

OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE

ENGAGEMENT REPORT	
Minister	Angus Robertson (AR) Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture
Type of engagement	Introductory meeting / country briefing
Date	Wednesday 1 February
Attending Official(s)	[redacted] – Senior Policy Officer, Nordic and Arctic Unit Kate Higgins – Special Adviser [redacted] – Private Secretary
Who	Richard Wood (RW), UK Ambassador to Norway
Key Points	<p>ENERGY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AR highlighted the work that SG is carrying out to promote Scotland as an hydrogen nation and opportunities for collaboration with Norway. <p>POPULATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given AR's scheduled participation in a session on population and migration, RW briefed him on the interventionist policies Norway uses to support communities in the north of the country, ranging from civil service job dispersal, to incentive packages for doctors, agricultural subsidies and a social contract that accepts Oslo will be poorer to benefit the north. <p>TRADE VISIT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RW highlighted that while UK/Norway trade figures are good, they are heavily reliant on gas. He is keen to explore other opportunities, with a focus on Scotland's hi-tech industries. The Crown Prince's visit to the UK, postponed in 2022, has been rescheduled for the spring, dropping the Aberdeen leg and focused on London. Was agreed we should explore ways to involve Scotland House London in the visit. <p>EDUCATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RW highlighted the importance of higher education links with Norway and keen to promote opportunities for students. There is a particular opportunity for post-graduate students to study in Norway as the Norwegian government pays fees and teaching is done in English. There are 400 students from Trondheim studying in the UK and only 40 from the UK studying in Trondheim, which emphasises the imbalance. <p>COOPERATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [redacted - s.30(b)(i) - Free and frank provision of advice] AR happy for officials to build further dialogue with the embassy and thanked RW for his support during his time in post, which is due to end in the spring.
Action points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officials to explore opportunities for SHL to be involved in the Norwegian Crown Prince's forthcoming visit to London and maintain communication over possible future collaboration.
Comment	A constructive introductory meeting, helpful to give AR context ahead of his programme getting underway.

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Type of engagement	Meeting
Date	Wednesday 1 February
Attending Official(s)	[redacted] – Senior Policy Officer, Nordic and Arctic Unit Kate Higgins – Special Adviser [redacted] – Private Secretary
Who	Hong Young-Ki (HY), Ambassador for Polar Affairs, Republic of Korea [redacted], Deputy Director, Polar Policy Team, Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, Republic of Korea [redacted], First Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea [redacted], Senior Researcher, Korea Maritime Institute [redacted], Senior Administrative Associate, Korea Polar Research Institute
Key Points	<p>CLIMATE CHANGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HY set out some of Korea's interest in the Arctic, emphasising the importance of tackling climate change. <p>RENEWABLE ENERGY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He highlighted Korea's investment in sustainable shipping and wider interest in renewable energy. Looking at hydrogen and ammonia as fuel sources. Open to cooperation on renewables. • HY asked about Scotland's interest in hydrogen. AR set out the context of ScotWind and the opportunity for Scotland as a northern European hub for hydrogen and the potential benefits of cooperation across the region. • It was agreed there could be benefit in Korean officials in London speaking with Scotland House London and SDI to see if there are areas for cooperation on hydrogen/renewables and wider research/innovation. <p>ARCTIC SCIENCE SUMMIT WEEK 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AR highlighted ASSW24 in Edinburgh and the potential for a Korean delegation. HY acknowledged Scotland's rich history, modern culture and status as a technology centre. <p>ARCTIC COMMUNICATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the Arctic Council suspended, HY emphasised the importance of forums like Arctic Frontiers to facilitate communication with other like-minded non-Arctic states.
Action points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officials to follow-up with SHL/SDI to check on potential areas of discussion with Korean representation in London.
Comment	[redacted - s.30(b)(i) - Free and frank provision of advice]

