

**Minutes of 17th European Marine Biological Resource Centre (EMBRC) UK
Node meeting – 1st October 2018 – at Marine Biological Association, Plymouth**

Present:

Nick Owens, SAMS (Chair)
Ian Davies – Marine Scotland (Vice
chair)
Martyn Cox - Marine Scotland
Alistair Main – University of St
Andrews
Melody Clark – British Antarctic Survey
(BAS)

Beatrix Schlarb-Ridley – BAS
Anuschka Miller – SAMS (Comms
Group chair)
Claire Gachon - SAMS
Willie Wilson - Marine Biological
Association (MBA)
Heidi Tillin - MBA

Apologies:

David Paterson - University of St
Andrews / MASTS
Gavin Grewar - Marine Scotland
Iveta Matejusova - Marine Scotland

Axel Miller – SAMS
Vincent Janik – University of St
Andrews
Jon Parr - MBA

1. Welcome and Introductions

1. Nick, chairing his first meeting of the UK Node welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

2. Minutes and review actions of 16th meeting

2. Minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting. The Actions were all completed or would be covered as part of the agenda, except for a few actions carried forward:

ACTION 14.14: JP to follow up matter with Nick Pade to make MEDIN DAC connections. To keep on future agenda. Nothing to report at this meeting but to keep on future agenda. Noted to carry forward.

ACTION 15.1: *External funding and resources* - map of funding opportunities – DP raised at General Assembly meeting and reported that funding map still not been published. Agreed to keep on agenda for future.

New ACTION: 17.1: MC to contact Paris HQ to ask about publication.

ACTION 15.13: email DMP with names of potential contributors [for INFRADEV proposal]. It was noted that both SAMS and MBA would be contributing to the work package on 'sustainability and engaging with regional funding'. The deadline for the proposal was not until mid-2019. There hadn't been any other work packages identified for involvement. It was noted that any Node partner could attend preparation meetings on behalf of the whole Node (as happened for the ASSEMBLE+ application) but at this stage, as the Node was not a legal entity, the Node could not be an application partner itself to receive funding. Using MAST-Scotland as an umbrella body for the Node could be explored for this if necessary.

New ACTION: 17.2: Nick Owens to check SAMS involvement with Axel.

Node email address – it was agreed in principle to develop a UK Node email address such as info@embrc.uk for use as a general contact on our web site with the Comms Group to oversee managing of the address.

ACTION 16.8: Agreed will be taken forward when a Liaison Officer in place.

Plymouth University Dive Centre - Melody had been in contact about working with EMBRC. It was agreed that MBA would follow this up.

ACTION 16.9: Matt F to talk to PUDC.

It was also noted that the Plymouth University electron microscopy was associated with the MBA as part of an ASSEMBLE+ application.

New ACTION: 17.3 WW to contact Plymouth University to check nature of association with MBA for applications and involvement with EMBRC.

3. It was noted that clause 3.7.3. of the Consortium Agreement allowed for new partners into the UK Node with unanimous agreement of the partners. In a discussion about letters of support for applications related to EMBRC, Nick agreed that he'd be happy, as chair, to provide such letters on behalf of the UK Node.

ACTION 17.4: M Cox to arrange upload of minutes of 16th meeting to web site.

3. General Assembly matters update

4. It was noted that there hadn't been a General Assembly meeting since the last Node meeting: the next was due on November 20th. There hadn't been any news yet of the outcome of the interviews (last week) for the post of the Paris based Executive Director: there had been a need to re-appoint following the move from application / implementation phase to operational phase. The current executive director was due to remain in post until end March 2019 with any possible replacement starting in January to allow a handover period. It was not known what other posts might be changing at the Paris HQ.
5. Alistair Main reported on the first meeting of a new Working Group, looking at the EMBRC Rules of Operation (RoO), that was held at end September. Present were Ilaria Nardello (EMBRC), Melindy Matthews (SU PMC), Alistair Main (USTAN), Tim Verstaeten UGENT. David Paterson (EMBRC chair) and Simon Berkowicz (HUJI) participated by Skype.
6. It is agreed by all EMBRC ERIC node countries that the current draft of the EMBRC Rules of Operation is an extremely long and unwieldy document with various shortcomings. The IPR clause is 11 pages or so.
7. The new WG reviewed clauses 1 – 3 and discussed the basis of a framework for the new IPR clause 14. It was agreed that significant progress had been made towards the first re-draft of the RoO and a follow up meeting of the working group was to be arranged for the end of October.
8. The next revised/ reworked draft of the RoO will be circulated to the contracts people in each of the UK node member organisations. As appropriate, USTAN will seek professional legal advice to assist with iteration review.

