

**NOC Association Steering Board**  
**30 May 2024: 10:00 – 11:45 UK time**

**Microsoft Teams meeting**

Professor Mark Inall, Chair

Professor Icarus Allen, PML  
Professor Teresa Fernandes, Heriot Watt University  
Dr Mark James, MASTS  
Professor Mike Meredith, Challenger Society  
Dr John Siddorn, NOC  
Jackie Pearson – Secretary

Apologies – Professor Martin Solan, Professor Kate Hendry, Professor Claire Mahaffey

**1. Welcome**

1.1 MI welcomed JS and congratulated him on his appointment as CEO of the National Oceanography Centre.

**2. Minutes**

2.1 MI asked for a correction to para. nine and a minor change to 7.2. Minutes are thereafter agreed and are to be published. **Action 29: JP**

2.2 Actions complete apart from:

15. JP: re: the Rock Store Working Group – is draft article to be submitted to Geoscience to announce the community survey. Will update at next NOCA Steering Board.

25: Future shape of the NOCA will be discussed during AoB today.

27: MI spoke to Angela Hatton about an action from the Decade Working Group to support the next generation of marine professionals but felt this is more the remit of the Challenger Society. Although MM agreed, these activities require resource. MJ: it would be helpful to know the degree to which marine science is represented in the Doctoral Landscape Awards as to date, it has been poorly represented. Review this in September when outcome of 'Landscape' awards will be known. **Action 30: JP**

**3. Update on the National Decade Committee - Alan Evans**

3.1 From March meeting, highlights include: updates to NDC web site, option to contact the secretariat if FAQs don't answer everything; opportunities to advertise Decade opportunities and a calendar for non-Decade events, so could advertise the NOCA on that calendar. [UKNDC - UK National Decade Committee \(uk-ndc.org\)](http://ukndc.org)

- 3.2 There is a policy sub-committee and ambition to use the web site to show what groups are doing. In the lead up to the Decade conference, there were efforts to establish who from the UK, would be attending, but poor feedback rendered this impossible. At the conference, the NDC co-hosted side events with Brazil and India and there was a poster session and social media campaign.
- 3.3 A UK-Decade event will be discussed on 19<sup>th</sup> June. MI asked if the event would focus on one or other of the sub-groups, but this has yet to be discussed. MJ: many don't feel connection to the Decade. Investing time and energy to generate resource hasn't been fruitful and the UK's response has been small. There is a sense that the UK has missed an opportunity to make a difference, rather than just rebadging projects. MI agreed but added that the Decade isn't over yet.
- 3.4 MM: there is an activity called [Antarctic InSync](#), which originated from the German Decade Working Group and has implications for the UK. A Southern Ocean project, this will involve institutes collaborating in the Southern Ocean. The RRS *Sir David Attenborough* may have a winter season in the Southern Ocean; discussions with UKRI have been positive. Professor Jane Francis is optimistic that there may be resource from UKRI. The programme office will be at the Alfred Wegener Institute and UK coordination will be needed. Fieldwork will take place during the Decade and outputs will come through for the International Polar Year which follows the Decade.
- 3.5 JS: we need to ensure that we have the right UK representation on activities e.g. Vision 2030 White Papers. Is the UK missing out? How does the UK place itself beyond the Decade as a nation? MI: Item five is about the NOCA as a vehicle for discussion of big ideas. If there is anything that the NOCA should feed into the next NDC, let AE know. Draft notes for NDC meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> June. **Action 31: MI & JP**

#### **4. NOCA 2024 AGM**

- 4.1 MI: The AGM will enable the community to contribute to the FMRI business case. It may be helpful to look at the discussions by our community, two years ago, to see if we could translate some of those ideas into tangible outputs. MI asked TF for her notes from the 2022 AGM and will discuss with Dr Katy Hill, Lead Scientist, FMRI. **Action 32: MI**
- 4.3 Dr Kristian Thaller, FMRI programme director, will introduce two of the FMRI's demonstrator projects which are about capability rather than research.

