

THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE

Minutes

***Of the meeting held on Tuesday 15th December 2009 at 0830 in the Meeting Room,
Gilbert House***

***These minutes 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	EOFC
	Charlene Rowlands (FIDC)	CR
	Louise Taylor (for FITB)	LT
	Anthony Payne	EPO
	Sally Poncet (for RBA)	SP
	Fiona Wallace Nannig	Secretary

Members of the Public/Press Attending: 0

1. Apologies for Absence

Members noted that apologies had been received from Mr D Christie, Mr H Wylie and Hon. Mr W Luxton.

2. Declarations of interest

LT and CD declared interests in items 4.4, 4.7, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 7.1.1, 7.1.4, 7.2.1, 7.3.1, 7.3.2 and 7.3.3.

3. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2009

The open minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2009 were confirmed with one amendment from EO. In the third paragraph of item 4.3, change the phrase “..personal view..” to “...view..” at the request of the FIDC General Manager David Waugh.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Designation of Chartres Horse Paddock (Page 1, item 4.1) – EO advised that this designation has been approved by ExCo and had been delayed formal designation due to the owner of the land being occupied with other matters. However, the owner is now keen for push the matter forward and EO is now working with the AG to achieve formal endorsement of the designation in January 2010.

4.2 Cobbs Wren Conservation Project update: eradications, surveys, Kidney Island trips (Page 1, item 4.2) – SP provided new Members with the background to the project. She advised that surveys of islands with the potential for eradication have been identified as have other islands with previously unrecorded populations of Cobb's Wren. It has also been observed that there are some islands where there are no rats but no Cobb's Wren either and it is not known why this is the case.

CR asked how long it took Cobb's Wren to return to eradicated islands. SP answered that this was not known as no re-colonisations have yet been identified. Chair suggested that a translocation project would be beneficial in populating appropriate islands with Cobb's Wren but SP warned that there needed to be more research done regarding the habitat required etc.

SP commented that all rat eradications conducted under the CWCP have been conducted with an operational plan produced prior to any activity. These plans set out the plan of eradication, how it would be done, the risks, baiting regime, awareness of other nearby islands that could lead to re-population of the target island with rats etc. It would ensure that time and money is not wasted. SP advised that the production of operational plans, particularly for large islands, would be a very useful procedure to ensure effective use of funds and improve chances of success.

EO added that last weekend saw the first of four day excursions funded by the CWCP to take members of the public to Kidney Island to observe Cobbs Wren and a pristine tussac environment. It was deemed a success by all involved and it is intended to undertake the second trips in March.

4.3 Crested Caracara shooting licence, Teal Inlet (Page 3, item 5.2) – EO advised that after the severity of the problem at Teal Inlet had been acknowledged, a licence had been issued to the owner to shoot a further 10 birds and to trap and tag others. Unfortunately, due to illness, the owner had not been able to do this and the birds have now dispersed (as they are prone to do in the summer).

EO added that Falklands Conservation are pursuing a study to investigate the interaction between raptors and

agriculture this winter.

- 4.4** Sea Lion Island Management Plan (Page 3, item 5.5) – EO informed Members that this has been moved forward by Falklands Conservation with FIDC and Strachan Visick in recent months. Two drafts have been produced and edited by a Falklands Conservation volunteer and will be continued by Falklands Conservation in 2010.

The ultimate aim is to have Sea Lion Island designated as a National Nature Reserve (NNR) once the plan has been approved and implemented. As a designated Ramsar (wetland) site and Important Bird Area, the island should be protected to the highest national level, which is not currently the case. This is only achieved by NNR designation.

CR explained that considerable work has gone into tidying up the island, removing remnants of the agriculture vehicles and a new pulley system will be going into the Gulch, thus facilitating the landing of provisions. She explained that her principle concern is that if the current manager of the lodge were to leave and a replacement contracted by the leasee, without a management plan in place, there will be no consistency in terms of management practice.

- 4.5** Fowler/Howes Zebra Trout project Page 4, item 6.3.4 – Members were reminded that this application had been approved at the last meeting but that Members had requested that it be expanded to include other river systems. EO had contacted the applicants to discuss this possibility but they advised that they would not be able to devote more time to a larger project due to work commitments.

- 4.6** Striated Caracara research licence approval (Page 6, item 8.4) – EO explained that Striated Caracara were to be studied as they both scavenge and predate prey, which is rare behaviour in raptors. It is intended the study will start in May 2010 on Carcass Island.

- 4.7** National Plan of Action Trawling (Page 6, item 9) – This document has now been approved by both this Committee and the Fisheries Committee and will now go to ExCo for approval in January 2010. CD advised that once approved, it will be translated into Spanish. EO advised Members that Hamish Wylie (FIFCA rep)

had commented in an email that the cover should have the FIG logo on it as opposed to the FC one, indicating that it is a government document. This was agreed.

- 4.8 Convention on Biological Diversity progress – EO advised that he was working with FCO to create a “road-map” by which the Falklands could ratify the Convention and thereby aspire to achieve the highest level in environmental protection for the Falkland Islands.

