

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 Council.

Ireland's focus in relation to 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

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 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-

ber status. States have joined 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.

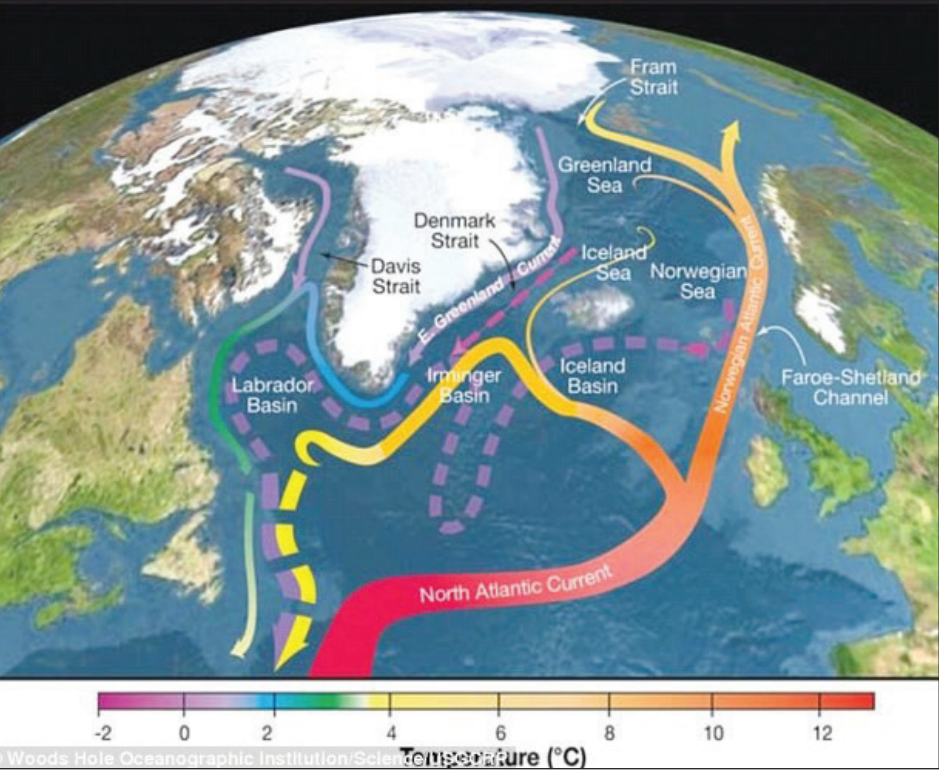
Despite being such a close neighbour, and indeed with natural historical links with the Arctic nations, Ireland is not a member.

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 are being 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 else on earth.



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



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

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



Representatives of the lead local authorities of the regional climate changes offices, with 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)

process, Cork County Council was last September awarded the role of lead author-

ity for the establishment and management of the Climate Change office for the Atlantic

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 Hurlley, 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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