

Minutes of 2nd European Marine Biological Resource Centre (EMBRC) UK Node meeting – 25th November 2014,

University of St Andrews – telephone conference call

Present:

In St Andrews

Ian Johnston – University of St Andrews
Colin Moffat – Marine Scotland
Mark James - MASTS
Alistair Main - University of St Andrews Knowledge Transfer Centre

By phone

Francis Neat - Marine Scotland
Colin Brownlee – Marine Biological Association
Martyn Cox - Marine Scotland
Beatrix Schlarb-Ridley – British Antarctic Survey
Paula Lister SAMS

Apologies:

Andrew Brown - Marine Scotland
Axel Miller – SAMS
Melody Clark – British Antarctic Survey

Update from EMBRC EIM Board meeting 14 November

1. IJ provided an update on the EMBRC Implementation Board (IB) meeting. It was very positive following the host country decision. The French had started to set up the office in Paris, and the key task over the next 18 months was to establish the legal entity of the ERIC and draft its associated statutes and regulations. Until this was achieved, there was unlikely to be a need for a partner country subscription as the intention was that the level of this was decided based on the Business Plan although this wasn't yet agreed between all partners.
2. The preference for the ERIC governance arrangements was heading towards a high level General Assembly (GA) being the legal representative, rather the Director who would have operational control. The GA would be similar to the IB with each partner country having two representatives (one government and one scientific). The next (lower) level of governance was a Board of the National Node Directors, with which the ERIC would interact operationally. Each node would need a Director – something for which the UK will need a selection process and candidate for in due course. The EU ERIC statutes require that the national coordinator / director cannot sit on the GA. So once the ERIC is established the UK would need a Director as well as government and scientific representatives for the GA. Currently these latter two roles were filled by Colin Moffat and Ian Johnston for the IB.
3. The EMBRC Director job was discussed. IJ had been invited to join the selection committee. The next meeting of the IB will probably be held on the 27th January (Lisbon).

ACTION: Ian to circulate the Rome meeting minutes when they are finalised.

Update on Working Groups

Business Planning Working Group (1)

4. Colin Brownlee (CB) reported that the first meeting had been held on Nov 13th. A formal note was awaited which CB would circulate but in the meantime CB would circulate the meeting PowerPoint presentation. CB outlined a few points. There were now a number of partners confirmed, having signed the MOU but also a few had fallen away. There was possibly a need to find a Baltic partner. A common agenda of aims and objectives had been discussed, as had the roles of observatories and governance structure. Actions to develop the Business Plan had included a possible 2 tier subscription rate (nothing concluded) and also the need to set the subscription based on the revised B Plan.
5. The successful French bid for hosting the ERIC included 236,000 Euro/year cash contribution and this was intended to cover core staff and running expenses. The Director position is currently being advertised (in place probably Autumn 2015) after which 3 more staff will be recruited.
6. The next meeting will be early Spring 2015. A timetable for the preparation of the B Plan was due.

Statutes and Governance Working Group (2)

7. Francis Neat (FN) reported that this group had progressed through correspondence rather than meeting and had essentially agreed that the EMBRC preparatory phase work had formed the basis so far. FN had circulated a summary report. No agreement for the group to actually meet up. There was a proposal to develop a steering committee to support the Director and carry out intercessional work between meetings of the GA. WG working towards a statute which goes in the European Journal.

Host Country Working Group (3)

8. Colin Moffat (CM) had been on group. This was now closed given that the host country has now been decided upon.
9. In summing up the next 18 months to 2 years, IJ highlighted that a clear Business Plan was necessary, with key people responsible to deliver the ERIC whilst at the same time keeping a watchful eye to capitalise on any possible funding opportunities.
10. It was noted that the UK was part of a significant clustering infrastructure EMBRIC proposal (euro 9 million). INFRADEV4 had appraised the applications and the outcome would be known in January 2015. If this was successful it would be an excellent start as it shows that funds can be levered from Europe.

Future UK Node arrangements, meetings, resourcing the UK subscription and need for UK MoU

11. There needed to be a contact point for the UK Node for use by EMBRC HQ. Nick Pade (MBA) was nominated to be the UK contact point.
12. It would be desirable to set up a budget to cover the costs of running the Node within the UK until the full operational phase came into being. Such costs are likely to be relatively modest and would include travel and subsistence to EIB and WG meetings. The administrative details should be agreed through a suitable MoU. Ian and Alistair will review the existing draft which was essentially 'an agreement to agree'. The UK Node would become fully functional once the ERIC becomes operational in around 2 years and then an additional subscription will be payable to the ERIC. The need for additional subscription during the implementation phase is still being discussed within the EIB, with Italy in particular taking the view that it is unnecessary given the "in kind" contributions from the national nodes.

ACTION: Ian and Alistair will review and send round the draft MoU document.

ACTION: Mark will work on a system which will provide a way of taking account of the T&S process.

13. The French Government would ultimately prepare the documentation for signing and in the UK it would be necessary to evaluate the final structure and satisfy ourselves that the final statute was worth signing. Progress was likely to be made through WG2 on which FN sits.

ACTION: FN to keep UK Node appraised of progress.

Other UK partners

14. EMBRC-UK is not a closed shop, but we need to move cautiously and establish our governance and better understand how the ERIC will operate before deciding whether additional members should be recruited. It was noted that in Scotland many activities were undertaken through MASTS and that this had provided reassurance to Heriot Watt University who was interested in EMBRC. One particular issue that needs resolving is that in the preparatory phase the MBA were invited to represent the other Plymouth Laboratories. The relationship now needed to be clarified.

ACTION: CB to clarify relationship with other Plymouth laboratories.

Communications

15. Nick Page names will be passed to Judith Fuchs as UK contact. There was an EMBRC Web page available on the Marine Scotland web site <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/science/EMBRC> which also included a flyer that could be used to promote EMBRC.

Identifying success of EMBRC

There is a requirement to develop metrics to evaluate the success of EMBRC and the benefits of the UK and this should be included in the MoU covering the UK node.

Updating MSCC - update for March 2015 meeting

16. There would be a need to update MSCC in a regular way. There should be a number of issues which we can provide an update on.

ACTION: MC to contact IJ in late January to prepare 1 page paper to submit to MSCC on EMBRC progress.

AOB

17. A number of points during AOB:

- a. We want to ensure that at least one representative from each UK Node member has some involvement in EMBRC committees and WGs.
- b. MC will prepare minutes. These will be circulated and eventually put on the EMBRC UK Node web page.
- c. Next meeting will be the first half of February 2015 (post 27 Jan IB meeting).
ACTION: Doodle Poll to be circulated.
- d. NERC National Capability meeting there was a questionnaire from the European Marine Board on UK infrastructure. There has been discussion between MASTS and NOC. A single UK submission was submitted to the Marine Board on 24 Nov 2014.

Martyn Cox
Marine Scotland
December 2014