

Kings Bay strategy

2016 – 2018



"For the benefit of the world's climate and environmental knowledge"

Global warming is considered one of our age's greatest threats. The UN climate panel has concluded that it is largely manmade, and that we are approaching a limit where warming becomes irreversible.

The Arctic is considered to be the part of the world where warming has its initial impact and is most visible. Studies of developments in the Arctic are therefore important in order to predict what will happen in the rest of the world.

Ny-Ålesund is particularly suited to climate and environmental research. Easy accessibility throughout the year, combined with a rich and diverse natural environment that has seen little impact from local disruptions, lends the location important advantages.

Kings Bay must, according to its articles of association, "provide services to and promote research and scientific activity, and contribute to develop Ny-Ålesund as an international Arctic, scientific research station".

The vision for Kings Bay is to be *for the benefit of the world's climate and environmental knowledge*. Our main goal is that Ny-Ålesund should be *the foremost location for Arctic climate and environmental research*. This strategy demonstrates how we intend to achieve our goals.

Ny-Ålesund, 27th of October 2015, signed by the board and administration of Kings Bay AS



Unni Steinsmo, chairman



Widar Salbuviik, deputy chairman of the board



Sven Ole Fagernæs, member



Egil Murud, member



Kirsten Broch Mathisen, member



Ole Øiseth, CEO

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Kongsfjorden. Photo: Jonny Sjøvoll

1. Purpose and constraints

Kings Bay AS is a limited company that is wholly owned by the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries. The company owns and operates Ny-Ålesund, and its main task is to manage the property and sell infrastructure services to Norwegian and foreign research institutions.

Kings Bay's property comprises the entire Brøgger peninsula and a stretch of coast on the east and north sides of Kongsfjorden, totalling 295 km². Kings Bay has particular responsibility for the cultural-historic buildings, which include 29 protected buildings from the mining era.

According to the articles of association, the company's purpose is *“operation and exploitation of the company's properties on Svalbard and other activities related to this”*. The company must *“provide services to and promote research and scientific activity, and contribute to develop Ny-Ålesund as an international Arctic scientific research station”*.

The Norwegian authorities have invested close to NOK 300 million in building infrastructure and facilitating research in Ny-Ålesund. The community is perceived as well-run, with good accommodation and work conditions for scientists. The location's popularity as a base for scientific studies of nature, the environment and climate is on the increase. Kings Bay will contribute to the research in Ny-Ålesund having good and predictable framework conditions.

The Government's goals and strategies for its Svalbard policy are stipulated in Report to the Storting 22 (2008-2009), Svalbardmeldingen. According to chapter 4.1.1, the Government's overriding objectives are:

- Consistent and firm enforcement of sovereignty.
- Proper observance of the Svalbard Treaty and control to ensure compliance with the Treaty.
- Maintenance of peace and stability in the area.
- Preservation of the area's distinctive natural wilderness.
- Maintenance of Norwegian communities in the archipelago.

In chapter 8.2 the Government proposes the following objectives for research and education:

- Research and higher education are to be key elements in Norwegian activities on Svalbard.
- Svalbard shall be further developed as a platform for international research, higher education and environmental monitoring. The archipelago's infrastructure and unique research opportunities shall be exploited even better than they are today. The infrastructure must be supplemented with measures that further strengthen Svalbard's position in the international development of knowledge.
- Norway should be a key player in the development of knowledge on and about Svalbard. An academic leading role must particularly be ensured through the professional standing and quality of Norwegian polar research.
- Climate/environment is a natural focus area. The research is dependent on the area being preserved unaffected to the greatest extent possible. All activity should be in accordance with an overriding consideration of the environment.

According to the Svalbard and High North reports, Norway must be at the forefront with respect to knowledge about, for and in the High North. It is emphasized that knowledge also is the key to good management.

According to the Svalbard report's chapter 10.2, Ny-Ålesund should be one of the world's foremost places for Arctic climate and environmental research. In chapter 8.3, Ny-Ålesund is defined as a “green” research station that should function as a natural science laboratory, primarily for research

that is dependent on the location's qualities. Other economic activities should be conducted within the constraints imposed by the research activities.

The cultural monuments are discussed in the Svalbard report's chapter 7.4, where it is emphasized that the settlement in Ny-Ålesund is an important cultural environment that should not lose its historical character. The management plan for the protected buildings has been an important step in the efforts to preserve the cultural heritage, and it imposes constraints on how the protected buildings may be used for the purposes of the company.

