

This strategic Q&A document sets out why the National Oceanography Centre (NOC) is being created and is designed for use within the new NOC. It explains the change for host partners, delivery partners and future potential associates together with the wider NOC stakeholder community.

Marine Project Board
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Table of Contents

THE ANNOUNCEMENT	3
STRATEGIC CONTEXT	3
DECISION MAKING PROCESS.....	6
AIMS OF THE CENTRE.....	7
TIMING.....	9
THE VISION AND MISSION OF NOC	10
ORGANISATION OF NOC	10
PARTNERS IN NOC	13
OTHER NERC CENTRES	15
STRATEGY.....	15
GOVERNANCE/INDEPENDENT ADVICE.....	16
BRANDING	16
EFFECTS ON PEOPLE	17
EFFECTS AT SOUTHAMPTON	18
COSTS.....	19
SUCCESS	20

THE ANNOUNCEMENT

1. *What is being created?*

NERC has announced the creation of a new Centre for marine science. The Centre will be called the **National Oceanography Centre** (NOC). It will be formed by:

- Merging, under unified management, all the NERC-managed marine research and marine national capability at the National Oceanography Centre, Southampton and at the Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory, Liverpool;
- creating a formal network of Delivery Partners in the National Oceanography Centre who will deliver marine science National Capability to NERC through the NOC;
- creating a wider, inclusive association of significant marine science providers who together with delivery partners and the NOC will develop a shared strategy for the Centre and the wider association.

The vision for the NOC, in collaboration with its partners, is that by 2015 it will be recognised as the world's leading institution for integrated marine science and technology, able to influence the European and global strategic research agendas.

This initiative is driven by the importance of marine science to delivery of the NERC strategy and NERC's strategic goal of creating more integrated research communities. Moving into the future, the marine science community needs now to be better equipped with a suitable framework within which to more effectively develop a shared vision and strategy to prioritise, coordinate and deliver marine science capability. This is consistent with the broad thrust not only of the NERC Strategy but also of the UK Marine Science Strategy.

The National Oceanography Centre is aimed at building on the significant successes and investments in marine science, including the strong integrated approaches to delivering world class science that takes place between Centres and University groups and that is strongly encouraged to continue and be enhanced even further.

The creation of the National Oceanography Centre explicitly recognises the strength and importance of science, engineering and technology collaborations between NERC and University staff at Southampton and Liverpool. These collaborations will continue to be an essential contribution to the new Centre, as it takes on its broader national focus working with Delivery Partners and the wider association.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2. *What is the big strategic aim behind the change?*

The NERC strategy "Next Generation Science for Planet Earth" sets out the grand challenges for environmental science which in essence are about providing science to tackle some of the greatest challenges of our age – rapid environmental change and increasing pressure on natural resources. Marine science is essential to this and

the aim is to better enable the marine science community to contribute effectively to tackling these challenges.

3. *There will be a new UK Marine Science strategy – is it linked to that?*

Yes, NERC has participated strongly in development of the UK Marine Science Strategy - NERC being the single largest investor in marine science of the members of the Marine Science Co-ordination Committee (MSCC) that has prepared the strategy, working with stakeholders. The UK Marine Science Strategy is looking for improvements in “the way marine science is prioritised, co-ordinated and delivered in the UK” – very much in the spirit of this initiative. NERC for its part is seeking to equip its own community with the right framework to contribute to the UK strategy and to contribute internationally.

4. *What is NERC’s view of marine science?*

There never has been a time when it has been more important to understand the oceans and seas on account of their role in regulating the earth’s climate, sustaining life on earth and as a source of natural resources. Marine Science is essential.

5. *What’s wrong with the way we’re doing this now?*

NOCS and POL, other marine centres and universities have records of proven success. The creation of the NOC is about building on this success to ensure that into the future, UK marine science remains internationally competitive by ensuring that it is able to apply the national effort in marine science in as integrated a way as possible. The issue is, although the individual institutions are successful in their own right, there is widespread recognition by the NERC marine community itself that the model in its present form is probably not sustainable into the future particularly against growing international trends to form a more coherent national marine community.

6. *Does NERC see a specific problem with marine science that needs fixing?*

There is a healthy marine science base on which to now develop the marine science community in the next step of its evolution.

