



DEBATE PACK

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Antarctica science and diplomacy

Westminster Hall

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2:30-4:00pm

Debate initiated by James Gray MP

The proceedings of this debate can be viewed on [Parliament.tv](https://www.parliament.tv).

[Further reading: [Science Diplomacy](#), POST, 8 February 2018]

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Compiled by:
Nigel Walker

Subject specialists:
Stefano Fella (Antarctic)
Georgina Hutton (science)

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1. Background

1.1 Summary

Several countries have established research stations in Antarctica, some of whom have made territorial claims. This includes the UK. The Antarctic Treaty entered into force 1961, signed by 12 countries. It prohibits new or expanded territorial claims in Antarctica. Several measures agreed by its signatories are designed to protect the Antarctic environment and wildlife. This includes a protocol prohibiting any activity relating to mineral resources, other than scientific research. Fishing has also been banned in much of Antarctica. Measures agreed in recent years have sought to limit tourist activity and improve maritime safety.

Recent research has highlighted the depletion of the ice sheets in Antarctica. Concerns over depletion of the ozone layer have however abated following the implementation of a 1987 protocol.

1.2 Introduction

The continent of Antarctica is estimated to cover 13,661,000 sq km. There are no indigenous inhabitants, but a number of permanent research stations have been established.

The following countries have research stations: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, China, France, Italy, Germany, India, Japan, South Korea, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Ukraine, United Kingdom, USA, Uruguay.

Argentina, Australia, Chile, France Norway, New Zealand and the UK all have territorial claims in the Antarctica. These claims are not recognised by the USA or Russian Federation.

The Antarctic Treaty

The Antarctic Treaty was signed in Washington, DC, USA, on 1 December 1959 by 12 countries, and entered into force on 23 June 1961¹. The Treaty made provision for a review of its terms 30 years after ratification; however, no signatory to the Treaty has requested such a review.

The Original Signatories to the Antarctic Treaty are Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, the Russian Federation (as successor to the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), South Africa, the UK and the USA. Each holds the status of Consultative Party.

By virtue of their scientific activity in Antarctica, Brazil, Bulgaria, the People's Republic of China, the Czech Republic, Ecuador, Finland, Germany, India, Italy, South Korea, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine and Uruguay have the status of Consultative Party under the Treaty. Austria, Belarus, Canada, Colombia, Cuba, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Kazakhstan, North Korea, Malaysia, Monaco, Mongolia, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Switzerland, Turkey and Venezuela are Acceding States but do not have Consultative Party status.

Article 4, Clause 2 of the Antarctic Treaty states that, 'No acts or activities taking place while the present Treaty is in force shall constitute a basis for asserting, supporting or denying a claim to territorial sovereignty in Antarctica or create any rights of sovereignty in Antarctica. No new claim, or enlargement of an existing claim, to territorial sovereignty in Antarctica shall be asserted while the present Treaty is in force.'

Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings

Meetings of representatives of the original signatory nations of the Antarctic Treaty and acceding nations accorded consultative status are held annually to discuss scientific, environmental and political matters.

Among the numerous measures that have been agreed and implemented are several designed to protect the Antarctic environment and wildlife. These include the designation of Specially Protected Areas and Sites of Special Scientific Interest, a Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals, and a Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.

The Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty was adopted by the original signatory nations in October 1991 and entered into force in January 1998. Under Article 7, any activity relating to mineral resources, other than scientific research, is prohibited.

Recent Developments

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) 2018 Scientific Assessment of Ozone Depletion reported in September of that year that the rate of depletion of the hole in the ozone layer formed over Antarctica has slowed since the implementation of the 1987 Montreal Protocol to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer. The WMO estimated that, assuming continued compliance with the Protocol, the hole over Antarctica would continue to shrink and by 2060 it would be the same size as it was in 1980.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's *Fifth Assessment Report*, published in 2013, concluded that the contribution of Antarctic ice sheets to sea level change had increased since the 1990s. Research published in 2018 by the Ice Sheet Mass Balance Inter-comparison Exercise concurred that the rate of depletion of ice sheets in Antarctica was accelerating.

The largest Marine Protected Area in the world came into existence in Antarctica in December 2017. Fishing was prohibited completely in most of this area. Agreement on the Area had been reached in November 2016 by member countries of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR).

