

**MINUTES OF THE TWENTY FIFTH MEETING OF THE UK NATIONAL
COMMITTEE FOR ANTARCTIC RESEARCH**
Tuesday 15th June, 2020, 13.00
Online Zoom

Present:

Prof M. Bentley	Chair, University of Durham
Mrs K. Gosling	Secretary, British Antarctic Survey
Prof. J. E. Francis	British Antarctic Survey
Mr. S. Colwell	British Antarctic Survey
Dr T. Bracegirdle	British Antarctic Survey
Dr C. Nath	SCAR Executive Director, Cambridge
Prof. E. Wolff	University of Cambridge
Dr D. Bakker	University of East Anglia
Dr H. Griffiths	British Antarctic Survey
Prof J. Smellie	University of Leicester
Dr P. Whitehouse	University of Durham
Dr N. Johnston	British Antarctic Survey
Dr A. Fox	British Antarctic Survey
Prof. P. Convey	British Antarctic Survey
Dr S. Doubleday	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Ms R. Cooper	Royal Society
Dr H. Peat	British Antarctic Survey
Prof L. Peck	British Antarctic Survey
Prof. J.A. Dowdeswell	Scott Polar Research Institute
Prof. M.J. Siegert	Imperial College London
Dr R. Bingham	University of Edinburgh
Dr K. Hughes	British Antarctic Survey
Ms H. Jenkins	University of Southampton
Dr K. Hendry	University of Bristol
Dr A. Jungblut	Natural History Museum
Dr B. Schlarb-Ridley	British Antarctic Survey
Dr Lizzie Garratt	Natural Environment Research Council

Apologies:

Dr R. Larter	British Antarctic Survey
Ms Vicky Dewar-Fowler	British Antarctic Survey
Mr H Burgess	British Antarctic Survey
Dr R. Mulvaney	British Antarctic Survey

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

**2 TWENTY-FOURTH MEETING OF THE UK NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR
ANTARCTIC RESEARCH ON TUESDAY 11TH JUNE, 2019 (*paper*)**

The Chair presented the minutes from the last meeting. No amendments were requested and the minutes were accepted as a true record of the twenty-fourth Committee Meeting.

3 MATTERS ARISING INCLUDING ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING (*paper*)

Update on actions:

Explore process for UK to host SCAR OSC – Committee agreed this should still be considered. The 2022 meeting is being held in Hyderabad. It was noted that it is an expensive meeting to host OSC and budget constraints in the next couple of years may be a barrier. If the UK is to host it should be used as an opportunity to do things in a smarter way, with more online participation and efforts to make the meeting more accessible. **SD**

4 UKNCAR MEMBERSHIP AND ELECTION OF NEW CO-OPTED MEMBERS (*paper*)

There are some changes to note:

- Lizzie Garratt has replaced Helen Beadman as NERC representative.
- Robert Larter is no longer UK representative to PAIS. Claus-Dieter Hillenbrand has taken his place. Mike will contact Claus-Dieter to invite him to join UKNCAR.
- John Turner is no longer UK representative to ACCE.

MB

5 UKNCAR CHAIR

The current Chair Mike Bentley will complete the 5-year term in 2023. The Chair noted an early notification that nominations for a new Chair will be requested for the 2022 meeting so that a new chair can take over in 2023.

Katie Gosling, UKNCAR secretary will step down in 2021.

6 REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF BAS

Jane Francis provided an update on recent and upcoming changes at the British Antarctic Survey.

BAS has released a [statement](#) on scenario planning for the 2020/21 Antarctic season in light of COVID-19. The operational planning is in line with other international operators, with a minimal season planned and the priority being to ensure the continent remains free from COVID-19. Those with NERC grant funded fieldwork scheduled for upcoming seasons should contact NERC regarding their grant.

COMNAP held zoom meetings for all National Antarctic Programmes to share their plans for the 20/21 season (many have announcements on their web sites). They are experiencing the same issue of ensuring access through the gateways onto the continent. Like BAS, most are planning minimal seasons with limited staff south for exchange of wintering teams and maintenance of stations and data sets. It is also likely that there will be very limited tourism.

7 ROYAL SOCIETY

7.1 COMMUNICATIONS

Ruth Cooper updated the group. GERC continues to welcome input from this committee. The Royal Society now requires any group requesting funding for a subscription to apply for a grant. This is an annual application, the first round has been completed. The next call will open in late summer/ early autumn.

Jane Francis and Mike Bentley submitted a grant application to cover 49% of the SCAR subscription, BAS pays the remaining 51%.

7.2 SCAR SUBSCRIPTION

Chandrika Nath and Jane Francis provided an update.

