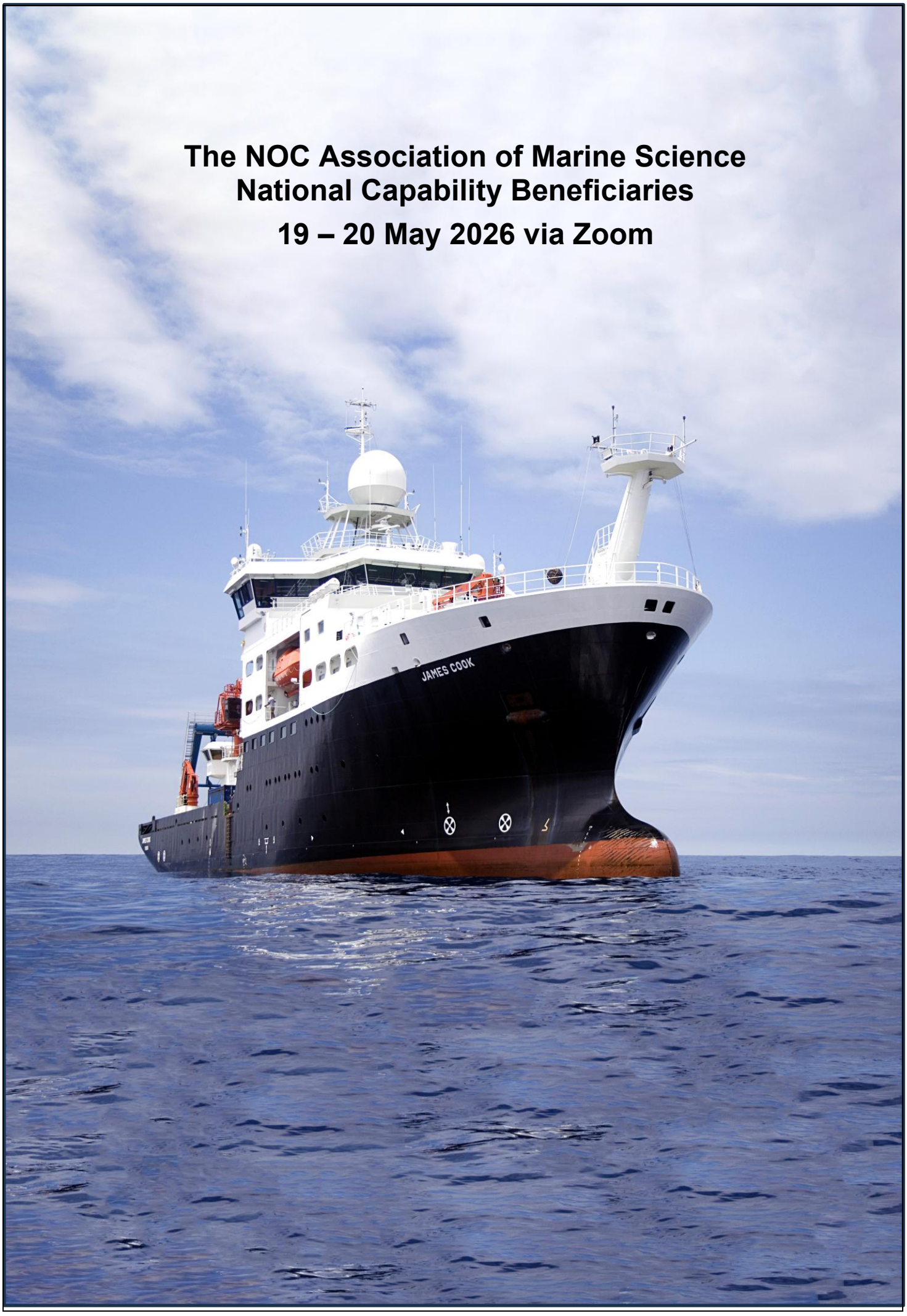
The NOC Association of Marine Science National Capability Beneficiaries

19 – 20 May 2026 via Zoom



Welcome by Professor Martin Solan,
Chair of the NOC Association of Marine Science National Capability Beneficiaries (NOCA)

I am delighted to welcome you to the 15th Annual Meeting of the NOC Association.

