

ASCENSION ISLAND GOVERNMENT

Clerk of Council's Office
Ascension Island
South Atlantic Ocean
ASCN 1ZZ



pa.admin@ascension.gov.ac

+ (247) 67000 ext 100

www.ascension.gov.ac

Informal meeting of the Ascension Island Council

1630 on Thursday 12 Nov 2020 at the Court House

MEETING SUMMARY

Present: HH Sean Burns, Administrator
Gareth Morris, Director of Resources
Councillor Andrew Ellick
Councillor Kitty George
Councillor Alan Nicholls

In attendance: Rob Cheeseman, Crown Counsel
Xander Halliwell, Head of Administrator's Office
Diane Baum, Director of Conservation and Fisheries
Siobhan Stewart, Clerk of Council
Apologies:

The Administrator welcomed all parties and thanked the Director of Conservation and Fisheries, Diane Baum, for attending to present **The Leaders' Pledge for Nature** from Lord Goldsmith and provide an update on the **Marine Protected Area (MPA)** and **Biosecurity**.

The Director of Conservation and Fisheries began by addressing the pros and cons of endorsing the principles of **The Leaders' Pledge for Nature**, noting that some of the commitments are aspirational. Councillors were in agreement for the Director of Conservation and Fisheries to draft a letter indicating a positive response for internal circulation initially for feedback, although Councillors indicated that there should be caution prior to any firm commitments being made.

The Director of Conservation and Fisheries provided an update on the **Marine Protected Area (MPA)**. Community involvement in the decision making structure continues to be a key focus, with public consultation meetings planned for next week. Included as part of the consultation will be an invitation for people to join the MPA steering group, the inshore fisheries advisory committee and the youth committee, which will guide the future management of the MPA. Councillors confirmed their commitment to the MPA, although further discussion and agreement was required around long term funding.

The Administrator was pleased to announce that Tristan da Cunha will announce 750,000km² as a marine protected area, the biggest in the South Atlantic.

The Director of Conservation and Fisheries reported that the majority of Ascension's **Biosecurity** ordinance came into force on the 02 November 2020, with some of the offences to be brought into force in the coming months to give those affected the time to adapt. The Director of Conservation and Fisheries welcomed Councillors to provide public feedback regarding the implementation and public engagement. She went on to explain that Biosecurity Officers had begun inspections, familiarising themselves with paperwork and procedures, on the M/V SLNC Magothy. There was discussion around Bio Controls, and what measures were in place to prevent secondary negative effects.

The matters arising were addressed via the actions tracker and current topics discussed were as follows:

- **Animal Welfare [pets]:** This would remain on the tracker until more information was known about the future flight schedule.
- **Capital Projects:** Councillors were encouraged to provide any suggestions they may have on future Capital Projects to the Director of Resources.
- **Illumination of Flags:** This would remain on the tracker until a further update was provided.
- **AIG switchboard:** A quotation from Sure has been received, although a business case to justify the expenditure was required.
- **Finance committee:** The current Councillors have formed the Finance Committee.
- **Public works Committee:** Membership to be addressed following a successful by-election.

- **JMC:** Councillor Nicholls provided an update later in the meeting
- **Single-use Plastics:** Policy Officer to provide an update at a later meeting

The Administrator provided an update about **coronavirus** (COVID-19) on Ascension. With a vaccine looking increasingly likely and the confirmation from UK Government that Overseas Territories will be included in the rollout, planning for the logistics of transport and administration were underway. The HoAO reported that the Falklands Islands have two active civilian COVID-19 cases, confirming that both individuals had been in quarantine since their arrival, therefore posing no health risk to the community. The HoAO added that travel restrictions in South Africa had relaxed, however, further discussion with SHG around the return of the Airlink Service and the current Titan Service was required. The HoAO went on to address two recent Public Notices regarding length of Compulsory Isolation and possible co-isolation on Ascension. Some discussion was had around the communication of notices, the decision making behind them and the mental health support available to people in isolation.

The Administrator provided an update on the **runway project**. He confirmed that things are progressing on all aspects of the project, reporting that the unloading of the M/V SLNC Magothy in Clarence Bay is expected to last for approximately 14 days. He confirmed that there is a second ship expected at the end of the month which should take another two to three days to offload, as well as 2 tugs due to arrive in the next few weeks and two 180' barges. It was confirmed that the AIG will not be involved in the unloading of the aggregate arriving in January 2021, although some support may be required with the tugs and barges. The HoAO added that there are now over 100 runway contractors on island, with an additional 43 expected to arrive on 13 November 2020, followed by the final contractor flight of the year on 23 December 2020. Additionally there was approximately 20 runway contract support staff recruited from Saint Helena expected to arrive via the Titan flight.

Councillor Nicholls had attended several Sherpa meetings in preparation for the virtual **Joint Ministerial Council** planned for the 23-26 of November 2020 and provided an update to Council. Councillor Nicholls confirmed that although Ascension Island had not been selected to provide a presentation on the MPA, Council had been asked if they would like to open on the topic of Marine Protection. Councillor Nicholls provided a brief guide on the schedule and explained that the briefing packs will be ready prior to the JMC.

The Administrator recounted that the deadline set by His Excellency the Governor for the receipt of nominations for candidates for the Island Council by-election previously scheduled for 12 November 2020 was Wednesday 28 October 2020. However, insufficient nominations were received by the Returning Officer ahead of this deadline. Therefore, in accordance with the provisions of Regulation 7(3) of the Elections Regulations, 2008, the election had been declared void. Further discussion was had around encouraging the community to participate and increase nominations for future elections. A new date for the by-election will be published in due course.

There were several items of **other business**:

- (i) **North East:** Councillor Nicholls raised concerns over the sudden lack of vegetation in the area. The Director of Conservation and Fisheries agreed to investigate and provide an update to Council.
- (ii) **Rats:** Councillor George requested an update on rodent control on the island. Councillor Ellick raised concerns over the number of rats, particularly in the north east area, adding that he had received a report of someone finding a rat in their car.
- (iii) **Employment Legislation:** Councillor Ellick requested an update on progress. The Administrator confirmed that the draft policy document is currently with employers, awaiting their feedback. It will soon be going out to public consultation, with the drafting of legislation and subsequent enactment forecast to be completed by mid-2021.
- (iv) **Street Lights in Georgetown:** Councillor George requested that the lack of street lighting in Georgetown is added to the actions tracker so that a regular update is provided to Council.

The meeting closed at 18:25

Siobhan Stewart
Clerk of Council