Tourism and Maritime Safety

Tourism is co-ordinated by the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators. Tourist numbers have been rising steadily since 2001/12, leading to concerns about the environmental impact. In 2009 signatories to the Antarctic Treaty agreed, subject to ratification, to prevent vessels carrying more than 500 passengers from landing in Antarctica, and to allow no more than 100 passengers to land at any one time. A mandatory safety code for vessels was also adopted.

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has adopted guidelines for ships operating in polar waters. The use of heavy fuel oils by ships in Antarctic waters was prohibited in 2011.

In January 2008 the first commercial air service to Antarctica landed.²

² Source: Antarctica (Antarctica), in Europa World online. London, Routledge. House of Commons. Retrieved 22 January 2020 from <http://www.europaworld.com/entry/ag>

2. Press articles

The following is a selection of press and periodical articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the view or accuracy of external content.

[Brazil's new US\\$100 million Antarctic base, built by China](#)

South China Morning Post
16 January 2020

[A Cold War-era treaty has kept Antarctica safe for the past 60 years. But will it survive climate change?](#)

Prospect
Camilla Nichol
18 December 2019

[The coldest, windiest and driest place on Earth: who runs Antarctica?](#)

Sydney Morning Herald
Felicity Lewis
29 November 2019

[The Largest Ever Women's Expedition To Antarctica Will Upscale Science Diplomacy](#)

Forbes
Emanuela Barbiroglio
22 November 2019

[New icebreaker raises bar for polar exploration](#)

Daily Telegraph / China Daily
Zhao Lei
19 November 2019

[What Are China's Intentions in Antarctica?](#)

The Diplomat
Nengye Liu
14 June 2019

[The fight to own Antarctica: Competition for natural resources, research and tourism is putting pressure on the cold war-era treaty that guarantees order on the continent](#)

Financial Times
Leslie Hook and Benedict Mander
24 May 2018

[How Antarctica became home to a new kind of scientific diplomacy](#)

The Guardian
Charlotte Connelly
1 July 2017

3. Press releases

[British Antarctic Territory Government website](#)

18 April 2019

The Government of the British Antarctic Territory has launched a new website. Find out more information about the largest of the UK's 14 Overseas Territories.

The [website](#) provides all information relating to the British Antarctic Territory (BAT) Government in a single place. It includes the latest news and information, including details on:

- the overall strategy the BAT Government has for the Territory
- all the current legislation for the Territory
- consultations on any new or updates to legislation
- the Official Gazette detailing new legislation, orders and appointments
- how you can apply for project funding and information on some of the projects which have received funding
- the work of our stakeholders

BAT is a wedge shaped sector of the Antarctic continent, with over 99% covered in a permanent ice sheet.

With no native population, the BAT is administered in London by staff in the Polar Regions Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Presence in the Territory is provided by the British Antarctic Survey, the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust and the Royal Navy's Ice Patrol vessel.

The UK's claim to this part of Antarctica is the oldest of any made on the continent. Under Article IV of the Antarctic Treaty 1959, all sovereignty claims to Antarctica are held in abeyance.

Find out more about the British Antarctic Territory on its website: www.britishantarcticterritory.org.uk.

[The UK's leading role in protecting the Antarctic](#)

8 December 2016

Speech by the Minister for Polar Regions, Sir Alan Duncan, at the Polar APPG:

Your Serene Highness, Lords, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. I'm delighted to be here – thank you for inviting me, and many thanks to the APPG for a series of excellent events over the last 6 months highlighting the Polar Regions.

This country's long and proud history in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean goes back to 1774, when Captain Cook sailed as far as 71 degrees South but, unfortunately, did not sight land. But it took until

1820 until the little known, perhaps he should be known better, Royal Navy Captain Edward Bransfield eventually discovered the continent.

Of course everyone knows about the expeditions of the heroic age of Antarctic exploration – to this day, names like Scott and Shackleton remain synonymous with British endeavour. This year we have been celebrating 100 years since the end of Shackleton's extraordinary Endurance expedition, which ended with him famously rescuing his stranded crew, assisted by Chile's brave Piloto Pardo.

