

Report of the 21st meeting of the Ocean Facilities Exchange Group (OFEG), held in London, UK on the 24th November 2008

Attending: Jean-Xavier Castrec, Juanjo Danobeitia, Terje Hindenes, Oliver Lefort, Thomas Mueller, Marieke Rietveld, Barbara Tanner, Mike Webb, Geraint West

Apologies: Jacques Binot, Per Nieuwejaar

1 Approval of minutes and matters arising

- 1.1 The draft minutes from the 20th OFEG meeting were approved without amendment.
- 1.2 The Group agreed that the draft OFEG Fleet Renewal Roadmap should be revised slightly – to modify the colour of the ship cartoons and to show the proposed new Norwegian icebreaker as a global class ship – and then the Roadmap could be published (as a word document) on the OFEG website. [**Action: Rietveld**]
- 1.3 The Group noted that no progress had been made by members with developing one-page platform descriptions for the OFEG ships, which had been an action arising from the last OFEG meeting. It was agreed that members would seek to complete this action by the next OFEG meeting. [**Action: Mueller** – to develop one-page description for *RV Poseidon* and share it with OFEG members; **Action: All** – to complete descriptions for the remaining OFEG ships]
- 1.4 The Group welcomed the response from BMBF to the concerns raised at the last OFEG meeting over the level of support that was being provided on barter cruises programmed on German ships. BMBF will now in future provide technical equipment (including equipment rental, transportation, and modification) and technician support on cruises on *RV Sonne* – but this arrangement will not apply to other German ships in the OFEG fleet. The Group considered that this was a very positive step towards addressing the Group's concerns and noted that this new arrangement would apply to the NERC barter cruise on *RV Sonne* in early 2009.

2 Feedback on barter cruises in 2008 and any clearance issues

- 2.1 Feedback was provided on recent barter cruises and a number of minor diplomatic clearance issues were discussed. It was noted that difficulties for the *RV Pelagia* to gain safe passage through the Gulf of Aden may result in a delay in the start of the NERC barter cruise in the Arabian Sea and that a proposed barter cruise for Ifremer on a German ship in the eastern Black Sea had been cancelled because the region was considered to be too dangerous.
- 2.2 The Group noted that there were a number of charter-barter activities where cruises were being covered by a mix of barter points and funding – at the academic rate rather than the full economic cost charter rate. Following discussion, it was agreed that these types of charter-barter cruises should be recorded in the OFEG Activity Data document.

3 Up-date on the 2009 cruise programme and new barter opportunities

- 3.1 The Group provided a brief update on cruise programme plans for 2009, and a number of barter opportunities were identified. It was agreed that all members would provide their revised bids for barter cruises by email for inclusion in the Proposed Barter Cruises document. [**Action: All**]

4 Fleet and major marine facilities changes and proposed procurements

- 4.1 The Group noted that: (i) *ROV VICTOR* is due to have an 8-month refit from October 2009; (ii) *RV L'Atalante* is due to have a major 6-month refit at the start of 2009; (iii) the new Spanish Geophysics equipment will be trialled in late 2009; (iv) a survey of the *RV Poseidon*'s hull in 2010 will determine if the ship can remain in service until 2014 – when it will be replaced by a new capability; (v) progress has been made with planning for the replacement of *RV Sonne*.

4.2 OFEG-ROVs: The Group considered that with the high capital and through-life costs of new ROVs and with relatively low utilisation rates of existing ROVs, OFEG needs to consider how its members can cooperate to support European deep-ocean ROV-type science more cost-effectively. It was noted that there is considerable potential for OFEG to develop common interfaces and payloads for ROVs, and that OFEG should in the future consider how it could support ROV operations with multi-national teams of technicians – as is planned by UK and Spain for geophysics facilities. The Group agreed that OFEG-TECH should examine this issue at some point in the future.

5 Up-date of OFEG documentation – including barter activity and bank balances

5.1 All members agreed to up-date the various OFEG documents following the meeting. [Action: All] The Group approved the latest OFEG barter graphs for release on the OFEG website.

6 OFEG Website

6.1 The Group welcomed the latest version of the OFEG website and members felt that it was very much improved. All members agreed to provide NERC with feedback on any minor changes to website [Action: All] and Thomas Mueller agreed to develop some proposed changes to the ‘left-hand’ column of the front page of the website. [Action: Mueller] It was also agreed that members should link to the OFEG.COM website from their ‘home’ websites [Action: All] and that OFEG should request that a link to OFEG.COM appears on the EUROCEANS, OCEANIC and POGO websites. [Action: Rietveld]

7 Any other business

7.1 Capital Plans: It was agreed that Capital Plans should be an agenda item at the Autumn 2009 meeting and that members should share their plans in advance of this meeting. [Action: All]