For example,

- The National Oceanography Centre, Southampton was recently ranked as one of the top 10 geosciences institutions in the world - and the leading oceanographic institution on the list. Interaction between NERC and University researchers has been a great success.
- NERC has invested strongly in new facilities for the Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory with its distinctive capacity for sea level science, coastal physical oceanography, technology and data management.
- There are vibrant, independent Marine Science Research Institutions at Plymouth and in Scotland, again with distinctive research foci. The most recent Research Assessment Exercise (RAE 2008) has also confirmed the health of marine sciences in the University sector.

- The interaction between NERC Centres and Universities through collaborative research and support for national capability by Centres contributes to the health of the discipline over all. The RAE overview report for earth and environmental sciences commented “the links between national research institutions and HEI groups is impressive”.
- NERC has made major investments in other marine science infrastructure (building facilities, research vessels, equipment, high performance computing) so there is a strong base upon which to build further.
- As the Oceans 2025 funding enters its final years, there is a risk that fragmentation could develop within the marine science community and that proactive measures to avoid this should be taken now.
- The strength of the marine community and its success in joint working (e.g. Oceans 2025) means, however, that it is strong and mature enough to take a bold step in developing further.

7. *Why hasn't it happened before now?*

This is part of a journey that has been going on for some time. NERC has made significant investments, over time, in marine sciences and in other sectors with a view to supporting greater coherence and co-ordination within those communities (e.g. the formation of the National Centre for Atmospheric Sciences). Marine science is probably the most diffuse organisationally at present – though with a good track record of team-working (e.g. Oceans 2025).

8. *Is the change directly linked to the NERC strategy?*

Yes, the NERC strategy “Next Generation Science for Planet Earth” has three high level goals:

- enabling society to respond urgently to global climate change and the increasing pressures on natural resources;
- contributing to UK leadership in predicting the regional and local impacts of environmental change from days to decades;
- creating and supporting vibrant, integrated research communities.

The change is very much about enabling a strong marine contribution to all three goals above, especially the latter.

9. *How can the marine community respond to these changes?*

The formation of the National Oceanography Centre to act as a clear focus for the marine science community presents a significant opportunity for all engaged in marine research. In particular, the sector needs access to world leading, expensive platforms and infrastructure. The current arrangements for the management and co-ordination of these resources at national level needs to be reviewed to ensure that we can maximise our returns on the investment in this infrastructure. The marine science community has long recognised itself that present arrangements at the national scale need strengthening so that the community is in a better position to more collectively voice, prioritise and coordinate its efforts..

The NOC will provide the marine science community with the basis for developing its own national framework for organisation, collaboration and the management of major facilities and in support of NERC's strategy.

The formation of the NOC with a broad national and international vision and perspective encourages all associated with it to set their own vision in a broad context and to develop their own strategies and plans in support of the shared priorities agreed within the NERC marine community and in consultation with the relevant stakeholders and NERC.

Some aspects of this are already happening. For example in Scotland considerable engagement has taken place in drawing together the major marine research providers through the exciting "Marine Alliance for Science and Technology for Scotland" (MASTS) initiative.

DECISION MAKING PROCESS

10. How was this decision made?

When Council agreed to fund Oceans 2025, it asked NERC Executives for a proposal to ensure continued cohesion and co-ordination in the longer term.

NERC Council considered the concept in 2008 and asked executives to engage with senior members of the marine science community and stakeholders.

Following positive feedback NERC Council approved the formation of a national marine centre in May 2009.

A Project Board was established chaired by the NERC Director of Strategy and Partnerships to develop an outline implementation plan.

As part of the process discussions have taken place involving the NERC Chief Executive with key partners including the Vice Chancellors at the Universities of Southampton and Liverpool and several key stakeholders, universities and centres. Following approval by the NERC Chief Executive, the plan has been agreed, resulting in NERC's announcement.

Further transition work will be needed and the announcement now enables wider participation in discussions around additional details of implementation.

11. What approach has guided NERC's thinking?

Two aspects:

1. NERC's commitment to delivering research and national capability in both Universities and Research Centres. Both have significant roles in sustaining a healthy science base, particularly in an expensive subject such as marine science which needs sustained long-term vision and capability. The key is finding effective ways of engaging the strengths of Universities and Research Centres in concert.

2. Building on success – there are many successful models in the marine science community (e.g. science excellence, collaborative working, organisational structures etc.). The aim is not to dismantle these or put barriers in their way, but rather to enhance them – by enabling them to come together in different ways.

