



Presenter Biographies Day 2 –

Daily Host - Dr Alex Phillips – Head of MARS National Oceanography Centre



Dr Alex Phillips is a qualified Naval Architect with 15 years' experience in the unmanned marine industry. Upon graduating from the University of Southampton, Alex spent two years in the offshore industry before returning to Southampton to complete a PhD in hydrodynamics of underwater vehicles. On completion of his PhD, he continued to research in the field of underwater robotics. In 2015 he joined the National Oceanography Centre as Head of Marine Autonomous Systems Development within the Marine Autonomous and Robotic Systems group where he led the development of Autosub5 and the Autosub Long Range 1500 programme. In 2023 he was appointed Head of the NOC's Marine Autonomous and Robotic Systems (MARS) facility with responsibility for both ongoing development of the equipment and the global operations of the NOC's large fleet of marine autonomy.

Theme 2

Session Chair Dr Sara Fowell

Dr Sara Fowell – Marine biogeochemist at the National Oceanography Centre



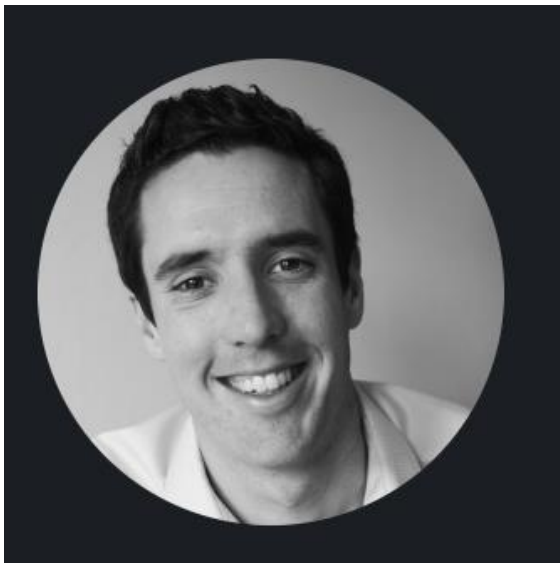
Dr Sara Fowell is a marine biogeochemist at the National Oceanography Centre who specialises in pushing novel autonomous sensors to their limits, deploying them deeper and longer than before, or in places almost no one has ever heard of. Sara is particularly interested in deciphering drivers of coral reef metabolism, and the response of these ecosystems to climate change. Sara especially enjoys making marine technology available to users outside of academia, realised through her work with Small Island Developing States through to large commercial subsea infrastructure companies. When she's not

Georgios Salavasidis – National Oceanography Centre



“Georgios is a senior robotics researcher with a proven track record in marine robotics. With nearly 10 years at the National Oceanography Centre, he has led numerous R&D projects in areas such as long-range navigation, networked robotic operations, and decision-making. His current research focuses on advancing system intelligence to enable AUVs with the ability to track dynamics underwater events and autonomy to enable AUVs with long range operations in remote, GPS-denied environments, including beneath the Arctic and Antarctic polar ice.”

Axel Durbec – Exail



Axel Durbec is an experienced software professional with a strong passion for autonomous vehicles and artificial intelligence. After several years in the automotive industry working on autonomous vehicle prototypes in Germany, Axel has spent the last nine years at Exail. He began by architecting the software for a 3000-meter depth underwater drone and now serves as the Technical Project and Product Manager, leading the development and performance of the DriX unmanned surface vessel (USV). Axel’s expertise lies in cross-domain coordination, seamlessly bridging software and systems design with production to deliver high-performance and reliable robotic platforms

Nick Swift – Wavefront



Nick Swift started his career in marine technology straight from leaving school, working on submarine sonars with the MoD. He then studied Physics at University before continuing his career in the maritime industry working on seismic vessels.

Has spent most of his life working in the offshore industry, from repairing sonars on submarines as an MoD apprentice, shooting seismic off the coast of Africa and working with underwater systems in the offshore energy market. He is currently involved in underwater positioning and imaging technologies.

Nick is now a business development consultant for some of the Covelya group companies, including Sonardyne and Wavefront Systems, focusing on global Ocean Science markets.

David Hull – HydroSurv



David Hull is the Founder and CEO of HydroSurv, a pioneering UK-based company specialising in Uncrewed Surface Vessel (USV) technology for hydrographic and environmental surveying. With over twenty years of experience in the commercial marine sector - spanning shipbuilding, repair, installation, and O&M - David has led HydroSurv to deliver more than 80 successful projects and 23 USV units over the past five years. Under his leadership, HydroSurv has expanded its deployment footprint across the UK, Europe, North America, Asia and Africa, driving innovation in uncrewed vessel applications worldwide

Dr Sourav Sahoo – National Oceanography Centre



I am a geophysicist working in rock physics lab and underwater acoustics. My novelty is in ‘inter-disciplinary’ and ‘multi-scale’ characterization of physical and mechanical properties of ice/rocks/sediments remotely. I am also interested in developing new state of the art laboratory geophysical equipment, autonomous robotics, and optical fibre technology. I joined in NOC in 2014 as PhD student and currently working as a senior researcher.

