

THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE

Minutes

***Of the meeting held on Monday 5th April at 0830
in the Liberation Room, Secretariat***

***These are draft minutes until confirmed by resolution
at the next meeting of this Committee***

Present:	The Honourable E Edwards, MLA	Chair
	Nick Rendell	EO
	Craig Dockrill	CEOFC
	Louise Taylor (for FITB)	LT
	Antony Payne	EPO (arrived at 0900)
	Tim Miller (for RBA)	TM
	Marie-Paul Guillaumot	MPG
	Miss S Crofts	SC
	Mr Henry Thompson	HT
	Fiona Wallace Nannig	Secretary

Members of the Public/Press Attending: 0

PART 1

1. Apologies for absence

Members noted that apologies had been received from Mr Darren Christie, Mr Hamish Wylie (FIFCA) and the Honourable Mr William Luxton, MLA. Mr Tim Miller attended the meeting for RBA instead of Ms Sally Poncet.

2. Welcome to new member of committee

Chair welcomed Marie-Paul Guillaumot to the Committee as a community member and Mr Henry Thompson, who attended in his capacity as the Demining Programme Environment Officer. Miss Sarah Crofts of Falklands Conservation was also welcomed to the meeting as she was to present item 11.3.

3. Declarations of interest

CEOFC and LT declared interests in items 5.2, 5.3, 5.6, 8.3, 8.4 and 11.3.

4. Confirmation of Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2009 were confirmed with no amendments.

5. Matters Arising:

- 5.1 Designation of Chartres Horse Paddock – EO advised that the NNR designation had been approved by ExCo in December 2009. He added that it was being made an NNR because of the presence of a large number of endemic plant species. Chair queried whether there were any other areas awaiting designation. EO responded that Sea Lion Island and Bertha's Beach were to be designated upon the completion of management plans.

The discussion then touched upon NNRs in general and Gypsy Cove specifically. Chair suggested that it was time that non-resident visitors to Gypsy Cove be required to pay an entrance fee, which would then go into a specific fund for the management of the area. In terms of prices, Chair suggested that on cruise ship days in the summer, there be a standard charge and outside the tourist season, people could be asked to make a donation rather than a stipulated amount. She suggested that having Gypsy Cove designated as a National Park would be the best route to take. Members were broadly in agreement with the idea but acknowledged that considerably more thought would have to go into it.

EPO is to write a report on the feasibility of this proposal for the next meeting.

EPO

- 5.2 Sea Lion Island Management Plan – Members were informed by EO that this was progressing well and was due to be presented to the FIDC Board soon. If approved, the Management Plan will then be in place to allow the designation of the island as an NNR to go ahead. As one of two Ramsar important wetland sites in the Falkland Islands, Sea Lion Island is a priority island for designation.
- 5.3 National Plan of Action Trawling – EO informed Members that this document had been approved by ExCo and been translated into Korean and Spanish. It is distributed to all relevant ships by the Fisheries Dept. A Seabird Bycatch Committee is to be established in conjunction with the revised plan.
- 5.4 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) – Members were advised by the EO that the UK had signed to this international convention but that the Falklands had yet to join this ratification. This is in progress. Chair queried whether there was any opposition from other countries to the Falklands joining. EO advised that the Falklands were not yet at the stage where this could be a problem, but added that the Falklands would be signing up under the auspices of a British Overseas Territory. CEOFC reminded Committee that the Falklands were already signed up to other international agreements/conventions as a British Overseas Territory so it was not a new approach.

- 5.5 Cobbs Wren Conservation Project update – Members were informed that Sally Poncet had recently organised another highly successful “open day” on Kidney Island, which was attended by 45 people. The project itself is advancing well, and further surveying is currently being done. The draft plan for the eradication of rats off First Passage Island has been produced, and preparations for the eradication this winter are well under way.
- 5.6 Fowler/Howes change to previously approved Zebra trout project - EO explained that the applicants now wished to translocate zebra trout from Port Howard to West Lagoons instead of re-locating the zebra trout currently at the FIDC Aquaculture project. Members agreed to the amendment.

