

Oil and Gas – Innovation Programme



Oil and Gas Innovation Programme

Announcement of Opportunity: Decommissioning Brokerage Event – 5 July 2016 (Aberdeen)

1. Summary

The Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) invites applicants to participate in a one-day interactive workshop with the ultimate aim of investing £850k in research translation projects.

- Applicants must express their interest to participate via the NERC [events](#) page website and will receive a formal invitation confirming attendance. **Closing date for Expressions of Interest is 16:00 6 June 2016 GMT.**
- This is an Oil and Gas Innovation Programme Decommissioning event and therefore all proposal ideas developed during the workshop must fall within the remit of the three key challenges identified by industry stakeholders and other end-users.
- Participants will be expected to present an initial project idea to an expert panel at the end of the workshop.
- Brokerage Event participants will have the opportunity to submit a full research translation proposal through JeS by **15 September 2016 at 16:00 GMT.**

2. Background

This Brokerage Event and associated Innovation funding call focuses on decommissioning and its environmental management, which is the initial area of focus of investment in the Oil and Gas Innovation Programme.

In the broader context, society faces a significant challenge over the coming decades to ensure a secure, safe and affordable energy mix while continuing to tackle climate change by reducing carbon emissions. As the global population continues to grow over the coming decades there will be an increasing demand for energy. In pursuing its remit, NERC invests in world-leading research, training and innovation across the energy spectrum to provide business, policy and wider civil society with the independent evidence and expertise required to inform responsible decision-making.

The Oil and Gas Innovation Programme is a five-year, £5m initiative which brings together academia with industry, regulators and policy-makers to enable access to data, knowledge and expertise in the

UK environmental science research base. The Innovation Programme aims to understand the environmental challenges facing the oil and gas sector, identifying where existing science can address these and promoting engagement by:

- Providing a neutral, open interface with the vast body of UK environmental data, knowledge and expertise;
- Building effective partnerships to facilitate access to that body of knowledge; and
- Translating the knowledge and expertise generated by NERC investments into innovative, industry-relevant tools and approaches.

The wider Innovation Programme will be launched in late 2016, following a period of scoping and consultation with industry, academic and government representatives. Business, regulatory and policy communities will be invited to become members of the Innovation Programme and help shape the focus of future funding calls.

A number of industry stakeholders and other end-users are engaging with NERC in relation to the Decommissioning Brokerage Event, including, amongst others:

- APEM Ltd
- Centrica
- Gardline
- OMV
- Shell
- Department for Energy and Climate Change
- Natural England
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Three key challenges have been identified (see Section 4, Scope).

3. The Brokerage Event

3.1 What is a Brokerage Event?

The Brokerage Event will be an intensive, interactive and free thinking workshop, where environmental scientists and end-users come together to network and develop ideas for research translation proposals which provide innovative solutions to meet the key challenges identified.

The Brokerage Event will be led by professional facilitators. Following the event, participants will be encouraged to submit innovation project proposals through JeS. (Please note that no funding decisions will be made at the Brokerage Event).

3.2 How will the Brokerage Event work?

The Brokerage Event will be run over one full day, starting at 9:00 and finishing at 17.00.

It is anticipated that the event will involve between 20 and 30 participants who are directly seeking funding. In addition to this, a number of facilitators, advisors and key end-user representatives will also be engaged in the process. 'End-users' may be private, public or third sector organisations or institutions, private industry, public bodies (such as government departments, local government, regulatory authorities, etc.), non-government organisations or charities.

The process of the event will be in several stages:

- defining the scope of challenges facing industry;
- agreeing a way of working and a process;
- sharing understanding of the challenges, and the expertise brought by the participants;
- focusing on a challenge, using creative and innovative thinking techniques in break-out sessions; and
- presenting initial ideas formulated by a project team to an expert panel.

Participants are then encouraged to go away and develop the outputs of the workshop into a research translation proposal that will be submitted after the event.

3.3 Location and Date

The workshop will take place at the **Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre on Tuesday 5 July 2016**. Submission of an Expression of Interest will be taken to mean availability for this date and a commitment to attend the entirety of the event. We will send out full details of the venue, travel and the accommodation arrangements to all participants. Travel, hotel costs and meals for the duration of the workshop will be covered by NERC.

4. Scope

Projects developed during the workshop must fall within the scope of oil and gas decommissioning and its environmental management. The three key challenges identified by industry and other end-users are:

- **Development of environmental baselines and innovative monitoring techniques and approaches** – This theme recognises the need for standardised, consistent, cost effective data collection and regulated and agreed monitoring protocols covering techniques and time periods to establish baselines. These need to be modern and relevant – taking account of the fact that the North Sea’s ‘baseline’ was effectively 50 years ago before offshore oil and gas exploration began.
- **Data management, sharing, access and collaboration** – Aside from the issues of consistent data collection addressed in the above, this challenge recognises the need for sharing of data between interested parties and related issues around acquisition, creation, accessibility and management of big data sets. What data is available? How comparable is this? Can a strategic approach be taken? It also recognises that the marine environment is shared by a wide variety of users, all of whom potentially impact the environment to a greater or lesser extent, and the need to share data and lessons learnt and consider cumulative impact and potential trade-offs. A depth and breadth of environmental data and understanding is needed to inform policy and regulation of decommissioning.
- **Impact of man-made structures on the natural environment and options for decommissioning** – This challenge recognises the need to better understand the influence of man-made structures on the marine ecosystem, and their potential to change the environment. What are the impacts at the biological community to ecosystem scale and at an individual and cumulative level? How can environmental costs and benefits be considered alongside other aspects? The challenge also recognises the need for full comparison and consideration of impacts and opportunities for re-use, recycling and disposal on a life-cycle basis.