We've also been marking an anniversary which is less well known, yet I believe just as significant in the history of Antarctica and the UK's role there. 2016 marks a quarter century since the signing of the Antarctic Treaty's Protocol on Environmental Protection. And I am pleased the APPG has chosen to mark this significant milestone this evening.

Just as we led the way in Antarctic exploration, so the UK was – and, I hope, remains - at the forefront of efforts to protect its environment. The Environmental Protocol is the only international agreement designed to protect an entire continent. It ensures that all human activity in Antarctica is carefully planned, to enable well-managed, environmentally sensitive tourism alongside scientific endeavour and exploration. And crucially, the Protocol prohibits commercial mining and it protects vulnerable areas, animals and plants.

While the French and Australians created the context by rejecting the previously agreed Convention on mineral exploitation, it was the UK that stepped into one of the lead roles in drafting the Protocol.

Today, the UK continues to make a major contribution to the Antarctic Treaty system: through the world class science of the British Antarctic Survey, the enthusiasm and expertise of the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust and the dedicated crew of the Royal Navy's ice patrol vessel HMS Protector.

And over the years we have played a leading role in protecting Antarctica's environment more generally. We pushed to get climate change onto the agenda at the annual meetings of Treaty Parties. We worked with the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators to develop the first guidelines for visitors to the most visited tourist sites. And our experts have led the way in limiting the spread of non native species to Antarctica, and in enhancing procedures relating to environmental impact assessments. Only the USA administers more Antarctic protected areas than the UK, and we manage the largest number of historic sites.

Thanks to the Natural History Unit of the BBC, and in particular to the tireless work of, if I might describe him as such, the legendary Sir David Attenborough, the UK has also been at the forefront of raising awareness of Antarctica across the world. And the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, with the Royal Geographical Society and the British Antarctic Survey, have developed an award-winning educational website called Discovering Antarctica – which is now used by the majority of geography GCSE and A-level students. And it is only by educating the next generation about this precious part of our planet,

and how it is changing, that we can hope to maintain support for protecting it.

We will continue with these efforts – not just as good citizens of the world but also because of our desire to protect the British Antarctic Territory. It is the UK's largest overseas territory and an integral part of our interests in the South Atlantic.

But challenges facing Antarctica over the next 25 years cannot be overstated. Over the second half of the twentieth century, the Antarctic Peninsula was one of the fastest warming regions of the planet. Plastics and heavy metals are now being found in Antarctica in increasing volumes.

That's why it is so encouraging that international interest in the continent has increased and the Antarctic Treaty System remains active. Gone are the days when it was just seen as a rich man's club: today, countries across all continents are engaged in Antarctic affairs. The Czech Republic became the twenty-ninth Consultative Party to the Treaty in 2013 and six countries have acceded to the Environmental Protocol over the past decade. One of those countries is Monaco – thanks in no small part to the personal efforts of Prince Albert, who I am pleased has been able to join us this evening.

Beyond the Protocol, there are other encouraging signs for the future. For example, the Antarctic has been the scene of considerable cooperation between the UK and Argentina, both within the Treaty system and in the field of science. This is an area where I hope we may be able to do even more in the coming years.

The expansion of Marine Protected Areas is another cause for optimism. We must continue to support the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources – mercifully, though not catchily, shortened to CCAMLR (generally pronounced Cam – lar)- in protecting the Antarctic Ocean and the multitude of animals that depend on it for food.

I was delighted that, at the Commission's October meeting, after five years of discussion, the world's largest Marine Protected Area was agreed. It is in the Ross Sea region of Antarctica. It is the second Antarctic Marine Protected Area, joining the one near the South Orkney Islands which was established in 2009 at the instigation of the UK. That is just one part of a network of Marine Protected Areas that the UK is developing across our Overseas Territories, including those around South Georgia, the British Indian Ocean Territory and Pitcairn Island.

The same Commission meeting also agreed to a UK-led proposal to give interim protection to seas newly exposed by ice shelf collapse, so that this could provide for scientific investigation. This proposal, which I know the WWF have supported, and Ben may touch on later, is exactly the kind of initiative that will help us protect the delicate and changing environment in the Antarctic region.

So can I just conclude by saying that the UK remains absolutely committed to upholding the Antarctic Treaty System and to ensuring the comprehensive protection of the precious Antarctic environment.