2. Vision and overriding objectives

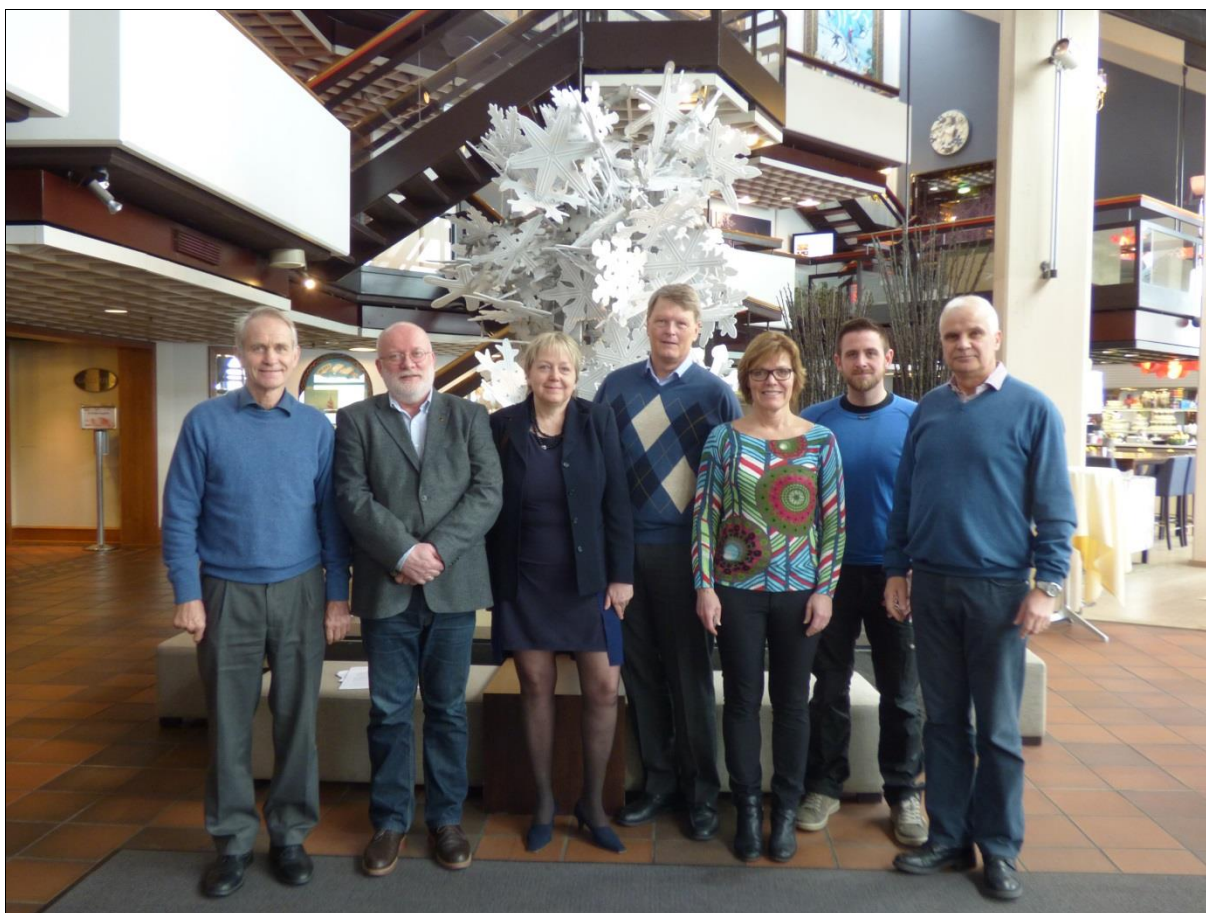
Ny-Ålesund has natural advantages and unique facilities for climate and environmental research. Activity is on the increase as a result of a growing interest for the fields of study and an increased awareness of Ny-Ålesund as a research base. Kings Bay's task is to facilitate research.

