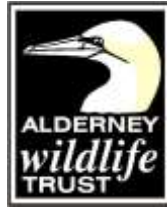


ALDERNEY WILDLIFE TRUST

Project Reviews 2014



Alderney Wildlife Trust
51 Victoria Street
Alderney
Channel Islands
GY9 3TA

Tel: 01481 822935

Email: manager@alderneywildlife.org

Website: www.alderneywildlife.org



Report compiled by: Roland Gauvain (Trust Manager)



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

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Introduction

At the time of its founding the Alderney Wildlife Trust (AWT), which received its core startup funding from the States of Alderney (SoA), 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). Given the SoA's resources, and lack of an environmental officer within the civil service, the work proposed by the SoA, was no longer considered as part of the SoA's remit and therefore could not be handled internally. In addition departments within the SoA such as Marketing (supporting journalist's visits and preparing copy) and the Treasury (managing the Dairy Farm Subsidy Contracts) saw an opportunity to use the AWT as a contractor to provide services at a competitive rate. .

This short report has been compiled to highlight the elements of the AWT work which have either been commissioned directly by the SoA, are carried out in collaboration with the SoA, or have a direct impact on areas of operation of the SoA. Despite its origins the AWT has **no mandate from the SoA** for its areas of joint operation and this is something which has been **strongly sought** for many years. Under the provisions of the Living Islands project the SoA and AWT have entered into negotiations concerning the creation of a Service Level Agreement (SLA) in order that both organisations can better understand and justify their relationship. Though there have been some significant delays in developing this SLA, it is hoped that this will be in place early in 2015 and that a full reporting process will be agreed as part of it.

Although the current report has a limited scope it is hoped that it will inform the SoA's Annual Review 2014. The information contained within this document has not been received by any external consultant; however, the report has been compiled to the best of this author's abilities and it is believed that it fairly represents the work undertaken during 2014.

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 2014 and the successes 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
8. Conclusion

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 footpaths back into regular management.

Table 1. Is extracted from the AWT's Annual Report 2002/3 – presented to the SoA in 2003. It breaks down the AWT's land management commitment in its inaugural year on the basis of management areas inherited from the PWD:

Project	Total Man Hours allocated for project by Trust
Wildlife Trust Bunker (estimated visitor numbers exceed 900 since August 2002, 60% local, 40% visitor)	450
ACV Longis Pond bird hide (estimated visitor numbers 3300 since October 2001, 65% local, 35% Visitor)	230
ACV Footpath Marker Stones	15
ACV Clearance of States Abreuvour Public	30
ACV Footpath Clearance Trois Vaux	30
ACV Footpath Clearance Bonne Terre	25
ACV Brown-tailed mouth clearance Longis Common	24
ACV Trough clearance and footpath repair Ladysmith	27
Wildlife Trust footpath clearance (this includes several paths normally managed by States of Alderney Staff, which however were found needing maintenance by Trust volunteers and staff)	120
Tourism Office Staffing (costs calculated against States staff time required to answer queries handled by Trust staff & volunteers)	1020
Total	1971

Over the subsequent years the specific work undertaken by the AWT has varied depending on local demand, issues with land owners and specific request from the PWD. Yet this still remains one of the largest areas of operation for the AWT with a nominal 2.5 full time staff (35 hrs/pw, minimum), and around 1540 hrs/pa voluntary staff/volunteers during the course of the year.

In **2014**, because of increasing demands from 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, maintaining land management effort was difficult; however, thanks to the extraordinary effort of the AWT's voluntary staff and volunteers, effort on the ground increased as set against 2013.

1.a Reserves

Alderney has two nature reserves maintained under memorandums of understanding with the SoA. These reserves total over 105 hectares .

The management objectives for these sites are:

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

The memorandums of understanding, which were originally established between the SoA and AWT when these reserves were established in 2003/2004, have not been updated. With this in mind the AWT is currently drafting a new 5-year reserves management plan. This will be brought to the General Services Committee (GSC) in the spring of 2015 in draft form, prior to being taken to public consultation for 4 weeks and then returning to the Committee for ratification. The development of the new management plan will depend, however, on the progress of the SLA between the AWT and SoA as this should define the joint management work undertaken by both organisations with a view to delivering the objectives of the Living Islands project.

Longis Nature Reserve

An area of SoA owned land, initially designated under a memorandum of understanding in 2003. 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 95ha
- Area of SoA owned land within the reserve, including intertidal, 70ha
- 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 AWT and Conservation Volunteers, 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)

Work levels during 2014 were set to maintain the status quo whilst a new 5-year management plan is developed for both AWT nature reserves. It had originally been intended that the new management plan would be ready for submission to the GSC in mid-2014. However, due to delays in the completion of the Alderney Community Woodland Management Plan as well as in the progression of the joint planning initiative (Living Islands project) the publication, as has already been noted, has been delayed until 2015.