Mike Gallo –EIVA



Mike Gallo is EIVA’s Business Development Manager of EIVA’s Robotics and AI team. He has decade-plus experience in Sales / BD in the offshore / survey world, having got his start at Coda Octopus and more recently with Rovco / Vaarst (now Beam), he has covered different aspects and perspectives of the technologies required to gather datasets and estimating position offshore and underwater, from more conventional Sonar / Acoustics methods up to the cutting edge of Computer Vision and Real Time perception solutions.

His role at EIVA is therefore a natural progression, as EIVA, backed up by the wider Covelya group, leverages both conventional and new technologies to build a future around automation and autonomy.

Samual Stanton – National Oceanography Centre



I'm a Marine Environmental Scientist with over 20 years of experience including taxonomy, fieldwork, environmental DNA (eDNA), reporting and management. I've a history of working on commercial marine ecology projects for the offshore energy and renewables industries, alongside various other projects with conservation, industrial or academic stakeholders. Having worked for a large multinational for >18 years, I took up a role working to bring eDNA technology into offshore commercial applications before joining the business development team at the National Oceanography Centre (NOC) in 2023. Here I am focusing on bringing the power of NOC's scientific expertise to projects with commercial partners.

Only with charities, academics, industries and the general public working in the same direction can we affect the real change our oceans so desperately need. I'm very proud to have a small role in helping to move our understanding forward.

Luca Dofing - Nautilus Aris – Academic Spaceflight Initiative Switzerland



Luca Dofing

Project Manager, NAUTILUS ARIS

MSc Student in Robotics, Systems and Control at ETH Zurich

As Project Manager of NAUTILUS, part of the non-profit organization ARIS, Luca Dofing leads a dedicated multidisciplinary team of 40 university students building an autonomous underwater glider for polar research. NAUTILUS allows students to step outside the classroom, tackle real-world problems and inspire them to become the next generation of innovators.

Luca pursued a Bachelor's in Mechanical Engineering at ETH Zurich, where she worked as a Software and Controls Engineer on the AVERO project hosted by the Autonomous Systems Lab (ASL). This project involved developing a propeller-less aerial robot for safer human and environmental interactions. At

NAUTILUS, Luca started as a Structural Engineer before moving on to a Systems Engineer role, eventually becoming Project Manager. Building on these experiences, she is pursuing a Master's in Robotics, Systems and Control at ETH Zurich, focusing on advancing autonomous systems

Jeremy Sitbon - Aleseamar



Jérémy Sitbon graduated from the engineering school Polytech Paris-UPMC, part of Pierre et Marie Curie University (Paris, France), with a major in Robotics Engineering. During his studies, he completed an internship with the French Defence Procurement Agency, focusing on aerial drone's vision systems.

In 2015, Jérémy joined the ecoSUB R&D team at the Marine Robotics Innovation Centre, National Oceanography Centre, Southampton. He progressed from Software Engineer to Chief Robotics Engineer, leading the development of the ecoSUB range of autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs).

Since 2022, Jérémy has been working as a Systems Architect and Project Manager at Aleseamar. In this role, he designs and integrates complex systems for the SeaExplorer glider, ensuring seamless performance and reliability. He also manages the Shallow SeaExplorer project, overseeing its development and implementation.

Theme 3

Session Chair – Dr Katy Hill



Dr Katy Hill – Lead Scientist for Ocean Research Infrastructure

Katy is experienced in science management and science diplomacy with a strong background in marine and climate science and the delivery of collaborative projects and programmes at the National, Regional and International/Intergovernmental levels. As Lead Scientist for Ocean Research Infrastructure, Katy provides scientific leadership and oversight of planning and investment in ocean research infrastructure (observation, data and prediction systems), including engagement with national and international partners and programmes. Specific roles include:

- Lead Scientist, UK Global Ocean Observing: Engage with Marine Science Community, Funders and Govt and international partners (e.g. through G7, GOOS) to strengthen coordination and boost UK

investment and impact in ocean observing, with support from UK Government. Katy is the UK Coordinator for the G7 Future of the Seas and Oceans Initiative (G7 FSOI) and provides a strategic overview to the G7 FSOI Work Programme, in close coordination with the EU Office. Further information can be found at www.g7fsoi.org.

- **Lead Scientist, NERC Future Marine Research Infrastructure:** A member of the FMRI Executive Team, the Lead Scientist is responsible for providing the programme with scientific leadership. They act as the focal point for both internal and external representation of the science, advising the SRO and working closely with the independent Science Advisory Group. www.fmri.ac.uk
- **International representation:** Katy also sits on a number of boards and committees including as Vice Chair of the World Meteorological Organisation Advisory Group on Ocean, and as a member of the UN Ocean Decade Data Coordination Group. Katy has also been an invited expert on review panels including for the review of the European Global Ocean Observing System (EuroGOOS), the NOAA Global Ocean Monitoring and Observing Programme and sat on the GOOS Governance Task Team .