This year's programme includes updates on the role of the NOC Association, Marine Science UK, the future of the UK's national marine science capabilities and infrastructure, the Marine Facilities Advisory Board, the Atlantic Climate and Environment Strategic Science (AtlantiS) programme, the Antarctica InSync Programme, the Antarctic Infrastructure Modernisation Programme, how NERC's funding landscape is changing and the Horizon Europe programme and UK engagement.

We will wrap up day two of the AGM with a discussion and look forward to hearing your thoughts on any or all of the topics we are covering this year.

In arranging this year's AGM, I would like to thank our guest speakers: Professor John Siddorn (NOC), Dr Eleanor Darlington (NOC), Professor Tim Smyth (PML), Professor Jason Holt (NOC), Dr Thomas Ryan-Keogh (NOC), Elen Jones (BAS), Dr Rupert Lewis (NERC) and Kerry Young (UKRI).

In creating and delivering this event, I would also like to thank the members of the NOCA Board (page 10), Dr Stephen Dye for chairing day two, NOCA Secretary Jackie Pearson, and Ryan McGarvey and Alice Banet of the National Oceanography Centre Events Team.

There will be opportunities to ask questions and presentations will be online afterwards. Questions are welcome anytime. Please contact me or Jackie Pearson, via our contact details below.

Best wishes,

Mart

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Chair, NOCA
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NOCA Secretary
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National Oceanography Centre

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Images: Cover: RRS *James Cook*, National Oceanography Centre, UK
NOCA image: Fishing boats on the Solent, Howard Marson

UK Marine Science 2026: Challenges, current and future

Tuesday 19 May 2026 – Day One

09:45	Delegates invited to log on by this time
10:00	Welcome from Chair, Professor Martin Solan
	Item One: The role of the NOC Association – Professor Martin Solan
10:10	Questions
10:20	Item Two: An update on Marine Science UK – Professor John Siddorn
10:30	Questions
10:40	Item three: Shaping the future of UKRI's national marine science capabilities and infrastructure – Dr Eleanor Darlington
10:50	Questions
11:00	**BREAK**
11:15	Item four: An update on the Atlantic Climate and Environment Strategic Science (AtlantiS) programme – Professor Jason Holt
11:25	Questions
11:35	Item five: The Antarctica InSync Programme – Dr Ryan-Keogh
11:45	Questions
11.55	Item five: The Antarctic Infrastructure Modernisation Programme – Elen Jones
12:05	Questions
12:15	**End of day one**

Wednesday 20 May 2026 – Day Two

09:45	Delegates asked to log on
10:00	Welcome from the Dr Stephen Dye, Acting Chair
10:05	Item six: Update about the Marine Facilities Advisory Board – Professor Tim Smyth
10:15	Questions

10:25	The Horizon Europe programme & UK engagement – Kerry Young
10:35	Questions
10:45	**BREAK**
11.00	How NERC's funding landscape is changing – Dr Rupert Lewis
11:10	Questions
11:20	**Item nine: Discussion – led by Dr Stephen Dye**
11:30	Given the current funding landscape, how will this affect the shape of future national capability?
11:40	How do we come together in the most effective way to represent the ocean science community?
11:50	What challenges lie ahead in creating a portfolio of ocean-related 'applied' research that will be able to address societal needs?
12.00	**End of the 15th AGM of the NOC Association**

Speakers, in order of appearance
Professor Martin Solan, University of Southampton

Martin is a marine benthic ecologist with broad interests in understanding biodiversity-environment interactions and the ecosystem consequences of altered diversity and environmental change. Martin champions strategic and applied interdisciplinary research in benthic habitats, from coastal to full ocean depth and across environmental gradients. A key component of his research has been the development of in situ marine technology for observation of organism-sediment relations.

Presently, Martin's main focus is to maximise the benefits of coupling powerful experimentation with theory and observations of natural systems by combining in situ observations in the field with appropriate laboratory experiments in the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Futures Facility, recently built within NOC.

Professor John Siddorn, Chief Executive, National Oceanography Centre

John was previously the NOC Chief Scientist, responsible for leading the research direction across all elements of NOCs portfolio and is an Honorary Fellow at the Met Office and a Fellow of the Alan Turing Institute.

Since joining NOC in 2020, John has championed the embedding of digital approaches to furthering science, including digital innovations and has been key to thought leadership in his field and in shaping the research landscape.