AIMS OF THE CENTRE

12. What specifically is NERC looking to improve?

The framework provided by the National Oceanography Centre and its wider Association is expected to contribute significantly to:

- Delivery of world-class science focussed on the most important and relevant scientific questions, achieved through development of a long term vision and strategy that views the oceans as part of an integrated whole earth system with important interactions and feedbacks between the oceans and the atmosphere, land surface, earth interior and ice-covered regions;
- development, procurement and efficient use of advanced technologies to meet, in a timely way, the present and anticipated science needs;
- increased integration of the human dimension into marine research including, in particular, closer linkage between marine (environment) and maritime (human uses of the sea) research as well as wider human interactions with the oceans;
- effective and more collective prioritisation, co-ordination and delivery of marine research and marine national capability;
- strengthened international leadership and influence (in Europe and beyond);
- development of a collective, coherent understanding of the needs of the users of marine research in the support of public policy and industry;
- creation of a more integrated science community to facilitate the collective, concerted approaches needed to the above;
- education, training and development of future generations of scientists and engineers capable of addressing the new challenges and working in more integrated ways;
- strengthened visibility for public engagement in marine science.

13. What difference will this make to the science?

Resulting from the creation of the National Oceanography Centre and the NOC partnership, we will be better placed to address key science challenges in a way that would not otherwise be possible. Examples include:

- Draw on expertise in present, 20th century, and palaeo **sea level change** to understand causes of, and likely future rates of global and regional mean sea level rise, changes in extremes (storm surges) and impacts on coastal communities;
- Capitalise on world-leading modelling capabilities to develop **seamless ocean prediction** systems from deep sea to continental shelf through which to quantify the integrated role of continental shelves and margins as sources, sinks and pathways for carbon and nitrogen in the global earth/ocean system;
- Pull together the UK world-leading capability across the NOC Partners and beyond in the measurement of the key elements of the ocean carbonate system to develop key contributions to a global **integrated carbon observing system** necessary to understand carbon uptake by the oceans and the process of ocean acidification.
- Integrate the oceans into the wider UK **Earth System Modelling** capability, necessary for regional to decadal climate prediction - to be developed in partnership with the Met Office Hadley Centre.
- Create a UK critical mass in the development and use of autonomous underwater vehicles, landers, gliders and micro-sensors for routine, low-cost sampling of ocean variability and change – with a focus on the North Atlantic and in remote hostile regions - especially the Antarctic and Arctic Oceans. Integrate this capability within international efforts to build **ocean observatories** focussed on understanding the processes of inter-annual to decadal variability and change.
- Develop the habitat mapping systems and fundamental sea-bed biodiversity and **ecosystem function** understanding (from deep sea to coast) to urgently develop the scientific evidence base to underpin ecosystem-based management and the designation of Marine Protected Areas in the UK Marine Area and in the High Seas.
- Drawing on strengths across the whole UK marine science community develop a major coordinated approach to the study of the **Arctic Ocean**, which is expected to undergo rapid change within our life-time – including by (a) the emergence of a “new ocean” as ice cover disappears in summer, (b) the interchange between Pacific and Atlantic ecosystems that has not occurred for at least 3 million years, and (c) the impact of humans activities including resource exploitation and marine traffic on a previously inaccessible ocean.
- Develop new partnerships between the marine natural environmental sciences and research expertise in maritime sciences (human uses of the sea) and social sciences, marine economics and maritime policy to rapidly develop much closer integration between marine and **social sciences** in recognition of the human drivers on changes in the marine environment and the impact and benefits (direct and indirect) of the oceans on human society – including not only on the fast-growing coastal populations of the world, but on people who live far from the sea.

- The above is **not presented as a fully formed vision of strategy**, but as an illustration of the huge range of opportunities to build more integrated research communities, especially by drawing together some of the underpinning capabilities at Southampton and Liverpool in a more coherent form. It will be for the NERC marine science community to take ownership of further developing the scientific vision and strategy, and focussing and prioritising the resources within the framework provided by the NOC association and the NERC strategy.

TIMING

14. Why now?

A number of key factors mean that now is right time to take this step in the development of marine science. These include:

- The need to address NERC's strategic goal of creating a more integrated marine science community.
- The pressing need for better approaches to prioritisation, co-ordination and delivery of marine national capability and research;
- NERC's desire to respond by implementing an effective co-ordination framework within its own science community in line with the UK Marine Science Strategy (resulting from the "Investigating the Oceans Inquiry").
- The need to sustain coherence of the marine science community as Oceans 2025 comes to an end;
- The urgent need for NERC to have a single point of management for NERC marine science national capability;
- The proven track record of achievements and the results of consultations with senior members of the community which demonstrate that the marine science community has both the will and capacity to take this step.

