

Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee (GBSC)

Meeting papers

**UK-Arctic Stakeholders report of
conference held at the Scottish
Association for Marine Sciences, Oban
10-12 March 2008**

September 2008

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UK-Arctic Stakeholders**Report of the Conference held at The Scottish Association for Marine Sciences (SAMS), Oban (10-12 March 2008)****Executive Summary**

The speed of climatic change in the Arctic and the associated impacts and opportunities mean that ‘business as usual’, with respect to the way the UK interacts with the region (both politically and commercially), is unlikely to be a sustainable or viable approach.

The wide-ranging discussion focusing on the UK’s interests in the Arctic led to a number of conclusions and specific actions or deliverables including:

- i) Greater coordination and communication is needed across Government, Research Councils and wider Stakeholders;
- ii) Development of an overall UK “Arctic Statement” could help discrete policy areas such as energy security, shipping, tourism etc to determine their importance and relevance to Arctic matters.
- iii) The UK should continue to engage with the Arctic Council and continue to draw attention to areas of interest.
- iv) UK-Arctic State bilateral engagement on key Arctic issues of interest to the UK should be increased/maintained. The UK should also continue dialogue with Arctic States to discuss how Arctic policy areas should be best taken forward.
- v) A UK Arctic stakeholder mapping or family tree exercise should be carried out to show the main areas of interest and activity and the key players involved;
- vi) An ‘Arctic Network’ of key UK Arctic players should also be developed.

The key areas for further UK future engagement were identified as being mainly commercial and scientific in nature.

Introduction and Background

The International Polar Year (IPY), launched in March 2007, provides a unique global stimulus for an increase in science in the polar regions. This unprecedented focus of attention, coupled with a number of recent UK-lead events looking at wider polar issues, presented a timely opportunity to discuss the key issues relating to UK interests in the Arctic.

Consequently, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office hosted an informal meeting of representatives of key Government Departments and bodies, NGOs, Polar Institutions, academics, researchers and relevant Arctic industry representatives (oil and gas, fishing, tourism, shipping, etc) at the Scottish Association for Marine Sciences (SAMS) in Oban, Scotland, UK, from 10-12 March 2008. (See Annex I for full list of participants).

The meeting consisted of presentations by selected speakers (see Annex II for presentation summaries) followed by discussion in both plenary and breakout groups. All discussions were held under Chatham House Rules.

The principal aim of the meeting was to address the key issues and challenges the UK faces in the Arctic and to have in-depth discussions surrounding the UK policy approaches to the region. The Event aimed to answer questions such as:

- Is the UK collectively maximising its interests and opportunities in the Arctic?
- What are the future changes and challenges in the Arctic? How should the UK respond to these?
- How do we ensure that we maximise the benefits arising from UK science in the region?
- Should we have an overarching UK-Arctic policy or strategy?
- How should the UK engage on matters of Arctic Governance?
- What sort of Governance framework would best deliver to the priorities of the UK?

Discussion

Building on the presentations, and the series of questions above, the subsequent discussion groups and feedback sessions focussed on the following areas:

- The key themes, main challenges and identification of gaps
- Governance and policy issues

The discussions came up with an overview of how the UK could address differing Arctic interests and activities: Grouped into four areas; Sustain, Exploit, Understand and Influence - summarised below:

Sustain	<p><u>Arctic Wildlife</u>: Ensuring that present flora and fauna populations can adjust to climatic changes</p> <p><u>Fisheries</u>: Maintaining viable commercial stocks and ensuring adaptation to climatic change</p> <p><u>Pollution Mitigation and Reduction</u>: Moving towards the enforcement of the polluter pays principle</p> <p><u>UK Nationals</u>: Supporting the UK tourism industry in the region and ensuring the well being of ‘British citizens in the Arctic’</p>
Exploit	<p><u>Oil, Gas, Minerals</u>: Support the success and activities of British companies operating in the Arctic</p> <p><u>Tourism</u>: Support UK companies operating in the region</p> <p><u>Shipping</u>: Work to ensure freedom of navigation and international consensus in the region</p>
Understand	<p><u>Science and Research Strategy</u>: Striving for better coordination and higher profile UK Arctic Science</p> <p><u>Hazards</u>: Understanding and predicting Arctic environmental hazards</p> <p><u>Climate Change</u>: Understanding and predicting the short and long term effects of climate change in the Arctic</p>
Influence	<p><u>Svalbard</u>: Work towards greater clarity and look for positive ways forward</p>

	<p><u>Knowledge Transfer:</u> Look to increase the flow of knowledge transfer between the UK and Arctic States, as well as between UK Stakeholders</p> <p><u>International Cooperation:</u> Increase and maintain the amount of UK bilateral, multilateral and regional engagement in the Arctic where appropriate</p> <p><u>Defence:</u> Maintain the <i>status quo</i></p>
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Discussion outcomes and points made:

Key Themes

a) Commercial Interests

Hydrocarbon industry representatives felt that it was important to have a level playing field in the region. An agreement like the 1992 OSPAR Convention for the protection of the marine environment of the North East Atlantic could be applied to the Arctic.

