



The Ascension Island Government

Environmental and Non-Environmental Activity Permitting Policy

Guidance Notes



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AIMS

The Ascension Island Government (AIG) is committed to supporting activities including research, commercial filming, and photography that informs local environmental decision-making, enhances understanding of the Island's natural and physical environments, and contributes to broader research objectives.

Ascension Island has a rich history of scientific exploration, and with an increase of interest in Ascension Island as a venue for activities including research, commercial filming and photography, AIG intends all organised activities to be conducted within a coordinated framework that prevents duplication, minimises environmental impact, and ensures that the knowledge generated is captured for the benefit of the Island, its community and wildlife. The **Ascension Island Environmental and Non-Environmental Activity Permitting Policy** aims to provide a framework for conducting environmental or non-environmental activities, including commercial photography, filming, and research.

This permitting policy provides practical advice and outlines the process for applying for the correct permit according to activities, according to how they will engage with Ascension's environment:

- **Environmental Activity Permit**
- **Non-Environmental Activity Permit**

SCOPE

The **Ascension Island Environmental and Non-environmental Activity Permitting Policy** covers permitting for external organisations or individuals to conduct on-island activities including commercial photography, filming and research on all components of the natural and physical environment within the 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone, including biodiversity, geology, atmosphere and oceans, as well as aspects of the human environment such as water and air quality, waste management and pollution. It also covers prospecting or bioprospecting, where the primary aim is to develop commercial opportunities for any external organisation. The policy also covers commercial filming and photography. Permitting is not required for non-commercial (i.e. not-for-profit) filming or photography. Visitors taking photos or videos for personal use do not require a permit.

Definitions:

Research:

Any structured activity undertaken to collect data, conduct experiments, undertake monitoring, or evaluate environmental, cultural, social, or physical conditions. Includes academic, government, and private-sector studies.

Commercial Filming:

The recording of motion images for sale, promotion, broadcast, advertising, monetised online content, or other profit-driven purposes, regardless of crew size or production scale.

Commercial Photography:

Still photography produced for commercial sale, advertising, promotional use, product marketing, or any activity intended to generate revenue or commercial exposure.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Environmental Activity Permit (EAP)

Any external individual or organisation wishing to undertake environmental-related activities, including research, commercial filming, or photography on the physical, natural or human environment on Ascension Island must obtain a valid **EAP** before travelling to the island. Any activity that involves harassing, capturing, harming, or killing a Protected Species as defined under the Wildlife Protection Ordinance, 2013, will require a **Protected Wildlife Activity License** that can be applied for via Section D of the **EAP** application form.

The EAP programme is coordinated by AIG Conservation and Fisheries Directorate (AIGCFD), who will review applications and return a decision to the applicant within 2 weeks of submission. AIGCFD may approve, request amendments to, or decline environmental activity proposals and must explain the reasons for its decision in its response to the applicant. Reasons for declining an application may include an excessive risk of damage to protected wildlife or habitats, or the failure of the applicant to adhere to the terms of previous EAPs. Appeals may be submitted to the Administrator, who holds the final say over permitting access. However, individuals and organisations are encouraged to contact AIGCFD (conservationenquiries@ascension.gov.ac) at an early stage in project planning to prevent any unforeseen problems.

Non-Environmental Activity Permit (NEAP)

Any external individual or organisation wishing to undertake non-environmental-related activities on Ascension Island must obtain a valid **Non-Environmental Activity Permit (NEAP)** before arrival.

The NEAP process is assessed directly by the AIG Administrator's office. Decisions will be returned to an applicant within 2 weeks of submission. Individuals and organisations intending to obtain a NEAP are advised to contact the AIG Administrator's Office (aigenquiries@ascension.gov.ac) at an early stage in project planning to prevent any unforeseen problems.

Fees

Environmental Activity Permit (EAP) Fee	£250.00
Non-Environmental Activity Permit (EAP) Fee	£250.00
Conservation staff time (compulsory for any activity within protected areas ¹).	Rate to be determined by AIGCFD, and estimated during the initial application stage.

