



Economic
and Social
Research Council



Natural
Environment
Research Council

Sustainable Management of UK Marine Resources

Closing date	Notification of Intent – 12 June 2020 Full proposals – 6 October 2020
Funding available	
Funding mode/stream	Strategic Programme Fund
NERC Core or UKRI/Collective Fund budget	UKRI Collective Funds
Project duration	36 months
Funding partners (if applicable)	
Start date requirements (if applicable)	15 May 2021
Call aims and objectives	The Sustainable Management of UK Marine Resources (SMMR) programme aims to improve understanding of sustainable societal, behavioural and economic benefits through better management of UK marine resources, and integrate this into systems based approaches that support the development and analysis of interventions and inform effective decision making for marine management and policy. This call aims to fund up to six projects to address this aim.
Eligibility criteria	<p>This call is open to UKRI eligible research organisations and for this call, Public Sector Research Establishments (PSREs) with 10 or more researchers with PhDs (or equivalent) are eligible to apply. If PSREs wishing to apply have not previously applied for UKRI funding and do not currently hold designated IRO status, they will be required to complete an eligibility form to ensure they have the required research capacity, systems and controls in place to manage the research and grant funding. Please note the condition to have less than 50% government funding required for IRO status does not apply to PSRE's. PSRE applicants should contact Avril.Allman@nerc.ukri.org at the earliest opportunity to discuss their interests in applying.</p> <p>Investigators may be involved in no more than two proposals submitted to this call and only one of these may be as the lead Principal Investigator.</p>
Call specific requirements	Funds of up to £1.5m (80% FEC) are available from UKRI for a period of 36 months in the first instance. A 'Notification of Intent' to submit must be registered by 12 June 2020 to be able to submit a full proposal. Grants must start no later than 15th May 2021.
Contact	Nicky Lewis



Sustainable Management of UK Marine Resources

Announcement of Opportunity

Issued on: 15 May 2020

Notification of Intent deadline: 12 June 2020

Full Proposals deadline: 4pm on 6 October 2020

1. Summary

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) are inviting the submission of proposals to the Sustainable Management of UK Marine Resources (SMMR) research programme. The £12.4m SMMR programme will be jointly delivered by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) on behalf of UKRI, and in partnership with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and Marine Scotland. This programme is funded through the UKRI Strategic Priorities Fund.

The programme aims to improve understanding of sustainable societal, behavioural and economic benefits through better management of UK marine resources and integrate this into systems-based approaches that support the development and analysis of interventions and inform effective decision-making for marine management and policy. At the same time, the programme will achieve an enduring step change in the capability of the marine transdisciplinary research community working on marine issues and its close working on solutions with stakeholders, including policy makers, industry, and the public.

Funding is available to fund up to 6 projects, with each project costing up to £1.5m per project (80% FEC, the cost NERC will pay the grant holder), to deliver the aims of the programme by addressing at least two of the programme's three Themes:

Theme 1: Understanding the different value systems people hold when they connect with the marine environment and how this affects their decision making, in order to inform and direct policy development.

Theme 2: Development and integration of modelling tools to support coastal and marine natural capital approaches and accounting.

Theme 3: Development of interventions that support government policy to improve the marine environment for the next generation.

Projects will be funded for up to 36-months, with the possibility of further funding being provided for 12-month cost-extension (i.e. extending project durations to 48-months). Successful proposals will be required to start no later than 15th May 2021.

2. Background

2.1 Strategic Priorities Fund

The UKRI Strategic Priorities Fund, which has funded this programme, has been set up to build upon the vision of a 'common research fund' set out in Sir Paul Nurse's [independent review](#) of the Research Councils. The fund will drive an increase in high-quality multi- and interdisciplinary research and innovation, ensure that UKRI's investment links up effectively with Government departments' research priorities and opportunities, and ensure that the system is able to respond to strategic priorities and opportunities.

