

IASC Terrestrial Working Group (TWG) summary report for the UK

Arctic Science Summit Week, Aarhus, Denmark

25th March – 1st April 2026

Mike Lim (Northumbria University): UK representatives to the IASC TWG

Gareth Phoenix (University of Sheffield): UK representatives to the IASC TWG, and TWG vice chair

These notes were taken during active participation in the meetings and workshops, so may include omissions.

The IASC Terrestrial Working Group (TWG) sessions ran over three days (25-27 March 2026) covering its business meeting, and sessions on three core activities: i) development of a new TWG strategic plan; ii) The development of an ECR mentorship programme within the TWG; and iii) Developing better connections and collaboration relevant to TWG activities including improving guidance on drafting grants submitted to the TWG, and on evaluation of grants by the TWG.

The TWG Business Meeting was held on 26th March and started with country updates from: Austria; Belgium; Canada; Denmark; Germany; India; Italy; Japan; Netherlands; Norway; Poland; Portugal; South Korea; Sweden; UK; US (no oral reports were provided by Czechia, China; Finland; France; Iceland; Spain). Notable infrastructure additions and international opportunities included (reporting country in parentheses): Sermilik Research Station opening in east Greenland (Austria); establishment of the South Greenland monitoring gradient GIOS (GIOS.org) long term research stations in the Narsarsuaq region, south Greenland (Denmark); launch of the Anna Weber-van Bosse flagship - a new 80m long marine research vessel, along with a new funding initiative (9M Euros) on the triple polar crisis (climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss) starting 2026 (Netherlands); a newly fitted Svalbard Research Office and field station at Svea in Svalbard, connected to UNIS (Norway); the BERA Polish consortium opened a new logistics and research centre in Longyearbyen on Svalbard (Poland); and new PhD opportunities at the School of Excellence in Arctic Learning (SEAL; Sweden). Among other highlights, Canada noted the ongoing success of its main arctic conference (ArcticNet) that recently attracted 1400 participants. Japan highlighted its new initiative over 5 years covering diverse themes including marine, terrestrial and atmosphere, and also highlighted the advantages of work now undertaken in Northern Mongolia as an alternative to work within the Russian Arctic. The US report mentioned several major initiatives now in the winding down stage (e.g. Navigating the new Arctic, ABOVE, Next Generation Ecosystem Experiments). Infrastructure such as Toolik Lake, Bonanza Creek and the Beaufort lagoon LTERs were ongoing. The US report also showed the dramatic impact of political shifts on the number and scope of terrestrial research conducted by US programmes (down approximately to 1/6th of what it was a few years ago). The UK report highlighted the UK Arctic Science conference at Northumbria University, which had engagement sessions on the strengths and opportunities of UK Arctic science, sustainability challenges and resilience in Arctic Research, and science to policy linkages. The UK report also highlighted preparations for the IPY, as well as the production of the "[UK Arctic Terrestrial Research strengths and priorities prospectus](#)" for IPY and beyond. Other UK highlights included the "Supporting Impactful UK Arctic Science Engagement Scheme (July 2025)", and the NERC Arctic Station (Ny-Ålesund, Svalbard) summaries and films.

Presentations were given from new members (including Michael Lim, Northumbria University as the new UK representative) and fellows. These included new fellows of Emma Cameron (Germany) and Brandon Samuel Whitley (Denmark), as well as new country representatives Shota Masumoto, (Japan), Runa Magnusson (Netherlands), and Stef Bokhorst (Netherlands). Following this there were

presentations on TWG funded projects including enabling early career researchers to attend and engage with Greenlandic communities during Greenland Science Week, cross working group projects on polar law looking at Arctic legal and policy frameworks, a hybrid workshop on glacier surge interactions with landslides, on strengthening coordination between Polarstern and Amundsen research vessel activities, and on decolonising Arctic research through understanding the role of translation at all stages of the research process.

The TWG then held a workshop on terrestrial research priorities and planning for IPY. For this, Gareth Phoenix (UK representative and TWG vice-chair) presented on UK national leadership and coordination in IPY and the development of the UK Arctic Terrestrial Research Strengths and Priorities document. The UK terrestrial research strengths and priorities document unites researchers from across the UK Arctic terrestrial science community to detail its expertise and capacity to address emerging challenges in the Arctic. For this, Gareth detailed the process of its production and its findings. This raised a great deal of interest from TWG members, including questions on UK priorities, how the process worked, the possibility of implementing similar initiatives in other countries, and how the TWG might communicate similar actions between countries to aid in collaboration across countries. There was a general feeling that the UK was leading the way and was a good example of how to organise ahead of IPY. Currently there seemed to be some difference between countries with Arctic territories and the perception that IPY priorities may reflect those interests specifically, and countries with less sovereign interests where there may be more opportunities for science-led prioritisation. There was also discussion of inter-country differences in how prioritisation works, with some being more bottom-up (science community lead) and other being more top-down (government or funder lead). Working towards true international collaboration and inclusivity across the countries within the TWG and across working groups will be a key challenge moving forward.

Either side of these activities, the TWG ran workshops on the three priority development areas of : i) The development of a new TWG strategic plan; ii) The development of an ECR mentorship programme within the TWG; iii) improving guidance on drafting grants submitted to the TWG, and on evaluation of grants by the TWG. Gareth Phoenix led on (i) with support from the chair, Michelle Mack (USA) and vice chair Mariasilvia Giamberini (Italy). All three activities took the form of group discussions and writing of key points and phrases on post-it notes that were then later developed into text with that text then edited by group members and agreed in further discussions. Late-stage drafts of the (i) TWG strategic plan, (ii) ECR/fellow mentoring scheme, and (iii) TWG grant proposal writing advice and assessment (reviewer) advice, are currently circulating the TWG for final edits.