

DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR AN INDEPENDENT REPORT RELATING TO THE RESEARCH PROJECT (SARF 098)

CONTEXT

SARF Directors received the report entitled PAMP Refreshment Study from its Contractor in late December 2015. After due process, it was accepted and approved in March 2016 for publication. For a variety of reasons, Directors considered that when the report is published on the SARF Website and given an ISBN number, SARF should also prepare and publish a “statement”. This would be based on a collation of the range of their comments, particularly as they related to the methodologies, applications and conclusions of the report. Significant, positive and supportive comments were also provided by Directors, who also acknowledged that there were good reasons to use the findings of the report as a “platform” for further research. These comments were derived from two main sources – the reports of external referees and Directors’ own knowledge and experience of the research topic, and included some reference to the implications of putting the contractor’s report in the public domain.

OBJECTIVES

Derived from the CONTEXT as given above, Directors determined that this “statement” should be provided by independent advisers to be appointed by SARF. The objective would be to produce a succinct analytical report that would address their collective comments as described in the CONTEXT. Further, the consultants should also advise on how SARF might promote further research into the same topic as a matter of some urgency.

METHODS

The methods to be used by the independent consultants will be based on the NERC moderation process for research grants, which contains elements of: reconciliation of reviewers’ comments; critical technical assessment; enumeration of strengths, uncertainties and weaknesses; consideration of wider stakeholder, societal and environmental impact; recommendations for possible development. This moderation will mainly be based on written material, discussions with individual Directors, Secretariat and members of the SARF Steering Group and, if appropriate, other experts in similar areas of research.

SOURCE MATERIALS

The main source materials that should be consulted and analysed are listed below:-

- (i) The Contractor’s report and its contractual requirements;
- (ii) All reports/reviews that were provided by SARF’s independent referees;
- (iii) Assuming their agreement, informal discussions with the authors of the Contractor’s report – primarily for clarification purposes;
- (iv) Comments (anonymous) provided by individual directors as part of the decision-making process;
- (v) Subject to the approval of SARF, any other sources that might be of relevance.

COMPOSITION OF ASSESSMENT TEAM AND THEIR REMUNERATION

SARF should appoint three independent consultants as follows:

1. Independent Convener with experience of this type of overview who will ensure compliance with the TOR and SARF’s general *modus operandi*
2. Expert statistician with experience of similar applications in marine biology
3. Marine biologist with expertise in similar research fields to the project

SARF should delegate the selection procedure to the Secretariat and Chairman, who will also determine a realistic cap on total expenditure, which will be based on comparative consultancy rates. All necessary expenditure, e.g. travel and subsistence, secretarial help, etc will be reimbursed by SARF.

TIMETABLE

A final or progress report to be available for presentation, discussion and approval at the SARF Board Meeting on 12th May 2016.

Professor William Ritchie
Chairman of SARF
24th March 2016