2.2 Sustainable Management of UK Marine Resources

There is growing reliance on the seas for resources. Over three billion people globally depend on marine biodiversity for their livelihoods and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) projects the 'ocean economy' to double to ~\$3 trillion by 2030. For the UK, it is estimated that the marine sector is worth ~£47 billion Gross Value Added, with strong growth predicted in offshore renewables and aquaculture sectors. At the same time, the marine environment is under increasing pressure from stressors, such as warming, acidification, over-fishing, and pollution. Furthermore, our coastal environments are at increasing risk from sea level rise and severe weather events and a reduction in the natural protection afforded by, for example, beaches and seagrass beds.

This is a transformative period for the UK marine landscape with opportunities and challenges arising from changing international governance, the drive to increase economic activity, and changing climate. Healthy marine environments promote economic, social and environmental prosperity, and support coastal communities, jobs, livelihoods and food security. Defra's 25-year plan highlights a significant opportunity to rethink management of coastal zone activity. In order to fully capitalise on these opportunities, it is necessary to develop transparent and public accounting of the benefits, goods and services that the marine environment provides, and to identify and assess policy gaps, needs, and best practice. In the international context, developing a holistic approach to marine resource management provides the most effective platform for engagement with multiple UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and their related targets to promote worldwide economic development and prosperity without adversely affecting the environment, including the marine environment. Ecosystem services provided by the marine environment are relevant to the delivery of 41 targets across 12 SDGs.

This programme will develop holistic systems-based approaches to the marine environment to improve analysis of interventions, improve our understanding of societal perspectives, behaviours and values, and develop the integrated modelling tools required to inform effective decision-making for marine management and policy development. A systems approach recognises the interdependence of external and internal factors and seeks to include these complex interconnections in management tools. For instance, bio-economic

models have been successfully applied to fisheries management at the national level (especially in Scandinavia) and internationally by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the UN. However, further work is needed to establish the fitness-for-purpose of a systems approach to diverse management questions concerning ecosystems services and marine environmental assets. It is also essential to build the enabling interdisciplinary community and the full set of tools needed for all aspects of marine management and policy development.

For example, in the near to offshore sea area, policy and regulatory decisions are required on the development of large-scale offshore wind farms to reduce carbon emissions, but these developments impede commercial fishing. Offshore wind farms have potential to also act as areas for shellfish aquaculture, as *de facto* marine protected areas due to protection from commercial fishing, and by creating artificial reefs that act as havens for fish and other species. The latter are potentially attractive to recreational anglers, wildlife watchers and divers. The commercial opportunities for the energy, aquaculture, leisure and recreation sectors need to be weighed against the economic and cultural values that are perceived to attain to commercial fisheries. Decisions need to take into account the impacts of climate change on wildlife and on the hydrodynamics of the marine system, and public attitudes and values that are increasingly influenced by the climate change agenda and the need for leisure and recreation for personal wellbeing.

This programme will deliver:

- (i) Scalable, adaptive solutions for marine management and policy development that enables intelligent regulation based on evidence-based understanding of trade-offs.
- (ii) An enduring step change in the capability of the interdisciplinary research community working on marine issues and its close working on solutions with stakeholders, including policy makers, industry, and the public.

This programme will provide opportunities to break down barriers between academic disciplines, and between science and policy. It will establish a strong interdisciplinary community focussing on further developing, and strengthening, interdisciplinary approaches already used with some success to support decision-making in both marine and terrestrial domains – including social science/economic approaches and natural capital methodologies for appraisal and accounting. It will also fill a gap in understanding the importance to the economy and to a range of societal groups of different components of marine natural capital and the services they underpin, enabling more comprehensive evaluation of the trade-off potential under different management scenarios, and identifying interventions that will improve the marine environment and produce societal, behavioural and economic benefits.

