



## **Formal meeting of the Ascension Island Council Public Works Committee**

**1700 on Tuesday 05 December 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  
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 04 October 2023 was accepted and were agreed by Committee Members.

#### **3. 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. Handrails at pierhead steps:** New handrails have recently been installed at the pierhead steps to improve pier safety.
- ii. Marty Wade Track:** Repairs have now been completed on the Marty Wade track following extreme flood damage in the early part of 2023.
- iii. Two Boats School:** The Two Boats School refurbishment project remains ongoing.
- iv. FCDO/MOD Officials visit:** AIG recently hosted a tour and briefing on AIG operations during a visit from FCDO and MoD Officials in November 2023.
- v. Mexican Thorn Clearing:** Efforts have recently been focused on clearing areas of Mexican Thorn in Georgetown, primarily between the cemetery and Georgetown Hospital area.
- vi. Waste water treatment plant:** Significant progress continues to be made at the Georgetown waste water treatment plant site.
- vii. Road Safety:** Public views have been sought in relation to suggested road safety suggestion and additional road signage in Two Boats.

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, with the tanks having arrived on the most recent FIRS in November 2023. Installation is forecast for early 2024.

- iii. **Flood Prevention:** Following successful testing of flood control barriers, more barriers will be ordered to arrive on the February FIRS ready for deployment when needed.
- iv. **Quad Bike:** The Sea and Land Rescue Service quad bike has now arrived on island to assist with land-based rescues. The quad bike is currently undergoing minor modifications and a Public Notice will be issued soon announcing its commission.

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

- i. **English Bay Buoy:** The Buoy was procured and has now been deployed at English Bay.
- ii. **Wood dust Extraction system:** Procured and have arrived on Island.
- iii. **Tractor and Trailers Units & Bradbury Lifts for MT:** Procured and have arrived on Island.
- iv. **Road Sweeper:** Procured and expected to arrive in early 2024.
- v. **VHF Repeater:** Procurement is on hold pending a query.

The DoOF provided the following updates in relation to road maintenance across the island:

- i. **Line marking:** Line marking on the NASA straight road is expected to commence soon, road closures are to be expected to allow the works to be carried out safely.
- ii. **Chip Spreader:** Two chip spreaders that will assist with road maintenance have arrived on the November FIRS. Clarity was requested as to where the funding came from for this equipment. The PM confirmed that funding was allocated from within the Green Mountain Road refurbishment project.
- iii. **Road Network:** The DoOF explained that a specialised contractor is forecast to be visiting Ascension in late January 2024 to survey the islands road network.

The DoOF provided the following updates of projects prioritised during the months of December 2023, January 2024 and February 2024:

- i. **Two Boats School:** Completion of Two Boats School refurbishment project.
- ii. **Flood Prevention:** Ordering of flood barriers for the February FIRS.
- iii. **Waste water plants:** Work is ongoing at the two new waste water treatment plants.
- iv. **Improving of road markings:** Work will continue to improve road markings across the island road network.
- v. **The Residency and Georgetown Hospital:** The Residency and Georgetown Hospital refurbishments works are being organised to start in February 2024.
- vi. **Two Boats Play Park:** Works are ongoing to expand Two Boats Play area which is forecast to be completed by the end of December 2023.

Councillor Alan Nicholls noted the advanced stage that the Georgetown waste water treatment plant appears to be at and requested further information on the above ground structures. The PM explained the smaller of the two white containers house the power unit for the treatment plant, with the larger container housing the water filtration processing unit. Councillor Miller asked whether the processing plant contains a biodigester, the PM confirmed that this style of waste water treatment plant does not, however the end product effluent water is expected to be of a very clean standard that will ultimately be used by the AIG hydroponics site.

The PM reported that following the recent FCDO/MoD Officials visit there was some interest as to how these new AIG waste water treatments plants could have been incorporated with MoD infrastructure on Travellers Hill, it was confirmed that systems like this could be compatible with each other and could potentially eliminate a duplication of services on island.

#### 4. Supplemental Funding from FCDO

The DoOF explained that all British Overseas Territories were recently given the opportunity to bid for additional projects for the year ending 31 March 2024 due to an underspend on another project in one of the other territories. A key factor for the bids were that they had to relate to projects where the work could be done, or the items ordered and paid for, before 31 March 2024. AIG were successful in securing funding worth £200,000 for the following projects.

- i. **Fire Safety:** An updated AIG Fire Risk Assessment and replacement of out of date fire safety equipment, which will be ordered soon, with an expected arrival date of February 2024.
- ii. **Road Line Marker:** A new road line marker has been ordered to replace the current one which is unreliable and is expected to arrive in February 2024.
- iii. **Glass Crusher:** A glass crusher which will convert bottles into particles that can be used as building materials will be ordered shortly, with an expected arrival date on May 2024. Councillor Nicholls highlighted that AIG already has a glass crusher, the DoOF explained that the current glass crusher does not break the glass down into small enough particles to be able to reuse in building materials, hence the purchase of a more suitable one.
- iv. **Safety Buoy:** A second life safety buoy, identical to the current one at English Bay has been ordered, with an expected arrival date of May 2024. Councillor Nicholls requested more detail on the procurement process of the safety buoy. DM explained that the buoy is bespoke to Ascension and has been created with a unique pivot shackle to prevent entanglement in rough seas. The DoOF confirmed that the buoy can be deployed anywhere around the inshore coast of Ascension where risk of drowning is most likely.

