



Media Statement

15 January 2015

Chinese Icebreaker to visit Lyttelton Port en route from Antarctica

A significant international event will kick-start 2015 with the visit of the Xuě Lóng, China's icebreaker and polar research vessel to the Port of Lyttelton in Christchurch.

For three days from 16 January the Xuě Lóng, whose name translates to Snow Dragon, will dock for refuelling and cargo transfer in Lyttelton having travelled through the Southern Ocean from the Ross Sea region. The vessel has been supporting scientific research on climate change, surveying a potential site for prospective bases and positioning fuel depots for science supported by Antarctica New Zealand.

Rapaki Marae leaders Nuk Korako MP and Rik Pitama will lead the official powhiri welcome for the Xuě Lóng and crew including the Chinese Ambassador and Consulate. They will also present a taonga – a treasured gift in recognition of the new relationship between Rapaki Manawhenua and the Chinese Antarctic Program.

Mayor Lianne Dalziel says the Xuě Lóng's visit is significant for Christchurch. "Having recently returned from Antarctica myself, I'm thrilled to welcome China's Icebreaker and polar research vessel to our city. As one of only five gateway cities to Antarctica in the world, Christchurch has become a logistics hub for national and international programmes and therefore our international relationships and strong historic connection with Antarctica is a top priority for Christchurch," says Lianne Dalziel. "Our local economy also benefits from these Antarctic related activities, with more than \$100 million injected into it each year."

This visit also signals the overall strengthening relationship between New Zealand and China, particularly through Antarctic cooperation in logistics and science which formed an important side-meeting during President Xi's visit to Wellington in November 2014.

"Antarctica New Zealand works closely with the Chinese Arctic and Antarctic Administration and this was highlighted during the meeting of the Managers of National Antarctic Programmes held in Christchurch in September last year," said Antarctica New Zealand Chief Executive, Peter Beggs. "For the people of Christchurch, the Xuě Lóng's visit is a great opportunity to head over to Lyttelton for a rare glimpse of an icebreaker of this size."

"Lyttelton Port of Christchurch (LPC) looks forward to welcoming the Xuě Lóng," said LPC Chief Executive Peter Davie. "LPC has a strong relationship with China and this visit will help strengthen it. Lyttelton has a long history with Antarctica, particularly as a New Zealand base for expeditions, and this visit further develops this important association."

The Xuě Lóng is 167 metres long and has a beam of almost 23 metres. The vessel can continuously break ice as thick as one metre at a sailing speed of 1.5 knots.

On board the ship covering an area of 200m² there are laboratories supporting marine physics chemistry and biology, meteorological instruments as well as a data processing centre. More than 125 researchers and passengers can be accommodated on board the vessel.

New Zealand and China are both part of the Antarctic Treaty System which places peace and scientific purpose at the heart of the operational presence of National Antarctic Programmes working on the continent.

ENDS

Media contacts

Antarctica New Zealand, Jeanine Begg 021 0298 8327

Lyttelton Port of Christchurch, Allanah James, 021 709 652

Notes to Editor

The Xuě Lóng is expected to arrive into Lyttelton Port at 17:00 Friday 16 January and is scheduled to depart at 12-Noon Tuesday 20 January.