3. Scope

3.1 Programme objectives

The overarching objective of the SMMR programme is to improve sustainable societal, behavioural and economic benefits through better management of UK marine resources and integrate this into systems-based approaches that support the development and analysis of

interventions and inform effective decision-making for marine management and policy. At the same time, the programme will achieve an enduring step change in the capability of the marine interdisciplinary research community working on marine issues and its close working on solutions with stakeholders, including policy makers, industry, and the public.

Delivery of the programme's objective will be strongly dependent on developing interdisciplinary capability (across environmental, social and economic sciences) and stakeholder engagement. Projects will be required to solely focus on the UK's marine environment, to take advantage of the opportunity to build on a strong portfolio of related research (e.g. NERC, Defra, Marine Scotland).

For this funding call, the UK's marine environment is defined as the broad marine habitat that covers all UK areas that are either permanently immersed in seawater or are inundated with saline water at some stage in the tidal cycle. This includes estuaries, beaches, coasts and all subtidal habitats out to the 200 nautical mile limit of the UK's marine area (within the UK's Exclusive Economic Zone) and the seabed and subsoil in the area of the continental shelf adjoining the UK's Exclusive Economic Zone over which the UK exercises jurisdiction (i.e. the geographic scope as defined in the UK Marine Strategy, which excludes the UK's overseas territories¹).

The programme's three Themes are:

Theme 1: Understanding the different value systems people hold when they connect with the marine environment and how this affects their decision making, in order to inform and direct policy development.

People attribute value to direct and indirect benefits provided by the marine environment in many different ways, and are influenced by both personal preferences and local and societal factors, such as their value as public goods (e.g. biodiversity or clean beaches). However, people are unable or unwilling to monetise many of these values. To inform and direct policy development, further understanding is required about the way multiple groups of people value the marine environment and how this attribution affects dependencies and trade-offs in their decision-making. Only then can positive synergies be harnessed between economic and social outcomes (including livelihoods, employment and community wellbeing) and the state of marine natural capital and ecosystem services at different spatial and temporal scales. For example: i.) How do the benefits of leisure and recreation (e.g. coastal walking, swimming, kayaking, wildlife watching, recreational sea angling) compare with the benefits from commercial fisheries, and how can this new evidence be used in decision-making?; ii.) To inform national food security strategies, what are the trade-offs between traditional fisheries and the increasing development of aquaculture for food production?; iii.) What factors motivate people's engagement with, and concerns about, the marine environment (e.g. TV documentaries, recreation, holidays, food quality and security, wildlife), and how much does this influence the values they hold for beaches, coasts and the wider seas and oceans, or for the indirect benefits such as climate regulation, flood protection for, and

¹ <https://moat.cefas.co.uk/introduction-to-uk-marine-strategy/>

livelihoods of remote coastal communities, or wildlife they may never personally encounter; and how could this be included in natural capital accounting?

This programme will:

- Increase understanding of value systems and make recommendations on how this can be used to supplement and support natural capital accounting.
- Deliver approaches, and scenarios (via Theme 3), to take account of value systems that affect success of marine management interventions.

Theme 2: Development and integration of modelling tools to support coastal and marine natural capital approaches and accounting.

New insights and capabilities are required to evaluate the environmental, economic and social trade-offs for a range of ecosystem services and benefits that arise from the targeted use of marine resources.

Building on existing observing networks, data, marine natural science models and bio-economic models, this programme will underpin the development of integrated or coupled models linking processes within the UK's marine environment to economic activity and society. This is required to support evidence-based management of the UK marine environment, a system that supports multiple services, including fishing, recreation, transport, climate regulation, energy, flooding defences, and building materials.

Applications for modelling tools can be tested through case studies at different scales, evaluating the environmental, economic and social trade-offs for key marine sectors. For example, assessing the trade-offs entailed in co-existence of: i.) expansion of the aquaculture industry in coastal areas of natural beauty with strong economic dependence on tourism; ii.) marine protected areas and fishing; iii.) delivering government commitments to net zero through expansion of the offshore energy industry whilst ensuring protection of marine biodiversity and the wider marine environment; iv) the possible extraction of mineral deposits from the UK's deep sea waters (> 200 metres depth) to produce electronics and green technologies such as wind turbines, solar panels and electric storage batteries while at the same time risking damage to deep sea ecosystems. Other applications include small and large-scale developments such as ports, harbours, flood defence, and renewables; marine planning, policy and licencing; and national scale natural capital accounting.

