

## 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the UK National Decade Committee Meeting Minutes

11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> March 2025, Defra, Marsham Street, London.

### Attendees

**Members Present:** Matt Frost (Chair), Aline Da Silva Cerqueira, Amy Bray, Antony Firth, Conor Savage, David Tudor, Elvira Poloczanska (online), Gareth Cunningham, Gina Reinhardt, Katrina Ryan, Michelle Frost, Natalie Fox, Sien van der Plank.

**Ex-Officio:** Anamul Islam (Secretariat), Bee Berx (Scottish Government, online), Caroline Culshaw (Defra), David Hughes (Secretariat), Frances Bird (Defra), Lowri Griffiths (FCDO), Suzanne Painting (Secretariat).

**Apologies:** Emma McKinley, Hayley Roberts, Lydia Bach, Richard Hixson, Victoria Chinery.

**Ex-Officio Apologies:** Alan Evans (NOC), Bekah Cioffi (Welsh Government), Colin Armstrong (Northern Ireland Executive), Dave Carlin (Defra), John Siddorn (NOC).

**Invited Speakers:** Susan Roberts (US NDC), Tony MacDonald (US NDC), Madeline Jensen (US NDC), Niru Dorrian (IMarEST), Thomas Davies (University of Plymouth).

### Item 1: Welcome and Introductions

Committee members were welcomed by the Chair. An extended introductions session was held to introduce new National Decade Committee (NDC) members, who were provided with an overview of the agenda, standing items and interactive components of Committee meetings.

### Item 2. Minutes and Actions

Minutes from the September meeting were agreed, and actions were reviewed.

An example of an AI-generated summary of Vision 2030 White Paper (Action 11) was presented to this meeting under Agenda item 12. Committee members were reminded to inform the Secretariat who plans to attend UNOC and/or OOS in Nice, June 2025. Five Committee Members informed the meeting that they will or would like to attend: AF, NF, GC, CJ, MF. It is likely that a Defra delegation will attend UNOC although it is not clear who members would be. Committee members were also reminded to support the Action Calls Sub-Committee in identifying relevant newsletters to promote the NDC and Ocean Decade across a variety of marine sectors.

#### **ACTIONS:**

- Inform the Secretariat of plans to attend UNOC and/or OOS in Nice, June 2025 (All Committee Members).
- Support Action Calls SC communications by contributing to Stakeholder Networks & Newsletters Google Sheet (All Committee Members).

## Item 3. Secretariat Updates

### Updates on the Ocean Decade

1. The latest Focal Points meeting was held on 6<sup>th</sup> March and attended by the Chair. Key discussion points of the meeting included:
  - Tanzania have become the latest country to form a National Decade Committee.
  - The Decade Coordination Unit (DCU) are planning an NDC presence at the UN Ocean Conference (UNOC) to be held in Nice. As UNOC is not an IOC-led event, the NDC activity will be held off site. The DCU have generated a list of NDCs that will be in attendance at the conference, with the aim to coordinate members.
  - Germany and New Zealand's National Decade Committees hope to organise an informal global working meeting alongside UNOC.
  - There is a new UN strategic communications group to advise on all structures in the Decade. A PML colleague is on the group and can share information.
  - The DCU have provided guidance notes on the following:
    - How to integrate national biodiversity action plans with the Decade
    - How to develop national implementation plans for the Decade.
  - Four countries have been shortlisted to host the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference: India, Indonesia, South Africa and Brazil. A decision will be announced at the next IOC assembly in late June.
2. The NDC has two annual reporting requirements:
  - The deadline for submission of the annual report to the IOC is 30th April 2025. Members are reminded to add any NDC related activities to the events spreadsheet on google drive.
  - A UK NDC report to Defra is in preparation and due to be completed by the end of March The report will reflect on all of the achievements of the Committee so far.

