A new International Polar Heritage Committee (IPHC) Executive Committee was elected in April 2018, for a term of three years. Dr Michael Pearson AO (Australia ICOMOS) is the new President, Dr Ximena Senatore, University of Buenos Aires, Argentina is Vice President, and Dr Bryan Lintott, Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge, is Secretary-General. They take over from Julian Bickersteth (Australia ICOMOS), Susan Barr (Norway) and Nigel Watson (NZ) who have been the Executive for the last six years.

The IPHC has achieved an enormous amount since it was established in 2000, including 12 formal and informal IPHC meetings around the world, some combined with conferences and symposia, the publication of three volumes in the ICOMOS Monuments and Sites series, largely arising from conferences (edited by Susan Barr and Paul Chaplin, which remain seminal collections of papers on polar heritage), establishing formal and informal collaboration with a wide range of Arctic and Antarctic organisations, attending and contributing to ICOMOS Advisory and Scientific Council meetings, and contributing to conservation planning at the invitation of a number of organisations managing heritage sites in the Ross Sea, the Antarctic peninsula and the South Shetland Islands.

In all of these activities Susan Barr has been a constant and most active instigator and participant, and she leaves the IPHC Executive Committee for the first time in 18 years (having been President and Vice-President over that period). The work of the IPHC over this period would not have been possible without the funding provided by the Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage (2000-2012), New Zealand Antarctic Heritage Trust (2012-2018), and now by the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge.

At the moment the IPHC has a Polar Archaeological Working Group (PAWG), headed by Bryan Lintott, which is actively developing a Charter for the protection and management of archaeological heritage in Antarctica. The drafting of this is well advanced, and a working draft will be available for circulation at the POLAR2018 Open Science Conference organised by Scientific Committee for Antarctic Research (SCAR) and International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) in Davos, Switzerland, in June this year. Copies will also be made available to IPHC members and through them to their national ICOMOS bodies, and will be circulated to a number of other ICOMOS ISC’s and organisations with an interest in Polar Heritage.

The IPHC is working to update its website, (currently located here but soon to be on the International ICOMOS website server) and hopes to make it more useful to members and others, for example by indicating recent publications by members, and issues and upcoming event of interest to the Polar heritage community.

The new Executive is also be forward planning for future IPHC meetings and hopefully conferences, including an event in association with the ICOMOS General Assembly in Sydney in 2020. Another publication, virtual or real, of current work and issues would be also be something to aim for. We are also keen to strengthen our ties with other ISCs, particularly the International Council on Archaeological Heritage Management (ICAHM) and the International Committee on Underwater Cultural Heritage (ICUCH), which share a special interest in polar heritage issues.

Michael Pearson AO
President, International Polar Heritage Committee
27 April 2018