The vision for Kings Bay is to be:

“for the benefit of the world's climate and environmental knowledge”

The primary objective is that Ny-Ålesund is:

“the foremost location for Arctic climate and environmental research”



Board of Kings Bay AS, 2015. Left to right: board member Sven Ole Fagernæs, board member Egil Murud, chairman Unni Steinsmo, deputy chairman Widar Salbuviik, board member Kirsten Broch Mathisen, employee representative William Engesland and CEO Ole Øiseth. Photo: Kings Bay AS

3. Status for activities 2015

Kings Bay's operating income is based on paid services from the research community. The company receives grants for operations and investments from the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries. Kings Bay provides services to cruise vessels who call at Ny-Ålesund. Following the introduction of the ban on heavy oil and mandatory ice pilot, the number of calls, and thus income from this activity, is more than halved since 2010.

Institutions from ten countries operate research stations in Ny-Ålesund. These are France, India, Italy, Japan, China, South Korea, the Netherlands, the UK, Germany and Norway. The Norwegian Polar Institute, the Norwegian Mapping Authority and the French-German AWIPEV station are manned throughout the year.

The organization Ny-Ålesund Science Managers Committee (NySMAC), comprised of representatives from the institutions, is a body to promote cooperation on infrastructure and technical solutions in Ny-Ålesund. NySMAC has an advisory position towards Kings Bay.

Kings Bay has utilised every protected building that can be used, while also taking into consideration good management of the cultural monuments.

Kings Bay has recorded an increase in the number of researcher days, from 12,211 in 2012 to 14,501 in 2014. Besides the monitoring programmes, most research takes place in the summer, with July and August as the high season. Activities during the polar night are showing a satisfactory increase. It remains a goal to achieve more predictable and regular use of the location throughout the year.

Activities in Ny-Ålesund must be viewed in relation to other research on Svalbard. The RiS portal, under the auspices of Svalbard Science Forum (SSF), has been established as a common platform for registration of projects. SSF, which is headed by the Research Council of Norway, supports measures to improve international research cooperation. In 2014 the Research Council of Norway also established a separate polar research programme with earmarked funds for projects in Polar areas.

Kings Bay often hosts political and research policy delegations. The Ny-Ålesund symposium has been established as a meeting ground for international climate cooperation. The symposium supports Norway's role as a driving force in environmental and climate policy.

Ny-Ålesund is host to globally coordinated research stations in fields such as air pollution (the Zeppelin station) and geodetic observations (the Norwegian Mapping Authority). Both are international reference stations in their fields. An upgrade of the geodetic station at a cost of approx. NOK 300 million will be completed in 2018.



*The Norwegian Mapping Authority's new geodetic observatory under construction in the summer of 2015.
Photo: Veidekke Arctic AS*

4. External development trends 2015

The government views the High North as its primary strategic priority in foreign policy. The policy is stipulated in strategic documents, such as Norway's Arctic Policy (2014), The High North (2011) and the white paper on Svalbard (2009). Among the main points are the development of sustainable commercial activities, care of the vulnerable environment, strengthening of the knowledge base and development of international dialogue.

There is a special need for more knowledge on climate change in polar areas, and the global consequences. The ice cover is shrinking, the temperature is increasing and the basis for existence for species living in the Arctic is changing. The data is often poor, and the climate models for the Arctic region are weak. Ny-Ålesund is well suited for studying the natural environment and climate, and is already recognized as one of the most important research bases globally.



The Marine laboratory, Gruvebadet, vessels and the building for light-sensitive instruments are examples of services Kings Bay offers scientists.

Svalbard may in a few years time become the hub for European Arctic research, with particular emphasis on climate-related observation systems. The SIOS project (Svalbard Integrated Arctic Earth Observing System) is assumed to become an important premise provider, also for developments in Ny-Ålesund. SIOS is headed from UNIS in Longyearbyen and is operative from 2015.

Reduced ice cover and thinner ice also increases commercial opportunities, particularly in the areas of fisheries, oil and gas, shipping and tourism. Several countries are heading north, and ship traffic through northern sailing routes and into the polar basin are on the increase. Bjørnøya is a potential future base for search and rescue.

Activities in the north must be sustainable, and require research-based knowledge in a number of areas. Climate change may affect both research priorities and infrastructure investments in the years to come.

Slumping coal prices caused cornerstone company Store Norske to reduce manpower by a hundred employees in 2014 and 2015. In the work on a new white paper on Svalbard, research and education attract new attention as pillars of society. These are trends that Kings Bay will have to actively relate to. The developments will impact Kings Bay's economy, among others, through increased transport costs.

The significance of coal operations are also reduced in Barentsburg. Here too, research is a focus area for the future. The Poles have intensified activities from their own station in Hornsund. Kings Bay is positive with regard to cooperating with all parties and research stations on Svalbard.



