

NERC Cruise Programme Executive Board Terms of Reference

1. The NERC Cruise Programme Executive Board

The NERC Cruise Programme Executive Board will be Chaired by the NERC Director, Strategic Partnerships (the 'customer' for NERC science programmes) and its membership will also include the:

- NERC Director, Research and Skills (vacant post)
- Chair of the NERC Cruise Programme Review Group
- Chair of the NOC Marine Facilities Advisory Board
- NOC Chief Operating Officer
- NOC Associated Director, National Marine Facilities (NMF)
- BAS Director of Polar Operations, Engineering and Infrastructure

In addition, there will be a number of ex officio members of the Board who will be involved in meetings as is required.

A full list of the members is provided at **Annex A1**.

2. Remit

The NERC Cruise Programme Executive Board is responsible for approving the programme for NERC's research ships (*RRS Discovery*, *RRS James Cook*, and *RRS Sir David Attenborough*) and other marine facilities (including the National Marine Equipment Pool). The Board will oversee the implementation of an integrated approach to support the Marine Facilities Programme, coordinated via the Marine Facilities Programme website, and will ensure that the programme's financial and science risks are managed appropriately by NERC. To do this, the Cruise Programme Executive Board is supported by three advisory bodies:

- NERC Cruise Programme Review Group (CPRG)
- NOC Marine Facilities Advisory Board (MFAB)
- NERC Ship Model User costs Group (SMUG)

In meeting its remit, the Board will pay close attention to overseeing the implementation of the funding model for NMF, and the delivery of NERC Benefit Realisation Plans for investments in NERC ships and marine facilities.

The Board will also consider the NERC and UKRI carbon reduction targets in the advice they provide to NERC.

In setting up the Board, the NERC Executive still retains the right to veto any decisions that are made if it considers this is required to manage NERC's science and financial risks.

3. Terms of Reference

The terms of reference of the NERC Cruise Programme Executive Board are to:

- a. Approve the publication of the NERC Marine Facilities Programme on an 8-month rolling basis, taking full account of the associated science and financial risks.

- b. Decide on the scheduling of science cruises on the RRS Sir David Attenborough working with the Polar Research and Operations Board (PROB) to define the available shiptime for science cruises, which may also require other NERC polar infrastructure and facilities (e.g. aircraft or land-based support).
- c. When required, decide on the priority for programming of competing ship-time bids for science events and revenue generating opportunities on NERC's research ships.
- d. Monitor the NERC-funded User costs associated with the Marine Facilities Programme (reported on by SMUG) and, when required, decide on the priority for programming events (i.e. science, passage, alongside, trials) to best mitigate any science and financial risks.
- e. Monitor any financial gap that opens up between the NERC National Capability funding budget and the Owner and Ready-to-Go costs of NMF ship and technical support operations, and advise NERC Executive on options to mitigate any resulting risk.
- f. Take a longer-term view (up to 5-years ahead) on the planning for NERC's research ships, and identify at an early stage science opportunities (e.g. potential for developing large programmes in remote regions) and revenue generating opportunities (e.g. windows in the emerging cruise programme to target for third party income) that NERC should try to take advantage of.
- g. Review the reward/incentive model for ship funding model for *RRS Discovery* and *RRS James Cook* and, when required, adjust the model to ensure that there is an appropriate balance of risk between NERC and NOC.
- h. Oversee the delivery of Benefit Realisation Plans for capital investments in NERC ships and marine facilities, and ensure that progress against these plans is effectively monitored by NERC.
- i. Consider how marine facility operations can be enhanced long term to support the delivery of net zero research capability. This includes identification of opportunities and recommendations for investment, actively implementing changes to marine planning policy, and advising NERC on wider policy change.
- j. Ensure that NERC effectively communicates with the seagoing science community, especially when decisions are made by NERC that have significant consequences for the delivery of NERC science.
- k. Consider any major issues/risks that the Chairs of CPRG and MFAB wish to raise following the meetings of their advisory groups.

4. Mode of operation of meetings

The NERC Cruise Programme Executive Board will meet at least twice a year (in the Spring and Autumn). It is anticipated that the main business of the Board will typically be completed in no more than half a day. Members can attend meeting in person, or via videoconference. Any written papers for agenda items will be provided to the Board by email at least one working week in advance of a meeting.

The Autumn meeting will assess reports from the following, approve the Marine Facilities Programme for the following financial year and agree any necessary mitigation measures to address science, operational and financial risk in the current and following financial year:

- Marine Planning
- NMF
- SMUG
- CPRG
- MFAB

The Spring meeting will assess reports from the following and agree any necessary mitigation measures to address science, operational and financial risk in the current and/or following financial year:

- Marine Planning
- NMF
- SMUG

Annex A1. NERC Cruise Programme Executive Board (CPEB) membership, January 2026

<p>Dr Iain Williams (Chair) NERC Director, Strategic Partnerships</p> <p>Email: iain.williams@nerc.ukri.org <i>First meeting: April 2020</i></p>	<p>Prof Tim Jickells University of East Anglia Chair of the NERC Cruise Programme Review Group</p> <p>E-mail: T.Jickells@uea.ac.uk <i>First meeting: February 2025</i></p>
<p>Prof Tim Smyth Plymouth Marine Laboratory and Chair of the NOC Marine Facilities Advisory Board</p> <p>E-mail: tjsm@pml.ac.uk <i>First meeting: October 2025</i></p>	<p>Ms Julie Pringle Stewart Chief Operating Officer National Oceanography Centre</p> <p>Email: jfp@noc.ac.uk <i>First meeting: November 2015</i></p>
<p>Mr Oliver Darke Director of Polar Operations, Engineering and Infrastructure (Acting from end July 2022) British Antarctic Survey</p> <p>Email: oldark@bas.ac.uk <i>First meeting: August 2022</i></p>	<p><i>Dr Eleanor Darlington</i> Deputy Director of Research Infrastructure, National Marine Facilities National Oceanography Centre</p> <p>Email: eleanor.darlington@noc.ac.uk <i>First meeting: April 2020</i></p>
<p>Dr Natalie Powney (<i>ex officio</i>) NERC Head of Marine Planning</p> <p>Email: natalie.powney@nerc.ukri.org <i>First meeting: February 2017</i></p>	<p>Dr Jacob Wood (<i>ex officio</i>) NERC Senior Programme Manager, Marine Planning</p> <p>Email: Jacob.wood@nerc.ukri.org <i>First meeting: October 2024</i></p>
<p>Mr Randy Sliester (<i>ex officio</i>) Ships Programme and Ops Manager British Antarctic Survey</p> <p>Email: ranies@bas.ac.uk <i>First meeting: July 2017</i></p>	<p>Mr Matthew Tiahlo (<i>ex officio</i>) Head of Marine Facilities Programming National Oceanography Centre</p> <p>Email: m.tiahlo@noc.ac.uk <i>First meeting: October 2024</i></p>
<p>Ms Nicola Lewis (Secretary) NERC Programme Manager, Marine Planning</p> <p>Email: marine.planning@nerc.ukri.org <i>First meeting: February 2021</i></p>	