



UK Antarctic Strategy to 2035



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Ministerial foreword

The UK retains longstanding interest in Antarctica with a rich history of exploration and research, which fascinated me as a child. Scott's fateful expedition departed from Cardiff on the Terra Nova and the exploits of Shackleton inspired me and so many others. Just a few months ago, I was equally inspired and fascinated by the work of our world class vessel, the RRS Sir David Attenborough, and the incredible scientists from the British Antarctic Survey before they headed south for the austral summer. We are one of the original signatories to the Antarctic Treaty and have continued our active involvement in the governance of Antarctica ever since.

The Antarctic Treaty, signed in 1959, has endured for over six decades and we remain committed to ensuring the principles and rules agreed then continue to endure now. Antarctica is not immune from wider global geopolitical tensions and there is no room for complacency. We need to continue to strengthen the Treaty and ensure that human activity in the region remains peaceful, safe and environmentally responsible.

Climate change poses one of the most significant threats to Antarctica and the world. It is one of the most rapidly changing regions in the world and what happens to the Antarctic environment impacts us all. In the UK, sea level rise, changes in our weather patterns, and threats to our wildlife are all linked to what is happening in Antarctica. Through the world-class work of the British Antarctic Survey and the wider British science community, the UK will continue to support research that will increase our collective understanding of climate change, and the actions needed to tackle the impacts.



I am proud to be the Minister in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office with responsibility for the Overseas Territories and Polar Regions. Three of the British Antarctic Survey's world-leading Antarctic research stations are located in the British Antarctic Territory. We will continue to maintain an active presence in the Territory, ensuring its effective governance and promoting our work there.

I am delighted to share our objectives and ambition for Antarctica. Our vision is to maintain the UK's role as a leader in Antarctica and an active participant in the Antarctic Treaty system. We have consistently applied the general principles of international cooperation, promoting scientific research and the free exchange of information to our approach to Antarctica and the way we look to uphold the spirit of the Antarctic Treaty. This draws on our wealth of experience and best practice in the region. This is a unique and special place on our planet. We must protect it and understand it even more.

Stephen Doughty MP, Minister of State (Europe, North America and Overseas Territories), Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office



Photo by Pete Bucktrout, BAS

Introduction



Photo by David Ganiford, BAS

The UK's steadfast commitment to Antarctica has remained since the early days of exploration to the continent and is demonstrated by our leadership in the implementation and strengthening of the Antarctic Treaty and associated legal instruments. Our vision for the UK in Antarctica is to remain at the forefront of Antarctic science, particularly climate and marine science, and conservation, to ensure effective governance of the British Antarctic Territory (BAT), and to uphold our responsibilities under the Antarctic Treaty system (ATS).

As an original signatory to the Antarctic Treaty, we will continue to play an active role in international efforts through the ATS to preserve Antarctica for peaceful and scientific purposes. We remain fully committed to the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CAMLIR Convention)

and the full implementation of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (Environmental Protocol). We will seek to counter efforts to weaken or undermine these instruments which form the heart of the ATS.

The Antarctic region is subject to strategic competition, with some states seeking to assert influence by expanding their regional presence. The UK and its allies, including new partners with whom we share objectives, must remain vigilant to ensure that new assets are consistent with the Treaty. The UK will continue to focus its presence to maintain its leadership role in producing high quality and impactful science, via BAS and UK universities, enabled by the Antarctic Infrastructure Modernisation Programme, which is ensuring our scientific stations are fit for modern operations. This will continue to be underpinned by annual Royal Navy patrols to

deliver Treaty obligations and sovereignty assurance, support hydrographic surveying and augment UK science and logistics, as well as targeted Royal Air Force support.

Climate change is having a significant impact on Antarctic ecosystems and biodiversity and will have global impacts including in the UK. Increased human activity from tourism, fishing, and science add to the challenges of preserving the continent's fragile and unique environment. To combat these, we will champion protective conservation measures for Antarctic biodiversity and the environment, and support the science needed to inform collective understanding of, and action to deal with, the implications of climate change and human impact.

Over the coming decade, the UK will remain vigilant and proactive to assert our interests in Antarctica. We will ensure we are well placed to anticipate and respond to future challenges, including in response to climate, nature, resource and political pressures. We will seek to maintain our leading scientific, policy and logistics expertise, and demonstrate best practice in Antarctic operations, our administration of the BAT and our domestic implementation of the ATS, including the Environmental Protocol.