¹ Protected areas include: Green Mountain National Park, Long Beach Nature Reserve, South West Bay Nature Reserve, North East Coast Nature Reserve, Letterbox Peninsula Nature Reserve, Mars Bay Nature Reserve, Waterside Fairs Nature Reserve, South Coast Nature Reserve, Hummock Point Nature Reserve, Bat Cave Nature Reserve, Boatswain Bird Island Sanctuary, Turtle Ponds Area of Historical Interest

Entry Visa

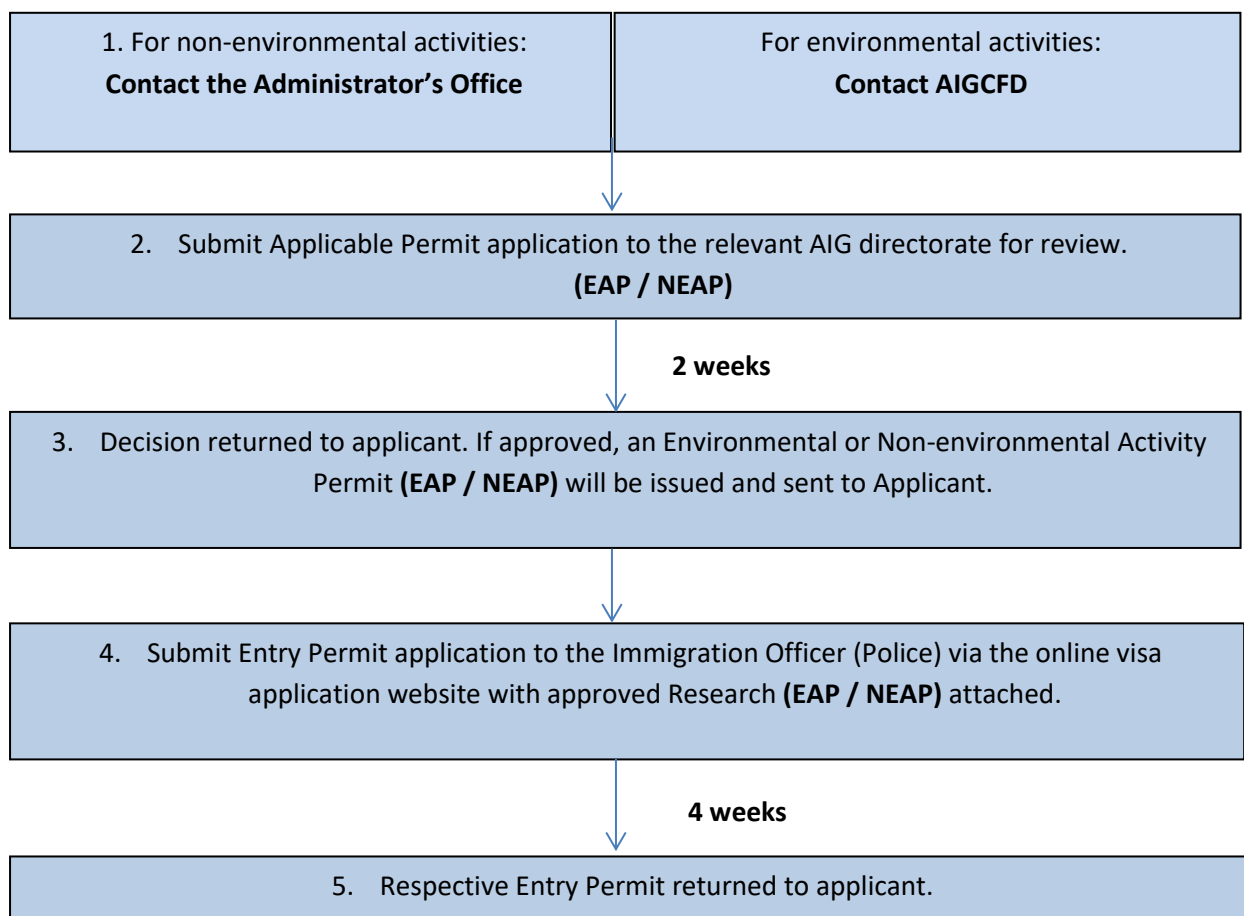
In addition, the external individual or organisation must also obtain an entry permit to travel to Ascension, in accordance with the Entry Control Ordinance, 2017. Applicants intending to conduct commercial photography or filming must apply for a **Business Visitor Entry Permit**, whereas researchers must apply for a **Scientific/Research Visitor Entry Permit**.

Subject to approval, the applicant must then submit their permit (**NEAP, EAP**) along with their respective completed Visa Application through the standard Ascension Island Government entry control system. For more information please visit: <https://www.ascension-visas.com/> Visa applications must be received at least 4 weeks prior to the proposed arrival date to enable them to be processed and returned to the applicant.

