

**Minutes of 19<sup>th</sup> European Marine Biological Resource Centre (EMBRC) UK  
Node meeting – 15<sup>th</sup> April 2019 – telephone conference call**

**Present:**

Nick Owens (NO), Scottish Association  
for Marine Science (SAMS) (Chair)  
Ian Davies (ID) – Marine Scotland  
(MS) (Vice chair)  
Martyn Cox (MCx) - MS  
Alistair Main (AIM)– University of St  
Andrews (USTAN)  
Heidi Tillin (HT) - Marine Biological  
Association (MBA)  
Gavin Grewar (GG) - MS

Vincent Janik (VJ) – USTAN  
Beatrix Schlarb-Ridley (BSR) – British  
Antarctic Survey (BAS)  
Anuschka Miller (AnM)– SAMS  
(Comms Group chair)  
David Paterson (DP) - USTAN /  
MASTS  
Andronikos Kafas (AK) – MS  
Ollie Payne (OP) - BEIS Brexit item  
only

**Apologies:**

Willie Wilson (WW) - MBA  
Jon Parr (JP) – MBA  
Melody Clark (MCK) - BAS

Claire Gachon (CG) - SAMS  
Axel Miller (AxM) – SAMS  
Iveta Matejusova (IM) - MS

**Welcome and Introductions**

1. Nick welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Minutes and review actions of 18<sup>th</sup> 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: 17.1:** *External funding and resources* - map of funding opportunities – this had been raised at November's General Assembly. DP reported that a document was to be prepared in due course.

**ACTION 16.8:** Agreed [*Node email address* [info@embrc.uk](mailto:info@embrc.uk)] This was now set up. It was agreed that AK should start using subject to some more testing. AK would have details added to EMBRC EU web site.

**New ACTION 19.01:** AK to test new email address and have text added to EMBRC EU web site.

**ACTION 16.9:** Matt F to talk to *Plymouth University Dive Centre* - nothing to report at this meeting.

**New ACTION 19.02:** HT to speak to Matt about this.

**ACTION: 17.3:** WW to contact Plymouth University to check nature of association with MBA for applications and involvement with EMBRC. AK now appraised of situation following meeting with various Node members.

**ACTION 17.9:** MC to contact UKRI about possible funding. Follow up of previous action 16.2. Note that Norwegian UKRI equivalent was possibly to be involved in the

EMBRC scientific advisory board. Agreed for MCx and AK to discuss before approaching UKRI.

**ACTION 17.16:** GG to check statutes as to how to incorporate new UK infrastructure. And **ACTION 18.03:** New Liaison Officer to make enquiries on how to ensure new infrastructure (i.e. increasing the UK offer) is included. It was noted that

- New country to join EMBRC required GA approval. It was noted that Sweden was showing interest in joining EMBRC.
- New UK partners to join UK Node was mainly a decision for the UK Node which would require changes to the Consortium Agreement. EMBRC-HQ would need to understand the rationale for the new member.
- New service offerings by existing UK Node partners was a strategic decision for each partner and the Node. AK has instigated a review of each partner's offering.

**ACTION 19.03:** MCx to arrange upload of minutes of last meeting to web site.

### **November General Assembly matters update**

3. ID and DP had attended the General Assembly meeting in November (Ghent). ID reported that:

- a. An initial closed session discussed the HQ recruitment process including the appointment of a new executive director who was now in post.
- b. There were presentations on the establishment of the ERIC; and a useful discussion about the 2019 work programme which was now to link the various admin activities with HQ projects and the main science projects. The budget still required more work before it was completed.
- c. A report was made on the work of the Committee of the Nodes. Noted that AK will attend CoN for the UK in future, thanks to AxM for doing this to date.
- d. A proposal for a scientific advisory board to assist the CoN was discussed. CoN has been asked to produce proposals for membership of this.
- e. A discussion on the statutes covered modification of them to cover new and departing members. A new member subscription would ensure that there was more funding available to the HQ.
- f. Noted that the next GA due to be in St Andrews in May 2019.
- g. The Rules of Operation (RoO) had been discussed. AIM was able to update the Node further on this:
  - i. Following a two day meeting in November there had been further consolidation work on the RoO with a further draft circulated in March on which AIM had made comments on behalf of the Node. The IPR and ethics section still needed much work: the draft was very much a work-in-progress.
  - ii. There was a further meeting due in June. It was agreed that the draft was not ready to send to Node member legal teams. A version that had been cleared by the Sorbonne Uni legal adviser was awaited before doing that.

