

BUSINESS PLAN

2026-2029



National
Oceanography
Centre



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Oceanography Centre (NOC) is one of the world's leading oceanographic institutions, with a distinguished six-decade legacy of pioneering marine research, technological innovation, and global collaboration. As a four-site organisation, with laboratory and workshop facilities in Southampton, a site in Liverpool, and two state-of-the-art research vessels (RRS James Cook and RRS Discovery); plus a fleet of autonomous underwater and surface vehicles we have the expertise and infrastructure to explore the ocean from coastal waters to depths of 6,000m.

Previously part of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), we became a stand-alone independent research organisation in 2019, with an annual turnover exceeding £80 million. This transition has provided NOC with greater agility and financial resilience while maintaining our fundamental mission: to enhance global understanding of the ocean and address the most pressing environmental challenges.

Following our independence, we continue to operate on behalf of UKRI-NERC, delivering national capability in marine science. We conduct our own world-class research, provide cutting-edge infrastructure for other institutions, and use our expertise to inform government policy on issues of national and international significance.

As the UK's lead centre for UKRI-NERC marine research, NOC plays a critical role in supporting the UK's strategic needs and global environmental science leadership. We manage and operate the National Marine Equipment Pool (NMEP) home to Europe's largest fleet of autonomous and robotic marine vehicles, ensuring that the UK remains at the forefront of oceanographic research.

Guided by an exceptional executive team and a highly skilled trustee board, NOC is charting its course towards balancing commercial success and growth, alongside delivering real outcomes aligned to its fundamental purpose of developing the world's understanding of the oceans. By expanding partnerships, diversifying revenue streams, and modernising governance, we are strengthening our position as a global leader in ocean science and innovation.

As the world's focus on ocean health intensifies, NOC stands ready to drive greater impact, innovation, and discovery, because understanding our oceans is key to shaping our future.

This Business Plan sets out how we will achieve our ambitious vision and tackle our missions by focusing on four outcomes that are fundamental to our continued success. For each outcome, we have objectives that will guide our actions, shape our priorities, and provide a framework for measuring progress. Through scientific excellence, strong partnerships, and a commitment to public benefit, we will ensure that NOC remains at the forefront of ocean research, innovation, and the knowledge gained is used to the benefit of society and planetary health. This plan provides a roadmap for delivering on our strategic priorities, supporting our people, and strengthening our organisation to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead.

VISION

By gaining a deeper knowledge of the ocean, we help every living thing on our planet flourish.

Our planet is a blue planet. Most of its expanse is covered by the ocean. This vast space is the lifeblood of our world, yet so much of the ocean is yet to be discovered and its value is so often overlooked and misunderstood.

The purpose of NOC is to gain a deeper knowledge of the ocean to address major challenges facing society and the natural world. We are uniquely placed, working with partners from around the world, to turn research and technological innovation into trusted knowledge for real action and solutions.

MISSIONS

We focus on four ocean-related missions:

CLIMATE

Society can plan for, adapt to and mitigate against environmental change.

BIODIVERSITY

Marine biodiversity is protected and thriving.

HAZARDS AND POLLUTION

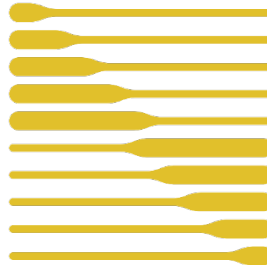
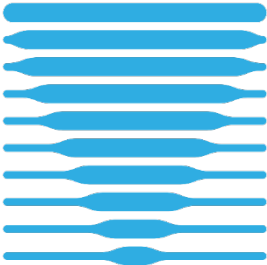
People, infrastructure and ecosystems are protected from hazards and pollution.

SUSTAINABLE MARINE ECONOMY

Ensure development of marine-based economic activity is sustainable, whilst protecting the ocean's future health.

OUTCOMES

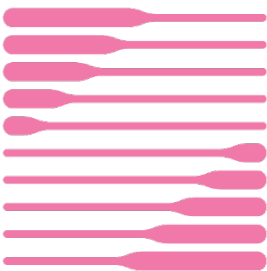
To achieve our vision our strategy is formulated to deliver four outcomes:



DEEPER KNOWLEDGE OF THE OCEAN

We develop the capacity, for ourselves and for others, to deliver world-leading science that spans the spectrum from curiosity-driven to applied.

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VALUE FOR SOCIETY

We ensure that the deeper knowledge gained is accessible and used to the benefit of society and planetary health.

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A VIBRANT AND HEALTHY ORGANISATION

We expect excellence in our science and impact activities, which is only possible if we are a vibrant and healthy organisation.

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A FINANCIALLY RESILIENT ORGANISATION

We are robust to changes in the funding landscape, and to maximise the potential for our organisation, through being a financially resilient organisation.

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PROGRESS & NEXT STEPS

Our business plan is our blueprint for shaping the future of NOC by defining clear objectives and practical monitoring, the plan ensures we are focused, aligned, and ready to deliver in the years ahead.

NOC has grown and adapted since becoming a charity in 2019. We have strengthened our capabilities, embraced new ways of working, and responded to a rapidly changing world. Our strategy gives us a clear direction for 2025-2035, as we recognise the significant risks and challenges that lie ahead, as well as the many opportunities before us.

SUCCESS IN OUR FIRST SIX YEARS

In the first six years as an independent research organisation, NOC has successfully leveraged its legal form to strengthen governance around our operating risk, enhance financial resilience, and expand its impact.

Our governing Board of Trustees, enriched with expert commercial guidance, has contributed to the strategic direction to navigate complex challenges and seize new opportunities. This leadership has ensured that NOC remains a globally respected, independent centre of excellence in oceanographic research.

By building financial reserves, we have successfully buffered income fluctuations and reinvested in cutting-edge science, technology, and infrastructure. Our improved financial resilience has allowed us to diversify funding sources, reducing reliance on a single income stream.

Operationally, we have improved business systems and processes, driving efficiency and our ability to support world-class science. Our trading subsidiary has strengthened engagement with commercial enterprises, unlocking new partnerships while managing associated risks.

To support our highly skilled workforce, we have introduced a job families approach to career progression. This ensures that employees are supported, motivated, and well-positioned for growth. Continued investment in people is instrumental in attracting and retaining top talent.

NOC remains firmly committed to its charitable purpose of public benefit, advancing science and education while

maintaining scientific independence. Positioned neutrally between business, government, and academia, we continue to serve as a trusted and objective research institution.

As a trusted partner of the Natural Environment Research Council, we have consistently delivered national capability in marine science, managing long-term research programmes, publicly funded data, and access to world-class scientific infrastructure. While the RRS Discovery and RRS James Cook remain owned by UKRI-NERC, NOC continues to operate them, ensuring the UK science community benefits from these invaluable research assets, by gaining charter income to help close funding gaps.

Through these achievements, NOC has established itself as a financially resilient, operationally agile, and scientifically independent organisation, poised for even greater impact in the years ahead. This business plan is set in the context of the next period of growth and embedding change, based on delivering the NOC 2025-2035 strategy. It also introduces an evaluation framework with measures of success across a balanced scorecard, which will be reported to the Board and form the basis of an Annual Report in the future.

OUR 2025-2035 STRATEGY

To gain a deeper knowledge of the ocean we must deliver world-leading science and deliver the capacity (including engineering, digital and laboratory) for ourselves and others to do that science. It is not sufficient just to gain knowledge, we must also ensure that it is trusted, purposeful, accessible, and used for the benefit of society and planetary health. To achieve this means partnering across an increasing range of sectors, including research organisations and charities, nationally and internationally, beyond the natural sciences.

We work with government to support their policy needs and with industry to stimulate prosperity and growth. We work with partners to ensure our ocean knowledge supports civil society and is used to engage the public, so they understand the ocean and its role in our lives. We support other organisations through providing research facilities enabling high-quality science for public good.

Our 2025 – 2035 strategy emphasises our purpose - to provide benefit to society through the research we carry out and the knowledge that we provide. This does not mean a big change in our work, it means that we will ensure our information and evidence reaches the people and places it is needed. To help us focus our research we frame our priorities as missions that target some of the most important challenges facing humankind.

RISK AND OPPORTUNITIES

The triple planetary crises of pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change all have major ocean dimensions. These crises threaten economic stability, border security and national security through natural hazards, resource pressures, migration, and broader political and societal instability. Public awareness of these issues, and of the ocean’s central role in them, continues to grow.

Ocean processes directly affect people and communities. While the ocean buffers substantial anthropogenic pollution, the mechanisms and limits of this buffering are still poorly understood. Pollution and changes in ocean health affect food security, cost of living, and societal resilience.

Similarly, the ocean absorbs large quantities of carbon, driving chemical and biological changes that impact marine life. These pressures, alongside other pollutants, create national and international risks that link directly to food security, living standards, and long-term stability.

The marine economy is among the fastest-growing sectors. Emerging industries including offshore renewables and carbon solutions depend on robust ocean knowledge for development, evidence-based planning and sustainable operations. NOC’s strong links to the blue economy, position us as a key partner for governments on policy, assurance and oversight of complex and ethically sensitive sectors.

In a period of geopolitical instability and shifting defence alliances, environmental intelligence is of increasing

strategic importance. Understanding the marine environment is essential for UK defence capability, including the Continuous at Sea Deterrence. NOC works closely with the Royal Navy and industry partners to deliver ocean knowledge and technologies critical to their operations.

Growing awareness of the ocean’s importance both within the planetary system and as an engine of economic growth—creates significant opportunities for NOC. However, rising populism, geopolitical pressures and constrained public finances are reshaping national priorities and competing for the attention of government and the public. This makes it harder for the science and evidence-based voices to be heard.

In light of these challenges NOC is preparing; remaining agile, seizing emerging opportunities and responding effectively to a rapidly changing political and societal landscape.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

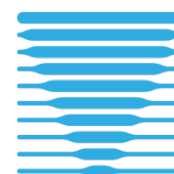
We will define success in all aspects of the NOC strategy and operations so that we can measure, evaluate and demonstrate our progress against our Missions, our Outcomes and Objectives.

The principles we follow for evaluation are:

- Success is viewed as the outcomes and impact resulting from our activities, not activities themselves
- Performance indicators are metrics that will be used to describe the cumulative outcomes of many activities
- Success will also be measured by narrative evaluation of the outcomes, used where numerical metrics are not suitable
- Success can sometimes be evaluated by comparing our performance with similar organisations, so we will benchmark our measures where appropriate

OUTCOME

DEEPER KNOWLEDGE OF THE OCEAN



OBJECTIVES

1. UNDERTAKE WORLD-CLASS RESEARCH INTO THE GLOBAL OCEAN AND CLIMATE SYSTEM, MARINE BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEMS, RESOURCES AND SOCIETY'S INTERACTION.

NOC research publications are of excellent academic quality and of higher quality than similar centres globally.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Annual evidence from 5-year running mean of NOC's peer-reviewed journal citation index, where the NOC Citation Index is higher than comparative research centres internationally.
- Quarterly narrative examples of excellent research outputs.

2. INNOVATE TO CREATE AND PROVIDE EXCELLENT TECHNOLOGY TO ADVANCE THE FRONTIERS OF OCEAN KNOWLEDGE.

Accelerate the adoption of priority oceanographic technologies defined in a new and annually updated NOC Technology Roadmap, directly or through commercialisation, ensuring they contribute to expanding ocean knowledge.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Percentage of technologies meet planned TRL progression and adoption targets as defined in the NOC technology roadmap.
- Selection of narrative examples of excellent technology developments and operational uses, such as those highlighted in the NOC news stories.

3. MAKE AND SHARE THE HIGHEST-QUALITY GLOBAL OCEAN OBSERVATIONS, MODELS AND DIGITAL TOOLS.

Increase the impact of observations, models and digital tools developed by NOC, by ensuring that they are readily accessible, well-described, reusable and of the highest possible quality, generating a year-on-year increase in uptake.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Annual statistics on usage show increasing uptake of NOC data and digital tools.
- Annual metrics of adherence to FAIR principles to demonstrate increasing level of re-usability of NOC data and digital tools.
- Quarterly narrative examples of outputs and how they are being used.

