

## **NOC Association Steering Board**

### **NOCA Steering Board 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020 Attendees**

Professor David Thomas (Chair, University of Helsinki) (DT)  
Professor Colin Moffat (MSCC)  
Professor Icarus Allen (PML) (IA)  
Professor Teresa Fernandes (Heriot Watt) (TF)  
Professor Angela Hatton (NOC) (AH)  
Dr Kate Hendry (Bristol) (KH)  
Dr Katy Hill (NOC) (Ka H)  
Professor Ed Hill (NOC) (EH)  
Dr Kerry Howell (Plymouth) (KHo)  
Professor Mark Inall (SAMS) (MI)  
Dr Mark James (MASTS) (MJ)  
Profess Clare Mahaffey (Liverpool) (CM)  
Professor David Paterson (MASTS) (DP)  
Professor Rosalind Rickaby (Challenger Society) (RR)  
Professor Martin Solan (Southampton) (MS)

Ian Folger, NOC Events Manager – for Item Five

Jackie Pearson, Secretary (JP)

Apologies: Stephanie Ockenden, Defra, Simon Brockington, Defra, Mark Inall, SAMS and Leigh Storey, NMF.

#### **1. Welcome**

DT welcomed Dr Katy Hill, Head of Marine Science Partnerships & G7 Coordinator.

#### **2. Update on NOC independence – Ed Hill**

- 2.1 EH talked about the new charitable status of NOC which has been in place for a year. NOC has a positive agenda going forward and concluded the F/Y in good position with reserve funds. The accounts are now being audited.
- 2.2 Dealing with COVID-19 has resulted in an interesting and challenging first year. NOC has kept operations going and got staff back into the laboratories. Both ships have been refitted over the summer and have been working.
- 2.3 NOC has made some key appointments: Cait Allen, Associate Director (AD) Engagement and Huw Gullick, Managing Director of NOC Innovations. Huw's remit is to generate extra revenue to support NOC's charitable purposes. There will also be an appointment of an AD Digital Transformation which NOC will announce in January.
- 2.4 MS asked how COVID has affected the operating budget for the ships. Funding for the NERC fleet is on a flat cash basis and a gap has opened up which NOC is filling with charter bookings. NOC will be underwritten by NERC if it is unable to meet the gap. A lot of this risk is underwritten by UKRI. NOC did lose a big charter

unfortunately but has been making savings in other areas and is looking to deliver this charter in a future year. IA congratulated EH on a surplus in NOC's first year of trading and asked to be put in touch with Huw Gullick. **Action: EH**

- 2.5 CM asked about impacts from the transfer. NOC is hiring staff on new terms which offer higher basic pay but the pension isn't as good as the existing package. Staff have the option to transfer if they wish.
- 2.6 NOC remains a science organisation but commerce will be an important part of its portfolio and there are opportunities of operating independently. There is an on-going cultural transformation. Any surplus funding is reinvested for the future as NOC no longer loses unspent budget at year end. NOC has instigated a progression points system into the staffing structure.
- 2.8 KH asked if there were concerns following the UK's exit from the EU. The NOC business plan model has assumed that there will be no EU funding so there is no dependency on it. If EU funding becomes available, that will be great but is not anticipated. There remain some areas of concern and uncertainty.

### **3. Meeting minutes and actions – June 2020**

- 3.1 DT noted no problems in relation to the minutes and thanked JP. Action 5.1 related to a position piece to show the importance of enabling economic recovery. We need to consider the audience for this, particularly now that the Spending Review (SR) has passed. The audience is a wider government BEIS group; some of the Research Councils would benefit so this has a potentially wide audience. There is a potential audience in NERC which will benefit from the SR. There has been a panel meeting about the ocean economy which articulates the benefit of the ocean environment.
- 3.2 AH suggested that rather than write a position piece, we need to think, as a committee, about how we promote science. We should all commit to promoting marine science to the groups we meet, to profiling key points about the economy, biodiversity and climate etc. and highlighting the importance of the ocean.

### **4. NOCA Steering Board Working Groups (Action 7.3, June 2020)**

- 4.1 DT asked whether we should distinguish between the key points of a position list and those of the Decade or whether these should be merged. AH recommended creating a small working group and reporting back to the annual meeting. The Decade Working Group (WG) hasn't progressed so perhaps we should change its ToRs to a more generic WG, going forward.
- 4.2 MS said we should be writing about how the ocean is integral to the earth system - a short, nature perspective's piece that would get exposure, would add to the debate.
- 4.3 Ka H said that Government is keen for concise, targeted information that is fit for purpose and profiles the challenges and opportunities. She recommended concise briefing notes of no more than two to four pages, with diagrams. We need to think

about how we demonstrate leadership; what do we want to promote in terms of our capabilities; what does the UK want to progress through the Decade? We need to identify the UK's key strengths, capabilities and emerging needs.

