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Other Policy Related Activities

Report Author(s)

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Summary

An overview of policy related activities undertaken by SCAR since the 2018 Delegates Meeting is provided. These include SCAR's engagement with the UNFCCC Climate Change Conference in June 2019 and an exhibition at the UK Houses of Parliament in January 2019. Reports are also provided on the work of the Antarctic Climate Change and Environment Group, SCAR's support to the Antarctic Environments Portal and the SCAR/IAATO collaboration to develop a systematic conservation plan for the Antarctic Peninsula.

A key topic for discussion is SCAR's takeover of the Antarctic Environments Portal in 2020 and a background paper on this is provided in Annex 1.

Events attended

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Standing Body (SB) 50 Meetings – Bonn, Germany, June 2019

In 2019 SCAR was invited to participate in the 11th Research Dialogue (RD) activity of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) of the UNFCCC at the SB50 meetings.

One of the 4 themes for the Research Dialogue was the “Role of the Ocean in the Climate system”. SCAR was invited to participate in the dedicated poster session preceding the formal dialogue and then to attend the research dialogue itself. SCAR submitted a poster entitled “Why the Southern Ocean matters” and both the Executive Director and Executive Officer took part in the poster session and the subsequent dialogue. SCAR made a submission to the Chair of the RD for consideration in his report on the RD. There was considerable interest in the SCAR poster with over 30 representatives of parties and other stakeholder groups (e.g. from the private sector and finance) taking the opportunity to discuss SCAR’s work. Attending the meetings gave the opportunity to network with the Research and Independent NGO (RINGO) and Education, Communication and Outreach Stakeholders (ECOS) constituencies.

This fruitful engagement with the UNFCCC came about as a result of prior work during 2018/19, including virtual meetings with the International Science Council and a visit by Executive Director to the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) in Geneva in 2019, where the topic of closer partnership within the UNFCCC process was discussed.

It also builds on successful work in 2013 when SCAR used the UNFCCC Standing Body meeting to promote the Executive Summary update to the Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment report and Conference of the Parties (COP) meeting in Warsaw (COP19) to highlight Antarctic research as part of the “Day of the Cryosphere”. Since then SCAR has had selective representation at UNFCCC, working with ISC (formerly ICSU) on specific side events, including at the historic COP21 meeting in Paris in 2015. SCAR has also worked the International Climate Cryosphere Initiative (ICCI), and its Director Pam Pearson on events and discussions in parallel with the UNFCCC process. ICCI has extensive experience in the UNFCCC process which has proved invaluable in ensuring our activities have been effective and efficient.

UK Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology – Polar Science Exhibition, UK Parliament, 29 January 2019

SCAR were invited to be one of four exhibitors at this event, which took place in parallel with a parliamentary seminar on Science Diplomacy. Speakers included Sir David Attenborough and Professor Dame Jane Francis, Director of the British Antarctic Survey. The audience were made up of UK policy makers and officials, embassy staff from a wide range of countries and representatives of scientific bodies.

Engagement with the International Climate and Cryosphere Initiative (ICCI).

SCAR took part in an ICCI round-table on ‘the consequences of change - What does the cryosphere tell us about climate risk?’ at Chatham House in July 2019 as part of London Climate Week. This event was a roundtable discussion hosted by ICCI in partnership with E3G and attendees included the UK lead negotiator at UNFCCC along with representatives from science, policy, foreign policy, security, development,

finance, civil society and journalists. Discussion centred around translating the messages that cryospheric research were generating, into materials that would encourage positive behaviour change generally but also motivating adequate policy and governance responses.

Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment Group (ACCE)

The ACCE Group under the direction of Prof John Turner provided an update on the Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment Report to the XLII Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting in Prague in 2019. Several new members will join the ACCE steering group in 2019, with the assistance of the Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS) who ran a process to invite participation from early career researchers.

Antarctic Environments Portal

Activities 2018-19

SCAR has continued to support the work of the Antarctic Environments Portal which makes available to all CEP Members and Antarctic Treaty Parties, up-to-date, state-of-knowledge reports on issues of relevance to the Committee's work programme. Professor David Walton who sadly passed away in February of this year, was the part-time Editor for the Portal. Neil Gilbert (portal manager) is currently Acting Editor for the Portal.

Several new Information or Emerging Issue Summaries have been added to the Portal since the last progress report. These include:

- Microplastics in the Southern Ocean
- Sampling the Southern Ocean: technology for observing the marine systems
- Pathways for the introduction of non-native species
- Antarctic sub-glacial lakes
- Diversity of lakes, ponds and streams

Importantly, several published Information Summaries have been reviewed and updated in keeping with the Portal's objectives of ensuring that information is as up-to-date as possible.

