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Joint Nature Conservation Committee

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South Atlantic Overseas Territories Natural Capital Assessment: Ascension Island Workshop Report

ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE SOUTH ATLANTIC

14th June 2018

I) Introduction

In February 2017 a Natural Capital Assessment workshop was held on Ascension Island, delivered by Wolf's Company, JNCC and the South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI). The airhead was closed shortly afterwards and it was decided to focus attention on the other South Atlantic islands until access to Ascension was easier. Since then many of the participants have left the island and a second workshop seemed appropriate.

Ness Smith, the Natural Capital Project Manager from SAERI, was on Ascension Island between 9th June and 15th July 2018 to reintroduce the South Atlantic Natural Capital Assessment Project and discuss with this new set of stakeholders how an NCA approach could help to inform environmental decision making on the island. The aim of the workshop, held on 14th June, was to provide basic training in natural capital concepts and to identify and prioritise ideas for a natural capital assessment for Ascension Island (Annex I). It was attended by 24 representatives from AIG, the Legislative Council and USAFB, and the Administrator Justine Allen attended for an hour in the morning (Annex II). The following is a brief record of that day.

II) Overview of the Natural Capital Assessment project

Ness Smith introduced SAERI and its work, and went on to describe the NCA project in more detail (see accompanying PowerPoint presentation 1.)

The UK Government, through the FCO managed Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, is supporting a suite of natural capital projects across the UK's South Atlantic and Caribbean Overseas Territories. This work is designed to improve economic stability in the Territories through enhanced environmental resilience as part of a programme led by the UK's Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra). The natural capital project began in September 2016 and will be completed by March 2019 with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) as the Implementing Body. In the South Atlantic, the natural capital project work is being undertaken by South SAERI under a Memorandum of Agreement with the JNCC.

Figure 1: Funding route for the South Atlantic Natural Capital Assessment Project

The project will assist the UK's Overseas Territories in the South Atlantic to assess and map natural capital, value priority assets and deploy decisions support tools to secure long-term economic benefits from the sustainable management of the territories' natural assets. This support will be provided through the development and collation of spatial (mapped)

evidence, and a Territory-to-Territory partnership for technical exchange and capacity building within the UK's Overseas Territories in the region. The outcome will be a framework for the South Atlantic UK Overseas Territories to assess the value of the environmental goods and services available and integrate this information into marine and terrestrial spatial planning, economic planning and environmental protection.

SAERI will be providing an evidence base for Ascension Island Government and other stakeholders to make decisions on the areas identified as a priority in this workshop. The project focuses on four key deliverables:

- Spatial data on the distribution of selected natural capital assets, both marine and terrestrial, derived from satellite imagery and other existing resources, as relevant to each Territory;
- Valuation of priority natural capital assets (value mapping integrated into national GIS) and the assessment of economic and societal benefits arising from them;
- Application of analytical tools that will support decision making in the context of environmental management and economic development (e.g. scenarios);
- Methods for monitoring changes to priority natural capital over time using appropriate attributes (e.g. indicators).

The outputs and approach are being tailored for each island, but the general process is outlined in figure 2.

