

## **Report of the 22nd meeting of the Ocean Facilities Exchange Group (OFEG), held in Texel, the Netherlands on the on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> April 2009**

**Attending:** Jacques Binot, Jean-Xavier Castrec, Juanjo Danobeitia, Colin Day, Linda Goad, Terje Hindenes, Erica Koning, Thomas Muller, Herman Ridderinkhof, Marieke Rietveld, Barbara Tanner, Mike Webb

### **1 Approval of minutes and matters arising**

- 1.1 The draft minutes from the 21<sup>st</sup> OFEG meeting were approved without amendment.
- 1.2 It was agreed by all members that they would share their capital/investment plans in advance of all future Autumn meetings of OFEG so that opportunities for shared investment and co-funding can be considered, as well as joint tenders as a means to get a better price. [**Action: All, Deadline: On-going**]
- 1.3 The Group noted that following the positive response from BMBF to OFEG concerns over the level of support that was being provided on barter cruises programmed on German ships, the BMBF had provided technician and equipment support from the NERC geophysics barter cruise on the *RV Sonne* working off Sumatra.

### **2 OFEG-TECH**

- 2.1 The Group decided that it needed to consider how it could improve the interoperability of its deep sea Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs) and their payloads and technicians. The Group recognised that collectively it needed to find better solutions as capital and through-life costs for ROVs are very high and these facilities are currently not fully utilised. With the next generation of systems, OFEG partners should avoid making investments without serious examination of partnership/co-funding options and without ensuring that any new system could be operated on the OFEG fleet of ocean-going vessels. The longer term objective for OFEG will be to move towards programming one ship to do all year round ROV operations so that partners can avoid the very high costs associated with mobilising a stand alone ROV cruise.
- 2.2 The Group agreed that OFEG-TECH should be mandated to consider options that would improve OFEG's ROV interoperability in future (**Action: Colin Day; Deadline: On-going**). It was highlighted that payload interoperability for the next generation of ROVs and the interoperability of the technicians were key issues. The latter would start to be realised by exchanging technicians on ROV cruises to increase the overall capability of OFEG – which would ultimately allow for OFEG to move towards deploying a trans-national team of technicians to support full time operations of its pool of ROVs. The Group recognised that OFEG's activities in this area should complement those that are funded by the Framework Programme VII project, EUROFLEETS (**Action: Colin Day, Jacques Binot**).
- 2.3 It was agreed that future Autumn meetings of OFEG would be scheduled to take place immediately after the OFEG-TECH annual meeting so that the OFEG-TECH Chairman, Colin Day, can provide the Group with a full up-date on OFEG-TECH activities.

### **3 Feedback from recent barter cruises**

- 3.1 Following difficulties on a recent OFEG barter cruise it was agreed that partners will in future need to be reassured that a proposed Principal Scientist has an appropriate level of seagoing experience before they are offered barter ship-time. It was agreed that OFEG should consider issuing a standard letter to Principal Scientists who are being offered an OFEG cruise. This letter would make a number of points, including: i) inexperienced Principal Scientists will need to be supported by experienced seagoing scientists; ii) Principal Scientists who accepts the offer of a barter cruise can only be replaced by another scientist if this is acceptable to both barter partners (i.e. the funder of the science programme and the provider of the barter ship-time); iii) In the event that the provider of the ship-time

considers that a Principal Scientist's performance has been poor, the provider can remove them from that role at any point during the cruise. (**Action: Mike Webb**)

- 3.2 It was noted that OFEG currently does not record the various training and trials activities that are now taking place on cruises and it was agreed that this information needed to be routinely added to the 'barter activity document'. (**Action: Mike Webb, Deadline: on-going**)
- 3.3 The Group noted the Output Performance Measures (OPM) document provided by NERC, which is produced by NERC each year to provide it with a means of identifying the potential cost equivalents and 'savings' of its barter activities. It was agreed that OFEG should work up an example of a similar OFEG OPM document with a view to this potentially being published each year on the OFEG website (**Action: All; Deadline: ASAP**)

#### **4 OFEG website**

- 4.1 A number of options for the further development of the OFEG website were discussed it was agreed that a number of changes should be implemented – including a new 'left-hand column' on the website's front page and the addition of ship and major equipment tables (similar to those on the UNOLS website) (**Action: Colin Day; Deadline: On-going**). It was also agreed that members would consider supporting further development of OFEG website with a 5kEuros contribution (**Action: All; Deadline: ASAP**).