4. DELIVER STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITIES AND SERVICES THAT ARE USED NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY, AND ARE ESSENTIAL FOR THE UK TO BE A WORLD-LEADER IN MARINE RESEARCH.

Effectively deliver marine facilities and services, ingest all relevant datasets, and curate all required samples in a timely fashion to maintain the UK's position as a world leader in marine research.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Customer service performance assessment of NOC facilities (from external oversight review annual report and other customer reviews) to be good or better.
- Progress against facilities annual enhancements plan, with a target >85% completion.
- Quarterly review of targets with narrative update highlighting impacts and areas for improvements.

ACHIEVING OUR OBJECTIVES

Our research is structured around four critical Missions to address these societal and environmental challenges – Climate, Biodiversity, Hazards and Pollution, and the Sustainable Marine Economy. Where we identify the need for scientific leadership and excellence in other areas, we strategically develop new networks to bring together research activities across NOC, our research partners, and external stakeholders. One example is the Arctic network, which is leading the development of the UK’s Arctic Ocean science contribution to the International Polar Year 2032/33.

We are uniquely placed, working with partners from around the world, to turn research and technological innovation into trusted knowledge for real action and solutions. Through our world-class research we make major contributions to international science programmes, provide critical evidence to inform international and national policy, and lead in developing innovative technologies. NOC is one of very few oceanographic institutions globally that brings together leading scientists, technologists and digital experts to provide critical scientific knowledge efficiently and effectively.

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR MARINE, ENGINEERING AND DIGITAL SCIENCE

Our research is supported through a wide array of funding sources and mechanisms, including:

- Competitively won research awards to support discovery science.
- Commercial and innovation funding to support applied science and technological development.
- National Capability programmes to support strategic science, such as high-quality sustained observations, models, and digital tools.

An essential dimension of securing research income is proactively identifying opportunities to shape the research funding landscape. This is needed both nationally, such as strategic and directed NERC funding schemes and cross-UKRI programmes, and internationally, such as the Horizon Europe programmes.

To deliver on our ambitions for the Digital Ocean agenda we must transform our approach to data and digital activities. Therefore, the NOC Digital Strategy will deliver digital transformation with the following major themes:

- Improved end-to-end data capabilities. Bringing together data, analysis capabilities, and visualisation tools in a well-engineered digital infrastructure (the ‘NOC Data Science Platform’), connected with

observing systems and data management systems, and enabling the development of digital twins.

- Accelerating research through targeted use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). This will focus on the areas of marine autonomy (intelligent vehicle operation), computer vision (marine ecosystem monitoring and biodiversity research), data fusion (analysis of multiple heterogeneous data streams) and prediction.
- Developing strategic partnerships with technology companies, computer science departments and funding agencies.
- Training for NOC staff and the wider community, using a variety of methods including courses, self-directed learning, seminars and peer support. This is connected with ongoing work to develop digital career pathways.

MISSION NETWORKS

To create enhanced focus on our four Missions we have launched Mission Networks. These will be led by internationally recognised scientists to develop coherent programmes across the mission areas, bringing together our diverse work into clear, impactful, delivery strands.

The Mission Network Leads act as a voice for the organisation in their areas, driving visibility and stimulating interest in NOC and our research. They will provide a focal

point internally to support our researchers to deliver impactful research in their areas.

The Mission Networks themselves will be formed of people from across NOC. They will be collaborative networks where each individual and each science, engineering and research project contributes to the Mission. The networks will be formed of a wide range of people and roles across NOC and from all Functions.

An important feature of the Mission Networks is that anyone can contribute regardless of their Group. For management purposes, all roles in the Functions are clustered into Groups roles requiring similar skills or expertise. In the Digital and Science Functions the design of management groups for researchers has been changed for FY25/26, bringing a more consistent size of groups and a refreshed definition of the Group Head role.

In the Marine Science Function, the Group Heads will each manage a medium-sized group of researchers (12-20 people). In the Digital Science Function some new Groups are larger (up to 40 people where there is a larger body of similar expertise). In the Engineering Science Function, we will use FY25/26 as a time of consolidation with the intention to design and implement a new group design for October 2026.

In Engineering, Digital and Science Functions the role of the Group Head is drive the direction of effort and delivery within the group, ensuring it aligns with the NOC Strategy. The Group Head will ensure effective financial management of the group, conducting regular reviews of budgets and expenditure. Developing and implementing workforce planning approaches to ensure the appropriate staffing levels, skills and line management are in place will be vital in this position. They will foster an inclusive and positive working environment across the group, where staff feel empowered and inspired to perform at their best.

It is therefore essential that Mission Network Leaders work in close partnerships with Group Heads. The Missions provide opportunity for proposals/income and the context for Group Head decisions, while Mission delivery will be dependent on contributions from the Groups. Collective understanding and agreement between all the Mission Network Leaders and Group Heads of objectives, priorities and workforce planning will be required. High level oversight will be provided through the new committee structure, and

this will be supported by regular communication between the Mission Network Leaders and Group Heads.

NATIONAL CAPABILITY

National Capability is fundamental to NOC's role as the UK's leading oceanographic institution. It provides the essential foundation upon which NOC delivers its mission, supports the wider marine science community, and maintains its position as a trusted national provider.

NATIONAL CAPABILITY—FACILITIES AND DATA SERVICES

National Capability funding and infrastructure underpin NOC's ability to deliver long-term, large-scale marine science that addresses national and global priorities. This support enables NOC to operate and maintain unique assets—such as research vessels, the National Marine Equipment Pool, and data centres—that are critical not only for NOC's own research, but for the entire UK marine science community.

Through National Capability, NOC provides access to state-of-the-art facilities, equipment, and expertise that would be impossible to sustain through individual projects or commercial contracts alone. This ensures continuity in delivering high-quality science, long-term data sets, and essential services that underpin the UK's leadership in oceanographic research.

National Capability allows NOC to convene and support collaborations across academia, government, industry, and international partners. By providing open access to its facilities and knowledge, NOC amplifies the impact of UK marine science, enabling collective responses to emerging scientific, environmental, and policy challenges.

The stability provided by National Capability funding allows NOC to remain agile and responsive, maintaining independence in setting research priorities for the public good. It ensures that NOC can rapidly address new opportunities and challenges and continue to deliver value even in times of uncertainty.

The breadth and depth of National Capability resources enable NOC to deliver research and services at a scale that is unmatched by other organisations, making it the partner of choice for national and international initiatives.

The combination of National Capability assets and NOC's scientific excellence creates a unique environment for innovation, supporting the development and deployment of new technologies and approaches that advance ocean science and its applications.

NATIONAL CAPABILITY—SCIENCE

The NERC National Capability Science programmes meet UK long-term and large-scale strategic research requirements, and for NOC and the UK HEI sector they provide a framework on which to build additional high-quality research and income.

National Capability Science plays a fundamental role in creating synergies between National Capability facilities and the wider HEI community, and sustains internationally important long-term data sets. NERC National Capability Science is at least national and decadal in scale, makes a substantial contribution in volume and quality to UK environmental science, demonstrates benefit to the wider UK community of environmental scientists and users, and is at least nationally outstanding in purpose and scientific scope. Furthermore, it advances the culture of diversity, inclusivity and environmental responsibility in UK environmental science.

The largest of NOC National Capability Science programmes, the Single Centre programme (AtlantiS) is led by NOC and delivered in partnership with other marine research centres Plymouth Marine Laboratory, Scottish Association for Marine Science, and the Marine Biological Association. The National Capability Single Centre programme includes National Capability National Public Good funding that supports activities to strengthen national security, resilience, economic growth and societal benefit through provision of independent scientific and expert advice, or other services required by government and the wider public.

The National Capability Multi Centre programmes tackle globally significant knowledge gaps that require multi-disciplinary teams from across the Research Centres. They were designed by NERC to bring science centre's together for more ambitious, integrated, and large-scale research into critical environmental challenges. In the 2022 to 2027 commission period NOC leads one programme (CHAMFER) and is a partner in four more (CANARI, BIPOLE, MOET, TerraFIRMA). NOC also leads a major

multi-centre programme of a third type of National Capability Science known as International (formerly NC-ODA) – our programme FOCUS is delivered by NOC and PML.

NATIONAL MARINE FACILITIES

NOC houses the UK's centralised Marine Research Infrastructure, supporting the UK marine science community. This includes two of the world's most capable global class blue-water research vessels, RRS *James Cook* and RRS *Discovery*, along with the National Marine Equipment Pool (NMEP) and the technical expertise required to operate them.

RRS JAMES COOK AND RRS DISCOVERY

The research vessels are owned by UKRI and chartered to NOC under a bareboat charter agreement. NOC is responsible for their management and operation, ensuring compliance with maritime legislation. We employ vessel superintendents to oversee maintenance and safety, with certification provided by Lloyd's Register. Additionally, our vessel compliance office ensures adherence to the relevant safety management system, audited by the MCA.

Operating 24/7 all year round, the vessels are continuously supported by shore-side staff, who remain on call to assist with operational needs.

Beyond their core research functions, the vessels serve as both a workplace and home for a significant number of NOC staff and members of the wider science community. We are committed to fostering a safe, harmonious, and supportive environment, investing heavily in crew well-being and IT infrastructure to ensure both comfort and efficiency on board.

In addition to their scientific mission, we collaborate with the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) to facilitate marine research applications under UNCLOS. The vessels also host FCDO embassy staff, providing opportunities for engagement with local dignitaries and enhancing the UK's global reputation.

Furthermore, they play an important role in NOC's philanthropy and outreach efforts, supporting the organisation's broader objectives. In collaboration with NERC, NOC develops a marine science programme that facilitates UK marine science field campaigns. This infrastructure and programme form the backbone of the

UK's marine research efforts, playing a crucial role in advancing environmental science. By providing a world-class platform for oceanographic research, this centralised infrastructure has helped maintain the UK's position at the forefront of global marine science.

This infrastructure is funded by NERC under the National Capability Large Research Infrastructure (NCLRI) mechanism through a ten-year commission finishing in March 2028. This comprises funding for the operation of the facility (ORTG), capital upgrades and maintenance of the NMEP and ships, and operational costs (fuel and user costs). The NCLRI funding is flat cashed and is running at a deficit. This funding gap is filled through NOC chartering the research vessels for use by third-party organisations. If this income gap cannot be filled, NERC would be responsible for covering the deficit. We are actively working with NERC to manage this funding gap to the end of the commissioning period so we can maintain the existing capability. NOC will work with NERC to define the capabilities and capacity that should be recommissioned to support the UK marine science community. This will be undertaken in conjunction with the broader Future Marine Research Infrastructure programme outline below.

The National Marine Facilities (NMF) award governance is managed through the Cruise Programme Executive Board (CPEB) who will sign off and agree the cruise programme, the Cruise Programme Review Group (CPRG) who will review the successful delivery of the programme and the Marine Facilities Advisory Board (MFAB) who provide input into the NMF technology roadmap use to guide the development of the NMF capabilities throughout the life of the award.

MONITORING AND REDUCING EMISSIONS

The carbon emissions from the research infrastructure and its operations are substantial. We are working closely with NERC to monitor and reduce emissions from our research vessels. CO₂ output is primarily derived from fuel consumption, measured using onboard vessel software (Engine I and Kongsberg's Vessel Insights). This data is analysed to identify opportunities for emission reductions.

Alongside monitoring, emissions are mitigated through careful vessel planning, improvements in the Marine Facilities Planning (MFP) tool, the use of Hydrotreated

Vegetable Oil (HVO)—a second-generation biofuel—and other vessel efficiency measures.