By 2035, the UK wants to ensure that Antarctica has the protection and science it needs to remain a peaceful continent dedicated to scientific excellence, environmental protection, resource stewardship, and international cooperation.

UK in Antarctica

The UK's overarching aims in Antarctica are to:

Strengthen governance and UK sovereign interests

- Engage actively with Antarctic Parties to sustain a strong and effective governance framework under the ATS.
- Champion the implementation and preservation of international rules that enhance further the comprehensive protection of the Antarctic, ensuring its value as a place of peace and science is prioritised, the impacts of human activity are minimised, and safety is enhanced.
- Celebrate the UK's connection with Antarctica and contributions from across UK society towards its management, protection and wider public awareness.
- Ensure the effective administration of the BAT.
- Promote regional opportunities, consistent with the provisions of the ATS, including for the UK's Overseas Territories in the wider South Atlantic.

Promote scientific understanding

- Support, lead and share high quality and impactful scientific research, including that which increases understanding of the links between global climate systems and Antarctica, and the implications of climate change and biodiversity shifts, and enhanced understanding of the dynamics of space weather.
- Ensure the UK's scientific stations in Antarctica, vessels and aircraft are effective and sustainable facilities that provide safe and secure platforms to conduct and support science.
- Ensure UK Antarctic science is shared with the global community and supports international policymaking.

Enhance environmental protection

- Protect the Antarctic environment, advocating for the establishment and management of protected areas, and enhanced species protection, based on the best available scientific evidence.
- Take a precautionary and ecosystem-based approach to the conservation and sustainable management of marine living resources in the Southern Ocean and advocate for the delivery of the commitment by the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) to establish a system of marine protected areas by 2030.
- Document and conserve British Antarctic heritage, including through supporting the work of the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust, and ensuring adequate protection for historic sites under the Environmental Protocol.

Ensure peaceful and lawful use

- Ensure the UK Government maintains capability for surveillance and patrol in the BAT, to uphold the ATS and undertake Treaty and CAMLR Convention inspections.
- Work closely with like-minded partners and those committed to the rules-based order to uphold the principles of the ATS.
- Seek to strengthen CCAMLR's ability to deter and address illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing in the Southern Ocean.
- Ensure the UK permitting process remains robust for UK-authorised activity in Antarctica and promote the authorisation of only safe and environmentally responsible science and tourism activities within the ATS.

Governance in Antarctica



Photo by UKAHT

The Antarctic Treaty system

Much of the UK's approach to Antarctica is shaped and driven by our ongoing commitment to the ATS, which insists that all Parties and signatories accept certain rules, norms and values. Within this, we strive to focus on environmental protection, marine conservation and climate change and encourage other Parties to prioritise such discussions.

The ATS provides the overarching framework for governance in Antarctica and ensures peaceful human presence in the Antarctic, international cooperation, and the delivery of science. It laid the foundation for over six decades of peace and cooperation and is widely regarded as one of the most successful international agreements in operation. Although the number of countries that have signed up to the Treaty has now

risen considerably, along with global interest in Antarctica, the UK wishes to ensure that the obligations for international cooperation and the protection of Antarctica remain at its heart. The core Antarctic values of peace, science and cooperation are vital to ensuring a robust ATS endures.

The Antarctic Treaty was followed by other international agreements: the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals (CCAS), the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CAMLRL Convention) and the Protocol on Environmental Protection (Environmental Protocol). Together they comprise the ATS, a comprehensive framework for the preservation of Antarctica as a place of peace and science. We encourage all Parties to the Treaty who are not party to the Environmental Protocol to

fully implement the agreement, and to ensure the provisions are reflected in their relevant domestic legislation.

Decisions regarding the continent are made at the annual Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM). The UK is an active participant in discussions and the submission of papers, and BAS and UK University science plays a key role in informing our position at these meetings. We take our responsibilities under the ATS seriously and will continue to play a leading role in calling for greater action on climate change and environmental protection. We will continue to submit papers to the ATCM and its advisory Committee on Environmental Protection (CEP) on climate change, environmental protection and monitoring, sustainable infrastructure in Antarctica, and are committed to doing more to preserve Antarctica for peaceful cooperation. Over the coming decade, the UK will consider how to enhance transparency and openness in the ATS, while ensuring Parties maintain the ability to openly discuss issues affecting Antarctica. The UK will explore opportunities for greater collaboration with other Antarctic Treaty Parties to advance our collective goals and commitment to Antarctica.

