



NERC EXPERT SCIENTIFIC MOORINGS ASSESSMENT GROUP

Terms of Reference

Background

As part of its investment in marine science, NERC invests in a National Marine Equipment Pool (NMEP), which is managed by National Marine Facilities – NMF. Deployment and usage of items within the NMEP is co-ordinated by NMF and NERC Marine Planning, Swindon Office. The purpose of the pool is to make available (where possible) centrally funded equipment for the use of sea-going scientists.

NERC needs to ensure that the best service is available for all prospective users of the NMEP. Amongst many things, the NMEP provides a range of moorings equipment and expertise, which is in high demand. NERC mooring operations are currently estimated to be in the region of £20M, and this is the focus for the NERC Expert Scientific Moorings Assessment Group (NESMAG).

Purpose

The primary purpose of the group is to assist NERC with the review and assessment of applications received from Principal Scientists which request the use of mooring equipment from the NMEP.

This will principally take the form of:

- Assess the level of risk associated with the mooring equipment deployment, and make recommendations on whether the NMEP is the correct route for the application for mooring equipment provision.
- Assess whether all precautions have been taken which will endeavour to retrieve the moorings in a timely fashion, in order to return them to the pool for future use.
- Advise applicants of additional/alternative steps for either improving their determined level of risk associated with their mooring equipment deployment, or advise on alternative options to the NMEP.

This approach allows NERC to determine the risk associated with mooring activities in the context of provision of equipment from the NMEP. There will be no peer review of the science.

Operation

The Group will rely heavily on documentation already produced by NERC and NMF, which consists of:

NERC Moorings Policy
Risk Management Document
Risk Management Form
Review Group Moorings Assessment Form

Mooring Design Best Practice Document

Remit

The remit of the NERC Expert Scientific Moorings Assessment Group is to:

- Review and comment on the risk level and associated controls recommended by NMF.
- Review and comment on the NMF Impact Assessment and make recommendations to NERC on the proposed use of NMEP equipment.

Membership Constraints

NERC will place a 'call for reviewers', asking for self-nominations from the UK scientific and technical user community to join the Group. Members will then be appointed to the Group by NERC, based on the need for key expertise.

The Group will be a 'virtual' group, in that it will not be necessary for the group to formally meet at defined intervals. However, members are encouraged to make contact with each other whenever they desire. Correspondence with NERC and NMF will primarily be by email or telephone.

The identities of the Group will be published on the NERC website, and comments made by reviewers may be made available to Principal Scientist applicants, however, they will not be attributable to any one person.

Members will be invited to serve for an initial term of 3 years, with possible extension.

Membership Criteria

The final choice of Group membership will be made by NERC and will be based on the following criteria (not in priority order):

- balance of representation across academic communities
- balance of relevant expertise
- cross-community knowledge
- track record

NERC reserves the right to appoint members of the Group to achieve the balance required.