

13th Meeting of the UK National Decade Committee

Meeting Minutes

18th June 2025, Online.

Attendees

Members Present: Matt Frost (Chair), Aline Da Silva Cerqueira, Antony Firth, Conor Savage, David Tudor, Elvira Poloczanska, Emma McKinley, Gareth Cunningham, Hayley Roberts, Katrina Ryan, Michelle Frost, Natalie Fox.

Ex-Officio: Alan Evans (NOC), Bee Berx (Scottish Government), Caroline Culshaw (Defra), David Hughes (Secretariat), Frances Bird (Defra), Lowri Griffiths (FCDO), Suzanne Painting (Secretariat).

Apologies: Amy Bray, Gina Reinhardt, Lydia Bach, Richard Hixson, Sien van der Plank, Victoria Chinery.

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

Item 1: Welcome

The Chair welcomed Committee members and highlighted a potential need to designate a Co-Chair for future virtual meetings in preparedness for any technical issues. As raised at the previous meeting, a brief discussion was also held around the possibility of considering the addition of more Ex-Officio members. It was agreed that Ex-Officio membership criteria should be determined and agreed upon by the Committee before extending any invitations.

ACTIONS:

- Determine a Co-Chair for virtual meetings (Management Group).
- Draft a paper on Ex-Officio membership criteria for the September meeting (Chair, Management Group).

Item 2. Minutes and Actions

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

CONTINUED ACTIONS:

- Support Action Calls SC communications by contributing to the stakeholder networks spreadsheet (All Committee Members).
- Discuss the best platform to produce a mailing list and present to the Committee (Secretariat, Communications & Engagement Sub-Committee).

Item 3. Secretariat & Social Media Updates

Secretariat Updates

1. UK NDC reports completed:
 - The Annual Report to the IOC was signed off and submitted via Survey Monkey on 09/05/2025.
 - The UK NDC Progress Report (2022-2025) was signed off by Defra and FCDO and published on the UK NDC website. Future progress reports will be delivered annually.
 - The UK Stakeholder Event Report was signed off by Defra and the Management Group and has been shared with the UN Ocean Decade Team (DCU), event attendees and published to the UK NDC website and LinkedIn.
2. Progress is being made on the planning of the next in-person meeting (September 2025) to be held in Cardiff. Prospective speakers have been contacted, and agenda items are in development, to include opportunities for engagement and discussion around the outcomes of the IOC mid-term review of the Decade.
3. The Cefas Secretariat function has been renewed for the current financial year, and the Chair position has been renewed for a second term.
4. Members were reminded that annual Conflict of Interest forms are to be submitted in the coming month.

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 200 views, gained 150 new followers (with a total of 750) and 5500 impressions on posts. The Stakeholder Event summary post achieved 900 impressions alone, with a 50% engagement rate. Latest updates to the NDC website include the addition of the Stakeholder Event and NDC Progress Reports, 6 new Decade Actions, and the announcement of Call for Decade Action #9. 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:

- Follow-up on invite to Tanzania's NDC representatives to speak at the UK NDC's September meeting (Chair).
- Contribute to UK NDC annual reporting (to the IOC and Defra) by adding upcoming and past events to the events calendar. (All Committee Members).
- Submit Conflict of Interest forms (All Committee Members).

Item 4. DCU Updates

The Chair delivered the following updates from the Decade Coordination Unit:

1. During the NDC Focal Points meeting in May, it was announced that the DCU are developing a series of toolkits for NDCs including 'navigating the challenges of community engagement', 'practice management' and 'guidelines to develop national ocean science action plans'.
2. There are now 40 established NDCs globally, with Australia being the latest addition.
3. Following the trial period of endorsing Decade activities, the UK NDC has withdrawn from the process due to limited resource and an overwhelming number of applications.

Item 5. Engagement Opportunities

In this item, discussions were held around potential opportunities for NDC engagement at upcoming UK-based events. The Ocean Sciences Meeting, to be held in Glasgow in February 2026, was highlighted as a good opportunity for a possible UK NDC event, maximising on the volume of attendees. It was noted that this year's resourcing would not allow for an event on the same scale as the March UK Stakeholder Event and would therefore need to be relatively light touch. It was highlighted that a science policy session has been proposed for the event, which could potentially include a talk from the NDC on the UN Ocean Decade. It was agreed that an in-person NDC meeting could be held in Glasgow to coincide with the Ocean Sciences Meeting, and it was requested that Committee members inform the Secretariat of their intention to attend the event.

