



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

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The Rt Hon. Dame Emily Thornberry MP
Chair, Foreign Affairs Committee
House of Commons

Mr Toby Perkins MP
Chair, Environmental Audit Committee
House of Commons

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi MP
Chair, Defence Committee
House of Commons

The Rt Hon. The Lord Robertson of Port Ellen KT
Chair, International Relations and Defence Committee
House of Lords

15 October 2026

Dear Select Committee Chairs,

The United Kingdom and the Arctic: An Update to the United Kingdom's Arctic Policy Framework

I wanted to bring to your attention that the Government is publishing, today, an update to the United Kingdom's Arctic policy. This builds on the United Kingdom's Arctic Policy Framework, 'Looking North'. It is a response to recent developments in the region since the publication of 'Looking North' in 2023 and sets out clear priorities to guide the United Kingdom's future engagement. This update reflects the Government's commitment that the United Kingdom should continue to be a constructive and reliable partner in a rapidly changing region that remains of fundamental importance to the United Kingdom.

The update sets out how the United Kingdom is responding to the challenges facing the region, including the threat from Russia, climate and environmental change, growing global interest in the region's economic opportunities, and an increasing inter-connectedness to wider global events. It sets out how the United Kingdom, in partnership with others, will bring to bear its diplomatic engagement, science and research expertise, defence and deterrence capability, and economic interests in taking action to protect the people, climate and environment of the region, preserve security and stability, and promote shared prosperity, all of which are fundamental to both the region and the United Kingdom's interests.

The United Kingdom will focus its engagement in the following five priority action areas:

1. **Understanding and responding to a changing Arctic**, to better inform policy by furthering our understanding of climate and environmental change, to address its causes and impacts, and draw on the United Kingdom's Polar research capabilities

and expertise to drive research collaboration that recognises the value of modern science and traditional knowledge.

2. **Enhancing security and stability**, by stepping up our defence contribution to the High North, including through our NATO-first approach and investment in technology and infrastructure, in conjunction with partners to maintain credible deterrence and warfighting readiness without seeking escalation or unduly securitising the region.
3. **Supporting strong and effective governance**, including by reaffirming our support for the Arctic Council and championing rules-based international governance consistent with established norms and fundamental principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity.
4. **Building responsible trade and economic partnerships**, where the United Kingdom has expertise and capabilities to offer, while managing risks to our security, safety and environment and ensuring responsible and transparent economic activity that benefits indigenous communities and other inhabitants of the Arctic.
5. **Strengthening resilience**, to deter threats to our security and prosperity by working collaboratively to enhance our understanding of the risks that we and our partners face from this rapidly changing region and appropriate mitigations.

These priorities reflect our diverse interests and relationships with the Arctic as a region. Partnership will be key to their delivery, and the Government will draw on and seek to strengthen further relationships with our seven Arctic State allies, Indigenous partners and many non-Arctic States with whom we share interests in the region across Europe and the Indo-Pacific, as well as the European Union. We are committed to ensuring the Arctic is a secure, sustainable and prosperous region as it continues to change.

Above all, through this refreshed framework, the United Kingdom reaffirms its commitment to being a reliable neighbour, a partner in science and stewardship, and a steadfast ally in maintaining the stability and security on which the Arctic's future—and our own—depends.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Uma Kumaran' in a cursive script.

Uma Kumaran MP
Minister for the Overseas Territories, Caribbean and Global Technology