Application Forms

Application forms can be obtained from the [AIG website](#) or by emailing the AIGCFD (conservationenquiries@ascension.gov.ac) for an EAP, or the AIG Administrator's office (aig.enquiries@ascension.gov.ac) for a NEAP. Applications for activities that interact with the environment and are not accompanied by a valid EAP will not be processed. The fees for individuals entering Ascension Island under an EAP / NEAP cannot be waived without written permission from the Director of AIGCFD or the Administrator.

PROCESS FOR APPLYING:





6. Once on the island, applicant should visit the relevant AIG directorate (Administrator's office or AIGCFD) in Georgetown to have their permit stamped and validated.

B. APPLICANT DETAILS.

Sections 1-4: Please provide the name, position, affiliation and contact details of the lead applicant. This person will be responsible for ensuring that the agreed programme of activity is adhered to and that all conditions and reporting obligations of the licence agreement are met.

Section 5: Please also provide the names and affiliations of any collaborators involved in the proposed activity. This should include any members of the team visiting Ascension Island, any local partners, and key external collaborators involved in processing or analysing samples collected during fieldwork.

C. DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

Section 2: These should be the dates of arrival on and departure from Ascension Island. The permit (EAP / NEAP) is valid for one visit only (maximum duration of 3 months under a Scientific Visitor Entry Permit, but with possibility for extension). The AIGCFD or Administrator's Office may waive additional permitting fees for subsequent visits for the same project, at their own discretion. Applicants must receive written confirmation of any waived permitting fees directly by the AIGCFD. Applications for multiple or on-going permits at the initial stage may not be considered because aims and methodology may change over time.

Section 3: Ascension Island has active military bases and as such there are sensitivities regarding access to some areas. The Island also has nature reserves, national parks and nature sanctuaries with restrictions on the activities that can take place within them. To avoid delays and disappointments, applicants should therefore provide a full list of locations or a map indicating prospective sites where they intend to work so that access can be cleared with relevant authorities. Any proposals that involve activities on or close to sensitive military sites or installations require clearance from the Commander of the Ascension Island Base (CAIB) and US Installation Commander during the assessment process.

Section 4: Applications to conduct activities on Ascension Island are assessed based on potential environmental impacts rather than on scientific merit and academic rigour. Intended activity outlines should therefore provide only enough background to explain why the activity is needed and what questions will be addressed, and focus more on the methodology that will be used. Proposals that duplicate previous work are unlikely to be approved, particularly where the proposed activities involve harm to protected wildlife or habitats.

Section 5: AIG is committed to ensuring that on-island activity contributes to enhanced environmental management on Ascension Island wherever possible. However, the Government recognises that some activities may not benefit the Island directly, but may contribute to broader goals and global datasets. Such activities are encouraged, provided that it is not to the detriment of the island. Applications will not be rejected based on a lack of local impacts, but we do ask that individuals and organisations

highlight any practical ways in which the outcomes of their proposed activities can benefit the local environment.

Section 6: The Administrator's Office or AIGCFD will make its own assessment of potential environmental impacts of the proposed activities based on the details supplied in the project outline. Applicants should use this section to explain what mitigation measures they plan to put in place to minimise any adverse impacts of their activities on wildlife and habitats. This policy is intended to minimise potential impacts to the environment by working with visiting individuals and organisations during the planning process, rather than screening applications. Please note that any misleading statements about proposed methods during proposed activities may result in respective permits being cancelled and/or future applications being rejected.

Section 7: Ascension Island has numerous military and communications installations that operate on radio frequencies. The island, therefore, operates a strict policy on RF emissions. Scientific equipment that emits strong RF signals may disrupt island operations (and vice versa). Individuals and organisations wishing to use such equipment should provide a list of frequencies that they intend to use so that these can be cleared with the relevant island users. Note: this does not include two-way radios or other mobile communication devices.

Section 8: Any scientific samples that are to be exported from Ascension Island must be declared in this section, along with an estimate of quantity. If approved, these will be added as endorsements to the ERP, which will act as proof of permission to export if questioned by Borders and Customs officials. Export of biological samples will require an Export Permit issued by AIGCFD. Export of soil, rock or other minerals will require a Mineral Export Permit issued by the Administrator's Office. Attempting to export samples without AIG approval is a violation of the terms of entry to Ascension Island and may result in future entry permits being denied.