- 4.4 DT concluded we need to combine actions 5.1, 5.8 and 7.3 and rethink the WG. It would be good to get a published positioning paper as an outcome. AH suggested that Kevin Horsburgh and Katy Hill could bring this group together, perhaps with a new chair. **Action: KA H**

**MS missed this input – sorry.**

- 4.5 DT agreed to amalgamate actions 5.1, 5.8 and 7.3 and asked that GERC (Global Environmental Research Committee) colleagues are asked to provide input. AH and MS need to be part of the discussion. MS advised that there is a report that can be shared. **Action: MS.**

## 5. **Finalising the 2021 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the NOC Association – date, format, topics and speakers.**

DT welcomed Ian Folger, NOC Events Manager, who joined for this item.

- 5.1 IF advised there are several commitments in June and July so it would be best to avoid this time. Also, there will be lot of precautionary COVID-19 measurements still in place, through to September 2021.
- 5.2 MS recommended staying virtual but make the decision early. We should time the meeting beyond term time and use the best practices from other conferences that have been conducted virtually. AH suggested splitting the meeting into a couple of slots of half days as one full virtual day is too much.
- 5.3 By May COP26 will be well advanced. MJ said it has been complicated trying to engage with COP. MASTS has applied for observer status but won't know the outcome for a while. MASTS is planning a series of events for COP which will help raise awareness.
- 5.4 Ka H said that COP is a big event; we need to be strategic about how to get involved. She is happy to discuss further, off-line.
- 5.5 The Board agreed that the NOCA AGM will be virtual, in mid-May, spread over two days, with sessions lasting no more than two hours each and no more than two sessions per day. The agenda will include a presentation on the current status of COP26. We should increase levels of interaction and avoid lengthy presentations (no more than six to eight minutes each) with break-out sessions. **Action: JP**
- 5.6 The meeting should have the title '**UK marine science – new opportunities for the future**' and the following is a list of topics suggested by the Board.
- 5.7 **Suggested agenda topics**

IF agreed to minimising screen time and including breaks. Recording sessions is helpful for when delegates need to duck in and out. We know this from 'on-demand'

figures for the Marine Autonomy and Technology Showcase. He advised leaving a reasonable amount of time for questions and answers after the presentations.

- 1.) COP 26 & G7 – Dr Katy Hill, G7 Co-ordinator
- 2.) COVID working group – Dr Kate Hendry, University of Bristol
- 3.) Net Zero Oceanographic Capability (NZOC), Leigh Storey, NOC
- 4.) The NERC research fleet, ship time and marine planning – Dr Natalie Powney, NERC
- 5.) Developments in autonomous underwater vehicles – Dr Alex Phillips, NOC
- 6.) Funding landscape for marine science, moving forward and how we might influence it - NERC Director of strategic partnerships, Dr Iain Williams, NERC
- 7.) Addressing the issues of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in marine science - speaker?
- 8.) What are the costs of global oceanography programmes? How much will the Decade cost? How will we deliver it properly and what happens if there is a short fall? EH referred to sustainable global observations, much of which is not well defined. There are high levels of ambition which come with price tags which are hard to quantify. MS added that we know roughly how much £10 million scheme is and how many grants that will cover. Formal financial costing isn't needed, just ball park figures and ship-time should be included.
- 9.) Outputs from the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and Official Development Assistance (ODA) – would be nice to know what has been delivered and whether we should be defending this. Are there any statistics on this? It's possible that the GCRF may cease to exist so a session on GCRF and ODA good news stories would be powerful. Whilst it's true that the GCRF may be in doubt, there will be some UKRI funding for international engagement. Agreed to GCRF/ODA good news stories.
- 10.) CM commented that we will have a big challenge in making ocean science attractive for undergraduates and she expressed concern that in the future, students might choose to study virology instead. We are not doing a good job advertising this to schools so perhaps there should be a session on training, ECAs...etc. DT agreed that there should be a session on how to attract the next generation of marine scientists. 'Encouraging the next generation of marine scientists – training opportunities and life as an Early Career Researcher (ECR)'. Regarding ECRs – there have been questions about job security; perhaps we should get data from NERC on what people have requested on grants in terms of lengths.