### Social Media Updates

Committee members were notified of the latest updates and analytics for the UK NDC website and LinkedIn profile. The LinkedIn page has received over 150 views, gained 90 new followers (with a total of 550) and 2000 impressions on stakeholder event posts. Latest updates to the NDC website include new member biographies, updated endorsed actions pages and maps. Members are reminded that they may suggest and submit news articles to the website, including volunteering to produce a blog post on the recent stakeholder event.

### ACTIONS:

- Contribute to UK NDC annual reporting (to the IOC and Defra) by adding upcoming and past events to the NDC Events Calendar (All Committee Members).
- Submit annual report to Defra for signoff (first reporting period January 2022 to March 2025) (Management Group, Secretariat).
- Submit annual report to IOC ( reporting period July 2024 to July 2025). (Secretariat).

## Item 4. Request to NDCs for activity endorsement

The DCU have presented an opt-in opportunity for NDCs to get involved in the endorsement process for in-country activities. Applications will be delivered to the DCU in the first instance, who will sift for potential conflicts of interest such as lobbying and commercial interests. Applications will then be delivered to the NDC for final sign-off of activities. Discussions highlighted both positive and negative attributes of this process:

- The process will provide NDCs with a better oversight of activities happening in the UK. Often members learn of events once they have already passed.
- UK NDC communications channels can support and raise awareness of Decade-endorsed activities. The Communications and Engagement Sub-Committee could provide applicants with a standardised template used to advertise activities online.
- Depending on the volume of applications received, capacity could be an issue for the Committee. A process will need to be developed to ensure that responsibility does not lie with a few individuals or a particular Sub-Committee. Feedback from other NDCs has indicated that the process requires minimal extra effort.

An example of an activity submission was reviewed to provide members with a better understanding of the level of detail included. It was then agreed that the UK NDC will opt in to the endorsement process on a trial basis once a relevant mechanism has been developed. Submissions will be delivered to all Committee members via the Secretariat, and once a sufficient response has been received, the final decision will be delivered to the DCU.

#### **ACTIONS:**

- Contact DCU to confirm trial of the activity endorsement process. Identify how often activity applications typically come through (Chair).
- Draft the process/mechanism for the Committee to review/endorse activities (Chair, Secretariat).

### **Item 5. Stakeholder Event: Reflections and Lessons Learned**

On 10<sup>th</sup> March 2025, Defra and the UK National Decade Committee hosted the event ‘The Next Five Years: A Science-Policy Dialogue for the Ocean Decade’, at the Royal Society in London. The event aimed to:

- Showcase examples of UK projects and initiatives related to the Ocean Decade
- Highlight where UK engagement in the Decade supports and informs domestic and international policy
- Connect and discuss new policy directions and science priorities to seek broad agreement on the UK focus for the rest of the Decade
- Promote collaboration, networking and opportunities for co-design of future initiatives and development of the Ocean Decade’s legacy for the UK.

This session provided Committee members with the opportunity to share reflections and feedback on the Stakeholder Event and suggest improvements for future planning.

#### **Overall reflections**

Overall, it was a successful event with lots of positive feedback received during the day. Attendees were pleased to have a chance for the UK’s Ocean Decade actors to come together. It was clear that there is still more to do to raise awareness of the Ocean Decade and should be made a priority for future activities. This could be achieved by delivering a short briefing ahead of the event, or to provide a short primer at the beginning of the agenda to ensure all attendees have the same base level of understanding of the Decade and its structures.

Whilst there was strong representation across a number of disciplines and sectors, it was noted that improvements should be made in relation to diversity. The Task and Finish Group will collect diversity information through feedback forms to identify how this could be improved in future. A greater industry presence (including finance and fishing communities) was suggested for the next event. The evening reception and exhibition space was well received and provided opportunity for stakeholders to learn more about the UK Ocean Decade landscape.

