



National
Oceanography
Centre

2021 SUSTAINABILITY & SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY 2024

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INTRODUCTION

Message from the Associate Director for Corporate Business Support

As the national centre and a world leader in marine science, with the responsibility for leading and providing the UK National Capability on behalf of the UK government and the marine research community, we believe we should lead by example. As a registered charity with public benefit at the heart of the organisation, we will make a positive contribution to society by advancing ocean science and education, supported by continuing substantial public research investment.

Charities bear an extra responsibility to be sensitive to social, cultural and environmental aspects of their operations, with an emphasis on higher moral and ethical standards, beyond mere legal compliance. By committing to sustainability and social responsibility we are making a considered and deliberate inclusion of employee, stakeholder and public interest into corporate decision making that goes beyond the statutory obligations to comply with legislation.

Our new sustainability strategy identifies five critical imperatives aimed at:

- 1 Our people
- 2 Our community
- 3 Our environment
- 4 Business Operations
- 5 Research Ethics

The National Oceanography Centre culture is built upon its values and is embodied by staff who are encouraged to be open and honest, to behave ethically, to protect the environment, and to engage with the public.

As an organisation, we adopt (and work to) the Charity Governance Code and as part of our commitment to sustainability this will provide assurance to the Charity Commission, our stakeholders and many of our funding partners that our ethical practices are of the highest standards. Social responsibility focuses attention to ensure that all of the activities we embark upon have a clear intent and fit within our overall Charitable Purposes, providing an assurance route to the Board Of Trustees that we are living and demonstrating our values.

Our Strategic Vision

The NOC five-year strategy, sets out our vision and mission, and defines the steps that we, as an organisation must take. The National Oceanography Centre is committed in bringing about faster, sustained and enduring progress in making sense purposefully contributing and leading global efforts to achieve clean, safe, healthy, productive and biologically diverse ocean and seas.

Our vision, that by 2025, we will be regarded as the world's most innovative oceanographic institution, through demonstrating excellence across science and research. This is a galvanising goal that can only be achieved if the business is able to recruit the right people, with the right skills and the right attitude to enable us to achieve its aims.

Enabling Our Strategy

Our sustainability commitments will enable responsible decision making processes and give us confidence that we are putting social responsibility into practice and integrating it throughout the organisation. A key aspect of this is understanding and recognising the importance of stakeholder relationships, and being aware of the social responsibility across our entire sphere of influence. Our commitment will enable the delivery of our vision and will benefit both ourselves and the wider society by:

- Increasing the sense of social responsibility
- Greater stakeholder awareness of corporate social behaviour
- Enhancing our reputation
- Enhancing our relationship with government, collaborators, companies and suppliers
- Support perceptions of funders, Charity Commission, donors and collaborators that we are fit to operate
- Ensuring our stakeholders are actively involved in shaping and informing our work.

DEFINITION & PURPOSE

What is Sustainability and Social Responsibility?

The ISO definition describes social responsibility as the 'responsibility of an organisation for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment, through transparent and ethical behaviour' that:

- 1 Contributes to sustainable development including health and the welfare of society
- 2 Considers the expectations of stakeholders
- 3 Is in compliance with applicable law and consistent with international norms of behaviour
- 4 Is integrated throughout the organisation and practised within its relationships

Our commitment to sustainability demonstrates how we are socially, economically, environmentally sustainable. It should provide benefit to both the National Oceanography Centre and society using the principle of shared value creation.

Sustainability and social responsibility encompasses dual objectives that enable the National Oceanography Centre to act as a profitable company whilst providing benefit to society. This mutual benefit is a sound objective but also important to ensure long-term success of sustainability, grounding the commitment in a value-creation potential.

Our sustainability approach will ensure that we balance our resources and effort; deploying our resources to maximise the benefits to the organisation, our stakeholders, and wider society.

Social responsibility is intrinsic within our values, policies, procedures and processes and so ultimately our culture. Delivery of our strategy is built into our daily operations and decision making but will be guided through a sustainability strategy that keeps us focused on our commitments and goals. Our business model is built upon on our values, linking our environment with a lifestyle that favours strong social policies and support of environmental best practice.

ISO Standards

ISO 26000 Social Responsibility is based upon stakeholder engagement and public scrutiny of whether an organisation is acting in a socially responsible way or not. As a charity this is an ideal and very applicable standard to aim for and to work to.

The National Oceanography Centre will aim to work to the principles of the ISO standard to enable us to be clear as to how we will contribute to sustainable development and encourage us to go beyond our legal obligations.

What is the Purpose of Sustainability and Social Responsibility?