#### **Format: For a selection of six sessions**

- Limit sessions to two hours
- No more than two sessions per day
- Presentations no more than six – eight minutes long
- Include breaks, break-out sessions and opportunities for questions and interaction.
- Record sessions and pre-record so that delegates can see in advance.
- Get David Thomas, Ian Folger, Mark James and Jackie Pearson together to discuss format. **Action: JP**
- Plenary speakers? Unusual topics e.g. migration to the coasts...
- What about mini-plenary sessions?
- Get presentations on line before hand and get questions in advance.
- To note: some topics will require introduction.

- 5.9 There is the timeliness for the year 2021 with lots of issues which has built in a sense of urgency so EH suggested the meeting title, “*Marine science - on the cusp of new opportunities for the future*” and said it will be important to get a sense of urgency into the strapline. IA commented we need to recognise that we are in a transition point over the next 12 to 24 months and the community must be ready to adapt to change, with embracing new ways of working and operating.
- 5.9.1 Arrange meeting with David Thomas, Ian Folger and Mark James to discuss format. **Action: JP (Update: Scheduled for 20 January 2021)**
- 5.9.2 MS asked if there will be plenary speakers and whether we get some whom we are not used to hearing from, for example, migration to the coasts. DT agreed there could be mini-plenary sessions. MS advised that some events include pre-recorded events with a 20 minute talk that people can see, for example, a week in advance.
- 5.9.3 It was agreed to have six defined sessions and consider two plenary guests. Some topics will require introduction. Questions can be added via the chat box. MJ suggested a series of short talks, then facilitated questions after. The Sustainable Management of Marine Resources (SMR) programme brings people together and is a UKRI Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF) programme. Should we bring in the other SPFs to link them into the marine context?
- 5.9.5 TF suggested putting the presentations on line beforehand so that questions can be raised beforehand.
- 5.9.6 MS concluded this session by advising that the minutes from the latest GERC meeting will be available in January 2021. In the N/Y, he agreed to circulate these to the NOCA Board. **Action: MS**

### 27th January 2021, Part Two

Apologies were received from Leigh Storey, Prof Colin Moffat and Dr Claire Mahaffey. Prof David Thomas (DT) welcomed Dr Tarquin Dorrington (TD) who would be standing in for Dr Stephanie Ockenden from Defra.

## 2. Status of the MSCC – Revised UK Marine Science Roadmap

- 2.1 TD said there was no information at the moment because currently, the Roadmap is with Scottish Government. The draft is in the public domain but the detailed document is waiting for sign off from ministers. An MSCC statement on the ocean and the climate crisis is due to be published next week. DT commented that we should make this a starting point on the next agenda (**Action, JP**).

## 3. NOCA information sharing: the 2021 Super Year

### 3.1 UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development

- 3.1.1 AH agreed to put Decade information on a Teams site as an output from the GERC meeting. (Slides were circulated after the meeting). There was a ‘Decade’ meeting with the Royal Society’s GERC group involving 60 people from the UK. Four ideas

for actions were prioritised. The International Working Group (IWG), is a subgroup of the UK's Marine Science Co-ordination Committee and the UK National Decade Committee for the 'Decade' and will collate information about the UK's potential to input into the 'Decade'. A deep ocean twilight zone programme has been submitted which has UK leadership. There is a POGO sponsored programme about designing next generation microbe molecular biological observing systems. It would be good if information about UK involvement in Decade could be flagged to the Secretary of the MSCC, Dr Abigail Marshall ([abigail.marshall@noc.ac.uk](mailto:abigail.marshall@noc.ac.uk)). MI asked about the process for passing on information as he aware that there is a WHOI ocean boundary initiative which has UK partners.

- 3.1.2 There is coordination within the Royal Society. The IWG is seeking information on large-scale programmes, for example, internationals with multiple partnerships. There may be smaller programmes that are grouped together under Decade themes. We need to know where UK researchers are involved in big programmes. This will then help the UK to be better prepared for Round Two.
- 3.1.3 This is a process about endorsement, rather than securing further funding. We need to be aware of what is going on and understand how the UK's marine science community can get involved. The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) has been restructured to manage the Decade. We are seeing some big initiatives where the UK is playing a leadership role and we need to think about a strategy as to how to attract funding to some of these areas.
- 3.1.4 Although this is early days, the list of programmes will eventually go on to the IWG's web site so, as an action for this Board, please let Dr Marshall have any information on UK involvement in Decade. Action: JP to pass on details of Dr Marshall to the Board. **Action: JP**
- 3.1.5 MI asked if the RS was in discussion about the Decade with the National Academy of Sciences at all? MS advised that GERC will have input on these and agreed to report back to the Board. **Action: MS**
- 3.1.6 It would be helpful if a programme with international connections goes to NERC. It might be worth getting a group together to consider highlight topics and there may be potential for coordinated activity. DT commented that at the last two science committee meetings, the Decade was not really discussed. IA noted that Prof Nicki Beaumont, PML is a representative on the NERC Science Committee. We need to get a solid idea on the table and agreed that it would be a good idea to form a group. **Action DT**