An end-user survey was circulated to a wide range of Portal users in December 2018. Survey respondents indicated that they remained supportive of the Portal and its objectives. Most respondents that indicated that they had used the Portal before completing the survey indicated that they use the Portal at least a few times a year (86%). The majority of returning users (64%) reported that they were satisfied with the range of topics covered by the Portal. Some returning users stated that they use the Portal for preparing for ATCMs or CEP meetings (38%), but the majority access it largely for general information purposes i.e. to keep up to date with Antarctic topics, rather than functional, directly task-related ones (56%). Respondents also made suggestions for improvement, including for additional content (particularly on issues related to conservation, climate change and biodiversity) and the need to better promote the Portal among both the provider and end-user communities.

Since CEP XXI, the technology supporting the website has been upgraded and plans are in place to refresh the look and style of the website itself.

Web analytics suggests that the Portal continues to provide utility to users. For the period December 2017 to November 2018, the Portal was accessed over 6,500 times

by close to 5,000 users. Since the Portal went live in August 2014 until October 2018, the site has been visited more than 21,000 times by over 15,000 users.

SCAR/IAATO collaboration on a Systematic Conservation Plan for the Antarctic Peninsula

As human activity grows across Antarctica and as environmental change becomes more pronounced, it becomes increasingly pressing to determine how to best conserve its unique biodiversity and environments. The Antarctic Peninsula, home to much of the continent's biodiversity, has a comparatively mild climate and close proximity to South America, making it the most visited region of Antarctica for both science and tourism. Improving the management of human activity in the region is a key priority for IAATO (International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators) and many Antarctic Treaty Parties, where an integrated approach is required to facilitate management of multiple values and stakeholders, particularly where human activity is highly concentrated. In 2018 SCAR and IAATO agreed to develop an integrative, evidence-based approach to site management, incorporating all activities (science and tourism) and all known biodiversity features (such as breeding seabird colonies, vegetation, and invertebrates).

Systematic Conservation Planning (SCP) is a routine approach employed by conservation biologists to aid decision makers in managing whole landscapes involving multiple stakeholders and multiple objectives. SCAR, IAATO and project partners are utilising the SCP approach to develop a SCP for the Antarctic Peninsula that will deliver quantifiable, evidence-based solutions for the simultaneous management of tourism, science and biodiversity in the Antarctic Peninsula region.

A Coordination Group, consisting of SCAR and IAATO members, with observers from Monash University, has been formed to help oversee this project. The coordination group meets regularly and will continue to for the duration of the project. The group is chaired by the SCAR ED and and Amanda Lynnes (IAATO).

SCAR and IAATO are establishing a liaison group for the project. The aim of the liaison group is to provide the project with input, advice and where appropriate, further data, from all interested stakeholders, and to keep the stakeholder community informed. Examples include advice on targets for biodiversity protection, or identification of key tourism and scientific values and objectives in the region.

A post-doctoral researcher, Dr Jasmine Lee, has been appointed to the project and officially commenced work in April 2019 at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. A methodology has been identified using some of the latest and most advanced spatial planning tools available to conservation scientists. Work has been undertaken to define the objectives of the project, to identify and collect relevant data, identify appropriate conservation decision support software, and establish where stakeholder engagement is required.

The next stage of the project is to engage with stakeholders to define broad objectives for each stakeholder group (science, tourism, biodiversity) and begin to discuss targets and thresholds for different zones and features.

Future Activities and Opportunities

IPCC Special Report OCC launch September 2019, Monaco.

SCAR is in discussions with IPCC, WMO and ISC to investigate ways SCAR could help promote the release of the Special Report on Oceans and Cryosphere in

September. Many SCAR scientists have led chapters, edited and contributed to the Report.

Transfer of the Antarctic Environments Portal to SCAR

Since 2015 the Portal has been operated by the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, and supported by a grant provided by the Tinker Foundation.

On conclusion of the Tinker Foundation grant, it has been agreed that the operation of the Portal will be transferred to SCAR.

A background paper provided in Annex 1 prepared by the Acting Editor of the Portal, considers the resourcing implications for SCAR and the plans for the transfer. Key points for discussion include:

- What could the resource requirements for the Portal be after the transfer and how what options are there for accommodating these?
- How might SCAR seek to develop the Portal after the transfer? What could it achieve in 2019 and beyond?
- What would be an appropriate timing for the transfer?