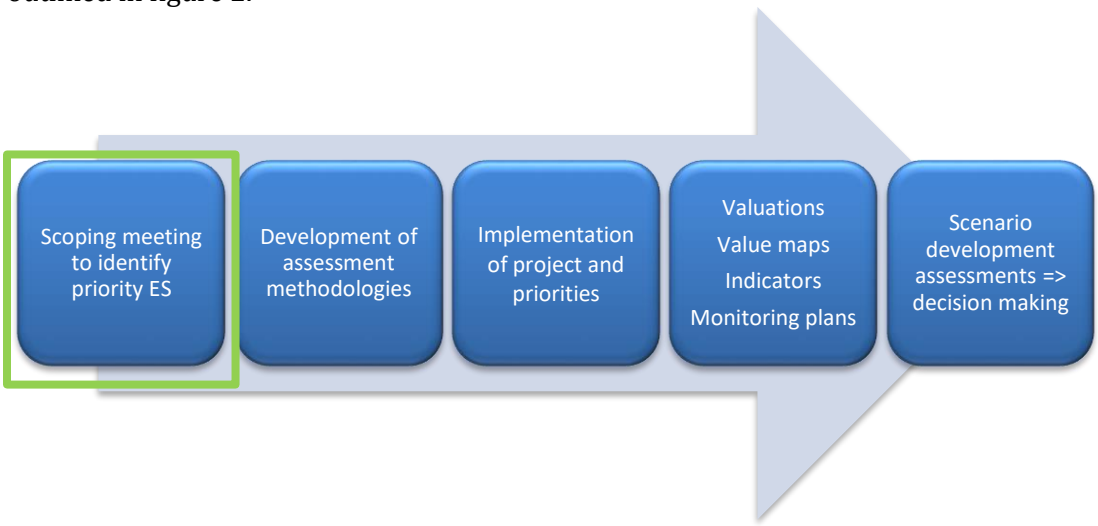

Figure 2: Work-flow for the NCA Project; green square indicates current status in Ascension

There are four Groups set up to support the project (Figure 3) and the Ascension Island Territory Advisory Group (outlined in green) will be a key conduit between AIG, regional cross-territory group, wider stakeholders and the project team.

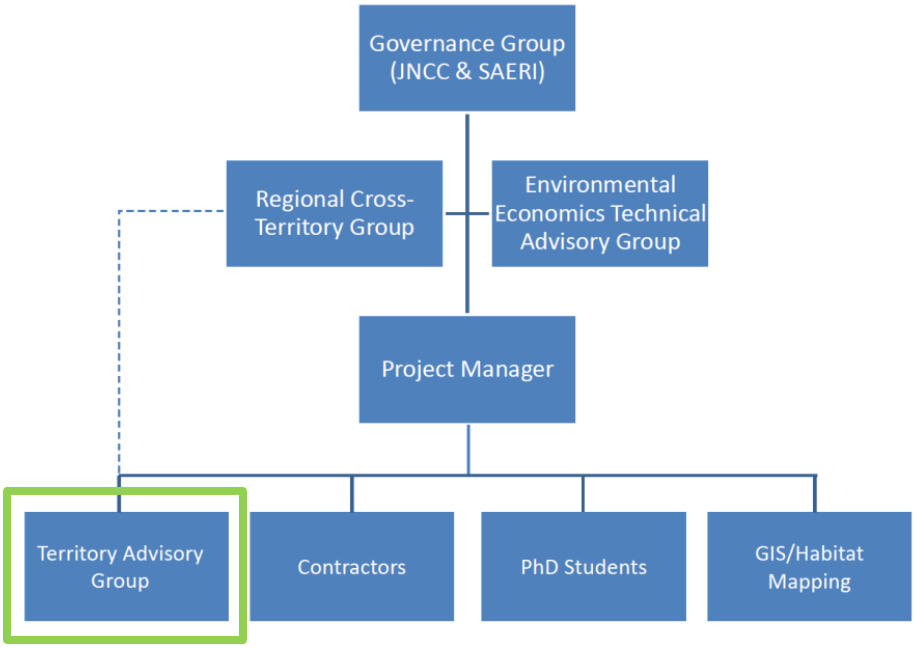

Figure 3: Governance structure of the South Atlantic Overseas Territories Natural Capital Assessment Project

Ness Smith, the NCA project manager then introduced the concept of natural capital and its uses in decision making, as well as the different ways in which the value of ecosystem services – both monetary and non-monetary – can be assessed. Please see accompanying PowerPoint presentation 2.

III) Validation of Ascension Island ecosystems and ecosystem services

During the project manager's presentation on natural capital concepts, attendees were shown photographs of Ascension Island and asked to name the benefits they saw in them. This was taken forward into a more formal session, where people were asked to validate the Island's ecosystems and ecosystem services identified in the February 2017 workshop (Tables 1 & 2). It was agreed that both were still valid and that these will be used as a basis for developing the Ascension Island NCA proposals.

Table 1: Ecosystems identified by participants in February '17 and confirmed in June '18

Shallow marine habitats	• Rocky reef habitats • Rhodolith beds • Sandy habitats
Pelagic marine habitats	• Pelagic zone • Sea mounts
Coastal habitats	• Beaches • Rocky coastline • Pools
Terrestrial habitats	• Lava flows and ash fields • Lower altitude peaks • Man-made cloud forest (green mountain)

Table 2: Ecosystem services identified in February '17 and one addition (in green) in June '18

Provisioning services	• Fishing • Water • Rock • Aggregate for construction • Vegetable production / hydroponics • Foraging (guava, banana etc.)
Regulating services	• Microclimate control • Carbon sequestration • Regulation of water flows
Cultural services	• Local recreation (diving, snorkeling, hiking, fishing) • Tourism (including the potential for tourism) • Potential for research

The Project Manager also reminded everyone of the priority services identified at the previous workshop (Table 3) but suggested that, given the time elapsed and staff changes since then, it would be good to revisit these.

