

*These notes refer to the Antarctic Act 2013 (c.15)
which received Royal Assent on 26 March 2013*

ANTARCTIC ACT 2013

EXPLANATORY NOTES

BACKGROUND

Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty

4. The Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (“the Protocol”) provides for the comprehensive protection of the Antarctic environment. It requires all human activities undertaken in Antarctica to be planned and conducted so as to limit adverse impacts on the Antarctic environment. Its Article 7 prohibits any activity relating to mineral resources other than scientific research. Until 2048 the Protocol can only be modified by unanimous agreement of all the Consultative Parties to the Treaty and, in addition, the prohibition on activity relating to mineral resources cannot be removed without a binding legal regime on Antarctic mineral resource activities being in force. There is therefore no foreseeable prospect of oil exploration or similar activity in the Antarctic. The Protocol, including its Annexes I–IV, was adopted in 1991 and entered into force in 1998. Annex V was adopted later in 1991 and entered into force in 2002. Provision is made in the Protocol for additional annexes to be adopted and incorporated into the Protocol following their entry into force. The text of the Protocol is available at: http://www.ats.aq/documents/recatt/Att006_e.pdf.