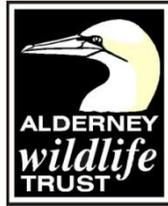


# ALDERNEY WILDLIFE TRUST

## Project Reviews 2013



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Prepared on behalf of: States of Alderney,  
On request of Christopher Rowley States Member for the Environment

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## Introduction

Since the Alderney Wildlife Trust's (AWT) joint founding by the States of Alderney and a group of Alderney residents in 2002, the organization has found itself presented with a number of areas of SoA operations which would otherwise either, no longer fall within the SoA remit, or were newly described (RAMSAR) and given the SoA's resources and lack of any environmental officer could not be handled internally. This has led the AWT to inherit roles such as the management of the islands Ramsar site which would otherwise be purely a governmental responsibility.

This short report has been compiled to highlight the elements of the AWT work which has either been commissioned directly by the States of Alderney (SoA), is carried out in collaboration with the SoA or has a direct impact on areas of operation of the SoA.

The report is limited in its scope and has been compiled at short notice in order that it might inform the SoA's Annual Review 2013. Therefore the information contained within this document has not received an internal review by the AWT's Management Committee, nor any external consultation. However, the report has been compiled to the best of this authors abilities and it is believed that it fairly represents the work undertaken over the last 11 months.

Work has been compiled into the following key headings and will contain a short description of the origin of the work, the objectives, the work undertaken in 2013 and the success and failures of this year's work programme:

1. Land Management
  - a. Reserves
  - b. Community Woodland
  - c. Footpaths
  - d. Invasive species and weed control
2. Ramsar (Convention for the Protection of Internationally Important Wetlands)
3. Tourism and publicity
4. Living Islands
5. LIVE – teaching through nature
6. Alderney Records Centre
7. Volunteer engagement

## 1. Land Management

A key reason for the founding of the AWT in 2002 was the rapid increase in land which had fallen out of traditional management. This included large areas of farm land which have subsequently been incorporated within the Alderney Dairy Farm Management Contract with Kiln Farm. Further, a number of areas once traditionally managed by the SoA's Public Works department (PWD) were also causing concern to local residents and a decision was made to use the founding of the AWT as a way of bringing work such as the management of coastal footpath back into regular management.

This is one of the largest areas of operation for the AWT with a nominal 2.5 full time (35hrs/pw, minimum) staff, and up to 1400hrs/pa voluntary effort per annum.

In **2013** because of a short falling in available staff, increasing requests from other areas of the SoA for support on projects such as Living Islands and aging equipment which has seen the AWT's main pedestrian mower and its tractor out of operation for long periods of time, there was an estimated 30% decrease in effort in Land Management effort. This effort does however still equate to the equivalent of two full time members of SoA staff employed to manage the follow areas of work.

### 1.a Reserves

Alderney has two nature reserves maintained under memorandums of understanding with the SoA. These reserves total over 200 acres (1/10<sup>th</sup> Alderney's land area).

The management objectives for these sites are:

- To maintain and where possible increase biodiversity
- To maintain public access
- To help education the public about the island's outstanding wildlife.

### Longis Nature Reserve

An area of SoA owned land, initially designated under a memorandum of understanding in 2003. The Longis Nature Reserve is the single largest terrestrial area of interest for the Trust on Alderney. The reserve covers 13 distinctly different habitats, including marine, intertidal, coastal heathland, grassland, scrub woodland and freshwater ponds, both natural and man-made.