Despite these efforts, achieving UKRI's carbon reduction glide path toward carbon neutrality by 2040 will require significant further emission cuts. These reductions are unlikely to be met without a substantial increase in HVO usage. However, HVO bunkering is not always feasible, and the fuel carries a significant price premium compared to marine diesel. As a result, meeting UKRI's intermediate carbon targets may not be achievable within current fuel funding and bunkering constraints.

NATIONAL MARINE EQUIPMENT POOL (NMEP)

The NMEP is owned by NOC and funded by NERC to support the wider marine science community. It comprises a diverse range of advanced marine technologies, including Europe's largest oceanographic autonomy fleet, which specializes in long-range, shore-launched subsea gliders and the in-house developed Autosub Long-Range (ALR) vehicles. These assets are made available to researchers through NERC's Marine Programme, further strengthening the UK's oceanographic research infrastructure capabilities.

In parallel, NOC is developing its own dedicated equipment pool to support internal scientific operations, commercial activities, and the broader science and monitoring community. This pool will operate under a pay-as-you-go model, providing flexible access to cutting-edge marine research tools.

To maintain world-class service, we continue to train and invest in highly skilled technical staff, ensuring the effective development and operation of both NOC's and the NMEP's assets.

FUTURE MARINE RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE (FMRI)

The Future Marine Research Infrastructure programme is a NERC program to deliver the next generation of large-scale, marine research infrastructure. It is exploring the requirements, constraints, partnerships and technical options for the future capability, which will lay the foundations for a major investment in UK research infrastructure.

It emphasises sustainability, both environmental and economic, while fostering global collaboration and

broadening access to marine research resources. FMRI is in the first phase of business case development with the next phase due in mid-2026.

As the delivery organisation for the National Marine Facilities, NERC's current marine infrastructure, NOC plays a central role in FMRI, contributing its expertise in marine science, technology, and infrastructure management. Our expertise in operating and developing novel autonomous technologies, in an ecosystem that includes large marine platforms (ships) as well as constellations of smaller autonomous platforms, integrated into a common data ecosystem, is well aligned with the FMRI vision. We will support the development of the FMRI programme where we can and expect to play a significant role as the FMRI vision becomes realised.

BRITISH OCEAN SEDIMENT CORE RESEARCH FACILITY (BOSCORF)

BOSCORF is the UK's largest deep-sea sediment repository and research facility. Its core role is to store and curate sediment cores that are collected through NERC research programmes, promoting secondary usage of samples and associated analytical data.

In addition to this, it acts as a research facility, providing a suite of analysis and imaging services that are used in the science community and by commercial clients. It is now closely aligned with other labs and facilities as part of the Science and Technical Services Groups (STSG) and has achieved Silver accreditation in the Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework (LEAF).

Current focus areas include:

- Managing physical storage, which is under pressure, with little prospect of NERC funding to expand it.
- Managing and diversifying income, developing commercial offerings as well as a clearer and more sustainable cost model for users.
- Digitisation of samples and management of digital data resulting from analyses.

BRITISH OCEANOGRAPHIC DATA CENTRE (BODC)

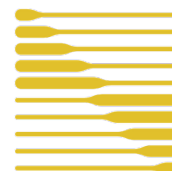
BODC is the UK's National Oceanographic Data Centre and marine data centre within NERC's Environmental Data Service (EDS). Its primary purpose is to store and manages data from NERC-funded marine research, promoting the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable).

In addition, it participates in many national and international programmes (including EMODnet, MEDIN, Seabed2030, SeaDataNet, GEOTRACES and MERMAN) and performs research to advance the theory and practice of data management. Integration with NMF data streams has been a focus of recent years, with significant progress made in streamlining data management from autonomous systems.

Currently, around 61% of BODC funding is for 'core' NERC data management (through a number of individual funding streams), with 39% of its funding being competitively won, through NERC, Horizon Europe and other funders, including contracts at FEC.

OUTCOME

VALUE FOR SOCIETY



OBJECTIVES

1. INSPIRE AND INFORM HUMANKIND TO PROVIDE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE OCEAN'S ROLE IN OUR LIVES AND AN AWARENESS OF OCEAN-RELATED ISSUES THAT PRESENT RISK TO LIFE (HUMAN AND WIDER) AND LIVELIHOODS.

Increased public awareness of ocean-related issues as a result of NOC activities.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Measures of NOC representation in target publications and media outlets increase on an annual basis.
- Quarterly narrative of progress, events and highlights of media and other public interaction with NOC.

2. PROVIDE SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE FOR NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC POLICY DEVELOPMENT, RISK ASSESSMENT, OCEAN GOVERNANCE AND REGULATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

NOC scientific knowledge and expertise to be increasingly used in evidence-gathering by local and national governments, intergovernmental organisations, industry and society.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Citations/mentions of NOC research in government, devolved administrations and international policy papers, and number of high profile and relevant evidence briefs submitted to government bodies, increases over time.
- Number of invitations to parliamentary committees, advisory boards, international panels or as part of UK government delegations to treaty meetings increases.
- Quarterly narrative of progress, events, feedback and highlights.

3. CONVENE THE MARINE SCIENCE RESEARCH COMMUNITY TO ENHANCE ITS INFLUENCE ON OUR KEY STAKEHOLDERS.

By convening key stakeholder communities in the UK and internationally, NOC ensures its marine research plays a growing and demonstrable role in shaping both national and global priorities.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Reported purely through narrative of outcomes.
- Quarterly narrative of stakeholder engagement and delivery of convening events and case studies of the role of NOC in influencing key stakeholders.

4. PROVIDE KNOWLEDGE OF THE OCEAN THROUGH CO-DESIGNED PRODUCTS TO BUSINESSES, FOUNDATIONS, NATIONS AND COMMUNITIES.

NOC knowledge and services are increasingly used in other organisations to grow their business.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Increase in number and value of multi-year formal innovation and technology-focussed collaboration agreements, contracts or IP licences.
- Quarterly narrative of innovation activities.

ACHIEVING OUR OBJECTIVES

NOC has an impact globally, nationally and regionally. We work with marine scientists and innovators all over the world both formally, through international meetings and fora, as well as informally with a vast range of organisations. Within the UK, we play a central role in coordinating our partners to feed into government policy through a variety of networks and have led the development of the Marine Science UK Association to create an amplified voice for marine science to government and other key strategic stakeholders.

We have relationships with colleagues in government departments, providing expert advice and working in partnership on key national initiatives. We engage with parliamentarians to positively influence ocean policy and ensure that decisions are guided by robust scientific evidence.

Within Southampton and Liverpool, we work with organisations, from universities through to industry partners. Our public engagement and education work continues to grow through virtual platforms as well as in-person events like school visits, corporate opportunities and open days. We collaborate with partners to raise the profile of the ocean and ocean literacy within the education sector. With public benefit at the heart of the organisation, we aim to make a positive contribution to society by advancing understanding and accountability of the ocean. This is the ethos of our Sustainability Strategy, which sets our ambitions on how we interact with our people, the public and our environment. It is also reflected in our Ethics Policy which guides us in ensuring our work has public benefit and positive impact, representing our core values and purpose.

We have a team dedicated to nurturing our partnerships with our stakeholders, staff, donors and the public. We recognise that NOC cannot bring about significant change and drive world-leading innovation alone; our stakeholders, partners and the public are critical to creating value and impact.

STAKEHOLDERS

To create value for society NOC must fully understand the communities that we impact. The Strategy 2025 – 2035 clearly puts value at the heart of what we do, and so a growing priority is targeting, and growing, our stakeholder engagement around our value propositions that are loosely defined by the missions but that need work to realise our vision.

Our stakeholder communities can loosely be categorized as:

- **Government and International** – scientific evidence for policy development
- **Public** – educating and engaging for ocean literacy
- **Industry** – knowledge, products and services to businesses
- **Research** – convening, and supporting, the research sector to further the vision

The Engagement function leads on our stakeholder plan, ensuring that we have a coherent approach and messaging with priority stakeholder communities. But the relationships are largely within the science and business development functions, who have the domain expertise to lead on the engagement.

The concept of business partnering between the Engagement function and the wider NOC community to grow a coherent voice for NOC is critical. The Engagement team are supported by Engagement champions, embedded in key parts of the organisation and tasked with providing expertise and support to help the right messages, and the right people, engage with stakeholders.

GOVERNMENT AND INTERNATIONAL

As an independent research organisation, one of the six NERC centres and as one of the world’s leading oceanographic institutes, we are in a unique position when it comes to engaging, informing and working with Government and international stakeholders. The essence of our engagement is focused on profile raising, convening, informing and engaging – we never work to directly influence, lobby or push agendas, instead we use our rigorous and credible ocean scientific research capabilities to support Government and international stakeholders. This may be to support public policy development, ocean governance, international events, or other key outcomes – but we aim for all engagement to be neutral and science-led.

Through our parliamentary and Government engagement, for example, regular MP meetings, regular engagement with key Government departments and Ministers, active attendance at parliamentary events and political conferences, we have been able to continually raise the profile and discussion of marine science and wider marine issues within the political and policy-making landscape, making sure that scientific evidence is at the centre.

CONVENING THE COMMUNITY

Given our unique position, we can convene the marine research and stakeholder community to ensure that we act as a collective group when it comes to responding to key national and international priorities. Our convening roles in



Figure: High level stakeholder map

key marine science membership organisations, such as the NOC Association and the Marine Facilities Advisories Board, gives support to the wider marine science community. Through these channels, we are able to support and direct marine activities and funding activities, for example, National Public Good and National Capability. We play a leading role on behalf of the UK Government when it comes to international engagement around ocean governance and marine science, specifically via the International Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, which NOC provides the UK delegation to. We have also recently taken a leading role in the formation of a new group, Marine Science UK, which will aim to bring together the marine science community, to act as a collective group to Government, and to inform on a number of key international and national priorities on behalf of the marine science community.

PUBLIC

NOC's public engagement delivery plan sits within the Engagement function and contributes to delivery of the Education Forum and the Community Impact Pillar of the Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy. The term 'public engagement' is broad with many different forms amongst diverse audiences. Our Public Engagement team is focused on creating value for society through community involvement, schools' outreach and live events. Other teams within the Engagement Function such as Partnerships and External Communications will also deliver public engagement as part of their own delivery plans with such activities as policy advocacy and storytelling across social and other media.

The objectives of the public engagement delivery plan are both internal and external in nature.

Internal:

- Foster a collective culture of public engagement across all areas of NOC
- Align NOC's public engagement activities to maximise impact

- Support the development of NOC staff from all areas to successfully deliver public engagement activities with priority audiences

External to NOC, the delivery plan aims to:

1. Facilitate a transformational relationship between society and the ocean¹ (e.g. ocean literacy)
2. Cultivate public understanding of NOC's science, innovation and collaborative work, making it accessible and relevant to non-specialist audiences
3. Provide members of the public with opportunities to participate in dialogues, discussions and activities related to NOC's work
4. Build science capital in historically under-represented communities
5. Inspire children and youth to consider careers in ocean science, data, engineering, technology and design, as well as in maritime and blue economy sector
6. Develop priority delivery partnerships to maximise NOC's public engagement reach and deliver ocean literacy and STEM programmes to a wider range of audiences

EDUCATION FORUM

NOC's [2024-2027 Education Strategy](#) clarifies the aim and purpose of our education work at NOC, our priority audiences and delivery partners, and the activities required to achieve a unified narrative to the education activities many NOC staff currently undertake.

The Strategy's high-level objectives are:

1. Review all current NOC educational delivery and consolidate activities to enhance the focus and impact.
2. Develop a clear pathway for students and educators to engage with NOC on our website.

¹ Claudet, 2021 from McKinley, et al 2022's *The evolution of ocean literacy: A new framework for the United Nations Ocean Decade and beyond* <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpolbul.2022.114467>

3. Integrate core ocean literacy learning outcomes and bring ocean careers visibility into existing educational provisions at primary and secondary school levels.
4. Inspire, enable and educate more young people (16-18) to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to take advantage of the growing number of ocean career opportunities needed to grow a sustainable blue economy.
5. Develop an integrated approach to higher education and post-graduate student engagement.