Prior to joining NOC, John was at the Met Office where he was Head of Ocean Forecasting R&D. His personal research was on developing ocean models for climate and hazard prediction and understanding.

Prior to his career at the Met Office, John worked at Plymouth Marine Laboratory as a mathematical modeller in the biogeochemistry modelling team with the primary responsibility for implementing marine dynamical models.

Dr Eleanor Darlington, Deputy Director of Research Infrastructure

Ella joined NOC in 2017 as a sea-going technician and has led the Marine Facilities Programmes since 2020. With a PhD in Arctic fjord circulation from Loughborough University/British Antarctic Survey, she brings deep expertise in physical oceanography, remote sensing, and marine operations.

In her current role, Ella will shape the future of the UK's national marine science capabilities and deliver critical infrastructure for global ocean research. Ella will lead the National Marine Facilities (NMF) service under contract to UKRI-NERC, ensuring safe and efficient operation of our ships and

equipment, and overseeing ship engineering, operations, and cross-functional integration across NOC's global ocean observing capability.

Professor Jason Holt, National Oceanography Centre

Jason is Deputy Director for National Capability Science at NOC. His research interests are in the impacts of climate change on the physics of coastal and shelf seas, and consequences for the biogeochemistry, investigating potential climate extremes in shelf seas around the world. He champions global approaches to coastal ocean modelling and climate impacts studies. He leads the UK National Capability marine science programmes: ATLANTiS (Atlantic Climate and Environment Strategic Science) and FOCUS (Future states Of the global Coastal ocean: Understanding for Solutions). He also leads the UN Decade of Ocean Science project Future Coastal Ocean Climates (FLAME), part of the COASTPREDICT programme. He has been actively involved in the development of coastal ocean modelling for research, climate and operational oceanography since the 1990's.

Dr Ryan-Keogh, Senior Scientist, Biological Carbon Cycles, NOC

Dr Tommy Ryan-Keogh is a senior researcher in the Biological Carbon Cycles at the NOC. He graduated with his PhD from the University of Southampton in 2014 under the supervision of Prof Mark Moore, Prof Tom Bibby and Prof Eric Achterberg. Following this, he moved in 2015 to the Southern Ocean Carbon-Climate Observatory, CSIR in South Africa where he spent the next 10 years working on understanding how nutrient cycles and phytoplankton physiology impact the Southern Ocean's biological carbon pump. In 2026 he took up a new role at NOC to continue this research and expand it to the other ocean regions. He has participated on 13 research cruises, predominantly in the Southern Ocean and North Atlantic. Dr Ryan-Keogh has published over 42 peer-reviewed articles, including in Science and Nature Climate Change. He is currently working on several large projects including the NERC funded BioCarbon projects (IDAPro, PARTITRIX) and the IronMan project.

Elen Jones, British Antarctic Survey

Elen Jones is the Programme Director for the Antarctic Infrastructure Modernisation Programme (AIMP) at the British Antarctic Survey (BAS). With over 20 years of experience as an electrical engineer, Elen's technical expertise has been the foundation of her career. She has worked extensively in the rail industry and beyond, leading complex multi-discipline engineering projects and, latterly, managing diverse project teams delivering large-scale infrastructure initiatives. Today, she oversees one of BAS's most ambitious programmes—modernising Antarctic research facilities to support world-class climate and biodiversity science. Through her talks and engagements, Elen aims to inspire others by sharing the challenges and

opportunities of delivering cutting-edge infrastructure in one of the most extreme environments on Earth."

Professor Tim Smyth, Plymouth Marine Laboratory

Tim is the Director of Science at Plymouth Marine Laboratory and has led the NERC funded Western Channel Observatory (WCO) for 20 years. Today, Tim is talking to us in his capacity as Chair of the Marine Facilities Advisory Board.

Tim has a 25+ year track record in hydrological optics measurements and modelling as well as upscaling to the global level using satellite remote sensing. He has published 140 ISI journal articles with two of his most recent articles mapping the global extent of underwater light pollution in the marine environment and the impact of ALAN around global megacities compared with the natural lunar cycles. He has been a Fellow of the Royal Meteorological Society for 30 years.