UK industry is finding it difficult to move into new oil and gas fields, there are no voices to protect UK interests in the region – industry would welcome a UK policy on the region. UK power companies are coming together to tackle climate change – is there scope for UK industry to do so for the Arctic? It was suggested that there is a need for a mechanism to bring together UK commercial interests and the various research institutions.

The point of view of the fishing industry was that there are clear future opportunities in the region stemming from the predicted redistribution of fish stocks and the possible emergence of new RFMOs.

In terms of shipping, it was recognised that the issues and challenges facing the region are of great importance; however, they are not necessarily high on the agenda of the shipping community at present primarily because of the time-scales involved.

The UK-Arctic Tourism industry also took the view that increased accessibility to the region from the expected ice-melt would give rise to increased commercial tourism activity from the UK.

Given the £10 million estimated value of the UK-Arctic fishing industry, it was suggested that a fiscal analysis of the entire region for UK engagement could be a good exercise. (Treasury and BERR would need to be consulted)

b) Science Interests

It was suggested that there needs to be further international coordination of existing Arctic data – large amounts of data are held by the Russians, and not easily accessible. IPY has demonstrated that international data collaboration works.

The UK needs to promote greater bilateral scientific relationships, as well as highlighting that the UK science community is a leader at dealing with environmental uncertainties.

The science into policy interface should also be developed further to identify how the science can best support the policy – it was mentioned that the contributions of some 200 UK scientists are not feeding into UK policy in any tangible way. There should be more use of tools such as databases and the harnessing of current non-Arctic UK expertise in areas such as petroleum geology, fisheries and social sciences.

There was broad agreement that a UK Secretariat or Forum would be useful in the science arena. Not necessarily a British Arctic Survey, but possibly based on the JNCC model, to help with coordination, (both across research councils and HMG as well as institutions, industry etc) and possibly be involved with processes such as sustainable extraction for example.

The underlining question of funding was a major factor in the discussions. How can any further work be funded? It was suggested that now was a good time to apply to NERC for potential funding – NERC have staff dedicated to Arctic affairs.

It was suggested that an overarching UK-Arctic science strategy could provide a suitable framework for future work.

c) Environmental Protection

There is a need for more science to be undertaken to look at specific species, especially fish, and how they will be effected by climate change and reducing ice cover.

Alien species were an important omission. Increases in shipping through the region and carriage (and discharge) of ballast water could give rise to introduction of invasive alien species as well as increased incidence of algal blooms. The UK is in a strong position to take forward work on this area because of its relevance in relation to fishing and the increased likelihood of Arctic species taking hold in UK waters.

There is potential for the UK to get involved with the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) to further our Arctic Biodiversity interests.

d) Governance and Policy

It was noted that the Arctic is highlighted in many international forums, (such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants) and that the UK is active in a number of these.

The UK is a State Observer to the Arctic Council (only Arctic States are Members) and makes regular contributions to the work of the Council, for example the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA). The number of State Observers to the Arctic Council is growing on an almost annual basis, with China being the latest addition to the group.

There was general agreement that ‘business as usual’ was no longer an option and that the UK now needs to ‘punch above its weight’ at the Arctic Council and have a much more coordinated approach in its engagement with the region.

In conjunction with Arctic Council work there should be further use of bilaterals and engagement with the Rim States, especially Canada, the US, Norway, Denmark and

Finland to gain better understanding of their policies and approaches. The UK should make it clear to the Arctic States that it wants to take a more strategic role and become more involved in the issues facing the region.

The concept of a regional seas programme was discussed on a number of occasions, there was general agreement that this might be a useful model in considering maritime governance.

Sending resources (staff) to the Arctic Council secretariat could be a useful way of asserting influence. However it was noted that the Arctic Council have difficulties with engaging State Observers and that they would be unlikely to listen to UK-Arctic Governance policy ideas. NATO was also considered as being an important field for engagement with the Arctic States.

Conclusions

The main conclusion or headline of the conference was the need for better coordination across the whole of the UK sphere of interests. Another key take-home message was the need for identifying gaps and engaging Ministers as appropriate, to take work forward and to commit necessary resources. However it was clear that there was a need to provide some form of governance framework to address issues not covered by the Arctic Council and to facilitate greater stakeholder participation in decision making. It was agreed that the UK should continue to input into the Arctic Council and to consider how to strengthen its role in that and associated fora.

The future security of the region was another important area identified for further consideration in light of recent territorial claims to the region and associated resource access issues.

