



Formal meeting of the Ascension Island Council Public Works Committee

1700 on Wednesday 09 August 2023 at the Court House

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Alan Nicholls [Chair]
Councillor Douglas Miller
Councillor Kyla Benjamin

In attendance: Director of Operations & Facilities, David Mills
Project Manager, Frikkie Myburgh
Facilities Manager, Arndt Herrmann
Encompass Power Station Manager, Stephen Smith
Siobhan Stewart, Clerk of Council

1. Welcome

Councillor Nicholls [Chair of the Public Works Committee] welcomed all parties and thanked those in attendance for joining to provide updates on matter of interest to the Public Works Committee.

2. Approval of Minutes

Decision: The summary of the Informal Public Works Committee meeting held on 14 June 2023 was accepted and were agreed by Committee Members.

3. Update on Projects

The Project Manager [PM] provided an update on the following projects:

- i. **New Waste Water Treatment Plants in Two Boats and Georgetown:** The electrical cabling is now expected on the August FIRS, with installation forecast to take place during September and October 2023. Both electrical feeder pillars are expected to arrive on the end of October FIRS, which will then be installed in November 2023. Both Two Boats and Georgetown Plants are expected to be fully operational by the end of December 2023.
- ii. **Two Boats Play Ground:** Weekend work is ongoing, with the liquid material expected on the August FIRS with an expected completion date of the end of September 2023.
- iii. **Hydroponics (Installation of solar power and water supply):** The PM confirmed that the installation of solar power at the Hydroponics site is now near completion. It is forecast that by the end of September 2023 Hydroponics will be powered solely by solar power and by the end of December 2023 will be supplied solely by filtered water from the Two Boats effluent water site. This is expected to show significant savings in the latter part of this financial year.
- iv. **Dental surgery refurbishments:** The Dental Surgery will be refurbished during the month of September 2023, whilst there is likely to be some interruption to normal clinic services for a few weeks, emergency treatment will still be available to patients in a temporary clinic.
- v. **Two Boats school refurbishments:** The internal painting of Two Boats School is forecast to be completed by the end of the school summer holidays.
- vi. **Georgetown Hospital & The Residency:** Invitations to tender for the refurbishment of both the Georgetown Hospital and the Residency will go out on 11 August 2023 and will close on 15 September 2023.

- vii. **Georgetown swimming pool replacement:** The new design specifications are expected soon for both the main Georgetown swimming pool and the baby pool next to it. The proposal is expected to recommend a treatment of lining the inside of the pool with concrete, adding another 30 years of life to the structure.
- viii. **Roof replacement for MEP building:** Material for the roof replacement is on island and scaffolding has been erected, following recruitment of a Roofer, the project will begin.
- ix. **Future Tenders:** Invitations to tender will go out later this year for Bedford House, Two Boats painting project and the MUGA installation in Georgetown.
- x. **English Bay BBQ Area:** The FM confirmed that whilst some initial repairs have begun at the English Bay BBQ area further repairs are forecast in the coming months, such as better shading and rebuilding of the BBQ area with improved materials to avoid cracking of the cement.

Councillor Nicholls thanked the PM for attending Council and for providing such a detailed update.

4. Report on operations/activities

The Director of Operations and Facilities [DoOF] provided an update and overview of activities to the Public Works Committee by way of a power point presentation. The following updates were provided:

- i. **Road Markings:** Works were ongoing in improving the road markings and verges on the NASA straight road.
- ii. **Backloading:** AIG have recently been supporting with the backloading of the runway project equipment on to the MV Ocean Grand. This is now completed and the ship has departed.
- iii. **Public Updates:** Updates continue to be provided to the public via a monthly Public Notice.
- iv. **Lighting:** Repairs have recently been underway in two boats to resolve lighting issues at both the MUGA and by JAMS. These repairs have been in conjunction with Encompass and are now complete.
- v. **Water Tanks:** AIG have been working with UK based colleagues on key projects funded by FCDO, such as ordering replacement water tanks for Green Mountain.
- vi. **World Drowning Prevention Day:** Sea and Land Rescue have been carrying out presentations to employing organisations in support of World Drowning Prevention Day that was held on 25 July 2023.
- vii. **Health and Safety:** AIG have recently welcomed Wayne Benjamin the new Health and Safety Officer who arrived in July 2023.
- viii. **Customer Service:** Training has taken place to strengthen, already very good, customer service values across the directorate.
- ix. **Road Safety:** Public views have been sought in relation to a new pedestrian crossing and additional road signage in Two Boats.