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Type of engagement	Meeting
Date	Wednesday 1 February
Attending Official(s)	[redacted] – Senior Policy Officer, Nordic and Arctic Unit [redacted] – Private Secretary
Who	David Balton, Executive Director, US Arctic Executive Steering Committee Mike Sfraga, Chair, US Arctic Research Commission Randy “Church” Kee, Senior Advisor, Arctic Security Affairs, Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies Matthew Hickey, Associate Director, Strategic Engagement, Ted Stevens Centre for Arctic Security Studies [redacted], Arctic Affairs Officer, US Embassy Oslo
Key Points	<p>SCOTTISH CONTEXT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AR set the context for Scottish interest in the Arctic, beyond just geography, exploring the opportunities for policy collaboration on shared challenges ranging from population to renewable energy and hydrogen. • Asked about the constitutional situation in Scotland, AR set out the SG’s current position and longer term aspirations to be a fully integrated member of the northern community, with membership of NATO and taking responsibilities in the region seriously. <p>ARCTIC POLICIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MS raised SG’s Arctic policy framework Arctic Connections, commenting that it had been well-received by an international audience. • He asked about awareness of the Arctic in Scotland and [redacted] outlined some of the progress made in recent years. • DB asked if the SG had been given the opportunity to contribute towards the forthcoming refreshed UK Arctic strategy, [redacted] confirmed that we had not. • DB gave an update on the new US Arctic strategy which affirms the US’ commitment to the region. <p>ALASKA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a discussion about Alaska, and how recent federal government funding can help with development, particularly with renewables potential in mind. Investment is needed in infrastructure. <p>FUTURE ENGAGEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MH highlighted the Arctic Encounters conference in Alaska as a potential opportunity for SG engagement. • AR highlighted Arctic Science Summit Week in Edinburgh in 2024. There will be a US delegation, and AR offered to help build a wider programme. • AR also highlighted the possibility of engagement between the Scottish Council on Global Affairs and the Ted Stevens Center.
Action points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officials to connect SCoGA and TSC, and to maintain contact ahead of ASSW24.
Comment	[redacted - s.30(b)(i) - Free and frank provision of advice]

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Minister	Angus Robertson (AR) Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture
Type of engagement	Meeting
Date	Wednesday 1 February
Attending Official(s)	[redacted] – Senior Policy Officer, Nordic and Arctic Unit [redacted] – Private Secretary
Who	Kirsti Mijnhijmer (KM), Head of Secretariat, Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme (NPA)
Key Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AR set out Scotland's commitment to the NPA, noting the recent move for observer status on the NPA Monitoring Committee for the 2021-2027 programme, and ongoing dialogue with the UKG to find ways for involvement. • KM highlighted the long relationship Scotland has with the NPA, [redacted - s.32(1)(a) International relations]. • She also highlighted the constructive relationship she has with SG officials as work continues to find new ways to connect. • Noting that KM is based in Copenhagen, AR offered to connect her with the SG hub and to ensure she is updated on news and events SG are organising in the city.
Action points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officials to connect KM with Copenhagen Hub.
Comment	[redacted - s.30(b)(i) - Free and frank provision of advice]

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Minister	Angus Robertson (AR) Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture
Type of engagement	Meeting
Date	Wednesday 1 February
Attending Official(s)	[redacted] – Senior Policy Officer, Nordic and Arctic Unit [redacted] – Private Secretary
Who	Professor Antje Boetius (AB), Director, Alfred Wegener Institute
Key Points	<p>AWI AND SCOTLAND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AB highlighted long links between AWI and Scotland, particularly with SAMS and the Universities of Edinburgh, St Andrews and Aberdeen. • These links were traditionally on deep sea research but are not as strong now as Scottish focus has shifted more towards coastal areas. <p>RENEWABLE ENERGY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was discussion about the interest and potential for hydrogen across northern Europe, particularly in terms of German demand. • AB also interested in Scotland's experience with CCS as AWI are writing a CCS strategy. <p>GERMANY AND SCOTLAND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was some extensive discussion on areas of possible collaboration. • AR mentioned the UK-Germany Konigswinter conference which AB wasn't familiar with, there may be opportunities for engagement there. • AB is regularly in Berlin, so also the potential for links with the hub there, and through the German Arctic Office, hosted by AWI. • The latter particularly pertinent with Berlin due to host an Arctic Circle Forum conference in March 2024, a partnership between AWI and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. • AB highlighted Scotland's expertise in glaciology, and the wider potential of combining science and cultural events. • AR keen to build on the strong relationship between Germany and Scotland.
Action points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officials to connect AB with Berlin Hub and explore possible collaboration, particularly with Berlin Arctic Circle Forum in March 2024 in mind.
Comment	A warm introductory meeting with plenty potential to develop deeper links between two non-Arctic countries with a strong interest in the region, particularly though scientific research.