SCAR Delegates meeting – There has been consultation with SCAR delegates on how to conduct business in the current situation due to COVID-19. There is broad agreement to run business by written resolutions during this period, however not all countries are in agreement yet. There is an intention for future meetings to be online, however a legal way needs to be agreed to allow this.

7.3 GERC

Mike Bentley provided an update. There have been discussions about technology in polar science, and GERC is considering holding a meeting on technology in environmental science more generally. Mike will keep group informed to ensure UK polar scientists involved.

There was discussion about how UKNCAR can improve the way it reports UK involvement in SCAR to the wider UK research community, outside the committee. It was agreed that in addition to agenda and minutes, the meeting reports will be added to the UKNCAR website. **KG**

Chandrika will arrange for the link on the SCAR website to the UKNCAR website to be updated, it currently links to the legacy site. **CN**

Katie and Mike will look at setting up a mailing list that people can subscribe to from the webpage. **KG**

8 NERC UPDATES (*paper*)

Lizzie Garratt presented the NERC report on grant successes with polar science.

It was requested that the report includes other Research Council funded grants in the future, for example UKRI Future Leader Fellowships. Lizzie Garratt will raise this with NERC. **LG**

NERC is considering cost extensions on grants affected by COVID-19. They are awaiting guidance from BEIS and UKRI on costed extensions.

9 SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ON ANTARCTIC RESEARCH

9.1 Standing Scientific Group (SSG) Reports

Geosciences SSG (*paper and oral report*)

See attached report.

Life Sciences SSG (*paper and oral report*)

Awaiting full report. Pete Convey will circulate once available.

Physical Sciences SSG (*paper and oral report*)

Steve Colwell provided an update. They were starting to make plans for Hobart and many groups were running sessions in the open science conference.

In Hobart the 8-year term for the Chief Officer and Secretary ended but they have been asked to remain in post for the next 2 years to help with continuity.

They are putting together the final Physical Sciences report for EXCOM after getting reports from the different groups.

No plan at the moment to have an online Physical Science meeting but that may change depending on what SCAR decides.

It has been decided by the SSG that groups that do not submit a report this year will not receive any funding allocation for the following year, if they do not submit a report for two consecutive years they will be considered for closure.

The Remote Sensing group plans to merge with Earth Observation group

9.2 Update on Scientific Research Programmes

Past Antarctic Ice Sheet Dynamics (PAIS) (*oral report*)

Mike Bentley provided a verbal update. The main activities have included capacity building in summer schools and funding Early Career Researchers to participate in a variety of activities. The main UK representative has changed from Rob Larter (BAS) to Claus-Dieter Hillenbrand (BAS).

Antarctic Climate Change in the 21st Century (AntClim21) (*paper and oral report*)

See attached report. Tom Bracegirdle thanked BAS for hosting an AntClim21 CMIP6/IPCC AR6 workshop last summer. Three papers were planned in the workshop and are currently in press.

Near-term Variability and Prediction of the Antarctic Climate System (AntClimNow) (*paper and oral report*)

See attached report. Tom Bracegirdle highlighted the strong UK involvement including partners from the Met Office, BAS and University of Southampton.

State of the Antarctic Ecosystem (AntEco) (*oral report*)

Huw Griffiths provided an update. They are in the process of writing a report for SCAR. They had planned to fund Early Career Researchers and those from merging nations to attend the SCAR OSC in Hobart, due to COVID-19 this will not happen. Funding will be returned to SCAR unless it can be carried over to fund participation in the SCAR Biology conference next year.

Antarctic Thresholds – Ecosystem Resilience and Adaptation (AnT-ERA) (*oral report*)

Huw Griffiths provided an update. A meeting took place last June at the University of Coimbra, Portugal, to identify the most important findings from the group. They have submitted a synthesis report.

Solid Earth Response and Influence on Cryosphere Evolution (SERCE) (*paper and oral report*)

See attached report. Pippa Whitehouse reported SERCE was due to end in 2020 but has been given permission to carry forward funds for a joint SERCE/PALSEA and a workshop to discuss the future of the Antarctic-wide GNSS network.

9.3 Update on SCAR Expert Groups

ACCE (climate change and environment) (*paper and oral report*)

Steve Chown intends to lead the 2020 ACCE report to the treaty, there have been initial queries but there is no further news on this at present.

John Turner has stepped down as UK Chair for the group.

ICED (climate and ecosystems) (*paper and oral report*)

See attached report.

IPICS (ice cores) (*paper and oral update*)

See attached report.

OpMet (meteorology) (*paper and oral update*)

See attached report. Steve Colwell provided an update. Continue to maintain web pages showing which stations and automatic weather stations are currently operating in the Antarctic.

Working with the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) towards the implementation of an Antarctic Regional Climate Centre. Regional Climate Centres (RCCs) are designated by WMO to create regional climate products, including long-range forecasts to support regional and national climate activities.