Section 9: Ascension Island is a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, and AIG is committed to enforcing this agreement. Applicants wishing to export samples from species listed under Appendix 1 or 2 of CITES are therefore required to obtain the relevant import and export permits before applying for an ERP and must submit copies of the approved permits along with their application. Further details on applying for CITES permits can be obtained by emailing conservationenquiries@ascension.gov.ac.

Section 10: The [Wildlife Protection Ordinance 2013](#) is the primary legislation protecting native and endemic species on Ascension Island. Under Article 4 of the Ordinance, any person wishing to carry out activities that involves the capture, harming, harassing, or killing of a protected species is required to obtain a Protected Wildlife Research License or Protected Wildlife Filming License. For ease, this license is incorporated into the ERP application process. Applicants should refer to the [Wildlife Protection Ordinance 2013](#) to check whether their proposed activities require a license and complete section D if necessary.

D. PROTECTED WILDLIFE LICENSE

The vast majority of individuals and organisations are committed to minimising any undue harm, stress or suffering to the species that they work with. The Protected Wildlife License aims to ensure that these principles are adhered to and that the benefits of research, photography or filming outweigh its

potential impacts. Under Article 4 of the Wildlife Protection Ordinance, Protected Wildlife Licenses are issued subject to the Administrator or his appointed representative being satisfied that the purpose of the proposed activity is to advance the conservation of protected species. **EAP Applications to carry out any activity that is excessively invasive and purely academic in nature (i.e. has no applied benefits for species conservation) are unlikely to be approved.**

Section 2. Applicants should describe in detail any invasive procedures that will be applied to protected species, including capture techniques, sampling procedures and/or methods for euthanasia, and indicate the number of individuals that will be affected. Applicants are required to justify the use of any invasive or destructive methods, both in terms of potential outcomes and lack of non-invasive alternatives, and keep sample sizes to the minimum needed to achieve the stated aims of the research, photography or filming.

Section 3. Applicants should name the individuals who will be responsible for carrying out the invasive procedures described in Section 2 and outline their level of competency. This includes any professional qualifications (e.g. bird ringing permits), training courses attended and/or the number of years' experience carrying out similar procedures.

Section 4. Applicants should demonstrate that all reasonable precautions to minimise disturbance, harm or suffering to protected species have been taken in the study design, both at an individual and population level.

E. CAPACITY BUILDING, DATA SHARING AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Knowledge transfer and benefit sharing are key themes of the Convention on Biological Diversity, to which Ascension Island is a signatory, and it is the policy of AIG that the benefits of on-island activities should accrue to all stakeholders in a fair and equitable manner. These include benefits to the researchers, photographers or film crews and their institutions through academic recognition, career advancement, and the furthering of institutional goals; benefits to local environmental agencies through training opportunities and gathering of the evidence base to support local decision making; and benefits to the local community through exposure to proposed activities and an enhanced understanding of their environment. The Environmental Activity Permitting Policy provides the formal structure to enable this benefit sharing.

Section 1. AIG recognises that not all projects will present opportunities for local capacity building. Nevertheless, visiting individuals and organisations are encouraged to consider ways in which local environmental workers can be exposed to their work and develop skills and experience. AIGCFD has developed long-standing collaborations with various external organisations through such initiatives to the benefit of all involved.

Section 2. Details of how the results of the proposed activities will be disseminated. We particularly encourage applicants to consider how their activities can be communicated to the local community on Ascension Island and to other non-specialist audiences. For example, in the past many organisations have contributed short articles to the local Islander newspaper.

In addition, appropriate permits are issued under the condition that applicants provide AIG with:

- A completed reporting form within 1 month of the end of each visit to Ascension Island as stated in Section B2. This allows AIG to follow the progress of the work being conducted on the Island and to benefit from any preliminary findings prior to publication of the data in other forums.
- Copies of all publications, articles and academic theses arising from activities on Ascension Island in a timely manner. These should be in English and ideally provided in an electronic format. Published materials will be archived by the Ascension Island Government, where possible.
- Copies of original datasets collected during the intended activities when requested (see below for data access and management policy).

