

**Research Centre for Marine Sciences Meeting**

**Tuesday, 8th May 2012**

**Doodson Room, National Oceanography Centre**

Participants

Miguel Maqueda (MM), Karyn Morrissey (KM), Jonathan Sharples (JS), Ric Williams (RW) (Chair), Andrew Willmott (AW)

Apologies

Chris Frid (CF), Claire Mahaffey (CM), Andy Plater (AP), George Wolff (GAW)

Agenda

1. Minutes of last meeting

2. Membership update

3. Activity update

4. Grants update

5. Update on the cuts in NOC staff

6. Implications/support from the University

7. NERC Doctoral training colleges

8. Climate Change Lobby Group

9. Stategic developments and funding opportunities

10. Future Workshops

11. AOB

12 Date of Next Meeting

**1. Minutes of last meeting**

(a) The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd December 2011 have not yet been circulated.

***ACTION****: YC to circulate as soon as possible.*

**2. Membership update**

(a) The original membership included engineering staff (Richard Burrows). As NOC staff are working on a joint Supergen (ESPRC) call with the School of Engineering it was agreed to invite Ian Poyntington, one of the engineers, to join the group.

***ACTION****: RW to invite Ian Waddington from the School of Engineers to be a member of the group.*

**3. Activity update**

(a) The Marine Symposium held on 26th /27th January 2012 went well.

(b) Ocean Sciences Meeting Salt Lake City – 12 people from Liverpool attended this meeting in February 2012,

resulting in high quality lectureship applications.

(c) Sao Paolo Visitors - Phil Woodworth has arranged a return visit for the Sao Paolo visitors on 14th May 2012.

(d) Proudman Lecture 22/23rd May **-** Carl Wunsch (MIT and Oxford University) will present his lecture ‘The

Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation, Its Nature, and Implications for Observations’ on

Wednesday 23rd May. RW/Chris Hughes will organise additional workshops around this.

***ACTION:*** *AW/RW will arrange refreshments after the lecture and dinner on 23rd May.*

(e) Lectureship presentations 29th /30th May - Attendance is requested at the presentations for the Ocean

Sciences lectureship post to be held on 29th May in the Herdman Lecture Theatre. The interviews will be

held on 30th May and the interview panel will consist of Ric Williams, George Wolff and Chris Frid (Chair).

**4. Grants update**

(a) RW, CM and JS have submitted a Glider Call with a PhD studentship.

(b) JS is involved in a Biochemistry consortium bid value £2.6M with an 80% FEC element.

(c) NOC is involved in a NERC whole sea shelf programme bid (seventh component). There are three

competing proposals for this bid. The outcome of the bid should be announced in September 2012.

(d) JS and GAW are involved in a benthic bid. There are two competing proposals for this bid.

(e) AW and other NOC staff involved in a Supergen Marine Renewables bid. Three letters of intent have been

Submitted. Full proposals will be submitted in 6 weeks’ time.

(f) Responsive mode – AW and other NOC staff are involved in an Arctic proposal.

(g) MM is writing a proposal jointly with a contact at Newcastle University for a Glider to be deployed in

measuring around the UK.

(h) KM reported that the geographers are preparing bids jointly with Lancaster for PhD Scholarships (Fellows)

funded by the European Regional Structural Fund. The PhD Fellows will be placed in SMEs in the

Merseyside area to work on innovative environmental projects. There are 50 scholarships available. SMEs

will only be required to pay the PhD fees (£4K/year) for 3 years. To qualify for this funding the SME must

have a turnover of <£1M/year and have <50 employees. Applications are acceptable from franchises which

earn <250K/year.

***ACTION****: KM will email AW with further details.*

**5.** **Update on** **cuts to NOC staff**

(a) AW reported that a staff cost-cutting exercise was carried out within the Centre to meet NERC’s core

funding savings target of £1.5M. Staff cuts were determined by ranking staff against performance criteria.

