

Minutes of 4th European Marine Biological Resource Centre (EMBRC) UK Node meeting – 12th May 2015 – St Andrews & telephone conference call

Present:

At St Andrews

Ian Johnston – University of St Andrews
Mark James - MASTS
Colin Moffat – Marine Scotland
Gavin Grewar - Marine Scotland
Martyn Cox - Marine Scotland

By telephone

Colin Brownlee – Marine Biological Association
Nick Pade - Marine Biological Association
Paula Lister SAMS
Beatrix Schlarb-Ridley – British Antarctic Survey (part call)
Melody Clark – British Antarctic Survey

Apologies:

Alistair Main – University of St Andrews
Axel Miller – SAMS

Minutes (paper) and review actions of last meeting

1. Minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting. The Actions were all complete or to be discussed as part of the agenda.

ACTION: MC to upload minutes of 3rd meeting to web site.

Update from Implementation Board

2. IJ reported that very similar ground had been covered at both EIB meetings (6th (Paris) and 7th (Rome). IJ, CM and NP had been in Rome and the report focussed on that. The meeting had considered three main areas: the reports of the joint WG 1 & 2 meeting; the ERIC application and a general discussion. The EMBRC Director elect (due to start 15th July 2015) was also present. There were two key areas for the UK Node to note:

- a. It was good news that the Commission had included ASSEMBLE+ in their funding programme (2016/17) for the availability of funds for EMBRC partners. Being involved in this application would be a good experience for the proposed ERIC partners. The matters for EMBRC to consider now were: how to prepare for ASSEMBLE+, who would co-ordinate; and what to offer up by way of infrastructure and services. Nick Pade was developing draft criteria for EMBRC as to the facilities to include in ASSEMBLE+, for example, pan European nature, significant at the EU level, reasonable amount of time available for others each year and other possible criteria still to be developed. A timetable was also needed. It seemed likely that the next few meetings (Lisbon in June; Edinburgh in July and Bergen (?) in September) would agree the process. It was necessary that the process was open and transparent and similar criteria could be adopted for deciding which UK facilities to offer up for the ERIC.
- b. Two visions seemed to be emerging for the development of the ERIC. Some partners thought that there would be a steady transition from the implementation phase to the operational phase happening soon after the Director started, appointed their staff, and worked on the ERIC documents and Business Plan. Although it was recognised that a French governmental process was required before the ERIC application was submitted – so submission to EU not expected until December 2015. The

other view seemed to be that momentum (and staff appointment) would not gather until the ERIC application decision was known in late 2016.

3. It was also noted that the exact role and responsibilities of the Director elect had yet to be decided, for example, would the ERIC run along similar lines to a Regional Seas Convention. It was anticipated that once in post the Director would increase the pace of the EMBRC work and also focus on the ASSEMBLE+ initiative.
4. A discussion was held as to 'what facilities would the UK offer the EMBRC'. It was important for the UK to assist in defining the necessary criteria as to what infrastructure and services qualified (e.g. to cover platforms (ships etc.), specialist services (such as tanks etc.) and the 'softer infrastructure' (such as access to time series) to be involved both at the European (for EMBRC and ASSEMBLE+) and UK level and also to ensure there was a clear process for selection.

ACTION: NP was developing criteria for ASSEMBLE+ and would pass a draft to the UK Node by end of the week for comment.

ACTION: All UK partners were asked to prepare a short document outlining the hard and soft infrastructure and services they would like to offer to ASSEMBLE+. Once the criteria and timetable are agreed at the EIB level the selection process might occur relatively rapidly and therefore we need to be ready to respond within the next 2-3 weeks. There is also likely to be a requirement for some pre-selection of proposals by the UK node prior to consideration by the EIB. It was anticipated that agreed facilities would eventually have a SLA with the EMBRC HQ in Paris.

Update on Working Groups

Business Planning Working Group (1)

5. NP had circulated a note of the joint WG 1 and 2 meeting. A few things were noted. Apart from when a legal reference was required EMBRC would be 'EMBRC' rather than 'EMBRC-ERIC' to save the use of two terms. Some criteria were being developed to cover potential new partners joining EMBRC, in particular the need to bring something strategic to the partnership. The Business Plan was still a work in progress and needed to address the possible funding streams as well as the subscriptions. On the latter, the possibility of a two-tier subscription rate was being raised although many recognise that a single rate would give equality amongst the partners.
6. Version 3 of the statutes was now available. The general approach was that the statute was high level and generic (as any changes would require EU Commission agreement) leaving the detail to be covered by the Rules of Operation and overseen by the EMBRC General Assembly which, it was understood, would operate independent of the Commission. It was noted that in future there would be a need for a number of documents:
 - a. ERIC statute
 - b. SLA between the EMBRC HQ and the Member State Node.
 - c. MOU between UK Partners until this was replaced by a further MOU / Consortium Agreement once the statutes came into force.