INDUSTRY

When we consider the marine landscape and how we should be positioning NOC to work with industry, it is important to look at various factors that make us unique. Whilst other organisations have significantly more research income or budgets, and more infrastructure for example, NOC is unique in the versatility of our research and outputs. Our critical mass to deliver big ocean science and operate at scale positions us with the best large oceanographic institutions in the world. Our purpose to gain deeper knowledge of the ocean ensures our whole organisation is set-up to deliver. This differs from many organisations where

their mass of research capability is orientated to their core offering; usually a product or service. In addition, our openness, transparency and emphasis on objective and independent scientific knowledge and understanding means we hold a truly impartial and unbiased position. This is highly valuable and means we are able to work with many different, and often competing, organisations. NOC's varied range of stakeholders means that there are no single expectations that we have to meet or manage and therefore have more freedom than other organisations such as those with shareholders.

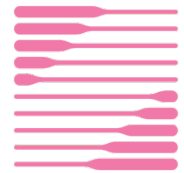
In the context of growing our partnering with industry we position ourselves as an 'enabling partner' and as a bridge in the innovation landscape that translates science and research into business applications; 'where business meets science'. Our approach also allows us to develop multi-dimensional relationships with organisations where we can develop partnerships based on a simple philosophy of 'with, to and from';

- Co-develop new products and services with a partner
- Sell our products and services to a partner
- Gain philanthropically from a partner

These strategic partnerships are just one example of the approach we take.

OUTCOME

A VIBRANT AND HEALTHY ORGANISATION



OBJECTIVES

1. MANAGE OUR PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT TO PROVIDE A WORKING ENVIRONMENT THAT ENCOURAGES INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY AND IS FIT FOR THE FUTURE.

Develop and maintain inclusive, digitally connected and secure environment (physical and virtual), that enables staff to work collaboratively, efficiently and securely from any location, whilst supporting sustainability, innovation and resilience across the organisation.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Staff satisfaction with physical and digital environments, measured via workplace surveys, is >70%, reported annually.
- Operational uptime of critical infrastructure and occupancy of our sites is greater than 99%.
- Quarterly case studies of workplace environments and impact on productivity, innovation or wellbeing.

2. BUILD A HIGH-PERFORMING ORGANISATION OF SKILLED, EFFECTIVE PEOPLE, THROUGH A CULTURE OF INCLUSIVITY, RECRUITING TALENT, AND PROVIDING CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL.

NOC will recruit, develop and retain a skilled and diverse workforce through fair and inclusive practices, structured career pathways and targeted learning opportunities.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Employee engagement increased from previous year, taken from staff engagement survey, reported annually
- Achieve and maintain an annual voluntary turnover rate (excluding retirement and end of fixed term contracts), of less than 10%.

Create and maintain an inclusive workplace culture supported by data-informed actions and leadership.

- Quarterly narrative examples of impacts of activities to increase employee engagement, skills, career development and diversity.

3. A WORKING ENVIRONMENT THAT SUPPORTS THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF OUR COMMUNITY, THROUGH A PROACTIVE CULTURE.

Ensure a safe, compliant and continually improving workplace by embedding robust HSE management systems, visible leadership accountability, digital innovation, open reporting and active engagement, thereby aligning with best practice standards (ISO, MCA, HSE), and fostering a strong culture of safety and learning.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- ISO45001 and ISO14001 accreditations maintained
- Quarterly targets:
 - Zero harm (definition zero major accidents or incidents that are MAIB or RIDDOR reportable)
 - Workdays lost to workplace injury per 100,000 working hours (Lost time injury rate, LTIR) is less than 1.5
 - Wellbeing engagement score from engagement survey: my line manager genuinely cares about my wellbeing is greater than 85%
- Quarterly narrative reporting via H&S dashboard and reports

4. WORK TO HIGH ENVIRONMENTAL AND ETHICAL STANDARDS IN ALL ASPECTS OF THE NOC BUSINESS.

Embed high standards of environmental sustainability, funding assurance, ethical conduct and project governance into all areas of NOC operations and decision-making.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Annual report of carbon reduction targets and maintenance of ISO140001.
- Quarterly narrative report of compliance (including on ethics and research integrity).

ACHIEVING OUR OBJECTIVES

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND PRINCIPLES: THE CHARITY GOVERNANCE CODE

NOC operates in alignment with the principles of the Charity Governance Code at its core, ensuring that the three pillars of the governance structure are fully integrated into the organisation's operations. The three areas of the framework are comprised of policies, our Statement of Delegation and our committees. Our internal audit programme provides assurance and feedback on the effectiveness of how our governance enables and supports the organisation.

NOC's governance structure is designed to ensure transparency, accountability, and a culture of good governance throughout its operations. This is achieved through the oversight provided by the NOC Board, its committees, and the Executive Committee, which work collaboratively to deliver the organisation's strategy, monitor performance, and make informed decisions in alignment with the Charity Governance Code.

Good governance helps provide consistent, clear decision-making routes, repeatable processes for staff and supports NOC to meet its legal and statutory compliance obligations. Review and evaluation of governance creates a culture of continuous improvement. We expect that every staff member in NOC contributes to the efficient working and the success of the organisation.

LEGAL STRUCTURE

NOC is a Charity classified as a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) and is registered at both the Charity Commission for England and Wales and Companies House. In addition, NOC is also registered with OSCR (Scottish Charity Register).

As a registered Charity and due to regulation by the Charity Commission, the organisation has adopted the Charity Governance Code.

NOC also has a trading subsidiary company, National Oceanography Centre Innovations Limited which has a separate Board of Directors. The NOC Board is provided

with oversight and regular updates from the NOC Innovations Board.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees has ultimate responsibility for overseeing NOC's operations and ensuring the organisation is fulfilling its charitable purposes and adhering to all legal requirements. The Trustees provide leadership and guidance in a strategic context while ensuring that the organisation remains financially viable and focused on its mission.

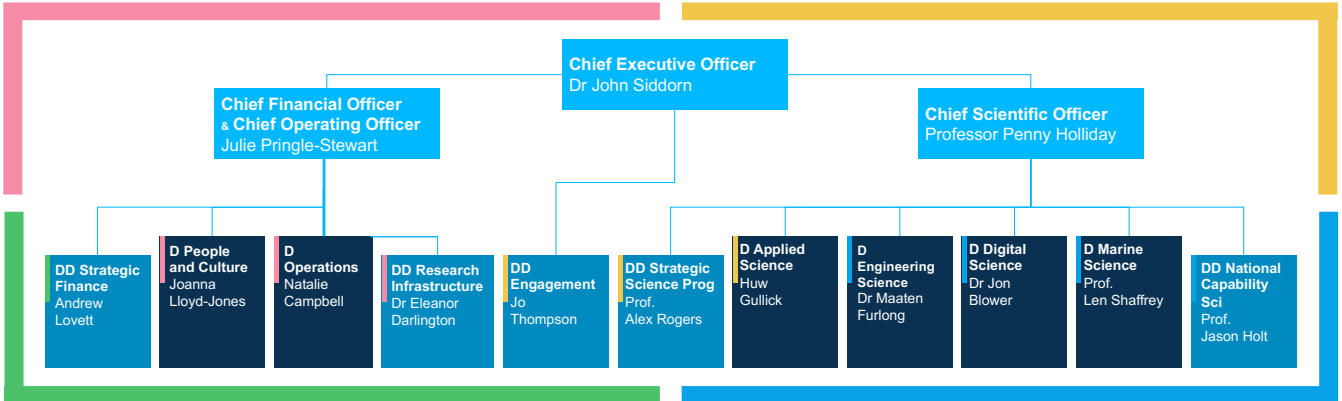
The Board of Trustees is comprised of eight members, each serving a three-year term, with eligibility for re-appointment for a further term. To enhance the two-way flow of information and facilitate communication, the NOC Board includes observers appointed by NERC and the NOC Association, who represent the views of the scientific community.

BOARD COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND OVERSIGHT

The NOC Board meets at least quarterly throughout the year to approve strategy, monitor performance, and make key decisions. Standing items covered in Board meetings include strategy, performance, risk management, Health, Safety and Wellbeing and Corporate Social Responsibility. To support the Board it has four formal sub-committees that focus on specific areas:

- Audit & Risk Committee
- Nominations Committee
- Remuneration Committee
- Science and Technology Advisory Committee

Chaired by Trustee Directors, these committees ensure that decision-making is well-informed and transparent. The committees meet regularly, and their Terms of Reference are reviewed annually to ensure their role remains relevant and aligned with the organisation's evolving needs. The committees' work ensures a robust process of decision-



C-Suite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive or C-Suite Officers • Responsible for making key strategic decisions 	Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Committee member with Corporate Responsibility and Accountability • Report to the C-Suite and lead a Function • On the Executive Pay Scale 	Deputy Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not on Executive • Reporting to C-Suite and lead a Function or Network(s) • Not on the Executive Pay Scale (Band 3)
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Figure: The senior leadership structure aligned to the four Missions

making and monitoring of NOC’s strategy, providing essential oversight and ensuring that the organisation operates effectively within its legal and compliance obligations and maintains good governance.

THE EXECUTIVE

The Executive reports regularly to the Board and the Board Committees, allowing them to conduct detailed scrutiny of their respective areas and provide recommendations to the Board.

In 2025, NOC has been through a process of organisational change to align the operating model with our strategic ambitions. This has led to changes at the Executive level, with the replacement of Directorates with Functions.

The day-to-day operations and leadership of NOC are delegated to the Executive Committee, which is composed of the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer/Chief Financial Officer, Chief Scientific Officer, and Directors. The Executive Committee meets monthly to review progress against strategic objectives, monitor KPIs, and address both

short-term and long-term organisational priorities. The Executive Committee operates with clear delegation of authority from the Board, based on a formal Statement of Delegations, which is reviewed and updated during each financial year. This ensures decisions are made effectively, with the Executive Committee empowered to execute decisions and direct day-to-day operations within the framework set by the Board.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES

The Executive Committee is supported by Executive sub-committees, restructured for this financial year around the four NOC Outcomes. These committees are responsible for defining and monitoring our progress against the organisational objectives. They will also monitor risks and opportunities, cascading to the Executive as appropriate.