Two pools of staff were drawn up consisting of 16 lead scientists and 23 support scientists, and on 16th

March 2012 staff at risk of redundancy were selected from the two pools. During the process of selection it

became clear that to radically reduce staffing to meet a savings target would put the Centre at risk

of being unable to function, and only 7 lead scientists and 6 support scientists from Liverpool were

identified as being ‘at risk’. In April 2012 NERC circulated a call for voluntary redundancies across all

scientists in the Centre, with three scientists expressing interest. NERC has offered to look for alternative

jobs within the Civil Service for all ‘at risk’ scientists. AW will discuss redundancy plans with all non-

volunteers by the end of May. AW will also look at any part-time opportunities if there are funds available.

Regrettably this is not the only NERC centre to face cuts, and over the next two years the Centre will go to

competitive funding.

**6.** **Implications/support from the University**

(a) RW has been impressed with that the calibre of the junior staff recruited to Liverpool during AW’s tenure

and he regretted that they have not fared so well in this cost-cutting process. He felt that the use of metric

based reviews to determine cuts has resulted in Liverpool staff being hit harder than staff in Southampton,

who follow a strategic mode of research rather than getting substantive papers out. AW reported that the

new NERC Chief Executive, Duncan Wingham, is sympathetic to the problems of chasing soft money and

plans to increase core funding to the Centre. There is one condition attached to this core funding, that NOC

will be accountable to NERC for these funds. RW has made the VC and Stephen Holloway aware of the staff-

cutting situation. In terms of University support for ‘at risk’ staff, RW suggested that the University might

consider offering high calibre staff an honorary appointment so that they would continue to have access to

the Library. The University might also provide support in applying for Fellowships and grant applications.

**7. NERC doctoral training colleges**

(a) Southampton’s graduate school is held in high regard nationally and NERC would like to see this replicated

elsewhere. Although All NERC scholarships go through Southampton, the Liverpool centre is important to

NERC’s strategy and there are no plans to move marine science from Liverpool. RW would like to

strengthen the University’s links with the Centre. However, MM is concerned that the Centre’s links with

the University are somewhat tenuous and that it does not have a central role within environmental sciences.

He is also concerned that there might not be much University support for NOC at a high level. RW

assured MM that the University does recognise NOC’s skills and has recently set up six major research

themes, one of which is supported specifically because of the presence of NOC. AW reassured MM that the

future of NOC is secure.

(b) AW will look at the Southampton model of recruiting PG students.

**8. Strategic developments and funding opportunities**

**DTPs**

(a) SISB at NERC has set up a Training Advice Group (TAG) which will be up and running by early June 2012.

(b) Four-year studentships will be the norm for DTPs starting in academic year 2014/15. All students will have

proper advanced course training with time at the end to get papers written up.

(c) There will be two types of funding available in 2014/15: (a) responsive mode, and (b) an annual round of

focused-training awards linked to specialist skills.

(d) Doctoral Training Partnerships will be awarded for five years with a timetable as follows:

Autumn 2012 – Announcement for applications

Spring 2013 – Closed for applications

Autumn 2013 – Awards

(e) KM recommends having a stronger branding for Liverpool to recruit students.

(f) RW envisages three different models for studentships: (a) Marine (b) Geophysics (Andreas), (c) Lancaster

partnership (Chris Frid).

(g) Kirsty Grainger, NERC’s senior DPT administrator, will be visiting Liverpool to talk about DTP’s. AW

suggested that she should be invited to give a presentation, and that James Scorse from Bangor University

who is also involved in DTPs, should be invited as well.

***ACTION:*** *AW will invite Kirsty Grainger and James Scorse (Bangor) to a presentation.*

**9. Climate Change Lobby Group (attached).**

(a) RW has received the attached invitation to be part of this group which appears to be simply a lobby group.

***ACTION:*** *JG to check this out with Andrew Miller and report back.*

**10. Future Workshops**

(a) The sea level workshop planned for July with Chris Hughes and Simon Holgate is deferred to later in the year.

(b) PSMSL will celebrate its 80th birthday this year. There are workshops planned with a climate and sea level focus.

**11. Any Other Business**

None.

**12. Date of Next Meeting**

September 2012 – date to be confirmed.