Small expedition cruises are experiencing a boom at Svalbard, here is Noorderlicht in Kongsfjorden. Photo: Åsne Dolve Meyer

5. Unique benefits in Ny-Ålesund

Ny-Ålesund is a good and functional base for international research and environmental monitoring. Easy accessibility throughout the year, combined with a rich and diverse natural environment that has seen little impact from local disruptions, lends the location an important advantage compared to other Arctic research facilities.

The area around Kongsfjorden is particularly well-suited to climate and environmental research. Here, Ny-Ålesund can develop its identity as an international reference station. Long series of measurements for air, radiation and biological monitoring strengthen its attraction. Ny-Ålesund is a natural choice for projects that compare measurement results from the Arctic and Antarctic.

Ny-Ålesund has natural qualities for space and atmospheric research due to properties of the earth's electromagnetic field. The Zeppelin station for air monitoring and the Geodetic station for earth observation exploit the advantages, and are a part of global networks. Radio silence is an important quality, but with challenges in regard to wireless technology.

The Marine laboratory attracts a number of projects and research groups. Bioprospecting, the ecology of the sea in winter and experiments in water close to the freezing point are also relevant research areas. Kongsfjorden, which is a changing fjord, is itself a subject of study.



The Marine laboratory in Ny-Ålesund. Photo: Åsne Dolve Meyer

6. Strategic opportunities and challenges

Ny-Ålesund is experiencing increased interest, domestically and internationally, as a result of good accessibility, unique advantages and intensified climate and environmental research. Wishes and needs must be balanced against the Kongsfjord area's general vulnerability and good management of the cultural and natural environment. The protected buildings are attractive, but have challenges related to costs and operations.

Ny-Ålesund's attraction is based on natural and developed advantages, the latter in the shape of good facilities for research and environmental monitoring. The infrastructure services should facilitate good research, but must also stimulate cooperation, within financial constraints that are manageable for the users.

According to the white paper on Svalbard, Norway should be centre stage in terms of knowledge development on and about Svalbard. It also states that an academic leading role must particularly be ensured through weight and quality in Norwegian polar research. It is a challenge to maintain the balance between the Norwegian and international presence in Ny-Ålesund. Kings Bay cannot manage this alone.

Kings Bay's participation in research policy processes domestically and internationally is limited, but undergoing positive development. Several major processes, such as the international infrastructure collaboration in SIOS and UNIS as a domestic cooperation arena for research and education, will play a major role in the years to come, including for activities in Ny-Ålesund.

The Government has announced a new review of Norway's Svalbard policy in the form of a white paper in 2016. The purpose is to ensure a stable and foreseeable Svalbard policy and a robust Norwegian presence in the archipelago. Ny-Ålesund's and Kings Bay's place in the future political vision will be a part of the review.

In cooperation with the Longyearbyen local government, the Longyearbyen trade association has drawn up a strategic industry plan for Svalbard, which emphasizes location and infrastructure as a point of departure for new industries. Among other things, the plan advocates a doubling of research and education in the archipelago, including Ny-Ålesund.



The protected London buildings are among the buildings Kings Bay has restored in recent years. The buildings are currently used by the University of Groningen. Photo: Åsne Dolve Meyer

7. Goals and strategies

1. Kings Bay will work to ensure that Ny-Ålesund is an attractive, international research community characterized by quality and cooperation. This will be achieved by offering outstanding facilities for research and environmental monitoring based on extensive sharing of facilities and resources. Scientists will be offered foreseeable and competitive framework conditions.
2. Kings Bay will manage the Kongsfjord area as a cultural and natural environment, as unaffected as possible by local disruptions and pollution. The protected buildings will be brought up to the applicable national standard.
3. Kings Bay will be involved in research policy processes with relevance for activities in Ny-Ålesund, such as the international infrastructure collaboration in SIOS and the national cooperation arenas for research and education under the auspices of UNIS and the Svalbard Science Forum.
4. Kings Bay will have close and good dialogue with the owner and other government agencies concerning the further development of Ny-Ålesund in a domestic and international perspective. Kings Bay will have a clear role as host and work for a good balance between the research communities.
5. Kings Bay must have a foreseeable economic basis that enables the company to carry out its duties in a satisfactory manner.



Photo: Manbharat Singh Dhady, Geophysical Institute, University of Alaska Fairbanks

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