We will continue to promote and scrutinise proposed Antarctic Specially Protected Areas and Antarctic Specially Managed Areas to ensure that each meets its intended objectives. Underpinning all of this, the UK will continue to use the best available science to advocate for a precautionary approach, advance evidence-based proposals and inform decision-making.

Under the Antarctic Treaty, Parties may carry out inspections of facilities and protected areas in Antarctica to ensure compliance with obligations under the ATS. There is scope to improve inspections in Antarctica and the UK will look to conduct more, both alone and in

cooperation with other Treaty Parties, throughout the Antarctic Treaty Area to document any non-compliant activities and make recommendations to the ATCM, so we collectively act to ensure Parties active in Antarctica are operating in good faith and within the agreed rules-based framework of the ATS.

The UK will also maintain the professional reputation and expertise of the FCDO's Polar Regions Department and continue building a diverse and effective team that actively engages with the increasing range of stakeholders. We will also engage with BAS and others to ensure the UK delegations to both the ATCM and CCAMLR are able to draw on expertise to inform decision-making.

Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources

As a Member of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), the UK will continue to promote conservation, which includes the rational use of resources based on scientific evidence. We will continue to support scientific programmes that advance knowledge and inform decision-making, especially in the context of climate change implications for Antarctic marine living resources.

The UK will continue to pursue the application of a precautionary, ecosystem-based approach to ensure sustainable fisheries management. We will work to ensure that CCAMLR continues efforts to develop an ecosystem-based regional resource management system and respond robustly to those who use the consensus regime to frustrate progress. The UK will continue efforts to secure enhanced protection of the marine environment, including through effective fisheries management and the establishment

of a greater number and diversity of marine protected areas in the Southern Ocean.

We will advocate within CCAMLR for catch limits for fisheries within the Convention Area that are based on the best available scientific advice. We will continue to support the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands to ensure the highest standards of fisheries management in full compliance of the CAMLR Convention, and we will continue strongly counter those who seek to undermine the UK's rights within these waters for political purposes. To combat illegal fishing and overexploitation, the UK will continue to conduct routine inspections of vessels operating in the Convention Area.

During the UK's 2024-26 CCAMLR Chairship, the UK has and will, continue to seek to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Commission.

CCAS

The UK will continue to serve as an effective Depositary Government for the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals. In addition to ongoing reporting on the number of seals captured or killed on an annual basis, the UK will seek to support efforts to digitalise past and future records, to provide for greater utilisation of CCAS information.

The British Antarctic Territory

The UK first formally claimed territory in Antarctica in 1908, and the BAT was established as a distinct territory in 1962. The UK will continue to maintain the security and good governance of the Territory, in the context of our Antarctic Treaty commitments.

We will work with all UK Antarctic stakeholders to deliver the objectives of the 2019-2029 BAT Strategy¹, which are to: promote the BAT and UK in Antarctica, including increasing awareness through education and outreach with partners; to protect the Territory's environment on the basis of thorough science and research; to preserve British heritage for future generations, including the wreck of Shackleton's famous ship *Endurance*, discovered in 2022; to effectively administer the Territory ensuring there is an effective and proportionate legislative and administrative framework; and to effectively manage the Territory's finances in accordance with the best financial practice.



Photo by Natalie Allen, FCDO

¹ <https://britishantarcticterritory.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/British-Antarctic-Territory-Strategy-2019-2029-Updated-Aug-2021.pdf>

Key priorities to 2035:

- Uphold the Antarctic Treaty's values of peace and international cooperation.
- Active participation in the ATS, including through the UK's 2024-26 Chairship of CCAMLR.
- Ensure the effective governance of the BAT and deliver the objectives of the BAT Strategy.
- Take a precautionary approach, underpinned by the best available scientific evidence.
- Conduct inspections under the Antarctic Treaty to ensure compliance with ATS provisions.
- Ensure catch limits for fisheries are based on scientific advice.
- Conduct inspections of vessels operating in the Convention Area to combat illegal fishing and overexploitation.
- Establish MPAs in the Southern Ocean to enhance marine protection.

