

NOC Association Steering Board
31 October 2025: 10:00 – 12:00 UK time
Microsoft Teams meeting

Present

Professor Martin Solan, (UoS) (Chair) (MS)

Dr Stephen Dye, (SD) Cefas
Professor Teresa Fernandes (TF) (Heriot Watt)
Dr Mark James (MJ) (MASTS)
Professor Kate Hendry (KH) (BAS)
Professor Claire Mahaffey (CM) (Liverpool)
Professor Murray Roberts (MR) (Edinburgh)
Professor John Siddorn (NOC) (JS)
Dr Will Homoky (Leeds) (WH)

Jackie Pearson (JP) Secretary

1. Welcome

- 1.1 MS noted apologies from Icarus Allen, Maeve Lohan and Alan Evans, and welcomed Murray Roberts to his first meeting.

2. Minutes from May 2025

- 2.1 One edit had been received by email. **Action 48: JP**
- 2.2 Item 43 dates from the December 2024 meeting. NERC introduced the FMRI programme and there had been concerns around overlap with MFAB which have been resolved. Dr Maaten Furlong reviewed the MFAB ToRs, clarifying the links between MFAB, Prof John Siddorn (NOC) etc. and these are incorporated in an updated schematic in the on-line ToRs. Action resolved.
- 2.3 Minutes accepted and can be published. **Action 49: JP**

3. Update on the National Decade Committee (NDC) – Alan Evans

Sept 2026 meeting key points to share:

- 3.1 Last UK NDC meeting held in person in Cardiff September 2025.
- 3.2 The NDC considered the merit and process of identifying a single person to be nominated by the UK Delegation to the IOC to become a member of the Decade Advisory Board (DAB). For several reasons, including the fact that the UK has had Gideon Henderson as a DAB member for its first two terms, it was decided not to undertake a process this time round but allow individuals to self-nominate. If NOCA members are aware of self-nominations it would be good to know.

- 3.3 The Decade mid-term evaluation response by the IOC Secretariat is available. A key outcome is if there is no adequate funding to support the Decade Coordination Unit it will scale back activities and focus on a smaller number of priority areas.
- 3.4 There will be a Horizon Europe call start 2026 seeking 3 groups to lead *Empowering the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development* to consolidate international cooperation. The NDC will discuss with counterparts whether to get involved in a consortium.
- 3.5 Presentations by Endorsed Actions were made by the Royal College of Art (NEMO), Project Seagrass (in-person) and Plastic Clever Schools (online). If NOCA members would like Endorsed Actions within their organisations to share their experiences please let the NDC Secretariat know.
- 3.6 The NDC is looking into participation at upcoming events, incl. AGU Ocean Sciences Meeting, IPBES and Ocean Advocate, all during Feb 2026! If NOCA members would like to get involved, please let the NDC Secretariat know.
- 3.7 Next UN Ocean Decade Conference will be held in Rio de Janeiro in 2027.
- 3.8 MR: Good that the Ocean Science meeting coming to Glasgow in February 2026. The [International Marine Conservation Congress](#) is coming to Edinburgh in November 2026 and is led by the US. In the lead up to the Decade Conference in Rio, there will be discussion around the [BBNJ symposium](#), and this is coming up in March 2026. MS asked about representation at those meetings. MR is a co-organiser and has contacted MASTS and SAMS around the Marine Conversation Congress. The BBNJ symposium will be an open door for satellite events and currently, there are nine expressions of interest for events with 18 possible. It would be good if the NOCA, or others, could be involved; all are strongly linked to Decade activities. JP to send Alan's email round after this meeting. **Action 50: JP**
- 3.9 MS: there will be several European calls in Feb/March 2026, with some around 'empowering' towards the Decade. These will be European-wide. Need to ensure the UK has a presence so may need a strategy to get colleagues involved. Few bids will be successful. MR: The draft call is open with a budget of £3m. Would be interesting to see UK leadership in this. Perhaps NOCA could spearhead this. MR agreed to share the details of the Horizon Europe draft call. **Action 51: MR**

4 NOCA and the connection with HEIs

- 4.1. MS: Need to improve NOCA visibility and links to national capability (NC) and consider impact of Marine Science UK (MSUK) on the NOCA and wider community. JS: MSUK will be a company and become an independent charity. Membership expressions of interest are being collected. MSUK will become operational over next year. Need to think how MSUK will link to organisations like NOCA, USF and MEDIN. If NOCA thinks it may be of value to link to MSUK, then JS, who chairs the MSUK Committee, can raise at next Committee meeting. A document describing the benefits of MSUK is in prep which JS will share to the Board for discussion during the review of the NOCA purpose. **Action 52: JS & JP**