15. The existing NOCS is still bedding in, so isn't this too soon?

The NOC is part of a natural evolution and development in the marine science community. The formation of NOCS recognised the importance of having a major national centre with a facilitating remit for the science community. This aspect of NOCS has been successful and NOCS has also demonstrated excellence in its own right. The time is therefore right to move to the next stage of development for the community in order to ensure that the organisation of the marine science community is robust into the future and able to capitalise on new opportunities.

16. When are the changes likely to take place?

The new centre will come into being on 1 April 2010 and be fully operational by 1 April 2011.

THE VISION AND MISSION OF NOC

17. What is the vision for NOC?

A “working vision” offered for a whole science community, not just one institution. It will be for the leadership of the NOC and the marine science community to refine the vision and strategy within the context of NERC’s overall goals.

The working vision is that “The National Oceanography Centre will, by 2015, be recognised as the world-leading Centre for integrated ocean sciences and technology”.

The above will be achieved through scientific excellence combined with broad, systematic engagement with the UK science community; understanding the needs of users and working internationally.

18. What will be the mission of NOC?

As part of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), and distinguished by its working with ‘Delivery Partners’, “NOC Associates” (see paragraphs 27 and 29), and collaborating internationally, the Centre will undertake and support world-class research, technology development, training and provide marine science National Capability for the entire NERC science community.

By understanding the needs of users, it will work to ensure rapid uptake by policy-makers, industry and society and other users of research outcomes, methods and technologies to address solutions to the greatest challenges of our age - which concern global environmental change and increased human pressures on natural resources.

ORGANISATION OF NOC

19. What specific organisational change is proposed?

Basic features of the organisation to achieve the above are:

- NOC will be a NERC-owned Centre formed by merging the NERC-managed parts of the National Oceanography Centre, Southampton with the NERC Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory at Liverpool.
- The NOC will be based at two sites (Liverpool and Southampton) – no consolidation onto a single site is planned.
- There will be an Executive Director for the NOC who will be the single point of accountability to the NERC Chief Executive.
- The Executive Director will be responsible for overseeing development of the strategy and managing relationships with Delivery Partners and Associates. The Executive Director will be employed by NERC.
- The Executive Director will be a member of the NERC Executive Board.

- The NOC headquarters will be at the Waterfront Campus in Southampton where the Executive Director and the majority of administrative support functions will be based.
- Like other NERC-owned Centres, NOC staff will be employed by NERC or seconded to NERC from other organisations (this will entail changes to present arrangements at Southampton).
- The internal structure of the NOC is yet to be determined and will be progressed by the Executive Director, once in post. Given the focus on increased integration and to ensure benefits of the merger are realised, it is anticipated that some re-organisation of the existing science, technology and support structures will be taken.
- The NOC will manage contracts on behalf of NERC to a number of "Delivery Partners" for national capability functions in addition to those managed directly by NOC itself.
- A wider network of "Associates" will be developed to engage in the strategy development.

20. Why POL and NOCS?

NERC owns and manages POL and a significant part of the activity of NOCS (apart from the School of Ocean and Earth Science which is owned and managed by the University of Southampton). NERC is taking the initiative in consolidating the elements it owns to form the NOC which in turn provides a core on which to develop a wider community network.

The NERC managed activity at Southampton and Liverpool have distinctive and complementary scientific and technological strengths covering deep sea marine science, sea level science and coastal marine science. The wider network of Delivery Partners bring important complementary strengths.

Together the Centres at Southampton and Liverpool are responsible for management for the benefit of the whole science community, a large proportion of the NERC marine science national capability. This includes

at Southampton –

- the ocean-going research vessels RRS James Cook and RRS Discovery; the National Marine Equipment Pool;
- the National Marine Facilities Sea Systems seagoing support teams;
- the British Ocean Sediment Core Research Facility;
- the National Marine Coordination Office

at Liverpool

- the British Oceanographic Data Centre
- the National Tidal and Sea-level Facility
- the Permanent Service for Mean Sea level.

Both Centres support national capability programmes of

- sustained ocean observing,

- mapping,
- technology development,
- development and support of community hydrodynamic numerical models.

21. How and when will the new Executive Director be appointed?

An advert is being placed shortly after the announcements on 1 February in Nature, Sunday Times and Guardian on-line. The interviews are scheduled to take place in the second half of March, after which time we will have a clear view on the potential start date of the successful candidate.

