



Department of Conservation and Fisheries Ascension Island Government

Policy of the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Ascension

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Background

1. The UK is party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and it has been extended to Ascension. A requirement of the Convention is that parties produce a Strategy and Action Plan that describes how the Convention's aims and targets will be achieved.

Context

2. The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) has also been extended to Ascension. For species listed in Appendix I of the CMS it requires: "*strict protection on them striving towards strictly protect the animal, conserving or restoring the places they live, mitigating obstacles to migration and controlling other factors that might endanger them*". A number of turtle, shark and whale species that occur around Ascension are listed in CMS Appendix I.

Issue

3. One of the Ascension Island Government (AIG)'s six Strategic Goals for 2022-2025 is to enhance the protection of the Island's terrestrial and marine biodiversity through the implementation of a Biodiversity Action Plan and the effective management of an MPA.

Principles and Objectives

4. The AIG Conservation and Fisheries Directorate (AIGCFD) has prepared a draft Ascension Island Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (AIBSAP) to describe how AIG will fulfill its international commitments and meet its strategic goal to protect the island's biodiversity.
5. The AIBSAP states nine strategic objectives for biodiversity protection on Ascension. It summarises the existing relevant legislation and policy and proposes further areas that need to be addressed between 2022 and 2025 to ensure effective biodiversity protection.
6. A summary of management actions to be completed by 2025 are also contained within

the AIBSAP. These will primarily be undertaken by AIGCFD and form the basis for the workplans of core staff and priorities for securing external project funding. Other organisations on Ascension and community volunteers will also play a crucial role in delivering the action plan.

Application of Policy

7. The AIBSAP is a high level document setting out the direction for biodiversity protection on Ascension. More comprehensive plans have been produced, or are being developed, for particular sites or species groups. The Ascension Island Marine Protected Area Management Plan was adopted in 2021 following public consultation and a recommendation from the Ascension Island Council. Management Plans for all six of Ascension's Nature Reserves and its endemic plant species are currently in development. These plans go into greater detail than the AIBSAP, but in all cases the plans are consistent with the AIBSAP and contribute to its objectives and adhere to its principles.
8. The UK Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy is the UK Government's blueprint for supporting biodiversity protection in all 13 of its Overseas Territories (OTs). The current version of the strategy was published in 2009 and is widely acknowledged to be in need of refresh. DEFRA and JNCC are beginning the process of co-designing a new strategy with the OTs. The duration of the AIBSAP (2022-2025) was specifically designed to tie in with this initiative such that the AIBSAP would be due for review at the same time the new UK OT Biodiversity Strategy was finalised.
9. Parties to the CBD are developing a new Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. This had not been agreed at the time of publishing the AIBSAP, but the targets contained within the latest drafts of the Framework have been considered during the preparation of the AIBSAP. An addendum describing the exact mapping of Framework targets to provisions in the AIBSAP will be added once the final Framework is in place.
10. AIG has in place or is developing strategies and policies covering infrastructure, land use, waste management and safeguarding. These all interact with biodiversity protection. The AIBSAP has been designed to be consistent with existing strategies and, through dialogue across AIG, future strategies will pay regard to the objectives and principles of the AIBSAP.
11. The AIBSAP provides an overarching framework for biodiversity protection on Ascension, but further more detailed policy and plans will need to be developed and applied to implement it. These will primarily be in the form of protected area management plans, but may also include specific policies to support standalone conservation actions where these will have a significant impact on the island community or the operation of employing organisations. In all such cases, these policies will be developed with relevant stakeholders and put out to public consultation before a recommendation to adopt them is sought from the Ascension Island Council.
12. The AIBSAP contains nine Strategic Objectives:
 - i. No native species or genetically distinct populations are lost from Ascension and the size and distribution of native populations is maintained or increased.

- ii. Management plans are in place and being implemented for all protected areas.
 - iii. Habitats are improved to support self-sustaining populations of endemic species that require little or no ongoing management.
 - iv. There are no new introductions of invasive, non-native species and the impacts of those already present are reduced.
 - v. Environmental Impact Assessments are undertaken for all new strategies or developments. Approval is not granted for any activity that would lead to significant environmental degradation.
 - vi. Exploitation of natural resources is managed to ensure it is sustainable and the benefits are shared by the island community.
 - vii. Everyone living on Ascension is aware of the island's biodiversity and has opportunities to input into decision making and take practical action to protect it.
 - viii. The knowledge and value of Ascension's biodiversity are shared with the Ascension and global community.
 - ix. Ascension's obligations under multi-lateral environmental agreements are met.
13. A full copy of the AIBSAP, with a more in depth analysis of how these objectives will be pursued is attached at Annex I.