DATA ACCESS AND MANAGEMENT

AIG recognises that access to data is a sensitive issue and is committed to protecting the intellectual property rights of individuals and organisations. However, access to raw datasets is also essential to ensure that local stakeholders benefit fully from activities conducted on the Island, as well as avoiding duplication and highlighting potential collaborations. Datasets that are gathered and never published, or which are published in a heavily summarised form are effectively lost from the Island. If underpinned by clear access management agreements, storing datasets within a central repository can be of mutual benefit to all stakeholders, revealing potential synergies between projects and enabling multidisciplinary and meta-analytical filming that is beyond the scope of individual projects. Many academic journals now require that original datasets are deposited in open-access repositories and data-sharing requirements are currently being rolled out across the South Atlantic UK Overseas Territories (SAOTs).

Environmental datasets collected on Ascension Island are stored on a secure server along with a metadata catalogue that records the name and contact details of the dataset owner, access restrictions and details of where, when and how the data was collected. **Datasets deposited by visiting individuals or organisations will never be published or released to third parties.**

Exemptions: AIG recognises that due to their size or nature, some datasets will not be appropriate for archiving on-island (e.g. large atmospheric datasets). Individuals and organisations should agree terms and a timeline for depositing datasets with AIGCFD before departing the Island. Failure to honour any reasonable requests for data may result in future permits being declined.

ANIMAL TAGGING AND BIRD RINGING

Where animals are to be fitted with unique identifying marks or tags, it is particularly important that applicants provide copies of tagging inventories and accompanying datasets with AIGCFD so that recaptures can be assigned to the correct individuals or organisations.

Although Ascension Island is a UK Overseas Territory, it is not governed by UK law regarding animal and bird marking. Nevertheless, AIG would prefer that all animal and bird tagging is carried out in accordance with relevant UK standards. As such, AIGCFD require that all bird ringing be conducted using rings issued by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) so that records are held within a single, centralised repository. The BTO has clear licensing regulations on who can fit these rings. For more information please <http://www.bto.org/>. AIG reserves the right for AIG officers to be able to observe any animal marking activity.

IMPORT OF BATTERIES, EQUIPMENT, CHEMICALS AND BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL

BIOSECURITY. [The Biosecurity Ordinance, 2020](#) is the primary legislation governing biosecurity on Ascension Island, which aims to protect the island against the entry of non-native species and of pests and diseases. Applicants working with similar species or in similar environments around the world are potential vectors for biological invasions and should be particularly vigilant. We require that all field equipment and clothing (including boots) to be thoroughly cleaned before visiting Ascension Island to minimise this risk. The import of biological specimens and growing media (e.g. soil) is not permitted without the written permission of AIG. Import of all controlled items must comply with Import Health Standards and may require a license ([Biosecurity – Ascension Island Government](#)). Customs Officers have the power to inspect all items on arrival.

CHEMICALS, REAGENTS AND EQUIPMENT. Ascension Island is remote and no chemicals or reagents can be acquired locally. Spare parts for equipment may also be impossible to source. Noxious, flammable or explosive chemicals that qualify as Dangerous Air Cargo cannot be transported on RAF flights to Ascension Island and must be shipped to Ascension Island well in advance. Ships from the UK depart approximately once every two to three months and take approximately 4 weeks. There is a risk that a ship's cargo may be at capacity and chemicals, reagents and equipment delayed until the next ship. However, not all sailings will accept Class 1 hazardous materials and special arrangements may need to be made. Applicants who wish to ship potentially hazardous cargo should contact AIG's shipping agent, [Richard James International](#), for further advice.

LITHIUM-ION BATTERIES. There are limitations on the transportation of batteries via air freight. [The Civil Aviation Authority](#) stipulates that spare lithium-ion batteries exceeding 100Wh but not exceeding 160Wh are allowed in carry-on baggage only, with a limit of two batteries per person, and must be individually protected to prevent short circuits. If any batteries that exceed this limit are required, they must be shipped to Ascension in advance. Contact AIG's shipping agent, [Richard James International](#), for further advice.

LOCAL LOGISTICAL SUPPORT

The Administrator's Office and AIGCFD can offer advice on appropriate timings and locations for proposed activities, both during pre-planning phases and while on-island. However, there are limited on-island resources to meet a considerable increase in workload. As such, the Department may not always be able to provide local logistical support in terms of vehicles or use of office space, unless

these have been arranged in advance through the development of collaborative projects. Government accommodation and vehicles are reserved for AIG staff only and will not be available to visiting individuals or organisations, unless with specific prior agreement. Rental cars and accommodation with internet access can all be arranged through JAMS (jams.dreams@outlook.com). Reservations should be made in advance to avoid disappointment.