Mark Burnett – Director of Special Operations Seiche Group



Mark Burnett is Director (Special Operations) with Seiche Group, with whom he has been employed since November 2016. Immediately prior to this Mark was the CEO of WGP Group where he spent the previous 19 years.

Mark is a graduate of Liverpool John Moores University (**BSc (Hons) Maritime Studies**) and has over twenty five years' cross maritime sector experience.

The First part of Mark's career involved offshore technical roles then onshore operational support and management positions in the marine geophysical sector, working in most corners of the world from Azerbaijan to Sakhalin, Greenland to Papua New Guinea.

Mark's current role in Seiche focuses on the Defence & Security, Offshore Energy and Marine Science sectors with particular interest in Marine Autonomy, Novel Sensors and Collaborative Partnerships.

Mark is the Chair of the recently formed North Devon and Torridge Maritime Network, and Clean Maritime Champion for Northern Devon - Focusing efforts to develop the regional economy, innovation and skills in the blue economy sector.

Martin Stemp – RS Aqua



Martin is the Managing Director of RS Aqua, the largest provider of ocean technology equipment across the UK & Ireland, operating across Science, Defence, Energy and Marine Engineering. Equipped with an Ocean Science background from the University of Bangor and University of Plymouth, Martin is focused on the sustainable growth of the blue economy enabled by advanced technology.

Justin Manely – Open Ocean Robotics



Justin Manley is a technologist and executive with experience in startup, public corporation, academic, and public sectors. After professional roles at MIT, supporting NOAA and in the private sector he founded Just Innovation Inc. in 2015 to support a variety of clients with a focus on uncrewed and undersea systems. Mr. Manley has demonstrated accomplishments in professional organizations including MTS and IEEE. He is a member of the NOAA Ocean Exploration Advisory Board and Co-Chairs the Technology & Innovation Informal Working Group for the UN Ocean Decade. He is also dedicated to innovation, advising startup companies and as a judge for the ANA AVATAR XPRIZE

Natasya Savina – CEO Seabed Ai



Nastasya is a seasoned strategic, hands-on manager with almost 30 years of experience delivering success in startup and corporate environments. She has led marketing, HR functions or regional offices of various AI companies for over 20 years.

Nastasya, with her expertise in AI, co-founded and leads Seabed.AI (<https://seabed.ai>). Seabed.AI is set to disrupt the marine geophysical survey industry by leveraging AI to significantly reduce the time and

costs of data interpretation while improving accuracy. This innovation addresses a key bottleneck in the early development stages of offshore projects (wind farms, interconnectors, etc.), which currently heavily rely on manual data processing.

She is passionate about climate innovation, trains and tutors occasionally and writes articles for Forbes or other media. The rest of her time, love and efforts belong to her family

Justin Buck – National Oceanography Centre

Principal robotics engineer and delivery lead in the NOC MARS team focusing on the digital aspects of using marine autonomy in ocean observation. Representations include the Global Ocean Observing System Ocean Coordination Group data task team member and the Ocean Best Practices System steering team member. Prior to joining MARS in November 2023 Justin Buck was senior data scientist working of FAIR with a focus on data from marine autonomy.

Arter Lidtke - Maritime Research Institute Netherlands (MARINS)



I graduated with a Ship Science degree from the University of Southampton in 2013 before pursuing a PhD at the Fluid Structure Interaction on the topic of maritime hydrodynamics and noise. Later, I carried out post-doctoral research on autonomous underwater vehicle hydrodynamics and propulsion. Since late 2018, I am performing applied research at the Maritime Research Institute Netherlands (MARIN). Main focal points of my work are unsteady hydrodynamics and data science.

Colin Sauze – National Oceanography Centre



Colin Sauze is a Senior Research Software Engineer in the Ocean Informatics group at the National Oceanography Centre. He holds a PhD from Aberystwyth University in biologically inspired power management techniques in autonomous sailing robots. He began his post-doctoral career continuing his PhD work in a project with Airbus before moving into several more general scientific and high performance computing positions. He has been at NOC since January 2023 where he co-leads a growing

team of Research Software Engineers who bring together expertise in research and software development to build better software that facilitates world class research.

Clemen Kok – Imperial College



Biography: Clemen is a fourth-year Electronic and Information Engineering student at Imperial College London. He previously did an internship at Amazon Web Services, working on cloud infrastructure for the telecommunications industry. He has a keen interest in distributed systems and wireless communications.

Aranya Gupta – Imperial College



Aranya is a fourth-year Electronic and Information Engineering student at Imperial College London. He has worked on a variety of engineering projects, including building an electronic keyboard, developing machine learning classifiers for brain tumour detection and modelling a RISC-V CPU from scratch. His current interests lie in machine learning and computer architecture