## **Opening Plenary and Policy Panel**

The Committee expressed gratitude to the cross-government speakers who contributed to the policy panel. It was requested that a transcript of the speech given by Emma Hardy MP, the Minister for Water and Flooding, could be obtained in the hope that it could be used as a statement of UK government support for the Ocean Decade. It was noted that there was some surprise among attendees that growth, energy and decarbonisation were such strong priorities across departments, highlighting the importance of maintaining a dialogue with researchers. Discussion highlighted the need to better understand how marine science is being coordinated across UK government in order for the UK NDC to effectively feed into conversations, and it was suggested that engagement with all-party parliamentary groups (APPGs) focused on marine topics would be a good place to start.

## **Workshops and Closing Plenary**

Workshops were led by a series of speakers who presented on their own Decade Programmes and set the scene for discussions around three themes: sustainable use, management and protection of the ocean; supporting climate-resilient coastal communities; and human-ocean connections. UK NDC members acted as facilitators and notetakers for breakout sessions. The length and richness of conversations varied across groups, possibly due to differing levels of understanding of the Decade among attendees. It was agreed that this could be combated in future by ensuring that each breakout session featured different combinations of attendees; allowing self-selection of topics tailored to backgrounds and skills; and providing a more varied pool of questions to stimulate conversation.

It was suggested that providing a set of parameters or guidelines around the scope of what the NDC can support would aid the identification of tangible outcomes and deliverables. Further suggestions considered the potential to work more closely with UK overseas territories (UKOTs) and to link with other UN Decade initiatives such as the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration. Final reflections highlighted that a key message at the mid-point stage of the Decade is to transform the way that we work together and collaborate within marine science, rather than transforming the topics that work focuses on.

## **Item 6. UK Engagement with the Ocean Decade**

In this session, three guest speakers were invited to present on Decade-related topics, followed by a plenary discussion to discuss how the UK NDC can better engage with the Decade.

**US National Decade Committee (online):** Tony Macdonald (Monmouth University), Susan Roberts (National Academies), Madeline Jensen (National Academies).

Representatives of the US National Decade Committee delivered a presentation outlining their formation, ways of working, considerations for best practice, challenges faced, and opportunities for potential collaboration between NDCs. The NDC features 25 independent members representing a range of institutes and industries across the United States. The Committee prides itself on its position as an ocean studies board, encompassing the all-society approach promoted by the UN Ocean Decade. The Committee also works closely with the Youth Advisory Council (developed by Heirs to our Ocean) to collaborate on assignments and events to promote youth engagement with the Decade and marine science. A key deliverable produced by the US NDC is the report 'cross-cutting themes for US contributions to the Ocean Decade', which identifies themes that will galvanize action and inspire transformative, cross-disciplinary, and multi-generational participation in the Decade. The development of the report was supported by the National Academies and NOAA. Following recommendations from the report, the Committee have hosted two workshops (East and West Coast) focused on the identified priorities.

Synergies were identified in the key challenges faced by both the US and UK NDCs. Funding was highlighted as an ongoing challenge, particularly as the US NDC is not government affiliated and relies on contributions from stakeholders. As with the UK, aspects of ocean and marine science is distributed across different government departments in the US, which can make it somewhat difficult to coordinate science to policy whilst maintaining the breadth of science. A final note from the US NDC representatives acknowledged that a Decade is a short period of time to make transformational change. Stakeholders across the world need to focus on changing the way we work and incorporate that into forming a meaningful legacy for the Decade.

**The Global Ocean Artificial Light at Night Network (GOALANN):** Prof. Thomas Davies (University of Plymouth).

GOALANN is an international network of the world's leading experts in marine light pollution. The Decade-endorsed programme's mission is to conserve the oceans by improving knowledge and awareness of marine light pollution, its ecological and societal impacts, and management options. The programme is the UK's first funded body of research into the impacts of light pollution within a marine context. Conversations centred around potential links with policy makers and with fellow Ocean Decade actors both nationally and further afield. At present, awareness and understanding of impacts related to marine light pollution are not well represented at the policy and governance level. Conversations with APPGs, coordination between EU and non-EU partners through the Oslo-Paris Commission and engagement with the Ocean Decade were highlighted as key routes to implementation of regulatory monitoring, assessment and mitigation. Connecting with overseas territories, SIDS and developing states was also highlighted as a key goal under the GOALANN programme, which could be facilitated by the known networks of the UK NDC. The UK NDC could also promote conversation between members' own networks, for example to better inform decisions around LED light usage at coastal and marine heritage sites.

