Students in the Arctic Technology program at The University Centre in Svalbard, top, conduct field work this spring while being observed by a drone. A two-part video of their work can be seen at https://youtu.be/1bDL-DlHUeI. At right, Northern Research Institute officials prepare to assemble a CryoWing drone in Ny-Ålesund, where the new Arctic Centre for Unmanned Aircraft opened last month.

SEBASTIAN SIKORA / UNIS

AECO bans cruise passengers from bringing devices due to risk of disturbance and loss

By MARK SABBATINI

Editor

Drones in Svalbard may open a world of future possibilities in the eyes of some very smart people, but another group doesn’t want to risk the negative possibilities if aircraft are in the hands of clueless tourists.

Passengers on most cruises traveling to Svalbard and other Arctic areas will be prohibited from bringing drones under a new policy announced Friday by The Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators. The association said unmanned aircraft, increasingly used by private individuals, pose an unacceptable risk in tourist situations.

“We do not want guests to use UAVs to try to get closer to wildlife and risk disturbance of animals, birds or other guests,” said Frigg Jørgensen, ACEO’s executive director, in a prepared statement. “It would also be very unfortunate if a UAV is lost and cannot be retrieved from Arctic nature areas.”

Ilja Leo Lang, manager of AECO’s main office in Copenhagen, stated in an e-mail interview it is not known if such problems have occurred during previous cruises to Svalbard.

Gov’t to buy Store Norske’s properties for 295M, provide 205M loan; ‘great risk’ remains

By MARK SABBATINI

Editor

It hands all of Store Norske’s property to the government and allows the cash-starved coal company to continue mining through 2016, but there is still a “great risk” of the company shutting down after that if the market slump continues.

Those assertions are spelled out in detail in a bill submitted Tuesday to Parliament authorizing the government to purchase all of Store Norske’s land and infrastructure for 295 million kroner, and providing the company with a 205 million kroner loan.

The 500-million-kroner package is more generous than the 450-million-kroner loan the company applied for in January, but the terms give the central government far more control over the company’s future development and possible expansion into other industries.

“The proposal means that the state will have direct ownership of the ground properties and infrastructure in Svalbard which today is owned by SNSK Group, while provision is made for further operations by SNSG,” the bill submitted by the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries states.
Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

Editor
Mark Sabbatini

Principal of principles
Kristan Hutchison

Psychiatrist
Irene Gallion

Accomplice
Jeff Newsom

Mailing address
Icepeople
Ve1 210 -2 -13
Longyearbyen, Svalbard
9170
Norway

Telephone
Norway: +47 41 51 46 38
U.S. +1 (970) 673-4472

E-mail
marksabbatini@yahoo.com

Web site
www.icepeople.net

Icepeople is published weekly (or thereabouts) on Tuesdays (or thereabouts), with printed copies available free on a limited basis in Longyearbyen. Additional printed copies are available locally and by mail upon request. Charges are on an "at cost" basis.

Copyright stuff
Original contents of this publication can be reproduced for non-commercial purposes free of charge if Icepeople is credited as the source. The original writers, photographers and other contributors retain their rights to all published works.

Corrections policy
When we screw up you’ll know about it – on the front page. One of the big complaints about newspapers is they tend to bury corrections and clarifications deep inside where few people who read the original article see them. If we need to fix something, an alert box on the front page will state what story is in error and where the full correction is printed.

Submissions policy
Letters, columns, photos and other material are welcome, but we can't offer pay for published items since nobody here is getting paid at the moment. Submissions in electronic form (text, Word documents, JPEGs, etc.) are highly preferred, although typing and/or scanning of items will be considered on a per-case basis. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, accuracy, libel and other reasons, but we will also make every reasonable effort to contact the author about any changes prior to publication.

It's all downhill from here snow fans

A communal kicksled lies stuck in the rapidly thawing snow between rows of homes near the seaside on the last day of April. Visit Svalbard distributed 25 of the kicksleds around Longyearbyen in January after obtaining a grant for its Arctic version of a sustainable shared transport system, but Trine Krystad, the project's manager, is requesting people locate and bring the sled to Sportcenteret or an easily accessible roadside location so they can be collected and stored for the summer. Most of those responding to her on a community Facebook page are, shockingly, reporting most of the kicksleds are at locations such as the town's "downhill" section such as the seaside homes and the "world's largest" Santa's mailbox.