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ENGAGEMENT REPORT	
Minister	Angus Robertson (AR) Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture
Type of engagement	Panel discussion on population and migration issues at Arctic Frontiers <i>Big Picture: Moving to and from the North</i>
Date	Wednesday 1 February
Attending Official(s)	[redacted] – Senior Policy Officer, Nordic and Arctic Unit Kate Higgins – Special Adviser [redacted] – Private Secretary
Who	<p>PART ONE Jonas Gahr Støre, Prime Minister of Norway Abbie Tingstad, RAND Corporation Sara Olsvig, Chair, Inuit Circumpolar Council Tom Jensen, CEO, FREYR Battery</p> <p>PART TWO Angus Robertson MSP Lisa Murkowski, US Senator for Alaska Mia Ahlstrand, Project Leader for the North Sweden Green Deal Sigrun Agustsdottir, Director, Environment Agency of Iceland Larry Ibrahim Mohammed, PHD candidate, University of Tromsø and part of the Arctic Frontiers Emerging Leaders programme</p>
Key Points	<p>Available to view online in full, key points from each speaker consolidated below.</p> <p>PRIME MINISTER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to ensure northern Norway is populated, viewed through a national security lens during the Cold War. Still relevant, but needs viewed differently now. The border with Russia was becoming more active, more modern, but now more restricted. • Important for government to help secure thriving businesses and opportunities for value creation in the north. And to create opportunities for young people to train and stay, and to enable people from other parts of the world to see value in moving there. • During this trip to the north, everyone is telling him they need more energy, more electricity and more grid capacity. It is the answer to almost all questions. Increasing renewable capacity has to be done to tackle climate change, it needs accelerated, and requires investment, cooperation and adjustment from local communities. • Free access to kindergarten is going to be delivered to communities in the far north from 1 August. • Reducing debt burden of students is important. • Recognises the region will always be sparsely populated, so transport is important. Air fares are extremely expensive and government looking at ways to reduce these. • Also looking at the possibility of smaller airports trialling eco-friendly electric aircraft over short routes. • Highlighted the importance of the Sami parliament and that when developing renewable energy, revenue should be shared in a fair and equitable way and done in consultation with communities. <p>ABBIE TINGSTAD</p>

- Highlighted that solutions can be local – communities can offer insight and data to solve problems. And important to maintain momentum over time as governments change.

SARA OLSVIG

- For indigenous people, these times are unprecedented. Climate change is affecting ways of life and as they live across borders, the current geopolitical situation is very serious.
- When talking about development of the Arctic it is important to remember indigenous people have lived through the colonial era. It doesn't mean they don't want development, but it must be "by, for and with us. Not without us" – "nothing about us without us".
- We have seen time and again that principles of ethical engagement have been broken. We must ensure history doesn't repeat itself.
- There is an infrastructure deficit across the Arctic. Need investment in health, education that is appropriate for peoples and cultures, access to jobs and proper sanitary installations. Cited example of Canadian community having to bring in bottled water due to infrastructure deficit despite abundance of fresh water in the Arctic.
- Need to see willingness from states to make that investment.

TOM JENSEN

- Has a company based in the Arctic creating clean battery technology. Norway has abundant low cost energy and is showcasing what it has done for over a century – demonstrating that businesses can scale, secure profitability and attract investment for growth. The government understands this.
- Has 15 different nationalities working for him. People are energised to come to the Arctic to tackle climate change in a region most affected by it.
- Work closely with the local community and ensure workers families are integrated in to society.
- Energy transition isn't just about shifting from fossil to renewable, it's about securing low cost, energy security and ensuring energy for all in a sustainable way.
- Believes we need to triple electricity production in next 20 years, 20 fold solar and wind installations, 400 fold the way we store energy.
- The best wind resource is in the Arctic and need to figure out how to do utilise it in collaboration with indigenous communities.

LISA MURKOWSKI

- Highlighted the importance of economic, energy and food security, all of which are major challenges in Alaska – and linked.
- Energy systems in Alaska are very isolated, very "islanded", so small-scale energy projects are important.
- Recent federal infrastructure investment very important, the last year has seen \$3bn to help with water systems and connectivity.
- Good broadband and ability to connect is vital, and many parts of Alaska still missing this basic infrastructure (in contrast to work being done by panel members in Iceland and Sweden).
- The failures experienced in Alaska stem from failure to consult with local communities. End up with infrastructure that can't be maintained properly. It is important to work together for solutions, which might cost more, but has better outcomes.

- The most successful energy and mining projects have engagement with local communities with training and jobs opportunities, rather than colonial imposition as seen in the past.
- Greatest challenge for Alaska is the high cost of living. Economies are very small, subsistence economies. When the price of fuel is continuing to be more expensive, then it pushes populations out. Seeing people leave villages to go to hub communities.

