St. Helena

State of the Environment report

April 2012 –March 2013

EMD

"Our Island. Our Environment. Our Responsibility."

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For more information see website: http://www.sainthelena.gov.sh/pages/environment.html

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The environment of St Helena is precious. Its ecosystems, biodiversity and heritage are vulnerable to the choices being made, and the actions being taken. At the same time, the growing population depends on them for our survival and wellbeing. As well as providing these services, a well-managed environment is vital to the Island's economic viability; agriculture, fishing and tourism all rely on St Helena having a healthy and prosperous environment.

- The major future drivers of change–climate change, permanent and transient population growth, economic development and associated consumption of natural resources, as well as the pressures that these drivers place on the environment–will need to be managed carefully if our society is to achieve a sustainable relationship with the Island's environment.

- There are a number of areas where environmental data is being collected and a number of those are included here.

- There are a number of areas where data collection is not being collated and presented in a useful manner and many activities where no data collection is being undertaken other than subjective assessments.

- The ability to establish trends and make predictions will improve over time.

INTRODUCTION

St. Helena has a unique natural environment that provides the ecosystem good and services upon which we all depend. Effective management of this environment is one of St. Helena's three National Goals in its Sustainable Development Plan. A National Environmental Management Plan (NEMP) provides the blueprint for how this goal is going to be implemented. Activities are of course balanced against budget restrictions and a government wide headcount reduction programme.

St. Helena is going through a period of rapid change with the construction of the islands first airport and the anticipated subsequent economic development. The St Helena resident population is growing. In financial year 2012/13 the quarterly average population has been consistently higher than the same period in any year since the 2008 population Census. In addition, the development of the island looks to increasing tourist visitors to the island as a key to economic development. The St Helena economy is growing. As much as the boost to the local economy which results from an increasing economically active population is welcomed, the environmental impacts must be carefully balanced. An increase in population means an increased demand for water, electricity, food, housing and other resources. An increase in sewage output and waste must be accommodated. An increasing number of people are making the most of our unique environment for recreation.

To find out how our environment is faring, St. Helena's first ever State of the Environment Report has been created. This report hopes to provide a snapshot of the environment of St Helena over the 2012/13 financial year. It is not a report on a set of agreed, considered environmental indicators (the process for setting these will be developed over the coming years) but is rather a report on some areas of the environment that are already being measured and monitored on St. Helena. Collating and reporting on this, serves also to highlight gaps in information. This report will be produced on a regular basis and it is anticipated that, as the years pass, the production of this report will allow us to see trends in our environmental data and to fill information gaps, allowing us to more effectively target our efforts to manage our unique environment.

In April 2012 the St. Helena Government created an Environmental Management Division, focussed on implementing the NEMP and providing a cohesive approach to environmental management within SHG and across the island as a whole. This report also provides a summary of the activities carried out by this body in its first year. EMD will be responsible for the collation and publication of the State of the Environment Report.

In addition to EMD there are a number of other individuals and bodies who work proactively to manage and protect St. Helena's environment. Most prominently the St Helena National Trust (SHNT) carry out a number of the biodiversity and restoration projects and St. Helena Active Participation in Enterprise (SHAPE) have initiated a long term initiative to recycle paper and cardboard.

Environmental monitoring in this report details a small selection the activities of the following bodies based on submitted data:

- St Helena Government (SHG) Environmental Monitoring Division (EMD) of the Environmental and Natural Resources Directorate (ENRD)
- St Helena National Trust (SHNT)
- Former SHG Infrastructure and Utilities Directorate (I&U) some relevant activities of which were divested to the arms-length Utilities corporation "Connect St Helena" on 1st April 2013
- Environmental Health Section (EHS) of the SHG Health and Social Welfare Directorate (H&SW)

Datasets presented have been provided by the contributors listed. Data collection and monitoring occurs at a wide variety of levels and complexity and consistency varies. This report is based on submitted data.

1.0 AIR AND CLIMATE:

1.1 WEATHER SUMMARY –

Plate 1.1.1 'Sun' ©Dr David Higgins, 2013

Although located in the tropics, St Helena has a sub-tropical climate due to the cooling influence of the South-East trade winds and the Benguela Current (Ashmole & Ashmole, 2000). Although the island does not have the four distinct seasons one might find elsewhere, there is a sunny, hotter and drier 'summer' period which gradually gives way to a cooler, wetter winter.

TEMPERATURE

The 2012/13 financial year was a relatively cool one for St Helena, with an overall average temperature of 17.5°C and an average maximum temperature of 20.2°C over the whole year (Met Office, 2013). Fig 1.1.1 shows that it was typically cooler overall during the winter months (from July to November) with temperatures highest in February and March. Comparing these figures with the long term average data (2005-2013), show that the winter months were slightly cooler last year than has been the case both in terms of average temperature and of maximum daily temperature, but with more or less an average summers either side.