5. Research licence applications

- 5.1 Rockhopper blood and diet samples – Falklands Conservation – Approved. The principle of undertaking this study on Beauchene Island was also discussed. It was agreed by Members that conducting this work on Beauchene Island in conjunction with the 5 year census of penguin and albatross species is acceptable. It was noted that separate permission from Executive Assembly will be required for this research to be conducted on the island.
- 5.2 Rockhopper blood samples – Falklands Conservation and Featherlink US-led regional study - Approved
- 5.3 Exporting dead birds – Falklands Conservation and Kings College, London – Approved. Members noted that a CITES permit would be required.
- 5.4 Invasive plant control research and native plant seed banking – Richard Lewis – Approved. SP queried whether a list of the problem plants was publicly available. EO advised that Richard wanted to handle the matter sensitively and so did not want to publish the list which could then be interpreted as requiring the public to remove plants from their gardens.
- 5.5 Acoustic Monitoring of Falkland Inshore Dolphins – Grant Munro – Approved.

6. Environmental Committee community member applications

Members noted that applications had been received from the following:

Dr A Clausen - Stanley
Mrs MP Guillaumot – Dunbar Farm
Mr R McKee – Stanley

After some deliberation it was agreed that it would be beneficial to have a representative from West Falkland on the Committee and so the application from Mrs Marie-Paul Guillaumot was accepted. It was also agreed that there needed to be a representative from the Department of Natural Resources – notably representing the agriculture department. EO was tasked with securing this additional position on the Committee.

7. ESB Funding applications

7.1 Darwin Initiative Bids – submitted November 2009:

7.1.1 Falkland Islands Southern Sea Lion Programme - Noted

7.1.2 Improving biodiversity information for environmental decision-making in UKOTs - Noted

7.1.3 Protecting galaxiids [Zebra Trout] from salmonid invasions in Chile and the Falklands - Noted

7.1.4 Developing knowledge to eradicate house mice from UK OT islands - Noted

7.2 Darwin Challenge Award – submission February 2010:

7.2.1 Conservation of Falkland Islands raptors and their interaction with sheep farming - Noted

7.3 Overseas Territories Environmental Programme (OTEP) Bids – submitted November 2009:

7.3.1 An Implementation Plan for the Falkland Islands Biodiversity Strategy - Noted

7.3.2 An Action Plan for the Conservation of Falkland Islands Rockhopper Penguins - Noted

7.3.3 Shallow Marine Habitat Mapping and Classification of the Falkland Islands - Noted

EPO advised that Members had an opportunity to indicate to the FCO which of these projects was their preferred choice or priority.

It was recognised that it was important to have the biodiversity strategy implemented in order to prioritise

future research applications. It was also noted that the shallow marine habitat mapping proposal is an extension of current work and that the shallow marine group may lose momentum if they are not successful in this funding application. The rockhopper conservation plan was noted as being a strong project which will benefit in complementing on-going New Island rockhopper penguin research.

There was considerable discussion about the merits of all and it was ultimately decided that 7.3.1 (Implementation plan for biodiversity strategy) and 7.3.3 (Shallow Marine Habitat mapping) were in close contention and so were made joint firsts. 7.3.2 (the rockhopper conservation plan) was to be listed as second priority.

8. Environmental Impact Statement for BHP Billiton offshore drilling campaign

Committee noted the submission of an EIS by BHP Billiton for two wells in the south and south east of Falklands waters. EPO advised that an external review of the EIS has been undertaken by the Scottish Association of Marine Science.

The review highlighted several concerns about the EIS. Comments will be submitted to BHP Billiton to allow for amendments to be made to the documents.

EOFC commented that FC had provided formal comments to the Mineral Resources department but that their major concern was over timings of drilling and possible interactions with sea birds.

Further details will be provided in the subsequent Operational Addendum to be submitted in the New Year.

Discussion also took place concerning the possible movement of invasive species via the drill rig. This is not specifically covered in the EIS. EPO advised he has submitted a request for information on biosecurity controls from the operator via the Mineral Resources Department.

9. Invasive Species Management Course

EO advised that he had attended the course in Jersey through funding from SAISP. It had been extremely

interesting and useful and had provided a good number of contacts in the field of invasive species management.

10. Elephant Seal Research Group project update

Members noted the end of season report and were encouraged to see that the results indicate a slight population increase.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The time and date of the next meeting was confirmed as 8.30 am on Tuesday 30th March 2010, in the Liberation Room, Secretariat.

Chair advised that, subject to the members' approval, LT would replace Jake Downing on the Committee as FITB's representative. This was agreed.

PART II

12. Exclusion of Press and Public

The Chairman moved that the press and public be excluded on the grounds that the next items to be considered were exempt within the terms of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Committees (Access to Information) Ordinance 2000.

13. Confirmation of Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2009

There were no minutes to confirm.

14. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

The meeting closed at 1100

Confirmed this

day of

2009

Chairperson