

Report of the nineteenth meeting of the Ocean Facilities Exchange Group (OFEG), held in Paris, France on the 8th November 2007

Attending: Jacques Binot, Jean-Xavier Castrec, Juanjo Danobeitia, Thomas Mueller, Per Nieuwejaar, Marieke Rietveld, Barbara Tanner, Mike Webb (Chairman)

1 Approval of minutes and matters arising

The Group approved the minutes from the last meeting and in response to the actions it was agreed that: 1) marine equipment capital plans should be shared before the next meeting and a 'Capital Plan' item should be on the agenda of the spring meeting of OFEG [**ACTION: ALL**]; 2) in response to the OFWG report there continued to be a need for an OFEG position statement and an OFEG roadmap for ship replacement. It was highlighted that the position statement should limit its comment to OFEG related issues. Mike Webb and Thomas Mueller agreed to take the lead with the OFEG position statement and the OFEG roadmap, respectively [**ACTION: WEBB/MUELLER**].

2 Feedback on barter cruises in 2007 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 agreed that it would be useful for the Group to maintain a list of key telephone numbers for ships in the OFEG fleet so that it is relatively easy to contact ships when barter cruises are taking place. Thomas Mueller agreed to circulate a list for OFEG partners to add ship contact details [**ACTION: MUELLER**]. Concern was raised over the level of engagement on one Principal Scientist (PS) with the planning of a recent barter cruise. It was highlighted that both Norway and the UK had recently introduced a review of PS's conduct. It was agreed that all members need to enforce a strong planning procedure for barter cruises and that the members would in future issue letters to the PSs of barter cruises to let them know what the cruise planning expectations are [**ACTION: ALL**].

3 Up-date on the 2007 and 2008 cruise programmes and new barter opportunities

Following a discussion on the 2007 and 2008 cruise programmes and on a number of proposed barter opportunities, it was agreed that members would email to the Mike Webb any amendments to the 'Barter Bids' information paper [**ACTION: ALL**]

4 Fleet and major marine facilities changes and proposed procurements

4.1 The Group noted there was no decision yet on the funding for the replacement of *RV Sonne* and that the replacement of *RV Poseidon* was likely to only be considered once agreement had been reached on the replacement of *RV Sonne*. Consequently the replacement of *RV Poseidon* would not be before 2014.

4.2 It was also noted that: Ifremer had taken delivery of a second AUV; the new multi-beam on *RV Pelagia* is now operational; plans are now in place for the delivery in 2012 of a new Norwegian ice ship and a replacement for the *RRS Discovery*; and, a proposal has been developed for a Dutch 2000m ROV.

5 OFEG membership

5.1 Following a recommendation in the OFWG report, the Group considered whether there was a case for expanding the membership of OFEG. Following discussion, it was unanimously agreed that the number of OFEG organisations should not increase. OFEG is the forum for ships operated regularly on an ocean and global scale, and as such the Group considered that there was no case for any further expansion. Even if this had not been the case, the Group felt that following the recent expansion of its membership from four to six members there was a need for a period of consolidation to allow for the strengthening of cooperation between members – especially with the two newest members, CSIC and IMR. The Group also agreed that bilateral regional agreements, such as that which the UK has with Ireland, could provide non-OFEG organisations with access to OFEG facilities via a trilateral exchange. Such an exchange has already been shown to be possible with the programming of a US bid for time on the *RV Sonne* in 2009 via the UK-US bilateral agreement.

6 OFEG-TECH update

- 6.1 The Group expressed strong support for its new OFEG-TECH initiative following a very successful first meeting of OFEG-TECH. This meeting was held over two-days in Bergen, Norway and was attended by 18 operational representatives of OFEG partners. The main outcomes of the meeting included: exchange of information on the operational set-up of partner organisations; planned development of a website for partners to share information on, and their experience of, marine equipment; and, identification of common problems – some of which will be examined by three OFEG-TECH working groups.
- 6.2 Following the success of the first meeting, the Group was informed that the next OFEG-TECH meeting will be held at NIOZ in 2008 and that Colin Day (NERC) would take on the role of OFEG-TECH Chairman. The Group agreed that: the timing of this meeting should allow for it to send a written report to the autumn meeting of OFEG; members should send up to three representatives to future OFEG-TECH meetings; that OFEG-TECH is primarily for technicians and there should no more than one manager sent as a representative by each member; that the minutes of the first OFEG-TECH should be circulated to members following the meeting [**ACTION: COLIN DAY**].
- 6.3 The Group decided that a ‘spare training berths for technicians’ item should be added to the spring agenda so that Colin Day can be part of the discussions [**ACTION: MIKE WEBB**]

7 Any other business

- 7.1 OFEG website: Following a discussion on the resourcing for the proposed new OFEG website, all members agreed that a proposal for the funding of a website would be well received. The Group was informed that the initial idea was that each member would contribute ca.£3k per year, but that the actual level of funding would be subject to further discussion at the next meeting when Colin Day would present a brief proposal. [**ACTION: COLIN DAY**].
- 7.2 It was agreed that: the next meeting should be held in Kiel on the 24th and 25th April; the Autumn 2008 meeting will be held in London on the 5th November; and, the Spring 2009 meeting will be held in Texel in May – which it was noted will be Marieke Rietveld’s last OFEG meeting.