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

When a barely-in-her-20s pop diva talks about visiting Svalbard for inspiration because "I wanted to get a sense of breaking free and breaking away," perhaps one should assume she won't opt for the most mature way of doing do. That said, we're wondering what Tove Styrke's teenybopper audience might do for fun if they follow her here this summer after seeing her new video where she indulges in a variety of odd behavior ranging from an apparent solitary orgasmic experience in a parked car from to smashing out the windows of a vehicle with a sledgehammer. Styrke, who released her debut album in 2010 after a third-place finish in Swedish Idol at the age of 16, filmed the video for the song "Borderline" (at tinyurl.com/mm2g2oy), which is also the title of her recent EP; at various locations around the archipelago after she and her fellow musicians "found it on the internet by accident," according to an interview in Vortex Music Magazine. "We were Googling for something else when that place, Pyramiden, came up. We were blown away and decided to go there instead. It seemed like it would be an adventure – and it really was." There's also a line in another song that declares "hijack the idea of a girl who obeys," which somehow has something to do with her newly assertive feminism … Meanwhile a group feeling true anguish rather than feigned will probably rank high on many people's no-sympathy list. Norway's whalers are reporting this year's hunting season has been terrible so far for weather-related reasons. So much so that Per Rolandsen, a sales consultant for the Norwegian Raw Fish Organization in Svolvær, told Lofotposten that "as far as I know there is no vessel that is going to Spitsbergen." The season started a week early and the initial catch was good, but hauls have dropped sharply since and the 64 total animals is 16 fewer than last year at this time.

Be part of Longyearbyen's growing future!

Polar Permaculture has a vision to develop a resilient and healthy community while reducing our impact on the environment. Our team of experts are creating solutions for organic food growing, transformation of waste streams and engaging our community. Work is commencing on our greenhouse project now. Could you be part of the solution? We would love to hear from you.

Polar Permaculture
www.polarpermaculture.com 4695 4875 info@polarpermaculture.com

Icenesheet

Available for airport parking enforcement: We're guessing the mayor wouldn't block traffic again if this alert soul was on the city payroll.

SONY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT SWEDEN

Get some real dirt on icepeople!
Miners head to work inside Store Norske’s Svea mine, which produced about 1.6 million tons of coal in 2014. A slump in coal prices forced the company to lay off about 100 of its 340 employees at the beginning of the year, but a government bailout package submitted Tuesday to Parliament would likely ensure mining could continue at least through the end of 2016.

Bailout may not end crisis

The bailout, which apparently has a majority of support in Parliament, was greeted with relief – but not excessive celebration – by local miners and other residents when the overall amount, but not specifics, was announced last month. The legislation confirms their caution is warranted since the company’s long-term future is still highly uncertain.

"The liquidity supply initially provides the foundation for coal operations to a limited extent in 2015 and 2016, but with the possibility of operating beyond 2016," the bill states. "The latter will include depend on whether market conditions evolve positively, whether the company succeeds in reducing costs and obtaining new financing. If market conditions do not improve, there is great risk that coal operations at SNSG by the end of 2016 may be dismantled."

The company lost a record 537 million kroner in 2014 and the current coal price of about $60 a ton is still well below the $75 Store Norske projected it would need to break even. It initially cut its operations in half by closing the new Lunckefjell mine, but work there has resumed because it contains a higher quality coal that could be sold to the metallogenic industry at higher prices.

Store Norske is already 99.9 percent owned by the government, but transferring the properties directly to government – and acquiring the few privately-held shares – "may provide the state ownership more flexibility for managing the further development" of the company, the bill states. The company, in its original loan request, wanted to use 50 million kroner to branch out into other industries such as consulting on Arctic infrastructure and industry in other areas.

The government is hastily overhauling a "white paper" defining policy goals for Svalbard, which will play a key role in determining "how the state can contribute to the restructuring of the Svalbard community," the bill states. There’s more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

No drones on AECO cruises

AECO has no information about AECO operators experiencing problems with passenger-controlled drones and as AECO’s secretariat, we are not aware of whether and how many AECO operators are using the drones," she wrote. "Our decision to prohibit drones is an expression of due diligence."

The announcement comes a month after the opening of the Arctic Centre for Unmanned Aircraft in Ny-Ålesund. Researchers and other officials say drones are likely to play a break-through role in climate change and other research, and will increase the safety of commercial flights search and rescue missions, and police operations.