6. Scientific visits/research since last meeting

- 6.1 Members noted the list of scientific visits and research licences issued since the last meeting and approved the amendment of the licence to Falklands Conservation permitting them to deploy 65 units on Rockhoppers instead of just 30.

7. Invasives summary SAOTs representation at NZ conference

- 7.1 Members noted the report produced by the EO and agreed with TM that earwigs should also be included in the list.

8. Research license applications:

- 8.1 Hila Levy Gentoo geneology application Approved
- 8.2 Fowler/Howes Zebra trout translocation Approved
- 8.3 FC Steeple Jason albatross geolocators Approved and Members noted that this would provide the first collection of data regarding albatross movement over the winter. 30 units have been deployed this season.
- 8.4 FC Steeple and Beauchene BBA diet sampling Approved. Members noted that the research would be carried out over 3 visits to the island, lasting between 1 and 3 weeks each. Permission now needs to be sought from ExCo to land on Beauchene.

9. ESB applications

- 9.1 Hila Levy ESB application Approved with no further comment.
- 9.2 ART Sea Lion Islands management plan application This application caused some debate as CEOFC commented that approving this application would set a precedent whereby it would appear to private landowners that

they could use ESB funds to write management plans for their private land. He added that the islands in question were also not ones that were visited by tourists and so did not have any value to the economy in terms of revenue from tourism. Chair agreed adding that she would have preferred to see that the applicants would recruit someone outside of their organisation, an independent body, to do the write-up. Options were discussed but most were deemed to set the same precedent and so it was ultimately agreed to refuse the application.

9.3 BILC biosecurity application Approved with no further comment.

9.4 Members also briefly discussed the matter of funding rounds for the allocation of the ESB and agreed that it would be better to revert to the one call for applications in July, with a second round being held later, should there be any funds left.

10. External funding results

10.1 Overseas Territories Environmental Programme – FC were successful with their bid for funds for Rockhopper research but the other applications were refused on the basis of the level of funding required being too much. The unsuccessful applications were the Biodiversity Strategy Implementation Workshop Project and the Shallow marine Survey Group habitat mapping project.

10.2 Darwin Initiative – The two large Falklands-based applications submitted were unsuccessful, these being the Improving environmental decision-making GIS project and FC's Sea Lion programme project. Two side projects were approved. A cross-territory project looking at the impact of mice on seabird populations, focussing on Gough Island, South Georgia and Steeple Jason Island. A Darwin post-project on Zebra trout was also approved. This was operating in Chile previously, but will now be extended to the Falkland Islands.

11. Strategies:

11.1 South Atlantic Regional Invasive Species Strategy – Chair commented that in future, for large documents such as this, an executive summary within the agenda would suffice, with the complete document being available if requested. The paper was noted and Members agreed that earwigs should also be included.

11.2 Falkland Islands implementation plan for the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP): review of current work and a prioritised work programme for the future – Members noted the document and acknowledged that it ties in well with the National Action Plan Trawling.

11.3 Falkland Islands Oiled Wildlife Contingency Plan – The document was presented by Sarah Crofts from Falklands Conservation. She advised that it should be used in conjunction with the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan and should be joined to such plans belonging to the oil companies, if they so wished. Copies have been passed to the companies who have requested it.

11.4 The document is a live document and as such can be amended as and when required. The military are actively raising funds to build a purpose built centre in Stanley for the treatment and recuperation of oiled wildlife, specifically birds.

11.5 Chair commented that it was a very thorough and useful document. Members agreed.

12. JNCC funding hub establishment

12.1 EO explained that the JNCC had made available the sum of £100,000 for funding of invasive species and climate change related environmental projects within the South Atlantic Overseas Territories (£20,000 each). The Falklands portion has now been allocated to various small research projects within the islands. Chair commented that some research on earwigs could be funded from this fund but EO advised that all monies had been allocated. However, EPO suggested that with the £1,500 still held in the ESB (from refusing the ART application above), this could be used to facilitate an earwig study. Members agreed.

13. Borders and Southern Offshore drilling EIA

13.1 Members noted the executive summary. The EIA itself is to go to ExCo for approval once the EPO has had it externally reviewed by the Scottish Association for Marine Science.

The meeting closed at 1130

Confirmed this

day of

2010

Chairperson