22. The management of some marine functions takes place in Swindon, will these transfer to NOC?

There are two relevant marine functions that currently reside in Swindon, the management of Collaborative Centre contracts and Marine Planning (for the ship programme).

- The marine planning function will remain in Swindon
 - firstly to keep a clear separation between the cruise planning function and the operational delivery of the cruise programme by National Marine Facilities Sea Systems, and
 - secondly because Marine Planning is now fully integrated across the ships operated on behalf of NERC by both NOC and the British Antarctic Survey (BAS).
- Marine Collaborative Centre contracts are presently for a mixture of National Capability and Research Programme activities. Separate contracts will be developed and agreed for the National Capability functions and administration of these will pass from Swindon to the NOC.
- The management of Research Programme and Responsive Mode contracts and grants will remain with Swindon Office.

23. What will happen to the Graduate School in Southampton under this new arrangement?

The Graduate School at Southampton is a major success story in generating scientific interaction between NERC and University researchers. It will continue to play a central part in promoting continuing collaboration and research integration with University colleagues in Southampton.

24. What role will the National Marine Coordination Office (NMCO) have in this new organisation?

The National Marine Co-ordination Office has already been undertaking a number of the co-ordination and facilitation functions that will be required of the new centre. Consequently within the NOC the NMCO will have similar roles with greater clarity. In particular, it will service the many co-ordination functions of the Centre and the NOC Association including the Partners Board, the Advisory Board and representation of the marine community nationally and internationally. NMCO will also continue to provide the NERC contribution to the Secretariat for the UK

Government's and Devolved Administrations' Marine Science Co-ordination Committee.

PARTNERS IN NOC

25. What type of Partners will there be?

Two types, "Hosting Partners" and "Delivery Partners"

26. Who are the Hosting Partners?

- The Universities of Southampton and Liverpool will be "Hosting Partners" of the NOC which reflects their particular role in contributing to the research environment for NERC-managed activity.
- At Southampton, in particular, this includes the close interactions between researchers and a vibrant community of graduate students. Particular arrangements will be put in place to ensure interaction is pro-actively fostered between NOC and the University of Southampton to ensure this continues.

27. Who are the Delivery Partners?

Delivery Partners must be legal entities in their own right and be eligible to receive NERC funds.

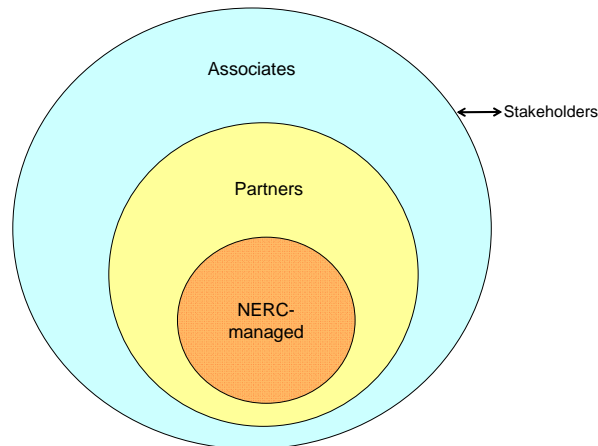
- The initial "Delivery Partners" will be those who receive National Capability contracts from NOC on behalf of NERC. These are the Oceans 2025 Partners: Plymouth Marine Laboratory (PML), Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS), Sea Mammal Research Unit (SMRU), Marine Biological Association (MBA) and Sir Alister Hardy Foundation for Ocean Science (SAHFOS).
- A number of key Universities have the potential to become Delivery Partners in view of their capacity to deliver national capability.

28. What is the NOC Association?

The NOC Association aims to be broadly inclusive and to provide opportunities to engage in the development of the NOC strategy. University providers of marine research are expected to be members of the wider NOC Association bringing an especially important contribution to the strategy.

- The NOC, its Partners (Hosting and Delivery) and the Associates will be known collectively as the NOC Association.

The NOC Association



29. Who will be the NOC Associates?

- NOC Associates should be providers of research. Generally they will not be in direct receipt of funding via NOC but nevertheless will be able contribute to the development and delivery of the wider strategy.
- Presently the basis for defining Associates is not settled and will need further discussion and agreement. The aim is to be broadly inclusive, whilst ensuring that the status of Associate implies a real commitment to engaging in strategy development and delivery.
- The ground rules and process for inviting Associates to participate will be developed with partners and upon taking further advice.
- One way that the association might be both inclusive and strong is for consortia or clusters of institutions to become associates, bringing a collective voice. The exciting "Marine Alliance for Science and Technology for Scotland" (MASTS) initiative which brings together the major marine research institutions in Scotland is an example of such a cluster.