The coastal grassland is known for its plant species diversity, with rarities such as small hare's-ear, small restharrow, scrambled egg lichen, autumn lady's-tresses, bastard toadflax and green winged orchid all to be found within a single acre. The marine and freshwater wetlands provide an important site for migratory birds and the reserve also hosts many of the island's best mammal habitats:

- Total Area 105ha
- Area of States of Alderney owned land within the reserve, including intertidal, 85ha
- Area of privately owned land within the reserve belonging to 5 local landlords 20ha

The reserve's amenity resources, all of which have been established by and paid for through the funding efforts of the Conservation Volunteers and Alderney Wildlife Trust, include:

- Longis bird hide and wildlife information point (2000)

- Mannez Bird hide and wildlife information point (2006)
- Mannez Garenne wildlife/history information point (2003)
- Houmet Herbe wildlife/history information point (2003)
- Odeon (MP3) historical interest point (2005)
- Fresh water wetland habitats

Work levels during 2013 were set to maintain the status quo whilst a new 5-year management plan is developed for both AWT nature reserves. The planning work fell 6 months behind schedule during the course of the summer and autumn due to staffing difficulties. However, a new member of voluntary staff is due to arrive to restart work on in November 2013 and it is hoped that the new Management Plans for these sites, compliant to the proposals described in the Living Islands Project will be tendered out to public consultation by April 2014.

### **Vau du Saou Nature Reserve**

Alderney's second nature reserve was established by the agreement of States of Alderney and two private land owners in 2004. At its centre is the island's only coastal cliff top woodland valley. The steep slopes of the valley, together with the availability of water all year round due to a deep fault line in the island's geology, has enabled an elm and willow woodland to establish itself.

The valley is a popular stopping-off place for migratory birds and is one of the few areas in which you may see the island's only reptile, the slow worm.

Originally identified by the SoA as an area of parkland, tree planting on the site during the early 1990's included several non-native species which had rapidly begun to establish themselves in this otherwise largely native woodland.

During 2013 the AWT has continued to maintain this valley as an amenity site, concentrating on developing more native woodland, as well as maintaining the areas footpaths and steps. The walks through the reserve are narrow and uneven and quite steep in places, and significant effort was invested early in the years to improve these, however they do offer wonderful views across the cliff tops and into the secluded valley, with its bird watching opportunities:

- Total Area 7ha
- Area of SoA owned land within the reserve, including intertidal 5ha
- Area of privately owned land within the reserve belonging to 2 local landlords 2ha

The principal amenity available within the reserve is the Trust's Countryside Interpretation Centre, which is located at the eastern edge of the reserve, within the two metres thick walls of a World War Two German bunker. The 'Wildlife Bunker', owned by the States of Alderney, has been leased by the Alderney Wildlife Trust since 2002 and the Trust has invested an estimated £12,000 in material costs and well over 3,000 voluntary man hours towards its renovation and upkeep. The Wildlife Bunker:

- has been restored to close to its original state to give the only publicly available WWII experience on Alderney
- contains displays relating to history and natural history, which examine the impact of our past and present activities on the environment, updated and re-opened in 2012
- has solar powered 12v lighting
- contains tourism and wildlife literature
- has seating and provides a rain shelter for walkers

Work continued as per status quo to maintain the bunker as a resource for the island

### **1.b. Alderney Community Woodland (ACW)**

The ACW is a joint community project between the Trust, the States, a wide range of Alderney based interest groups (including schools, clubs and societies) and several businesses. The aim is to create a broad range amenity, sustainable and wildlife friendly woodland area covering some 17ha.

Over 9,500 trees have been planted to date, with an estimated further 1,500 trees to be planted by 2015 (this is estimated to be more trees than where planted under the SoA planting program run during the 1980s and 90s).

Over 3km of footpath has been created or improved to create new walking access within the site, a significant increase in path management effort was undertaken in 2013.

10 historic builds or sites have been partially or completely re-opened to the public ranging from the foundations of the Battery Quarry Gantry Crane, to WWII bunkers which have been turned into information and observation points, with the latest of these opened in August by BBC Present Miranda Krestovnikoff, thanks to the support of Ronez Ltd.

Numerous features including willow arches and screens have been created this year around the site for public use.

During the week of the 24<sup>th</sup> November, Alderney Woodland Week, a range of activities have been planned for the woodland including the planting of a further 500 trees, the beginning of sustainable management of existing woodland cover, classes on drystone walling and wood turning.

*For more details on the ACW project the Alderney Community Woodland Development Plan 2010-14 and the draft copy of the ACW Management Plan 2015-20 are available on request.*

### **1.c. Footpath management**

When the AWT was formed in 2002, one of the main tasks requested of it by the SoA was the re-establishment of management on areas of footpath once managed by government but that were no longer maintained.

