

Royal Navy Ice Patrol Ship Awarded Freedom of the City in Cambridge

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In a rare but symbolic honour, a Royal Navy vessel has been granted the Freedom of the City by Cambridge, despite the inland city being some 50 miles from the nearest coast. HMS Protector, an ice patrol ship predominantly operating in the Antarctic, received recognition during a military fair hosted by Cambridge City Council last month.

The award acknowledges HMS Protector's significant role in scientific and environmental research, particularly in collaboration with two of Cambridge's world-leading institutions, the British Antarctic Survey and the Scott Polar Research Institute. The ship has been instrumental in supporting climate science efforts, including mapping wildlife, monitoring environmental changes, and tracking shifts in the polar waters.

Cambridge City Council expressed gratitude for the vessel's contribution to climate change efforts. Since declaring a climate emergency in 2019, the city has intensified its focus on resilience and sustainability. The council framed the award as a meaningful gesture of support for the wider Armed Forces community.

The Freedom of the City ceremony took place at Parker's Piece, a historic green space in the heart of Cambridge. The event featured a ceremonial parade involving HMS Protector's crew, alongside armed forces veterans and cadets, highlighting the city's recognition of both service and scientific partnership.

Commanding officer Captain Tom Weaver acknowledged the deepening relationship between HMS Protector and the city of Cambridge. He reaffirmed the ship's commitment to climate-related research and its ongoing collaboration with Cambridge-based scientific institutions.

This award marks the first time in over a decade that the Cambridge City Council has granted the Freedom of the City, with the previous honour awarded to the Hungarian city of Szeged in 2011. While ceremonial, the recognition reinforces the strategic and scientific relevance of HMS Protector's mission and reflects the city's alignment with global environmental goals.

