

2 October 2012

### **Media statement on the BAS/NOC merger proposal**

NERC is aware that reports in the media have contained speculative statements about the future of the British Antarctic Survey (BAS), and in particular about the proposed merger of BAS and the National Oceanography Centre (NOC), both of which are wholly-owned NERC research centres.

NERC has made clear statements on this subject, first on its website on 8 April 2012 and more recently in the public document it issued on 11 September 2012 as the basis of its [open consultation](#) on the proposal to merge BAS and NOC.

To avoid further confusion or misinterpretation of these statements, we would emphasise the following points:

1. In recognition of the importance of the polar science and of the NERC role in maintaining the UK presence in Antarctica and South Georgia, NERC has provided BAS with a higher level of settlement for this CSR period – level cash – than any other NERC centre, and a higher level than the headline reduction of 3% cash in the NERC budget over the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) period. For this period BAS will receive at least the same level of funding in cash terms that it received in 2010/11.
2. In providing this funding settlement NERC has made a commitment to Government to the end of this CSR to support the current level of UK bases and activities in Antarctica and South Georgia. This will support the continued UK leadership and participation in the Antarctic Treaty system. The proposal to merge BAS and NOC does not change this commitment and there is no suggestion that Antarctic bases will be reduced or closed as a consequence of the merger.
3. Far from seeking to damage UK polar research, NERC has demonstrated its commitment to sustaining polar activity in spite of the financial constraints of its CSR settlement.
4. There are no plans to close BAS or to close the BAS offices in Cambridge.
5. It is true that there are some planned reductions in BAS staff, because even a level cash settlement is a real terms reduction. However, these are part of NERC's general response to the CSR settlement, which has demanded some savings across the board at all our Centres and in our grant research funding lines. For the most part the reduction is being achieved through voluntary exits and voluntary redundancies. The staff reductions in BAS and NOC would have been necessary, irrespective of the proposed merger.
6. In considering funding reductions, NERC considered carefully its entire scientific portfolio, recognising that there are other challenges, equally as great as those of polar science, to which NERC must also respond.