In 2013 approx. 20km of footpath, largely minor paths over both States and private land and often within popular walking areas such as Longis and the Giffoine, was maintained by the Trust.

Maintenance varies between cutting as seldom as once every 2-3 years, to more common cutting programmes of 3-4 times a year and in places as often as 6-7 times a year. Currently the AWT is responsible for management of all but a two mile stretch of the round island coastal footpath and many other popular sections of path at Longis, the Giffoine and Les Rochers.

During 2013 the path management regime fell behind schedule for the same reasons as described in the reserves section of this report. However, additional effort is being directed to this programme and coupled with the increasing communication between the SoA and AWT teams, through the Living Islands Project, it is hoped that a comprehensive path management regime can be established for 2014 onwards, by February of next year.

### **1.d Invasive species and weed control**

**Ragwort Control;** alongside its commitment to manage States and private land within the island's reserves and other sites the Trust has maintained its support for the Mauvaise Herbe law. This has meant a regular annual programme

primarily targeting ragwort on Trust managed sites on the island, but also aimed at the control of European identified dangerous/invasive plants such as *Crassula helmsii* and Hottentot fig.

Support funding for this was withdrawn in 2010 which will require a re-evaluation of this work. However, thanks to a huge volunteer effort the following management hours were undertaken.

- **Ragwort** approx. 60hrs of pulling 2013
- **Hottentot fig** removal approx. 70hrs 2013
- **Crassula helmsii** Initial stages of planning on new methodologies to control *Crassula helmsii* has been started and full plans will be included in the Longis Reserves Management plan when it is completed in 2014. The draft control assessment is available upon request.
- **Bracken and bramble**, which threaten to impact dramatically on the diversity of species throughout Alderney and are reducing areas of amenity grassland and footpath, control = 13ha repetitively cut up to 4 times per annum
- **Brown-tail moth control**; more than 30hrs undertaken in 2013. There was a marked reduction in the quantity of moth tents present in sites managed by the AWT.

## 2. Ramsar

Alderney's only international designation was formally announced in August 2005 after three years negotiation and preparation. *Ramsar* is the Convention on the Protection of Internationally Important Wetlands and 'Alderney's West Coast and Burhou Island's' site was the first to be designated in the Bailiwick of Guernsey.

The site is administered on behalf of the SoA on a cost of materials basis, under the Alderney Ramsar Management Strategy 2012-16, and the scientific research and management work now being undertaken makes the 'Alderney Ramsar Project' arguably the most advanced conservation programme currently underway in Channel Island waters.

In 2013 an extensive programme of practical management and research work was undertaken after a period of preparation and logistics management on behalf of the States of Alderney. This level of work resulted in the expansion of research work being carried out with Gannet and Common Tern productivity assessments being added to the population and productivity work already ongoing across other seabird species'.

The first field season was completed of a PhD research project linked with Liverpool University and the Alderney Commission for Renewable Energy. Using GPS transmitters the project will study foraging behaviour of Gannets, Shags and Lesser Black-backed Gulls and the potential impact of renewable energy developments within the English Channel and associated waters on this behaviour.

Key results of 2013:

- The Puffin population on Burhou totalled 168 pairs, a slight decrease on the 176 pairs of 2012 but a significant population increase on the 2005 population of 120 pairs.
- Work began on describing the Seabird colony on Coque Lihou; 77 pairs of Shags were counted whilst Auk (Guillemot and Razorbill) surveying cannot be carried out due to disturbance. Fulmar, Crow and Great Black-backed Gull nests were also identified.
- Fulmar, Common Tern, Ringed Plover and Shag populations all stable in comparison to previous years with consistent breeding success for each species.
- University of Liverpool PhD study began with 27 Gannets GPS tagged and either a barometer or accelerometer also attached. 16 GPS tags were recovered with 9 accelerometers and 7 barometers. 5 Shags and 10 Lesser Black-backed Gulls also GPS tagged with 1 recovery per species. Data analysis being conducted over winter; improved methods of tagging Shags and Gulls being researched.

