



## Questions from the UKRI Sustainable Management of UK Marine Resources (SMMR) Stakeholder-Researcher Workshop

Held online on Tuesday 31st March

### **Introduction**

For this funding call, the UK's marine environment is defined as the broad marine habitat that covers all UK areas that are either permanently immersed in seawater or are inundated with saline water at some stage in the tidal cycle. This includes estuaries, beaches, coasts and all subtidal habitats out to the 200 nautical mile limit of the UK's marine area (within the UK's Exclusive Economic Zone) and the seabed and subsoil in the area of the continental shelf beyond the Exclusive Economic Zone over which the UK exercises jurisdiction (i.e. the geographic scope as defined in the UK Marine Strategy, which excludes the UK Overseas Territories<sup>1</sup>).

### **FUNDING**

#### **Q 1 – Will there be an Expression of Interest Round?**

A – Due to the current situation with Covid-19, we intend to extend the period of time that the Call for Proposals is open and include a light-touch 'Notification of Intent' to submit stage\*. The purpose of the 'Notification of Intent' is to help us manage the commissioning process in the most effective way possible. It will help us have a better estimate of the number of submissions, identify thematic areas and enable the Champions to facilitate interdisciplinary and stakeholder connections. The 'Notification of Intent' will not be assessed. Further information will be provided in the Call for Proposals.

(\*Please note this has changed since the 31<sup>st</sup> March webinar).

#### **Q 2 - It was highlighted that funding is available at 80% FEC. This might prevent researchers in some eligible organisations from being fully engaged in projects. Is there flexibility on this?**

A – No, this is in line with UKRI's standard policies.

#### **Q 3 - Could the funding available be used for projects that are already in place and running?**

A – Proposed projects may build on previously completed projects, but ultimately the proposed project must demonstrate how it meets the requirements and objectives of the programme. Funding will not be provided to simply extend existing projects.

#### **Q 4 - Can proposed projects be led by universities or research centres from outside the UK?**

A – No, individuals from non-UK organisations are not eligible to apply as PIs or Co-Is on proposals. If the expertise of a non-UK individual/organisation is required and is not available in the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://moat.cefas.co.uk/introduction-to-uk-marine-strategy/>



UK, their involvement can be included via a sub-contract, but note scope of call relates to UK's marine environment. Please note that although this programme is being jointly delivered by NERC and ESRC on behalf of UKRI, it is NERC eligibility rules that apply for this call. See FAQ Q6.

**Q 5 – How many projects will the SMMR programme fund in this round?**

A – UKRI expects to fund 6 projects.

**Q 6 – Can international partners and funding streams be used in combination with the SMMR funds to boost and expand scope and impact of the work?**

A - Provided the project is focused on the delivery of solutions to policy challenges in the UK marine environment, there is no barrier to including additional funding streams (see FAQ Q4).

**Q 7 - Can more detail be given about the 2nd tranche of funding?**

A – Once funded projects are underway, it is anticipated that there will be some additional funding available to supplement and extend projects by up to a further 12 months (i.e. extending projects from 36 to 48-months). It is anticipated that there will be a competitive opportunity for those projects that pass the mid-term review to bid for these additional funds, where the extension of projects will ensure the programme's delivery of enhanced or more impactful outcomes. Further information will be provided to successful grant holders nearer the time.

**Q 8 - Defra Chief Scientist said he wants Natural England to be involved where relevant. Does this mean Natural England can lead or partner bids?**

A – Natural England is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) and is not eligible to lead or apply as a co-investigator on bids. Natural England may be a project partner, which is defined as an organisation contributing to the project either in cash or in kind.

**Q 9 - Can organisations like CEFAS lead projects or just be partners?**

A – Yes, organisations like CEFAS, which are Public Sector Research Enterprises (PSREs) that also have Independent Research Organisation (IRO) status, can lead or be a co-investigator on bids. It is the responsibility of all PSREs to ensure that they are registered as IROs and if in any doubt they should contact Avril Allman of NERC ([avril.allman@nerc.ukri.org](mailto:avril.allman@nerc.ukri.org)) to discuss their application as soon as possible.