There are three mandatory functions, long range forecasts, data collection and monitoring.

There are also many highly recommended functions which include things like research which is then applicable for some SCAR groups and the national Antarctic operators.

A scoping workshop was held in Bologna in October and at this workshop it was decided that Australia would lead the long-range forecasts, the UK would lead on the data collection and Italy the monitoring.

The next stage is develop a concept paper and also get expression of interest on which countries would like to be involved, at the moment we have had responses from UK, USA, Australia, India, China, Sweden and Denmark.

We have had a couple of online meetings since the scoping workshop and hope to have the concept paper ready soon so that it can go to WMO for approval and then we can start with the implementation stage of the RCC.

AntVolc (Antarctic volcanism) (*paper and oral report*)

See attached report. John Smellie reported the group is in the final phase, due to end 2021, a White Paper will be submitted to SCAR. The group will end unless community wants to continue.

ANTOS (near-shore and terrestrial observation) (*paper and oral report*)

See attached report. Pete Convey provided an update on the impact of COVID-19 on activities and spending, the group may face funding problems that could impact on progress.

SCAGI (Antarctic geographic information) (*paper and oral report*)

See attached report.

AntArchitecture Action Group (*oral report*)

Rob Bingham requested that AntArchitecture is added to the agenda as a **KG** standing item.

Action Group on Geological Heritage and Geoconservation (*oral report*)

Kevin Hughes provided an update. The group is ending this year, they are working papers for Treaty Consultative meeting in Helsinki. The methodology

developed by the Action Group to identify sites of geological value could be implemented by SCAR Geosciences, possibly through the establishment of an Expert Group.

Additional groups not covered on the agenda.

The committee mentioned three further action groups that are not reported on in UKNCAR. KG will contact the UK representatives to ask if they could provide updates on UK involvement.

- Earth Observation Action Group (EOAG) - Anna Hogg (Leeds)
- Antarctic Gravity Wave Instrument Network (ANGWIN) - Tracey Moffatt Griffin (BAS)
- Remote Sensing (of birds and animals) – Peter Fretwell (BAS)

KG

9.4 Update on SCAR Treaty activities

Covered in item 7.1.

9.5 Input to Programme Planning Groups for SCAR's next programmes

The draft programmes are being submitted. The new SRPs are expected to undergo scientific review at the next delegates meeting when procedures are agreed, possibly later in the summer. This will be the beginning of transition to new programmes. The number of programmes will reduce from five to three, they will be more interdisciplinary focusing on big questions.

9.6 SCAR OSC 2020, Hobart – Feedback on session list (*paper*)

SCAR OSC 2020 online – The meeting will not be a complete replica. Everyone who sent an abstract can submit a poster, they are planning to run the originally planned workshops and plenaries. However, not all parallel session will run, they would be optional, and run how and when organiser want. Further information will follow.

10 FUTURE SCIENCE DEVELOPMENTS

10.1 UK Antarctic science Meeting 2020 – Edinburgh – Rob Bingham reported that Edinburgh have taken the decision to cancel the meeting planned for September 2020. Rob and BAS are exploring the option of an online meeting in January 2021. Those with ideas should contact Rob in the first instance. It was agreed Early Career Researchers participation should be prioritised.

Holly Jenkins reported UKPN are hoping to hold a remote polar ECR conference, there could be opportunity to link up.

It was also noted that the UK Challenger meeting had been postponed to 6-10 September 2021 in Oban. The following meeting will be on 5-9 September 2022, Natural History Museum London

10.2 Community usage of Antarctic GPS data

NERC funding for UKANET, a network of 25-30 GPS instruments deployed along the Antarctic Peninsula and around the Weddell Sea embayment, and NSF funding of POLENET/ANET, a larger network of GPS instruments across the rest of West Antarctica, will end in the next few years. There is a strong desire to continue running a slimmed-down version of these networks in the longer

term. The main ongoing cost is the satellite transfer of data to the open source data repository at UNAVCO, the sites only need to be visited for repairs. In order to make a case to extend the lifetime of these networks it is necessary to understand who is using the data. Pippa requested anyone using data from the UKANET network, or other international GPS networks such as POLENET/ANET, for any purpose, to get in touch. She is particularly interested to hear from people who envisage the data being useful for operational or logistical purposes.

11 FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE (FCO) UPDATE

Stuart Doubleday reported on other UK activities beyond this committee:

As reported, the Helsinki ATCM is cancelled, the meeting in Paris June 2021 is planned to be a normal meeting. CCAMLR is hoped to be held virtually in October, this requires consensus from members.

HMS Protector – Repairs are still underway however it is hoped the ship will be in Antarctica this season.

