

NOC Association Steering Board
1 May 2025: 10:00 – 11:00 UK time

Microsoft Teams meeting

Present

Professor Martin Solan, (UoS) (Chair) (MS)
Professor Icarus Allen (PML)
Dr Stephen Dye, Cefas (SD)
Alan Evans, NOC (AE)
Professor Teresa Fernandes (TF) (Heriot Watt)
Dr Mark James (MJ) (MASTS)
Professor Kate Hendry (KH) (BAS)
Professor Maeve Lohan (ML) (Challenger Society)
Professor Claire Mahaffey (Liverpool) (CM)
Dr John Siddorn (NOC) (JS)
Dr Will Homoky (Leeds) (WH)

Jackie Pearson (JP) Secretary

Item One - Welcome

Item Two - Minutes and actions

Action 36: completed

Action 37:

| # | Action | Who | Status |
|----|--|-----|---|
| 37 | Summarise concerns about the profile of Decade-related science to NDC Chair, Matt Frost | MI | Pending – post-meeting note – decide if this is still needed at the October 2025 meeting. |
| 38 | Ensure that NC science events are advertised as widely as possible. | JP | On-going |
| 39 | NOC has a document about the various different types of NC. Suggest shortening to four bullet points and including as a paper for information in the NOCA AGM booklet. | MI | JS is presenting a detailed overview of NC for the community. |
| 40 | Create plan for two-day AGM. | MI | Completed |
| 41 | Ask representatives to highlight NOCA meeting. | JP | Meeting emails to the NOCA ask reps to circulate to their teams. |

| | | | |
|----|--|---------|---|
| 42 | Invite Claire Mahaffey, Kate Hendy and Teresa Fernandes to extend their membership on the board. | JP | Done, 22 April 2025 |
| 43 | Clarify the situation of MFAB in relation to the NOCA. | JS & JP | On-going. |
| 44 | Ensure that the advert for new members makes the selection process clear. | JP | Advert did explain that there is a selection board. |

Item Three - Update on the National Decade Committee – Alan Evans

- 3.1 The UK NDC held a stakeholder event on 10 March, to bring the scientific community together, with colleagues in Whitehall, to consider what the direction of the second half of the Decade may be. The report from this event will be available shortly.
- 3.2 The NDC has to provide an annual report to the Decade Coordinating Unit (DCU) which reflects on what the UK has been doing for the last ten months. This is about bringing together an international coordination piece at the IOC.
- 3.3 There is an initiative to give NDCs sight of actions that have been submitted to the DCU, that require endorsement. Some NDCs were not aware of activities in their countries so this is an opportunity to address this.
- 3.4 The UK NDC has new members: Gareth Cunningham, Conor Savage Eliva Poloczanska, David Tudor and Katrina Ryan. Next meeting is in June 2025.

Item Four - The agenda for the NOCA AGM 2025

- 4.1 IA liked the NOCA AGM programme. JS asked if further clarification is needed around NC. MS asked for emphasis on areas other than ships and also how HEIs can engage with NC. JP to mention to Jason Holt about how HEIs can link into NC Science. **Action 44: JP to Jason Holt.**
- 4.2 IA: referenced BAS's contribution to marine NC and the NEODAS satellites. JS suggested including this in next year's AGM. **Action 45: JP**
- 4.3 IA: As Defra are joining this meeting, it is important to focus on how we can help them, so the IPY may not be relevant. What are the policy questions that Defra is interested in?
- 4.4 JS would be happy to discuss how we use NC science for different purposes, however we can't meet all requests as we are tightly constrained financially.
- 4.5 WH: There is a tender process, for HEIs to be suppliers, with a spending plan for the next eight years. This new process might mean that HEI engagement will be more effective, which may also help to address those policy areas that need to be prioritised. If there is a mechanism whereby HEIs can chose to be suppliers, we need more time to plan research and plan consortia that might link into NC. Could we task Defra's Dr Rohan Allen with this? For example, how will Defra engage with us

on sufficient time scale? Defra are trying to engage with a wider range of suppliers. The first deadline to register is imminent. WH shared a link, noting that the questions are not yet defined but the process of engaging with suppliers is live:

https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/Notice/015314-2025?origin=SearchResults&p=1#main_heading_anchor_3

- 4.6 SD: This option isn't available to Cefas, possibly because guidelines for suppliers to government are changing. Government is tightening up the ways that we can procure services. WH: Could this mechanism be a way to direct funding to NC? SD didn't know but commented that this sounds like sub-contracting. ML: This is more about ensuring that contacts are in place and will be a way of HEIs being able to offer services. This is about streamlining the contracting process, but it is unlikely that timeframes will be changed for us, so we need to be capable to respond quickly.
- 4.7 JS: in terms of NC (i.e. not NERC NC but national NC), how do we create a cross-Whitehall coherence?

Item Five - The impact of 'Marine Science UK' on the NOCA – John Siddorn

- 5.1 This is a new group and there have already been extensive discussions. It will sit at the interface between the wider marine science community and wider government and be a voice for the marine science community. There is an interim executive committee; we will launch something more concrete in one year's time. The group won't interact with NOCA although there may be an option to bring the NOCA under the UK Marine Science banner. We should consider if the NOCA, in its present form, is what we need. For example, HEIs interaction with NC can be problematic. There is an NC science stakeholder group and also, the Cruise Programme Executive Board, Marine Facilities Advisory Board and the British Ocean Sediment Core Research Facility. What does NOCA do in that context? SD: There are other layers of national coordinating committees and groups e.g. the National Laboratory Alliance. JS: We do lack a voice for UK marine science yet there are so many groups. UK Marine Science could be transformational in a world where voices are struggling to be heard. KH: The Challenger Society is also an important stakeholder with good links to HEIs and research institutes. MJ: we should be asking about the NOCA and the connection with HEIs. **Action 46: NOCA Board**

Item Six - How recent changes in government budget allocation may affect marine science.

- 6.1 MS talked about the links given, noting that we need to think about how these changes may affect NC. JS: although the NERC budget is flat cash, significant residual costs are being carried over. NC may be cut between 15 and 20% in real terms in the future, and this will be reflected in the wider NERC disbursements. There will be other opportunities coming through UKRI though.
- 6.2 KH: BAS NC was cut by 4% this year but if any more is cut, this will mean losing science. In the context of PRESCIENT, there needs to be better communication with stakeholders. We should be raising the profile of NC and showcasing why it should not be lost.

Item Seven - Broadening of reach for NOC-A:

- 7.1 MS asked if the NOCA Board should be conducting consultations. IA considers that NC will lose some of its function, going forward. It is important to get the new Marine Science UK group up and running as the funding cycle in the UK is at risk.
- 7.2 MS: Consider reviewing the purpose of the NOCA at the next meeting. **Action 47:**
All

| # | Item | Who | Status |
|----|---|-------|-----------|
| 44 | JP to mention to Jason Holt about profiling at the AGM, how HEIs can link into NC Science. | JP | Completed |
| 45 | IA: referenced BAS's contribution to marine NC and the NEODAS satellites. JS suggested including this in next year's AGM. | JP | Pending |
| 46 | We should be asking about the NOCA and the connection with HEIs. | Board | Pending |
| 47 | Add a review of the purpose of the NOCA, to the agenda, for the October meeting of the NOCA Board. | All | Done |