ANGUS ROBERTSON

- Recognised the shared geography and history between Scotland the Arctic, similar challenges on rural issues, and Scotland only nation in the UK projected to have population decline.
- Highlighted Ministerial population taskforce, ensuring all parts of government orientated in right direction.
- Keen to be innovative and see what we can learn from other nations, which is why forums like this are so important.
- Highlighted importance of energy transition and opportunities it presents to create benefits for rural communities. For all the challenges, this presents a bright future.
- Important to remember there are already people living in the north, but also important to communicate advantages of moving there to people who could be interested. Example of work done with refugees.
- Highlighted ambitions around 20 minute neighbourhoods, while recognising can be more difficult in rural areas. And new Talent and Migration service and historical record of civil service job dispersal.
- Recognised the Islands Bond as an example of trying something new, listening to feedback from communities and not moving forward with it as a result.
- You have to try different things. There are no easy solutions.

SIGRUND AGUSTDOTTIR

- Highlighted new remote working policies in Iceland that enable people to live and work in rural communities.

MIA ALSTRAND

- North Sweden Green Deal Working across all 40 municipalities across northern Sweden, and focused on finding new ways to work
- Important to attract new people to the region and using data and AI to track people online who are interested in moving there.

LARRY IBRAHIM MOHAMMED

- Came to Norway from Ghana to study and was given flexibility on English language requirements.
- Norway offers free tuition, but it is regrettable it looks like fees will soon be introduced. This will make the Arctic a less attractive destination for international students.
- He highlighted that the UK has visa schemes for students who have been to “top 50” international universities, so without the incentive of free tuition, why would an international student not go to one of those instead of the Arctic, opening up the possibility of moving to the UK.
- Believes it’s important to look at it holistically and think about international students beyond just the EU and EEA. Also pointed that he could bring his partner to Norway but it could take 11 months to get a visa.
- Recognised it’s easier to keep people in an area rather than attracting fresh talent.

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Comment	[redacted - s.30(b)(i) - Free and frank provision of advice]

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ENGAGEMENT REPORT	
Minister	Angus Robertson (AR) Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture
Type of engagement	Meeting
Date	Thursday 2 February
Attending Official(s)	[redacted] – Senior Policy Officer, Nordic and Arctic Unit Kate Higgins – Special Adviser [redacted] – Private Secretary
Who	Anu Fredrikson (AF), Executive Director, Arctic Frontiers Morten Høylo, Adviser, Arctic Frontiers
Key Points	<p>TROMSØ CONFERENCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AR thanked AF for the invitation to attend Arctic Frontiers and was pleased with the panel discussion he had the day before and the engagement he's had so far. • AR emphasised the value SG places on engagement with Arctic Frontiers, Minister have participated every year since 2019. Happy to keep dialogue going on how best we can contribute in future years. AF explained they will start to plan next year's event soon and will engage with SG once it starts to come together. <p>[redacted - s.30(b)(i) - Free and frank provision of advice]</p>
Action points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [redacted - s.30(b)(i) - Free and frank provision of advice]
Comment	[redacted - s.30(b)(i) - Free and frank provision of advice]