**ACTION 19.04:** AIM to circulate to the Node the draft with his comments.

- h. DP added that the GA had a detailed discussion about the budget, particularly about delegated levels to the HQ, with further discussion expected in May.

### **Liaison Officer Update**

4. Since January 2019, LO has been active sorting out outstanding administrative issues (EMBRC-UK mailbox, time recording, expenses, reviewing important documents), arranging site visits with all UK partners, contributing to funding proposals, and representing the UK-Node at the Committee of Nodes meeting and EuroMarine GA.
  
5. **EMBRC-UK Node site visits:** LO visited all UK partners (apart from SAMS due to travel disruption). Key messages:
  - a. *UK service offering* – A review exercise was needed to update the UK service offering. There were partners with incorrect/incomplete presentation of their offering. Soon-to-be-adopted “Rules of Operation” (RoO) will require further categorisations of services in terms of access modes, pricing policy, conditions of access, user access process, and user agreements. LO to use this review exercise as an opportunity to prepare the node for adopting the RoO in the future.
  - b. *Success stories* – Most partners raised the importance of documenting impact out of EMBRC-UK activities (both financial and non-tangible). LO invited partners to share “success stories”, short articles demonstrating the positive impact of EMBRC in establishing research collaborations, expanding partnerships, attracting funding, and achieving excellence.
  - c. *Websites* – Most UK partners expressed general dissatisfaction with the current status of both UK-node and HQ websites. The UK node website was incomplete with only introductory information and didn’t present services. The HQ website was difficult to navigate and access portal was incomplete. Efforts should focus on updating both websites once the review of the UK service offering was complete.
  
6. **EMERGE bid:** The “EMBRC-ERIC From Implementation to Long-Term Sustainability and Global Reach” (EMERGE) proposal was submitted to the “H2020 INFRADEV III 2019” call. It is a ca. €5M project proposal with 24 partners (4 of which are in the UK; Marine Scotland, MBA, SAMS, and Highlands and Islands Enterprise; collective UK budget of ca. €485k). It is a 3-year long project expected to start in Jan-2020. The bid will provide resources to address challenges faced by EMBRC and enable the ERIC to realise its full potential. EMERGE comprises a set of targeted actions that represent a defining step in the evolution of EMBRC-ERIC into an optimized, sustainable, world-class distributed infrastructure that helps diverse international user communities to respond to major challenges in science, industry and society. The integrated work program aims to: (1) consolidate EMBRC capacities, foster corporate culture, and harmonize RI-wide operational procedures and quality management; (2) build market trust in EMBRC, engaging specifically with the commercial sector; (3) position EMBRC in the European and international landscape of related infrastructures and global research initiatives; and (4) further embed EMBRC in regional, national and pan-European innovation ecosystems to unleash the full potential of the blue bio-economy.

7. **CoN meeting:** LO attended the 12<sup>th</sup> EMBRC Committee of Nodes (CoN) meeting. A separate note was shared in advance in the meeting. Provided separately.
  
8. **HQ update:** EMBRC HQ Update N.14, covering the period (15 November 2018 – 15 February 2019) is shared separately. Highlights: UK member contribution payments were received for 2018. EMBRC Rules of operations are being reworked. Exec Director (Nicolas Pade), Scientific officer (Sidonie Gras), and Admin assistant (Katharine Worley) were all successfully recruited. Comms officer still to be recruited. EMERGE bid was successfully submitted. Next EMBRC-ERIC General Assembly will take place on 13-14/5 in St. Andrews
  
9. **Risks** – Following the various engagements, the LO has identified a number of possible risks for the UK node:
  - d. Immensely complex landscape of research infrastructure with potentially competing initiatives e.g. JERICO and Danubius.
  - e. Significant differences between maturity levels (and resulting structures) of EMBRC Nodes e.g. France is very mature; UK and Norway not so much).
  - f. “Marine genomics” theme dominates discussions in terms of the shaping of the composition of the Scientific and Innovation Advisory Board and the principles for developing an EMBRC Scientific Strategy. This is often to the expense of other topics.
  - g. Need to identify UK node “champions” to promote UK interests on “marine genomics”.
  - h. Fundamental/existential sticking point on EMBRC role and drivers of engagement “advancement of science and efficient use of underutilised labs” vs. “attracting funding/collaborations and mechanism to upgrade infrastructure”.
  - i. Most nodes are serious about their annual financial and human resource commitments to EMBRC. Belgium and France have between 5 and 8 FTEs to run their node.
  