Table 3: Priority ecosystem services identified in February '17

Scientific research	Culture & recreation
Biodiversity	Tourism
Microclimate	Carbon sequestration
Construction materials	Fresh water
Fisheries	

IV) Identification of questions and/or potential projects for the NCA to address, and selection of priority areas

Participants were divided into three groups and asked to identify strategies, policies, upcoming decisions or questions which the NCA could support and the ecosystem services associated with this. They were tasked to develop ideas for assessments from this if possible (Tables 4, 5 & 6).

Table 4: Group 1 outputs (Alasdair, Eve, Megan, Nathan, Sophie, Dan, Jo)

Assessment
• MPA – evidence on impact of sport vs commercial fishing for benefit of island
• MPA – what is being taken & affect inshore; impact of personal fishing, legislation before rise in tourism
• Terrestrial built heritage; exiles, garden cottage => all disused buildings => costs of conversion to cafes, gyms, accommodation, social hubs etc.
• Charging for volunteers/interns/voluntourism => shorter term
• Cost benefit of local farming
• Tourism – full-on dive club – affect, benefits? Unique accommodation
• Municipal composting – combat food waste
• Alternative renewables – solar, tide.

Table 5: Group 2 outputs (Dee, Christiane, Kate, Jon, Mike, Andy, Tash)

Assessment
• Repair water catchment => hydroponics (less desalination), endemic restoration, and increase in cultural heritage.
• Carbon sequestration – marine & terrestrial => habitat value, carbon credits
• Marine mineral extraction
• Renewable energy and storage => electric cars
• Marine tourism => potential & distribution
• Ecotourism => geotourism
• Agriculture =>food waste => compost
• Development planning => EIA => identify suitable sites
• Invasive species (Mexican Thorn, sheep, donkeys) => threats, costs. Costs to eradicate – savings.
• Citizen science – cultural benefits

Table 6: Group 3 outputs (Andrew, Eliza, Kitty, John E, Kevin, Clarence)

Assessment
• Cost Benefit Analysis of a breakwater for safe harbour
• Tourism – sports fishing
• Fisheries
• Agriculture

At the end of this session, all ideas were displayed and a representative from each group talked through their ideas. The project manager scoped-out a few ideas as being unfeasible at this stage. She then worked with participants to identify similar themes and ideas across the groups, and collated these into nine potential assessments (Table 7). Each remaining participant was given three sticky dots to vote for the assessments they would like to see go forward. Voters were reminded that they could only place one dot per assessment.

Table 7: Collated assessments and number of votes

Assessment	# Votes
Potential value of increased agricultural production	10
Value of marine ecosystem services within the proposed MPA (excluding fishing)	9
Potential value of geotourism and other terrestrial tourism	9
Potential value of 'voluntourism'	8
Cost Benefit Analysis of building a breakwater for safe harbouring	5
Value of education/research	5
Cost Benefit Analysis of renewable energy	3
Benefits of clearing invasives (Mexican Thorn/Sheep)	3
Land use planning	2

