

**Item 3      8<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting**

- 3.1      The membership of the Board needs refreshing so it would be good to let the community know at the Annual Meeting that there are opportunities to join.

**Item 4      The Industrial Strategy**

- 4.1      Bids have been submitted for wave three and wave two has started. There is an open call that will be led by industry. The Scottish Innovation Centre has submitted a bid on aquaculture. A UKRI infrastructure road map is in preparation and will be completed for infrastructure up until 2030. The Strategy is for large-scale infrastructure and is divided into themes, including environment. The NERC Joint Capital Advisory Group and government departments, including the Met Office and Defra will be feeding into the process. Industry contacts will also be asked for their input.

- 4.2 In 2032 the RRS *James Cook* will be 25 years old. If NOC applies to replace her on the road map, this may not get support from NERC. The NOC Association produced the publication, [Scanning the Horizon](#) which stated that platforms are needed for high level sampling and large volume biological and physical sampling. By 2030 the new ship won't necessarily look like the *James Cook*. There needs to be more horizon scanning and marine industry should be involved.
- 4.3 PL asked about deep sea vessels and work in-shore and in the coastal region and whether these activities will become fully autonomous. The US tried cabled observatories but these weren't a great success. This needs to be discussed with industry. We haven't made as much progress as we could have done. If there is more investment, e.g. more sensors, there may be more interest from industry. The aerospace industry is a good example. One of the themes on the Strategy is on artificial intelligence. It would be good to hear the NERC view on this. TC reminded members about the Shell Ocean Discovery XPRIZE.

## **Item 5 MSCC Update**

- 5.1 The MSCC met in March. An update of the strategy will be published soon. The Government Office for Science Foresight project report, [Future of the Seas](#) was published in March 2018 and includes the pillars of national interest, marine economy, environment and social dimensions and more strategic, long-term, globally-facing plan. At the NOC Association Annual Meeting, Defra's Dr Simon Brockington will give his view on the MSCC and the other working groups.
- 5.2 The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) met in April in London and a number of commitments were made, including around coral reef protection and marine plastics. The CHOGM Secretariat has been working on the Commonwealth Blue Charter. Thérèse Coffey, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at Defra, attended a number of the events held, including the marine showcase held at the National Oceanography Centre. Cefas brought their ship into London and highlighted issues concerning the waters of commonwealth island states that are now getting new infrastructure to help manage their environment. The events helped to raise the profile of UK marine science and the UK will continue to Chair the CHOGM for the next couple of years.

## **Item 6 National Capability (NC) programme update**

- 6.1 AH talked about the NC long-term science single programme (National Capability Science - Single Centre (NCS-SC)), Climate Linked Atlantic Sector Science (CLASS) programme which involves SAMS, SAHFOS/MBA, SMRU, NOC. CLASS starts on 1 April and will run for five years and aims to provide data, models and technology to help understand impacts of climate change and human activities on Atlantic Ocean environments. CLASS will underpin a range of actions including UK commitments to international observing programmes and will involve development and deployment of marine robotic

platforms and sensors, combined with ocean modelling and satellite remote sensing.

- 6.2 The Atlantic Meridional Transect programme is funded by NERC NC and informs on changes in biodiversity and function of the Atlantic ecosystem. Only limited funding is available, however, so the UK needs to engage with as many international colleagues as possible. This point will be highlighted during the talk to be given by Dr Penny Holliday at the NOC Association Annual Meeting. It would be helpful if members of the Board could suggest scientists who could participate.
- 6.3 AW queried whether there is any funding available from NERC as the situation has become difficult on mixed science programmes. AH advised NC funding has been cut so there is a limit on how many NC staff can participate on expeditions, creating opportunities for other to participate. Expeditions may be highlighted on the POGO web site. NOC will issue an expedition programme for the next five years to enable scientists to apply to take part. Upcoming expeditions include one to the Darwin Mounds and Whittard Canyon. It is hoped to engage more participants, including students. AW said that historically, extra money was provided to enable other members of the community to participate and this was a good initiative. AH would mention this to NERC's Professor Tim Wheeler and asked if AW could also highlight this.
- 6.4 The CLASS programme has funding of ~ £23M, over five years. There will be an Executive Board and Advisory Group which will include Hermione Coburn (Dynamic Earth), David Marshall, Murray Roberts, Helene Hewitt (MET Office), Rowan Sutton, Peter Liss, Rachel Mills and Stephen Dye. The NOC Association can help. PL mentioned that the new NERC Council includes Gideon Henderson, Julia Slingso and Karen Lockte. Although Council is now smaller, it is more scientifically focused.
- 6.5 When UKRI formed, the funding was ring-fenced between the elements. At the moment, each Council keeps its own budget. Once UKRI is running, they may decide, during the next Comprehensive Spending Review, to vary the balance between the councils. Although the Research Councils (RC) have tried to increase their baselines, RC budgets are unlikely to increase. UKRI is driven by new funding initiatives and large sums of money are supporting small areas. e.g. the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCFR) and the Industrial Strategy Research Fund. The Strategic Priorities Fund is another new programme.
- 6.6 PL referred to the on-going concern that there have been fewer marine PhD studentships since the introduction of Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs). Data from NERC seems to confirm this. During the years before the DTPs (2010 – 2013), marine science, on average, achieved 87 PhDs per year. The figure from 2014 – 2017 reduces to 74, so the concern is confirmed. PL advised that he did not receive figures for 2017 so had had to scale them but nonetheless, the numbers have declined. AH asked if studentship numbers have decreased in general but PL said that this was not the case.