**The Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology (IMarEST):** Niru Dorrian (IMarEST Ambassador to the UN Ocean Decade).

IMarEST is the largest professional marine organisation of its kind, promoting the development of marine engineering, science and technology across a range of sectors. The institute is represented across 50 branches globally with memberships spanning 120 countries. IMarEST hosts over 20 member-led special interest groups which engage in driving progress in emerging fields.

The role of the UN Ocean Decade ambassador was created to align activities of the institute and its members with the overarching aims of the Decade. A key priority is to catalyse research, innovation, capacity building and knowledge sharing throughout its member base, ensuring equity, inclusivity and transparency across the marine sector. IMarEST engages directly with Decade stakeholders through the Decade Network online platform, as well as hosting a wide range of Decade endorsed webinars, workshops and activities both in the UK and internationally. Engagement with ECOPs is considered a priority, with an annual award for outstanding contributions to the Decade currently in development, designed to help raise the profile of early career scientists. It was agreed that IMarEST and the UK NDC could collaborate on activities such as media campaigns and promotion through networks; and supporting side events at upcoming conferences such as UNOC.

#### **ACTIONS:**

- Discuss links with UKOTs and SIDS with Tom Davies/GOALANN (Chair).

## **Item 7. UK NDC Engagement: International**

The committee is exploring various ways to engage with the UN Ocean Conference (UNOC). It was noted that the Blue Zone, which requires accreditation, would not be suitable for an NDC activity. The conference will be preceded by the One Ocean Science Congress week, which does not require accreditation but does involve a registration fee. UN Ocean Decade activities during UNOC will likely be held in the Green Zone (a series of offsite locations where no registration is needed) but venues and availability have yet to be confirmed by organisers. The Committee expressed interest in contributing to an NDC based event (with a potential focus on capacity building for the Decade), to be organised by the DCU and potentially co-hosted by other NDCs. Further opportunities for engagement at UNOC could be achieved by coordinating with a number of planned pavilions centred around specific marine themes. A communication strategy will be developed, including a website and LinkedIn presence.

### **ACTIONS:**

- Contact DCU to confirm details of UNOC: date/venue, NDC attendees, focus of pavilions in green zone (Chair).
- Share any UNOC related information with Secretariat: confirmation of attendance, confirmation of activities (All committee members).

## **Item 8. Sub-Committee Breakout Groups**

In this breakout item, new members were introduced to Sub-Committees and discussions were held around each group's purpose, activities and workplans.

## **Items 9 & 10. Summary of Day 1 and aims for Day 2**

The Chair introduced the aims for day 2, to consider reflections on the Stakeholder Event and discussions from day 1 to develop next stages of Sub-Committee workplans.

## **Item 11. Sub-Committee Breakout Groups**

In this agenda item, Sub-Committees met to continue mapping activities and deliverables, with encouragement to consider the reflections on the stakeholder event when determining how to best progress with workplans for the upcoming year. Discussions and considerations were delivered in plenary in Item 12.

## **Item 12. Feedback Session on Workplans**

### **Policy Sub-Committee**

The Policy Sub-Committee intend to continue with the existing workplan of publishing an overview policy brief, followed by a series of briefs focused on the 7-decade outcomes. The initial overview brief will be published alongside the stakeholder event dialogue report to leverage communications and audience reach. The document will be promoted on LinkedIn and hosted on the UK NDC website. The existing draft will be updated to incorporate post-Barcelona Ocean Decade developments, adding more statistics and improving readability. The following series of briefs will be then aim to be launched in coordination with relevant events, such as the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) review of productive oceans targets. Defra colleagues will explore options for PhD student assistance and potential authorships of future briefs, under guidance of the Policy Sub-Committee. Longer-term goals include targeted conversations with specific UK policy departments and the potential to host bilateral meetings with departments to tailor Decade-related information to their needs. The Sub-Committee also plan to review the stakeholder

map to align relevant departments with appropriate stakeholders, whilst noting that resource limitations may pose challenges.