We in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office work closely with experts here in the UK and with the extraordinary Antarctic community across the world. So I would like to thank each and every one of them and join them to celebrate the anniversary of one of the most successful international agreements: the Environmental Protocol.

£100 million partnership to upgrade Antarctic research facilities **5 January 2017**

The British Antarctic Survey has announced a £100m programme to upgrade polar infrastructure including the [Rothera Research Station](#), ensuring the UK remains a world leader in science and polar-based innovation.

The new facility will become home to the RRS Sir David Attenborough that will transform UK polar research enabling more ambitious expeditions to untapped areas of the Antarctic and the Arctic.

The investment will enable British scientists to remain at the forefront of science and research, helping to improve our understanding of the world we live in and the impact of climate change.

Universities and Science Minister Jo Johnson said:

Key to the long-term success of science and innovation in the UK is ensuring our world-class research sector has the tools it needs to thrive on a global stage.

The government's £200 million investment on specialist research ships including RRS Sir David Attenborough underlines our commitment to this burgeoning sector and our upcoming industrial strategy will go even further, placing science and innovation at its absolute core.

The partnership was commissioned by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) whose CEO Professor Duncan Wingham said:

The Polar Regions, although geographically remote, are of equal importance in our drive to understand how the Earth is changing. NERC science in Antarctica plays an important role in meeting this challenge.

Working with BAM and design partner Sweco, on this long term approach to modernising our infrastructure in the Antarctic, we will jointly foster and further build the UK's high level of expertise, experience and good practices for working in challenging design and construction environments.

The UK government is also supporting the Polar Explorer Programme - a £1 million educational programme that aims to inspire the next

generation of scientists, engineers and citizens by engaging young people with the RRS Sir David Attenborough and the science it will support. The programme aims to raise scientific awareness and literacy in young people and will include resources based on the missions of the state-of-the-art robotic subsea vehicle named Boaty McBoatface.

The UK's world-class research and science sector is a priority for the government, and will play a key role as part of our upcoming industrial strategy. An extra £2 billion per year for research and innovation will be invested by 2020/21 supporting the sector and helping to boost the UK economy.

4. PQs

[Antarctic: China](#)

11 Apr 2019 | 241982

Asked by: Sir Nicholas Soames

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether military activities have been detected in the bases belonging to the People's Republic of China in the Antarctic; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

No military activities have been detected in the bases belonging to the People's Republic of China in the Antarctic. The Antarctic Treaty does not prevent the use of military personnel or equipment for scientific research or for any other peaceful purpose. All inspections and observations of Chinese Antarctic scientific stations have concluded that operations are in full compliance with the Antarctic Treaty. Along with other Parties, the UK will also continue to monitor closely activities by China and other states to ensure compliance with the Antarctic Treaty.

[Antarctic: China](#)

11 Apr 2019 | 241981

Asked by: Sir Nicholas Soames

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether bases in the Antarctic belonging to the People's Republic of China have been inspected under the provisions of the Antarctic Treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

In the past 20 years, China's Great Wall Station, based in the British Antarctic Territory, has been inspected 12 times, including 4 times by the UK, most recently in 2012. Zhongshan, in the Australia Antarctic Territory has been inspected 3 times. Kunlun (established in 2009) and Taishan (established in 2014) have yet to be formally inspected. The conclusion of the most recent inspection to Great Wall station by the UK, Netherlands and Spain, was that the station facilities had been recently expanded and was one of the best equipped in the region, and that there appeared to be scope for more international collaboration on science programmes. China welcomed the inspection and committed to increase scientific collaboration at the station.

[Antarctic: China](#)

11 Apr 2019 | 241980

Asked by: Sir Nicholas Soames

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the use of bases belonging to the Peoples Republic of China in the Antarctic.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

China has established four scientific stations in Antarctica and is currently establishing a fifth. In terms of number of scientific papers, during the period 2011-2015, China ranked sixth (the UK was second) and its scientific activities have continued to increase. Its scientific stations are strategically located across Antarctica and underline China's ambition to increase their influence within the Antarctic Treaty System. China has stated its objective to 'understand, protect and use' Antarctica. Whilst the UK, and many other Parties, have expressed concern regarding China's reference to the 'use' of Antarctica, in light of the Treaty's objectives of Conservation and protection, there is no evidence to date of China undertaking any activities in contravention to the Treaty.