- Marine work expanded in the form of a proposed Environment Group for the Channel Islands to respond to maritime events, such as the Polyisobutylene (PIB) spills in early 2013. PIB was subsequently banned under the MARPOL convention due to the combined efforts of the RSPB, RSPCA and RSWT.
- A full programme of events was successfully carried out within the Ramsar area and its associated sites. Awareness of our work was greatly increased through these events and through the vast increase in use of our social networking sites.

### **3. LIVE**

In 2013 LIVE was run as a pilot project with a dedicated 12 week educational programme with hundreds of resources tailored to Key Stage 1 & 2 National Curriculum, including graded Learning Objectives, and linking schools with young scientists working in the field. LIVE has a dedicated website and gives high quality video streams from two webcams showcasing Alderney and some of its amazing wildlife, namely the Puffins. For 12 weeks the pupils and teachers invited the natural world into their classrooms with the live video streams, daily blog posts and weekly video calls with our ecologists, dedicated Activity Days and Travelling Puffins, life-size toy Puffins which the pupils wrote blog posts about their visits.

In total 29 schools signed up to the programme, 9 Channel Islands schools and 20 schools from the south east of England (predominantly Kent). Of the 29 schools taking part 23 schools 'fully' participated in the programme; 79% logged in to use the programme twice a week or more, 69% used the site five or more times a week. Of those six schools that did not fully participate in 2013, one explained the programme came too late in the school year to fit into lesson plans, and one school has already signed up for the 2014 season. With many schools having several classes taking part a total of over 1,500 students were engaged in this year's pilot project.

2014 will make use of the programme and resources developed for this year's LIVE pilot and will extend to cover up to 200 fully participating schools, all of which will get full access and support including direct contact with the field scientists. LIVE 2014 will also be expanding with a new webcam on Ortac, GannetCam and linking in with the Birds on the Edge Chough reintroduction project in Jersey. Staff from the world famous wildlife park in Jersey (headquarters of the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust) will be taking on a section of the teaching programme, bringing with them all their education expertise, enthusiasm and unique case studies from Durrell's conservation work.

### **4. Tourism and publicity**

The joint management of the Alderney information, visitor or tourism centre (depending on the current thinking), was again one of the original commitments between the SoA and AWT. Over time this commitment has seen the moving of the Information Centre twice, its re-development and a 70% increase in opening hours.

During 2013 the AWT supported SoA tourism and marketing by:

- Commitment of over 60hrs assistance from the Trust Manager to assist Be a Tiger and SoA Tourism and Marketing in the production of literature, provision for journalists and supplying of type.
- The use of the Trust's boat at cost for filming and journalistic trips
- Approximately 900 hrs volunteer effort to the maintenance of regular opening hours at the Information Centre
- A further 300hrs of additional opening time, refurbishment, cleaning, window cleaning, refurbishment of the Information Centre

### **5. Living Islands**

The AWT was approached by Neil Harvey and Roy Burke to respond to the Be A Tiger report on Alderney Tourism undertaken in 2012. In response to the request to inform the debate on the nature tourism aspect of future effort in this area the AWT

contacted the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust who were running a successful nature tourism project at the time called Yorkshire Natures Triangle.

This led to subsequent presentations and the contracting of Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to undertake a Research Development Assessment on the potential natural and heritage assets in regards to tourism in Alderney.

Whilst this assessment was being undertaken the AWT prepared a joint bid with the SoA to the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT) to secure joint funding for a £100,000 project to develop a project titled Living Islands (LI). LI was to be the template for exploring the links between tourism as an economic driver within small island communities and links to their biodiversity assets. This bid was successful and on the 1<sup>st</sup> September Martin Batt took on the role of Living Islands Manager.

In total the AWT has committed an unrecorded amount of time and effort to this project, probably in excess of 1,000hrs over the last 12 months. The potential of the LI programme not only to help secure a more prosperous economic future of the island, but also to help organize the SoA, AWT and Alderney Society assets to yield the greatest possible effect is huge and has already begun to yield significant benefits.

