



**Formal meeting of the Ascension Island Council**  
**16:30 on Thursday 08 December 2022 at the Courthouse**

**MINUTES**

Present:	HE Nigel Phillips CBE, Governor [remotely]	Councillor Kerry Benjamin
	HH Simon Minshull, Administrator	Councillor Kyla Benjamin
	Catherine Leo, Deputy Director of Resources	Councillor Douglas Miller
	Attorney General, David Ballantyne [remotely]	Councillor Alan Nicholls
		Councillor Laura Shearer
In attendance:	Luke Atkinson, FCDO Desk Officer [remotely]	
	Carl Mackerras, Head of the Administrator's Office	
	Crown Counsel, Matthew James	
	Diane Baum, Director of Conservation and Fisheries	
	Siobhan Stewart, Clerk of Council	

**1. Welcome**

The Administrator welcomed all parties and explained who was present for those attending remotely. The Administrator welcomed HE the Governor to his first Formal meeting of the Ascension Island Council. The Governor explained that he will be visiting Ascension in January 2023, where he looks forward to meeting with everyone.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

**Decision:** The minutes of the Formal Council meeting held on 02 November 2022 were accepted with one feedback comment received. In accordance with the Council Rules these had already been agreed by Council members and published on 18 November 2022.

**3. Matters arising**

Matters arising were addressed via the actions tracker. There was only one current topic on the tracker which was discussed as follows:

**Blue Marine Endowment Fund:** The Director of Conservation and Fisheries (DoCF) explained to Council how the £2 million Blue Marine Endowment fund came about following the designation of the Marine Protected Area around Ascension, and how the intention is that the interest accrued and capital gain on the £2 million would be used to fund community projects on island. The DoCF highlighted that the funds could only be accessed following the implementation of an Inshore Fisheries Management Plan. Councillor Nicholls requested confirmation on how much money was currently in the fund. The DoCF confirmed that a figure would be provided to Councillors at a later date.

**4. Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan**

The DoCF reported that a draft Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan was prepared and sent out to public consultation in August 2022. Following this a Government Response to the Consultation was published where feedback and responses were provided in more detail. The DoCF highlighted the introduction of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA's) and the potential financial implications associated with new developments, as well as positive environmental and social impacts. The DoCF requested Councillors to consider the Strategy and Action

Plan with the hope that jointly Councillors may wish to write a foreword prior to publishing. Councillor Nicholls noted his concerns regarding the removal of structures from beaches as previously mentioned at the most recent informal meeting of the Ascension Island Council. Councillors thanked the DoCF for attending and offered their support in principle to the strategy however requested until the new year to allow full consideration and preparation of a foreword.

## 5. Inshore Fisheries Management

The Administrator introduced the topic of Inshore Fisheries and encouraged elected member to feedback any constituent feedback. The DoCF explained that the Public Consultation on the Inshore Fisheries Strategy and Policies has now begun and will continue until 12 February 2022. The DoCF reported that following a period of Public Consultation in 2021 a revised strategy, along with two implementation policies have now been drafted offering more detail around how the strategy will be applied in practice. The DoCF reported on the various methods of consultation being used, such as social media campaigns, notices in the Islander and at the pier head, meetings with employees of larger employing organisations as well as meetings offered to the Fishers Association directly. The DoCF requested that if Councillors have any other suggested methods of engagement to let her know, adding that should any members of the public prefer to meet on a 1:1 basis, she is content to do so. It is forecast that the topic of Inshore Fisheries Management will return to the agenda in March 2022 where responses from the Public Consultation will be collated and presented to Council. Councillor Nicholls recommended that methods of encouraging registration such as an event in Two Boats or a prominent place in Georgetown on a Saturday morning may be an ideal way of capturing fishers. The DoCF explained that the AIGCFD intend to hold an annual event to encourage registration and renewal of registration, registration will also be available at the Post Office, the Shipping Office and potentially arrival lounges and accommodation providers, although a two month grace period will be applied. Councillor Nicholls noted the challenges around collecting catch data from Fishers. The DoCF explained that whilst catch data would be voluntary for Registered fishers, incentives were being considered to encourage log book data submissions, such as analysis of fishers specific data. The DoCF highlighted that a variety of methods would be used to collection data, not just log books.