### 3.2 COP26 – Katy Hill

COP26 is about working to 'net zero' and is a great opportunity to raise the profile of UK marine science. There may be a side event at COP26 which will be a hybrid event of virtual and in person and marine science will be in the Blue Pavilion. Earth Information Day is an opportunity to network and brief on topics and activities. The Met Office is supporting a hackathon and the NOC has engaged MEDIN on this. NOC is working with others, e.g. PML. The Future of the Seas and Ocean initiative (FSOI) is being led by UK and we have established a Coordination Centre.

### 3.3 UK G7 presidency – Tarquin Dorrington

- 3.3.1 We didn't receive much notice in October 2020 to collate ideas that we could submit on the ocean for the UK's presidency, however, it is pleasing that this has been picked up by Number 10. We are working with the IOC and Katy Hill and are working on two main areas:
- The Decade and pushing action-orientated science. We need to remind the G7 that the Decade is in support of Sustainable Development Goal 14.
  - The Global Ocean Observing Systems GOOS Strategy.
- 3.3.2 We are linking through the IOC on two major programmes. The main meeting will be in June with sub-meetings in the preceding months.
- 3.3.3 (MI) The Cabinet Office is seeking large collaborations between institutions. To have an event in zone will require money. If there are discussions, what can NOCA do? Are we serious about putting in a 1000 word proposal? The deadline is late February.
- 3.3.4 (KA H) Richard Wood is the science lead from Met Office side. They have a government team managing the engagement. Katy has a meeting with the Met Office and will try to nail down a concept note. There is discussion about getting equipment to Glasgow. There needs to be good infographics on social media and we need to keep in mind that large sections of the event will be on-line.
- 3.3.5 EH added that important to manage expectations re: COP26 as NOC can't do anything on its own in this space. The discussions with the Met Office are not a NOC-Met Office discussion. We are not prioritising this strongly unless we will can join an on-going initiative. There are many players in this space. UKRI is also thinking about its presence here.
- 3.3.6 MI noted that Marine Scotland may be bringing ships into Edinburgh. Edinburgh will be as much a part of this as Glasgow so engaging with Colin Moffat will be good for NOCA.
- 3.3.7 MJ added that MASTS has applied for observer status and has been in contact with the Met Office. We are all cautious about making large commitments to this but need to be avoid losing our voices in the noise. There may be some smaller events, targeted at younger people, good on-line activities. There has been a conversation about bringing the SDA into Glasgow, however, MI says it's too shallow.
- 3.3.8** AH recommended setting up a group to discuss potential funding opportunities and agreed to send an email out. We need to represent everyone. We could we create a page/forum for information sharing. **Action: AH, JP**
- 3.3.9 DT agreed this is a good idea. AH asked that if members have any thoughts on this, to let Jackie know and we will also look at this for the NOCA members. Maybe an

on-line notice board. Ka H agreed to talk to JP about this. KHe suggested Trello or a Teams group. **Action Ka H**

#### **4. Impacts of COVID 19 on the UK Marine Science Community – update**

- 4.1 DT asked where this report will go and how to ensure it is seen by the appropriate contacts.
- 4.2 KH explained she had been asked to head a WG to look at impacts of COVID19. She designed an anonymous survey and received 193 responses. KH has processed the report; the comments were a bit gloomy. We now need to focus on the summary and recommendations which are not well organised. They need to be allocated to the right contacts now - NERC? Institutions?
- 4.3 AH noted this as a brilliant piece of work as it has highlighted issues we have been concerned about. KH said that a key reason for the report is to distil recommendations that are practical for institutions. It is important that where people have been impacted negatively by COVID, this should not have any influence on their chance of getting a job.
- 4.4 MJ added that it would be good to a statistically valid interpretation of the impacts of COVID. We need to remember that some positives that have come out of the pandemic.
- 4.5 TF added that this was a great piece of work. We need to think about PhD students who are on a tight time frame and keep fighting for them. Where colleagues have been made redundant and not replaced, this will add to workloads.
- 4.6 DT commented that whilst institutions may not want to respond to more questions about COVID19, it would have been good for universities to have input from universities other than their own. Bangor would have valued this document.
- 4.7 MS agreed with MJ and AH, however, there can be mixed messages. For example, sometimes staff might be told, “do what you can, we understand etc.” but then later, are given more work. Perhaps rather than targeting funders, we should write a piece for Nature?
- 4.8 KH noted that as the NOCA is a link between institutions and NERC, it can be used to provide this type of report. She has talked to SCAR who are doing a similar survey so one possibility might be to join forces and see what the common threads are and see if this is could be suitable for Nature?
- 4.9 AH commented that institutions need to take responsibility here. The information in the report is good and can help people do their jobs properly. UKRI will expect institutions to sort these issues out themselves.
- 4.9.1 IA added that this is a great piece of work, very informative and useful and that he would like to share it with his HR team to see what lessons may be learned. It is important to also think about people other than scientists, e.g. those who complete operations. They are not covered by this survey and some have just as big issues