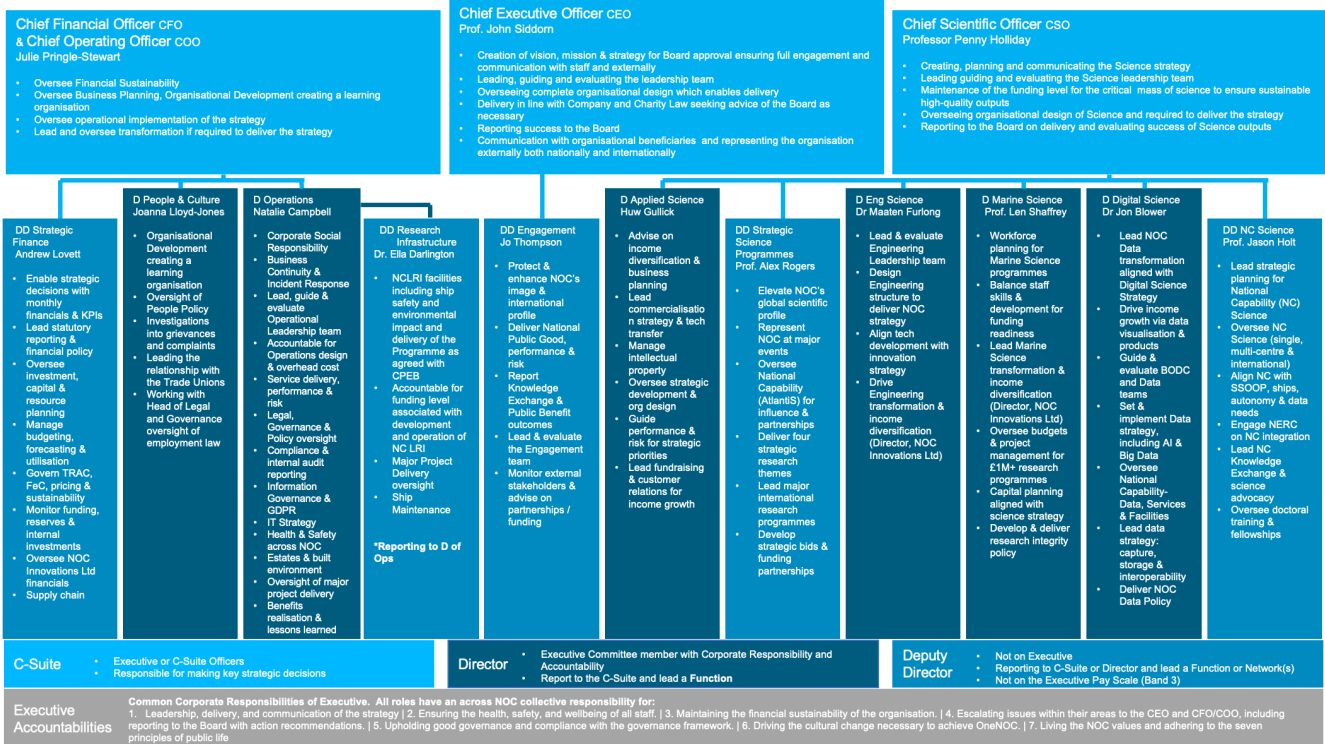


Figure: Senior roles and responsibilities

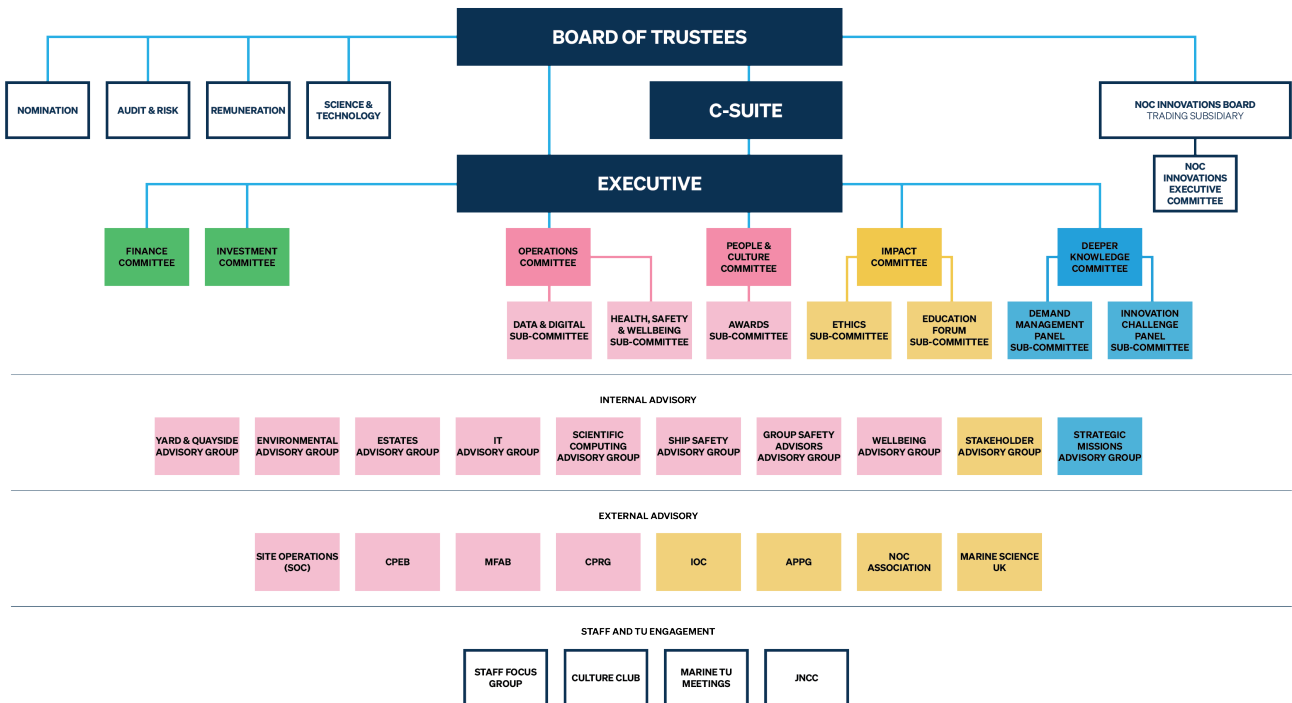


Figure: Structure of NOC Board of Trustees, executive, committees and advisory groups

WHO WE ARE

OUR VALUES

Our six Values guide our internal conduct as well as our relationship with collaborative partners and all external stakeholders. They are interwoven with our corporate vision and our Behaviours Framework, shaping a passionate values-driven culture which is critical to our ongoing business success.

We recognise that diversity of many kinds underpins all our shared values. Diversity is especially important for driving innovation by enlivening what we do - and how we do it - with different perspectives, experiences and backgrounds.



EXCELLENCE We value excellence as the foundation on which the NOC is built



EMPOWERMENT We value people and teams as the NOC's most important assets



INTEGRITY We value independence and integrity and treat each other with respect and trust



INNOVATIVE THINKING We value considering different approaches, finding different ways of doing things and seeking creative solutions



ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY We value the ocean, recognising our reliance on it, and consider our environmental impact in everything we do



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP We value the benefits of working together and actively seek to exchange knowledge, skills and resources

BEHAVIOURS

NOC's behaviours framework describes how we expect people to behave and applies to all job levels and roles. It outlines how we go about our work and is just as important as what we do. The behaviours framework aligns to the NOC purpose, encourages behaviours that help everyone work well together and supports staff in achieving their goals. The Framework has been developed against three main areas:

- Organisational Direction – creating a work environment where everyone matters and feels valued, respected and heard
- Engaging People – Feeling good about our organisation and the part we play in making a difference
- Achieving Results – When we work together, we create something greater than we can as individuals

Under each area there is a set of core behaviours that underpins and supports our core values.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

At the heart of our operations, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is integral to how we function. As a charity, we adhere to high moral and ethical standards, striving to make a meaningful difference beyond legal obligations. Our CSR strategy ensures our actions align with our values, enhancing societal and environmental well-being while supporting our purpose.

By embracing sustainable practices we contribute to a better future. Our commitment to CSR yields numerous benefits:

- Enhanced Reputation: Doing CSR activities improves our reputation. Customers, employees, investors, and communities appreciate socially responsible companies, which leads to more customer loyalty, attracting top talent, and stronger relationships with stakeholders.
- Managing Risks: Dealing with social and environmental issues proactively helps avoid potential risks. Following environmental regulations and adopting sustainable practices can prevent fines, legal issues, and damage to our reputation from negative publicity.

- **Cost savings:** Sustainable practices can save money in the long run. Energy-efficient operations, reducing waste, and responsible sourcing can lower utility bills, cut waste disposal costs, and streamline supply chains.
- **Competitive Advantage:** CSR initiatives make us stand out from competitors. As people prefer ethical and sustainable products and services, socially responsible businesses gain an edge. Strong CSR commitments also attract investments and partnerships.
- **Employee Motivation:** We want our staff to be more engaged and motivated when they connect with our values and social contributions. CSR programs boost morale, increase retention, and improve productivity.
- **Community Impact:** Investing in CSR lets us positively impact the communities we operate in. Supporting local charities, sponsoring events, and addressing local issues build goodwill and strengthen relationships with all our stakeholders.

Aligned with our focus on ocean science and sustainability, our CSR approach embodies responsibility to both current and future generations. As a registered charity, we are committed to public benefit, advancing ocean research, and maintaining high standards of social, cultural, and environmental responsibility.

Our CSR Framework has four fundamental pillars:

- **Responsible business operations-** To review and refine our governance and compliance frameworks in line with our CSR mission
- **Environmental responsibility -** To minimise the environmental impact of our operations, prioritising environmental stewardship across all activities
- **Community impact -** To positively impact all the communities we operate in, considering both our geographical communities and the broader ocean professional community
- **Our people -** To ensure our people and teams can reach their full potential while fostering an inclusive and supportive culture (noting this is covered by our People & Culture Approach outlined below).

ENVIRONMENT

NOC will continue to commit to minimise our environmental impact by maintaining, quality, robust environment management systems that meet a high standard Environmental Policy and ISO14001 accreditation. NOC has recently been accredited under ISO45001 for H&S and intends to continue to operate to its best practice with its own H&S Policy.

- Enhance our carbon accounting and review and refresh targets for all our in-scope emissions
- Analyse scope 3 business travel emissions to identify areas of focus in reducing our impact.
- Introduce Environmental and carbon awareness training into our induction
- Protect and maintain biodiversity at our sites
- Improve recycling and waste segregation at all our sites
- Reduce single-use plastics in all our laboratories

Our CSR framework is further strengthened by our Modern Slavery Policy, in compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015. Through regular training and resources, we ensure that all employees are equipped to uphold these values.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY

We protect our services and activities through Business Continuity Management (BCM), this ensures that the organisation has acceptable levels of planning and preparation to overcome serious incidents or disasters, and that it can resume normal business operations within an acceptable period.

To plan for the continuation of services, we:

- Have an established BCM governance and framework
- Undertake a business impact analysis to understand how our services are delivered, the activities involved and resources used;
- Developed and exercise a business continuity recovery and response plans, so when a disruptive incident

occurs there is a planned business continuity solution, which has been rehearsed, for continuing the service.

- Developed a competency and training framework for the Incident Response Team and other relevant persons

INFRASTRUCTURE

As a four-site organisation with facilities in Southampton, Liverpool and two world-class research vessels, RRS James Cook and RRS Discovery, we must ensure that our physical and digital environments foster innovation, collaboration, security and sustainability. By integrating cutting-edge technology, optimising our built environment, and enhancing connectivity across all locations, we will create a workspace that is fit for the future.

The estate is owned by NERC with interest from University of Southampton and a long lease from University of Liverpool, NOC will continually improve and optimise our built environment and space in-line with the latest technologies and developments. It is therefore imperative that we continue to develop and strengthen our Estates service to meet the needs of this new environment and the teams at NOC.

To foster innovation across our diverse locations, we are committed to providing an inspiring, collaborative, and inclusive work environment.

Recognising the need for sustainability, we are committed to minimising emissions, reducing waste, and maximising energy efficiency across all our locations, including our ships.

By integrating sustainability, digital transformation, and employee well-being into our organisation, we will create an innovative, future-ready work environment that enables our teams, whether in Liverpool, Southampton, or aboard our research vessels, to thrive.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

NOC is supported by a digitally connected, Information Technology team who embrace the culture of consistent innovation and continual improvement with the aim of delivering accurate and timely services, ultimately creating more time for world class engineering and science. Their key areas of focus are:

- Operational efficiency: Prioritising efficiencies and embracing continuous improvement
- Customer focussed: Putting our customers' needs at the centre of what we do
- Innovative: Open to new and innovative technologies and ways of working
- Working in partnership: Creating new relationships with business partners
- Project delivery: Planning for and delivering best in class projects
- Visible: Being pro-actively visible to our customers
- Security: Providing a secure and compliant digital environment for all colleague to work within.

To support our multi-location operations, we will implement digital solutions that enable seamless communication and efficiency across Liverpool, Southampton, and our ships.