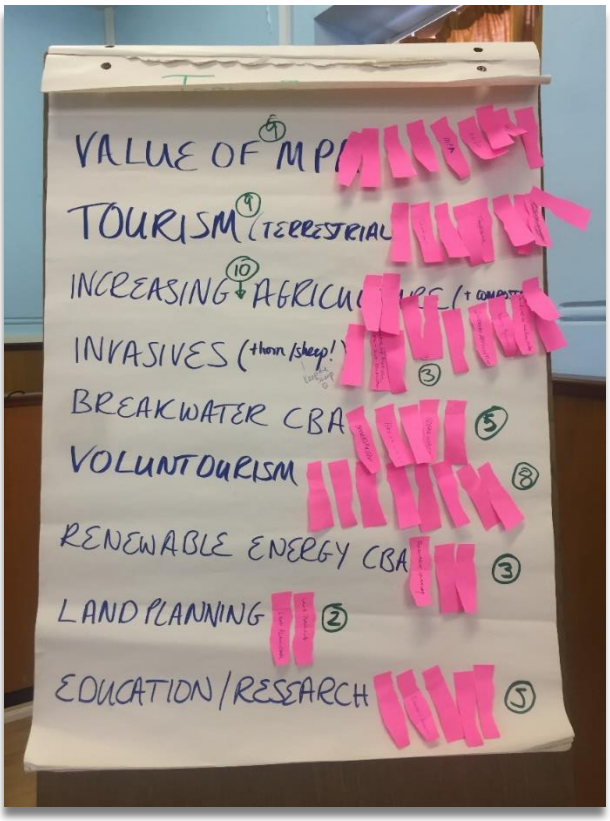

Figure 4: Photo of collated assessments and votes

V) Next Steps

The project manager explained that the next steps would involve taking the information from the meeting and developing proposals from the priority areas identified. She stressed that data availability, time and resource would all need to be considered in developing these proposals and that it would be an iterative process. The MPA work could take up a lot of resource.

An Ascension Island territorial advisory group will be set-up and several people volunteered to be members; Alasdair Bain, Dee Baum, Kate Chadwick, Kitty George, Kevin Hudson, Andy Richardson and Dan Sadd. The advisory group will guide and steer the proposals and consult with colleagues for input where necessary. An advisory group meeting will be held towards the end of the project manager's stay on island (date to be confirmed) to discuss progress and next steps.

Annex I: Agenda

South Atlantic Natural Capital Assessment project; prioritising assessments in Ascension Island

Thursday 14th June 2018, Courthouse, Georgetown

Time	Activity
09.30	Tea & coffee
10.00	Welcome and introductions
10.15	Introduction to the NCA project
10.30	Training session; NCA approaches
12.15	Lunch
13.15	Validate key Ascension Island ecosystem services
13.45	Identify policies and upcoming decisions NCA could support
15.30	Coffee break
15.45	Selection of priority services to assess
16.00	Wrap up, feedback and next steps
16.30	Close

Annex II: Attendees

Ascension workshop attendees

Name	Position
Andrew Airnes	Terrestrial Conservation Officer & Reserves Warden, AIG Conservation
Justine Allan	Administrator (observer)
Christiane Anthony	Environmental Health, Ascension Island Government
Alasdair Bain	Policy, AIG
Diane Baum	Head of Conservation and Fisheries, AIG Conservation
Megan Benjamin	Conservation Assistant, AIG Conservation
Kate Chadwick	Marine Fisheries Scientist, AIG Conservation
Marcella Corcoran	Kew Gardens/AIG Conservation (observer)
Evelyn Denton	AIG Conservation
John Esposito	Environmental, USAFB
Nathan Fowler	Environmental Health, Ascension Island Government
Kitty George	Ascension Island Council/Assistant Harbour Master, AIG
Jonathan Greenslade	AIG Conservation
Mike Haworth	Waste Management Project Manager, Ascension Island Government
Kevin Hudson	Environmental, USAFB
Nicholas John	Ascension Island Council/Sure
Eliza Leat	Seabird Scientist, AIG Conservation
Mark Neale	(observer) Crown Counsel, Ascension Island Government
Andy Richardson	Senior Marine & Fisheries Scientist, AIG Conservation
Clarence Roberts	Acting Police Inspector, AIG
Daniel Sadd	Marine Fisheries Scientist , AIG Conservation
Jolene Sim	Conservation Team Leader/Native Plant Nursery Officer AIG Conservation
Natasha Timm	Conservation Assistant, AIG Conservation
Sophie Tuppen	Conservation Fieldworker, AIG Conservation

Invited but could not attend

Name	Position
Councillor Arms-Lawrence	Ascension Island Council
Marie-Anne Dennis	Ascension Island Government
Councillor Ellick	Ascension Island Council
Major Adam Harris	USAFB
Matt Stritch	John Matthew Stritch, Conservation Fieldworker (National Parks)/Assistant Warden, AIG Conservation
Jamie Manson	Ascension Island Government
Nathan Millington	Ascension Island Government

Kevin Williams (Charles)	Environmental Health, Ascension Island Government
Councillor Young	Ascension Island Council