It was also highlighted that the UK will be hosting the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Plenary in early 2026. There has been a proposal to host a parallel programme of events alongside the Plenary, including a science conference at the University of Oxford which could provide an opportunity for an NDC presence. The Chair agreed to explore this option further by contacting the IPBES Chair.

The final opportunity discussed in this item was for the Ocean and Coastal Futures (OCF) Conference 2026. David Tudor confirmed an upcoming OCF committee meeting in July, suggesting that the UK NDC could consider hosting additional sessions or events (such as stakeholder meetings and networking receptions) alongside formal presentations. Feedback and updates on opportunities will be provided to the Committee following the OCF meeting in July.

ACTIONS:

- Inform Secretariat of intention to applied to go to the Ocean Sciences Meeting in Glasgow, February 2026 (All Committee Members).
- Follow up with David Obura on IPBES plenary in February 2026 and potential parallel programme of events (Chair, CC).
- Explore and feedback on the potential for an NDC event to be held at the Ocean and Coastal Futures Conference, 2026 (DT).

Item 6. UNOC Reflections

In this item, Committee Members in attendance reflected on the content and outcomes of the One Ocean Science Congress (OOSC) and UN Ocean Conference (UNOC) held in Nice, France, between 3rd and 13th June 2025.

One Ocean Science Congress (3-6 June)

The congress was designed as a precursor to UNOC dedicated to science, to provide Heads of State, Government, and the broader society with comprehensive scientific insights on the Ocean's health and future trajectory.

Members in attendance found it valuable for bringing together experts to focus on ocean governance and solution-driven science, though it was noted that there was only a weak connection to the Ocean Decade's challenges and outcomes. The view amongst attendees was that despite an appreciation for the science-driven focus and support for the inclusion of underrepresented and indigenous voices, the event was a missed opportunity to better integrate with the Decade given the intersection of similar themes and challenges.

UN Ocean Conference (9-13 June)

Two key Ocean Decade side events were attended by UK NDC Committee members during UNOC. The first was an NDC workshop hosted onboard the RV Meteor, including breakout sessions designed to address the engagement and effectiveness of NDCs. Discussions covered key themes such as community engagement, ocean literacy, co-design, collaboration, and challenges like funding and data-sharing coordination. A key observation from the workshop highlighted the significant diversity among NDCs in terms of their operations, resources, and engagement levels, making it difficult to establish universal best practices. Some concern was raised around the limited progress or follow-up on previous outcomes and reports delivered at the Barcelona meeting. Despite this, it was agreed that the workshop offered a valuable platform for NDCs across various countries to exchange ideas and learn from each other. Attendees appreciated the opportunity to collaborate and share solutions, which was seen as one of the most beneficial aspects of the meeting.

The second side event was the Ocean Decade Forum, hosted in the 'Green Zone', off-site of the main Conference with representatives of the UK NDC on the Chair panel. Attendees considered the forum a success, providing an opportunity to hear from many people involved in the Decade internationally. It was highlighted that there was a distinct separation between the Green Zone and Blue Zone (on-site) activities, which resulted in missed opportunities to foster cross-zone collaboration, particularly in connecting the decade's initiatives with policy and finance discussions. Attendees felt that the Forum was useful for Decade actors, but there was limited engagement with those outside of the existing community which limited the opportunity to build connections with relevant stakeholders.

Based on discussions throughout the event it was noted that there is a need to improve engagement with the philanthropic sector to secure funding for UN decade initiatives. The discussion highlighted the current mismatch between the sector's preference for high-profile, tangible projects and the Decade's focus on addressing scientific and institutional needs. Suggestions included inviting philanthropy representatives to a future Committee meeting, to better understand their interests whilst sharing the committee's ambitions for the Decade.

Item 7. Sub-Committee Breakout Groups

In this breakout item, Sub-Committees met to continue the development of activities and workplans. Discussions were fed back in plenary in Agenda Item 8.

Item 8. Sub-Committee Reports

Sub-Committees each delivered a series of updates on recent and upcoming activities.

