

## Natural Environment Research Council: Large-scale Research Infrastructure (LRI) Commissioning (2018-2028): British Ocean Sediment Core Research Facility (BOSCORF)

### Summary

1. NERC is inviting National Oceanographic Centre (NOC) to apply for The British Ocean Sediment Core Research Facility (BOSCORF) Large-Scale Research Infrastructure (LRI) funding over a 10 year period. BOSCORF, with NOC as their managing centre, should submit a clear case for support in response to the requirements identified by NERC in this specification. Further funding calls for other LRI will be released at a later stage.

### Background

2. This call is part of a wider review and commissioning of NERC National Capability (NC). NERC NC enables the UK to deliver world-leading environmental science, support national strategic needs, and respond to emergencies. It includes the research and development activities which keeps this capability at the cutting edge. It describes the element of NERC-funded activity directly procured by NERC due to a combination of its scale and complexity.
3. LRI funding provides specialist, large research infrastructure that enables excellence and impact in national to global-scale environmental science. A characteristic of large scale infrastructure is that its effective and financially-viable provision requires a single, critical mass both in operations, and in technical and regulatory compliance. LRI operating costs, capital purchases and maintenance are met by other funding streams.
4. NERC requires its large-scale research infrastructure to be available to the entire UK research community, and to support research from all NERC funding streams. This infrastructure is a major asset which the UK cannot afford to duplicate, and which allows the UK to engage in world-leading international research programmes, partnerships, and international barter programmes.

### Scope of commissioning

5. During this round of LRI commissioning, NERC are inviting BOSCORF to apply for a ten year funding period (1 October 2018 to 30 September 2028).
6. Applicants should note that the outcome-based approach adopted by this commissioning process places an onus on the applicant to demonstrate clearly how outcomes will be delivered. The commissioning and subsequent evaluation of all LRI will be assessed against a standard set of service requirements (outlined in Table 1).

### Requirements

7. NERC requires the delivery through BOSCORF of:
  - community access to a suite of state-of-the-art non-destructive core logging instruments and expertise that is unique in the UK;
  - specialised long-term core storage facilities that allow optimum core preservation for analysis and future investigations;
  - specialist training in core analysis, core logging technology and core data visualisation;
  - technological development of new research tools;

- long-term curation of core-based data relating to its holdings and from core-based national marine programmes in accordance with NERC data management policy;
- opportunities for enhanced research outputs by organising scientific meetings and workshops, and promoting use of advanced logging tools and
- integration of information on the UK sediment core archive into global data networks, promoting accessibility and collaboration within the global scientific community.

### Funding

8. **Resource:** BOSCORF will be commissioned at the existing level (£375k pa at 100% full cash cost (FCC)) for a ten year period commencing 1 October 2018 as agreed in the current arrangements. NOC will manage distribution and allocation of all funds for associated activities and management of the station.
9. **Capital:** Proposals should include in the *Case for Support*, details of any additional capital investment needs (up to £2M). There is no guarantee of additional capital investment within this call and LRI should provide evidence that the capability proposed can be delivered without any additional capital. This should be seen as an opportunity to flag potential transformative investments and any agreed leverage to deliver this ambition.

### Eligibility

10. This opportunity is only open to BOSCORF. NERC will announce further commissioning for other nominated LRI.

### Requirements and assessment criteria

11. Applicants will be expected to deliver against the overall essential NC-LRI objectives as outlined in the background section (paragraphs 2, 3, & 4). These requirements will also be used as a framework for future evaluation. Applicants should address the following criteria, with the focus on outcomes, within their *Case for Support* using the following headings (table 1):

Table 1 – LRI requirements
<p><b>Need to be supported by National Capability &amp; Contribution to NERC Charter Objectives (excellence, impact, skilled people, public engagement)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What capability will be provided by the LRI, how will it ensure unique capability and provision of NERC <a href="#">National Capability</a>?</li> <li>• How will the LRI capture impacts arising from the research supported?</li> <li>• State how the specific requirements of the user communities will be taken into account.</li> <li>• How will the LRI grow both existing and new communities?</li> <li>• How will the LRI identify and support training needs of the user communities?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Demand, usage &amp; access to and volume of service</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will access and usage be monitored?</li> <li>• How will the LRI provide maximum facility access (maximum uptime)?</li> <li>• How will the LRI collect and address user feedback, and monitor demand?</li> <li>• What mechanisms will be in place to ensure NERC grants are supported in a timely and appropriate way?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Physical capability (including Maintenance)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will the LRI identify future opportunities and need (financial, training, technical, equipment and physical capability)?</li> <li>• Describe how the LRI will identify leverage opportunities to support future</li> </ul>