The DoOF provided the following updates of projects prioritised during the month of August 2023:

- i. **Two Boats Play Park:** Works will take place in August to continue expanding Two Boats Play area which is forecast to be completed in September 2023.
- ii. **Waste water plants:** Work is ongoing at the two new Waste Water Treatment Plants.
- iii. **Improving of road markings:** Work will continue to improve road markings across the island road network.
- iv. **Marty Wade Track:** The first stage in repairing the Marty Wade track will begin, this will allow an assessment to be made in relation to repairing the remaining section of the track.
- v. **English Bay BBQ Area:** Work is ongoing to improve this area for the public.

The DoOF provided an overview of the following ongoing FCDO funded projects:

- i. **Replacement Barge:** The Marine Barge has been procured and is expected to arrive in Ascension in early 2024.

- ii. **Green Mountain Water Tanks:** Plans to replace the failing water tanks on Green Mountain is underway.
- iii. **Flood Prevention:** Flood control equipment is being identified to deploy in residential areas when needed.
- iv. **Quad Bike:** The Sea and Land Rescue Service have been awarded funding for a quad bike to assist with land-based rescues. Discussion was had regarding the suitability of the vehicle and its other potential functions, such as towing.
- v. **Future Housing:** AIG are currently seeking consultants to carry out a study for the best future form of housing for Ascension

The DoOF provided the following updates of the Capital Funded projects approved by Council earlier in the year.

- i. **English Bay Buoy, Water Jetting Units and Wood dust extraction system:** Procured and expected in late August 2023.
- ii. **Tractor and Trailers Units & Bradbury Lifts for MT:** Procured and expected to arrive in October 2023.
- iii. **Road Sweeper:** Procured and expected to arrive in April 2024.
- iv. **VHF Repeater:** Procurement is on hold pending a query.

The DoOF explained that a specialised contractor will be visiting Ascension in October 2023 to survey the islands road network. The DoOF confirmed that this is likely to highlight Hogans Bypass and the Road connecting Two Boats to Georgetown, via Needles Road as priorities. It was agreed that at the next meeting of the Public Works Committee in October, Capital bids for 2024/2025 financial year will be discussed with suggestions welcomed from Committee Members.

5. Red Lion Archway

The FM explained that the archway opposite the Red Lion on Green Mountain is now scheduled for restoration following an award of Capital Funding. The archway has recently been deconstructed to prevent an unplanned collapse and following further investigation additional deterioration to the buttresses on either side of the arch has been identified. The FM requested Committee Members feedback and views on the recommendation that the width of the arch be increased by a further 1.5 meters, allowing emergency services and maintenance vehicles to pass through safely, highlighting the potential need to access Garden Cottage in an emergency or for refurbishment. It was also suggested that a bespoke iron gate be put in situ to prevent sheep and non-authorized vehicles entering. Councillor Nicholls requested clarity on whether the Heritage Society's guidance has been sought due to the age of the structure. The FM confirmed that the Heritage Society were content with the proposed widening of the arch. The DoOF declared a conflict of interest due to being a member of the Heritage Society. Discussion was had regarding the need for Garden Cottage to be refurbished.

Councillor Nicholls agreed to make a recommendation on behalf of the Public Works Committee to the Island Council that the improvement set out by the FM be endorsed.

6. Briefing on FCDO funded study into future accommodation

The DoOF explained that via the FCDO's International Programme, a study is being funded to identify the best form of future housing for Ascension. Due to the AIG's aging housing stock a study was identified as necessary to identify the most cost-effective form of future housing that is both suitable for persons to live in and more energy/resource efficient. It was noted that the current funding only covers the study itself. The costs of providing any future housing will have to be identified at a future date. It is anticipated that a consultant will be appointed in October 2023 and that the final consultancy report will be received by April 2024.

7. Electrical Power Outages

Councillor Nicholls expressed concerns regarding the recent trend of increased, unscheduled power outages affecting the community of Ascension. Councillor Nicholls explained that there has been reports of damage to people's private electrical equipment due to these outages and requested that the Encompass Power Station Manager [EPSM] offer some advice as to why unexpected power outages have increased and what mitigations are being taken to avoid these outages.