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 heavily wooded 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.

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. Several significant trees fell in the woodland during the winter and early spring storms. In total 3 large conifers were dropped (from a stand planted in the late 1950's early 1960s) and there were a number of small rusty sallows which had extensive branch damage. The fallen conifers led to the path needing to be re-routed and the trees have now been cut down insitu with the intention of leaving large areas of deadwood for invertebrates and slow worms and creating at least one wooden feature bench out of the largest stem.

- Total Area 10ha
- Area of SoA owned land within the reserve, including intertidal 8ha
- Area of privately owned land within the reserve belonging to 2 local landlords 2ha

The principal amenity available within the reserve is the AWT'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 SoA, has been leased by the AWT since 2002 and the AWT has invested an estimated £12,000 in material costs and well over 3,100 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 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 and it will be included as one of the feature sites for Living Islands in 2015.

1.b. Alderney Community Woodland (ACW)

The ACW is a joint community project between the AWT, the SoA, and a wide range of Alderney based interest groups (including schools, clubs and societies) and local businesses. The principal aims of the woodland are to create:

- a habitat rich in wildlife
- a community amenity site with features and facilities.
- a sustainable woodland which helps to pay for its own upkeep and increases on island interest in managing the island's landscape for a productive future.

Over 10,000 trees have been planted to date (estimated to be more trees than were planted under the SoA planting programme run during the 1980s and 90s), covering an area of 9hectares (total area of the ACW 17ha).

Over 3km of footpath has been created or improved to create new walking access within the site and this has been actively managed throughout the year, with a new 150m section of trail added early in 2014.

The woodland contains the following features:

- 12 historic buildings 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, thanks to the support of Ronez Ltd.
- A 2km historic trail with 13 information boards has been opened for public use
- An area of sycamore has been developed for green wood management. This includes draw benches and woodland lathes which are available for the public to use, after receiving instruction, or under supervision during training days.
- A children's area with seating, a willow T-Pee, bug hotels and green wood benches

- 4 greenwood benches have been sited around the woodland created from conifer cleared from the site during creation of a woodland corridor.
- A children's trail and play area has been created in a section of woodland paid for by a memorial donation from Colin Williams - 'Milly's Wood'.
- The "Woodland Bunker", a WWII ammunition store which has been turned into a workshop and educational space, complete with solar lighting and power.

During 2014 the AWT's voluntary Conservation Officer, Cristina Gonzalez, put in over 800hrs to the development of a woodland management plan. This plan was approved by the GSC in June and will inform the annual action plans which the AWT prepares for its team to work from. The 2015 plan will be brought to GSC in February 2015.

2014 has seen a significant increase in use of the site, with growing numbers of local dog walkers and pedestrians, as well as the Alderney Cubs and St. Anne's School actively using the site on a regular basis. A new Woodland Trail walking guide will be created to replace the SoA's existing Les Rochers leaflet which is produced by SoA Marketing Department.

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 (see table 1.).

In 2014 approx. 20km of footpath, largely minor paths over both SoA and private land, and often within popular walking areas such as Longis and the Giffoine, was maintained by the AWT.

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 a few 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 2014 the path management regime was maintained at a good level, though the excessive growth experienced during the early spring put some sections of path behind schedule during late March to early May when problems were experienced by both AWT and PWD teams. In the 2013 annual report the following sentence was included:

.'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.'

Due to the restructuring of the PWD this development of joint management planning, as already described in this report, did not take place. The AWT feels that there is an URGENT need to ensure that management plans for this area of effort are developed at the earliest possible opportunity as there are large sections of the path network where the organisation responsible has not been identified and several sections where both PWD and AWT undertake cutting wasting valuable resources.

The AWT maintains a full set of footpath management notes in its Reserves Officer's Handbook which is available upon request and a copy of which has been sent to the Acting States Engineer.

1.d Invasive species and weed control

Ragwort Control; alongside its commitment to manage SoA and private land within the island's reserves and other sites the AWT has maintained its support for the Mauvaises Herbes law. This has meant a regular annual programme primarily targeting ragwort on AWT 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. 35hrs 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 2015. 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 20hrs 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 of negotiation and preparation. *Ramsar* is the Convention on the Protection of Internationally Important Wetlands and 'Alderney's West Coast and Burhou Islands' 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 marine conservation programme currently underway in Channel Island waters.