30. Stakeholders

- Subject to further discussion, the NOC Association is viewed at this stage as a body of "research providers". The association will need to develop a systematic engagement with stakeholders including "research users" as well as the public.
- The envisaged Partners in NOC already have strong stakeholder links and a key objective will be to take the opportunity to engage with these in an even more strategic way as part of its knowledge exchange agenda.

31. What will be the implications for Delivery Partners?

- Delivery Partners have their own independent identities and governance (they are not owned by NERC). Partners will retain their own identities and governance arrangements which are not under threat because they are an important part of the diversity of the marine science community.
- In future, Delivery Partners will receive contracts from NOC on behalf of NERC to deliver marine national capability. These will be contracts with NERC (as the legal contracting party) administered on behalf of NERC by NOC. A standard contract will be used for all Delivery Partners. These will be modelled on the national capability components of existing "Collaborative Centre Contracts". The contracts will also set out how national capability activity funded by NERC via NOC shall be branded.
- Contracts and Grants for NERC Research Programme and Responsive mode funding (even if in collaboration with researchers in NOC) will be funded directly from NERC following the usual procedures.
- A "Partners Board" will assist the NOC Executive Director in the management of marine science national capability.

OTHER NERC CENTRES**32. There is significant marine activity in the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) and the British Geological Survey (BGS) – why is this not part of NOC?**

- There is indeed significant marine activity in BAS and BGS and the matter has been considered. BAS and BGS are already wholly owned by NERC and it is possible for NERC to direct joint working between these Centres and NOC;
- The focus has been on achieving sustainable cohesion within the Marine Centres and their University collaborators. BAS and BGS do need to share in the development of the NOC strategy, however, and so it is intended that these Centres be Associates in the NOC.

STRATEGY**33. Will there be a NOC strategy?**

Yes, the NOC Strategy will be developed and owned by the broadly based NOC Association. The strategy will set out the priorities for fundamental marine science in the context of the NERC Strategy and the UK Marine Science Strategy to which NERC is a party.

GOVERNANCE/INDEPENDENT ADVICE

34. Will the NOC have an advisory body like other NERC Centres?

- Yes, an independent, non-executive Advisory Board with an independent Chair will guide the strategic development of NOC and the wider NOC association. The terms of reference will be similar to other NERC Centres.
- The Advisory Board will help guide the development and delivery of the NOC strategy.
- The terms of reference, independent chair and the membership will be agreed with NERC.

35. What will happen to the current NOCS Advisory Council and the POL External Scientific Advisory Board?

These advisory bodies will be superseded after 1 April by the single independent, non-executive Advisory Board for NOC with an independent Chair.

36. Will the current Oceans 2025 programme continue as planned?

These organisational changes in themselves do not affect the content of the science programme per se. The Oceans 2025 programme already has defined funding and a planned transition within the NERC funding model.

37. Will the Oceans 2025 Executive Board continue?

It is likely that the new Partners Board will take on some of its responsibilities, particularly in respect of delivery of national capability. However in developing the Partners Board terms of reference in discussion with NERC and the Delivery Partners we will want to preserve the benefits of joint working that the Oceans 2025 Executive Board has fostered to date and to ensure that the opportunities for collective discussion of key strategic issues are fully explored and optimized.

38. What will happen to the current Oceans 2025 Programme Advisory Board?

This Advisory board will continue in its present form during 2010 (for remit <http://www.oceans2025.org/aboutoceans2025.php>). However the NOC Association may wish to review this in later years, taking account also of the Boards and activities established in the light of the MSCC and the UK Marine science strategy.

BRANDING

39. How will the NOC be branded?

The National Oceanography Centre will be a unitary entity with a single brand.

The following geographical descriptors may also be used to describe the locations and to describe integrated activity being undertaken at those sites.

- "National Oceanography Centre, Southampton"
- "National Oceanography Centre, Liverpool"

Partners in the NOC may use the NOC brand, or sometimes be required to, use the NOC brand, in conjunction with their own brand for certain types of joint activity. The basis for this will be decided by agreement with the partners.

40. Will the Proudman name be lost from POL?

- The work at Liverpool in future will come under the name of the “National Oceanography Centre, Liverpool”. The branding as a national centre is a very strong and powerful one which should not be underestimated. It signifies an institution of stature that one can be proud to work for.
- The Proudman name is not completely lost, however. The building at Liverpool is called the Joseph Proudman Building and so the name will remain very visible and will continue therefore to appear in the address cited in publications.