Modelling tools need to reflect the complexity of natural capital assets and flows of services; their value and importance to different economic and social sectors; the distinctions between flows of public, common and private goods; and potential for development of future financial products. Tools should support effective movement of marine management approaches beyond evaluation of individual services, such as fisheries and blue carbon, towards accounting for the multiple ecosystem services and benefits with the production of relevant information at the right scales and formats (such as GIS) to enable prioritisation for policy. These tools will be increasingly important, for example, as UK government seeks to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, contribute to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, and as it begins to apply the sustainable development principles described in its 25 Year Environment Plan, and build practical regional marine plans for their operational delivery.

This programme will:

- Deliver tools for use by stakeholders that enable natural capital and trade-off approaches to be used to support decision making across multiple economic sectors and social groups, taking into consideration implications of global change.

Theme 3: Development of interventions that support government policy to improve the marine environment for the next generation.

There is a need for ambitious coordinated actions to sustainably manage and protect the oceans for future generations. Government policy seeks to reverse the loss of, and restore, marine biodiversity, and increase resilience of ecosystems and the services they provide. Interventions are required to ensure that public goods are sustainable, and that people can engage with them. With increasing and diverse marine sector development (e.g. ports and harbours, offshore energy), the UK needs to plan and manage for net gains of natural capital and ecosystem services, considering the links between ecosystems, economic and social systems, and governance.

Approaches for implementing net gain on land may not be applicable to marine environments. For example, one of the main interventions for protecting species and habitats in the UK marine environment is through the creation of marine protected areas (MPAs). However, the success of these interventions needs to be assessed, including understanding how the MPAs affect ecosystem services, benefits and societal outcomes, and the potential biodiversity gains within MPAs and across the wider environment. Another example of an intervention is managed realignment, which is the breakdown of man-made sea walls to allow limited flooding of coastal land but at the same time restore saltmarshes and natural coastal defence.

In sustainably managing the coastal environment, it is also important to consider land-sea interactions, as upstream land and catchment management can have adverse consequences for downstream marine natural capital. Interventions are required to improve stewardship by those involved in both marine sectors (such as fisheries, aquaculture and renewables, but also recreation and local communities) and relevant terrestrial sectors (such as those engaged in land-use and water management). This programme will develop and evaluate new incentive schemes and approaches to improving the marine environment. It will engage directly with relevant UK marine and catchment management and regulators to ensure that approaches are fit for purpose and address high priority issues.

This programme will:

- Deliver approaches and tools on interventions and management scenarios for improved environmental, social and economic outcomes focussing on public goods and net gain.
- Make recommendations on future policy concerning interventions to improve the marine environment and achieve net gain.
- Utilise social, economic and environmental metrics and model tools to enable evaluation of interventions.

3.2 Proposal requirements

In recognition of the potential disruption and delays to proposal development caused by the current COVID-19 situation, the period for proposal preparation will be 20 weeks from the date of issue of this Announcement of Opportunity (15 May 2020). Those wishing to submit a full proposal **must** register a "[Notification of Intent](#)" (NoI) of their plans by **midday on 12 June 2020**. **Please note that only those who have formally registered a NoI will subsequently be able to submit a full proposal.**

The NoIs will not be assessed. The purpose of this stage is to help estimate the number of potential submissions, identify thematic areas being addressed and enable the Champions to facilitate interdisciplinary and stakeholder connections.

Proposals can bid for up to £1.5m (80% FEC, the cost UKRI will pay to the grant holder) for 36 months and must address at least two of the programme's three Themes.