[Antarctic Treaty](#)

11 Apr 2019 | 241979

Asked by: Sir Nicholas Soames

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what the UK's obligations are under the Antarctic Treaty.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK is fully committed to the Antarctic Treaty and its objective to preserve the continent for peace and science. The Treaty sets out the obligations of Parties, including the participation in, and facilitation of, Antarctic Treaty inspections and the participation in annual Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings. Formal decisions taken by Antarctic Treaty Parties come into force internationally when they have been approved by all Parties. The UK is one of only a few Parties to be up-to-date with this process. The UK is also a Member of the Commission of the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, which sets out rights and obligations for managing fisheries in the Southern Ocean; and a Party to the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, which ensures that all activities undertaken by British nationals are pre-planned and potential environmental impacts are mitigated. The Antarctic Acts 1994 and 2013 establish the UK's obligations under the Treaty, the Convention and the Protocol in domestic legislation.

[Antarctic Treaty](#)

11 Apr 2019 | 241978

Asked by: Sir Nicholas Soames

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what contribution the UK Government makes to the Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK's contribution to the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat for the 2019/2020 financial year was \$60,347 USD, which was paid in January

2019. Details of annual contributions by all Antarctic Treaty Parties can be found in the meeting records of each Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting at www.ats.aq.

Climate Change: Antarctic

21 Mar 2019 | 233433

Asked by: Sir Nicholas Soames

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of reports from the British Antarctic Survey on the effect of climate change on Antarctic ice sheets; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Claire Perry | Department: Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

The evidence gathered by the British Antarctic Survey shows significant changes in the Antarctic ice sheet that have occurred due to human-induced climate change, and natural phenomena, over recent years. Reports produced by the British Antarctic Survey form an important contribution to reports produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The Antarctic ice sheet contribution to sea level rise has been growing in recent years and represents a significant fraction of the total. The recent IPCC's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C states that instabilities exist for the Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets, which could result in multi-metre rises in sea level over timescales of centuries to millennia. According to the IPCC there is "medium confidence" that these instabilities could be triggered at around 1.5°C to 2°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels.

Satellite observations show that since 2002, the Antarctic ice sheet has been losing 127 billion tonnes of mass per year, and that the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report states that the average rate of ice loss from the Antarctic ice sheet has likely increased from 30 gigatonnes per year over the period 1992-2001, to 147 gigatonnes per year over the period 2002 to 2011.

These findings emphasise the importance of international collaborative research, such as the £20 million UK-US International Thwaites Glacier Collaboration in Antarctica, to understand its ice sheet stability and potential impacts on future global sea-level rise.

The IPCC will publish a Special Report on Oceans and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate later this year, which will include an up-to-date assessment of observed and projected changes in the Antarctic region. Once published, we will respond to these findings in due course.

Diplomatic Relations: Climate Change

07 Feb 2019 | 214586

Asked by: Stephen Gethins

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of climate change on UK diplomatic relations with states that have (a) a maritime border with and (b) territorial claims to Antarctica.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

All countries with a territorial claim to Antarctica (Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand and Norway) are signatories of the Paris climate change agreement. We have also worked positively with them within the Antarctic Treaty System to ensure issues relating to climate change impacts are addressed. Working collaboratively with these countries, and other signatories to the Antarctic Treaty, to understand how climate change is affecting Antarctica and migrating its effects on the continent has a positive effect on UK diplomatic relations with those nations.

Polar Regions and Seas and Oceans: Waste

31 Jan 2019 | 212433

Asked by: John Lamont

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what international representations are being made to reduce waste in the oceans in international waters and the Polar Regions.

Answering member: Dr Thérèse Coffey | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The UK is committed to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14 – preventing and significantly reducing marine pollution of all kinds. Marine litter is a global issue affecting every region of the world's oceans and therefore needs global action. To achieve this goal we are working through a number of organisations and multilateral organisations.

We played a leading role within the G7 to drive ambitious action under the Ocean Plastics Charter in 2018 which has secured support from 16 governments and 20 businesses and organisations.