EFFECTS ON PEOPLE

41. Will the Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory close and the staff be moved to Southampton

- No, NERC has invested heavily in the Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory to bring it onto the University campus at Liverpool to strengthen scientific interactions.
- The National Oceanography Centre, Liverpool will play a key role in contributing to the scientific breadth and excellence of the National Oceanography Centre (e.g. its expertise in coastal marine sciences, sea level science, technology and data management).

42. Will there be redundancies as a result of the formation of the NOC?

No, the creation of NOC is not designed as a cost-saving measure, neither is it expected to cost more to run (other than some transition costs). Consequently, there are no planned redundancies as a direct result of the creation of NOC.

43. Will there be any impact on the employment of staff?

- Yes, there will be an effect at Southampton and only at Southampton with regard to the mixed employment model there.
- The unconventional mixed employment model (NERC and University staff managed in the same management unit) within the NERC managed Units of NOC at Southampton will discontinue in its present form. The matter of the mixed employment model would probably have been regularized in any event, regardless of the formation of NOC.
- Staff within the NOC will be employed by NERC. Staff currently employed in the Corporate Services, National Marine Facilities and NERC Strategic Research Divisions at NOCS will transfer from University to NERC employment under arrangements (TUPE) which have force in law to protect the existing terms and conditions of staff who are transferred i.e. there will

be no detriment to existing terms and conditions as a result of the transfer. It will still be possible, however, for University of Southampton academic staff to work within the NOC, but will take place under conventional, formal secondment arrangements.

44. *Can secondments be used in NOC?*

- The NERC People Strategy encourages movement of staff within the NERC community and secondments are a means of achieving this. Consequently, secondment into or out of NOC for fixed periods to other organisations and for specific purposes will be possible.
- Secondments will be governed by standard secondment agreements in each case.
- Secondments will be possible at Liverpool as well as Southampton and with a range of Universities. Indeed it would be hoped to encourage academic staff from Universities to spend some time in their career in the research intensive environment of the National Oceanography Centre, working with the excellent people and facilities the Centre has to offer.

45. *What will happen to NERC staff in Collaborative Centres?*

There will be no change to existing arrangements with those Centres. Staff there will not transfer to the management of NOC.

46. *Will any staff transfer from Swindon to NOC?*

It is not expected that any staff will transfer from NERC Swindon Office to the NOC.

47. *Have the Trade Unions been consulted?*

Yes. Both NERC and University of Southampton recognised Trade Unions have been consulted and are engaged with us through this change.

EFFECTS AT SOUTHAMPTON

48. *How will all the above effects be felt at Southampton where NERC and the University of Southampton have a close partnership with successful, integrated research interactions – will this make scientific collaboration within the Southampton community more difficult?*

- Southampton is a location where large changes will be felt (e.g. changes to staff employment).
- The intention is absolutely not to break up an outstandingly successful model, but rather to build on it and raise interactions across the whole science community.
- The University of Southampton will be a “Hosting Partner” in NOC through its long-standing role in sharing ownership with NERC major facilities and through the integrated approaches to undertaking research between NERC and University researchers and students.

- Southampton will be the headquarters of the NOC (home of NOC headquarters) which is where the Executive Director of NOC will be based. The NOC will also have a base in Liverpool and the Centre as a whole will be the hub of a wide network of marine researchers across the UK and with strong visibility overseas.
- The creation of the new National Oceanography Centre explicitly recognises the strength and importance of science, engineering and technology collaborations between NERC and University scientists at Southampton and Liverpool. These collaborations will continue to be an essential contribution to the new Centre, as it takes on its broader national focus.
- The research priorities of the new Centre will be set out in the NOC strategy to be developed in broad consultation, but very much taking account of existing strengths and priorities outlined in documents such as the current NOCS and POL strategies.
- Reflecting this, NERC and the University of Southampton will appoint a local research director, supported by a research committee - who will develop an implementation plan to support the local delivery of the NOC and University of Southampton strategy. They have also agreed to establish an executive committee, to manage the shared use of the Waterfront campus, and to continue the regular high-level 'meeting of the parties' between NERC and University senior executives.
- The Graduate School at Southampton is a major ingredient in the success of research interactions in Southampton and will continue to be an important element in the interactions between NOC and the University at Southampton.
- The School of Ocean and Earth Science will otherwise be managed and operate as a normal School of the University of Southampton. The Head of School will report to the Dean of Engineering Science and Mathematics as for all other Heads of School.
- There will continue to be a NERC/University Agreement that codifies the relationship between NERC and the University in respect of the interaction between NOC activities and those of the University at Southampton, and this will be modified to reflect the changes.
- The National Oceanographic Library will continue to be managed under present arrangements (i.e. by the University on behalf of both NERC and the University).