Sustainability focuses attention to ensure that all of the activities we embark upon have a clear intent and fit within our overall Charitable Purposes, providing an assurance route to the Board Of Trustees that we are living and demonstrating our values.

At a strategic level it can be seen to add value within four areas:

- 1 Image Challenges**
Social responsibility should form the basis of the National Oceanography Centre's engagement strategy. Using the communication avenues to forge the company message and values to our stakeholders whilst also being clear and transparent about recognising the impact of the company's activity on its environment and any corrective action we might take. This supports a better perceived value of the brand and therefore will enhance the company image.
- 2 Risk**
Working to ensure the National Oceanography Centre's risk management system dovetails with social responsibility will mean that we analyse the impact of our activity in relation to all of our stakeholders. We therefore will be able to assess any threats within the external and internal environment, such as risk to reputation or within the supply chain. Anticipating constraints and preventing risks enables us to develop a pro-active, rather than defensive, strategy to challenges.

3

Governance

Charities have a clear need for transparency. This means we need the highest standards of corporate governance that take environmental, social and societal impacts into account and can be clearly seen by our stakeholders. Creating value for all stakeholders means striving towards a system of governance where our leadership and management anticipate risk and opportunities, and take into consideration the opinions of our stakeholders when making decisions.

4

Competitive Advantage

The National Oceanography Centre's business model is built upon our values, providing an environment and lifestyle that favours strong social policies and support of environmental best practice. As a socially responsible organisation we aim to attract better talent by sending a strong signal to potential employees.

OUR COMMITMENT

The sustainability commitment defines our ambition to be an organisation that integrates business and employees' personal values. Our people want to do work that contributes to society within a company whose values they share, where their actions count and their views matter.

This document has been shaped and developed in response to the following key business drivers:

Five-year Business Strategy

Our business strategy, will enable the National Oceanography Centre to deliver its vision to be the world's most innovative oceanographic institution

Ethical Behaviour

The National Oceanography Centre's behaviour is based upon shared values which are the fabric of the governance framework and woven into all of our policies. Living our values commits us to behaving ethically and operating with concern and regard to our impacts on the environment and our stakeholders.

We will act with integrity to ensure corruption and bribery does not take place and we have a whistleblowing policy that provides our employees confidence to flag any unethical behaviour.

Transparency

The National Oceanography Centre will be fully transparent with regards to its activities that impact society or the environment, and how we evaluate our performance in these areas. Information will be readily available and understandable, and openly presented

to stakeholders. It will be accurate and based upon the best available information at that point in time.

Accountability

We will also be fully accountable for our impact on society, the economy and the environment, ensuring that we are answerable to our Board Of Trustees, the Charities Commission and legal authorities, aiming to work to high quality standards in all areas. If we identify any negative impact we will act to rectify and ensure action is taken to prevent reoccurrence in the future.

Human Rights

As an organisation we recognise the importance of and respect for human rights, and will exercise due diligence to seek to prevent or mitigate any adverse impact. Our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, alongside risk management, will support identifying, preventing and mitigating actual and potential adverse impacts.

Respect for Stakeholder Interests

The National Oceanography Centre will commit to considering the views of stakeholders who are impacted by our activity or decision making. Regular and effective communication and an open dialogue are fundamental to gaining mutual respect of our stakeholders.

OUR NEW APPROACH

Our commitments will enable us to prioritise social responsibility issues. We will monitor and report our activities using the framework outlined within this document.



People

Our People & Culture 2020-2025 will commit us to high standards of employee engagement, making employee wellbeing a priority and ensuring that our people work in an environment that respects and appropriately rewards them.



Operations

We will commit to have fair operating practices that are well governed and encourage, where possible, social responsibility throughout all our value chains.



Research

As an organisation we are committed to ensuring our stakeholders will have trust and confidence in all our results, the methods used and the processes by which these results were obtained. We will commit to ensuring that there is trust and confidence in the academic integrity of those who undertake our research.

OUR NEW APPROACH



Environmental

We are committed to the prevention of pollution and the protection of the environment. We will demonstrate continuous improvement of our environmental management and performance through regular setting and reviewing of objectives and targets.



Community

The National Oceanography Centre will commit to high standards of social responsibility through its relationships with its external and internal partners and stakeholders. Our engagement strategy will act as anchor to ensure we play an active part in our community.

Strong leadership and managerial ethics are a prerequisite to social responsibility, they enable and ensure that we live up to our commitments and that as an organisation we are living our values.

