

NOCA Steering Board – 9 May 2023

Participating

Professor Mark Inall, Chair (MI)

Professor Icarus Allen, PML (IA)

Alan Evans (NOC) AE

Professor Teresa Fernandes, Heriot Watt (TF)

Dr Kate Hendry, BAS (KH)

Professor Angela Hatton (AH)

Professor Ed Hill, NOC (EH)

Dr Mark James, MASTS (MJ)

Dr Clare Mahaffey, Liverpool (CM)

Professor Martin Solan, Southampton (MS)

Secretary: Jackie Pearson, NOC (JP)

1. Apologies from Mike Meredith and Kerry Howell.
2. **Minutes and actions from June 2022**
 - 2.1 **Point 4.** The minute had reported that the 'Respect at Sea' film would not be made public as it was a training video, however, a post meeting note advised that the content is on-line after all. MI asked about the reason for this. AH advised that it was always the intention that the film would be available generally as it was not only a NOC film. It was a NERC-funded project with international partners who were promoting the film. The video is publicly available and not part of a training package. MJ advised that MASTS may have removed the film, however, this isn't necessary although should be marked as a training video. **Action 8: complete.**
 - 2.2 **Action 9:** Carry forward, discuss with MI before publishing. **JP, MI**
 - 2.3 **Action 12:** Concerns whether Delivery Partner membership on the NOCA Steering Board should include Nick Owens and Willie Wilson. The other centres are already on the Board to represent NC, e.g., CLASS programme delivery. Needs to be consistency in representation. **EH**
3. **Update on activities of the National Decade Committee – Alan Evans (AE)**
 - 3.1 AE's role within the NDC is as a member of the UK delegation to the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC). The UK delegation to the IOC, Defra and the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) have permanent seats on the NDC. There are 16 members; membership is renewed every three years. Meetings have been held in July 2022, September 2022 and March 2023. NDC is co-chaired by the FCDO and Defra. The Secretariat is recruiting an independent Chair.
 - 3.2 Five working groups: 1.) To develop a business statement 2.) Communications 3.)

Internal infrastructure 4.) Stakeholder Engagement 5.) Identifying 'Decade' calls. There are four sub-committees: 1.) Communications and Engagement 2.) Internal engagement 3.) Engagement with UK community on Decade calls and 4.) Science into policy. The NDC doesn't have funding and there is no government funding for the Decade. The DWG is important so the NDC will invite a member to a meeting.

- 3.3 AH: NDC's Emma MacKinley has joined the DWG so is now a link. The DWG is trying to generate ideas within NERC, encourage the community to develop Centres for Doctoral Training and think about Highlight Topics, based on the outcomes of the Royal Society meeting. AH is happy to ask DWG's Professor Peter Liss to attend an NDC meeting to update about the DWG's ideas. If the NDC needs anything, AE to let the DWG know via JP.
- 3.4 The DWG is not a NOCA working group; this needs to be made clear in discussions. The NDC doesn't appear to be connected to the key funders, i.e., research councils. The DWG could become a NOCA committee if preferred, however, originally, it was meant to be an independent group. IA felt that the DWG will be more effective if independent. A concern was expressed about the apparent slow progress by the NDC and the risk that Government might lose interest. AE: the NDC started as part of the MSCC International Working Group, so this is not a cold start, however, the evolution has taken time.
- 3.5 MS: There is a lot of confusion about the Ocean Decade; how do people get involved; what are the official channels? Communication around this subject needs to be improved. AE: the NDC website is being set up which will help.
- 3.6 MJ: If there are examples of countries where the Decade is being progressed well, there should be a discussion about how to replicate their success. AE advised that guidelines on best practice will be issued and that the list of UK lead programmes will go on the NDC website. AE to update the Board in six months.

Action 14: JP & AE

4 Upscaling Autonomy Working Group (UAWG) – Mark Inall

- 4.1 There have been three webinars on the aspirations for NERC in terms of upscaling autonomy with reference to NZOC. We ran a discussion round table in April and the draft report will be provided to this group in the next couple of months. MI will update the community at the June NOCA AGM.

5. The Rock Store Working Group (WG)

- 5.1 This working group, inherited from the Marine Facilities Advisory Board, is headed by Dr Suzanne MacLachlan, Curator of the British Ocean Sediment Core Research Facility. A survey will be announced at the NOCA AGM.
- 5.2 MI: it might be appropriate for a member of this Board to be on the Rock Store Working Group. The WG doesn't have any representatives from MFAB or NOCA. Dr Kate Hendry agreed to join. **Action: 15 JP**
- 5.3 This WG will be important to help understand the scale of this problem.

