How Climate Change is affecting West Cork: Part 1

High time to answer Ireland's Arctic Call

We do not have time for 'fireside chats' on climate change. The best information about weather saves lives and a lot of money, but only if it based on informed decisions, writes maritime lawyer Michael Kingston

IRELAND must, without hesitation, apply for 'Observer Member' status of the Arctic

climate change is constrained and side-tracked by a constant vision in general towards the South East (Europe) and the South West (United States).

Much as we hugely value those relationships for so many reasons there is another horizon to our North that we must also engage with as a matter of priority - to gain

Ireland's focus in relation to

the critical knowledge needed to help make informed decisions about coastal erosion and flood defences, planning, agriculture, fishing, and safety that are all dependent on local weather predictions.

We need the best information and we do not have that without speaking to our Arctic neighbours.

Established in 1996, the Arctic Council is the leading intergovernmental forum promoting co-operation, co-ordination and interaction among

The Gulf Stream hits Ireland's shores, bringing warm water from the Gulf of Mexico and

the Arctic States on common Arctic issues, in particular on issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.

The Arctic States are USA, Canada, Russia, Norway, Sweden, Denmark (Greenland), Finland, and Iceland.

The organisation is not a law-making body, but much of the consensus reached is pursued in national legislation, and in international forums.

The Arctic Council allows, without a fee, Observer Mem-



for access to discussions and information about the effect of Arctic weather patterns on the lower latitudes.

There is a huge focus in active Working Groups on monitoring the Arctic Environment all aspects – including ice melt and changing ocean flow and weather patterns.

The current Observers are France, Germany, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, China, Poland, India, South Korea, Republic of Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

Despite being such a close neighbour, and indeed with natural historical links with the Arctic nations, Ireland is not a member.

Yet, Ireland's climate is critically dependent on the regulation of the Gulf Stream by the Arctic, and the balance of the Jet Stream, which arebeing discussed in depth in these Arctic Council Working Groups.

The Gulf Stream hits Ireland's shores, bringing warm water from the Gulf of Mexico and across the Atlantic. Ireland sits very high up in the world, higher than St John's in Newfoundland in Canada, yet when it is freezing in St John's, and at a similar latitude to Ireland's is Siberia, Russia. It is moist and warm in Ireland with sub-tropical gardens on Garinish Island in Bantry Bay, and more flora per square foot in the cracks and crevasses of the Burren than anywhere



Ophelia hits Castletownshend: Our houses, towns and cities, are under constant threat of flooding, due to climate change.

The Arctic acts like a refrigeration system – when the Gulf Stream has warmed Ireland – then Scotland – then North West Norway, it goes into the Arctic Circle and back down the Western Atlantic, by then, of course, much colder - having intermingled with billions of tonnes of ice.

But due to record ice melt in the Arctic Circle, the Gulf Stream's regulation is chang-

As it returns south of Greenland, it is less cold. Therefore, there is more evaporation and more rain, causing more turbulence as the meteorological balance in the mid-latitudes is affected.

Due to ice depletion, the warmer seas in the north are also affecting the balance of the Jet Stream above Ireland.

County Cork has not seen two dry days in a row since the beginning of July 2017.

Our houses, towns and cities, are under constant threat of flooding. Our slurry tanks are full, but the ground is saturated during the illogical 'spreading window'.

We have had to cut silage in November because the ground was so wet in August, September, and October. Our crop cultivation and production are being affected.

We have had to put extra moorings on our boats during hurricane Ophelia. It is therefore affecting everyone in our society, including our safety and our food security. In the meantime, Florida is experiencing cold snaps due to the jet stream's turbulence that are unprecedented, as are other parts of the mid-Latitudes, including Ireland

The recent extreme weather conditions are stark evidence of this.

SEAN O'DRISCOL

at times.

So, we do not have time for 'fireside chats' on this issue. The best information about weather saves lives and a lot of money, based on informed decisions.

The good news is that An Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney is heavily engaged on the issue.

He understands the critical importance of climate information, as well as the many other opportunities being an Observing Member will afford Cork and Ireland in other

Cork County Council's management team also understands this, and it is pleasing to see their commendable leadership in assuming responsibility for the Atlantic Seaboard South Region under the new National Climate Change Adoption Frame-

Observing Member status

of the Arctic Council will majorly assist these objectives and will also demonstrate Ireland's responsibility in helping to protect the world's last frontier.

Everyone must now row in behind Ireland's Arctic Call.

• Michael Kingston, a lawyer from Goleen, is a special advisor to the Arctic Council's Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment Working Group, working closely with the World Meteorological Organisation. He has also given evidence to the House of Lords Arctic Committee and is on the Advisory Council of the All Party Parliamentary Group on the Polar Regions. He is liaising with Minister Coveney's office regarding Ireland's Arctic Council Application. He is also a part-time farmer and has a fishing background.

Crucial role for Cork County Council in climate research

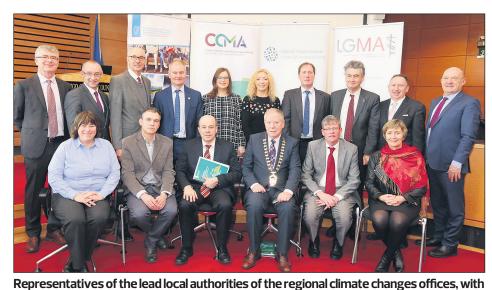
CORK County Council has been appointed the lead authority to set up and manage a Climate Action Office for the Atlantic Seaboard.

This will see them, in association with UCC and CIT, develop expertise in the climate change risks of coastal flooding, sea level rise and storms common off our coast.

This came about as the government's National Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 required the making of a National Mitigation Plan and National Adaptation Framework. Both the Mitigation Plan

(published in July 2017) and the National Adaptation Framework (published this January) proposed the establishment of regional climate action offices to coordinate the Local Authority response to climate action.

Following an evaluation



Denis Naughten, Minister for Communications, Climate Action, and Environment, including Louis Duffy, director of services, environment, climate change, broadband & emergency services, Cork County Council. (Photo: Charlie Brady)

was last September award-

ity for the establishment and process, Cork County Council management of the Climate Change office for the Atlantic ed the role of lead author-

Seaboard South region, which consists of the administrative areas of Clare County Council, Cork City Council, Cork County Council, Kerry County Council and Limerick City and County Council.

It is envisaged that the regional team would develop an expertise on the predominant climate risks in their particular regions and develop regional strategies on that basis. Tim Lucey, chief executive

of Cork County Council said: 'Local authorities are in the front line of responding to the effects of climate change and the funding announcement enables the sector to further develop their competence to deal with climate change. We look forward to establishing the office and working with the other local authorities in the region to deliver on climate action.'

Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr Declan Hurley, added: 'Local authorities have a key role in driving practical policy and behavioural changes for communities to deal with the impacts of climate change and I welcome the announcement of funding for the establishment of the regional structure of expert teams to meet the challenge that climate change presents

to our citizens.



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