The winter weather of 2013/14 created what is now understood to be the worst seabird disaster ('wreck') in recorded history. Over 50,000 birds (approx. 28,000 puffins) were washed up dead, mostly along the French and southern English Atlantic coastlines. In total, during 6 weeks of dedicated daily beach survey by staff and volunteers, over 140 dead birds were found on Alderney's beaches (annual average estimated at 12 birds) whilst only 1 injured bird was rescued. Because of Alderney's work on seabirds, as well as its strong links with both French and English governmental and non-governmental groups, Alderney played a major part in tracking and helping to co-ordinate the response to this disaster. The AWT co-ordinated the Channel Island data gathering on the event and the Living Island's team helped brief and disseminate information within organisations working in France. Despite this disaster the annual breeding returns in 2014 were much better than could have been expected with only a few species below average. However, the massive additional effort required to respond to this event saw many AWT volunteers and staff putting in a lot of additional hours. AWT would like to thank all of those involved, including the Alderney Harbour Office, for everything they did.

Because of the "wreck" the usual extensive programme of practical management and research work was expanded at late notice in 2014 (GSC permission sought for Action Plan Changes and for review of the Bird Law). This level of work resulted in the expansion of research work being carried out on all Alderney's breeding seabirds and led to the production of the first comprehensive breeding seabirds review in several years..

The second -field season of a PhD research project linked with Liverpool University and the Alderney Commission for Renewable Energy was completed. Using GPS transmitters the project will study foraging behaviour of the northern gannet.

Key results of 2013:

- The Puffin population on Burhou totalled 143 pairs, a decrease on the 168 pairs of 2013 and the second decrease in 2 years, though still significantly up on the 2005 population of 120 pairs.
- Fulmar, and Shag populations all stable in comparison to previous years with consistent breeding success for each species.
- Ringed plover breeding success was seen to increase significantly, possibly as a result of the introduction of warning signs on Platte Saline. Common Tern numbers also increased, however, warning signs will need to be produced for their breeding site in 2015.

- University of Liverpool PhD study on Gannets has enabled Alderney to respond to the National Planning Enquiry for the Navitus Bay wind farm site off the Isle of Wight, with Alderney's Gannets being cited in over 100 of the responses to the planning inspectorate.
- A full programme of events was successfully carried out within the Ramsar area and its associated sites. Awareness of Alderney's work was greatly increased through these events and through the vast increase in use of our social networking sites.

3. LIVE: teaching through nature

In 2014 LIVE, the internet based learning project set up by the AWT, was expanded to reach up to 200 schools. LIVE offers a dedicated 12 week educational programme with over 300 teaching 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, specifically Puffins and, but in 2014 this was expanded to cover Choughs in Jersey, thanks to the Birds on the Edge project and Durrell Conservation Trust. It was intended to also cover Gannets on Ortac, however the system did not successfully run this year. For 12 weeks the pupils and teachers invited the natural world into their classrooms through 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 visited participating schools and about which the pupils wrote blog posts.

In total 73 schools signed up to the programme in 2014, 18 from the Crown Dependencies, with 69% of schools fully participating in the programme, that is logging in to use the programme twice a week or more, 64% used the site five or more times a week. It is estimated that upwards of 1,000 students within the Channel Islands and Isle of Man used the project on a weekly or daily basis, with a further 4-5,000 students involved across the UK. All those taking part were given a detailed introduction to Alderney and its wildlife which has generated very positive feedback.

Thanks to the securing of support from HSBC International, which will allow the AWT to cover website design and programme development costs, the AWT intends to extend the programme in 2015 to include elements aimed at the island's history and sections for reception students. It is hoped that this will allow the project to approach the full figure of 200 schools. The AWT is also attempting to raise funding to enable it to GPS tag some of the Gannets which will be nesting in front of the (hopefully) working GannetCam in 2015. This will enable those using the website to actually both see the birds live on their nests but also follow them as they fly thousands of miles to feed.

By running LIVE Alderney also has a well-managed and designed website which reaches around 30,000 people, with 80,000 visits. It is also generating a unique story, which in turn can be used for marketing purposes.

4. Tourism and publicity

2014 saw a reorganization of the Alderney Visitor Information Centre. This meant a reduction in the AWT's responsibility for managing the volunteer effort in the Centre and a reconfiguration of the Centre itself. When the decision was reached to undertake these changes the SoA Marketing Department indicated its intent to hire an additional part time member of staff. Unfortunately this did not happen until mid-summer which meant a period when there was no clear management for the Centre, and the AWT ended up manning the public desk, much of the time using its own staff.

Following the appointment of the new marketing assistant the situation has improved dramatically, During Autumn and Winter, however, the AWT is still required to staff the desk for much of the time, though it is not responsible for managing the volunteer effort.