BOSCORF is funded-NC, however, there appears to be a gap in capability, relating to rocks, particularly those collected by ROVs. Samples may have no metadata or a record of where they are. KH is asked to report back to the next meeting. **Action: 16 KH**

6 The NOCA Annual General Meeting

- 6.1 IA suggested changing the order of the agenda so that 'accessibility to ship-based research' is at the start. MS sent the following link on this: <https://www.science.org/content/article/unfair-medical-screening-plagues-polar-research> which was sent to the speaker, Dr Eleanor Darlington.

Any Other Business

Update on Challenger, Defra, post MSCC – Ed Hill

1. After the disbandment of the MSCC, the Climate and Ocean Adaptation and Sustainable Transition (COAST) Programme was created inside government, to coordinate at departmental level (UK Government departments and devolved administrations are part of the marine evidence needs). The disbandment of the MSCC has 'left a hole' for those who are delivering policy advice.
2. Is there still something missing in the marine science landscape in terms of an independent voice? Bodies like the NOCA and Challenger Society partly cover this. There was a meeting with Chair of the NOCA, President of the Challenger Society and Prof Gideon Henderson to see what the interest might be in assembling a more coherent voice for the marine science community.
3. Initial thoughts were around potentially growing the Challenger Society to the point that it would have a Secretariat. This raised several questions e.g., what would the business model be? What would be the offer to members? Would it be an individual membership body? It was concluded that more work is needed, perhaps drawing on advice from a membership-based organisation and this is now with Mike Meredith. There was a suggestion that the Defra Chief Scientist might be able to provide some funding, but this has now gone quiet.
4. MI: Challenger Council is thinking about how the Society needs to modernise, to meet some of the needs identified, 'post MSCC'. Irrespective of this situation though, the Challenger Society will be looking at how to be more effective. Funding would help but this review will be conducted anyway.
5. IA didn't think that there was a need for another body as there are already too many. Possibly merge some. The Challenger Society doesn't represent the whole science community; the various marine biological organisations don't represent the oceanography community either. There is a need for a committee which speaks with one voice. Maybe a merger of some of these, to become an overarching society, which could represent the community.
6. MI gives anonymised updates from NOCA discussions to Challenger Council so

this is helpful. MS: NMF will give an update at the NOCA AGM, however, there are no updates from the ecology side and NC – for example, in terms of getting samples on board ship, there aren't great facilities in terms of cold rooms. It would be good to see more diversity of input, in terms of capability, in the question time session after the NMF talk. We need to ensure that we consider those who are not used to going on research ships.

7. MS spoke about AI and large data sets etc.; these are also part of capability - we need to reflect on where science is going so that the UK doesn't get let behind in terms of these new capabilities. This applies to 'low tech' as well e.g., Raspberry Pies, the Internet of Things - these types of capability aren't covered by a national centre. NMF may need to think about providing this. Data maybe an avenue, perhaps through BODC etc.
8. MI sees a gap between the TRM and data services. MS: We have an oceanography and ecology community who don't meet. In terms of NC, we need to think about all the community's needs - there may be technological solutions that NMF could provide, either at base, in an institution or on a ship. MI agreed to frame this as a discussion point for the AGM and commented that there may be a need for another working group. This would need to comprise those who work at sea and those who don't. MS mentioned the GERC report and agreed to send to the Board. **Action 17: MS** MI agreed that this should be added as an item to the next agenda item for the NOCA Board. **Action 18: JP**
9. MJ: What would the additional body deliver? Sometimes we make this too complicated. We just need a clear voice to government. It may be difficult to get everyone's agreement but there are mechanisms by which this can be done easily without setting up new infrastructure. This group could craft some words about what we think is required and this is how it could be delivered etc. It is important that government recognises that this is the credible voice of the community. MI: I don't think another group will be set up. Our WG reports are topic-specific and have community input, but we need to make them visible. **Action 19: JP**

Summary Actions

9	Document to go to the Challenger Society after final review by MI.	MI & JP
12	Discussion on representation of NC delivery partners on the NOCA Board to be completed.	EH
14	Alan Evans to provide the next update on the NDC in six months.	AE
15	Contact Dr Suzanne MacLachlan to advise that Dr Kate Hendry has agreed to join the Rock Store Working Group	JP
16	Invite KH to report back about the Rock Store Working Group at the next NOCA Steering Board meeting.	KH
17	Send the GERC report around the Board.	MS/JP
18	Include item for next meeting to discuss potential gaps in capability in the NMF Technology Roadmap.	JP
19	Ensure outputs from NOCA Working Groups are visible.	JP