



UK Hydrographic Office

Admiralty Way
Taunton, Somerset, TA1 2DN, United Kingdom
Telephone: +44 (0)1823 483137
E-Mail: rhett.hatcher@ukho.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/ukho

From: **Rear Admiral Rhett Hatcher**
UK National Hydrographer

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INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CREATION OF UK POLICY ON CROWD SOURCED BATHYMETRY

Dear MSCC members,

ISSUE. The UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO), as UK HMG's representative to the International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO) has been requested via IHO circular CL21_2020¹ to submit the UK's official position on the collection and provision of **Crowd Sourced Bathymetry** in waters under UK jurisdiction. This will involve refining and validating the UKHO's proposed response with other UK stakeholders.

ACTION REQUIRED

You are invited to register your interest to participate in the next steps. We are conscious that it is a particularly busy time for colleagues across the UK and we will endeavour to minimise the burden to better enable your participation. To register for involvement, please respond to Government.Relations@UKHO.gov.uk, titling your email with "**CSB Participation Registration**". The closing date for registration is mid-day 13th July 2021.

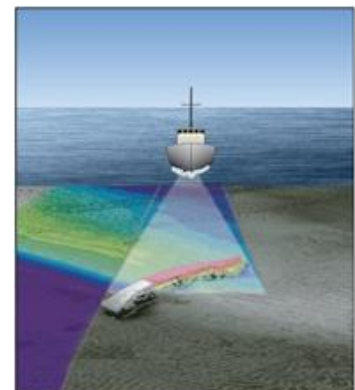
BACKGROUND

The International Hydrographic Office (IHO), an associated organisation to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), consisting of 94 coastal and island states has requested its membership to submit their national positions on (the relatively new technological advancement of) CSB occurring within their waters and the release of this data to the public.

Whilst UKHO is UK HMG's lead for hydrography and seabed mapping, we are acutely aware of the national security, economic and environmental risks and benefits of CSB. Therefore, we welcome MSCC participation in refining and validating UKHO's proposed response to the IHO.

WHAT IS CSB? CSB is defined by the IHO as '*depth measurements from vessels, collected using standard navigation instruments, while engaged in routine maritime operations.*' [Source: IHO Guidance on Crowdsourced bathymetry - B12]

Within the Exclusive Economic Zone, Territorial Sea and Internal Waters planned seabed surveying activities require permission from the coastal state; CSB doesn't fall into this category. But with bathymetric data collection technology becoming cheaper and more commonly installed on vessels as obstacle avoidance safety devices, and with the absence of any national CSB regulation, the



¹ https://iho.int/uploads/user/circular_letters/eng_2020/CL21_2020_EN_v1.pdf

data that is being collected is no longer being discarded as it now has increasing commercial value (particularly for commercial prospecting) and is being sold on to any user. Coastal states now need to consider how to regulate this change to the status quo.

The IHO's position. The IHO is pro CSB and view it as a method for increasing knowledge of the world's seabed (currently only 20% mapped) and supporting various high level global initiatives now in place that seek to address ocean issues such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. The IHO also encourages CSB data to be uploaded to their Data Centre for Digital Bathymetry (DCDB) as an archive and access point for any interested user.

CSB Opportunities

- Increases our knowledge of the UK's marine estate which supports UNCLOS, SOLAS, marine spatial planning, environmental protection, and security planning & response.
- Opportunity for UK to contribute internationally to the furthering of our knowledge of the world's seabed and the various high-level global initiatives this supports.

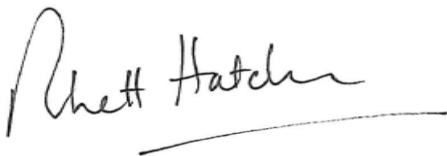
CSB Risks

- Increased ability to collect data without national permission and ability to download data that gives greater awareness of our seabed could be exploited for nefarious purposes by our adversaries: both state actors and organised crime.
- As CSB is collected by non-survey specialists, the data quality might not be compliant to international standards. This could lead to negative outcomes if too much reliance is put on it by uninformed users.

UKHO's recommendation for the UK position. CSB data collection and provision should be allowed within UK waters, with caveats that mitigate risk. MSCC and National Maritime Security Committee (Officials) (NMSC(O)) input is required to validate our proposed response, which will form the UK's position to the IHO. To receive a copy of the UKHO's proposed response and be involved in this validation process, please register your interest as per para 2.

We look forward to your participation

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Rhett Hatcher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the signature is a horizontal line that extends to the right, serving as a separator or underline.