For further details see the LI website at <http://www.alderneywildlife.org/node/4122>.

## 6. Alderney Records Centre (ARC)

ARC will fulfill two important roles for the AWT's conservation and ecological efforts on Alderney:

1. Monitoring - Records are important to monitoring the effectiveness of AWT management and conservation efforts.
2. Objectives - Records are important to form objectives for management and conservation efforts, which help us to form an understanding of ecosystems.

ARC strategic objectives for 2013, objectives, progress and achievements are detailed below:

ARC Objective Group	Objective	Progress and Further Achievements
<b>Structural Objectives</b>	Maintain a member of staff to oversee ARC	ARC has a nominal full time (35hrs/pw, minimum) staff member, subsidized by the RAMSAR fund.
	To keep up to date with new technology, including computer hardware and software	It was advised by the Terrestrial Ecologist for the 2013/14 placement season that ARC should be designed and developed in a dedicated database program, MS Access with a distmaps interface. This resulted in a reprioritisation of structural objective. However, significant achievements and progress has been made for the operational objectives.
	To create an email account for ARC	Currently, the Terrestrial Ecologist email account is adequate for this purpose and is receiving new sightings.
	To recruit a volunteer willing to be trained in entering data onto distmaps/in a distmaps	The decision to redesign and develop ARC in Access resulted in a de-prioritisation of these structural

	compatible format	objectives for 2013. At the time of writing they remain incomplete.
	To catalogue all museum natural history records	
	To catalogue as much as possible of all previous records stored in AWT	
	To regularly upload records from 2013 survey work	
<b>Operational Objectives</b>	To encourage Alderney residents, in particular children, to take an interest in their natural environment and cultural heritage	The Terrestrial Ecologist has worked to collect new information on Alderney's species, representing Alderney in the RSPB Beached Bird, Garden Moth Scheme, Long Eared Owl Survey, UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme, MCS Beachwatch event and Hedgehog monitoring. Four of the six surveys utilised local volunteer assistance to promote and gain support of biological recording within Alderney
	To improve and help to direct recording effort, focusing that effort where necessary and encouraging structured recording schemes with appropriate methodologies	
	To encourage environmental recording in Alderney and maintain and enhance its quality	Web Interface – The Alderney Record Centre is encouraging the recording and submission of accurate, high quality data from residents and visitors through the AWT website's "Submit a Sighting" page.  Validation - A semi-automated validation process has been developed in the ARC database to maintain data quality.
	Collect images of species for use on the website	Images have been collected from local sources and beyond to deliver high quality content for the new AWT website.
<b>Financial Objectives</b>	Investigate any suitable grants for potential funding	Grant and funding opportunities have been investigated, but due to the scarcity of any grant making or funding bodies for Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, no suitable grants or funding was found for ARC at the time of writing.

## 7. Volunteer engagement

To achieve all of the above the Trust is dependent on one of the most defining strengths.

On an island of just under 1,900 individuals, with limited resources and with the SoA currently lacking the capacity to maintain any staff with an environmental remit, the Trust is able to attract a huge amount of both skilled and unskilled voluntary labour.

3.8	- Full time volunteer staff	=	5,928 hrs p.a.
4	- Part time volunteer officers (with key responsibilities)	=	1,920 hrs p.a.
7	- Volunteer Directors	=	672 hrs p.a.
11	- Tourism Centre and Wildlife Trust shop volunteers	=	880 hrs p.a.
8	- Conservation Volunteers	=	800 hrs p.a.
2	- Ramsar project volunteers	=	220 hrs p.a.
1	- PhD student	=	300 hrs p.a.
Total estimated voluntary hours secured by the Trust during 2013			= 10,720 hrs p.a.

The Trust has only one paid member of staff, working approx. 2200hrs p.a.

39.8 active staff and volunteers	=	12, 920 hrs p.a.
(Equivalent to almost 9 full time SoA labourers)		