HOW WE WILL
GET THERE



Focusing on our employee relationship as well as their health and wellbeing

Employee Relationship

National Oceanography Centre is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, good relations between employees, and encouraging diversity throughout the workforce. We value finding different ways of doing things and the creative solutions that a diverse workforce brings, and expect our employees to feel respected to enable them to give their best.

Our policies and procedures provide good labour practices and encourage respect for compliance to legislation as well as consideration of socially responsible behaviours. The behaviours are defined within our values and reinforced within our Code of Conduct.

We recognise the value of collaborative working with trades unions, and the benefits trades unions bring to the workplace, such as consultation and collective bargaining; through which the National Oceanography Centre and its recognised trades unions can work together to further both the interests of its employees and the organisation.

We recognise that strong managerial and leadership ethics are critical to good employee relationships and will commit resource to training and supporting our staff to strengthen the skills across the organisation.



Focusing on our employee relationship as well as their health and wellbeing

We encourage open dialogue through Staff focus groups and regular open staff meetings.

Our Whistleblowing policy ensures that staff have a confidential and supportive route to raise any concerns of unethical behaviour.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

As an organisation we have a responsibility to exercise due diligence to identify, prevent and address actual or potential impact to human rights.

We will respect the dignity and wellbeing of all of our people and those with whom we are involved, and pay specific regard to our duties under the Equality Act, as outlined within our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.

We are committed to the promotion of equal opportunities, and in turn will look to build business relationships with those partners and suppliers who support and apply similar principles.



Focusing on our employee relationship as well as their health and wellbeing

All National Oceanography Centre staff are expected to complete equality and diversity training to make sure staff are equipped and informed of the behaviours aligned with our shared values. We offer a guaranteed interview scheme for disabled applicants, and ensure policies cover critical social issues such as modern slavery.

Our Equality Advisory Group plays a critical role in due diligence and ensuring that we proactively review and design mechanisms to prevent and mitigate adverse impacts, acting as eyes and ears throughout the organisation to support the avoidance of complicity. We will not tolerate any form of unlawful or unfair discrimination.

Health & Wellbeing

The National Oceanography Centre is committed to achieving and maintaining a high level of Health & Safety at work, complying with all relevant legislation and continuously seeking to improve its Health & Safety performance.

We are committed to developing a wellbeing culture, recognising that we have a duty of care. We also recognise that our employees also have a duty of care for themselves and others at work.



Focusing on our employee relationship as well as their health and wellbeing

As part of our wellbeing strategy, we see the value of going beyond this duty and we endeavour to apply best practice to enable our people to meet their responsibilities and fulfil their potential, wherever possible.

We ensure a healthy workplace providing access to occupational and employee assistance services. We will develop mental health awareness among employees, and encourage open conversations about the support available, committing to establishing a network of mental health first aiders.



Being a well governed organisation with effective business operations

Governance

This is effectively the systems by which we are lead and directed, our approach is not just about ensuring we are operating in line with company and charity law but encourages responsibility and accountability that will ultimately improve performance and ensure we operate in a sustainable manner.

We use two routes to achieve good governance; a sound governance framework for operation and an adherence to Charity Governance Code to align the required culture. This is detailed in the Governance Policy.

Fair Competition

We will trade fairly with our suppliers and develop relationships in accordance with our shared values. We will ensure that we operate fair competition, with documented due diligence of our procurement and financial processes and promotion of fairness throughout our value chains.

The National Oceanography Centre will not condone or tolerate fraud, bribery or corruption in any form.



Being a well governed organisation with effective business operations

We continually strive to ensure that all our financial and administrative processes are carried out and reported honestly, accurately, transparently and that all decisions are taken objectively and free of personal interest.

Business Ethics

As a charity we must ensure that sustainability and ethics are considered in all business decisions. The National Oceanography Centre has drafted an investment policy that provides guidance for short and long term investments, in line with our charitable obligations.

A good governance framework also enables strong business ethics that provides us with clear internal controls, our ethical decision making procedure is a critical aspect of that oversight. As part of our ethical business approach we ensure the highest standards of customer privacy and ensure that all information is appropriately managed and protected.

Supply Chain

Acting with integrity, the National Oceanography Centre takes accountability not only for sound social and environmental practices within our own premises but also the



Being a well governed organisation with effective business operations

environmental and social performance of suppliers and the wider supply chain. The procurement policies support and encourage compliance with NCVO's preferred Suppliers Code of Conduct. Where possible we will look to ensure good standards are adhered to through the whole supply chain, and use this as an important collaboration tool that will help in identifying, establishing and managing opportunities.



