

Official Launch of new Environmental Management Directorate

This Monday, 16th April, saw the official launch of St Helena's very first Environmental Management Directorate.

The Directorate, headed by Tara Pelembe, and with the purpose of coordinating environmental policy on St Helena, was launched in the presence of His Excellency, Governor Capes, Councillors, senior officials and members of the National Trust, who all joined, via a live video link



from the UK, Environment Minister Richard Benyon (of DEFRA); for the Opening Ceremony.

In his opening words to the people of St Helena Minister Benyon remarked on how rewarding it is to join with the overseas territories in recognising the importance of effective environmental management.

He stressed the importance to the UK of the overseas territories' unique ecosystems and endemic flora and fauna, referring specifically to the St Helena Wirebird and the Bastard Gumwood, just two of the species only found on the Island.

Minister Benyon also recognised the environmental challenges that the overseas territories face with increasing world population and climate change, but also commented on the opportunities these challenges bring to increase the commitment by UK Government towards biodiversity in the Territories.

He said:

“The launch of St Helena Government's Environmental Management Directorate is particularly timely; DEFRA's Departmental paper 'the Environment in the United Kingdom's Overseas Territories: UK Government and Civil



Society Support’ was published in January and it emphasises the importance of sustainable environmental management in the overseas territories on the environment.”

He ended by highlighting that to protect biodiversity in the Overseas Territories the UK Government and the territories must work together in partnership.

Governor Capes commented:

“My colleagues here greatly appreciate the very positive policy of the UK Coalition Government towards the overseas territories; a most welcome development. That sea change in HMG’s approach has brought more engagement with the territories across Whitehall; and DEFRA has been at the forefront of UK departments ready to assist with expertise to help us meet our goals.

“There will be new economic and social opportunities as we develop our tourism infrastructure, but it is essential that we take great care to manage our precious environment on this jewel of an island in the South Atlantic.”

Tara Pelembe highlighted the importance of the environment to St Helena:

“The environment underpins everything, and impacts all of us...it is the air that we breathe, the water that we drink, the food that we eat, the energy we use in our houses, the landscape we enjoy, the sea where we fish and also importantly, our culture and our inspiration, our history and our business.”

She added that the EMD would be leading on developing a National Environmental Plan that will be for the whole Island and not only for government:

“EMD comprises a team of committed individuals who have come together from different parts of the government with some new recruits, and we are very excited and honoured to be taking this important work forward.”



Councillor Raymond Williams, Chair of the Natural Resources, Development and Environment Committee remarked:

“As the airport project progresses and the Island develops its economy, we will need to ensure that the environment, one of St Helena’s key tourism products, is effectively managed...I am very keen that we are successful in taking forward environmental

protection, which is now one of our three National Goals under St Helena's new Sustainable Development Plan."

The day continued with an open afternoon at the EMD in Essex House where Isabel Peters, a well known figure in striving forward with the Island's environment issues and the new Manager of Environmental Assessment and Advocacy, 'popped the cork' to declare EMD officially open. All present were then able to share in a slice of the specially made cake for the occasion and view displays on the importance of the environment on St Helena and how to live in 'green' ways.

Public Relations Office

The Secretariat

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