



BAS/NOC Merger  
**CONSULTATION DOCUMENT**

TEMPLATE FOR RESPONSES

Deadline for response **Wednesday 10 October 2012.**

Please send responses (hard copy or by e-mail) to:

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Please enter any comments or suggestions under the headings below. You need only answer those sections that are of particular interest or concern to you or your organisation

**SECTION 1: Vision and Mission of the Centre**

It is difficult to comment upon this or to agree with the proposed Centre's vision and mission, without having (1) seen the detail of the arguments and an evidence-led (as opposed to assumption led) justification for the merger between the two bodies and (2) a clear statement as to how a merger adds value to the existing visions and missions of BAS and NOC separately.

**SECTION 2: Aims and Objectives of the Merger**

There is no evidence presented to demonstrate why and how the merger will (1) enhance UK competitiveness in marine and polar science; (2) better develop international partnerships; (3) enhance the UK perspectives on science delivery; or even (4) save significant sums of money over and above those that can be achieved under the current arrangements of separate polar and oceanographic research centres. Until such evidence has been presented and scrutinised by the Society, we are unable to offer our support to the idea of a single merged centre or to the proposed aims and objectives.

**SECTION 3: Scientific, Economic and Societal Impact Opportunities**

There are many different models under which synergies between marine and polar science might be developed further and for the UK science community in these areas to work more effectively together; merger is but one possible model. We would like to see a range of model options set out for consultation, together with their costs and benefits, and an independent options appraisal undertaken from outside NERC; only then would we feel we had enough evidence on which to formulate a careful judgement on such an important matter as merger between two well-established, high profile and internationally renown and respected institutes.

**SECTION 4: Name of the new Centre**

It is premature in our view to consider the name of the centre until the case has been proven for the need for one centre. BAS and NOC have high brand recognition, scientifically and politically. If in due course a case for merger can be well made and is accepted by all key stakeholders, then there is an argument after that for considering a change in name, but the political risks of doing so must be fully taken into account. To continue to use the BAS name for the logistical operation alone will be seen as little more than a ploy to keep a name without continuity of an integrated science & logistics function.

#### **SECTION 5: Governance and Management**

The proposals seem to be based largely on existing management structures within BAS and NOC, as such the structure per se would not seem to be contentious. Separate Directors of Polar and Marine science are highly recommended (as at present), regardless of if/how the institutes are restructured.

Given the size and complexity of the proposed merged institute, representation of key stakeholder groups will become vitally important. Some external representation on the Board of the institution would be vital. This is over and above a science Advisory Board. So, for example, the Advisory Board Chair and Deputy Chair could usefully sit as independent Board members, as could those with other skills.

#### **SECTION 6: Large Research Infrastructure**

The management of large research infrastructure should not be handled by NERC, adding a further level of administration by those who do not fully understand the complexities of field science in challenging and difficult environments.

Large infrastructure management should remain integrated within the research institute(s).

#### **Any Other Comments, including on questions such as:**

1. What do you think is the major opportunity that would result from the proposed merger?

On the basis of the evidence that is included in this consultation, nothing that could not result just as well from a closer working relationship between the two separate institutes, including closer co-operation over the planning and use of large infrastructure equipment.

2. What do you think is the major risk that may arise from the proposed merger?

This depends on how it is handled. Feelings among stakeholders currently seem to run high and that does not augur well for a smooth process. Major risks are: reputation damage in UK and overseas, loss of science staff, years of disruption, and negative press reflecting poorly on NERC at a critical time in the Government's funding rounds.

3. What are the features of the British Antarctic Survey that you think it is most important to preserve if the merger takes place?

World leading areas of science expertise and peer reviewed publication output, and reputation; the high cost efficiency and safety of its current logistics operations opening Antarctic research opportunities to others; increasing trend towards partnership working between BAS and the academic community; historic brand and dual purpose; strong UK representational role in terms of the Antarctic Treaty; both Antarctic and Arctic operations.

4. What are the features of the National Oceanography Centre that you think it is most important to preserve if the merger takes place?

No comment as the geography community works more with BAS than with NOC.