New products from SCAR papers to XLII ATCM

SCAR's President Professor Steven Chown delivered the SCAR lecture to the XLII ATCM. The title was 'What Does the Paris Climate Agreement mean for Antarctic and Southern Ocean Environmental Protection?' Following widespread interest from attendees, SCAR intends to investigate ways of making the lecture's content available to a wider audience, e.g. through the publishing of a one-page summary available on SCAR's website. It also intends to investigate ways of promoting SCAR's paper on 'Sixty Years of Treaty-Supported Antarctic Science'.

UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) 25 Santiago, Chile, December 2019

As the major international platform for climate related diplomacy, the UNFCCC COP25 in Santiago will be an important opportunity to reflect on SROCC and more generally the critical impact of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean on the issue of climate change.

A "Cryosphere Pavilion" is planned which will showcase relevant issues in climate change and SCAR are looking at ways to input into and potentially participate in this initiative, by liaising with Chilean partners and with ICCL. Many partner organisations are likely to be developing specific events at which SCAR may wish to have representation, and some discussion has already taken place about planning for events with ISC and WMO.

Antarctic Parliamentarians Conference – Houses of Parliament, London, December 2019

The UK All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Polar Regions, chaired by James Gray MP, will host an Antarctic Parliamentarians Assembly in London on 2-3 December 2019. SCAR is providing advice to assist in the planning of this event. It is intended that the Assembly will provide an opportunity to discuss the role Parliamentarians can play in Antarctic governance. Steven Chown and Tim Naish have been invited to talk at the meeting.

Annex 1 - Antarctic Environments Portal

Planning the Transition from the University of Canterbury to SCAR

Prepared for SCAR EXCOM

Synopsis

The Antarctic Environments Portal (<https://www.environments.aq>) has been developed by a consortium of countries and SCAR so as to provide easy access to policy-ready 'knowledge summaries' to support the various bodies of the Antarctic Treaty System. The Portal also provides SCAR with a mechanism for meeting its mission of providing objective and independent scientific advice to the Antarctic Treaty System.

Since 2015 the Portal has been operated by the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, and supported by a grant provided by the Tinker Foundation.

On conclusion of the Tinker Foundation grant, SCAR delegates have agreed for the operation of the Portal to be transferred to SCAR.

This paper considers the resourcing implications for SCAR and the plans for the transfer.

Background

Until recently there has been no centralised or standardised means for synthesising science knowledge in a single place that readily supports Antarctic management and policy discussions.

The Antarctic Environments Portal is an on-line resource of policy-ready information on Antarctic environments that supports the work of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM), the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) and the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). The Portal makes available to all Antarctic Treaty Parties high quality, unbiased and a-political knowledge summaries on issues of management or policy priority. It also includes an interactive map, where relevant spatial information is displayed.

All Information Summaries are available in the four languages of the Antarctic Treaty (English, French, Russian and Spanish) so as to facilitate accessibility.

The Portal also provides SCAR with a dynamic mechanism for meeting its mission of providing objective and independent scientific advice to the Antarctic Treaty System on issues of science and conservation affecting the management of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean.

The Portal was launched in 2015 and has been overseen by the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand through a grant provided by the Tinker Foundation. The Portal was warmly welcomed by the Antarctic Treaty Parties by means of ATCM Resolution 3 (2015) in which the Parties:

- recognised that the increasing complexity of protecting the Antarctic environment in the context of increasing human activity and a changing Antarctic climate requires access to policy-ready information to support the effective implementation of the Protocol;
- acknowledged the longstanding scientific advisory role to the Antarctic Treaty system of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (“SCAR”);
- welcomed the development of the Antarctic Environments Portal (“the Portal”) as a mechanism to provide state-of-knowledge reports on priority or emerging issues, which can be drawn on to support effective management and governance of the region, including effective implementation of the Protocol, and
- noted that the Portal will also provide a mechanism to support SCAR in providing independent, scientifically based information to the Antarctic Treaty system.

At their 2016 meeting in Malaysia, the SCAR delegates agreed to take on operational oversight of the Portal, while ensuring that a cost neutral means of doing so could be found.

Operation

Production of each Information Summary relies on a rigorous process of scoping, drafting and peer review (involving both an independent scientific review and a second ‘expert’ review through the Portal Editorial Group), prior to translation and publication.