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ENGAGEMENT REPORT	
Minister	Angus Robertson (AR) Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture
Type of engagement	Visit to Tromsø Havn (Port of Tromsø) and presentations from Troms Kraft, Arva and Fjuel
Date	Thursday 2 February
Attending Official(s)	[redacted] – Senior Policy Officer, Nordic and Arctic Unit [redacted] – Private Secretary
Who	Jørn-Even Hanssen – Port Director, Tromsø Havn Erling Dalberg – Executive VP Markets and Technology, Troms Kraft Julien Moisan – Project Manager for Smart Senja , Arva Tomas Solstad – CEO, Fjuel Nils Arne Johnsen – Head of Department, Industry and Economic Development, Troms and Finnmark County Council
Key Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AR set the context for Scotland’s interest in the Arctic and wider interest in renewable energy and sustainable shipping, which is consistent with the companies in the room. <p>TROMS KRAFT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Troms Kraft is a publicly owned power company operating 10 hydroelectric power plants and one windfarm in the Troms area. • ED set the context for Troms Kraft’s business, highlighting that 95% of Norway’s electricity comes from hydro, but shifting towards 40% from wind, from which there needs to be a surplus given variables around the weather. • The Norwegian grid has connections to England, Germany, Sweden and Denmark. The connection to Russia is currently disconnected. • Troms Kraft’s mission statement is to supply secure power and to help tackle climate change. • 52% of energy use in Norway is currently renewable, but there is a target of 80% by 2030. It is a challenging target and more must be done quickly. There are five solutions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More wind power – both on and offshore (the main priority) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Norway has offshore under development. On onshore, some areas are more receptive than others and Troms Kraft are trying to work with community groups to find solutions. 2. Strengthen the power grid 3. Investment in hydrogen and ammonia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Changes will have to be made in shipping and fishing fleets. ▪ Troms Kraft is a partner in Project Neptun, which aims to establish large scale facility for the production of green hydrogen and green ammonia in Tromsø, with an initial target of 25k tonnes of ammonia per year. ▪ This will meet demand as ships/fishing vessels switch to ammonia engines, with hopes the new post boat to Svalbard will be an early adopter. 4. More water in to reservoirs and optimise hydro plants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is limited potential for this as already well-developed. 5. Improve energy efficiency • There was some discussion about public perceptions of wind power in Scotland and Norway. There is a negative perception of private ownership and publicly-owned Troms Kraft is helping to shift views on wind. • AR emphasised the importance of community benefit and the potential to learn from the decisions Norway took around the oil fund in the 1960s.

- The concept of “near” wind was also mentioned, where a direct link between wind farms and powering local industry is drawn so people can see the benefits in action.

ARVA

- Senja is the second largest island in Norway with a huge fishing industry. As the industry has adopted more energy-intensive technologies, demand for electricity has increased, requiring innovation as the existing power grid in the area struggles to meet demand.
- The [Smart Senja](#) project can help bridge the gap, managing the supply of renewable energy, as the grid is developed, and reduce the need for as many new power lines.
- Troms Kraft are also partners in the project, and there has been wider collaboration with Alaska, Saskatchewan and Durham University.
- Social scientists from UiT (Tromsø University) and engagement with the community is vital to the project. [Energy cafes](#) were established to get early buy-in from the community. AR commended this element of the project and keen for SG to look in more detail.
- The project aims to distribute the energy load over the day ensuring businesses and homes get the energy they require, with particular emphasis on large batteries that can store energy for when it’s needed and maintain voltage quality in the supply. Creating a dynamic rather than a static system.

FJUEL

- Fjuel is a start-up which is part-owned by Tromsø Havn and Troms Kraft, as well as the ports of Bodø and Trondheim, and wants to help make Norway the world leader for sustainable energy solutions.
- Transport creates a third of Norway’s CO2 emissions, and 7% of a ship’s emissions happen while in port.
- Fjuel have developed a software platform that automates shore power requirements, utilising sustainably produced and stored energy, thus cutting down emissions. It also makes the process easier for the customer.
- JEH recognised the benefits of a standardised system across ports, making them more attractive destination, particularly for cruise ships. This isn’t essential yet, but expects it will be eventually.
- Longer term potential to include hydrogen and ammonia as demand increases.

TROMSØ HAVN

- JEH is planning a study visit to Scotland in May, AR offered to connect him with Forth Ports and other organisations of possible interest.
- Tromsø Havn was established in 1827 and is owned by the municipality. It is one of Norway’s largest fishing ports, an important logistics hub and a large cruise port.
- They also aim to facilitate maritime business development and push for a green maritime shift.
- They provide a full range of services to incoming shipping, covering movement of cargo, waste management, resupply of energy and shore power.
- The business is split across three port areas, the city centre, Breivika (where this meeting took place) and Grøtsund. They have invested beyond just port infrastructure, particularly in the city centre, making it more attractive to visitors, to the wider benefit of the city.
- He highlighted current investment in shore power in the city centre (Fjuel) and the Neptun project (mentioned by Troms Kraft) at Grøtsund, to the north of Tromsø.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site at Grøtsund is under development, covering 100k m2, with dual civil and military use, as an important resupply point for NATO submarines. • Tromsø is one of three Norwegian ports authorised to admit Russian vessels, a relationship that continues despite the invasion of Ukraine due to bilateral agreements. • There was some discussion about northern sea routes opening up, but while this may happen longer term, it's not something actively being planned for as northern Norway would not be the destination for that kind of traffic - although happy to refuel and service any ships coming through. • The visit ended with a short tour of the port facilities at Breivika.
Action points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officials to keep in contact with JEH to offer assistance with his visit to Scotland in May. • Officials to consult with energy colleagues to see if there follow-up opportunities, particularly around Smart Senja's energy cafes.
Comment	<p>An interesting and informative visit co-ordinated by Troms and Finnmark County Council and themed around key interests for northern European international engagement. There are clear areas of shared interest around wind development, rural energy supplies and development of hydrogen and sustainable shipping solutions.</p>