#### 5. 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 cables have now arrived on island, with the electrical feeder pillars in the final stages of procurement.
- ii. **Two Boats Play Ground:** Installation of the final structure is near completion. The flooring is expected to be completed by the end of December 2023, utilising unused materials originally allocated for the Two Boats School playground.
- iii. **Hydroponics (Installation of solar power and water supply):** The PM confirmed that the installation of solar panels at the Hydroponics site has been completed, with the final transfer of power supply to take place in the coming months.
- iv. **English Bay BBQ Area:** The PM confirmed that the top BBQ area nearest the road was now complete, with the lower BBQ area to be completed early 2024.
- v. **Two Boats school refurbishments:** The painting of Two Boats School has now been completed, with only the drainage remaining that is scheduled for January 2024.
- vi. **Cattle Grids:** Councillor Nicolls conveyed concerns from constituents living in Two Boats regarding the incomplete works along the edge of the cattle grid leading from Two Boats Village in the direction of Travellers Hill. Pedestrian traffic is left with no option but to walk over the cattle grid, which can be particularly dangerous for small children given the gaps. The PM explained that fault finding on an underground power line is ongoing, once Encompass complete their investigation and repairs the area will be back filled and the pedestrian path running along side the cattle grid will be accessible once again. Councillor Nicholls requested that these works be completed as soon as possible. The DoOF confirmed that AIG engage with Encompass on a monthly basis and will highlight this at their next meeting.
- vii. **Marty Wade Track:** Repairs have now been completed on the Marty Wade Track and the track is now open to pedestrian traffic and pre-approved vehicles beyond the gate.
- viii. **Motel Power Cable Replacement:** Progress of works is pending approved excavation permits.
- ix. **Fuel Station Hydrant:** Progress of works is pending approved excavation permits. Councillor Nicholls requested clarity on who issues the excavation permits. The PM explained that prior to

- excavation permission must be sought from Sure to confirm there are no telephone lines, and from Encompass in relation to power and water lines.
- x. **Georgetown swimming pool replacement:** The contractor is currently on island working for another organisation, however the sourcing of materials has delayed any progress on this project.
  - xi. **Roof replacement for MEP building:** Materials for the roof replacement is on island and scaffolding has been erected, due to conflicting priorities this project has not yet begun.
  - xii. **Green Mountain Road improvements:** Resurfacing of the Green Mountain Road will begin in early 2024, with the worst areas being addressed first. Replacement road barriers are forecast to arrive on the February 2024 FIRS and will be installed thereafter. Councillor Nicholls noted that the vegetation is once again is encroaching onto the already limited road space. The PM acknowledged this and agreed that regular maintenance was required.
  - xiii. **Green Mountain Water Tanks:** Replacement water tanks have been procured and will be installed in February 2024.
  - xiv. **Georgetown Hospital & The Residency:** The successful bid was made by Mark Corker who will begin these works in February 2024.
  - xv. **Dental surgery refurbishments:** The Dental Surgery refurbished has been delayed due to circumstances out side AIG's control. The flooring will now arrive in time for the works to begin in January 2024.
  - xvi. **Georgetown MUGA Installation:** The contractor will revisit Ascension for two to three weeks in March 2024 to complete this project.
  - xvii. **Incinerator Site:** The two concrete slabs to be installed at the incinerator site are currently being costed.
  - xviii. **Bedford House Refurbishment:** Due to limited accommodation available for AIG contractors, this project is delayed.
  - xix. **Painting of AIG properties in Two Boats village:** Due to limited accommodation available for AIG contractors, this project is delayed. Discussion was had regarding the shortage of accommodation and potential solutions.
  - xx. **Removal of Green Mountain archway:** Following a recent visit from a landslide specialist it was recommended that the arch after the Green Mountain allotments be removed. Before any removal plans begin, further specialist guidance will be sought. A second visit from the landslide consultants is hoped to take place soon when the Marty Wade track can also be assessed for risk.
  - xxi. **Resurfacing of the Boat Yard:** A capital bid for the resurfacing of the boatyard and installation of metered power/electricity will be bid for in the 2024/2025 budget setting process to the Finance Committee.
  - xxii. **Cattle Grids Replacement:** The cattle grid leading out of Two Boats, in the direction of Georgetown will be replaced when the resurfacing of the road is scheduled, to minimalise interruption to commuters.
  - xxiii. **Mars Block Refurbishment gabions:** Prior to beginning any works on the Mars Block gabions, consultation with the landslide consultants will take place to assess the risk.