Tourism –An IAATO meeting is taking place, they plan to create guidance for their operators, it not know at this stage how many will operate.

200th anniversary year – UKAHT events been cancelled or moved online, they are currently looking at how to enhance their online activities.

Martin Siegert reported the RGS planned event to be moved to 2021, no date as yet.

Funding for the Diversity in Polar Science project has been allocated to BAS to lead (see AOB).

12 UPDATE ON THE SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH

Jane Francis provided an update. Interim acceptance is planned to take place in October 2020. There have been some delays resulting from COVID-19. Sea trials are expected to begin at the end of 2020 and ice trials in spring 2021. The ship will sail south for the Antarctic rehearsal cruise in the 2021/22 season, and the first full operational season is planned for 2022/23.

There are plans to send the SDA to the COP 2026 in Glasgow.

Workshops are being planned on cruise track thinking and plans for scientific equipment.

13 UK POLAR NETWORK (*paper and oral report*)

See report attached.

14 UK POLAR DATA CENTRE (*paper and oral report*)

See report attached.

15 THE UK ANTARCTIC AND ARCTIC POLAR PARTNERSHIP (UKAAP)

Martin Siegert reported on the 1.5 degree policy briefing note presented by Jane Rumble at ATCM. Feedback received asked why is it only focused on Antarctica and only UK scientists. There have been discussions with Chandy to consider how to make more the response more international. It was agreed a continent wide paper would be really useful.

At the Loughborough Arctic Science meeting last September work began on an Arctic science horizon scan. The discussion included: Arctic focus for the SDA, briefing note for policymakers, UK strengths, logistics capability, important connections being Arctic and UK eg. Extreme weather, politics, opportunity for multi discipline research. The report will go to the Arctic ministerial meeting later this year, the aim is shape NERC for calls relating to this.

16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

16.1 Diversity in UK Polar Science Initiative

Beatrix Schlarb-Ridley joined the meeting to present an introduction to this initiative and invite participation from the committee and the whole UK polar science community.

The [Diversity in UK Polar Science](#) initiative was conceived and funded by the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office, specifically from the Polar Regions Department, to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of the sighting by British sailors of the Antarctic continent.

This initiative celebrates existing diversity in UK Polar Science and aims to further encourage the inclusion of groups that are currently underrepresented, such as people from ethnic minorities, the LGBTQ+ community or have a disability. It is recognised that people representing UK Polar science do not reflect the diversity of the current British society. The initiative seeks to deliver a more diverse and inclusive future for Polar science.

The UK polar community are invited to engage with the Diversity in UK Polar Science Initiative – in particular to:

- suggest activities that the initiative could do to
- amplify the EDI momentum in polar research at own organisations
- address diversity issues people may be aware of in own contexts
- connect the leads to EDI Champions in own organisations
- inspire students from underrepresented group by presenting and discussing own research in seminars the initiative are organising.

16.2 Social science representative:

Pippa Whitehouse noted the action to seek social sciences input into this committee. Jane Francis suggested Klaus Dodds, Mike Bentley will contact him.

MB

16.3 Examples of White Papers:

John Smellie noted he had asked SCAR for any examples of previous White Papers and was surprised to hear there was no system to store White Papers. The committee will suggest to SCAR that these papers are stored and accessible.

UK NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR ANTARCTIC RESEARCH

25th Committee Meeting, 15th June, 2020

ACTIONS

ITEM	NO.	ACTION	BY	STATUS
Matters Arising	3	Explore the process for the UK to host SCAR OSC	SD	
UKNCAR membership and election of new co-opted members	4	Contact Claus-Dieter Hillenbrand to invite him to join UKNCAR as UK representative for PAIS.	MB	
GERC	7.3	Publish UKNCAR meeting reports on the UKNCAR website.	KG	
GERC	7.3	Update the link on the SCAR website to the UKNCAR website, it currently links to the legacy site.	CN	
GERC	7.3	Set up a mailing list that people can subscribe to from the UKNCAR website.	KG/MB	
NERC Updates	8	Request that the NERC report to UKNCAR includes other Research Council funded grants, for example UKRI Future Leader Fellowships.	LG	
Update on SCAR Expert Groups	9.3	Add AntArchitecture to the UKNCAR meeting agenda as a standing item.	KG	
Update on SCAR Expert Groups	9.3	Invite the UK representative of action groups EOAG, ANGWIN and Remote Sensing to provide updates to UKNCAR.	KG	
Social science representative	16.3	Invite Klaus Dodds to join UKNCAR as a social sciences representative.	MB	

MB: Mike Bentley (Chair)

KG: Katie Gosling (Secretary)

SD: Stuart Doubleday

CN: Chandrika Nath

LG: Lizzie Garratt