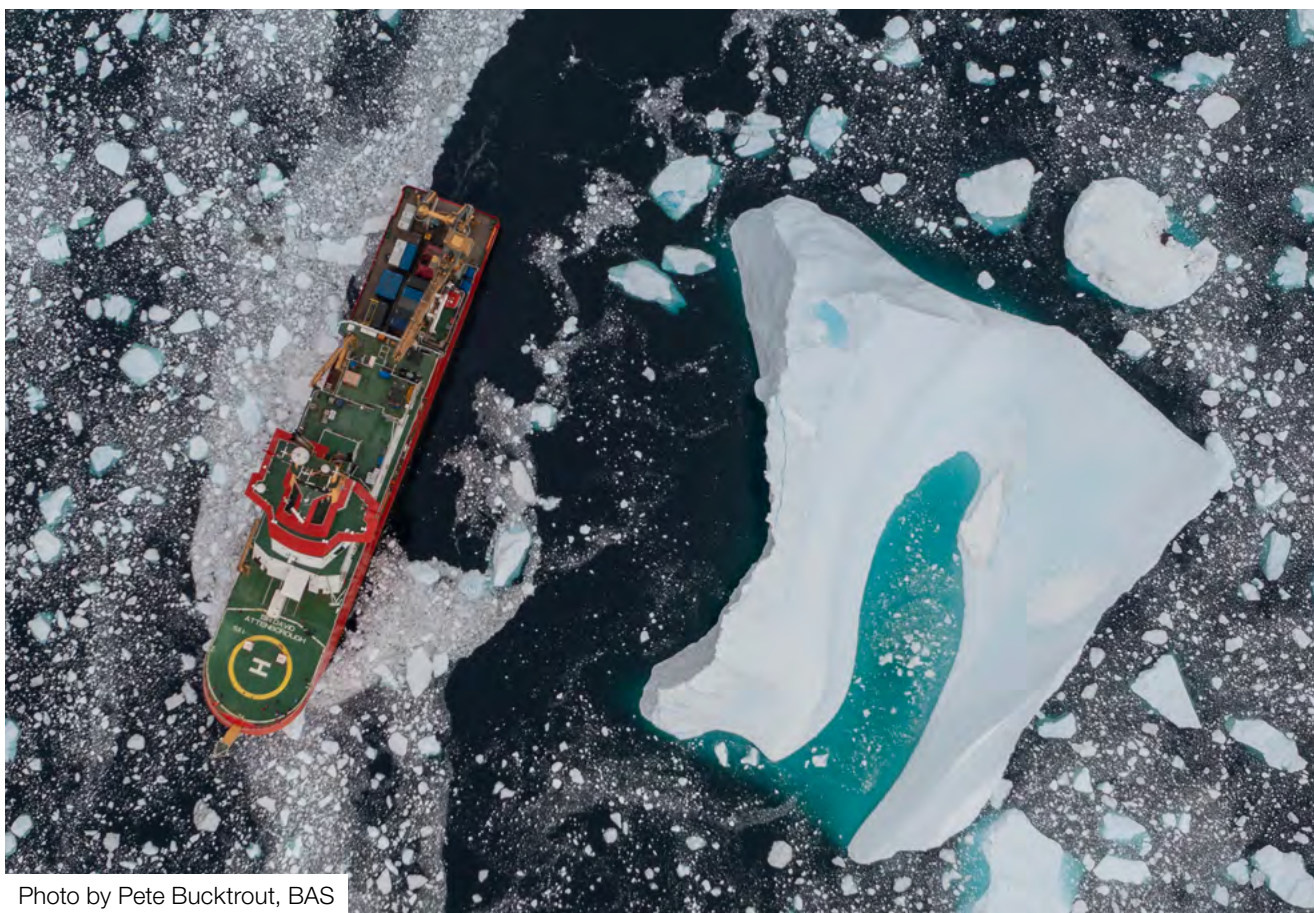


Photo by Pete Bucktrout, BAS

Science

The UK has long been considered as world-leading for impactful Antarctic science. UK scientists make internationally recognised contributions to a diverse range of areas including marine research, biodiversity, ice sheet modelling, sea level change, and to climate change research, including through ongoing analysis of the world's oldest ice cores, and supporting the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) work on the Polar Regions. British scientific excellence will underpin the UK's activities within the ATS and provides evidence and advice for collective decision-making, both in respect of Antarctica, and in relation to the impact of Antarctic change on the rest of the planet. The exchange of scientific information is key principle of the Antarctic Treaty and the UK's Antarctic science plays an important role in informing international policymaking, including documents such as the IPCC's Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a changing climate.