The EPSM confirmed that during his 3 ½ year in Ascension, he too has recognised the increase in power outages more recently and offered reassurance that everything is being done to avoid unscheduled power outages where possible, not only to avoid interruption to customers, but also to avoid additional stress to cables and switchgear.

The EPSM explained that in June 2022 a replacement digital load shed panel was purchased and installed to rectify an existing issue, however it has become apparent that the new load shed panel is overly sensitive to fluctuations in the load, resulting in unscheduled outages on the small island network, averaging at least one unscheduled power outage per month. Plans are underway for an authorised engineer to investigate the sensitivity of the load shed panel with the hopes of moving from a three second trip setting to a more balanced three and a half or four second setting.

The EPSM explained that small island networks are often susceptible to outages due to the instability of such low loads, noting that Ascension only demands a 600kW daily load. Both voltage and frequency are monitored closely and whilst the voltage does not tend to cause any issues remaining steady at 11KV, the load shed panel monitors frequency fluctuations both up and down, which are generally caused by any small variations in the island grid. This can also be caused by transmissions, specifically during the on, off, silence, noise and when transmitting for the British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC]. To mitigate fluctuations during transmission two engines are run to provide additional resilience in the system. However, where there is a large swing, typically when the frequency is on a downward trend, the load shed panel will activate and begin to preserve power for the primary function of transmitting by shutting down the first of four sections on the grid in order of priority.

The EPSM provided an overview of four sections within the grid network and the order of priority within.

1. The RAF
2. The Island (Two Boats and Georgetown)
3. BBC Transmitter Site (feeder 2)
4. BBC Transmitter Site (feeder 1)

It is hoped that by one section at time being shut down that stabilisation of the grid can be established and everything can be brought back on line as quickly as possible, typically taking between four to 15 minutes. The EPSM assured Committee members that every effort is taken to restore the island network as quickly as possible.

The EPSM explained that whilst additional engines could be running, their needs to be a balance of efficient fuel usage whilst making a conscious effort to push towards renewable energy. The EPSM reported that battery storage is scheduled to arrive in June 2024 following a recent feasibility study, with a 50% reduction in fuel consumption anticipated. Following the arrival of the battery storage, a period of commissioning is expected to take an unknown amount of time.

Following the commissioning of the battery storage it is anticipated that during non-transmission times the engines will not need to be run, with batteries and wind being able to support the island grid network independently. Discussion was had regarding the amount of battery storage required, the EPSM projected a 1.0MW to 1.5MW storage capacity within the battery bank, with the reduction of only one engine needing to be run. It is hoped that with the batteries being faster acting than the engines, unscheduled power outages

will be reduced, resulting in less interruptions to customers.

Discussion was had in relation to the Ricardo Report that was recently published exploring renewable options for Ascension as a whole. The Ricardo Report is a scoping study into increasing renewable energy on island across multiple employing organisation.

Discussion was had regarding some of the older equipment at the power station and the requirement for certain equipment to remain energised.

Councillor Nicholls noted that in previous years unscheduled power outages were substantially fewer than today and requested a short overview on the significant change at the Power Station that has caused this increase. The EPSM reported of a reduction in both transmissions and island load need, resulting in a lack of justification to run two engines in tandem, hence there is now only one engine run at a time with a focus on fuel efficiencies. Councillor Nicholls asked whether one engine was sufficient to support a transmission. The EPSM confirmed that the one engine could support all four transmitters simultaneously, however given the BBC's need for resiliency, two engines are currently run during transmissions.

Councillor Nicholls thanked the EPSM for attending and providing such a detailed overview to Committee members.

8. Any other Business

There were two items of other business.

- i. **Line Marking:** Councillor Miller requested an update on the line marking on the NASA Straight Road. The DoOF explained that the line marking machine is currently under repair, however following repairs, the line marking will resume.
- ii. **Pot Holes:** Councillor Nicholls requested details of the material currently being used to fill potholes. The PM explained that Macadam is currently being used, which avoids the use of scattering cinders on the road, although it was noted that this material is more expensive. Councillor's expressed the Committees appreciation for the use of this material.

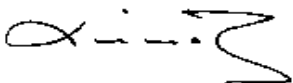
9. Proposed date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next informal meeting of the Ascension Island Council Public Works Committee would take place on Wednesday 04 October 2023.

There was no further business and the meeting ended at 18:00

Siobhan Stewart
Clerk of Council

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



*Councillor Alan Nicholls
Chair of the Public Works Committee*