COSTS

49. Will it cost more to run NOC than NOCS and POL, especially with the additional responsibilities on NOC?

The costs of running the NOC have been examined and a condition for approval of the change has been that it will not cost more to run (other than the costs of the transition).

- Many of the resources exist within NOCS and POL to perform the new functions required because some of this activity is already taking place but may need focussing. The existing resources that NOCS has for National Marine Coordination, for example, will be directed specifically on the functions of the new Centre and NOC Association.
- The Centre also has capacity to free resources to take on new responsibilities by efficiencies achieved by combining some activities (i.e. by re-prioritisation). For example, both NOCS and POL have independent Advisory Bodies and in future only one will be needed.

50. We are short of money. Isn't there a danger that we will spend more money on re-branding and re-organisation instead of spending our hard earned resources on science, as it should be?

NERC has considered this matter very carefully and has been very clear that the costs of transitioning to a new organisational structure should be kept within very tight limits. However, it is important especially when resources are tight for expensive marine national capability to be managed in an integrated way and the NOC will provide the means of doing this. The costs of rebranding will be minimal and there will be no relocation of staff nor any redundancies planned as a result of this organisational change. All these will contribute to minimising costs.

51. What happens if budgets get cut after the election?

The UK's current economic position and public finances are challenging. It is difficult to speculate at present what the precise impact will be to NERC and to Universities. However, a strong national marine centre will mean that we are likely to be better equipped to deal with these challenges than at present e.g. by being able to take the most integrated view possible of marine science national capability.

SUCCESS

52. NERC has tried previously to bring together elements of the marine activity – notably the Centre for Coastal and Marine Sciences (CCMS) – why will this be different?

There are some essential differences which have been recognised explicitly in designing the new centre so that lessons from the past have been taken into account. For example, CCMS did not include the very substantial marine activity at Southampton which meant its scope was ambiguous. The NOC is widely inclusive and respects the changes in ownership models that have taken place since the disbandment of CCMS. The concept of national capability is now much more explicit in NERC than it was formerly and this provides a very strong cohesive aspect of the new centre. NERC has had other experiences of successfully developing broadly inclusive national centres such as NCAS as well as its wholly owned centre model. All of these experiences have been brought to bear in developing the NOC model.

53. How will we know if the NOC has been successful?

Within five years of formation measurable success is sought in five broad areas:

i) Science priorities

- The NERC marine science community will be undertaking high impact research stemming from a shared vision and a more collective approach to identifying research and capability priorities. There will have developed a sharp focus on those areas where the UK is unequivocally world-leading and/or where there is a clear need for research to support national needs.

ii) Skilled People

- The UK will be meeting the needs for next generation marine researchers both within the science community and amongst the user community and will continue to be a very attractive location of choice for overseas researchers to develop their research careers and to visit.

iii) Understanding user needs

- A deep understanding of user needs will have become engrained in the NERC marine science community. The engagement between the NERC science community and users will be a strategic one, covering broad sectors and including non-traditional, indirect users of ocean information. (Users in this context refer to any 3rd party organisation or individual including maritime, marine, HEI's, general public, not for profit organisations for whom the research we undertake has a direct or indirect impact).

iv) Efficient and effective and relevant national capability

- The NERC marine science community will have a clear understanding of its national capability portfolio within the wider UK, European and International setting. There will be a clear matching of present and anticipated future research programmes with national capability (e.g. sustained observing programmes). A clear process will have been developed for prioritisation and redirection of national capability that results in real change.

v) Public Engagement

- The importance, relevance and impacts of the oceans and seas to every day life will be much more widely understood among the public and key stakeholders. Wider society will be engaged in understanding and developing priorities for research, especially with regard to what may be expected to be progressively high-profile marine policy and planning issues.

54. What will be the immediate next steps?

In preparing for this change an outline implementation plan has already been prepared by the Project Board working on this initiative;

- Following this communication, work on the transition project will continue to develop the details engaging more staff than it has been possible to do until now.
- Regular updates on progress to staff will be given through line managers. We will additionally provide updates in internal newsletters and at team and other briefings as appropriate and applicable.