Proposals must be submitted in a modular format, separated into a number of defined work-packages (including costs for each work-package outlined in the Justification of Resources), where some work-packages may be higher risk than others. If any higher risk project work-packages fail, there will be the opportunity for researchers to propose adjustments to science plans if time and remaining unspent funds allow.

Successful projects will initially be awarded funding for the first 24 months of their planned 36 month project (May 2021-April 2023) and proposals must include well defined milestones and deliverables for these first 24 months as these will be used to assess progress, particularly at an 18-month mid-term review (more details at Section 4.2). Proposals will also be required to include milestones and deliverables for the final 12 months (of the proposed 36-month project) but these do not need to be as well defined as they may be subject to significant changes, particularly as a consequence of the mid-term review.

The SMMR programme will fund a balanced portfolio of projects across the three Themes and a range of environmental and economic contexts. Applicants are encouraged to take a case study approach and to utilise innovative methods to optimise new data collection and re-use of existing data.

Proposals are required to be interdisciplinary in nature, bringing together environmental scientists with economists and social scientists. The programme aims to break down barriers between academic disciplines and between science and policy. It is expected that economists and social scientists will be included on proposals, including those who may not have previously worked on marine systems, to add momentum to the creation of strong interdisciplinary partnerships incorporating economics and broader social science research developed for land-based management.

Proposals are required to include a section that clearly outlines how their project will help the programme to deliver an enduring step change in the capability of the interdisciplinary research community to work on marine issues and its close working on solutions with stakeholders, including policy makers, industry, and the public. Proposals are therefore strongly encouraged to include early career interdisciplinary researchers, secondments (e.g. researchers into policy organisations, and vice versa) and significant Principal and Co-Investigator time to allow for strong engagement (throughout the lifetime of projects) in

delivering the programme's objectives (including strong engagement of researchers with Government stakeholders). During the peer review process, reviewers will be asked to pay particularly attention to these aspects of proposals.

It is recognised that building interdisciplinary and Government stakeholder (Defra, and Marine Scotland) partnerships will take some time during the project proposal development phase, particularly for those who have not worked in the marine area previously. To help with partnership development during this critical phase, the SMMR programme has introduced a facilitation process that will be led by the SMMR Champions.

The following information is available on the [SMMR website](#):

1. Video presentations outlining the scope of the SMMR Programme.
2. A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document – this will be updated as new questions arise throughout the proposal preparation period.
3. A list of policy stakeholder research requirements that will be updated during the proposal preparation period [*Please note that these will only be those requirements which have been provided to the Champions and that other legitimate research priorities exist*].
4. A list of “offers and wants” collected as part of the Community workshop on 31st March from those interested in developing or participating in proposals and seeking appropriate contacts. If you would like to add to this list please contact the SMMR Champions.

Applicants seeking information or advice not available from the above should contact the SMMR [Champions](#).

After the Nol stage deadline has passed, the SMMR Champions will contact the identified project lead on all submissions to discuss their plans, and to offer assistance in identifying suitable academic or stakeholder partners if this need has been highlighted.

The SMMR Champions will offer impartial advice and any non-project specific responses may be published anonymously as additions to the FAQs.

To realise the ambition of the SMMR programme of initiating a step change in the relationship between interdisciplinary research and policy stakeholders will require the development of a strong interdisciplinary community of researchers and stakeholders. The SMMR Champions will continue to support projects and work with the successful grant holders throughout the programme to facilitate the development of networks between projects and more widely across the stakeholder community, to ultimately enhance the outcomes of the programme.

Engagement with, and inclusion of, stakeholders in proposals is strongly recommended and proposals are required to include plans for their own Project Steering Groups (PSG), which should include representation from the SMMR Champions and key stakeholders. The PSG will provide input and advice to the PI on how the project can maximise its science and innovation impact and ensure there are useful outcomes for end users. Where appropriate, international researchers should be considered as members of the PSG. An outline of the make-up, mode of operation, and terms of reference for the PSG should be included in project proposals, however, it is expected that the project team will meet with their PSG at

least once a year and that regular communication is maintained throughout the projects lifetime. Given the limited funds available for projects, PIs may wish to consider alternatives to the typical in person meetings for the PSG, such as video conferencing.