There are three strategic areas of focus:

- **Efficiency and Automation:** a major project implementing a new Enterprise Service Management System to enhance the user experience when dealing with Operations as well as produce a more aligned working practice across the Function. There is also a need to explore the automation of multiple manual processes across the NOC utilising known technologies such as Power Automate.
- **Cyber:** NOC is Cyber Essentials accredited. This central to enhancing NOC's cyber security status, its reputation and ability to secure funding as funders are increasingly adopting CE as a pre-requisite for funding awards. NOC will continue to drive a culture of security in the face of growing threats.
- **AI:** The introduction of AI has exploded into the corporate working world and, we explore the possibilities, benefits and risks associated with its use, making risk-aware decisions about rolling out capabilities to staff as appropriate.

PEOPLE

People are at the heart of our success. Investing in their growth, well-being, and potential is fundamental to our success. Our commitment is to create an environment where every employee can thrive regardless of background, ability, or experience and are empowered to contribute to our mission.

We provide fair access to opportunities, promote well-being, and support career development at every stage, we are dedicated to building a workplace that enables individuals to grow, succeed, and lead. We will focus on supporting staff across all employment stages, aligning policies and practices with organisational objectives to foster a positive and inclusive workplace culture. This involves strategic HR Business Partnering, specialist centres of expertise, and first-line support to staff and managers.

NOC employs 725 staff. Of these are 135 based in Liverpool and 590 in Southampton with the mariners all being included in the Southampton headcount and the percentage of female employees is 36%.

Health and well-being is central to a successful and engaged workforce, and we aim to take a holistic view of well-being, integrating physical, emotional, and psychological support. This includes:

1. Education, access to resources and wider organisational support;
2. Embedding the principles of wellbeing and inclusivity across our people policies and practices;
3. Supporting our employees living healthy lifestyles;
4. Embedding workplace health promotion.

Tools and support include provision of Mental Health First Aiders, a confidential 24/7 Employee Assistance Programme and a library of resources focused on encouraging and supporting staff to maintain good mental health and manage problems should they arise. Partnering with our specialist provider, MIND, we support reducing mental Ill-Health Stigma within the workplace.

By embedding these pillars into our workplace culture, we will continue to make NOC a great place to work, where employees feel valued, supported, and empowered to contribute to our collective success.

PEOPLE PLAN

The 2025 workforce model provides a forecast for the year-end position, based on current payroll data and projected growth. This forecast assumes stable funding, moderate expansion in NOC's core markets, and diversification through initial investment.

If workforce growth continues at the projected 5% rate in 2025 – consistent with the previous two years – the headcount is expected to increase by approx. 35 FTE positions. This remains subject to organisational demand, critical skills need, bid funding success, staff turnover, investment plans, and external factors influencing NOC.

CULTURE

The new Culture Team plays a pivotal role in shaping an agile, resilient, and innovative NOC. Recognising that culture is owned by all, the focus is on embedding this understanding at all levels of the organisation to maximise individual, and organisational performance and development. Just as the ocean thrives through harmony and balance, so does our workplace and together, we create a culture where every individual feels valued, connected, and empowered to help NOC fulfil its mission: understanding the ocean for the benefit of all life. This initiative is vital, ensuring our culture supports innovation, investment, and strategic growth.

The Culture Team will implement cultural transformation initiatives aligning them with strategic priorities, with:

- Support to Organisation Design and Strategy
- Organisational Learning
- Employee Engagement
- Diversity, Equality and Inclusion

The team deliver these responsibilities by working across the organisation to:

- Bridge Connections: Facilitate collaboration and innovation bringing people and ideas together across the organisation.
- Cultivate Growth: Build an environment where everyone feels a sense of belonging, is recognised for their contributions and is empowered to reach their full potential.

- Unlock Potential: Encourage and support employees to bring their authentic selves to work, unlocking creativity and driving impactful results.
- Align with Purpose: Reflect NOC's mission in our workplace culture, aligning our actions and values to make a global impact.
- A structured DE&I framework that drives accountability through dedicated working groups, programmes and initiatives.
- Ongoing engagement with staff with disabilities, ensuring accessibility in recruitment, workplace adjustments, and technology integration.
- An open and inclusive culture, where diversity of thought, background, and expertise strengthens our organisation.

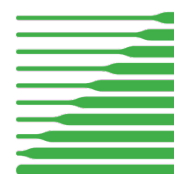
Our Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DE&I) framework is designed to remove barriers, support employee well-being, and embed DE&I into all aspects of our operations. Our priorities include

- Fair access to opportunities for all staff, ensuring equity in recruitment, career progression, and leadership development.
- Smart and flexible working practices that improve inclusion, work-life balance, and productivity.

We continuously improve how we attract, recruit, and support disabled talent by removing barriers and fostering a welcoming culture. Adopting a 'NOC Accessible' approach means embedding accessibility in everything we do—shaping our behaviours, policies, environment, technology, and communications. We ensure accessibility is integral to both internal and external engagement, reinforcing NOC as a great place to work and collaborate.

OUTCOME

A FINANCIALLY RESILIENT ORGANISATION



OBJECTIVES

1. INCREASE NOC'S FINANCIAL RESILIENCE THROUGH DEVELOPING A WIDER PORTFOLIO OF INCOME STREAMS.

To build an order book with a wider portfolio of income streams that diversify away from National Capability and the underpinning from UKRI-NERC. It will be monitored monthly and reported to the Board quarterly and annually.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Less than 50% of our total income comes from UKRI-NERC National Capability.
- Quarterly narrative report of financial resilience, based on an additional basket of measures.

2. INCREASE REVENUE AND PROFITABILITY TO ENSURE WE MAINTAIN STRONG FINANCIAL RESERVES.

Maintain a sustainable level of reserves through continued delivery activities that contribute adequately to our reserves, thus supporting continuing to invest in line with the business plan and reserves/investment policy (signed off by board annually).

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- At least £4.23 million contribution (CBITDA) to our unrestricted reserves from our core business activities.
- A quarterly narrative report of revenue, profitability and reserves, to include an additional basket of measures.

3. ENCOURAGE EFFICIENCY, GAINING MAXIMUM VALUE FROM EFFECTIVE, WELL-DESIGNED, WORKING PRACTICES.

Have an efficiently run organisation, enabling growth with existing support and indirect costs and thus benefit from economies of scale.

Indirect costs will be measured and monitored as a proportion to revenue (in comparison to turnover) year on year.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Indirect costs less than 40% of our total revenue.
- Narrative assessment to include benchmarks against comparable organisations and progress update on improving effectiveness and utilising tools for efficiency to remain competitive.

4. GROW CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY BY INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE AND SKILLS, CAPABILITIES AND LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE, TO OPEN NEW AREAS OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION.

Aligned capability and capacity to future delivery needs on a rolling annual basis through detailed resource planning and planning usage of infrastructure and asset.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- We reinvest more than £3 mill of our savings into the business, whilst maintaining £8 mill reserves for emergencies.
- Narrative to include updates on progress in growing our people and capital assets.

ACHIEVING OUR OBJECTIVES

NOC is a NERC Centre and continues to receive the majority of its funding from UKRI-NERC. As such NOC operates under the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) model. This model includes calculating the full economic cost of research projects including the full direct costs, indirect and estates costs and the margin for sustainability and investment adjustment.

Funds that exceed the Full Cash Cost (FCC) of a project are added to NOC's strategic reserves, which are invested into targeted projects to stimulate growth in priority areas. Projects that recover less than FCC (e.g. Horizon Europe) need to be subsidised.

NERC provide NOC, and other NERC centres, with Institutional Funding (IF) to allow NOC to make up the Internal Rate of Return to the Full Cash Cost (FCC). Therefore, the amount of available IF is a limiting factor on the amount of work NOC can do that is funded through loss-making mechanisms. The amount of IF awarded is determined partly through the level of NERC funding and through a measure of the performance of the Research Centre through a Centre Evaluation exercise, conducted on approximately 5-year cycles. The date of the next Centre Evaluation, and the form it will take, is not presently set but is likely to be in 2027. We will maintain the quality of our

research aligned with the measures of the Centre Evaluation process.

NERC also fund infrastructure investments separately to allow NOC to bridge the gap between FCC and Full Economic Cost (FEC) that is required for NOC to be long-term sustainable. Monitoring Internal Rate of Return (IRR) of the portfolio of NOC projects is therefore critical in ensuring we are sustainable as an organisation.

There are continued downward pressure on NERC resources, and that has and will continue to affect the availability of funding to NOC. To enhance financial resilience, NOC has and continues to diversify its research income, increasing the proportion of funding from commercial, innovation, and philanthropic sources, and from new funding bodies such as ARIA.

NOC has great flexibility in the way it has been incorporated and governed. As well as having exclusive access to public funding, its commercial and charitable structures allow it to access a broader customer base and operate independently. This flexible model allows it to operate in a broader space than many organisations that sit in one particular sector.

In its public service role, NOC is the UK's largest ocean research institute, widely acknowledged as 'the' national

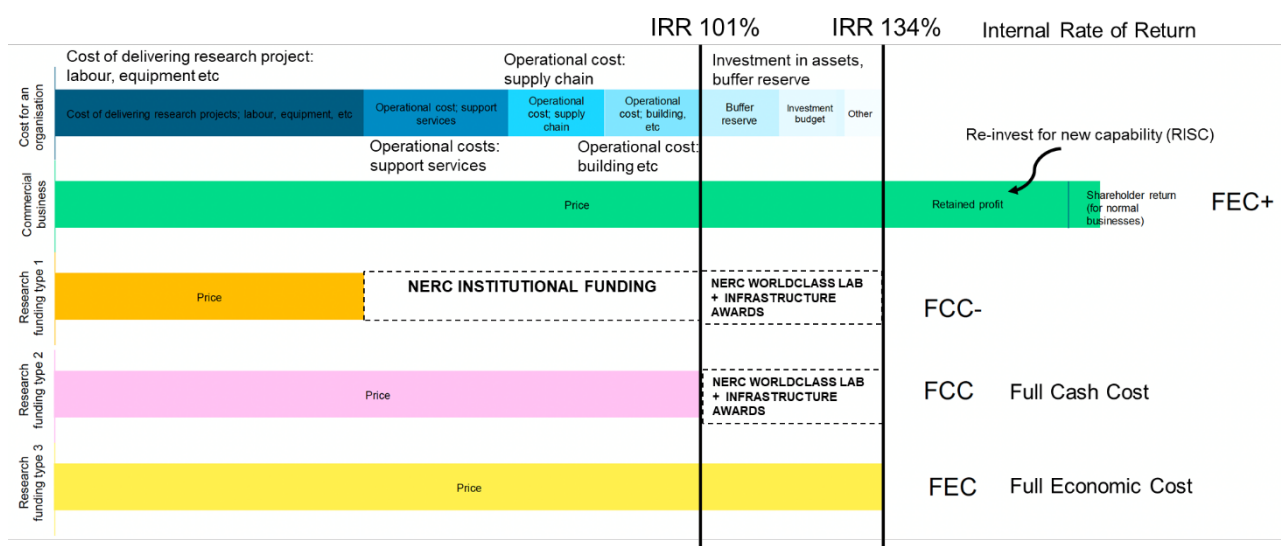


Figure: Sustainable costing model

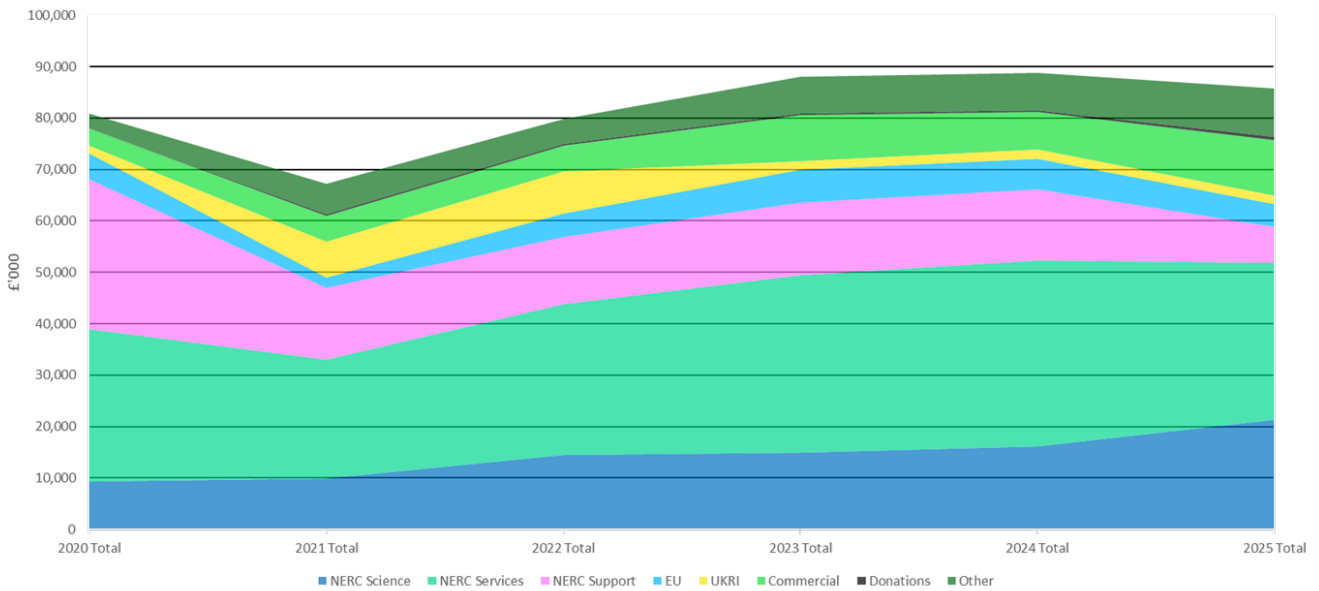


Figure: Income categorisation 2019/20 – 2024/25

ocean expert. It claims market leadership in this respect and uses that position to gain influence as well as income.