Action Calls Sub-Committee

- The FAQ guidance for applicants has been revised and is now available online, providing instructions for the latest Call for Decade Actions.
- The mapping spreadsheet (includes UK-led and UK-partnered endorsements) has been updated following recent endorsement announcements, along with visual materials and maps for the website.
- The LinkedIn campaign focusing on Call for Decade Action #9 was launched in April, featuring monthly posts that spotlight UK decade endorsements. Highlights include posts featuring IMarEST (April), the Cultural Heritage Framework Programme (May), and Plastic Clever Schools, led by Common Seas (June). Further posts are planned for July and August, concentrating on increasing engagement and reaching audiences not yet involved in the decade initiatives.

- It was highlighted that UK NDC members had engaged with Common Seas in Nice during UNOC, and a suggestion was made to extend a guest speaker invite for the next NDC meeting in September.

Communications and Engagement Sub-Committee

- Following attendance at UNOC, the Sub-Committee will produce communications materials (blogs, social media posts) to highlight the UK NDC's engagement and reflections. This will include summaries of presentations given at the Digital Ocean Pavilion; the virtual ECOP days; and the two Ocean Decade / NDC events.
- It was highlighted that the Ocean Advocate Summit will be hosted in Bristol in February 2025, with NDC members scheduled to attend. It is hoped to be endorsed as a Decade activity, which will provide an opportunity for a communications plan to be developed around the event.
- It was highlighted that UK NDC members had engaged with representatives from Project Seagrass during the UNOC event, who have been invited to speak at the next Committee meeting. It was suggested that this could provide an opportunity for the Committee to develop a community engagement activity and visit a seagrass restoration site to showcase the work.

Policy Sub-Committee

- The Sub-Committee revisited the work on policy briefs and discussed the intended audience, emphasizing the need for policy relevance in light of ongoing changes.
- The first Policy Brief, serving as an introduction to the Decade, will be scheduled for completion at the beginning of July for proof-reading and final review.
- It was agreed that once the content is complete, the Communications & Engagement Sub-Committee will provide feedback and support for finalisation of the visual layout. Materials such as templates, images and branding guidelines are available on the Committee Google Drive.

Engagement Sub-Committee

- The Sub-Committee highlighted that the date and location for the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference will be announced on 26th June, which is expected to be held in either India, Indonesia or Brazil. It was highlighted that there will be a need for engagement opportunities to coincide with the conference, such as UK-focused activities for those unable to attend in person. It was also noted that there may be an opportunity for NDCs to feed into the design of the Conference.
- Chile and Korea have both shown interest in hosting the next UN Ocean Conference. The Sub-Committee highlighted that it may be worth reaching out to the DCU in the future to discuss opportunities to ensure better integration of the Ocean Decade throughout UNOC, based on the recent feedback from Nice.
- The Sub-Committee will develop a brief timeline to the next Ocean Decade Conference, including the co-design process for NDCs and plans for UK-based stakeholder engagement activities.

ACTIONS:

- Invite a guest speaker from Common Seas to the next in-person Committee meeting (Chair, Secretariat).
- Develop a brief timeline to the next Ocean Decade Conference 2027 (Engagement Sub-Committee).

Item 9. IOC-delegate Updates

In this item, Alan Evans, the alternative head of the UK delegation to the IOC delivered a brief presentation to inform the Committee (particularly new members) of the structure and function of the IOC, how it links to the DCU, and an overview of the upcoming Assembly.

Overview of the IOC

- The IOC holds functional autonomy within UNESCO, allowing it to manage its own budget, programmes, and governance.
- The IOC's primary mandate is to promote international cooperation and coordinate programmes related to ocean science and services but does not conduct research itself.
- Core functions include capacity building, governance, and the coordination of global programmes like tsunami early warning systems, marine spatial planning, and data management.
- Funding comes from UNESCO (3% of its budget, equating to over \$20 million every two years) and extra-budgetary contributions such as grants and philanthropic support.

The IOC and the UN Ocean Decade

- The IOC serves as the host agency for the UN Ocean Decade, which aims to advance ocean governance and science.
- The recent mid-term evaluation of the decade has highlighted challenges, including insufficient UN agency engagement, the need for better coordination, and the absence of a robust monitoring and evaluation framework.
- The outcome of the mid-term evaluation finds that programme has thus far succeeded in raising awareness but has also faced some criticism for its inefficiencies and lack of inclusivity and strategic focus.

