

Future GEBCO symposia

Submitted by GGC Chair

SUMMARY

Executive Summary: This document aims to facilitate an informed discussion on the future of the GEBCO symposium

Action to be taken: See paragraph 3

Related documents: None

1. Overview/Introduction

The Map the Gaps Symposium has gone through major developments in recent years. What started as a one-day GEBCO Science Day has grown and become a two-day symposium that attracts both science, government and relevant industry actors.

After 2016, Science Day was renamed Map the Gaps Symposium to reflect the growing influence of GEBCO internationally, the opportunity to attract a larger and diverse audience to GEBCO, and the launch of the nascent project: Seabed 2030. Due to the success of the symposium in subsequent years, and the complexities and financial requirements, a non-profit of the *same name* was established to overcome some of these challenges. GEBCO-NF Alumni from the XPRIZE competition also joined at the inception of the non-profit to attempt to carry-on international activities in ocean mapping that involved this unique group.

It provides a venue to interact with and grow the GEBCO network and address the many challenges related to improving and sharing seabed knowledge. Tim Kearns has done a great and impressive job, with little means, to develop and deliver the symposium these last few years – with a substantial impact to GEBCO and the ocean mapping community. In view of a GEBCO strategy under development, of a GEBCO Governance Review, of the Nippon Foundation GEBCO Seabed 2030 project and its strategic role for GEBCO, of future venues for the GEBCO week with its opportunities and limitations, we need to address the symposium as a means to an end, as a tool. How can it support the GEBCO strategy, how should it be organized, how should it be governed, what role has SCOPE, how should it be profiled? I do not wish to present a solution but would welcome an informed discussion that could provide input for a smaller group that would then prepare recommendations to GGC41.

2. Discussion/Background information (delete as required)

What should a future GEBCO symposium look like and how should it be organized taking into account that:

- a. The available budget for organizing a symposium is modest and we need a sustainable solution to the continual budget shortfall.
- b. The symposium has grown from a one-day symposium (of GEBCO people talking to GEBCO people), to a two-day symposium with a far broader outreach, including both science, government and industry representatives and external sponsorship(s).
- c. Integration / harmonization with Seabed 2030 activities is essential while maintaining a clear global GEBCO profile / branding.
- d. The widest possible attendance is facilitated. For example, next year's GEBCO week will be in Fiji with the purpose of bringing GEBCO to the Pacific. To secure maximum attendance of Pacific Island States, travel budgets need to be sponsored.
- e. The symposium has developed very positively but also organically. Future GEBCO symposia need to consider the yet unfinished GEBCO strategy and governance.

3. Action

The GGC is requested to:

- a. **Note** and discuss the contents of this report;
- b. Task a small group to provide recommendations to GGC41 on guidelines for organizing future GEBCO symposia; and
- c. **Take** any other action deemed appropriate.