INCOME DIVERSIFICATION

Building diversified income streams is something that NOC has been successful at for many years. Indeed, even within the broad research funding space, we have a range of different funding sources; NERC, Innovate UK, European independence and is a critical part of the 2025-2035 strategy.

We have built a solid foundation to accelerate income diversification which has seen us develop a broad approach to working with industry that focusses on our expertise in the marine innovation and science space and positioning NOC as an enabling partner for industry. Income through our trading subsidiary and directly into NOC has increased year on year and we have set high expectations for our 2025-2035 strategy.

In mid-2024 there was a review of our income diversification approach with a projection of potential income from diversified sources. This looked at the total diversified income that NOC had achieved in 2022-2024 and then, based on the income diversification strategy, categorized the type of income that we believe is possible out to 2030 and beyond. The graph below provides a summary illustration of this. This excludes any estimated ship charters from, and including, 2024 onwards.

Space Agency, Horizon Europe to name a few. Becoming an independent organisation has given us the ability to decide how we diversify our funding streams further and grow them; what we decide to do, how we decide to do it and who with. Income diversification has been a central tenant of the NOC strategy since

With a top-level potential diversified income of £35m - £40m by 2030 outlined, we have developed a simple ‘10-point plan’ which outlines the levers we can use to accelerate the growth. Behind each of these levers is an execution plan that is led by the Applied Science team. These provide more details on each lever with annual actions and activities to execute captured in an individual’s objectives.

The schematic below provides a summary of the 10-point plan along with aspirational targets against each one. Progress against this is reported monthly at Executive level.

Building a sustainable, balanced income portfolio underpins NOC’s financial resilience and provides the means (money) for investment in our science and research. An organisation with a balanced income portfolio is therefore a securer and more resilient one. Generating income from a range of funding sources makes our organisation less financially fragile, allows us to continue our work through challenging periods where there may be existential shocks and enables us to invest in science and research. These things are

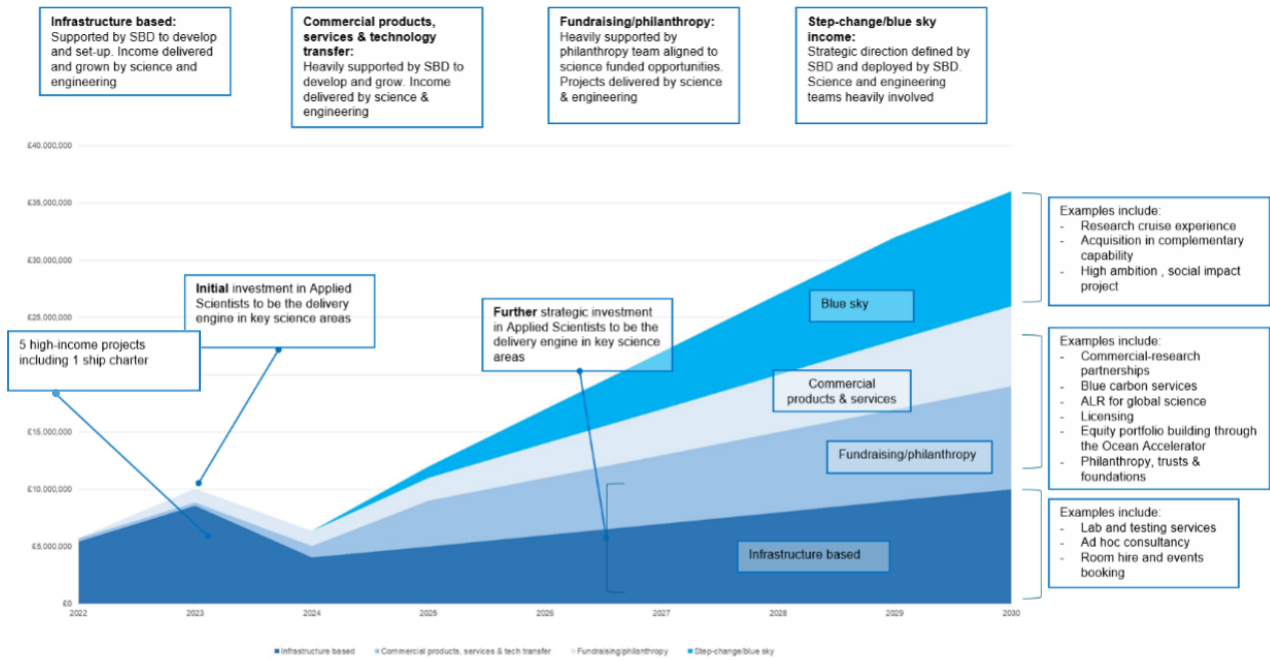


Figure: Growing to meet charitable aims

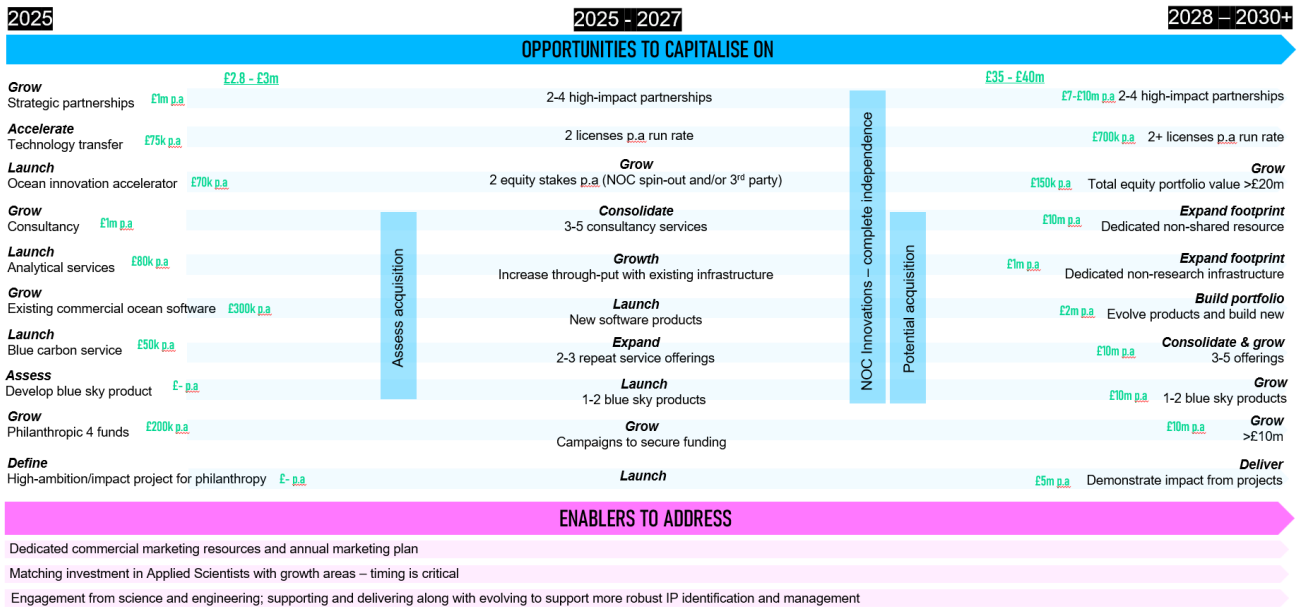


Figure: Delivering diversification

critical if we want to remain a relevant, world-class ocean science research organisation and have impact in our world.

In diversifying our income, we will work with new stakeholders, customers and audiences and in new markets and sectors. This is a wonderful opportunity for us to expand

existing, and create new, multi-dimensional channels that could allow us;

- To create new, mutually beneficial, partnerships to further our wider strategic aims and goals

- To generate more profitable income
- To forge links with organisations who are interested in scaling our technology and IP for impact
- To keep connected with current and emerging challenges and issues that exist in industrial sectors for example. This can inform what science we do and connect it to “real world” problems
- To gain research funding for scientific questions that we set rather than being reliant on funding calls
- To enable us to learn from new organisations where their R&D mass is far larger than ours

Whilst our income diversification approach is concerned with generating revenue for a balanced income portfolio, it has been designed to open these new channels for us. In short, we view income diversification as a channel for good science, research and achieving impact just as much as a profitable funding stream.

The Applied Science function is responsible for creating the channels and opportunities for income diversification. It has a simple strategy which focusses on 5 strategic channels.

The 10-point plan shown above all relate to one or more of the 5 strategic channels.

NOC INNOVATIONS

The NOC income diversification strategy is developed and led by the Applied Science function but the delivery resource for driving the growth resides across the organisation, typically in the science, engineering and digital functions.

A significant proportion of diversified income is delivered through NOC Innovations Limited. NOC Innovations is a wholly owned subsidiary of NOC and is used to be the transactional route for commercial contracts that NOC may deliver. NOC Innovations allows NOC to undertake work that is not necessarily wholly aligned to our charitable aims, and it allows NOC to gain profit. NOC Innovations pays NOC FEC for the work NOC undertakes and then, through an annual gift aid mechanism, provides profit to NOC. In addition to its functional role, NOC Innovations has an important governance role.