10. **Key upcoming events:**
  - j. 13-14/05/2019 - EMBRC-ERIC GA meeting, St. Andrews
  - k. 15/05/2019 - Next EMBRC-HQ update, Online
  - l. 4-5/07/2019 - 13th EMBRC Committee of Nodes meeting, Naples
  - m. Aug 2019 - UK node meeting, TC
  - n. Sep 2019 – 14<sup>th</sup> EMBRC Committee of Nodes meeting, TBC
  - o. Oct 2019 – UK node meeting, Aberdeen
  - p. Nov 2019 - EMBRC-ERIC GA meeting, TBC

#### **11. Actions 19.05:**

- a) AK to contact SAMS colleagues and arrange site visit in May/June 2019.
- b) AK to liaise with UK partners and compile an updated service offering for the UK node, reflecting on RoO categorisations before the next UK-Node meeting.

- c) AK to liaise with UK partners and compile list of UK-node “success stories” before the next Comms sub-group meeting. To share with the Comms sub-group for dissemination at UK-node/HQ websites.
- d) AK to update UK/HQ websites with the generic mailbox and migrate communications via [info@embrc.uk](mailto:info@embrc.uk) as soon as practically feasible.
- e) AK to join the next Comms sub-group meeting organised by Anushka.
- f) AK to update UK Node on the outcome of EMERGE bid as soon as information becomes available. Expected in June/July 2019.
- g) AK to draft a position statement for the UK node, and finalise with all UK partners before the next CoN meeting (4-5/07/2019).
- h) AK to liaise with BAS, MBA, and SAMS to identify “marine genomics” champions, as information from HQ become available.

### **Communications Group**

12. AnM reported on that the work of the Group was awaiting the appointment of the HQ Communications Manager to ensure integration with their work. In the meantime, the emphasis had been on re-tweeting and re-posting of work being carried out by partners to their networks as well as creating content for the HQ web site although this wasn't uploaded yet. AK had been using the earlier poster created by the Group and would be invited to join the Group. Another meeting would be arranged soon by which time it was hoped there may be some more clarity and certainty from HQ over the general direction of EMBRC.

**ACTION 19.06:** AnM to arrange another meeting of the Comms Group.

### **Brexit update**

13. OP joined the call and gave an update on the UK Minister's recent announcement that ensured that all UK ERICs, including EMBRC, could continue to meet ERIC membership requirements even in the event of a no-deal Brexit. Two statutory instruments had been laid and passed that allowed UK organisations to remain involved in ERICs, accepted the role of the ECJ for ERIC arbitration and implemented the necessary VAT procedures. BEIS would continue to work closely on any broader ERIC issues that may have an impact on EMBRC directly or indirectly. This was good news for EMBRC. It was confirmed that Node partners could talk openly about the UK's position.

14. NO mentioned that SAMS had experienced issues with some European related programmes and noted that certain UK government funding was on hold whilst Brexit uncertainties were sorted out: Brexit was having consequences.

### **UK Node Consortium Agreement (CA)**

13. It was previously agreed to take a phased approach with a new CA. A new CA had been signed at the 1st October meeting. A second phase could then be taken forward to reflect the agreed Rules of Operation, once agreed by EMBRC GA. As the RoO were still awaited the current CA would left in place for now, noting that it states the need to update by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019 (see clause 5.1 pasted below for information).

**ACTION 19.07:** to check at each meeting the position re EMBRC RoO and need for updating the CA.

5.1 This Agreement is effective as of 1st October 2018, notwithstanding the date of the final signature of this Agreement and will remain in force until all of the members of the UK Node enter into a consortium agreement setting out the UK Node's requirements in respect of EMBRC-ERIC, or such other date as the Participants may unanimously agree in writing, having regard to the implementation phase of the EMBRC-ERIC, and no later than 31st December 2019.

### **AOB**

a. T&S Reconciliation – DP to check with MASTS office re progress of latest reconciliation.

**ACTION 19.08:** DP to check with MASTS office

b. EMBRC-UK metadata and biobank database – See Action 14.14 – agreed to keep on agenda. Nothing to discuss at this meeting. Best practice guidelines were in development.

**ACTION 19.09:** HT to speak to JP about this.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

12. it was agreed to plan two further meetings:

- a. end August / early September – tele conf call
- b. Ahead of autumn General Assembly a face-to-face meeting in Aberdeen. Doodle Poll to be arranged

**ACTION 19.10:** MC to arrange Doodle Polls.

Martyn Cox  
Marine Scotland  
April 2019