## Item 7      **NOC demerger**

- 7.1      NOC has negotiated the terms of the separation from NERC and issues concern transfer of assets, indemnities against liability, governance and the question around the financial resilience of the organisation.
- 7.2      The next phase is dependent upon NERC, which does not have delegated authority to cover all the areas, some of which will need Treasury approval. There is slippage in the time table and although we'd hoped to complete by November 2018, this is unlikely. It will now be May or April 2019 for the go-live. We anticipate setting up the company limited by guarantee soon.

## Item 8      **Future role of the NOC Association**

- 8.1      PL spoke about the intention for the NOC Association to have observer status on the new NOC Board. The Association will become even more important after NOC splits from NERC to ensure that the community retains a voice. EH referred to para. three of meeting paper <sup>(1)</sup>, **Proposed changes to the NOC Association**. The focus is about engagement of the science community with the NOC-led NC-funded capability. NC is what makes NOC the national centre. A national role is around the NOC-led NC, some of which goes beyond and into institutions which are not NOC, e.g. PML. <sup>(1)</sup>*The paper is not for onward circulation.*
- 8.2      EH referred to para. 13 noting that there have been changes. NOC now has an even stronger role. The NC bids have been submitted and led by NOC, at NERC's request. At the moment, the NOC Association tends to focus on what NOC delivers, perhaps forgetting that others, e.g. PML are worthy of equal scrutiny, in terms of the area they deliver.
- 8.3      The financial situation has changed radically since 2010 and the table on page three shows the extent, e.g. 10% of NOC's entire science budget is marine focused NC science so only focusing on this 10% is unbalanced. In terms of NOC science, NC is less than 30% of everything we do. The rest of NOC science funding is competed so it is important to look at NC but not focus on this. In terms of governance, NOC will not be answerable directly to NERC although NERC will still have a strong influence. The observer status should not be focus on 10% of our budget. If the focus is on the 57% (including NMF, Data and S&F), this would make more sense. Resources are constrained and funded through the NC budget but spread thinly.
- 8.4      The Association is a key vehicle for engagement for the marine science community. The Association will not spread itself across all aspects of NOC though and should avoid duplication e.g. avoid overlap with the Challenger Society. We also have the Marine Facilities Advisory Board (MFAB) which is a big slice of the 57%. It may be sensible for MFAB to be within the NOC Association. EH referred to the single science bid and suggested it may make sense to draw the MFAB into the NOC Association.

- 8.5 NOC resources the NOC Association. The other way to fund it would be by subscription and it would then be owned by the community, however, there has been no indication of appetite for this from the community for a subscription based model, so our preference is for option three. *Post meeting note: this was reference to Table 2 of the paper, 'Proposed changes to the NOC Association' which was circulated with the meeting papers.*
- 8.6 The Association represents the marine science community in terms of NC. The new NOC board will listen to NOC Association representation on specific items. NOC already supports the Marine Facilities Advisory Board and it would be beneficial if this could come under the NOC Association.
- 8.7 PL asked whether the new Steering Board would cover studentships, for example. EH said probably not as this is not part of NC. This could be reviewed instead through the Challenger Society.
- 8.8 PL said that it would be good to still have an annual meeting. AH said that it may be good to see if this could be reconfigured. Meetings could be focused around the wider NC engagement. The UK Marine Science and Technology Compendium should be covered under this; some of this could be covered through National Public Good.
- 8.9 PL said that it is important to have an idea of what the scope of the new NOC Association will be. The new organisation will have a bigger role and this will be a bigger commitment. IA added that NOC must be clear on what it can afford to manage. EH said that if NOC is independent, it is important that the community still has the confidence that the NOC is fulfilling its national commitment. This is why we thought of observer status for the NOC Association, so that there is a clear mechanism for the community to voice issues. This discussion is about ensuring that the NC discussion is properly represented to the new NOC board. We need to encourage people to engage. The Annual Meeting could be made wider. HK said that not everyone is interested in NC. It would be better if people could raise issues with the colleagues who representing them on the Steering Board.

The NOC Association will be called the New NOC Association, for now.

## **Item 9      Board Membership**

- 9.1 The next meeting for this Board may be the last meeting, for this Board. Complete a Doodle Poll for a date in six months time, November 2018.  
**Action: Secretariat**