Excellent environmental awareness and best practice throughout all our activities

We value the ocean and the environment, recognising our reliance on it, and will consider our environmental impact in everything we do. The National Oceanography Centre has adopted the ISO:14001 management system for the organisations environmental commitments and standards. Our environment policy commits us to achieving good practice through all our activities.

Resources

The National Oceanography Centre's recognises the important role it has in managing the impact of its day to day operations on the environment and in promoting the principles of sustainability.

As an organisation we are committed to environmental responsibility and proactive environment risk management. We aim to take all reasonable steps to manage our operations so as to minimise our environmental impact and to promote good practice.

Where possible we will consider sustainable use of resources and improve our efficiency with regards to energy, water and materials, promoting prudent use of natural resources.



Excellent environmental awareness and best practice throughout all our activities

Biodiversity

We consider the impact of activity on the local environment, valuing and protecting the biodiversity of our local and wider environment.

Responsibility

The National Oceanography Centre will consider sustainable procurement, understanding the environmental impact associated with the processes, goods and services of the full life cycle, with a view to minimising environmental impacts. Where they are unavoidable we will mitigate through environmental impact assessments. We will proactively run awareness events that encourage staff to act responsibly, provide training and running programmes to increase environmental awareness.

Waste

As one of our values, we are committed to reducing our environmental footprint in all areas of our business through the reduction of waste and active management of our recycling programmes.



Excellent environmental awareness and best practice throughout all our activities

Ship Operations

We understand that operating two ocean going research vessels will leave an impression on our environment, we will monitor and report to be open and transparent of any imprint that we leave.

The National Oceanography Centre will commit to operating our vessels to a Ship Energy Efficiency Management Plan, in line with IMO guidelines, but seeking to exceed those targets wherever possible.

We will continue to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment for every research expedition and introduce mitigating actions wherever possible.



Building trust and confidence in our academic integrity

Integrity

The National Oceanography Centre is committed to the highest standards of research integrity which lies at the heart of an effective and trusted worldwide scientific research endeavour. It is important that all those who use and are informed by the centre's research outputs can have trust and confidence in the results, the methods used and the processes by which the results were obtained.

There is an expectation that all researchers we employ, and those who are permitted to use an affiliation in the presentation of research and data, to be honest in the design, conduct and presentation of research.

Scientific Quality & Assurance

Research integrity underpins the quality and reliability of research outputs and of decisions made in the light of those findings.

Peer review is an important part of research activity, and provides a very important assurance on research quality and a safeguard on research integrity. Our researchers will normally be expected to submit their research proposals and publications for peer review. We will ensure best practice for those who agree to act as peer reviewers to declare any potential conflicts of interest, to treat any information received in this capacity as confidential, and not to take advantage of it.



Building trust and confidence in our academic integrity

Research Ethics

We will ensure that all research is conducted in accordance with appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards, with respect for all participants in and subjects of research, including humans, animals, the environment and cultural objects and locations.

The research integrity policy and the ethics policy provide guidance to all staff as to when an ethical matter should be escalated for consideration by the Executive.

Safeguarding

We recognise that in the nature of scientific endeavour in which research teams may be working with individuals or communities facing systemic vulnerabilities, and where junior staff may be dependent upon senior staff for mentorship and support, or where research staff may be engaged on short term contracts, presents situations in which abuses of power may occur.

Our pledge is to work on raising standards of behaviour across our sector, recognising the strength of existing good practices and working in partnership with the development research community. We will place utmost importance on the protection from harm and abuse of all individuals; including research participants and their communities, and those that volunteer, work (researchers and others) or study in the research sector.



Developing excellent relationships with our stakeholders, partners and community

External Stakeholders

The National Oceanography Centre has a broad and global stakeholder community and so we will ensure that we proactively manage stakeholder identification and engagement. We recognise the importance of creating opportunities for collaboration between the National Oceanography Centre and our key stakeholders, to provide a meaningful dialogue that will support our planning and decision making. This will be done through engagement plans that enable us to have confidence that we are collecting and canvassing stakeholder interests on a regular basis.

Local Community

Wherever possible and efficient, the National Oceanography Centre seeks to take account of the impact of its operations on the local community, building supplier relationships with local firms based in the Solent and Merseyside. We will ensure our organisation is embedded in the community by sharing our work with local people, and in turn ensuring our colleagues feel part of the local culture.

Volunteering

We offer staff the opportunity to volunteer up to two days per year, to dedicate to voluntary work or projects which give something back to the public or local community. Specific initiatives are down to individuals, but we expect that staff members will use the skills adopted in the normal workplace activities and further develop them through the voluntary exercise.