**Q 10 – Can an organisation be involved in more than 2 proposals (e.g. as a subcontractor or member of a Steering Group)?**

A – There is no limit to the number of proposals an organisation can be involved in. The only limit is that an individual researcher can only be an Investigator on up to two proposals, and can only lead one as Principal Investigator.

**PROJECT PROPOSALS**

**Q 11 – Should projects focus on single Themes or cover more than one Theme?**

A – Projects are expected to address a minimum of two of the SMMR Themes.

**Q 12 – Can projects be social science led or dominated?**



A – Projects can be led by any discipline, including social science. All projects must clearly demonstrate appropriate interdisciplinarity, where the balance of disciplines will be dictated by the solution required.

**Q 13 – Could a proposal be led from a PI in physical sciences/engineering since they are not traditionally NERC funded?**

A – Yes, projects can be led by any discipline, including physical science/engineering. All projects must clearly demonstrate appropriate interdisciplinarity, where the balance of disciplines will be dictated by the solution required.

**Q 14 - Would a project be eligible in this scheme if it compared the UK case/context to another, such as in EU or US or Asia/Africa?**

A – The primary focus of the SMMR Programme is the UK marine environment. Whilst international comparisons may be useful, it would not be appropriate for SMMR Programme funding to support project work in countries outside the UK (see also Introduction text).

**Q 15 - How desirable is it to bring in the international dimension? Marine issues are transboundary, but focus of talks has been on the UK. Can we bring in learning/models from elsewhere/link to other international partners?**

A - There is a clear focus on UK marine resources under the SMMR Programme and where transboundary issues impact on the management of these resources they will need to be considered. There is no barrier to using learning or models from elsewhere or engaging with international partners, but the focus must be on delivering solutions to the challenges of managing UK marine resources (see also Introduction text).

**Q 16 - Are there any boundaries to systems thinking for this call, can we take this from the marine environment, down the supply chain and through to consumers?**

A – There are no boundaries – the project must be defined on the basis of the solution required. Recognising that terrestrial activities and inputs impact on our coastal waters, the extent of the inland boundary of the project is flexible.

**Q 17 - In terms of proportions, how do you imagine the split between social and natural science? 50/50? or more natural science?**

A – There is no defined split. The projects will, by definition, require interdisciplinary research spanning social, natural and other sciences. The balance of disciplines within a project will be dictated by the challenge and the nature of the solution.

**Q 18 - Do you see a stronger emphasis on projects providing solutions for national policy and regulation rather than local policy and social-community needs?**

A – The programme will be strongly predicated on policy challenges articulated at UK and devolved Government level. However, this should not preclude the development of more regional or local case studies that could be scalable and transferrable to a wider UK context.

**Q 19 - The programme title uses the term "marine resources", as opposed to e.g. the broader term "marine ecosystem services" which appears more prominently in the presentations. So does it**



cover "marine resources" in the broadest possible sense i.e. including goods, services and cultural benefits (Barbier 2017)?

A – Yes

**Q 20 - One of the interesting points about the MCCIP programme was that it was very adaptive - so included new partners/initiatives as the programme developed. Would SMMR proposals that build in a degree of open-ended partnerships/activities be accommodated?**

A – The ability of projects to adapt and respond to new opportunities/partnerships would be welcome, provided these do not detract from achieving the outcomes for which it was funded. We would expect any proposed significant changes to the project to be presented to the Strategic Advisory Group after there has been an opportunity for Project Steering Group and SMMR Champions to provide input. Please be warned that extra finance for new partners may not be available.

**Q 21 – Is there an early career/capacity building element to this programme across research and stakeholders?**

A - Yes. Bids are encouraged to include early career researchers (ECRs) to support capacity building in marine research. Although specific ECR and capacity building activities are not planned at this stage, they will be considered as part of the wider community building activities by the SMMR Champions.

**Q 22 – A lot of research effort at European level has gone into developing and understanding a range of indicators (e.g. for MSFD). Given Brexit, how engaged will the UK continue to be in using these indicators and with GES reporting, or are we looking for new indicators?**

A - It seems likely the UK will employ MSFD indicators for at least a transition period, possibly longer, and so they will remain relevant for some time. However, there is an opportunity to examine other methodologies and to demonstrate how other such metrics might be developed and used.