### **Engagement Sub-Committee**

Having discussed the potential for UK NDC engagement with UNOC in agenda item 7, the Engagement Sub-Committee suggested that a corresponding event held in the UK could be more suitable than competing with other planned activities in Nice. It was also noted the next Ocean Sciences Meeting is due to be held in Glasgow in February 2026. The meeting has confirmed its endorsement under the Decade, therefore a UK NDC led event alongside the meeting could be promoted to capitalise on attendees. Furthermore, the World Conference on Marine Biodiversity will be hosted in Bruges, Belgium in 2026. The Sub-Committee will endeavour to reach out to Belgium's NDC to scope the potential for a collaborative Decade event. Finally, Committee members were reminded that next Ocean Decade Conference is scheduled for 2027 and the host country is due to be announced soon. The Sub-Committee highlighted a need to revisit the current UK NDC ex-officio memberships to ensure representation of all relevant bodies and consider those who may be able to provide extra support.

### **Communications and Engagement Sub-Committee**

The Communications and Engagement Sub-Committee highlighted three key avenues to be incorporated into their workplan. The first consideration is to identify areas of zero added effort, utilising existing tools, networks and presentations to raise awareness of the Ocean Decade and the work of the UK NDC. The second area considers the development of creative concepts and campaigns to promote the Committee. The Ocean Decade UK film trailer, previously developed by the Sub-Committee, will be revisited and sent to the management group for approval and sign off. A further series of films have been planned to focus on the ten Decade challenges, but funding avenues will need to be explored to support their development. The Vision 2030 White Paper campaign is underway, with Committee members assigned to provide a summary of the documents to be published on LinkedIn using a uniform template. The Sub-Committee considered resource gathering as the final key work area. Considerations included an opportunity for funded internships to provide social media support (with a focus on ECOPs) and development of a social media toolkit which could be delivered to relevant organisations, leveraging on their networks to promote the Decade through social media channels. An NDC mailing list could be developed to retain a network of contacts, but potential platforms need to be explored.

### **Action Calls Sub-Committee**

The Action Calls Sub-Committee plan to run another LinkedIn campaign in support of the next Call for Decade Actions, which is due to launch in mid-April. The campaign will focus on the four new UK Decade contributions, to be posted monthly until the call closes in August. The current Action Calls FAQ document will be updated before the launch of the next Decade Call to incorporate the tips received from the stakeholders who contributed to earlier campaigns. The Sub-Committee have also developed a list of key stakeholders to engage with on LinkedIn to broaden the reach of the Committee and will work with the Communications and Engagement Sub-Committee to develop a plan for engagement.

### **ACTIONS:**

- Contact NDC Belgium to discuss potential coordination of an NDC event at World Conference on Marine Biodiversity in Bruges (Chair).
- Include the Ocean Sciences Conference (February 2026 in Glasgow) on the next meeting agenda (Secretariat).
- Include ex-officio memberships on agenda for next management group meeting (Secretariat).
- Discuss potential online platforms to host an NDC mailing list (Secretariat, Communications and Engagement Sub-Committee).

### **Item 13. Forward Look & Future Events**

Dates were agreed for the next virtual meeting of the NDC on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2025. Preliminary dates and a venue were also secured for the next in-person meeting in September, to be held in Cardiff between 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> September. Committee members were asked to consider potential guest speakers for the next in-person meeting, with a suggestion to invite the newly formed NDC in Tanzania to promote engagement with African states.

#### **ACTIONS:**

- Suggest speakers for the next in-person meeting (e.g. Tanzania NDC).
- Send calendar invites for next UK NDC meeting, Wednesday 18 June 2025 (virtual).
- Confirm venue and dates for next in-person UK NDC meeting (between 16 and 18 September).