- 4.2 JS: Individual membership is not envisaged (too expensive), but there has been discussion about representing networks.
- 4.3 SD: although HEIs have historically been underrepresented in previous marine coordination committees, this has not been the case for the NOCA which has always represented HEIs— this connection to NC for HEIs is important. JS: MSUK is largely driven by the HEI sector and integrating HEIs within the wider research organisations is part of the discussions. MS: the mechanism of engagement needs clarity. JS: representatives will represent the community, not themselves.
- 4.4 CM: Funding is tight for HEIs— if institutes can't afford this, would this lead to exclusion? JS: NOC is keeping the fee as low as possible. It will be £5,000 per membership, per year and many institutes are signing up. Funding will cover the associated staff costs. MR asked about the potential difference in representation between those institutes that are represented within MSUK via their MASTS subscriptions, as opposed to those who may join as individual institutes.
- 4.5 MJ asked about the value of UKMS— what impact will MSUK be able to leverage at UK level. It is essential to show value for money. Currently, this situation feels a bit defuse.
- 4.6 JS: Rather than focusing on personal grant income, UK community needs to think strategically and long-term. Other research communities work in a coordinated way to influence government. MJ reiterated the need for careful investment by organisations to avoid wasting time and money.
- 5.0 JS confirmed that reducing the overhead on international subscriptions is within scope of UKMS. Individual members of EuroGOOS could come together and join as UKMS. SD: To ensure value, organisations must provide additional time and effort; staff time costs more than consumables. TF spoke about providing evidence, sometimes tangible, about the value of membership. MS: money is a concern as is increasing administrative burden; more cuts are on the way. JS advised CM to chat to Professor Alesandro Tagliabue about this group.

5. Agenda for the NOCA AGM 2026

- 5.1 JP confirmed that the AGM will be on-line as it works well, and the option enables others to join and minimises cost. Plenty register although numbers aren't always the same on the day. CM asked about the potential value of tying the NOCA AGM into the Challenger Society meeting so that it could be in person, in case it might enhance engagement. MS: could think about this, in terms of whether we want it to be independent or associated. JP expressed preference for AGM to be on-line. MS: there might be more we can do, in terms of workshops/break-out rooms groups on-line etc. but it can be difficult to get groups together in the right place at the right time. SD: holding the NOCA AGM at the Challenger Society would be difficult. Holding the meeting on-line works. Perhaps an in-person evening NOCA/ MSUK discussion session at Challenger, to get personal engagement. WH suggested both approaches, agreeing that an on-line AGM works but maybe have a mop up opportunity, capturing feedback. MS is conscious about the visibility of the NOCA and engaging with colleagues. Even in NOC itself, there are those who don't know

what the NOCA is. This type of event could be conducted at many venues although time and budget are challenging. We can think about this. **Action 53: MS & JP**

- 5.2 JP: the AGM format is successive on-line meetings over two mornings. Suggestion from Icarus Allen, at last meeting about having item at the AGM about BAS's contribution to marine NC and the NEODAS satellites. **Action 54: JP**
- 5.3 WH: the Antarctica InSync programme, which concerns coordinating Antarctic research objectives and priorities, would align well with UK NC. At the 2025 AGM Professor Kate Hendry gave talk about the Antarctic time series research. Would be good to provide an update on this. Dr Thomas Ryan-Keogh (NOC) is leading some of this for Theme 11. JS liked WH's suggestion about InSync and asked if the AGM could broaden to include IPY with a specific slot on InSync. WH: InSync is designed to tie in with the polar year. **Action 55: JP**
- 5.4 MS mentioned the updated NERC strategy and how the funding landscape is changing and suggested an AGM item on this. Should consider how the community can adapt to how the funding landscape is changing. JS agreed and commented that soon, NERC funding will be very different. Would be good to get someone senior from NERC to talk to the NOCA about what Discovery funding will look like in the future and also the position with funding in an international landscape. **Action 56: JP**
- 5.5 WH mentioned the Horizon Europe programme and commented on the effectiveness of European partners in coordinating responses, whereas sometimes, UK representation is missing. WH suggested raising the profile of the Horizon Europe call at the NOCA AGM. MS: It might be possible to have a speaker from Europe on UK science and representation strengths and weaknesses – this will extend to the next few calls. **Action 57: JP**
- 5.6 TF: would be good to have a speaker on national funding (UKRI/NERC) and learn about what the future will bring internationally. For the Horizon Europe call, although a bit late, we still need to make plans—for this year, it would be good if there could be interactive sessions at the AGM. SD: by the time of the AGM, will we be able to tell delegates about what NOCA will be, going forward, post UKMS? JP: there will be a pre-AGM meeting so can discuss this both then and at the AGM. MS: At start of the AGM, should re-emphasize what NOCA is, what it does and what it will be. Was decided to bring pre-AGM meeting forward, to give Board time to discuss this and review the NOCA ToR's. Outcomes will be communicated at AGM. **Action 58: JP**
- 5.7 Draft agenda and circulate to Board before the next meeting. **Action 59: JP & MS**

Actions

#	Item	Who
48	Minutes: One edit received by email	JP
49	Minutes accepted and can be published.	JP
50	JP to send Alan's email round after this meeting.	JP
51	Share details of Horizon Europe call	MR
52	Share document about benefits of MSUK, with the Board.	JS & JP

53	Consider option for workshops/break-out rooms groups on-line etc. and possibly an in-person evening NOCA/ MSUK discussion session at Challenger, to get personal engagement.	MS & JP
54	Include item at AGM about BAS's contribution to marine NC and the NEODAS satellites.	JP
55	Include item on InSync and broaden to include IPY.	JP
56	Approach senior NERC colleague to talk at AGM about what Discovery funding will look like and the position with funding in an international landscape.	JP
57	Find speaker for NOCA about the Horizon Europe call.	JP
58	At start of AGM, re-emphasize what the NOCA is, what it does and what it will be. Bring pre-AGM meeting forward, to give Board time to discuss what NOCA will be, post UKMS. Review NOCA ToR's, communicate outcomes at the AGM.	MS & JP
59	Draft agenda and circulate to Board before next meeting.	MS & JP