There’s more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mostly clear. Variable winds to 25 km/h. High -6C (-9C wind chill), low -12C (-17C wind chill).</td>
<td>Partly cloudy. NE winds to 11 km/h. High -1C (-6C wind chill), low -6C (-10C wind chill).</td>
<td>Mostly cloudy. Variable winds to 25 km/h. High 0C (-5C wind chill), low -3C (-7C wind chill).</td>
<td>Rain/snow. NE winds to 42 km/h. High 3C (-1C wind chill), low 0C (-4C wind chill).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-hour daylight</td>
<td>24-hour daylight</td>
<td>24-hour daylight</td>
<td>24-hour daylight</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extended forecast: Sunday, clear, 0C (-6C), -5C (-9C), light 24:00h; Monday, clear, -3C (-7C), -5C (-9C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, partly cloudy, -2C (-5C), -4C (-8C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, cloudy, -1C (-5C), -3C (-7C), light 24:00h

Data provided by storm.no

Polarsyssel returns, ready for full season of duty

The 89-meter-long Polarsyssel returned to Svalbard on Sunday to begin its first full season as the service vessel for The Governor of Svalbard. The new vessel was christened during a ceremony at Longyearbyen last September after months of delays in its delivery, therefore limiting the range of its use before it was deployed to the mainland for winter to be used for offshore supply work. "Now it will be used for search and rescue, and various other expeditions," said Arild Lyssand, a police chief lieutenant for the governor. The Polarsyssel features significant upgrades over the Nordkystet it replaces, including a helipad capable of accommodating large Super Puma helicopters, and infrared and optical cameras to search for people and environmental discharges.

Man rescued by helicopter after crash in Barentsburg

A 65-year-old man was brought by helicopter to Longyearbyen Hospital after suffering a shoulder injury in a snowmobile crash Saturday in Barentsburg, according to The Governor of Svalbard. No specifics about the extent of his injuries was available.
Swinging high on Syttende Mai

Sixty-member Østensjø Janitsjar band to boost the volume of music during Sunday's holiday

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

If the music sounds a bit louder during this year's parade, it's not because the kids turned the volume of their band instruments up to 11. Østensjø Janitsjar, an Oslo band with about 60 musicians, will be performing during the traditional procession through Longyearbyen and at other events during the Norwegian Constitution Day holiday Sunday. They will also perform a concert at 3 p.m. Friday at Kulturhuset.

"They're coming on their own," said Anne Lise Sandvik, chairwoman of this year's local Syttende Mai committee. "They asked if they could be a part of the parade and some other activities." The band, formed in 1968, consists of amateur musicians who perform original music, as well as classical, swing and street marches.

The holiday will also feature the traditional schedule of local activities, beginning with the firing of the salute at 7 a.m. and concluding with a 7 p.m. gala at Kulturhuset where the Tyfus Statuette will be presented to "a resident whose work has kept us out of typhus." A scholarship honoring a local youth's significant contributions to Longyearbyen's culture will also be awarded.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

Syttende Mai schedule

7 a.m.: Firing of the salute.
8 a.m.: Procession w/ the Longyearbyen Storbund and Østensjø Janitsjar beginning at Svalbard Church. Stops include raising of the flag and laying of flowers at the July 22 memorial by Kristin Furu Grotting; laying of wreath at memorial at Huset by Anastasia A. Gorter; and laying of wreath at the miner's monument in the town center by Anne Lise Sandvik.
10 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Kirke.
11 a.m.: Traditional train procession through Longyearbyen, ending at the Skjæringa memorial.
11:45 a.m.: Syttende Mai presentations, songs and commemorations, including laying of the wreath at the Skjæringa memorial by Robert Hermansen; laying of flowers at the memorial by Russian Consulate General of Barentsburg Juri Grishkov; firing of the salute.
12:10 p.m.: Bus departs to Svalbardhallen.
12:15 p.m.: Family activities and food at Svalbardhallen, including music by Longyearbyen and Barentsburg youths, a performance by Sirkus Svalnardo, and music by Østensjø Janitsjar.
4 p.m.: Exhibit opening: "Rock Stories" (painting, drawing and sculpture) by Carl Martin Hansre. Music performance by Lusie Frosvoll. Galleri Svalbard.
7 p.m.: Syttende Mai gala performance, featuring presentations by the Russian Consulate, Gov. Odd Olsen Ingers and the "Tale for the Day" by Longyearbyen Culture Director Einar Bus. Awarding of Tyfus Statuette (recognizing a resident whose work has "kept us out of typhus") and Youth Cultural Stipend (recognizing a local youth's significant work and talent), Kulturhuset.
7 p.m.: Youth club open for juniors until 8:30 p.m.
9 p.m.: Youth club open for seniors until 11 p.m.

What's online

Icepeople.net provides daily updates of news about Svalbard and the world's polar regions, plus extras for articles from the print edition. Among the latest news:

• U.S. to allow Arctic oil drilling, with limits
• Antarctica's biggest ice shelf may break
• Shell wins injunction against Greenpeace
• How to mail a live polar bear via FedEx