#### **5.0 The NOCA as a vehicle for discussion the next big ideas.**

- 5.1 MI: there will be a follow-on meeting to the now wound-up Decade Working Group (DWG). MM: ideas that had arisen from the group had not attracted significant funding. Now that the group has disbanded, does this mean that the group had decided that it wasn't possible to make progress? JP: there had been positive outcomes from the DWG but Angela Hatton had stepped down as she had taken on a new role. The closing of the DWG was not necessarily the end but more a pause to enable a look at the interaction with the NOCA, going forward, with a view to now looking at the group's closing actions and building on what had been achieved. JS had been approached to take over chairing the DWG but considered that what is

really needed is for the community to come together to create a single voice for marine research. JS felt that the breadth of the DWG was too narrow. Two key activities now are 1.) how we bring together Decade work to create funding opportunities (which is the role of the NDC) and 2.) creation of a community to advocate for scientific areas. JS had commented, at the DWG meeting, that now was the time to pause and think about how we put together big ideas as a community and that this had probably brought the DWG to a close. MI: Although MI had offered to provide information to the NDC about the outcomes of the DWG (action 31), this would parallel what Matt Frost is going to do.

- 5.2 MI asked if the Board should set up a joint NOCA/Challenger working group, similar to the Upscaling Autonomy working group, or something joint around a large international programme? MM: the post-DWG meeting will help with these decisions.
- 5.3 JS: this is linked to the conversations about COAST and national capability integration. We need to build a voice for marine research and think about how the NOCA fits into that. We also need to think about a body that looks at the big programmes. We won't need a new DWG, rather we need to identify the gaps. A community-led approach may be helpful in picking the next big ideas. MI: we should discuss at the follow-on meeting of the DWG. **Action 33: MI**
- 5.4 IA: The Decade is a dead end in terms of funding now. What are the big ideas that will frame at the next Decade? How do we move beyond the current echo chamber that features the same voices? How do we frame a few challenges to excite the community, political and funding organisations, and not just government? What about industry? We need to change the way that we operate. MM: We need to a mechanism to engage the right range of people to help develop the next new ideas. A similar idea was the NERC Moonshots engagement programme.
- 5.5 JS: Although the MSCC was judged by the Defra not to be fulfilling its purpose, and was closed down, it did create a forum which enabled the community to influence government. As IA said, there are other routes to funding. MSCC was responsible for the marine science strategy which ends in 2025. It has no owner in government and no mechanism for its delivery, so the community has lost its way to directly communicate with government. This summer, we may have a new government which may lead to the opportunity to engage with a single point of contact in government, for the ocean. A new marine research strategy will need to be delivered. We may be able to re-inspire government engagement with oceanography; working with industry is more important now than ten years ago. We need to re-think how we create advocacy for marine research and its role in society. This could involve the NOCA but this would need to change. The marine community needs a better voice so we need to create a cohort of colleagues to help develop this idea. The DWG isn't the right group for this. The meeting can be about the DWG and what follows it, as a first step. Now that the DWG has closed down, let's about this in the context of a wider structure. MJ: We should avoid giving ownership of a marine strategy to government; rather, government should be the recipient. JS agreed. MI will summarise the group's thoughts and invites MJ to the follow-on meeting. **Action 34: MI & JP**

- 5.6 MM: the meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> July may highlight a way forward but JS is talking about how the community speaks to government and stakeholders. Currently, we aren't doing this well and part of the problem is limited resources. Also, we don't always have the correct cross section of people involved. We need a broader conversation about how the community talks to government. Also, there are CSAs other than Gideon Henderson whom we should talk to. There needs to be for a separate, broader mechanism to the July 8<sup>th</sup> meeting to initiate this discussion. JS agreed. We will set up a meeting that will include colleagues on this call. JS will complete this action, in the early autumn. **Action 35: JS**
- 5.7 MM: Challenger has been asked to do this before but doesn't have the resource. JS will pick up the action around the wider conversation about engagement that is needed with government and others. The Scottish government has created a new role called CSA Marine which MI is taking this on, starting in June. MI suggested that the UK government should do this too. MI will be at three years of NOCA by December 2024 so we need to think about a new chair. MI will finish as NOCA chair in the next 12 months.
- 5.8 MM congratulated MI on his new appointment. MI added that he will have a seat on Gideon Henderson's 'COAST' group.

## Actions

29	Correction needed to para. nine and minor change to 7.2. Minutes are thereafter agreed and are to be published.	JP
30	Review representation of marine on the Doctoral Landscape Awards when outcome known in September.	JP
31	Provide notes to the NDC meeting on 19 <sup>th</sup> June.	MI & JP
32	Review notes from 2022 AGM and discuss with Dr Katy Hill, Lead Scientist, FMRI.	MI
33	Building a voice for marine research; thinking about the next big ideas etc. Discuss at the follow-on meeting of the DWG.	MI
34	Summarise group's thoughts and invite MJ to the follow-on meeting.	MI & JP
35	Set up a meeting that will include colleagues from this NOCA meeting.	JS