### **Item 14. AOB**

No further business was raised by the Committee.

### **Item 15. Close**

All actions were summarised and agreed by the Committee.



## Actions

No.	Action	Agenda Item	Deadline	Owner
1	Submit expense claims to Lowri Griffiths via PayPal		20 March	All Committee Members
2	Inform Secretariat of plans to attend UNOC and/or OOS in Nice, June 2025	2	31 March	All Committee Members
3	Support Action Calls SC communications by contributing to Stakeholder Networks & Newsletters Google Sheet.	2	Ongoing	All Committee Members
4	Contribute to UK NDC annual reporting (to the IOC and Defra) by adding upcoming and past events to the NDC Events Calendar	3	26 March	All Committee Members
5	Submit annual report to Defra for signoff (first reporting period January 2022 to March 2025).	3	30 April	Management Group/ Secretariat
6	Submit annual report to IOC (reporting period July 2024 to July 2025).	3	30 April	Secretariat
7	Contact DCU to confirm trial of the activity endorsement process.	4	31 March	Chair
8	Draft the process/mechanism for the Committee to review/endorse activities.	4	16 April	Chair / Secretariat
9	Discuss links with UKOTs and SIDS with Tom Davies/GOALANN.	6	31 March	Chair
10	Contact DCU to confirm details of UNOC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date / venue for NDC event</li> <li>• Other NDC attendees</li> <li>• Focus of each pavilion in green zone</li> </ul>	7	31 March	Chair
11	Share any UNOC related information with Secretariat (e.g. confirmation of attendance, confirmation of activities).	7	31 March	All Committee Members
12	Contact NDC Belgium to discuss potential coordination of an NDC event at World Conference on Marine Biodiversity in Bruges.	12	30 April	Chair
13	Include the Ocean Sciences Conference (February 2026 in Glasgow) on the next meeting agenda.	12	30 April	Secretariat
14	Include ex-officio memberships as an agenda item for next management group meeting.	12	31 March	Secretariat
15	Discuss the best platform to produce a mailing list and present to the Committee at the next meeting.	12	21 May	Secretariat; C&E SC
16	Suggest speakers for the next in-person meeting (e.g. Tanzania NDC).	13	30 May	All; to Secretariat
17	Send calendar invites for next UK NDC meeting, Wednesday 18 June 2025, 10:00-13:00 (virtual).	13	31 March	Secretariat
18	Confirm venue and dates for next in-person UK NDC meeting (between 16 and 18 September).	13	30 May	Secretariat / Emma (Cardiff, tbc) / Chair

## Agenda

### Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2025

Time	Item		
10:00-10:40	1	Welcome & Introductions	Verbal: MF
10:40-10:50	2	Minutes and Actions	Paper: AI
10:50-11:00	3	Secretariat and social media updates	Verbal: DH
11:00-11:30	4	Request to NDCs for activity endorsement	Paper: MF
11:30-12:30	5	Stakeholder Event: reflections and lessons learned	Verbal: MF/All
12:30-13:30	Lunch		
13:30-15:00	6	UK engagement with the Ocean Decade	MF; invited speakers
15:00-15:30	Break		
15:30-16:00	7	UK NDC engagement: international	Engagement SC
16:00-16:50	8	Sub-Committee breakout groups	Verbal: MF
16:50-17:00	9	Summary and Close of Day 1	Verbal: MF

### Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2025

Time	Item		
09:30-09:40	10	Recap of Day 1 and aims for Day 2	Verbal: MF
09:40-11:00	11	Sub-Committee Breakout Groups	Verbal: MF
11:00-11:15	Break		
11:15-11:50	12	Feedback session on work plans	MF: SC reps
11:50-12:00	13	Forward Look	Verbal: MF
12:00-12:15	14	AOB	Verbal: MF
12:15-12:30	15	Summary and Close	Verbal: MF