7. There was a continuing discussion about the Directors of the various institutions within Member State partners and whether they would have a role on the Advisory Body set up to assist the Director in day-to-day operations. It seems that any Director will be chosen by the Board itself and not by the various host countries. The UK's position was that EMBRC be open and transparent.

ACTION: NP and GG to maintain involvement in WGs 1 and 2.

UK Node MoU

8. GG had prepared a further draft of the initial MoU that was required to cover the UK partners until the signing of the ERIC statute (possibly end 2016). It was anticipated that this would be replaced by a UK Consortium Agreement to cover the next 5 year period where the financial commitment was necessary and such matters as IPR needed to be covered. Previous comments had been incorporated and GG was waiting for the Scottish Government legal team to comment. There was agreement that where decisions were required, then a majority would be sufficient, rather than unanimity, as the later was not always possible and may cause further difficulties.

ACTION: GG to chat with AM on his comments and provide a further draft to the UK Node.

9. It was looking highly unlikely that any subscription would be required during 2015 so the key matter to manage for the UK Node over the next 12 months or so was that of T&S. MJ agreed to explore if MASTS finance could help with a reconciliation of the T&S based on all UK partners maintaining records in line with their usual internal T&S rules. The intention being to equalise the overall expenditure say twice per year.

ACTION: MJ to make enquiries of MASTS finance and report back.

ACTION: MJ to forward MC a sample EU consortium agreements. DONE.

RCUK Capital Framework for investment

10. Nick reported that there was possibly an opportunity for the work of the EMBRC to be recognised by NERC and BBSRC. Other ESFRI RIs have been encouraged by NERC to seek support from multiple RCs to spread the cost of participation fees. EMBRC is considered to be the responsibility of NERC, however, if EMBRC can demonstrate real success, outputs and impact on biotechnology there is a good case for asking BBSRC for support. However, it is unlikely that this will be relevant for the next 24 months. We need demonstrable outputs and success stories before we can approach BBSRC

ACTION: NP will keep an eye on this and report any further developments or emerging opportunities.

Communications

11. EMBRC web page - it was agreed to add a short summary of the various EMBRC EIB meetings (CM to provide), details of the forthcoming MASTS seminar and the new EMBRC director to start in July.
12. The current topic Sheet remained valid and was likely to so for the next 6-12 months unless there was any major EMBRC milestones to report.

ACTION: CM to provide MC with bullet point summary for Rome meeting.

MASTS event workshop - MASTS Annual Science meeting

13. Last year's MASTS event had about 50% attendees (of 350) from outside the academic field. It was agreed to hold a 2 hour workshop on the Friday (October 2nd) with 2-3 20 minute talks followed by a discussion and to be pitched for a wide audience. .

ACTION: IJ to develop ideas for who might speak.

ACTION: MJ to pass MC advert for circulation and place link on EMBRC web page.

Identifying success of EMBRC

14. There had been INFRADEV 4 success in January. Future possible funding could come from the 2nd phase of INFRADEV 2 and the ASSEMBLE+ initiatives, both in preparation.

ACTION: All to pass MC details of any successful EMBRC associated applications

Updating MSCC

15. A paper was tabled at MSCC March meeting and this will be repeated for future MSCC meetings. Next due September 2015. It was also noted that CB was keeping the various organisations in the Plymouth area updated on EMBRC progress.

ACTION: MC submit short update to MSCC on EMBRC progress in September.

AOB

16. A few points:

a. 13th July – EMBRC EIB meeting in Edinburgh

ACTION: MC to check admin arrangements and advise Ricardo about accommodation etc.

b. Next meeting – after Lisbon meeting (15th June).

ACTION: MC to arrange Doodle Poll.

c. Noted that MASTS was part of the European Marine board and could be a conduit for advertising EMBRC.

d. STFC ERIC Workshop idea – it was agreed that this would be a good opportunity.

ACTION: Gavin to relay message to STFC.

Martyn Cox
Marine Scotland
May 2015

EMBRC Web page available on the Marine Scotland web site

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/science/EMBRC> includes a flyer that could be used to promote EMBRC.