Upcoming IOC General Assembly

- The 33rd Assembly will take place on 27th June 2025, with agenda items including the UN Ocean Decade, budget governance, and future strategy planning post-2029.
- The UK delegation has plans to raise concerns about unresolved issues from the mid-term evaluation, such as an apparent lack of transparency in commissioned reports, and the need for clearer impact measurements for the decade. Committee members were encouraged to contribute any recommendations or feedback for the UK's intervention at the upcoming Assembly.

ACTIONS:

- Inform UK reps to the IOC/Secretariat of any recommendations or feedback for the UK's intervention at the upcoming Assembly (All Committee Members).

Item 10. Forward Look

Whilst rooms have preliminarily been reserved at the University of Cardiff for the next in-person meeting in September, it was agreed that the Committee will liaise with the Crown Estate to see if they are able to provide a meeting room in Cardiff on alternative dates. Should no meeting space become available, the reservation with University of Cardiff will be confirmed.

ACTIONS:

- David Tudor to liaise with the Crown Estate and Secretariat to confirm the next meeting date and venue (DT; Secretariat).

Item 11. AOB

Defra representatives provided a brief update from Horizon Europe, the EU's research and innovation programme. It was highlighted that the draft call 'Cluster 6' includes a €9 million funding call titled "Empowering the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development." The aim of this call is to secure the legacy of European leadership in the UN Decade. The EU Commission is currently developing work programmes for 2026-2027, and draft calls are being shared with Member States and associated countries. Committee members were encouraged to review the draft call text ahead of further discussions at the next meeting. It was also suggested that the opportunity could be socialised with existing Decade Programmes and collaborating partners in the UK to identify priorities and foster international linkages.

Item 12. Summary and Close

All actions were summarised and agreed by the Committee.

Actions

No.	Action	Agenda Item	Deadline	Owner
1	Determine a Co-Chair for virtual meetings.	1	07/07/25	MG
2	Produce a paper on Ex-Officio membership criteria to present at the September meeting.	1	07/07/25	MG; Chair
3	Support Action Calls SC communications by contributing to the Stakeholder networks spreadsheet.	2	Ongoing	All Committee Members
4	Discuss the best platform to produce a mailing list and present to the Committee.	2	31/07/25	Secretariat; C&E SC
5	Follow-up on invite to Tanzania's NDC representatives to speak at the UK NDC's September meeting.	3	27/06/25	Chair
6	Contribute to UK NDC annual reporting (to the IOC and Defra) by adding upcoming and past events to the Events Calendar.	3	Ongoing	All Committee Members
7	Submit Conflict of Interest forms to Secretariat.	3	30/06/25	All Committee Members
8	Inform Secretariat of intention to apply to go to the Ocean Sciences Meeting in Glasgow, February 2026.	5	15/09/25	All Committee Members
9	Follow up with David Obura on IPBES plenary in February 2026 and potential parallel programme of events.	5	31/07/25	Chair; CC
10	Explore and feedback on the potential for an NDC event to be held at the Ocean and Coastal Futures Conference, 2026.	5	31/07/25	DT
11	Invite a guest speaker from Common Seas to the next in-person Committee meeting.	8	27/06/25	Chair; Secretariat
12	Develop a brief timeline to the next Ocean Decade Conference 2027.	8	15/09/25	Engagement SC
13	Inform UK reps to the IOC/Secretariat of any recommendations or feedback for the UK's intervention at the upcoming Assembly.	9	24/06/25	All Committee Members
14	Liaise with the Crown Estate and Secretariat to confirm the date and venue for the next in-person meeting.	10	20/06/25	DT; EM; Secretariat

Agenda

Wednesday 18th June 2025

Time	Item		
10:00-10:10	1	Welcome	Verbal: MF
10:10-10:15	2	Minutes and Actions	Paper: DH
10:15-10:20	3	Secretariat and social media updates	Paper: SP, DH
10:20-10:35	4	DCU Updates	Verbal: MF
10:35-10:55	5	Engagement Opportunities	Verbal: MF, Eng SC
10:55-11:15	6	UNOC Reflections	Verbal: LG, MF
11:15-11:30	Break		
11:30-12:00	7	Sub-Committee breakout groups	Verbal: MF
12:00-12:20	8	Sub-Committee reports	Verbal: SC reps
12:20-12:45	9	IOC- delegate updates	Slides: AE
12:45-12:50	10	Forward Look	Verbal: MF
12:50-12:55	11	AOB	Verbal: MF
12:55-13:00	12	Summary and Close	Verbal: MF