In April 2018 the Prime Minister launched the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance, an action group under the Commonwealth Blue Charter that takes action on marine plastic pollution. Led by the UK and Vanuatu, 24 Commonwealth country members of the CCOA have pledged ambitious action to tackle plastic pollution. The CCOA is supported by a package of UK aid of up to £66.4m, which will provide technical assistance and boost much needed research and innovation to stop plastic entering the marine environment in the first place.

In the Polar Regions, the UK has maintained strong involvement in finalising the environmental aspects of the Polar Code, through the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and Protection of the Marine

Environment Working Group (PAME). The Polar Code includes mandatory measures covering pollution prevention from various wastes. The dumping of plastic waste in Antarctica is prohibited and UK fishing operators are leading action to reduce plastic pollution released into Antarctic waters.

Antarctic: Marine Conservation Zones

20 Dec 2018 | 201606

Asked by: Emily Thornberry

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his counterparts in (a) China, (b) Russia and (c) Norway on their recent veto of proposals to create marine conservation areas in the Weddell Sea and two other areas of the Antarctic Ocean.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK is fully committed to establishing a representative network of Marine Protected Areas around Antarctica. At the 2018 annual Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) meeting, the UK worked with the majority of Members to seek agreement on establishing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the Weddell Sea, East Antarctica and around the Antarctic Peninsula. However, an agreement could not be reached due to objections from Russia and China who have fishery interests in the area. Subsequent to the meeting, the UK has engaged with China and discussed how to move forward on MPA proposals. No discussions have yet taken place with Russia. Norway did not veto the MPA proposals in principle: their only objection was over part of the Weddell Sea proposal which they said should be delayed pending further Norwegian-led scientific research. The UK will continue to engage CCAMLR Members, if necessary at high level, to address outstanding issues.

Antarctic: Marine Protected Areas

29 Oct 2018 | 182867

Asked by: Stephen Gethins

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent progress has been made on the establishment of a marine protected area in the Weddell Sea.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK is supportive of proposals for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the Weddell Sea and East Antarctica, both of which are being presented at the meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) currently taking place and due to conclude on the 2 November 2018. UK scientists and experts have been closely involved in the development of the Weddell Sea proposals. Foreign Office officials have also been lobbying other members of CCAMLR in favour of the proposals.

Shipping: Polar Regions

12 Sep 2018 | 170300

Asked by: Dr Matthew Offord

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will seek a change through the International Maritime Organisation to ban ships from using heavy fuel oil when travelling in the Arctic and Antarctic regions.

Answering member: Ms Nusrat Ghani | Department: Department for Transport

The Government is supportive of the ongoing work at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to address the risks associated with Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO) in Polar Waters.

The use and carriage of HFO by ships in the Antarctic region is prohibited and the UK has been an active participant in the current international effort to identify appropriate control measures, including a possible ban, for the Arctic region.

The Government is in favour of proportionate, risk based controls, noting the vulnerability of the Arctic, and if the IMO work indicates a ban is necessary to mitigate the risk we will support such a step.

Antarctic: Marine Protected Areas

11 Sep 2018 | 169438

Asked by: John McNally

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his international counterparts on marine conservation in the Antarctic.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Ocean protection issues have been a key point of discussion among Ministers at recent G7 and G20 meetings, as the UK continues to be a global leader in marine conservation. Within the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), the UK is working proactively to establish a network of Marine Protected Areas around Antarctica. At its next meeting in October, CCAMLR will consider the UK co-sponsored proposals for establishing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the East Antarctic and Weddell Sea. International consultations on these proposals are underway at official and technical levels.

Antarctic: Marine Protected Areas

11 Sep 2018 | 169437

Asked by: John McNally

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent progress he has made on securing international support for marine protection in the Antarctic.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK is a global leader on Antarctic marine protection issues, including within the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). At its next meeting in October, CCAMLR will consider the UK co-sponsored proposals for establishing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the East Antarctic and Weddell Sea. International consultations are underway at official and technical levels. The final proposal will be submitted to CCAMLR this week, we will then work with other EU Members to consider the most appropriate level of lobbying.