Developing excellent relationships with our stakeholders, partners and community

Public Engagement

On an annual basis we showcase our activity and demonstrate our contribution to society and science via an open day where we invite the general public to see the activities that take place at the National Oceanography Centre.

Throughout the year we host schools to educate them on the importance of marine science and to hopefully inspire a generation of new scientists. When we have the opportunity, we will invite guests on board the ships to see and learn more about our work.

On a weekly basis, we engage with the wider public through digital media, using a number of channels that open up our work to the world. Many of these media allow two way conversation so people can engage and learn further.

Our website is also accessible to a broad audience, and showcases our work and our people.



Focusing on our employee relationship as well as their
health and wellbeing

Employee Relationship

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Health & Wellbeing

OUR OBJECTIVES

Our People & Culture 2020-2025 outlines a high-level commitment to staff:

- Demonstrating how we value leadership and build leadership excellence.
- Supporting continuous change and learning.
- Engaging and enabling our staff
- Supporting the health, safety and wellbeing of our people.
- Developing future skills and capabilities.
- Improving our ability to attract and retain the best talent.
- Promote inclusion and diversity, tackle inequalities and remove barriers which may prevent people from fulfilling their true potential.



Being a well governed organisation with effective business operations

Governance

Fair competition

Business Ethics

- Develop and embed a new corporate governance framework that enables good governance practice throughout the organisation and creates a culture of compliance
- Develop an ethical decision making framework that assists staff to make good decisions on ethical matters in line with the NOC company values and ethics guidance
- Provide robust evidence of due diligence in our procurement and financial processes and the promotion of fairness throughout our supply chains
- Be actively transparent and demonstrate integrity in all of our financial, investment and administrative decisions
- Be accountable and provide an appropriate audit trail for all important decisions



Excellent environmental awareness and best practice throughout all our activities

Resources

Biodiversity

Responsibility

Waste

- Maintaining and enhancing the quality of the our building environments, for all who work there, and for the wider National Oceanography Centre community
- The prevention of pollution and protection of the environment
- The continual improvement of our environmental performance and management through the regular setting and reviewing of targets and objectives
- Complying with applicable environmental legal and other requirements relevant to our operation
- Maintaining an environmental management system certified to ISO14001 standard
- Introduce an Inventory of Hazardous Materials on the ships by the end of 2020, ensuring our ships are a healthy and safe environment, whilst preventing environmental pollution



Building trust and confidence in our academic integrity

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|-----------|-----------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Integrity | Research Ethics | Safeguarding | Quality & Assurance |
|-----------|-----------------|--------------|---------------------|

- Develop dedicated training programmes for our staff around research ethics and research integrity.
- Work in an interdisciplinary, transparent and open manner to promote scientific quality and assurance.
- Promote and support scientific quality and assurance through the application of the highest levels of research integrity.
- Promote fair access to the work of NOC and thereby allow wider assessment of the quality and level of integrity of the work we aim to have >75% of our work published in an open access form.



Developing excellent relationships with our stakeholders, partners and community

| | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|
| External Stakeholders | Local Community | Volunteering | Public Engagement |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|

- Develop improved engagement routes for external Stakeholders that have clear purposes.
- Take steps to improve engagement and consultation with the Local Community.
- Better capture the volunteering days of NOC staff and pro-actively capture the contribution they make.
- Increase our public engagement traction, both face to face and through our online channels, to open our work up in an accessible way.
- Develop our future scientists by building strong relationships with young people and educational organisations.
- Ensure our community feels ownership of its National Oceanography Centre, and our colleagues feel part of the local culture.

PERFORMANCE & ASSURANCE

Committee Structure

As part of the assurance processes for the National Oceanography Centre, we will make sure that our sustainability and social responsibility commitments are embedded and integrated throughout our operation. This will be considered as part of our risk management process, treating threats to this strategy as possible reputational risks, and opportunities as a route to improve our image.

Due diligence provides an important role in our ability to achieve our objectives. We will establish a sustainability and social responsibility sub-committee that will be composed of the relevant technical experts to lead and champion the strategy across the organisation.

The committee will propose the objectives and associated KPIs for each topic within the framework, for approval from the Executive. The sub-committee will meet quarterly to review progress against our commitments and assess potential sustainability and social responsibility opportunities and threats. They will also provide guidance and advice with regards to the initiatives with a focus on ensuring continuous improvement within our commitments.

Due Diligence

ISO 26000 defined due diligence as:

Comprehensive, proactive process to identify the actual and potential negative social, environmental and economic impacts of an organisations decision and activities over the entire life cycle of a project or organisational activity, with the aim of avoiding and mitigating negative impacts.



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