

**ASCENSION ISLAND
GOVERNMENT**

Clerk of Council's Office
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Informal meeting of the Ascension Island Council

15:00 on Thursday 20 November 2025 at the Courthouse

MEETING SUMMARY

Present: Administrator, HH Rowan Laxton
Director of Resources, Peter Thomas
Crown Counsel, James Twigg

Councillor Ethan Bally
Councillor Thomas Barnes
Councillor Eugene Bennett
Councillor Michael Ellick
Councillor Thomas Hickling
Councillor Laura Shearer

In attendance: Head of the Administrator's Office, Martin Hogg
Director of Conservation and Fisheries, Dr Tiffany Simpson
[Agenda item 4 only]
Policy and Comms Officer, Stephanie Sherrin
Clerk to Council, Georgina Wilson

Apologies: Councillor Alan Nicholls

1. Welcome

The Administrator Rowan Laxton welcomed all parties and thanked everyone for attending.

2. Approval of Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the Formal Council meeting held on 29 October 2025 and published 12 November 2025 were accepted, and in accordance with the Council Rules were agreed by Council members.

3. Matters Arising

- Food security: Councillor Bennett asked AIG to share information on running costs of Hydroponics.

4. Environmental or Non-environmental Activity Permitting Policy

Stephanie Sherrin, AIG's Policy and Comms Officer, introduced the memo which explained the background to the proposed changes to the policy. Stephanie explained that a recent operational case under the current research and filming permitting process highlighted an inefficiency: an activity with no environmental impact was referred to the Conservation and Fisheries Directorate for review, creating further demand on the Directorate's workload without affecting the Administrator's Office's approval decision. In response, AIG has reviewed the existing research and filming permitting policies. The proposed process now categorises activities by their potential environmental impact up-front. Activities determined to have no to low environmental effect would be reviewed directly by the Administrator's Office, streamlining approvals. The standard permit fee has also been revised to align with fees for similar activities in other UK Overseas Territories, including Saint Helena. This fee will be set at £250, but this can be waived depending on circumstances.

Councillors raised questions regarding the requirement of a permit for filming. It was clarified that a permit for filming on island would only be required for commercial purposes. Discussion was had on including clear definitions of what is considered commercial filming. It was also suggested that examples may help applicants determine which type of permit would be required for the intended visit.

It was discussed and clarified that whilst one permit may cover everyone involved in the project, all individuals intending to visit Ascension for the purpose of environmental or non-environmental activities would be required to obtain an appropriate entry visa.

Discussion was had on the UK standards set by AIG regarding the tagging of animals and birds. It was confirmed that environmental research permits were held to the highest practicable standards and visiting researchers would be expected to conform to the standards set out by AIG. Applicants completing the research permit application with the intent to visit the island would be required to adhere to local legislation. Councillors questioned what would cause a permit to be refused. It was explained that lack of accommodation, flight availability, duplication of research efforts and environmental harm were some examples of situations that could result in refusal.

5. Any other business

There was one item of **other business**.

1) Sheep in Two Boats:

Councillor Bennett raised the issue that there are large numbers of sheep causing a disturbance in residential areas of Two Boats Village. The councillor called for the perimeter fencing around the Two Boats play area to be replaced with something more suitable to stop the sheep from entering the children's play area. He explained that members of the public were concerned about sheep entering the play area when Q fever was a risk to the public. It was agreed that an existing Councillor Enquiry Form submitted by Councillor Hickling would be expanded to include the request to improve the fencing around the play area. Discussion was also had on possible solutions to reduce the volume of sheep within the village.

6. Proposed date of next meeting

- Formal Meeting 16:30 on Thursday 04 December 2025
- Extraordinary Informal Meeting 15:00 Wednesday 17 December 2025
- Informal Meeting 16:30 on Thursday 15 January 2026

The Administrator thanked all the councillors and the meeting closed at 15:57

Georgina Wilson
Clerk to Council