Antarctic science matters to the UK. It aids our understanding of the scientific challenges facing the region, from future ice sheet stability in Antarctica to biodiversity change in the Southern Ocean.

The UK has an active scientific footprint in Antarctica, and we will maintain our year-round presence in the region through the British Antarctic Survey (BAS)², supporting its mission of delivering world-class science, along with the wider UK Antarctic science community. The UK will continue to invest in our research stations in Antarctica and utilise BAS aircraft and the Royal Research Ship *Sir David Attenborough* to best effect as platforms for advanced scientific work. Improvement works at Rothera Research

Station will facilitate world-class science, as well as delivering on sustainability ambitions that limit the impact of human activity on the Antarctic environment, while ensuring any corresponding negative environmental impacts are minimised. The UK will ensure it maintains an influential presence, as well as the capability to reach all parts of the BAT, going further afield to pursue its scientific and environmental protection priorities. The UK's Antarctic research does not operate in isolation and requires international collaboration on science and logistics. This enables us to work with existing and new partners to tackle the challenges facing Antarctica. We will continue to work closely with international partners and play an active leadership role in both SCAR and COMNAP, ensuring scientific data is shared internationally, and that Antarctic operations are conducted safely.

In addition to BAS, a wide range of UK Universities and other scientific institutions engage in Antarctic science and social science. The Government will continue to support the UK community-led UK Arctic and Antarctic Partnership forum, which encourages collaboration and information sharing.

The UK will continue to advocate for the integration of emerging technologies in scientific research, including artificial intelligence to enhance decision-making in marine operations and carbon emissions monitoring. British scientists have demonstrated the impact on Antarctica from climate change, and its global consequences. The UK will continue to support research, including commissioning work on tipping points and global temperature increases.

² BAS's science strategy Polar Science for a Sustainable Planet details planned science programmes and themes for 2023-2033.

It is vital that we improve our collective understanding of the state of Antarctica's environments and the role of the continent as a global barometer. The Government is also committed to supporting international initiatives like the UNESCO's Antarctica InSync programme to improve observational capabilities and will support the International Polar Year of 2032/33.

There is growing interest in bioprospecting and the commercial use of Antarctic genetic material. The UK will advocate for continued and detailed scrutiny of this issue at the ATCM, ensuring that any regulation respects the principles of the ATS, promotes research and knowledge-sharing, safeguards the environment, and ensures robust oversight. The UK remains committed to the indefinite ban on commercial mineral resource extraction enshrined in the Environmental Protocol and will work with Parties to uphold the integrity of this ban and challenge those who seek to undermine it.

In the early 20th century, women in Antarctica faced discriminatory challenges, fighting for representation and inclusion in Antarctic research. Fortunately, the 'ice ceiling' has thawed, and the UK will continue to support greater diversity in polar science from communities and backgrounds previously underrepresented, including support for underrepresented groups, early career researchers, and initiatives to ensure access to the continent for vital research. An approach to science that supports diversity and inclusion will continue to develop the best policy that reflects the diverse within UK society and attract the widest range of people. We want UK polar scientists to play an active role in SCAR and participate in programmes that advance our scientific objectives. We also ensure tour operators permitted by the UK fully respect the primacy of science, as enshrined in the Treaty, and encourage them to support scientific activities in the region.

Education is also an important strategic tool in ensuring future generations are engaged in the continued protection of Antarctica and its ecosystems and understand why the UK retains a BAT. The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) together with the Royal Geographical Society, BAS and other partners, continues to maintain an award-winning educational website *Discovering Antarctica*, which is widely used in UK schools and will continue to raise awareness of the continent's importance and the challenges it faces over the coming decade.

Key priorities to 2035:

- Maintain a year-round UK scientific presence in Antarctica through BAS.
- Invest in modern, sustainable research infrastructure.
- Lead international collaboration and data sharing through SCAR and COMNAP.
- Support UK science community partnerships and institutional engagement.
- Integrate emerging technologies like AI into Antarctic research and operations.
- Advance climate change research and monitoring of tipping points.
- Participate in global initiatives such as Antarctica InSync and the International Polar Year.
- Advocate for regulation and oversight of bioprospecting activities.
- Uphold the indefinite ban on commercial mineral resource activity in Antarctica.
- Promote diversity, education, and tourism practices that support science.