NOC Innovations is the only dedicated ocean science research organisation focused on helping organisations on their energy transition journey, by providing a scientific

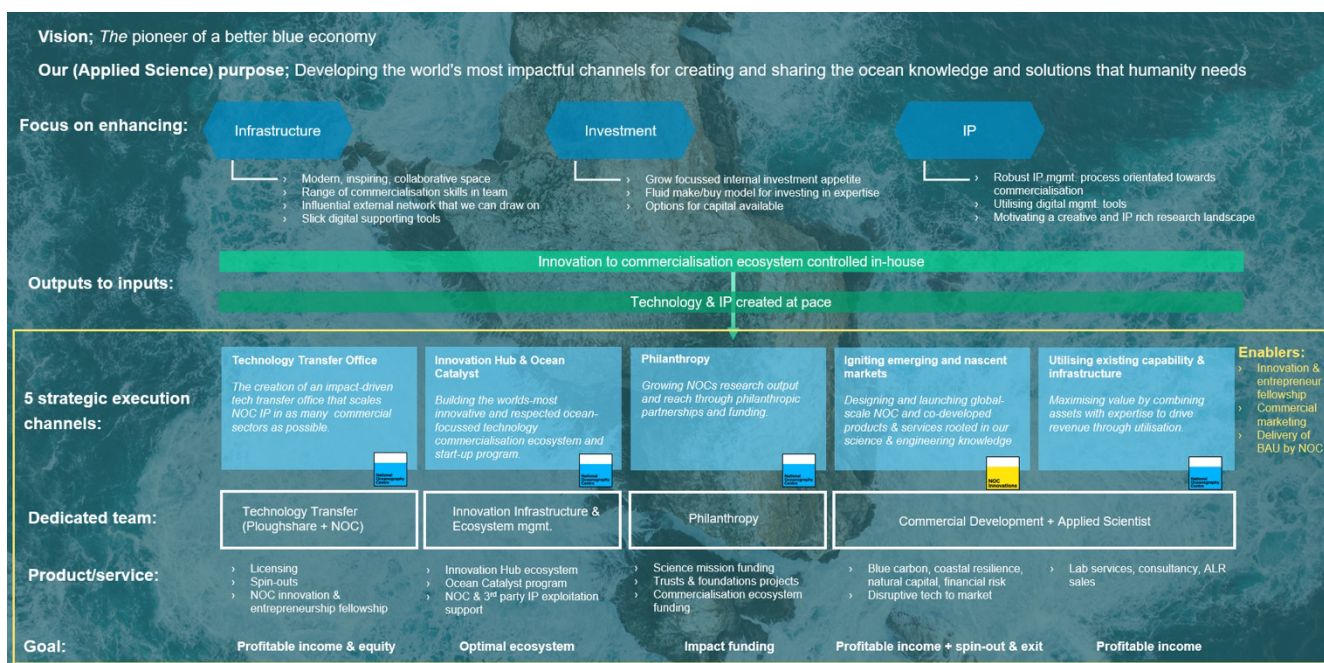


Figure: Applied science strategy on a page

understanding of the ocean to allow them to operate more sustainably. The increasing importance on organisations sustainability strategies and energy transition journeys, combined with the growing understanding that the ocean has a vital role in achieving net zero, means NOC Innovations has an excellent opportunity to own the space that provides the scientific services to assist commercial organisations.

Free to explore commercial opportunities, NOC Innovations has identified the defence, seabed mining, oil and gas sectors as the primary source for securing financial growth. Conscious of the potential risk to NOC's reputation, relationships with defence, seabed mining and oil and gas must be communicated in a measured and meaningful way. Besides promoting new opportunities within existing customer markets, the emergence of renewable energy, communications, blue carbon and carbon finance holds the potential for further diversification and collaboration.

through very targeted campaigns that are aligned with NOCs strategic missions/goals. Philanthropy is a long-term endeavour and takes many years to establish itself before significant returns can be realized. It is largely relationship-based so the journey from assessing and targeting an opportunity through to realizing income can take years. Despite these, often challenging nuances that exist, philanthropy is a critical part of our income diversification approach. Whilst it is captured at a high-level in the 10-point plan it is important to note that our approach is different from many of the more commercial or corporate elements of the income diversification approach.

Set-up in 2020, Philanthropy at NOC has changed considerably over the last 4 years. In mid-2024 a full review of the approach from the last four years was undertaken and a new strategy was devised on the following principles;

- a. Focus on three areas for philanthropy
 - o High-net worth individuals, often with their own philanthropic organisations
 - o Corporate philanthropy
 - o Trusts and Foundations

PHILANTHROPY

Philanthropy is a broad discipline which features ways to generate new income. Unrestricted income is preferable, but very difficult to secure, whilst restricted income enables funding of specific science, innovation or public benefit work that can demonstrate real impact. Our approach to philanthropy covers both bases

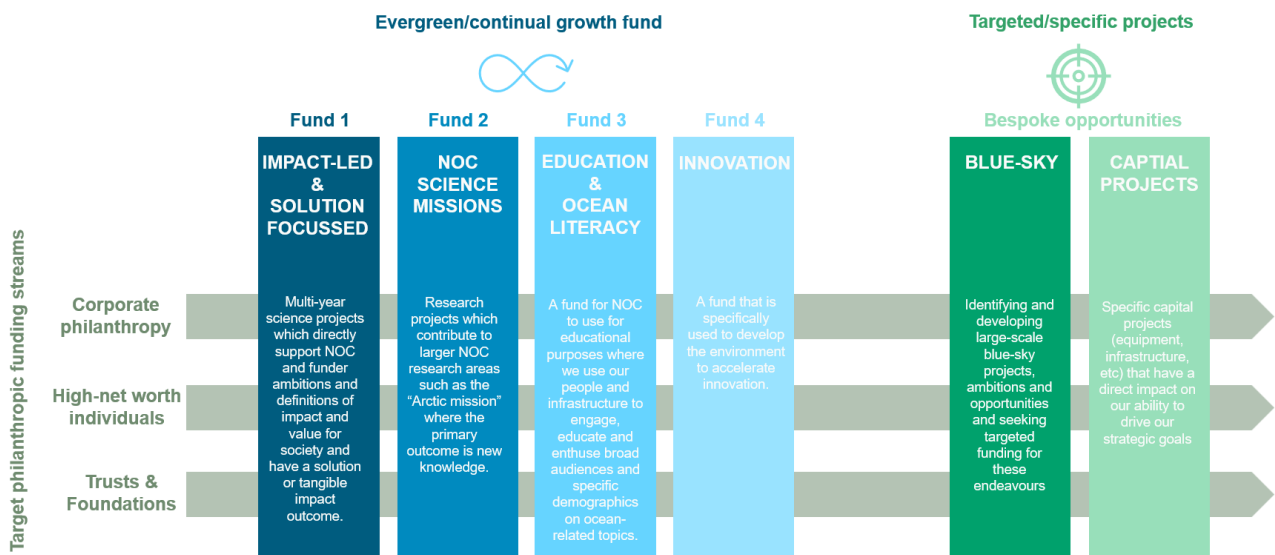


Figure: Philanthropy strategy on a page

- b. Develop large-scale, ambitious and impactful ‘asks’ that are of interest to funders.
- c. Elevate these ‘asks’ to a higher-level, more organisation/brand level ones where a portfolio of funds can be built that will fund our NOC strategy.
- d. Align closely with the Commercial Development team to assess and target commercial organisations to build a corporate philanthropy relationship and funding.

We will not focus on growing the individual giving” approach and will be opportunistic with individual research projects/scientists where there may be some interest in getting philanthropic funding but not prioritize this due to capacity and time intensity required to be successful.

To bring these principles together we have developed an approach based on funds. The schematic, *Philanthropy strategy on a page* (page 35), shows these against the different types of funding areas we are focusing on.

INVESTMENTS AND ASSETS

NOC is able to invest financial resources through both external and internal investment. To ensure long-term sustainability, and to ensure we are resilient to fluctuations in NERC investments in NOC infrastructures, we are increasingly reinvesting our reserves internally. We have opened up the opportunity to all staff to bid into these internal investments pots, allowing us to flexibly reinvest our reserves on developing new capability or capacity in the organisation and to grow the innovation potential of the organisation. This is a relatively new area for NOC and needs to be developed carefully to ensure we are creating long-term, sustained, value through those investments.

EXTERNAL INVESTMENTS

- Investment Fund Identification: The quarterly investment report will detail available cash and the level of unrestricted funds suitable for investment. This analysis, performed in conjunction with the reserves policy, identifies the pool for external investment.

- Investment Approach & Risk Management: Initially, cash reserves will be prioritised for low-risk investments with alternative banking providers to diversify holdings and mitigate risk.
- Future Diversification (Post-FY25): Opportunities for alternative investments beyond cash and bonds will be explored, contingent upon the Board's evolving risk appetite, aiming to further diversify the portfolio.

INTERNAL INVESTMENTS

- Re-investment Mandate: Any unrestricted surplus reserves, as defined by the reserves policy, are earmarked for re-investment back into the core charitable activities of NOC.
- Decision Making & Justification: The Finance & Investment Committee holds responsibility for determining specific internal investments. All proposed investments require a robust business case demonstrating their value and alignment with organisational goals.

There is annual investment of £850k for the systematic refreshment and replenishment of assets, ensuring they meet ongoing strategic requirements. Additional funding, when received, presents opportunities to invest further in enhancing capabilities and capacity beyond the standard annual commitment.

For assets under our control we will focus on forecasting, configuring, controlling, and optimising stock levels to balance supply with demand, while minimising risk, waste, and costs.

PROCUREMENT AND LOGISTICS

NOC currently engages with over 1,300 active suppliers with a total spend of around £40m. Notably, 35% of this spend is concentrated within the top 20 suppliers. We are identifying critical, key, and preferred partners, consolidating spend and reduce the supply base, targeting a reduction to approximately 500-700 suppliers to improve cost-effectiveness of NOC procurements.

We will function in full compliance with Procurement Act 2023 (PA2023) regulations, employing proactive risk

mitigation strategies, and actively working to increase the percentage of organisational spend covered by formal contracts.

NOC handles significant numbers of assets, including those that are deployed internationally upon our ships. The efficient receipt, handling, storage, and dispatch of assets is

key to effective operations, and we will continue to develop improved working practices for handling and deploying our assets.

YEAR	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
INCOME TOTAL	89,515	97,788	103,782	110,142	116,893
TOTAL PAY	49,941	53,220	55,359	58,095	61,490
NON-LABOUR TOTAL	38,745	40,080	41,483	42,935	44,438
COST TOTAL	88,686	93,300	96,843	101,030	105,928
CONTRIBUTION BEFORE DEPRECIATION	829	4,488	6,939	9,112	10,965
DEPRECIATION	5,737	5,938	6,158	6,361	6,584
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS	(4,909)	(1,450)	793	2,751	4,381
HEAD COUNT (FTES)	758.17	781.17	787.17	793.22	799.31

Figure: Statement of Financial Activities

YEAR	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
FIXED ASSETS	15,012	14,725	14,428	14,221	14,624
CURRENT ASSETS	54,987	53,573	54,512	57,154	61,560
CURRENT LIABILITIES	46,038	45,787	45,637	45,821	45,748
NET CURRENT ASSETS	8,949	7,786	8,876	11,334	15,812
NET ASSETS	23,960	22,510	23,303	26,055	30,436
UNRESTRICTED & DESIGNATED	18,558	18,046	19,985	23,778	29,204
RESTRICTED / RESTRICTED FIXED ASSETS	5,402	4,464	3,318	2,276	1,234
RESERVES HELD	23,960	22,510	23,303	26,055	30,436

Figure: Statement of Financial Position

AREA	INCOME TOTAL	TOTAL PAY	NON-LABOUR TOTAL	COST TOTAL	CONTRIBUTION BEFORE INDIRECT COST ALLOCATION
CORPORATE	12,420	6,952	9,500	16,451	(4,031)
OPERATIONS	3,401	6,813	10,189	17,003	(13,602)
INFRASTRUCTURE	11,537	7,439	3,090	10,529	1,008
ENGAGEMENT	474	1,076	1,494	2,570	(2,096)
PEOPLE & CULTURE	0	1,214	949	2,164	(2,164)
STRATEGIC FINANCE	116	2,510	384	2,895	(2,779)
ENGINEERING SCIENCE	16,234	8,726	2,416	11,142	5,092
DIGITAL SCIENCE	10,848	5,118	411	5,529	5,319
MARINE SCIENCE	24,658	7,401	4,698	12,099	12,560
APPLIED SCIENCE	7,785	3,027	5,278	8,304	(519)
CLS	18,004	0	15,963	15,963	2,041
SUB TOTAL	105,478	50,277	54,372	104,649	829
INTERCOMPANY	(15,963)	(15,963)	(15,963)	(15,963)	0
GRAND TOTAL	89,515	50,277	38,409	88,686	829

Figure: SOFA (£'000s) Split by contribution before depreciation and indirect cost allocation by function for year 1



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