

THE GEOGRAPHER ARCTIC EDITION: DRAFT EDITORIAL

As the former President of Ireland says in his article, Scotland has tended to look southwards. Now there is welcome new direction of vision as the importance of Scotland's geographical location as the Arctic emerges from under the pack ice and becomes a marine crossroads between western and oriental worlds.

This northerly orientation is not new. We know from the excellent geoarchaeological studies undertaken in recent years by many Scottish based geographers that there have been strong connections in the past. How far back they go is difficult to know because of the paucity of evidence, but connections are likely to stretch back to the ninth century. Analysis of DNA does show that the northern genetic strands have a strong presence in some parts of Scotland, particularly in the Northern Isles. And, more recently, there has been much Scottish led exploration of the Arctic since the eighteenth century.

Why is the Arctic world so important to Scotland that we should devote a special edition of *The Geographer* to exploring the region? Apart from the aforementioned cultural connections, we depend on the Arctic for both our daily weather and our longer term climate. The ocean circulation system is substantially driven by the cold water inflows from the Arctic ocean and surrounding lands, and is partly responsible for the warm water surface currents which reach our shores and warm our air. With the continuing warming of the globe, we face increasingly turbulent weather and rising sea levels which provide a threat to our coastal communities.

The increase in travel possibilities by sea and air has allowed more Scottish residents to visit the Arctic. Scotland can potentially provide a hub for such travel. It can also provide a transit point for the expected increase in shipping via the Arctic ocean routes between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Orkney and maybe Shetland have potentially significant roles to play.

We welcome the Scottish Government's increasing alliances with Arctic nations through the Arctic Circle mechanism and will play our part in developing the connections between Scotland the Arctic.

Roger Crofts and Mike Robinson