The future ice-melt and rapid changes expected in the Arctic and how the UK intends to respond to these challenges was highlighted as a key work area for the future.

The Polar Regions Unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office would like to thank all participants for attending the event and for their lively, positive and thought-provoking engagement.

ANNEX I

ARCTIC STAKEHOLDERS EVENT, 10 - 12 MARCH 2007, SAMS, OBAN	
Name of Attendee	Organisation
Sheldon Bacon	National Oceanography Centre
J C Ellis-Evans	British Antarctic Survey
Ian Boyd	St Andrews University
James G Parker	Shell
D Goodman	Foundation for Science and Technology
Mike Rimmer	DEFRA Fisheries
Vin Fleming	JNCC
Anneli Conroy	FCO Oslo Embassy
Graham Pilling	CEFAS
Peter Kershaw	CEFAS
Robert Culshaw	British Antarctic Survey
David Milroy	Department for Transport
Steve Aiken	Ministry of Defence
Wayne Elliot	Hadley Centre/Met Office
Seymore Laxton	CPOM
Prof David Cope	Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology
Chis Sear	DEFRA
Jane Rumble	FCO
Richard Mills	FCO
Scott Parnell	FCO
Rob Bowman	FCO
Ray Leakey	SAMS
Finlo Cottier	SAMS
Ken Jones	SAMS
Tavis Potts	SAMS
Doug Kerr	FCO
Richard Powell	University of Liverpool
David Ovadia	BGS
Michael Bravo	SPRI
Jeremy Wilkinson	SAMS
Faith Culshaw	NERC
Luke Milner	High Latitudes
Richard Haworth	High Latitudes
Katherine Henry	FCO
Mitch Winkler	Shell
Ronnie Glud	SAMS
John Howe	SAMS
Charles Emmerson	Arctic Reseacher
Gregor McKenzie	Scottish Government -Fisheries Enforcement

ANNEX II**Presentations**

Ten presentations of approximately 20-30 minutes each were given over a one and a half day period. A brief summary of each presentation follows:

Findings of the Ministry of Defence Arctic Strategic Trends Workshop

Commander Stephen Aiken OBE gave an overview of the recent MOD Arctic Strategic Trends Workshop. In his talk, Commander Aiken outlined the key findings as having negative, neutral or positive impact. Issues identified for further work/investigation included sea ice uncertainties, resource nationalism and security. He also drew attention to areas such as potential operational risks associated with shipping, tourism and pollution. Energy security was highlighted as a key priority for the UK as security of supply of oil and gas will be vital until other viable alternatives come on line.

UK Science in the Arctic

Dr Ray Leakey from SAMS presented an overview of current UK Arctic science research activities showing which organisations are involved and the disciplines covered. His talk also summarised the UK's strengths and weaknesses in relation to Arctic research. Ray also highlighted the findings of the FCO commissioned Report "A Review of the Current Status of UK Arctic Research" (see Annex III)

Ray concluded that the UK supports an active and diverse Arctic research community led by researchers located across a wide range of UK organisations. The UK Arctic research community has international strength in environmental sciences including: atmospheric sciences, climate modelling, palaeo-records and climate history, glaciology, sea-ice processes, oceanography and biogeochemistry. The unprecedented scale and rapidity of the current changes taking place in Arctic offers unique opportunities for the UK to maintain its international lead in predicting the local, regional and global impacts of environmental change. An increased level of UK Arctic research activity is required to take full advantage of these opportunities.

He concluded that the UK research community would benefit from more strategic and co-ordinated funding and infrastructure support to secure national capability and respond optimally to future challenges.

The Met-Office and the Arctic

Wayne Elliot, Head of Health Forecasting at the Met Office provided an overview of the climate research in relation to the Polar Regions at the Met Office's Hadley Centre for Climate Research

Wayne highlighted what the Met Office is currently doing in terms of advancing knowledge of polar environmental impacts and questioned whether we currently have the right balance between policy questions and science capabilities (i.e. is research moving the science forward and quickly enough?). He concluded that we can be

confident that the climate is changing - it is due to man made emissions, and that warning will continue. However there are uncertainties in the regional predictions.

Arctic Biodiversity: Links and Relevance to UK Conservation

Vin Fleming from the JNCC gave a talk on biodiversity focusing primarily on the importance of the bird populations that the UK shares with the Arctic. Vin also showed how the UK is involved in multilateral environmental agreements, research collaborations and the use of fly-way/species management plans.

Vin drew attention to the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Arctic Council Working Group (CAFF) and highlighted that currently the amount of UK input is very small. Vin asked how UK conservation agencies can best contribute to shared conservation and monitoring, and called for the ‘smarter’ use of existing monitoring data to develop ‘headline’ type indices for different taxa/breeding sites and making data more policy relevant. He also drew attention to the possibility of further collaborations with CAFF and the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Programme (CMBP).