Environmental stewardship



Photo by Michael Duff, UKAHT

Antarctica is undergoing rapid and profound environmental change, with the effects of climate change increasingly visible in melting sea ice, collapsing ice shelves, and shifting ecosystems. The Antarctic Peninsula and surrounding waters are a hotspot for warming and seeing rapid change. The effects of these changes are not confined to the polar regions – they have serious global implications, including rising sea levels, altered ocean circulation, and more extreme weather events. The UK recognises that protecting Antarctica is essential not only for the continent itself and surrounding ocean, but for the health and stability of the entire planet. We have a clear long-term responsibility to future generations to act in the best interests of Antarctica and UK work in baseline studies remains critical. As such, the UK is committed to being a driving force for protection of the Antarctic environment and to deepen understanding

of the implications of climate change through science, policy, and international cooperation.

British scientists have already demonstrated the cumulative impact of climate change on Antarctica, and the UK continues to support research to enhance our global understanding of the effects. This includes commissioning new research studies and supporting long-term monitoring programmes through BAS, recognising Antarctica's role as a global barometer of environmental health. The UK also supports urgent exploration of these issues to inform decisions on risk, mitigation, and adaptation.

Under the Environmental Protocol, the UK has taken a leading role in implementing and strengthening environmental safeguards. This includes the designation and management of both marine and terrestrial protected areas. The UK was instrumental in

establishing the South Orkney Islands Southern Shelf Marine Protected Area (MPA), the first international MPA under CCAMLR, and continues to advocate for the expansion of MPAs across the Southern Ocean. On land, the UK has designated one of the highest number of Antarctic Specially Protected Areas (ASPAs), demonstrating our active work to understand and protect areas of significant scientific value. Recognising the clear scientific evidence for vulnerability of emperor penguins to climate-driven habitat loss, the UK has also led efforts to designate them as a Specially Protected Species under the Environmental Protocol and will continue to push for greater protection of these and similarly threatened species.

In response to the growing threat of non-native species, which are increasingly likely to be introduced and establish in Antarctica due to increased human activity and warming conditions, the UK has developed world-leading biosecurity protocols. BAS has implemented rigorous measures to prevent the introduction of invasive organisms via cargo, clothing, and vessels, and the eradication of already present non-native species. The UK continues to support international cooperation to strengthen biosecurity standards and share best practices. The Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI) also has robust biosecurity measures in place for cruise ships visiting the Territory to further enhance our efforts to prevent the introduction of non-native species to Antarctica.

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) are a cornerstone of the Environmental Protocol, and the UK has been at the forefront of applying rigorous EIAs for all Antarctic activities. This includes infrastructure projects such as resurfacing the Rothera Research Station airstrip and the construction of Halley VI Research Station. The UK is leading efforts to improve the consistency and transparency of EIA processes across Treaty Parties and

has presented work on cumulative impacts at the ATCM, highlighting the need to better assess how multiple activities can collectively degrade the environment. The UK will continue to develop proposals to better understand and address cumulative impacts in Antarctica, including through intersessional work with Antarctic Treaty Parties. The UK also encourages all Treaty Parties to adopt robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms to assess environmental impacts and ensure accountability.

Beyond EIAs, the UK will continue to identify and propose for protection, and subsequent management, areas with special environmental, scientific, or wilderness and/or aesthetic values.

Since the time of Operation Tabarin, a secret British expedition during World War II to establish a permanent presence in Antarctica, the UK has maintained active stations on the continent, including operating Rothera Research Station for 50 years. Through the Antarctic Infrastructure Modernisation Programme, the UK is investing in energy-efficient buildings and renewable energy systems to decarbonise Antarctic stations by 2030 and seeks to achieve net zero across Antarctic scientific operations by 2040. We also encourage Parties operating stations in Antarctica to reduce carbon emissions and adopt sustainable practices, including for the timely management of waste reports where appropriate. BAS has pioneered the use of alternative fuels and energy-efficient technologies, and the UK is considering the inclusion of firm climate commitments in permits issued for Antarctic visits. Through the Antarctic Infrastructure Modernisation Programme, the UK is investing in energy-efficient buildings and renewable energy systems to decarbonise Antarctic stations and seeks to achieve net zero across Antarctic scientific operations and activities at BAS's Headquarters in Cambridge by 2040.

Within the ATS, the UK will continue to encourage the urgent adoption of Annex VI to the Environmental Protocol on Liability Arising from Environmental Emergencies to ensure the prevention, minimisation, and containment of impacts from environmental emergencies.

