



MFAB Meeting Minutes – 6 October 2025

Attendees

- Professor Tim Smyth, PML, Chair (TS)
- Dr Gaye Bayrakci, NOC (GB)
- Matthew Tiahlo, NMF (MT)
- Dr Veronique Creach (Cefas) (VC)
- Dr Michelle Taylor, (Essex) (MT)
- Dr Adrian Baker, (Dstl) (AB)
- Dr Alexander Phillips, NMF (AP)
- Dr Helen Snaith, BODC (HS)
- Dr Stephen Jones, Birmingham (SJ)
- Dr Gabriele Stowasser, BAS (GS)
- Dr Maaten Furlong, NMF (MF)
- Rory O'Brien, NMF (RO)
- Helen Oldridge, NMF (HO)
- Dr Suzanne Maclachlan, BOSCORF (SM)
- Dr Natalie Powney, NERC (NP)
- Jackie Pearson, NOC, MFAB Secretary (JP)

1. Welcome

- Apologies were noted from Professor Tiago Alves (Cardiff), Dr Veerle Huvenne (NOC), Dr Filipa Carvalho (NOC), Dr Natalie Powney, (NERC) and Dr Eleanor Darlington (NMF).

2. Minutes and Actions from July 2025

Minutes taken as read and will be published. **Action: JP**

#	Item	Who	Update
62	Merge the UWG and DWG and include as agenda item for autumn meeting.	HO, HS, JP	Actioned. To be covered today.
63	Hold UWG meeting before next MFAB.	JP	Not held. The group is being merged with the DWG.

64	Circulate membership of UWG and DWG to Board and then launch open call for new members.	HO/JP	Not achieved yet so keep this action open.
65	Write short report about the Rock Store survey and include as agenda item at next meeting.	SM, JP	Circulate finished short report outside the time frame of the next meeting.
66	Leads of WGs should include the TRM in their aims and objectives at the top level.	JP	JP to add this info to the ToRs for the relevant groups.
67	Invite BAS's Dr Sophie Fielding to be an ex officio member of MFAB and the BAS equivalent of NMF.	TS, JP	Done. We will welcome Sophie to the next meeting.
68	Review the membership of the sampling working group and restart with focus around BBNJ.	HS, GS, SM	SM: We have established the basis of the WG and are advertising for ECRs to join. Open action.
69	Look at ToRs to see how MFAB operates around ocean-going equipment.	All	JP commented that the MFAB ToRs have a diagram on links and noted that a further diagram is being prepared to be updated with links to NERC's groups.

AoB from MF

- Internal restructuring of NMF: Two new groups formed – Engineering Sciences Function and Research Infrastructure Function.
- Dr Eleanor Darlington has been appointed Deputy Director of the Research Infrastructure and will act as the lead for the NMF services.
- Dr Maaten Furlong will remain on MFAB covering NMEP developments.
- These updates are to be reflected in the MFAB ToRs. **Action 70: MF/JP**

3. NMEP Update – Review of Budget, Equipment Status and Priorities [Slides]

- £6M budget for 2024–2027 focused on repair, replacement, and obsolescence management.
- Moving Vessel Profiler (MVP) refurbishment completed; ROV Launch and Recovery System (LARS) overhaul ongoing.

- Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP) fleet aging; repairs and replacements underway.
- HyBis lost on the seabed but recovered and returned to service; to be replaced by Modular Payload Underwater System (MPUS).
- The number of deep tow cables reduced due to loss of cable in 2025; replacement delayed to next financial year.
- Scanfish has been returned to service, but there are ongoing altimeter issues.
- Autosub5 trials completed.
- ROV camera replacement planned; community feedback requested for preferences of type and video data format.

4. Equipment Condition and Maintenance

- Major replacements needed: Ship IT infrastructure (2028), Multibeam systems on both ships are out of service (quote to replace ~£2M), Seismic compressors (~£1.4M).
- HS: is there possibility to hire a towed alternative to provide multibeam capacity. HO: the multibeam on both ships are working but the availability of spares is limited and thus a component failure could make the systems inoperable.
- ADCPs on both vessels problematic; RRS *James Cook*'s unit still out of action.
- Glider attrition rate (aging fleet): we typically see a loss every 15 deployments, and we don't have sufficient funding to maintain the fleet
- Discussion on hiring vs. purchasing compressors. It would be cheaper to hire in compressors.
- Multibeam and (some) ADCP repairs/replacements need to align with the ship dry dock schedules, as access to the hull is required.
- Ships have the capability to live stream video, due to Starlink and OneWeb. IT infrastructure work is around cyber security, to ensure compliance with IMO regulations.

5. Recommendations for Retirements and Investments

- Retire HyBis in 2026, to be replaced by its successor MPUS
- Invest in glider fleet upgrades and ADCP replacements.
- Extend VMP altimeter integration across fleet.
- Upgrade ROV cameras (video and stills); Isis 'penciled in' for science in 2027 which is target for updating cameras. Dr Veerle Huvenne, Dave Turner to explore options. Challenges around data storage may be alleviated by more modern video compression codecs.

6. Capital Call Discussion

- Although a useful activity for NMF, there should be no formal capital call due to budget constraints.
- Recommissioning of NMF is from April 2028 so it would be useful to complete the assessment alongside a knowledge of community needs. **Action 71: HO/JP**
- Suggestion to survey community for future needs.
- Consider revisiting previous requests and updating the list to see if items are still needed. **Action 72: HO/JP**

7. Working Group Updates

- Ship Underway and Data Working Groups to merge; an update to be presented by Dr Louise Darroch at next meeting. **Action 73: LD/JP**
- Rock Store Working Group report to be circulated before the next meeting. **Action 65: SM/JP**
- Sampling Working Group recruiting new members including Early Career Researchers and data managers. Suggestions for new members are welcome.
- MARS Working Group is recruiting new members.

8. Membership and Vacancies

- Dr Sophie Fielding to join MFAB in Spring 2026 as ex officio member. Sophie's role will enable comparison of kit on the RRS *Sir David Attenborough* with that on the RRS *James Cook* and RRS *Discovery*.
- Existing members invited to continue and to let JP know. **Action 74: All**
- Contact Johannas Karstensen, (OFEG+GEOMAR, technical background and engagement with FMRI), to suggest international barter partner role. **Action 75: HO**
- Considered if unsuccessful applicants from last call should be encouraged to join either a working group or be observers.
- Appoint ECRs to working groups as induction for new members. **Action 76: TS/JP**

9. Any Other Business

- Meeting in March/April 2026. **Action 77: JP**
- Meeting closed with thanks from MF and JP to our chair and the members.

Actions carried forward plus new actions from today

#	Action	Who
64	Launch open call for members for the newly combined UWG and DWG.	HO/JP

65	Circulate Rock Store Working Group report, before next MFAB.	SM/JP
66	Include reference to TRM on WG ToRs	JP
68	Review of membership of the sampling working group – advertising for ECRs	SM/JP
70	Reflect internal restructuring updates in MFAB ToRs.	MF/JP
71	Complete assessment of community needs to underpin recommissioning of NMF in 2028.	HO/JP
72	Revisit previous capital expenditure requests to see if items are still needed.	HO/JP
73	Ship Underway and Data Working Groups to merge; an update to be presented by Dr Louise Darroch at next meeting.	LD/JP
74	Existing members invited to continue and to let JP know.	All
75	Contact Johannas Karstensen, to invite to be international barter partner.	HO
76	Appoint ECRs to working groups as induction for new members.	TS/JP
77	Arrange next MFAB meeting for March or April 2028	JP