These challenges will be described in depth at the Brokerage Event itself. The strong interlinkage between the three is recognised, and it is likely that research translation projects developed may span across these.

What is research translation?

For the purpose of this opportunity, research translation is defined as the integration or adaptation of existing research outputs to enable the development of technologies and solutions for the benefit of practitioners and decision-makers outside of academia. This includes emerging or adapting research outputs or the bringing together of dispersed knowledge and developing it into a form that is appropriate for use by the practitioner/decision-maker. Research translation is predicated on access to expertise and the exchange of knowledge – often leading to the fusion of knowledge between academia and the practitioner/decision-maker. Therefore, effective knowledge exchange is the cornerstone of research translation, resulting in new products, services, tools, technologies, demonstrator projects, evidence-based systematic reviews, and other outcomes that create tangible economic or societal benefits.

5. Application Procedure for Workshop Participants

5.1 Who should apply?

We invite applications to participate in the Brokerage Event from individual UK researchers who are:

- Based at Higher Education Institutions (HEI) or Research Organisations eligible for NERC funding. For further information on eligible Independent Research Organisations visit the [RCUK webpage](#).
- Researchers from eligible UK institutions able to act on successful projects as Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator. See NERC [Research Grants Handbook](#) for further eligibility information.
- Experienced Postdoctoral Research Award holders (PDRAs) who could make an important contribution and would gain additional benefits by attending e.g. developing new links, gaining experience. Please note: as these candidates are generally not eligible to hold NERC grants so opportunities to participate directly in the funded project may be limited.
- Individuals from UK organisations not eligible to receive NERC funding who feel they could make an important contribution to the research. They may potentially act as project partners on successful projects.
- **Applicants must be available to attend for the full duration of the workshop, and submission of an Expression of Interest will be taken as a definite commitment to attend.** Please note: Substitutes or representatives for selected applicants will not be permitted to attend unless under exceptional circumstances and by pre-agreement with NERC. Only workshop participants may receive funding as a Principal or Co-Investigator on a resulting award.

We encourage applications from all relevant research areas but more importantly, applicants must demonstrate an enthusiasm for research translation and indicate how their expertise can address

the defined problems. Applicants should not feel limited by conventional perceptions; this event is about bringing together people who may not normally interact. Unsuccessful applicants from previous Oil and Gas Innovation Programme funding rounds are encouraged to register their interest in attending.

5.2 How to apply

Applicants should complete the Expression of Interest (EOI) form available on the NERC events page website.

Please ensure you fully complete the EOI form, as this is the only information used for the selection of participants. Your answers to these questions will be used to differentiate your application and convince us that you have the suitable skills and outlook to participate in this event. We are looking for both your relevant skills and expertise and for evidence of how you might approach the industry challenges.

The completed registration form should be submitted **by 16:00 on Monday 6 June 2016**. No further documentation will be accepted and we will not consider late submissions.

If selected as a participant, your application details may be made available at the event to other participants to facilitate networking.

5.3 Assessment Criteria

NERC will identify the attendees to take part in the Brokerage Event. The participant selection panel will seek to ensure that a balance of expertise is present at the event; their assessment will be based on the criteria outlined below:

- specific expertise relevant to the challenges identified;
- the ability to develop new and highly innovative project ideas that address an end-user need;
- the ability to communicate with non-experts.

Please also note that it will not be possible to provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

5.4 Post-Workshop Activities

Following the Brokerage Event, investigators involved in the projects conceived/developed will be encouraged to submit their project ideas as a research translation project proposal. **Proposals will only be accepted from those who have participated in the full Brokerage Event. Where specialist expertise is required, applicants can make the case to include additional project team members who did not attend the event. Project leads (Principal Investigators) should contact the NERC office with their justification for doing this at least two weeks prior to submission.** The deadline for submission via the Research Councils Joint Electronic Submission System (Je-S) will be **15 September 2016 at 16:00**. Further guidance on this part of the process will be provided to Brokerage Event participants.

6. Key Dates

Expression of Interest Opens	16 May 2016
Expression of Interest Application Deadline	6 June 2016
Participants Panel Selection and Applicants Informed	Week commencing 6 June 2016
Brokerage Event	5 July 2016
Proposal Submission Deadline	15 September 2016
Funding Announcement	End of October 2016

7. Contact Details

For further information, advice or queries regarding the format of the event and application procedure please contact:

Sarah Keynes

Knowledge & Innovation Manager: Natural Resources

01793 411541

saryne@nerc.ac.uk

Judith Youziel

Innovation Programme Officer

01793 442896

juyouz@nerc.ac.uk

Or email: innovation@nerc.ac.uk