Following decades of human activity in Antarctica, waste can be an issue on the continent, particularly from early expeditions where records of activity may have been lost. The UK has advocated for the development of guidelines for the management of waste of unclear origin to ensure better reporting and assessment. We will continue to commit to minimising waste generation in our Antarctic operations. The UK has also undertaken extensive clean-up operations to remove abandoned infrastructure, hazardous materials, and waste from former stations, and has transferred some functioning stations to other Treaty Parties to reduce the need for new construction. We also engage with other Parties to protect British Antarctic heritage and other sites of historic value in areas

of Antarctica outside the BAT.

Plastic pollution is a global issue requiring attention and the ATCM has recognised the threat it poses to Antarctic and Southern Ocean ecosystems. The UK has also highlighted research on plastic pollution associated with Antarctic station and field operations and will continue to encourage the adoption of practices to reduce such sources of pollution. In our own Antarctic operations, the UK has led the way on waste management, including enshrining best practice within our activities.

Through its leadership in the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings and CCAMLR, the UK continues to advocate for science-based conservation, the protection of vulnerable species, and the sustainable management of human activities. These efforts ensure that Antarctica remains a zone of peace, science, and environmental stewardship for future generations.

Key priorities to 2035:

- Advance climate change research and long-term monitoring in Antarctica.
- Prioritise studies to inform risk, mitigation and adaptation strategies.
- Designate and manage protected areas and species to safeguard Antarctic biodiversity.
- Implement and promote world-leading biosecurity protocols to prevent the introduction of invasive species.
- Apply and improve rigorous EIAs for all Antarctic activities.
- Reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainable operations at Antarctic stations and other UK-permitted activities.
- Conduct clean-up operations and manage legacy waste to preserve the Antarctic environment.
- Support research and practices to reduce plastic pollution in Antarctic ecosystems.

Heritage



Photo by Helen Annan, UKAHT

The UK's heritage in Antarctica is a testament to the early pioneers of exploration and science on the continent. From the early expeditions of Scott and Shackleton to the establishment of the first research stations, British activity laid the foundations for modern Antarctic science. These historic endeavours are not only part of the UK's national story but also central to the shared human legacy in Antarctica. The BAT Heritage Strategy recognises this significance and sets out a clear framework for identifying, protecting, and communicating the value of heritage sites across the region. Our heritage also recognises and reinforces the Treaty's principles of peaceful use of the Antarctic and celebrates our cultural identity in the region. It provides an important platform for education and public awareness for visitors, who can learn about our history while seeing firsthand the importance of conservation work.

Several of the UK's early research stations have been formally designated as Historic Sites and Monuments under the ATS. Managed by the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust, sites such as Port Lockroy, Wordie House, and Detaille Island preserve the physical legacy of British scientific and exploratory activity. The UK also supports international efforts to conserve British heritage beyond the BAT, including contributing to the preservation of the historic huts in the Ross Dependency associated with Scott and Shackleton's expeditions, and the conservation efforts in SGSSI to preserve British heritage in the Territory. These structures offer a tangible connection to the Heroic Age and continue to inspire public interest and international collaboration in heritage conservation.

The UK has recently led efforts to secure greater protection for the wreck of *Endurance*, Shackleton's famed vessel,

discovered in the Weddell Sea in 2022. A Conservation Management Plan was presented to the ATCM, with the UK advocating for its designation as an Antarctic Specially Protected Area. This initiative reflects the UK's broader commitment to safeguarding

Antarctic heritage—ensuring that the stories, sites, and symbols of its historic presence are preserved for future generations and remain integral to the continent's identity as a place of peace, science, and shared human endeavour.

Key priorities to 2035:

- Implement the British Antarctic Heritage Strategy.
- Support international heritage conservation and lead heritage advocacy in the ATS.
- Identification and documentation of British heritage in Antarctica.
- Conservation of designated British historic sites and monuments in Antarctica.
- Build resilience to climate change impacts in British heritage in Antarctica.
- Through education and engagement activities, connect a global audience with the rich stories of British endeavour in Antarctica.



Photo by UKAHT

Human activity



Photo by Jane Rumble OBE, FCDO

The UK is committed to the effective regulation of human activity in Antarctica to ensure the continent remains a place of peace, science, and environmental stewardship. Through its implementation of the Antarctic Treaty and the Environmental Protocol, the UK operates a robust permitting system under the Antarctic Act. This system governs scientific research, tourism, and other activities, ensuring they meet the highest international standards and are subject to rigorous EIAs. These assessments are essential for identifying and mitigating environmental risks, and the UK continues to advocate for improvements to the EIA process across Treaty Parties, including better evaluation of cumulative impacts and consistent application of standards.