Since joining PML in 1997 as a data analyst and algorithm developer for the then newly launched SeaWiFS ocean colour satellite, his research interests have broadly encompassed theoretical and experimental atmospheric and in-water optics. He has a strong interest in developing innovative technologies for automated marine measurements including the WCO buoys, ship emissions and atmospheric aerosols. He has around 280 days of sea-going experience including being Chief Scientist on two Atlantic Meridional Transect (2014, 2015) expeditions between the UK and Falkland Islands.

Dr Rupert Lewis, Deputy Executive Chair, NERC

Dr Rupert Lewis joined NERC as Deputy Executive Chair in April 2025.

Previously he was Chief Science Policy Officer at the Royal Society, the UK's independent scientific academy, dedicated to promoting excellence in science for the benefit of humanity. The policy team lead work on climate, the biosphere, innovation and emerging technologies, data and AI, science policy and education.

Before joining the Royal Society Rupert led the Government Office for Science (GO-Science) which supports the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, in providing advice to the Prime Minister and to the Cabinet. His previous roles include head of Automotive policy, deputy Chief Scientific Adviser (Business Department), and head of Climate Adaptation policy. He also set up the Prime Minister's 'Business Council for Britain' during the financial crisis. Rupert has a BSc in Marine Biology, a PhD in genetics, and worked on aquaculture development and start-ups in SE Asia, South Africa, and Europe prior to joining Government in 2002.

Kerry Young, UK Horizon Europe National Contact Point

Kerry is the UK Horizon Europe National Contact Point (NCP) for Cluster 6 - Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment. The role of Horizon Europe NCPs is to support all organisations applying for funding under the EU Research & Innovation Framework Programme. She has been a UK NCP for more than 20 years and is keen to increase success in the programme post Brexit, with particular interest on proposal development and impact.

With a background in Natural Science, Kerry has worked in the European Commission, UK civil service, private and NGO sector and UKRI, predominantly on external relations policy and transnational funding programmes.

Introductions to topics

Marine Science UK

Marine Science UK is an umbrella organisation that acts as a collective voice for marine science across the UK universities and research organisations to champion the seas and ocean and to communicate robust and coherent marine science evidence to government, industry and the wider community.

Marine Facilities Advisory Board

The Marine Facilities Advisory Board (MFAB) has the task to develop a medium to long-term holistic strategy for future equipment requirements in Marine Science. This will respond to and reflect the community's needs and to assess current and future funding.

Antarctica InSync

Antarctica InSync is a global effort to synchronise research across Antarctica and the Southern Ocean, connecting ice, ocean, climate, and life to protect this vital region.

Atlantic Climate and Environment Strategic Science (AtlantiS) Programme

AtlantiS is delivering the continuation and evolution of the UK's strategic ocean observing and ocean prediction programme. The programme, led by NOC and in collaboration with PML, SAMS and the MBA, is building and expanding on the CLASS project.

Horizon Europe

Horizon Europe is the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation. It tackles climate change, helps to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and boosts the EU's competitiveness and growth.

The Antarctic Infrastructure Modernisation Programme (AIMP)

British Antarctic Survey (BAS) is in the midst of a long-term programme to enhance the UK's polar research capabilities—the Antarctic Infrastructure Modernisation Programme (AIMP). The programme began in 2017, commissioned by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), and is the largest Government investment in polar science infrastructure since the 1980s that will strengthen the UK's capability to deliver world-leading climate, biodiversity and ocean research and innovation in Antarctica. It will transform the way we work and support UK and international scientists for generations to come as well as supporting the decarbonisation of our Antarctic operations.

NOC Association of Marine Science National Capability Beneficiaries

National Capability funding

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The **NOC Association Steering Board**

Members	Affiliation
Professor Martin Solan	University of Southampton (Chair)
Dr Stephen Dye	Cefas
Prof. Teresa Fernandes	Heriot Watt University
Professor Kate Hendry	British Antarctic Survey
Dr William Homoky	University of Leeds
Prof. Claire Mahaffey	University of Liverpool
Professor Murray Roberts	University of Edinburgh
Prof. Maeve Lohan	Challenger Society
Dr Mark James	Marine Alliance for Science and Technology for Scotland
Prof. David Paterson	Marine Alliance for Science and Technology for Scotland

In attendance	Affiliation
Professor John Siddorn	National Oceanography Centre
Prof. Icarus Allen	Plymouth Marine Laboratory
Jackie Pearson	National Oceanography Centre (Secretary)

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