### **PROGRAMME FIT**

**Q 23 - Some of these topics strongly link with the NERC UK Climate Resilience programme themes, should we consider this SMMR Programme to be separate or link with UK Climate Resilience research projects?**

A – Both programmes are supported by [UKRI's Strategic Priority Fund](#) for high quality multi and interdisciplinary research that links up effectively with government and responds to strategic priorities and opportunities. The SMMR Programme is solutions focused, and there may be high level cross cutting research challenges that overlap with the UK Climate Resilience programme. Engagement with the UK Climate Resilience projects are encouraged where appropriate if the challenge to be addressed and ultimately the solution sought would benefit and add value from the interaction.

**Q 24 – Would local case studies provide an ideal platform and timely opportunity to deliver the objectives of the SMMR Programme?**

A – If any geographic location can be demonstrated to be a useful case study in finding a solution to a stated challenge it can be considered.



## **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

### **Q 25 – What specifically are the needs of stakeholders?**

A – The stakeholders in the context of the SMMR Programme are largely Government organisations that deal with UK marine resources in a variety of ways. Some of these stakeholders have published research requirements. The SMMR Champions are actively engaging with many of these organisations through the auspices of the Marine Science Communication Committee (MSCC) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/marine-science-co-ordination-committee>) and through direct contact with other UK Governmental bodies. These organisations are being encouraged to articulate their research priorities through the SMMR Programme and this information will be shared through the SMMR website at the earliest opportunity. Many of those engaged in policy and challenge led research will have established contacts within the relevant Government organisations. The SMMR Programme will also endeavour to secure points of contact within the relevant policy stakeholder community. The SMMR Champions will also use information provided in the ‘Notification of Intent’ to identify where they can bring benefit in facilitating collaboration.

### **Q 26 - Is there a possibility we can collaborate on a project with experts at Defra?**

A – Yes, Defra may be project partners on a bid.

### **Q 27 - Prof Boyd mentioned at the outset that you would have liked other policy people involved - please could you indicate who they might be and whether further efforts should be made by PIs to engage them during project development?**

A – Efforts should be made by applicants to engage policy and other stakeholders at the outset and during project development themselves. The SMMR Champions are supporting this by liaising with Defra, Marine Scotland and through the MSCC, other marine policy relevant stakeholders. We are requesting that appropriate points of contact be provided which will be shared as appropriate, with members of the academic research community.

### **Q 28 – Are industrial and commercial partners encouraged?**

A – Industrial and commercial partners are encouraged where they add value to a project.

## **OTHER**

### **Q 29 – Can you clarify what you mean by ‘systems approach’ as this means different things to different people?**

A – Whole-systems marine research aims at a better understanding of the marine landscape, incorporating socio-economic, physical, natural, environmental and biological systems, at all spatial and temporal scales. It addresses complexities, interactions and interdependencies within the seascape, and with other systems. Whole-systems research necessarily draws upon a wide range of disciplines and methodologies. It does not demand comprehensive coverage at the level of individual projects, but projects must be aware of and demonstrate this approach.

### **Q 30 – To what extent will this call require consideration of gender equality?**

A – UKRI has its own equality, diversity and inclusion policies (<https://www.ukri.org/about-us/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/>) and applicants should consider gender equality, as well as other



areas of inequality within their research field. The principles of Athena Swan and other diversity initiatives can be highlighted.

**Q 31 - Regarding the 18 month review, do I understand correctly that you want to see at that time already well developed practical solutions and implementations?**

A – The purpose of the 18-month review is to assess the progress of each project against previously agreed milestones and outputs at that point and come to a conclusion as to whether the project is on track and performing as expected, requires amendment or should be terminated. Milestones and outputs will be specific to individual projects.

**Q 32 – Does SMMR envisage that there will be new marine data collected as part of this programme (both environmental data and socio-economic data)? How will the champions ensure that the data are available for the long-term, ensuring transparency and reproducibility of the work and enhancing its value (societal, cultural, economic, scientific ...)?**

A – There is no barrier to the collection of new data but there is an expectation that existing data will also be used. The available budget will, to some extent, dictate the capacity to collect new data. There will be an expectation that the data collected are archived as required under [UKRI's Data Policy](#) in the appropriate UKRI data archive centres.