



Environmental Audit Committee

Stephen Doughty MP
Minister of State for Europe, North America and Overseas Territories
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
King Charles Street
London
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Sent by email only

Antarctic tourism

Dear Stephen,

I want to thank you for giving evidence to my Committee's evidence session on 11 December, which concluded our inquiry into the UK's relationship with the Antarctic environment. The session was highly informative and helped the Committee better understand this complex but vital part of the planet.

We were pleased to note that the Antarctic Treaty System agreed, at the 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting in May 2024, to develop a comprehensive framework for the management of tourism. This was a significant step, particularly given the increasing pressures on Antarctica's fragile ecosystems. With a record-breaking 122,072 visitors to the region in the 2023-2024 austral season, alongside growing vessel traffic and the introduction of new tourism activities, it is vital that these challenges are effectively managed to prevent environmental harm.

It would be very helpful to the Committee to have a Ministerial response to the following questions which were not raised in the evidence session:

- **Balancing tourism and environmental protections:** How will the Government ensure that the new framework, being developed under the Antarctic Treaty System, effectively balances the growing demand for tourism with the need to preserve Antarctica's environment and biodiversity, and what approach is the Government taking in negotiations at the ATCM meetings to support this goal?
- **Ensuring adherence to environmental standards:** What actions is the Government taking, both within the Antarctic Treaty System and bilaterally, to

ensure that tourism operators uphold high environmental standards in the interim period to 2028, complementing the self-regulation efforts led by IAATO?

We look forward to your response, which the Committee will wish to publish as supplementary written evidence to its inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Toby Perkins'.

Mr Toby Perkins MP
Chair, Environmental Audit Committee