Proposals are required to focus on the UK's marine environment².

4. Programme requirements

4.1 Programme funding

This announcement aims to fund up to six projects, each costing a maximum £1.5m at 80% FEC (the cost NERC will pay to the grant holder). UKRI are looking to fund a balanced, interdisciplinary portfolio across the programme's three Themes.

Proposals should include formal requests (and access costs) for NERC Services and Facilities (e.g. HPC, isotope analyses) where relevant. No additional funding is available to cover NERC Service and Facilities costs, therefore all costs associated with the use of NERC Services and Facilities (including any costs of the National Marine Facilities) must be included within the funding limit of proposals.

Applicants may also want to consider where, in cooperation with their stakeholders, they can add value to their projects through cash and/or in-kind contributions and articulate this information within their proposals.

4.2 Implementation and delivery

Proposals should present a work plan of 36 months.

Projects progress against agreed milestones and deliverables will be assessed throughout the lifetime of projects. Reviews of progress by the SMMR Strategic Advisory Group will take place every six months, and at a mid-term review after 18 months. Previously agreed milestones and deliverables may be subject to change following these reviews in order to ensure that the SMMR programme stays on track to deliver required outcomes, and where appropriate respond to changes in stakeholder needs. Six monthly reports will include a section where information should be provided on actions taken (if any) as a result of the advice of the project's Project Steering Group. Attendance at Strategic Advisory Group meetings will be a requirement for project teams twice a year. One meeting will be held virtually using Zoom, and travel and subsistence costs for attendance at a second meeting in person for up to 3 members of each project team will be funded centrally by the SMMR programme and so these costs should not be included in proposals.

The programme aims to fund innovative research, some of which may be high risk research, and the Strategic Advisory Group will take this into consideration when reviewing the progress of the work-packages of projects at the 6 monthly and mid-terms review points. For

² defined as the broad marine habitat that covers all UK areas that are either permanently immersed in seawater or are inundated with saline water at some stage in the tidal cycle. This includes estuaries, beaches, coasts and all subtidal habitats out to the 200 nautical mile limit of the UK's marine area (within the UK's Exclusive Economic Zone) and the seabed and subsoil in the area of the continental shelf adjoining the UK's Exclusive Economic Zone over which the UK exercises jurisdiction (i.e. the geographic scope as defined in the UK Marine Strategy, which excludes the UK's overseas territories (<https://moat.cefas.co.uk/introduction-to-uk-marine-strategy/>)).

example, the expectations of the pace of progress of project's work-packages that are very innovative and higher risk will be different to less innovative and lower risk work-packages.

The mid-term review, conducted by the SMMR Strategic Advisory Group, will take place in September/October 2022 and will assess each project's progress against previously agreed milestones and deliverables. The mid-term review will also assess the proposed work plans, including well-defined milestones and deliverables, for the final 18-months of projects.

Projects that pass the mid-term review will continue their work for a further 12 months (i.e. April 2023 – March 2024), and may be subject to some new terms and conditions as agreed following the review process. Projects that do not pass the mid-term review will stop at the end of 24 months and final work plans (including milestones and deliverables) for the last 6-months of projects will need to be agreed by the SMMR Programme Executive Board following input from the SMMR Strategic Advisory Group and SMMR Champions.

Once funded projects are underway, it is anticipated that there will be some additional funding available to supplement and extend by up to a further 12 months (i.e. extending projects to 48-months), for those projects that pass the mid-term review and have strong proposals for the extension of projects that will ensure the programme's delivery of more impactful outcomes.

