MARINE FACILITIES ADVISORY BOARD (MFAB) WORKING GROUP ON NATIONAL MARINE SAMPLING (MARS)

Terms of reference

The Marine Facilities Advisory Board (MFAB) advises the National Oceanography Centre on marine facilities and services, including the Natural Environment Research Council's National Marine Equipment Pool (NMEP).

The MFAB National Marine Sampling Working Group (Sampling-WG), has the primary objective to provide recommendations to MFAB on current and future priorities for investment in, and development of, marine sampling equipment within the National Marine Equipment Pool (NMEP).

BROADER OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKING GROUP

- Reviewing the suitability, effectiveness, and sustainability of existing NMEP sampling equipment in meeting current and anticipated science needs.
- Identifying gaps, emerging requirements, and opportunities for innovation in marine sampling technologies.
- Strengthening alignment between UK sampling practices and emerging international frameworks and obligations, including the BBNJ (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction) Agreement.
- Representing the needs and perspectives of the UK marine research community in national marine facilities and infrastructure planning.

SCOPE OF WORKING GROUP

- The Working Group operates in a purely advisory capacity.
- Recommendations will be submitted to MFAB for consideration; final decisions rest with MFAB, NOC, and NERC as appropriate.

WORKING GROUP COORDINATION

The working group will be chaired by Dr Suzanne MacLachlan, Scientific & Technical Specialist Group Head, with secretariat support provided by the MFAB Secretary.

MEMBERS

Up to 12 members may be appointed from the UK's marine science and technology community.

- Membership will aim to reflect a balance of:
    - Scientific disciplines
    - Career stages
    - Users and providers of sampling infrastructure

WAYS OF WORKING

- The Working Group will normally meet twice per year, virtually, for up to two hours per meeting.
- Additional meetings or task-and-finish activities may be convened if required.
- Meetings will be conducted on a consensus basis where possible.
- A quorum will be achieved when at least half of the appointed members are present.

EXPENSES

The position of member on this working group is unremunerated. Meetings will be conducted on-line.

MEMBERSHIP – START DATE APRIL 2026

Dr	Antony Birchill	National Oceanography Centre
	Donna Cockwell	National Oceanography Centre
Dr	Sophie Fielding	British Antarctic Survey
	Elaine Fileman	Plymouth Marine Laboratory
Dr	Andrew Gates	National Oceanography Centre
Dr	James Hunt	National Oceanography Centre
Dr	Cían McGuire	National Oceanography Centre
Dr	Federica Persico	University of Cranfield
Dr	Alejandro Roman-Gonazlez	University of Portsmouth
Prof	Martin Solan	University of Southampton
Dr	Craig Smeaton	University of St Andrews

NATIONAL OCEANOGRAPHY CENTRE REPRESENATIVES

	Benjamin Poole	Engineering Manager, Ocean Engineering Group
Dr	Suzanne MacLachlan	Group Head - Scientific & Technical Specialist
	Helen Oldridge	Group Head - Scientific Engineering
Dr	Tammy Horton	Discovery Collection Team Leader

March 2026