

NERC/BAS OPERATIONS AND SAFETY ASSURANCE & ADVISORY GROUP (NBOSAAG)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The NERC/BAS Operations and Safety Assurance & Advisory Group (NBOSAAG), is an advisory body with no executive powers. However, it is authorised by the NERC Executive Chair (EC) to investigate any activity within its terms of reference and to seek any information it requires from NERC staff.

Role of the Group

The role of the Group is to:

1. Provide the Executive Chair of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) with independent advice and assurance on Antarctic Operations and Safety.
2. Provide the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) with independent advice and support on Antarctic Operations and Safety matters.

Governance and Reporting

1. The Chair of the Group will report directly to the NERC EC on all matters relating to the Group's role and governance, and to agree its annual programme of work.
2. The NERC EC will agree the Group's annual review program, commission specific audits and reviews, and authorise requests from BAS for specific advice or support.
3. The Group will report annually to the NERC Management Board (NMB) on their activities retrospectively, and their work plan going forward.
4. In addition to providing assurance to the NERC EC and support to the BAS Management Team, the group will provide reports and advice to any other relevant person or body as directed by the NERC EC, for example, UKRI Committees or the Legal Commissioner for British Antarctic Territories.

As a non-executive Group, any guidance or opinions are advisory only. The NERC EC and BAS Management Team retain full authority and responsibility for operations and safety and they may choose to adopt or ignore the Group's guidance as they see fit.

Duties of the Group

The specific duties of the Group will be to:

1. Undertake a thematic review of Antarctic Operations and Safety over a rolling five-year period and offer advice and guidance to BAS and NERC EC. The relevant themes and their priority order would be defined in collaboration with BAS and agreed by the NERC EC.
2. Undertake specific reviews as directed by the NERC EC, for example, following an accident or incident impacting operations or safety. Report on findings and offer advice and guidance as appropriate.
3. As directed by the NERC EC, offer advice and guidance on new BAS policy proposals with a significant impact on operations and safety.
4. Assist BAS Management Team in ensuring that a Safety and Business Continuity Management (BCM) culture is in place at BAS and adhered to by all staff, offering advice and guidance as appropriate.

As a “light touch” body, members will be expected to work and contribute remotely and maximise the use of technology in undertaking its day-to-day work. In agreeing the annual work programme, the NERC EC will also consider and agree the anticipated number of physical meetings necessary to deliver that programme.

Membership

The Group will consist of a relatively small core membership that can be expanded if/as necessary to bring in additional experience to address specific tasks.

The Core Group will consist of a Chair and between four and six other members, with a target of 50% of the membership having Antarctic experience or an understanding of the BAS role. These core members will be experts in their respective fields who can bring experience from at least one of the following areas:

1. Management / Policy experience in a “high risk” operational environment
2. Antarctic Operations, including field operations and logistics
3. Ship and / or Aircraft Operations
4. Health and Safety and / or Business Continuity Management
5. Engineering / Construction safety
6. Provide essential links with other relevant NERC and BAS groups and committees

To ensure benchmarking against current international best practice, ideally, at least one of the core members selected for their Antarctic experience will have relevant experience from a non-UK Antarctic base. It is important to ensure that any guidance or opinion issued by the Group is not viewed externally as “Government Policy”. Therefore members of Central Government Departments will not form part of the Core Group.