sustainability.
<b>Staffing (Expertise and Service delivery)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How will the most appropriate level of staff be determined and how will they be equipped to support the users of the LRI?</li> </ul>
<b>Governance arrangements and mechanisms to deliver science quality</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe how the management and governance model will ensure effective delivery of NERC National Capability.</li> <li>What role with the LRI play in insuring the quality of scientific outcomes?</li> <li>What mechanism is in place to determine access to the service?</li> </ul>
<b>Upgrade /innovation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What areas will the LRI prioritise for innovation (internally for the facility &amp; to support the scientific communities) e.g. technique, equipment and community standards (nationally or internationally).</li> </ul>
<b>Value for money and funding</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How will the LRI demonstrate Value for Money? This may include (but not exclusive to) additional funding, joint agreements or leverage for use of buildings/facilities, staff, equipment or training. How will outputs be monitored?</li> <li>How will the LRI prioritise activities to meet resource allocations?</li> </ul>
<b>User engagement mechanisms</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How will the LRI identify, target and engage appropriate audiences and/or beneficiaries (e.g. core science community, industry, general public etc.)?</li> </ul>
<b>Risk Management and supplier competencies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How will the LRI manage risk and minimise service down time?</li> <li>How will the LRI ensure they achieve and maintain the required competencies? (Industrial standards, Legal, Health &amp; Safety, Environmental, HR).</li> </ul>

### Assessment process

- Proposals will be assessed by an expert panel in September 2018. The panel will be tasked to consider whether the evidence provided is appropriate to address these requirements.
- Only an application from NOC in partnership with BOSCORF will be accepted in this call. NERC reserves the right to return submissions for amendment if documents do not meet the required submission criteria in the relevant annex and format requirements outlined in Table 2. Applicants will be informed within two weeks of the submission deadline if this is the case.
- While on this occasion NERC has invited submissions and anticipates funding each application in this commissioning round, the expert panel may seek points of clarification or provide recommendations for amendments to better fit the required LRI criteria.
- The final funding announcement will be communicated in September 2018, with the ten year funding period commencing 01 October 2018.

### Reporting and review requirements

- BOSCORF will be required to report annually to NOC on the service provided who will subsequently report to NERC through the BOSCORF Executive Board. Annual reporting will directly align to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which will be included in a LRI Benefits Realisation Plan.
- BOSCORF, NOC and NERC will develop and agree a draft Benefits Realisation Plan, including

KPI's and a risk register, in parallel with the submission process with the final version to be agreed by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019. The Benefits Realisation Plan will also help inform future recommissioning activities. Guidance on this activity will be provided separately.

### How to apply

18. Proposals must be submitted using the Research Councils Joint Electronic Submission system (Je-S). To use this system, the applicant's Research Organisation must be registered as a Je-S user. Full details are available on the [Je-S website](#).
19. When using Je-S applicants should select;
  - Council > NERC
  - Scheme > NC&C
  - Call > NC LRI Commissioning JUL18
20. Dr Suzanne MacLachlan will act as submitter (and PI) in Je-S on behalf of NOC as lead Research Centre. Other facility staff should also be listed on the Je-S form.
21. All costs associated with the LRI must be itemised and fully justified in the Justification of Resources document, with the following exceptions;
  - Estate costs
  - Indirect costs
  - Staff salary costs (not time, which must be justified)
  - Other Directly Allocated costs e.g. Infrastructure Technicians
22. Applicants should itemise breakdown of funding headings costs and resources associated with NERC funding provided to the LRI. Details of the funding categories can be found in the [NERC Research Grants and Fellowships handbook](#).
23. Funding will remain at the current level to BOSCORF via NOC.
24. Applicants must ensure that their proposal is received by NERC by **4pm on 11 July 2018**. Further details for submission requirements can be found in Table 2 (below).
25. The following documents with stated page limited should be submitted as details in Table 2:

Table 2 – Proposal format	
Document/ attachment type	Requirements
Case for Support	<p><b>Up to 9 sides A4</b> in total, to cover:</p> <p><b>A. Up to 8 sides A4</b> on the following LRI requirements (as seen in Table 1):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to be supported by National Capability &amp; Contribution to NERC Charter Objectives;</li> <li>• Demand, usage &amp; access to and volume of service;</li> <li>• Physical capability (including Maintenance);</li> <li>• Staffing (Expertise and Service delivery);</li> <li>• Governance arrangements and mechanisms to deliver science quality;</li> <li>• Upgrade /innovation;</li> <li>• Value for money/funding;</li> <li>• User engagement mechanisms;</li> <li>• Risk Management and supplier competencies</li> </ul> <p>Text addressing these criteria should include any underpinning and science programme elements, outlining key deliverables and outcomes by including all necessary tables, references and figures.</p> <p><b>B. Up to 1 side A4</b> detailing how <i>up to</i> £2M additional capital would be allocated if available (including agreed leverage opportunities).</p>
Justification of Resources	<p><b>Up to 2 sides A4</b> for all collaborative organizations/locations.</p> <p>Provide a breakdown and justification of costs and resources associated with the funding provided by NERC. These figures should match those submitted in Je-S against the budget named in paragraph 7.</p> <p>If actual costs for LRI differ to this budget allocated through NERC National Capability funding, LRI's are invited to use this document to highlight the actual cost of operation. NERC does not guarantee any additional funding will be available during this commissioning process.</p> <p>Facilities should include a justification for all Directly Incurred Costs, Investigator effort, use of pool staff resources and any access to shared facilities and equipment being sought.</p>
Pathways to Impact	<p><b>Up to 2 sides of A4</b></p> <p>Focusing on engagement with users (industry, business, government, charities or the general public). Considering a wider strategy for;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who could potentially benefit from the S&amp;F over different timescales?</li> <li>• How might this value be realised?</li> </ul>
Letter of Support	<p>Letters of support should generally be from Project Partners or organisations relevant to delivering a specific service. Applicants should ensure that any letter of support adds value to the scientific case e.g. where access to data, facilities, infrastructure, equipment or information is being granted and/or leveraged.</p>
Other Attachment	<p>Additional annexes e.g. Operational Management Plan, Draft Benefits Realisation Plan.</p>

26. All documents (including embedded references) should be completed in single-spaced typescript of minimum font size 11 point Arial font or other sans serif typeface of equivalent size to Arial 11, with margins of at least 2 cm. Please note that Times New Roman, Arial narrow and Calibri are not allowable font types as they are smaller and any proposal which has used either of these font types within their submission will be sent back to re-submit. Page limit restrictions apply (Table 2) and should be adhered to. Failure to adhere to these guidelines will result in submissions being sent back for amendment.
27. Please note that on submission to council ALL non-PDF documents are converted to PDF, and the use of non-standard fonts may result in errors or font conversion, which could affect the overall length of the document. Additionally, where non-standard fonts are present, and even if the converted PDF document may look unaffected in the Je-S System, when it is imported into the Research Councils Grants System some information may be removed. We therefore recommend that where a document contains any non-standard fonts (scientific notation, diagrams, etc.), the document should be converted to PDF prior to attaching it to the proposal.

### Timetable

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|--|--------------------|
| • Call documentation published                 | April 2018         |
| • Deadline for submission of facility proposal | 11 July 2018 (4pm) |
| • Assessment panel meets                       | September 2018     |
| • Decision announced                           | September 2018     |
| • Funding begins                               | 01 October 2018    |
| • Benefits Realisation Plan agreed             | 01 April 2019      |

### Contact

28. For general (non-Je-S) queries about this guidance, please contact Amy Vitale ([NCLRI@nerc.ac.uk](mailto:NCLRI@nerc.ac.uk) /01793 442594).
29. Queries regarding the Je-S system will be handled via the Je-S help desk: [JesHelp@rcuk.ac.uk](mailto:JesHelp@rcuk.ac.uk) / 01793 444164).

### Other information

30. NERC is committed to Open Government and to meeting responsibilities under relevant legislation such as the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations. NERC has an obligation to respond to specific requests and may be required to disclose information about or provided by applicants. If any of the information included in the proposal is considered to be confidential or sensitive, applicants should identify the relevant text and explain why they consider an exemption should apply and for how long, and what harm may come from disclosure and/or publication. Note that even where information has been highlighted as confidential, NERC may still be required to disclose and/or publish the details, whether or not the application is successful. Further details are provided in the [NERC Grants Handbook](#).