9. It was agreed that all partners would wish to closely scrutinise the RoO but recognised that with all country nodes doing likewise there would have to be room for compromise.

ACTION 17.5: AM to circulate further draft when available, for comment from the Node.

ACTION 17.6: GG to alert SGLD about possible need (at short notice) to consider draft Rules of Operation.

10. Following Nick Owens election as UK Node chair last meeting, the EMBRC Paris HQ had been informed of the UK's intention that Nick would attend the GA with Ian. The EMBRC statutes are silent on backfilling country representation and the HQ interpretation was not to backfill. It seemed that some ERICs backfill whereas others did not. Until there was further clarification, Ian or Nick would attend subject to availability.

4. Committee of Nodes (CoN) update

11. The formal mechanism being implemented to provide updates from the CoN to the General Assembly would be first used for the next GA, in November. In the meantime Axel had passed the email from Paris HQ that showed that EMBRC was recommended as Landmark status in the new ESFRI Road Map published in September <http://roadmap2018.esfri.eu/>.
12. It was agreed to discuss further the role of the CoN representative once there was a UK Liaison Officer in place.

5. Liaison Officer

13. Previously it had been agreed that there was a need for a Liaison Officer to act on behalf of all Node partners and for it to be a proactive role. Following the invitation at the last meeting for partners to consider what resource might be available it was reported that:
 - a. BAS could possibly provide a resource but only at 1 day per week: it had been recognised we'd probably need more.
 - b. SAMS did not have any capacity at this stage.
 - c. MBA could possibly, subject to confirmation, make someone available for 2 days per week.
 - d. MS could offer an as yet unnamed person to undertake the role. It had the advantage of not including overheads on costs and for the time being MS would not charge the UK Node partners although would appreciate travel T&S being shared as for other formal EMBRC business.
14. It was agreed to accept MS' offer and the sharing of T&S was agreed.
15. Contact points for the Liaison Officer would be:
 - a. BAS – Melody
 - b. SAMS – Axel and Clare
 - c. MBA – Heidi Tillin and Paul Lonsdale
 - d. SOI – David Paterson

ACTION 17.7: Ian to identify individual within MS and share CV around Node.

ACTION 17.8: MC to tidy up job description which was agreed as suitable subject to comments made after last meeting and re-circulate to the Node.

ACTION 17.9: MC to contact UKRI about possible funding. Follow up of previous action 16.2.

6. UK MoU / Consortium Agreement

16. Following the last meeting revisions were made to the UK MoU / Consortium Agreement based on the paper circulated and a near final text agreed. One phrase remained to be confirmed: the date of the letter of authorisation from UK Government to Scottish Government. Martyn to add this date once confirmed. With all happy the Agreement was signed by BAS, MBA, SAMS and University of St Andrews. Alistair took the document to be signed by MAST-Scotland. Marine Scotland would be last to sign and formal copies then be circulated by Martyn. As previously agreed. The Agreement would be re-visited once the Rules of Operation had been finalised to see if any amendment was necessary.

ACTION 17.10: AM to arrange signature by MAST-S and return documents to MC.

ACTION 17.11: MC to finalise date of BEIS letter, arrange signature by Marine Scotland and circulate final copies to Node partners.

7. Communications Group

17. Anuschka reported on the progress of the Comms Group to date. The EMBRC central promotional material had been accessed. The content of the UK Node website could evolve over time but it needed to show what EMBRC was about; why the UK was a member; what facilities the UK offered and what did we want to access from others; why it was important from a UK point of view and what projects we were involved in. There may be a case to add a *Liaison Officer blog* in due course. Also very useful to demonstrate how EMBRC work linked to the [UK Industrial Strategy](#) (published) and UK Marine Science Strategy (due soon). It was recognised that we didn't have a lot of resource to make changes so had to keep in mind a relatively low maintenance approach to the site.

18. It was noted that the EMBRC HQ had yet to appoint a Comms Officer and make many changes to its web site. In the meantime, the [EMBRC France](#) web site was a useful model.

19. For the corporate PowerPoint presentation it was recognised that this needed to be high level messages about EMBRC, costs / benefits, nature of work and the infrastructure that wouldn't essentially change very often. Individual partners could add their own perspectives anyway so it cover the material that applied to all.

