

Questions and answers from the UKSOOP Webinar 28/01/2022

Below is a list of questions asked during the UKSOOP webinar with answers from NERC and NOC. Many of these were addressed in the webinar and are included below along with others we received before, during and after the webinar. Rather than list each question, we have gathered all the answers under themes to cover the broad range of topics raised.

Theme 1: About the Project

NERC is committed to the delivery of the ambitious strategic priorities of the UK environmental science agenda. To maintain the UK's position as a science leader within specific and established resources, NERC must ensure public money is used in a way that achieves best value and optimum results.

As part of its regular reviews, NERC seeks to ensure that it is investing in capabilities that are fit for future. NERC has asked NOC to lead with a piece of work on identifying the ocean observations that are most important to the UK as a nation and within the context of an international effort.

Theme 2: Scope of Observations

There were some questions relating to which observations would be included in the consultation. The aim is that the final report will capture narratives on the full range of *sustained* observations but that the report will focus on observations that fall into the NERC remit, either currently or for potential future inclusion.

Atmospheric observations – these alone are seen to come under some of the atmospheric science budgets.

Satellite observations - will not be included.

Polar and ice - polar priorities are part of the polar programme run by BAS which is funded separately. Similarly, if there are sustained sea ice observations, we would be interested to include them in a review of existing activities. If there are ideas for new sustained observations that are currently unfunded, the opportunity exists in the survey to suggest these.

This consultation covers the coastal zone, the sea surface and exchange with the atmosphere at the sea surface, the full-depth water column, and the seafloor. It does not cover geophysical processes below the seafloor.

Theme 3: Consultation Process

There were questions relating to the survey, stakeholder input and evidence gathering.

Webinar – 108 people joined the introductory webinar from UK organisations.

Survey – the survey contains a list of observations and asks for your opinions on them. However, there is the ability to skip some of these sections. So you can choose to only answer the questions on the platform you know, understand or have an opinion on, and skip the ones you don't.

Anyone in the world can fill in the survey – it is completely open. The aim is that anyone can have a say. It has only been promoted within the science community, as the questions are quite niche, but is not restricted to that community.

If multiple members of one organisation have completed the survey, rather than completing it as an organisation, metrics will be used to highlight any areas of incidental bias due to, for example, multiple individuals from a single organisation giving the same responses. The panel will receive this information.

We are aware that some sustained observations add value beyond National Capability, by attracting other scientific studies and funding. The survey includes the ability to rate observations on their wider benefits beyond the direct purpose of the funding.

There is a web page that leads to the consultation survey here: ocean-observations.uk

Stakeholder input – we are keen for the process to be fair and not be in a position where some stakeholders have had more of a voice than others. Therefore, we are restricting stakeholder one to one meetings to parties running current observations. The purpose is for them to describe the observation for the report and discuss its benefits.

In addition, members of the project are promoting the survey at existing meetings of the marine science community to ensure as much engagement and input as possible. This may include UK meetings like the Challenger Society or the MSCC and international meetings like POGO or GOOS.

Evidence – we have provided a dedicated email for people to submit evidence. However, please be mindful of the panel's time. We have already gathered the strategies relating to ocean observations from other countries as well as high profile published evidence.

Theme 4: The Panel

We received some questions around the make-up of the panel and what they will do with the evidence.

We are in the process of finalising the Panel, which is a broad mix of UK and international experts. The proposed membership was approved by NERC and does not include anyone running any of the existing funding observations. Members of the project team may be asked in for some of the meeting to take questions on the process or any misunderstanding of the report. There will also be notetakers summarising the workshop. We will publish Terms of Reference in due course once they are agreed by NERC.

The aim is that everyone inputs at the consultation stage, as they would a normal NERC or government consultation, so we have as much as possible to inform the panel. As well as a summary of the survey results, the panel will receive feedback from stakeholder meetings and interviews, and written evidence such as strategies and papers. They will see the first half of the draft report which outlines context, the UK landscape and existing observations. This will all be sent to them prior to the workshop to give ample time to read and digest. The Panel will meet for a day to discuss the evidence and how the observations contribute to UK and international efforts. The outcomes of their discussions, their thoughts and their recommendations will form the second part of the report.

Theme 5: Outputs and Outcomes

The main output will be a report written by the project team which summarises the broad range of observations, evidence from the consultation, and recommendations from the panel as to what the UK priorities might be. The intention is to have this report peer reviewed and published.

The report will be a strand of evidence and information, alongside other sources, that will inform NERC's future funding decisions. It's important to note that this report is expected to have a longer shelf life that just the next round of funding. From time to time, there will be other funding calls and



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opportunities that may be a good fit for these observations. Therefore, this will be a document that NERC can draw from on an ongoing basis.

This consultation is independent of the spending review. Funding is regularly reviewed and we would not expect it to remain static. NERC wants to make best use of public money and make sure it invests in observations that support present and future strategic science priorities.