Arctic Hydrocarbons and Industry

Dougal Goodman, Chief Executive of The Office for Science and Technology gave a presentation titled “ How important is the Arctic to the UK?”

Dougal drew attention to the safety, environmental, fiscal, political and technological uncertainties associated with operating in the Arctic.

He concluded that development can only take place if uncertainties about the environment, political, fiscal and technological challenges of the polar regions can be reduced. Trade-offs are inevitable – energy policy is focussed on diversification of oil and gas supplies by development of Arctic oil and gas but many would like to see no development. Arctic development will happen but only with a careful balance between state and developer enshrined in a licence to operate. Marine living resource exploitation also depends on maintaining a licence to operate. Many lessons from co-operation between nations in the Antarctic can be carried over to the Arctic

Jim Parker and Mitch Winkler from Shell Exploration and Production gave a joint presentation on the activities of Shell. The talk covered the business and historical context as well as licenses to operate and technology use from 25 years of Arctic operations.

Their presentation concluded that:

- Arctic oil and gas is a globally significant conventional energy resource.
- The role of industry is to explore and develop responsibly on behalf of society
- Challenges are large in this high cost and extremely sensitive environment; collaboration is essential.
- Close links between UK Government, industry associations, academic and research institutions are enablers.
- Specific help is needed in identifying gaps in knowledge, enabling collection and sharing of data across boundaries and integrating across disciplines to address policy and business issues.
- To help create a level playing field for business, the development of technical and environmental standards are needed.
- Stakeholder understanding and support is a critical success factor.

Arctic Shipping

David Milroy (Department for Transport)'s presentation detailed the activities of DfT as well as their interests in the Arctic. He noted that as the Arctic opens up there is potential for more shipping traffic to pass through UK waters as well as the rise in ship-based tourism from the UK. David underlined the fact that cross-Arctic shipping is still a long way off and so not on the DfT agenda at present, but recognised that more time and effort would need to be devoted to the region. He highlighted the importance of the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) Arctic Council working group and the Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment with respect to the UK industry.

Arctic Fishing

Mike Rimmer from DEFRA gave an overview of the UK role in Arctic fishing which is currently valued at some £10m. Mike showed how the EU has competence over fisheries and fisheries agreements and negotiations. The presentation focused on what would happen when the ice melts, and raised a number of possibilities including redistribution of current stocks to international waters or EEZs and the discovery of new stocks.

In summary, DEFRA's main objective would be to maintain and defend existing fishing possibilities as well as (via the EU) establish new or extended Third Country Partnerships or agreements and look at establishing new, or extending the competence of existing RFMOs for international waters.

Arctic Governance

Richard Mills from the FCO Polar Regions Unit and Doug Kerr, from the FCO's Maritime Team, gave presentations on Arctic Governance.

Richard focused on the Arctic Council, giving an overview of the structure and work of the Council. Richard drew attention to the narrow remit of the Arctic Council, pointing out that not all UK-Arctic interests are covered by the Council (e.g. fishing, whaling, defence etc) and that there are many other bodies and agreements that cover the Arctic region. The presentation highlighted that the UK should be involved in the Arctic for numerous scientific, political, environmental and commercial reasons and gave indications of how the UK is actively engaging in these areas. The presentation posed a number of questions to be taken forward in discussion such as: Do we want to see a regional seas framework? Is the Arctic Council the right way forward? Do we need a UK-Arctic Strategy? Do we need a UK-Arctic Secretariat?

Richard concluded that there are strong reasons for the UK to be involved in the Arctic, however greater coordination and input from UK Stakeholders will be needed to engage more effectively.

Doug gave a presentation on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), in particular on Article 76 of UNCLOS, which defines the continental shelf.

He informed the group that UNCLOS provides for States to submit a case to extend a continental shelf beyond 200nm subject to certain defined geological conditions being met. Such submissions are considered by the UN's Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS), which then makes recommendations concerning the establishment of an extended outer limit. In cases where a dispute exists between

coastal states, the CLCS must decline to examine any submission which would prejudice delimitation between them without the agreement of the states concerned. Doug underlined the fact that Coastal States have sovereign rights on the seabed, for the purpose of exploring and exploiting natural resources.

Regarding the Russian flag expedition in 2007, the Russian Federation had submitted to CLCS in 2001 and had been asked for a revised submission. Norway, Denmark, USA and Canada had all made statements on the flag planting - however, all activity was fully in compliance with international law. Norway has also submitted to CLCS and Denmark and Canada are working closely together.

In summing up, Doug noted that this is a very slow process, which could take many years. However, it is possible that there will be some overlapping claims, which will require bilateral delimitation to find solutions.