20. The Comms Group was due to meet again in October.

ACTION 17.12: Comms Group to report back to next Node meeting.

8. BEIS ERIC Update

21. Oliver Payne (BEIS policy lead for Research Infrastructures) phoned the meeting and gave an update on UK involvement in ERICs generally. Ollie made a number of introductory points:
- a. A team of 8 had oversight of about 750 Research Infrastructures (RIs) in which there was UK investment. OP was particularly focusing on European RIs and the impact of Brexit on the RI landscape generally, not just EMBRC.
 - b. ERIC RIs were set up under a European regulation and were independent of the Commission. Any country could be a member.
 - c. The UK was a member of 11 ERICs; hosted two; observer at one; and there were others it was considering joining.
 - d. The relationship with ERICs may / may not change when the UK leaves the EU. The UK would have to accept certain ERIC rules around the role of the ECJ and VAT, for example, which were the subject of much broader negotiation with the EU than the context of ERICs.
 - e. The UK was clear that it wanted a science accord with the EU as there was mutual benefit to this. How Brexit would have an impact on ERIC operation was not yet clear but ERICs were happy for the UK to remain involved.
22. In discussion it was said that Ollie's outline was welcome news but what wasn't clear was the level of commitment we could give to EMBRC UK, such as employing a Liaison Officer, given the uncertainty. Ollie confirmed that our relationship with the ERIC shouldn't change immediately and it was prudent to undertake some planning and establish, for example, how important it was for the UK to remain part of a particular ERIC, e.g. EMBRC, given a preference for the UK to remain part of ERICs generally. Four possible scenarios had been identified:
- a. UK to remain a member of EMBRC and be associated with the next framework programme (Horizon Europe)
 - b. UK to be a 3rd country member but not associated to Horizon Europe
 - c. UK to make a separate arrangement and Agreement with EMBRC and have benefits of being a member
 - d. The UK is not a member of EMBRC and has to make other arrangements for marine biology.
23. It was clear that partners considered being a full member of EMBRC was very important for building partnerships / collaborations and unlocking the necessary investment. Being part of EMBRC had already brought significant financial benefits to the UK. It was far from clear how a replacement mechanism (4th option) would give staff resource and capital investment but BEIS was keen to establish what the marine biological community would need. It was agreed that Ollie would share with the Node, via Ian and Martyn, some key questions (e.g. on views for a potentially larger subscription) so that BEIS could better understand the benefits of EMBRC and any key issues.
24. Ollie confirmed that there wouldn't be any immediate effect for EMBRC on EU exit day as the statutes covered the operation of the ERIC but the terms of the UK's withdrawal would dictate the situation post the transitional period. The UK was clear that it wanted a Science and Innovation Accord and to be associated

with the next framework. An agreement at the October Council should provide more clarity as to the nature of the future arrangements.

ACTION 17.13: OP to maintain dialogue with ID and MC for questions to ask Node partners and for briefing ahead of next GA meeting in November in light of the outcome of October Council meeting.

ACTION 17.14: MC to share table of benefits with BEIS.

9. AOB

- a. EMBRC-UK metadata and biobank database – See Action 14.14 – agreed to keep on agenda. Nothing to discuss at this meeting but agreed to keep on agenda. It was noted that best practice guidelines were in development.
- b. Monetary / non-monetary benefits of EMBRC membership – it was agreed to update this table as appropriate given its usefulness in demonstrating the benefits of EMBRC working.

ACTION 17.15: ALL to check table and update as necessary.

- c. MBA and SAHFOS - WW reported that SAHFOS and MBA had formally merged. It was agreed that how to include the SAHFOS continuous Plankton recorder (CPR) data within EMBRC would be explored.

ACTION 17.16: GG to check statutes as to how to incorporate new UK infrastructure.

- a. It was noted that without the generic email address for the UK Node currently there was the possibility that some opportunities might be being missed. It was important that we could use it as soon as possible. See **ACTION 16.8** above.

10. Date of Next Meeting

25. The next meeting was arranged as a telephone conf call, on 16th November, ahead of the next General Assembly due on 20th November.

11. MBA Tour

26. After the meeting a tour of the MBA facilities was undertaken to see:

- a. Live cell imaging facilities
- b. Cell and molecular labs
- c. Algal culture collection
- d. Library
- e. Seawater hall and aquaria
- f. RV Sepia

Martyn Cox
Marine Scotland
October 2018

EMBRC Web page <https://embrc.uk/>