Michael Kingston charts the progress of the Arctic Council Best Practice Information Forum and how it can assist with the implementation of the Polar Code next year.

In view of the impending implementation of the Polar Code in January 2017 there is a requirement to educate all concerned about its provisions and the required data to be relied upon, including operators, flag states, insurers, financial markets, and port state control.

In order to do this effectively, a proposal for a Best Practice Information Forum to be set up to achieve this has been made to the Arctic Council’s Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment Working Group (PAME). The Proposal was tabled at PAME’s Jan/Feb meeting in Stockholm.

Previously in FE, we have commented that knowledge is lacking in the various decision making stages of the process: operators, flag state, insurers, financiers, and port state control. Put simply, people do not know where to get reliable information.

In Stockholm the case was put that the Polar Code at present, such as fishing, is one focus, and there is hope that this suggestion may be prioritised.

We need to know what the best information is at any point in time and currently that knowledge is lacking in which lasts for two years (until April 2017), navigational safety is the number two meeting in the State of Maine this September.

The hope is that the proposal will then be recommended to the senior Arctic ambassadors from each Arctic state with a recommendation to each country’s minister for states that it be established.

Clearly this is a great opportunity for the Arctic Council to show how they are working with industry and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), and it is refreshing to see the leadership being shown by PAME and representatives from other Arctic Council groups that are involved. It is also noteworthy that at an important meeting of several of the NGO’s (such as the World Wildlife Fund, the Pisces Foundation, Pacific Environment, the Wildlife Conservation Society, Ocean Conservancy, the Oak Foundation and Climateworks) regarding Arctic shipping in Seattle previously, they too unanimously agreed with this proposal in principal. This meeting was organised and facilitated by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and the work that they are doing and supporting is commendable.

Important timing

There is a possibility with a supreme effort that such a forum could be established in time for the handing over of the Arctic Council Chairmanship from the US to Finland in April 2017. Of course, the Polar Code comes into force on January 1, 2017 so this effort is timely and extremely important.

A further update will follow as matters progress, but it is great to see such cross-jurisdictional collaboration across the Arctic working that also includes governments, industry, NGO’s, the indigenous community and other players which will help to promote the correct behavioural atmosphere in relation to marine operations, the impact of which can extend to operations not covered by the Polar Code at present, such as fishing and leisure craft.

A collaborative effort

PAME unanimously backed further investigation about this proposal and work is currently being carried out by their Expert Shipping Group in relation to this forum and further discussions will take place at their next meeting in the State of Maine this September.

The hope is that the proposal will then be recommended to the senior Arctic ambassadors from each Arctic state with a recommendation to each country’s minister for states that it be established.

Clearly this is a great opportunity for the Arctic Council to show how they are working with industry and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), and it is refreshing to see the leadership being shown by PAME and representatives from other Arctic Council groups that are involved. It is also noteworthy that at an important meeting of several of the NGO’s (such as the World Wildlife Fund, the Pisces Foundation, Pacific Environment, the Wildlife Conservation Society, Ocean Conservancy, the Oak Foundation and Climateworks) regarding Arctic shipping in Seattle previously, they too unanimously agreed with this proposal in principal. This meeting was organised and facilitated by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and the work that they are doing and supporting is commendable.

Important timing

There is a possibility with a supreme effort that such a forum could be established in time for the handing over of the Arctic Council Chairmanship from the US to Finland in April 2017. Of course, the Polar Code comes into force on January 1, 2017 so this effort is timely and extremely important.

A further update will follow as matters progress, but it is great to see such cross-jurisdictional collaboration across the Arctic working that also includes governments, industry, NGO’s, the indigenous community and other players which will help to promote the correct behavioural atmosphere in relation to marine operations, the impact of which can extend to operations not covered by the Polar Code at present, such as fishing and leisure craft.

A collaborative effort

PAME unanimously backed further investigation about this proposal and work is currently being carried out by their Expert Shipping Group in relation to this forum and further discussions will take place at their next meeting in the State of Maine this September.

The hope is that the proposal will then be recommended to the senior Arctic ambassadors from each Arctic state with a recommendation to each country’s minister for states that it be established.

Clearly this is a great opportunity for the Arctic Council to show how they are working with industry and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), and it is refreshing to see the leadership being shown by PAME and representatives from other Arctic Council groups that are involved. It is also noteworthy that at an important meeting of several of the NGO’s (such as the World Wildlife Fund, the Pisces Foundation, Pacific Environment, the Wildlife Conservation Society, Ocean Conservancy, the Oak Foundation and Climateworks) regarding Arctic shipping in Seattle previously, they too unanimously agreed with this proposal in principal. This meeting was organised and facilitated by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and the work that they are doing and supporting is commendable.

Important timing

There is a possibility with a supreme effort that such a forum could be established in time for the handing over of the Arctic Council Chairmanship from the US to Finland in April 2017. Of course, the Polar Code comes into force on January 1, 2017 so this effort is timely and extremely important.

A further update will follow as matters progress, but it is great to see such cross-jurisdictional collaboration across the Arctic working that also includes governments, industry, NGO’s, the indigenous community and other players which will help to promote the correct behavioural atmosphere in relation to marine operations, the impact of which can extend to operations not covered by the Polar Code at present, such as fishing and leisure craft.

A collaborative effort

PAME unanimously backed further investigation about this proposal and work is currently being carried out by their Expert Shipping Group in relation to this forum and further discussions will take place at their next meeting in the State of Maine this September.

The hope is that the proposal will then be recommended to the senior Arctic ambassadors from each Arctic state with a recommendation to each country’s minister for states that it be established.

Clearly this is a great opportunity for the Arctic Council to show how they are working with industry and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), and it is refreshing to see the leadership being shown by PAME and representatives from other Arctic Council groups that are involved. It is also noteworthy that at an important meeting of several of the NGO’s (such as the World Wildlife Fund, the Pisces Foundation, Pacific Environment, the Wildlife Conservation Society, Ocean Conservancy, the Oak Foundation and Climateworks) regarding Arctic shipping in Seattle previously, they too unanimously agreed with this proposal in principal. This meeting was organised and facilitated by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and the work that they are doing and supporting is commendable.

Important timing

There is a possibility with a supreme effort that such a forum could be established in time for the handing over of the Arctic Council Chairmanship from the US to Finland in April 2017. Of course, the Polar Code comes into force on January 1, 2017 so this effort is timely and extremely important.

A further update will follow as matters progress, but it is great to see such cross-jurisdictional collaboration across the Arctic working that also includes governments, industry, NGO’s, the indigenous community and other players which will help to promote the correct behavioural atmosphere in relation to marine operations, the impact of which can extend to operations not covered by the Polar Code at present, such as fishing and leisure craft.