Tourism is a legitimate commercial activity, but the UK shares concerns about its rapid growth and diversification, particularly as most

visits are concentrated in the BAT. The UK has a particular interest in ensuring that the expansion of tourism does not come at the expense of safeguarding the Antarctic environment. Following agreement at the 2024 Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) to consider regulation of tourism, the UK is actively contributing to the multi-year development of a framework for its safe and sustainable management. The UK regularly engages with other Treaty Parties and the tourism industry, including through participation in the annual meeting of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO), and will bring forward concrete proposals to support this work. The UK also continues to monitor yacht activity in the region and urges Treaty Parties to follow up on unauthorised vessels operating without permits.

The UK will support CCAMLR's efforts to ensure that fishing in the Southern Ocean does not compromise ecosystem integrity or undermine the long-term sustainability of marine biodiversity. The UK plays a leading role in CCAMLR, supporting the development of a network of MPAs and advocating for sustainable fisheries management. The UK takes a precautionary approach to any proposals to expand fishing activity, calling for robust scientific monitoring, spatial management, and clear conservation objectives as a pre-requisite to any such developments. This approach is reflected in the UK's stewardship of the waters around South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI), where a world-leading regime of sustainable fisheries management is in place, underpinned by science and strict enforcement.

The UK recognises that future threats to Antarctica will require proactive leadership and coordinated management with all Parties. Climate change remains the most pressing challenge, with warming temperatures and ice loss, and the risk that increased human activity poses to biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. Over the next ten years, the UK will continue to closely monitor emerging issues

such as bioprospecting, increased shipping, and infrastructure development. In addition, the UK and other Treaty Parties have expressed concern about the potential use of polar geoengineering technologies in Antarctica. While such interventions may be proposed as climate mitigation tools, the UK will continue to support a precautionary approach and has advocated within the ATCM for careful scrutiny of any geoengineering proposals to ensure they do not undermine the environmental protections enshrined in the ATS.

Central to the UK's approach is its unwavering support for the peaceful use of Antarctica informed by a culture of international collaboration and respect for the Antarctic Treaty and associated legal instruments. We recognise that, in the next decade, there is likely to be greater interest in the polar continent. In an era of rising geopolitical tensions and growing environmental pressures, UK leadership and our work with partners will ensure that Antarctica remains free from conflict, and that human activity is carefully managed in the interests of environmental protection, global stability and future generations.



Photo by Michael Duff, UKAHT

Key priorities to 2035:

- Operate a robust permitting system with rigorous EIAs for all Antarctic activities.
- Improve EIA standards across the ATS, including cumulative impact evaluation and consistency.
- Develop and implement a sustainable tourism framework in collaboration with Treaty Parties and IAATO.
- Monitor and enforce compliance against unauthorised vessels and activities in the region.
- Lead marine conservation through CCAMLR, expanding MPAs and enforcing sustainable fisheries.
- Apply a precautionary approach to emerging threats and issues, including bioprospecting, shipping, and geoengineering proposals.
- Strengthen international governance and collaboration through active participation in ATCM and CCAMLR.
- Ensure Antarctica remains a place of peace, science and environmental stewardship amid global pressures.

Definitions and acronyms

Antarctica, Antarctic, and the Southern Ocean refer to the region south of 60 degrees latitude South, as provided for in the Antarctic Treaty.

When referring to marine living resources, the **Convention area** detailed by the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources applies.

Acronyms

ASPA: Antarctic Specially Protected Area

ATCM: Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting

ATS: Antarctic Treaty system

BAS: British Antarctic Survey

BAT: British Antarctic Territory

CCAMLR: Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources

CCAS: Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals

EIA: Environmental Impact Assessment

FCDO: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

GSGSSI: Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands

HSM: Historic Sites and Monuments

IAATO: International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators

MPA: Marine Protected Area

SCAR: Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research

SGSSI: South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands

UKAHT: UK Antarctic Heritage Trust

Key delivery partners

The Government will work closely with partners to deliver the ambition of this strategy, including BAS, IAATO, GSGSSI, and UKAHT.

Monitoring and review

Delivery of this strategy will be kept under review by the Ministerial Group on the Polar Regions.