as these to deal with. Maybe there should be a comment piece in Nature or even in the press or via social media – would this be a way to highlight this?

4.9.2 MI echoed that this is a good and important piece of work, so well done. He asked if it was possible to tease out data on those on short term contracts as their problems differ to those on open-ended contracts. Short term contract staff have faced significant problems. KH responded that the survey had asked about contract length, salary and that one of the most resounding findings had been in relation to impact on ECRs on fixed terms contracts.

4.9.3 EH suggested some ways forward. The survey statistically was self-selecting and this is clear in the report.

- 1.) Recommendations – in terms of credibility and impact, it would be better to create a small number of actionable recommendations. Lobbying isn't an action so strip this out.
- 2.) Target audience - rather than write to UKRI, this could be positioned as a self-help document for the marine science community. Thus, the community needs to take responsibility for taking action. UKRI has been trying to manage many challenges already.

In terms of presentation, it is important to acknowledge the significant impact of COVID-19 on the whole of UK society.

4.9.4 As Chief Executive of NOC, EH expressed concern to avoid some unintended consequences of the report. Sometimes there is confusion between 'NOCA' and 'NOC'. The report is a community view and it is important to avoid any idea that this is NOC's view of the world. Such would not be helpful for NOC – it is not representative of what NOC has achieved during the pandemic.

4.9.5 There is also branding issue. This is a community view but some may ask, who is NOC to tell me how to run my university? We need to think about how this will be branded and should avoid having 'NOC' written into a document that appears to be criticising anyone. It would be wrong for this to be seen as a NOC document.

#### **The way forward:**

1. Change way this is branded
2. Consider how it will be positioned and distil a small number of recommendations.
3. The document needs to be viewed as helpful rather than antagonistic.

4.9.6 KH thanked Ed and agreed that the recommendations can be paired down. Once we have a properly formatted document, let's look at it again. AH to look over recommendations with input from Cait Allen's team. **Action: AH, CA**

## Any other business

DT advised the board that there are some speaker vacancies for the AGM. The GCRF section needs up to three presentations and we need speakers for the Decade, Encouraging the next generation of marine scientists and EDI. Any ideas, please send to JP and DT. **Action: All**

## Actions – December 2020

2.4	Icarus Allen asked to be put in touch with NOC's Huw Gullick.	Ed Hill
4.4	DT concluded we need to combine actions 5.1, 5.8 and 7.3 and rethink the WG. AH suggested that Kevin Horsburgh and Katy Hill could bring this group together.	Katy Hill
4.5	Share GERC report on the Decade	Martin Solan
5.5	Create draft AGM agenda	Jackie Pearson
5.7	Get David Thomas, Ian Folger, Mark James and Jackie Pearson together to discuss format.	Jackie Pearson
5.9.6	Circulate GERC meeting minutes to the Board	Martin Solan

## Actions - January 2021

2	Re: MSCC statement on the ocean and the climate crisis is due to be published next week. DT commented that we should make this a starting point on the next agenda.	Jackie Pearson
3.1.4	The list of Decade programmes will go on to the IWG's web site so, please let Dr Marshall have any information on UK involvement in Decade.	Jackie Pearson
3.1.5	Report back on discussion about the Decade with the RS.	Martin Solan
3.1.6	Form Decade WG (as action point 4.4, above.)	David Thomas
3.3.8	<b>UK G7 Presidency</b> AH recommended setting up a group to discuss potential funding opportunities and agreed to send an email out. We could we create a page/forum for information sharing.	Angela Hatton, Jackie Pearson
3.3.9	AH asked that if members have any thoughts on this, to let Jackie know and we will also look at this for the NOCA members. Maybe an on-line notice board. Ka H agreed to talk to JP about this.	Katy Hill
4.9.6	Review COVID-19 report & recommendations	Angela Hatton & Cait Allen
AoB	Advise ideas for AGM speakers to JP	All