An overview of the operational structure of the Portal as it has been operating under the funding provided by the Tinker Foundation, is shown in Figure 1. The orange shaded boxes indicate where the Tinker funding has been spent. Additional costs are incurred through the role of the Portal Manager (shaded yellow), but these have been covered by Antarctica New Zealand and do not draw from the Tinker grant. The unshaded boxes in Figure 1 depict roles and positions that are being or have been filled on a voluntary basis.

The two paid editorial roles (Editor and Assistant Editor) are formalised through contracts with the University of Canterbury.

The time spent on Portal matters by the Editor has varied depending upon the status of Information Summaries, but has approximated to 4 days per month (0.2 FTE). The Assistant Editor has provided a similar amount of time (0.2 FTE). Until recently the Editor focussed on scoping and commissioning Information Summaries and the Assistant Editor focussed on processing them through the editorial process, translating them and uploading them to the Portal website.

A contract is in place between the University of Canterbury and Landcare Research, New Zealand for the technical website support that the latter provides. The contract is for a fixed cost of NZ\$20,000 per annum (approximately GBP10,800 at the time of writing). This contract covers any minor updates to the Portal website software, minor changes to the website, uploading of data on to the map / GIS, and emergency response (during normal working hours) if the website crashes.

No formal agreement is in place with the translators (currently 'OnCall Translation Services'), who simply undertake work when requested and invoice the University accordingly.

No formal agreement was in place with the Deputy Editor, who until recently was supporting the peer review process of draft Information Summaries (this is now covered by the Acting Editor). It is estimated that the Deputy Editor was spending between 1 and 2 days per month facilitating the peer review process.

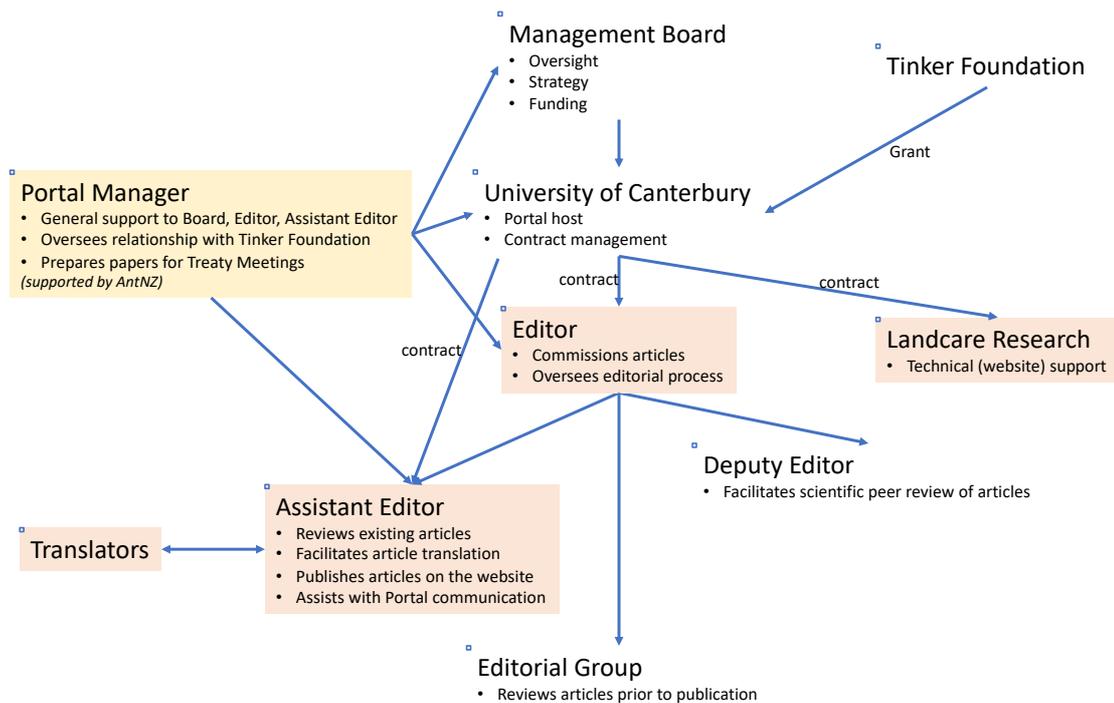


Figure 1. Overview of the current operation of the Portal

It is feasible to conceive of a simplified structure for the Portal with the Editor playing a more central role and fulfilling functions that are currently supported by others (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Potential 'simplified' Portal management structure under SCAR.

SCAR will need to consider how best to fulfil the various functions involved in running the Portal taking in to account existing or planned roles within the organisation, as well as the potential involvement of SC-ATS.