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Type of engagement	Meeting
Date	Thursday 2 February
Attending Official(s)	[redacted] – Senior Policy Officer, Nordic and Arctic Unit Kate Higgins – Special Adviser [redacted] – Private Secretary
Who	Kjell Giæver, Chairman, Energi i Nord Petter Bjørkli (PB) , Cluster Leader, Energi i Nord
Key Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AR set the context for Scotland's interest in energy cooperation in northern Europe. • PB introduced the work of Energi i Nord. It is the most important energy cluster in northern Norway and focuses on five areas: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hydrogen: emphasising the need to plan the logistics and supply chains from the beginning, 2. Green aviation: early work with Iceland on sustainable aviation fuel. 3. Wind: noting the ambition of the Norwegian government, there is still a lot of work to do and Scotland is further on re offshore. Opportunity to learn, and conscious it can be controversial. 4. Smart energy solutions: particularly for remote areas which are off the main grid, recognising there are 1500 islands in the Arctic. 5. Infrastructure: particularly around high intensity industries (eg iron smelter in Bodø) which need to transition away from fossil fuels, looking more at a circular economy and industrial symbiosis. • Natural gas remains part of the EiN strategy, working within the parameters of the Paris agreement and opportunities around CCS, blue hydrogen and blue ammonia. • PB stressed the importance of the value chain – offshore wind is good but what does it power? Need to ensure there are industries and jobs for people to remain in the north of Norway. • The cluster is looking west for further opportunities for collaboration, [redacted - s.33(1)(b) - Commercial interests] • They are also involved with the High North Atlantic Business Alliance Network (HiNABA), which SG Arctic officials and HIE are connected to. • PB happy to accept the invitation from Arctic Frontiers to speak at Arctic Frontiers Abroad in Aberdeen in March and AR offered to help connect him to businesses and networks that would be relevant to meet during his visit.
Action points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officials to keep in touch with PB and make connections with relevant people for him to meet while in Scotland in March.
Comment	Continuing the energy theme of the day, a useful meeting to hear more about Norwegian energy innovation. PB's visit to Scotland will present opportunities to foster collaboration.

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Type of engagement	Meeting
Date	Thursday 2 February
Attending Official(s)	[redacted] – Senior Policy Officer, Nordic and Arctic Unit Kate Higgins – Special Adviser [redacted] – Private Secretary
Who	Patti Bruns (PB) – Secretary General, Arctic Mayors’ Forum
Key Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PB was appointed in August 2022, a new role as the AMF grows (it was founded in 2019). • They are undergoing a process of strategic planning just now which will inform their priorities. • Open to municipalities that identify as Arctic (not necessarily tied to geography, but wider than that). For example, Torshavn (Faroes) was a member until 2022. • Open to partnership with Scotland and Observer Status might be most of interest – allowing participation in joint projects, but with no membership fees and understandably no vote in AMF issues. • Orkney (represented at the conference) have already expressed an interest. • PB keen for partners who are looking for meaningful engagement and not just a platform. • In addition to grants from the Norwegian MFA, they have EU funding proposals pending. • [redacted - s.32(1)(a) International relations] • It was agreed the appropriate level of practical engagement with Scotland is at local authority level. Once their strategic planning is complete, SG officials should liaise and can play a role in facilitating dialogue with local authorities who could be interested in joint projects on shared challenges.
Action points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officials to keep in touch with PB with a view to speaking to local authorities once AMF are clearer on their strategic priorities.
Comment	A warm introductory meeting with AMF who are becoming a more prominent organisation in the region following their establishment in 2019 and recent opening of an office in Tromsø. Clear opportunities for engagement with Scotland at local authority level further down the line.