## 6. Runway Project Update

The Head of the Administrator’s Office gave an update on the **runway project** reporting that the project is progressing well with a completion date of around February/March 2023, although this is dependent on the bitumen container delivery expected around 15 December 2022. Schuyler have begun their demobilisation and are expected to have completed this by the end of January 2023. The resurfacing of the road from the airhead to the pier head has begun and is expected to be completed in February 2023. The HoAO confirmed that MOD are working on preparations for the return of the Airbridge following completion of the runway works, details on seating allocations and booking arrangements for AIG will be provided when more information is available. Councillor Nicholls requested reassurance that the quality of the road refurbishment was of a high standard and that consideration was being given to weather related issues such as heavy rains that would require good surface runoff. The HoAO explained that the roads are being replaced to a very high standard and are designed for heavy traffic use. The Administrator confirmed that the road is built to the same standard as the runway, with a life expectancy of 40 to 50 years. The HoAO agreed to provide detailed specifications of the road refurbishment project to Councillors.

## 7. Public Holidays

The Administrator provided a brief update and back ground to the declaring of Public Holidays on Ascension Island highlighting the schedule in the Public Holidays Ordinance where the official Public Holidays are listed. Ascension Day in 2023 falls on Thursday 18 May. The Administrator proposed that Councillors may wish to consider directing that the Ascension Day Public Holiday be observed on Friday 19 May 2023 in order to provide a more efficient working week and greater flexibility to island residents.

	Proposal	KylaB	KerryB	DM	AN	LS
1	Ascension Day to be observed on Friday 19 May 2023 instead of Thursday 18 May 2023.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The Administrator invited Councillors to formally recommend that directing that Ascension Day be observed on Friday 19 May 2023. The Administrator explained that all five Councillors present have voted in favour, HE the Governor thanked Councillors for their advice and accepted their recommendation.

#### 8. St Helena Law (Police Service Ordinance, 1975)(Disapplication) Order, 2022

The Crown Counsel explained the challenges the Royal St Helena Police Department, Ascension Island Police Detachment face with recruitment due to the stipulation within The Police Services Ordinance, 1975 that requires members of the police force to retire at the age of 60, subject to an additional 5-year continuation period. Crown Counsel recommended that secondary legislation is implemented to allow applicants over the age of 60 to work in Ascension to alleviate difficulties in recruitment.

	Proposal	KylaB	KerryB	DM	AN	LS
1	St Helena Law (Police Service Ordinance, 1975)(Disapplication) Order, 2022	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Crown Counsel invited Councillors to formally recommend that the Governor make the Order that section 10(2) and (3) are disappplied to Ascension. The Administrator explained that all five Councillors present have voted in favour, HE the Governor thanked Councillors for their advice and accepted their recommendation.

#### 9. Sexual Offences (Communications with a child) Ordinance 2022

The Crown Counsel reported that in June 2022, St Helena passed the Sexual (Communications with a Child) Offences Ordinance 2022, which outlaws a person having communication with a child for sexual gratification and any matter connected therewith or incidental thereto. The Crown Counsel explained that the Social Worker and Police has reviewed the draft Ordinance and are content that it would apply proportionately and is enforceable in Ascension.

	Proposal	KylaB	KerryB	DM	AN	LS
1	Sexual Offences (Communications with a child) Ordinance 2022	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Crown Counsel invited Councillors to formally recommend that the Sexual Offences (Communication with a child) Ordinance, 2022, is made into law. The Administrator explained that all five Councillors present have voted in favour, HE the Governor thanked Councillors for their advice and accepted their recommendation.

#### 10. Any other business

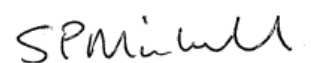
There were three items of **other business**:

- i. **Airbridge return and Accommodation:** Councillor Nicholls explained that he had received an enquiry from a constituent regarding future visitor accommodation in Ascension following the return of the airbridge. The Administrator requested that Councillor Nicholls submit the enquiry through a Councillor Enquiry Form to allow a full and thorough response.
- ii. **Joint Ministerial Council:** Councillor Nicholls explained that a number of Sherpa meetings are expected to begin in January 2023 prior to the JMC in May 2023. The Administrator explained that it is for elected members to nominate an attendee to the JMC and therefore attend the Sherpa meetings. Councillor Nicholls agreed to send his fellow Councillors dates of when the Sherpa meetings are scheduled to take place.
- iii. **Governor visit:** HE the Governor explained to Councillors that he takes great interest in Ascension Island matters and is always available to Councillors to hear their views, noting the importance and value he places on democratic legitimacy. HE the Governor thanked Councillors for their time, explaining that he looks forward to meeting them all in January 2023.

There was no further business and the meeting ended at 17:15

Siobhan Stewart  
Clerk of Council

*I certify that this is a true record of the meeting to which it relates.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Minshall'.

*Simon Minshall*

*On behalf of HE the Governor, Mr Nigel Phillips CBE*