

## Summary of English Nature's response to the NERC consultation on Oceans 2025.

1. Involvement of English Nature/Natural England: The successful execution of the Oceans 2025 work packages is crucial to advancing marine conservation over the coming decades. Conservation and sustainable use requires a solid evidence base both for its justification and strategic direction, and for marine work this comes mainly from the science community. English Nature (and especially Natural England with an expanded remit and staffing on marine issues - representing nearly a tripling of national staff working on marine issues) is therefore more than just a stakeholder. As we are a primary customer of NERC's outputs we would welcome discussions on how we might be involved more formally within the programmes governance structure.
2. The status accorded to the MBA and SAHFOS: We are surprised to see the differing status given to the Marine Biological Association and the Sir Alistair Hardy Foundation for Ocean Science in this document compared to other NERC marine science centres. From our knowledge both organisations received excellent evaluations at the last Science and Management Audits, comparable to that of the other marine science bodies that were reviewed. We are therefore unclear why they are only mentioned as grant in aid funded bodies. In our view they are essential components of the NERC family working on marine science. Not affording them the same status as the other organisations mentioned makes it difficult to establish in the text whether their efforts are included and recognised on various issues. English Nature would also be very concerned if the position and long-term outlook of these organisations were to be weakened as a result of this differing status. This is because within the NERC marine science family they have a primary focus on long-term monitoring and increasingly associated education and outreach. These functions directly support the two top strategic priorities of Defra on climate change and delivery of sustainable development, and yet these areas are some of the hardest areas to secure through open funding.
3. Greater recognition of the role of long-term datasets and the need to sustain their collection: We welcome the recognition given to the importance and value of long-term observations as part of the Oceans 2025 strategy. We do believe, however, that this is an excellent opportunity to translate the many fine words on such an issue into meaningful actions. We therefore ask that far greater prominence be given to this issue in Oceans 2025. The mention in C4 is welcome but from our perspective comes far too late in the document, and reads more as a passing reference rather than a fundamental principle.
4. Greater actions to ensure the application of the science generated by Oceans 2025: Whilst the entire document represents important work, themes 4 and 6 are the most relevant to English Nature's/Natural England's business. For both of these themes, and probably elsewhere, we ask that a greater emphasis be given to the application of the results from these studies. In other words we ask that the application of the science to the way we manage the marine environment needs to be developed as an integral part of the Oceans 2025 programme. Again, whilst the issue of knowledge transfer is mentioned in C6 we believe that this needs to form a fundamental element of the new day-to-day working patterns for the NERC marine science cluster.

5. The linkages between Oceans 2025 and new thematic reporting arrangements: We believe that greater consideration needs to be given in Oceans 2025 to ensuring that the science generated feeds into new thematic reporting arrangements being developed at national and European levels. There are dangers that by developing Oceans 2025 without adequate consideration of such policy needs, the science products will not be adequately streamlined to feed into such processes without additional use of public funds.
6. Recognising opportunities to share resources: We believe that Oceans 2025 presents opportunities beyond the purely marine science community for organisations such as English Nature/Natural England to participate and share resources. At present the text is defined too narrowly, and we would welcome the opportunity to explore in the execution of the Oceans 2025 programme how and where we may take advantage of working together and sharing resources as work packages become operational.
7. Addressing the European dimension and recognising more fully policy drivers: We believe that a major audience is all but absent from the document – Europe. Oceans 2025 will be of value for informing Europe and yet Europe does not feature in Box 4. Table 1 on page 9 also needs to be expanded to include references to European initiatives (Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Maritime Green Paper, Habitats and Birds Directives) and national initiatives (Marine Bill etc) that the proposed work packages will support.

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