4.3 Knowledge Exchange and Impact

Knowledge exchange (KE) is vital to ensure that environmental research has wide benefits for society and should be an integral part of any research.

A separate Pathways to Impact statement is not required, but applicants should still consider how they will or might achieve impact outside the scientific community and include this as part of their Case for Support. Impact activities do not have to be cost-incurring, but relevant costs can be included and must be fully justified within the Justification of Resources statement.

All funded projects may also be required to engage with programme-wide KE activities, in which case appropriate funding for which will be provided by the programme.

4.4 Data Management

The UKRI Data Policy must be adhered to, and an [outline data management plan](#) produced as part of proposal development. Details of [NERC](#) and [ESRC](#) data centres are found in the embedded links. UKRI will pay the data centre directly on behalf of the programme for archival and curation services, but applicants should ensure they request sufficient resource to cover preparation of data for archiving by the research team.

4.5 NERC Facilities

Prior to submitting a proposal, applicants wishing to use a NERC service or facility must contact the facility to seek agreement that they could provide the service required. Applicants wishing to use most NERC facilities will need to submit a mandatory 'technical assessment' with their proposal. This technical assessment is required for aircraft but not for NERC Marine Facilities (NMF – Ship-time and/or marine equipment) and HPC. For NERC, this means a quote for the work which the facility will provide. A [full list](#) of the Facilities

requiring this quote can be found on the NERC website. The costs for the service or facility (excluding NMF and HPC costs) must be included within the Directly Incurred Other Costs section of the Je-S form and also within the facilities section of the Je-S form. Further information on [NERC services and facilities](#) can be found on the NERC website.

Applicants wishing to use NERC's marine facilities must complete an online Ship-time and Marine Equipment (SME) or Autonomous Deployment (ADF) application form on the [Marine Facilities Planning](#) webpage. The SME/ADF number should be included on the Je-S grant proposal form under Services and Facilities. SME/ADFs must be submitted and approved by NERC Marine Planning by the time the proposal (Je-S form) is submitted, so that a pdf of the SME/ADF can be attached as a facility form. Failure to do so may result in the request not being included in the NERC Marine Facilities Programme. Applicants intending to apply for NERC's marine facilities should also contact marineplanning@nerc.ukri.org to discuss ship-time and equipment needs as soon as possible.

Completed SMEs/ADFs should be submitted by 11 August 2020 (11 June = 2 months before proposal submission)

4.6 Programme management

Successful applicants will be required to work closely with the SMMR Champions, whose role includes ensuring the active management of funded projects in support of a coherent programme and continued government relevance. The Champions will also lead on knowledge exchange and communication strategies and implementation plans for the programme, with which successful applicants are required to engage; will aid in the development of a strong interdisciplinary community of researchers and stakeholders; and ensure strong programme wide engagement with a diverse stakeholder community.

The SMMR Champions are part of the SMMR Strategic Advisory Group who will ensure that the programme is delivered effectively, and projects deliver the commissioned outcomes. There will be two SMMR Strategic Advisory Group meetings a year, one in person when each Principal Investigator, accompanied by up to three members of their project team, will be required to attend to present an update report on their project's progress against agreed milestones and deliverables, and to respond to questions from the group.

4.7 Reporting requirements

As with all UKRI grant holders, there will be a requirement to report through the UKRI reporting system; this is required annually and continues for up to five years post grant end.

Submission of progress reports to the SMMR Strategic Advisory Group in advance of its 6-monthly meetings will be required, plus any exceptional reporting as required.

5. Application process

5.1 How to apply

Full Proposals

Closing Date: 6 October 2020

Those wishing to submit a full proposal **must** register a "[Notification of Intent](#)" (NoI) of their plans by **midday on 12 June 2020**. **Only those who have formally registered a NoI will subsequently be able to submit a full proposal. Note that NoIs will not be assessed.**

Full proposal must be submitted using the Research Councils' Joint Electronic Submission system (Je-S). Applicants should select Proposal Type - 'Standard Proposal' and then select the Scheme – 'Directed' and the Call – SMMR OCT20.