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ENGAGEMENT REPORT	
Minister	Angus Robertson (AR) Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture
Type of engagement	Dinner
Date	Thursday 2 February
Attending Official(s)	[redacted] – Senior Policy Officer, Nordic and Arctic Unit Kate Higgins – Special Adviser [redacted] – Private Secretary
Who	Deputy Chief Councillor Ronald Wærnes, Troms and Finnmark County Council Director Industry Anne Hjortdahl, Troms and Finnmark County Council Department Manager Nils Arne Johnsen, Troms and Finnmark County Council Pål Kjelstad, CFO Askø Nord, [redacted], Project Manager Green Hospital, University Hospital North-Norway (UNN)
Key Points	<p>TROMS AND FINNMARK COUNTY COUNCIL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The council have been developing a strategy for attracting foreign workers to the region which AR asked for more information on. <p>AKSO NORD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pål Kjelstad interested in visiting Scotland and AR offered to connect him with businesses that might be relevant to Akso's work (Norway's largest grocery wholesaler with ambitious sustainability targets). <p>GREEN HOSPITAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The work being done as part of the green hospital initiative at the University Hospital of Northern Norway may be of interest to the Copenhagen Hub.
Action points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NAJ to share information on council plans re foreign workers. Officials to keep in touch with PK with an open offer to make connections for him should he visit Scotland. Officials to share information with Copenhagen Hub on green hospital.
Comment	A warm and informal dinner with the council deputy leader and invited guests involved in innovation. Further strengthens links with the Council built up over several years of attending Arctic Frontiers and engaging with the High North Atlantic Business Alliance Network. While there will not be political representation at Arctic Frontiers Abroad due to council business, there should be a delegation attending at official level.

20 MINUTE NEIGHBOURHOODS

- The 20-minute neighbourhood concept supports people to meet the majority of their everyday needs within a reasonable distance of their home preferably through active travel modes or by public transport.
- 20 minute neighbourhoods are promoted through the policy approach of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), approved by the Parliament on 11 January.
- The revised draft NPF4 was amended to reflect a more flexible approach to this in rural areas through a wider emphasis on 'local liveability'
- Scotland's diverse urban and rural geographies requires flexibility of approach in relation to how movement supports access to daily needs.
- 20 minute neighbourhoods can help to support a high quality of life for rural and island populations, providing improved access to local facilities, capitalising on digital infrastructure to support remote and home working and reducing the need to travel and the associated costs, time and environmental impact.
- 20 minute neighbourhoods can support and help to grow local economies, creating social, economic and civic hubs and developing positive local identity and community resilience.
- 20 minute neighbourhoods promote local access to services but do not restrict movement. Supporting local living for rural or island communities in particular may involve travelling to wider areas for certain activities and services.

[Note: Sensitivities re. 20MN]

A media query was answered recently around social media claims that 20 minute neighbourhoods are intended to trap people in these areas. The following response was issued:

- *“These claims are completely inaccurate and untrue. Twenty minute neighbourhoods seek to create connected local communities, enabling people to meet most daily needs within a reasonable distance of home by walking, cycling, using sustainable public transport or mobility scooters, prams or wheelchairs. ‘It promotes an integrated approach to planning housing, local infrastructure including schools, community centres, local shops and health and social care. The aim is to prioritise quality of life, help tackle inequalities, improve health and wellbeing and respond to the climate emergency.”*

ISLANDS BOND:

- In 2021, Scottish Government announced a commitment to develop an Islands Bond fund, providing up to £50,000 each for up to 100 households by 2026, by providing financial support for island residents to remain in their community, or to encourage people to move there.
- Since then, we have listened carefully to islanders, and are changing our approach to the issues of depopulation in response to what they have told us.
- The feedback has been very clear. Whilst a renewed focus from the Scottish Government on the population challenges being faced across our islands is to be welcomed, a more strategic focus on the drivers of depopulation would be far more beneficial.
- On the basis of what we've heard from partners and communities, we are withdrawing the Islands Bond so that we can focus on the delivery of more localised solutions.
- Therefore, the investment that was planned for the Islands Bond for this financial year is now supporting our Practical Policy Tests to be delivered through our Addressing Depopulation Action Plan.
- These Practical Policy Tests take a cross-sectoral approach including localised interventions across skills, childcare, enabling infrastructure, scholarships, talent attraction, and community empowerment.

GREEN FREEPORTS

- The Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport aspires to create up to 25,000 high-quality, well-paid jobs, and to attract £2.6bn in inward investment into the region
- In drawing businesses and people to the area, and contributing to increased economic growth, it should make a real contribution to addressing the decline in population seen in recent times.