During 2014 the AWT supported SoA Marketing by:

- Commitment of over 25hrs assistance from the Trust Manager to assist Be a Tiger and SoA Tourism and Marketing in the production of literature, provision of information for journalists and supplying of type.
- The use of the AWT's boat at cost for filming and journalistic trips
- Approximately 600hrs of staff cover for the front public desk.

5. Living Islands

In 2012 the AWT was approached by the then SoA CEO to respond to the strategic aim to generate a greater interest in niche tourism markets.

In response the AWT sourced an external consultant, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, who advised on the creation of a local nature and heritage tourism programme, Living Islands. From this starting point the AWT then secured £50,000 (50%) funding for the project on the basis that the SoA would match fund and a commitment that new joint working practices. These practices would be aimed at delivering more effective, cost efficient and sustainable working between the SoA and the AWT, maximizing the limited resources of both organisations to:

- avoid wastage
- maximize the results to ensure the best possible face of Alderney being show to residents
- involve the island in the management of its green spaces in such a way as to support both organisations.

A full report on Living Island's progress this year will be available directly from its manager. However, in 2014 the Trust took a lead in:

- increasing effort ton footpath management to support visitors and residents use of the island
- providing events support to Living Islands and where possible integrating existing AWT effort into the Living Islands programme to increase the value to both organisations
- Supporting the heritage work, primarily at Cambridge Battery Fort Tourgis but also at Bibette Head
- Producing literature and signage
- Developing a framework for joint management planning to try and integrate both the AWT and PWD effort to increase the overall yield of the project.
- Support the Living Islands team by providing use of the Trust's workboat at cost or below whenever possible

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 in order to monitor the effectiveness of AWT management and conservation efforts.
2. Objectives - Records are important as a way to inform objectives for management and conservation efforts, which help us to form an understanding of ecosystems.

ARC strategic objectives for 2014, progress and achievements are detailed below:

ARC Objective Group	Objective	Progress and Further Achievements
Structural Objectives	Maintain a member of staff to oversee ARC	ARC has a nominal full time (35hrs/pw, minimum) staff member..
	To keep up to date with new technology, including computer hardware and software	A Microsoft Access database was created to manage the ARC's data. This is now being moved forwards onto a specialist system designed by the Guernsey Biological Records Centre and which is used by both the States of Guernsey and Jersey.
	Maintain a telephone, email and public drop in service for records	Currently, the Terrestrial Ecologist email account is adequate for this purpose and is receiving new sightings.

	To regularly upload records from 2013 survey work	Constant effort was maintained on these objectives throughout the year.
	To encourage Alderney residents, in particular children, to take an interest in their natural environment and cultural heritage	
	To improve and help to direct recording effort, focusing that effort where necessary and encouraging structured recording schemes with appropriate methodologies	
Operational Objectives	To encourage environmental recording in Alderney and maintain and enhance its quality	<p>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.</p> <p>Further ARC provided a central mechanism for collating records which occurred due to the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seabird wreck, managing records for UK, Channel Islands and France. • Collating records on trees which fell during winter storms. • Fulfilling the requirements for information for future planning review
	Collect images of species for use on the website	
	To provide a resource for the SoA and other organisations to respond to unforeseen situations	
Financial Objectives		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 AWT is dependent on one of its 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 AWT is able to attract a huge amount of both skilled and unskilled voluntary labour.

4.5	- Full time volunteer staff	=	7,020 hrs p.a.
4	- Part time volunteer officers (with key responsibilities)	=	1,920 hrs p.a.
7	- Volunteer Directors	=	672 hrs p.a.
11	- Alderney Visitor Information Centre Staff coverage of front desk	=	600 hrs p.a.
10	- Conservation Volunteers	=	1,100 hrs p.a.
8	- Living Islands Heritage sites Volunteers	=	500 hrs p.a.
2	- Ramsar project volunteers (including volunteer effort Monitoring wreck and recovering birds)	=	360 hrs p.a.
1	- PhD student	=	300 hrs p.a.
Total estimated voluntary hours secured by the AWT during 2014			= 12,472 hrs p.a.

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

35	active staff and volunteers	=	14,672 hrs p.a.
(Equivalent to almost 8 full time SoA employees @ 38hrs p.w., 48 weeks of the year)			

9. Conclusion

In conclusion the AWT would like to note the very positive relationship which has continued to develop between it and the SoA, not only through the Living Islands project, but also in the support the AWT has received from the civil service and members.

The Trust hopes that this relationship will continue to flourish, but would once again it would stress the need for a properly constituted relationship which defines the AWT's roll in relation to its delivery of key services to the States and the role of the SoA departments to which it offers its support. For all the successes of the year the AWT continues to exist only on the good will of the volunteers, donors and members who support and in turn it needs a clearly defined relationship with the SoA to enable it to demonstrate to these supporters that the SoA in turn values the effort they expend in supporting the island.