This call will close on JeS at 4pm UK time on 6 October 2020 and it will not be possible to submit to the call after this time. Applicants should leave enough time for their proposal to pass through their organisation's Je-S submission route before this date. Any proposal that is incomplete, or does not meet UKRI's eligibility criteria or follow NERC's submission rules (see [NERC Grants Handbook](#)), will be office rejected and will not be considered.

All attachments, with the exception of letters of support and services/facilities/equipment quotes, submitted through the Je-S system must be completed in single-spaced typescript of minimum font size 11 point (Arial or other sans serif typeface of equivalent size to Arial 11), with margins of at least 2cm. Please note that Arial narrow, Calibri and Times New Roman are not allowable font types and any proposal which has used either of these font types within their submission will be rejected. References and footnotes should also be at least 11 point font and should be in the same font type as the rest of the document. Headers and footers should not be used for references or information relating to the scientific case. Applicants referring to websites should note that referees may choose not to use them.

Applicants should ensure that their proposal conforms to all eligibility and submission rules, otherwise their proposal may be rejected without peer review. More details on NERC's submission rules can be found in the [NERC research grant and fellowships handbook](#) and in the [submission rules](#) on the NERC website.

Proposals for this call should be submitted in **large grant** format following the requirements outlined in Section F of the [NERC research grant and fellowships handbook](#).

Please note that on submission to council ALL non-PDF documents are converted to PDF, the use of non-standard fonts may result in errors or font conversion, which could affect the overall length of the document.

Additionally where non-standard fonts are present, and even if the converted PDF document may look unaffected in the Je-S System, when it is imported into the Research Councils Grants System some information may be removed. We therefore recommend that where a document contains any non-standard fonts (scientific notation, diagrams etc), the document should be converted to PDF prior to attaching it to the proposal.

No associated studentships can be requested under this call.

The expected start date for projects funded under this Announcement of Opportunity is 15th May 2021.

5.2 Eligibility

Calls under these programmes will be open to eligible individuals in organisations that are normally eligible to apply for research grants from [UKRI's research councils](#).

Public Sector Research Establishments (PSREs) are now also eligible to apply to SPF programmes. If PSREs wishing to apply have not previously applied for UKRI funding and

are not currently designated IRO status they will be required to complete an eligibility form to ensure they have the required research capacity, systems and controls in place to manage the research and grant funding. Please note the condition to have less than 50% government funding required for IRO status does not apply to PSRE's. See [this link](#) for further information. PSRE applicants should contact avril.allman@nerc.ukri.org at the earliest opportunity to discuss their interests in applying.

Proposals involving a PSRE must include a statement to confirm that additional funding in support of their involvement has been secured.

Investigators may be involved in no more than two proposals submitted to this call and only one of these may be as the lead Principal Investigator.

6. Assessment Process

Proposals will be internationally peer-reviewed and final funding recommendations made by a moderating panel consisting of independent experts and members of the NERC and ESRC Peer Review Colleges where possible. Applicants will be given the opportunity to provide a written response to peer review comments prior to the moderating panel. Applicants may be invited to give a presentation at the moderating panel.

The assessment criteria to be used will be as follows:

- Research Excellence
- Fit to Scheme

Feedback will be provided to both successful and unsuccessful applicants.

The recommendations of the moderating panel, along with the overall call requirements to ensure a balanced portfolio and the available budget, will be taken into account in making the final funding decisions.

7. Timetable

- Announcement published: 15 May 2020
- Notification of Intent deadline: 12 June 2020
- Deadline for submission of full proposals: 6 October 2020
- Moderating panel meeting: January 2021
- Latest start date for projects: 15th May 2021

8. Contact

For all technical enquiries, please contact smmr@nerc.ukri.org

For project and team development support, contact [SMMR Champions](#), Professor David Paterson and Dr Mark James