Budget

The operational costs of the Portal are dependent to a great extent on the number of Information Summaries that are processed; the more Information Summaries, the more time that is required to process them through the peer and editorial review requirements, and the greater the costs involved in translating them¹.

As content on the Portal website increases, more time will be required also to review already published articles so as to ensure that the information remains up-to-date and accurate.

The annual Tinker Grant of NZ\$70,000 (approx. GBP37,000) has not been fully spent each year for three reasons:

1. It has taken longer to commission and process articles than had been anticipated. There have been long periods of waiting for authors to prepare and/or review draft material and identifying authors and reviewers can take considerable effort and time in some cases;

¹ The more Information and Emerging Issue Summaries that are published on the website also equates to the 'impact' of the Portal and to the benefits it provides to end-users.

2. Some aspects of the editorial functions have been picked up on a voluntary basis e.g. the functions fulfilled by the Deputy Editor have been cost-free to the Portal;
3. The Portal Manager's time has been paid for by Antarctica New Zealand and has also been cost-free to the Portal.

An indicative, fully costed annual budget for the Portal is provided in table 1 below. The actual costs of running the Portal into the future will depend upon the contract rates that are established with personnel and technical service providers. Costs could also be managed or reduced in a number of ways including:

1. By securing support in kind, particularly with regard to translating articles from English into French, Russian and Spanish. This option has already been tested. Since late 2016, France has provided cost-free support for translating all new articles into French (see below).
2. The technical costs for administering the website could be transferred to an alternate, less expensive provider. We have been paying premium prices for technical support in New Zealand and the transfer to SCAR offers the opportunity to review the support and potentially reduce these costs significantly.

At the recent ATCM (Czech Republic, July 2019), offers of support to SCAR to operate the Portal were provided by several countries. Australia, The Netherlands, New Zealand and the UK all made financial commitments totalling just over USD 45,500 or approx. £36,000. Spain and France indicated that they are prepared to provide translation support for each Information Summary.

	Hours / year	Cost / year (GBP: based on hourly rate of GBP25)
Editorial functions		
Scoping articles, identifying authors, iterating scope with authors, reviewing drafts, facilitating peer review, overseeing the Editorial Group, liaising with translators, publishing articles on the website etc. (Based on 0.4 FTE)	752	18,800
Translation		
Based on current costs of translation @ GBP250 / article – 3 languages x 10 articles / year		7,500
Engagement with end users		
Preparation for ATCMs / CEP / CCAMLR meetings e.g. writing working or information papers, updating the content management plan, writing articles for newsletters etc.	56	2,600
Administration		
Oversight of contracts e.g. with Editor and technical support; liaising with translators; paying invoices, supporting Portal Board, securing additional funding as required	60	1,500
Technical support		
Hosting fees, maintenance and emergency support costs (based only on current contract with Landcare Research)		10,300
Upgrades (likely every fourth year - but averaged annual costs; based only on current costs with Landcare Research)		2,000
Total technical support		12,300
Total annual costs		42,700

Table 1. Indicative annual running costs for the Portal (GBP).

Next steps

To assist the transfer to SCAR, a Portal Handbook is being comprehensively revised so as to provide the background to and context for the Portal; roles and responsibilities of the Editor and editorial group; the editorial process, including guides to authors and reviewers; the publication standards, and the procedures for publishing material on the website. A database of Portal contacts, including all existing authors, is also being compiled.

It is suggested that a staged approach to the handover is likely to be the most effective. The current Acting Editor has agreed to stay on for as long as is necessary to facilitate the transfer to SCAR. As soon as the new Editor is identified, a handover from the current Editor can occur.

A new contract for technical support will also need to be explored. This could be with Landcare Research (who have indicated that they would be prepared to remain as the technical provider) or with another provider. A handover to a new technical provider will need to be facilitated and will incur some additional one-off costs. These could be borne, at least in part, by the remains of the Tinker Foundation grant.

The existing Management Board could remain in place during the handover period so as to maintain some continuity and support. But once the Portal is operational under SCAR, the on-going need for and potential re-shaping of the Board (if it is required) could be reviewed.

It is also noted that that the Portal has been put together and managed by a group of highly motivated people who will ensure that there is a smooth transition to SCAR.

Timing of the transfer

Precisely when the transfer takes place will be dependent upon a number of aspects including SCAR's readiness to take over the Portal (including financial readiness), and the spend-down of the Tinker grant money. Potentially, this could be during the first quarter of 2020.