[Antarctic: Environment Protection](#)**06 Sep 2018 | 168147****Asked by: Alison Thewliss**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps are being taken at international level to advocate for the protection of the Antarctic.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The United Kingdom is a leading voice in the Antarctic Treaty System. The UK wants to ensure that the Antarctic Treaty continues to be a respected and influential agreement. We play a highly active role in the annual meetings of the Consultative Parties, and in meetings of the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) and Commission on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). The UK has consistently lobbied for greater environmental protection of Antarctica and this year has seen UK led initiatives relating to tourism management, terrestrial protected areas and heritage conservation agreed by Treaty Parties. We will continue to press for the full implementation of the Treaty's Environmental Protocol which prohibits commercial mining and protects vulnerable areas, animals and plants.

Within CCAMLR the UK is committed to establishing a representative network of marine protected areas around Antarctica. The UK led the proposal for the South Orkney Islands Southern Shelf Marine Protected Area (MPA), which was the first MPA agreed by CCAMLR in 2009. The UK also successfully led a proposal to protect marine areas newly exposed by ice shelf retreat or collapse, and after the massive iceberg broke off from the Larsen Ice Shelf last year, the UK secured protective measures for the area of sea exposed by the ice. The UK also strongly supported the designation of the Ross Sea region MPA, agreed in 2016 and is a co-proponent of the proposals to establish MPAs in the Weddell Sea and East Antarctica, which are under consideration at the 37th CCAMLR meeting in October 2018.

[Antarctic: Marine Protected Areas](#)

02 Jul 2018 | 156620

Asked by: Angela Smith

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what progress he has made in establishing the largest marine sanctuaries in the southern oceans; and whether those marine sanctuaries remain one of the primary goals of his Department's Blue Belt policy.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK is a leading advocate for marine protection across the Southern Ocean. The UK secured agreement for the first Marine Protected Area (MPA) designated by the international Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) and we strongly supported the Ross Sea region MPA, which was agreed in 2016. The UK is a co-proponent for MPA proposals in the Weddell Sea and in East Antarctica, both of which will be presented to the next CCAMLR meeting in October for adoption. We are also playing a leading role in developing an MPA proposal for the Antarctic Peninsula.

The Blue Belt initiative is primarily focused on British waters around the UK Overseas Territories and we remain committed to protecting 4m square kilometres of UK waters by 2020. South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands and the British Antarctic Territory both fall within the CCAMLR Convention Area, and the UK therefore works within CCAMLR to underpin protection measures implemented within our own waters.

[Antarctica](#)

21 Nov 2017 | 631 c844

Asked by: James Gray

What steps he is taking to raise the level of international protections for the Antarctic region.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Maintaining the integrity of the Antarctic treaty is fundamental to protecting Antarctica. The UK's leading role within the Antarctic treaty system has allowed us to push consistently for increased levels of protection for the continent's vulnerable environment, and we are committed to continuing to do so.

Asked by: James Gray

"Blue Planet II", among other things, reminds us all of the very delicate and extremely vulnerable biodiversity of our deep oceans—particularly those around the Antarctic continent. Yet, when the nations of the world proposed there should be a marine protected area for the Weddell sea—an area seven times the size of Germany—that was resisted particularly by two nations, namely Russia and China. In the Secretary of State's forthcoming visit to Russia, will he take the opportunity of pressing the Russians to support the rest of the

international community in pressing for a marine protected area for the Weddell sea?

Sir Alan Duncan

I am very happy to put that on our agenda, but may I also reassure my hon. Friend that the UK is a co-proponent of the proposal to establish a marine protected area in the Weddell sea, and that is being developed by the European Union and its member states? British scientists are taking a leading role in preparing a final MPA proposal, which is to be presented to the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources in October next year.

Asked by: Helen Goodman

The hon. Member for North Wiltshire (James Gray) mentioned “Blue Planet II”, and 12 million people watched it on Sunday. We want to know what the Government are going to do to protect the beautiful environment around South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. Will the Government now commit to establishing a marine sanctuary around this British overseas territory?

Sir Alan Duncan

This issue has been championed very much by my right hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Richard Benyon). Indeed, it is not just in the Antarctic that the UK is championing marine protection. The UK is on track to deliver our Blue Belt manifesto commitment around the overseas territories. We will have protected 4 million sq km of ocean by 2020, and the South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands were designated in 2012 as a sustainable use MPA covering 1 million sq km. The first formal review of that will take place next year.

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