

UNITED KINGDOM-AUSTRALIA ANTARCTIC CO-OPERATION PRIORITIES: 2021-2026

Through their respective delegations to the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM), the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) and their respective National Antarctic Programmes, the UK and Australia have identified the following priority areas to further underpin their historical close co-operation on Antarctic and Southern Ocean issues, for the period 2021 to 2026.

Acknowledging that the United Kingdom and Australia were amongst the 12 original signatories to the Antarctic Treaty and have a shared commitment to maintaining Antarctica as a natural reserve, devoted to peace and science under the Antarctic Treaty system;

Noting our shared history of Antarctic exploration and science, and our strong contemporary Antarctic links;

Recognising the significant environmental challenges – including in the form of rapid climate change – affecting parts of Antarctica, and our commitment to strengthen environmental protection in the Antarctic region; and

Noting our desire to strengthen future scientific research cooperation to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented in Antarctica.

1. Annual Antarctic dialogue

The Polar Regions Department of the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the British Antarctic Survey will meet annually with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Australian Antarctic Division of the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment to discuss Antarctic policy and strengthening our Antarctic cooperation. These meetings will take place in the margins of annual ATCM or CCAMLR meetings.

2. Scientific cooperation

The British Antarctic Survey and the Australian Antarctic Division, and other relevant organisations in the United Kingdom and Australia, will strengthen existing collaboration and explore the potential for future scientific cooperation, including joint-projects and secondments of researchers and support staff between our Antarctic Programmes.

3. Our Antarctic programmes

We are committed to logistics and technical collaboration between our programmes, including in aviation, staff exchanges and joint logistics to support major science efforts. We will explore opportunities to grow this collaboration, including through sharing logistic and other Antarctic supply experiences, particularly in relation to the new polar research vessels that our programmes will operate from 2021.

4. The Antarctic Treaty system

i) Shared history and objectives

We share significant national interests in Antarctica and in the Antarctic Treaty system. We have a strong interest in the effective administration and governance of our respective Antarctic Territories, consistent with the Treaty system. As original signatories to the Antarctic Treaty, we will work to develop policy proposals, in particular to ATCM and CCAMLR, that uphold and strengthen the system's objectives and core principles. In 2021, we look forward to celebrating the 60th anniversary of the entry into force of the Antarctic Treaty, and the 30th anniversary of the 1991 Protocol on Environmental Protection, which prohibits any activity relating to mineral resources, other than scientific research, in Antarctica. In 2022, we look forward to celebrating the 40th anniversary of the 1982 Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.

ii) Inspections

The United Kingdom and Australia have a strong record of support for the key principles of the Antarctic Treaty system, including by carrying out inspections under the Treaty. We will explore opportunities to share expertise.

iii) Marine protection

The United Kingdom and Australia are committed to the objective and principles of the CAMLR Convention and will continue to work together to develop, promote and seek the adoption of enhanced conservation outcomes in the Southern Ocean. As a priority, we will work with CCAMLR Parties to develop a representative system of Marine Protected Areas, including proposals for MPAs in East Antarctica and the Weddell Sea. We will also work to adopt enhanced conservation measures, including in relation to climate change and improved fishing practices. The United Kingdom and Australia will work together to further enhance CCAMLR's compliance regime.

5. Our Antarctic heritage

The United Kingdom and Australia have a proud history of Antarctic exploration and scientific research, dating back to the 'heroic age' of Antarctic exploration in the early 20th century. We will work together to preserve and promote our shared Antarctic heritage, including the important legacies of Sir Douglas Mawson, Captain Robert Scott and Sir Ernest Shackleton.

25 May 2021