AQUACULTURE

- Aquaculture is a significant contributor to our national economy and is represented in every constituency in Scotland. Farmed salmon is the UK's most valuable food export.
- Aquaculture products are lower in carbon than many terrestrial sources of protein and will be an important part of our transition to net zero.
- Supporting over 10,000 jobs nationally through the supply chain, aquaculture is a key employer in many rural communities on the West coast and across our islands. Around 1,500 jobs are provided by fin fish farmers alone in some of Scotland's most fragile communities with more across the country and others with shellfish and seaweed farmers.
- The vast majority of jobs with fin fish farmers are of good quality providing long term and year round employment at above local average wage levels and with opportunities for long term careers. The jobs provided by aquaculture will be an essential part of our green recovery, delivery of our Blue Economy Vision, and transition to net zero.
- Our forthcoming Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture will provide clarity on the Scottish Government's long-term aspirations for aquaculture and our support for the sustainable development of the sector.
- The vision will place an enhanced emphasis on environmental protection and community benefits for our rural and coastal communities, as committed to in the Bute House Agreement.
- A Consenting Task Group is now working to streamline and better coordinate the multiple consents that are required to operate aquaculture businesses in order to create a more efficient regime.
- A review of the science relevant to aquaculture is currently being undertaken (at SG's request) by the Scottish Science Advisory Council and is expected to report in the coming weeks.

**ARCTIC FRONTIERS 2023
PLENARY PANEL SESSION 'MOVING TO AND FROM THE NORTH'**

Opening question pre-agreed with moderator and suggested points for response:

Q: What from Scotland's remote, rural and island experience can contribute towards addressing trends around depopulation in the Arctic?

- As well as geographical proximity, there are a number of **challenges Scotland and the Arctic share**. A lot of these focus on rural parts of Scotland.
 - 98% of Scotland is classified as rural, but only contains 17% of our population.
 - We have 96 inhabited islands.
- We are conscious that the scale of our rurality and remoteness is different if compared to some part of the Arctic region. But the challenges we collectively experience are nonetheless similar.
- In Scotland, we are observing a general trend where not only is there a drift from rural to urban areas of the country, but also that there is an observed drift from the west of the country, to the east. The result of this is that many remote, rural and island communities in the west of Scotland are depopulating, while urban and surrounding areas in the Edinburgh region are growing.
- We know that there is **no quick fix** for the challenges leading to depopulation, and I look forward to the discussion on this topic during this session.
- Scotland is very keen to **engage internationally** around the challenges being faced around demographics and population.
- I chair the Scottish Government's **Ministerial Population Taskforce**, which takes a cross-portfolio approach to demographic challenges – including rural depopulation – involving 10 different Ministers.
- In 2021 we published Scotland's **first national Population Strategy**.
- And in Autumn this year we will publish an **Action Plan** focussed on the challenge of depopulation in our rural and island areas.
- To inform the Action Plan, we are taking an innovative approach and implementing over 15 different **practical policy tests** with local communities in Scotland to help communities attract and retain people in their areas.
- These projects include pilot projects are focussed across a system of support including skills development, enabling critical infrastructure,

scholarships, digital connectivity, crofting, and locally-led talent attraction.

- With enterprise agencies and local authorities, we are also taking forward the development of a **Talent Attraction and Migration Service for Scotland**, which is expected to launch later this year.
- We also believe there are major opportunities for **local-level place-based migration solutions** to help facilitate population attraction and retention. Although migration is a reserved power to the UK Government, Scottish Ministers are calling on UK Ministers to implement our proposal for a community-driven Rural Visa Pilot scheme. This proposal has recently been endorsed by the UK Government's own Migration Advisory Committee, and we hope to see movement on this in the coming year.
- Scotland has a long established reputation for engaging with its rural communities in an inclusive and enabling way.

Additional key points to raise during session

- The megatrends affecting Scotland's current and future demography, are set out in [Scotland's first national Population Strategy](#), published by the Scottish Government in March 2021. *[see key themes contained within strategy at Annex C of briefing pack]*
- Last year we published [research about lessons for Scotland from island depopulation in Japan](#) – this is something we are using to inform our forthcoming policy approaches, where relevant to Scotland, but I'm also aware that lessons for island settings will have value to a range of you here today.
- And in late 2022, [a new report was published by our Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population](#), which looked at the application of place-based approaches to addressing local population challenges. This report reviews learning and research from a range of countries seeking to address similar challenges – it's my hope that some of the content of that report may be useful for the countries represented here today in addressing their own population challenges.
- The Talent Attraction and Migration service will:
 - attract people from anywhere in the world to work in Scotland
 - retain people already in Scotland who have chosen to move here
 - serve individuals and employers
 - support the public, private and third sectors
 - help meet people's immigration advice needs.