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

## 6. AIG Guest House

The DoOF reported that in the formal meeting of the Ascension Island Council held on 09 November 2023, the Administrator advised that the AIG Guest house topic will be addressed in the Public Works Committee. The DoOF explained that the Operations and Facilities Directorate does not have the remit to decide on the future of the AIG Guest House, therefore the update provided is limited to the cost of a possible solution to improve the buildings flexibility and state of repair.

An estimate of £200,000 was provided to convert the rooms into self-catering accommodations, offering flexibility to both short term visitors and more long-term occupants. The DoOF noted that this estimate does not include furniture and other non-fixed contents. Councillor Nicholls asked whether there were any

structural concerns and whether a structural assessment had been completed recently. The DoOF confirmed that a structural assessment of the AIG Guest House was conducted in 2020 where it was confirmed that the building was structurally sound; confirming that most of the works required are cosmetic. Councillor Nicholls requested clarity on what the future of the AIG Guest House looked like, and whether it was being considered for the private sector as a hotel or whether AIG were intending to keep it as an AIG asset as it is currently. The DoOF suggested this question be redirected as a decision on the future use of the AIG Guest House was not within the scope of the Operations and Facilities Directorate.

## **7. Waste Management Strategy Update**

The DoOF provided an update to Councillors on AIG's waste management strategy, noting several improvements in recent months. AIG have invested in specialised training of its employees on the operating and management of the incinerator unit, which has directly resulted in increased reliability of the unit itself and improved efficiencies at the incinerator site. The DoOF reported that the incinerator's down time has been significantly reduced and it is now fuelled by waste oil in stage two of each burn, highlighting that using waste oil in this way benefits in helping to use what otherwise would be a waste product. The DoOF confirmed that Mitie have the option to send their waste for processing to the AIG incinerator to reduce open pit burning in Ascension, the transition is expected to happen in early 2024. An already established process of sending old tyres to St Helena for upcycling has been working well and will continue, subject to ongoing support from the shipping company operating the Ascension to St Helena leg. The DoOF explained that discussions on free shipping of recyclable materials to the UK were ongoing.

Councillor Nicholls requested details on what is done with cans that are placed in the separate recycling bin. The DoOF confirmed that they are crushed approximately once every quarter, or once a sufficient level of cans has been collected. The DoOF invited Committee Members to visit the AIG waste management site on a preorganised tour. Committee members were keen to do this.

Councillor Nicholls requested confirmation on what happens with unused/broken white goods such as chest freezers and washing machines. The DoOF explained that AIG are continuing to explore routes off the island for white goods.

Councillor Nicholls asked whether the USAF Base were intending to use the AIG incinerator also. The DoOF confirmed that whilst there is a willingness to work together, there will always be a degree of separation to some extent.

## **8. Update on Green Mountain Archway Repair Project**

The DoOF explained that at a formal meeting of the Ascension Island Council on 17 August 2023, the Operations and Facilities Directorate were instructed to look in detail as to what consents were required for the proposed works to the Green Mountain archway leading from the Red Lion in the direction of Garden Cottage. Upon investigation it was identified that sufficiently sized motor vehicles can navigate the arch already in order to reasonably satisfy AIG's vehicular access requirements. This subsequent finding is key as the primary reasoning for widening the arch was to enable motor vehicle access. In view of these points, the project to revise the arch is withdrawn. Councillor Nicholls highlighted that in the event of a fire at Garden Cottage, a fire truck would not be able to access the cottage through the arch. The DoOF explained that the mountain road would not allow for a long wheel base fire truck to navigate anyway.

Further conversation was had regarding the Historical interest in the arch. Councillor Nicholls conveyed his surprise that the Heritage Society were so quick to agree to the proposed removal of the arch. The DoOF declared a conflict of interest as a member of the Heritage Society. The DoOF explained that whilst refurbishing of Garden Cottage will take place soon, as the majority of works are cosmetic rather than structural, it is expected that existing vehicle access will suffice without removing or widening the arch. Councillor Nicholls recommended that a report is provided back to the full Council reporting on the changes.

## 9. Any other Business

There were two items of other business.

- i. **Hospital Hill:** Councillor Miller conveyed concerns regarding overgrown vegetation on Hospital Hill between Two Boats and Travellers Hill which is forcing vehicles to ride the central line on an already narrow road for two-way traffic. The DoOF agreed to take this forward.
- ii. **Manhole in Georgetown:** Councillor Nicholls requested clarity on what works appear to be taking place around a manhole cover when entering Georgetown from Needles. The DoOF explained that this is an Encompass manhole and agreed to raise it at his next meeting with Encompass.

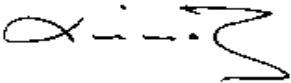
## 9. Proposed date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next informal meeting of the Ascension Island Council Public Works Committee would take place on Wednesday 07 February 2024, followed by a formal meeting on Tuesday 19 March 2024.

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*