

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

CONFIDENTIAL

Title of Report: Applications Process to visit Beauchene Island

Paper No: 35/15

Date: 11th March 2015

Report of: Environmental Officer
Head of Environmental Planning
Head of Policy

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To advise Executive Council on a revised process for applying to visit Beauchene Island and other FIG-owned islands.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Executive Council is recommended to adopt the following points:

R1. Change the permission process such that applications to visit Beauchene Island are considered and approved by the Environmental Committee.

R2. That the approvals process set out in R1 is extended to requests to visit the other FIG-owned islands which have National Nature Reserve designation (with the exception of Kidney Island).

R3. That the existing process of visits to Kidney Islands and FIG owned islands which do not have National Nature Reserve designation being approved through the Environmental Planning Department continues.

R4. That FIG retains the existing policy that visits to Beauchene Island are approved for scientific purposes where the impact on the resident wildlife is negligible. Visits for purposes of tourism and wildlife filming will not be approved under the delegation of authority.

R5. That the existing practise of allowing visits for tourism and filming purposes on the other FIG-owned islands which have National Nature Reserve designation is confirmed as an acceptable policy.

R6. That visits to all FIG-owned islands (including Beauchene) are subject to strict biosecurity measures as noted in the report at appendix 2.

3.0 Additional Budgetary Implications

3.1 None.

4.0 Background

- 4.1 Beauchêne Island is a FIG-owned National Nature Reserve and is identified as an internationally important bird area (IBA) and is the most southerly and remote island in the Falklands archipelago. It lies thirty miles to the south of Sea Lion Island. Beauchêne Island is a pristine environment hosting a wealth of seabird biodiversity. The island holds the largest population of rockhopper penguins in the Falkland Islands (estimated at 105,000 pairs in 2010), the second largest population of black browed albatrosses (estimated at 139,000 pairs in 2010) and is the only breeding site of fairy prions in the Falkland Islands. It also hosts a sizable population of striated caracaras.
- 4.2 Historically Beauchêne Island has been visited infrequently due to its remoteness and difficult landing aspect. In more recent years access to the island has been strictly controlled by FIG in order to reduce disturbance to the wildlife on the Island and minimise the risk of invasive plants and animals being introduced.
- 4.3 Beauchêne Island was declared a wild animal and bird sanctuary by the Wild Animals and Bird Protection (Sanctuaries) (No 3) Order 1964. By operation of s13(2) of the Conservation of Wildlife and Nature Ordinance, areas protected under Sanctuary Orders were converted into National Nature Reserves.
- 4.4 Under s16 of the Conservation of Wildlife and Nature Ordinance the Governor has powers to introduce and regulate access to National Nature Reserves in keeping with the regime and conditions envisaged in this paper.
- 4.5 At present it is recommended that the regime for approval of visits to Beauchene Islands and accompanying conditions is imposed using FIG's controls as landowner. However, in future, it may be that some of the issues would be more appropriately addressed by regulation of the relevant areas made under the Conservation of Wildlife and Nature Ordinance. The recent protected areas strategy work undertaken by Falklands Conservation will likely feed into future management considerations.
- 4.6 Such regulations may not be used to interfere with any pre-existing public rights over land. However, the 'right to roam' powers contained within the National Parks Ordinance only apply to land designated as a National Park. National Nature Reserves do not fall within the definition of National Park unless specifically designated as such. Accordingly, the public's right to roam does not apply to Beauchêne Island.

5.0 Visit Permission

- 5.1 Landings on Beauchêne Island are currently required to be approved by Executive Council under a policy decision confirmed in 2000 (Executive paper number 245/00).
- 5.2 A full list of approved visits to Beauchene Island since 1962 is included at Appendix 1. This shows that visits are irregular and only generally occur every few years.
- 5.3 The last visit to the island was in November 2014 by a group from Falklands Conservation. Permission was sought from Executive Council under paper 218/14. Permission was granted and ExCo advised they felt it appropriate that future permissions be granted by EPO/Environmental Committee.

6.0 New Approvals Process

- 6.1 It is advised that permission to visit Beauchene Island could be granted by the Environmental Committee. This would remove the need to ask Executive Council to consider these requests and by ensuring Environmental Committee consider each request this maintains a high degree of scrutiny over visits to Beauchene Island. This procedure was agreed to by Environmental Committee in a meeting held on 19th February 2015. It is confirmed that in determining any applications the Committee would apply the existing policy; reference recommendation R4 above.
- 6.2 It is confirmed that if any application to visit for scientific purposes included any proposals for research which would require a licence under section 9 of the Conservation of Wildlife and Nature Ordinance, a separate application would have to be made in that regard.
- 6.3 If this approach is felt to be appropriate it is further recommended that requests to visit other important FIG-owned Islands which are designated as National Nature Reserves should be considered by the Environmental Committee. This would comprise; Bird Island, the FIG-owned Jason Islands (South Jason, Elephant Jason, Flat Jason, Seal Rocks and North Fur Island), the Arch Islands group, Sea Dog Island and Cochon Island. These are all near-pristine islands hosting globally important seabird populations and are remote uninhabited islands.
- 6.4 It is recommended that visits to other FIG-owned remote islands which are not designated as NNRs should be issued through the Environmental Planning Dept. Additionally it should be noted that visits to Kidney Island, by far the most visited island owned by FIG, should continue to be issued through the EPD. A review of the management of Kidney Island (as the only regularly-visited FIG-owned Island) will take place in winter 2015 and a report will be brought to Environmental Committee for consideration.

7.0 Conditions of visit

- 7.1 As landowner FIG is entitled to control access to Beauchêne Island. Where FIG agrees to grant permission to visit the island, it is entitled to impose such conditions as it considers appropriate in the interests of the preservation of the environment.
- 7.2 Visits to Beauchene Island have historically been approved for scientific purposes where the impact on the resident wildlife is negligible. Visits for purposes of tourism and wildlife filming have not been approved. It is recommended this remains the same for Beauchene Island but not for the other FIG-owned NNRs. Visits for tourism and filming purposes have been allowed on these islands.
- 7.3 It is recommended that visits to Beauchene Island and all remote FIG islands should be allowed subject to established strict biosecurity and safety conditions. These are noted in Appendix 2 and incorporate strict biosecurity policy and invasive species mitigation measures.
- 7.4 In addition, any visiting party will be required to abide by the Falkland Islands Countryside Code, including controls over biosecurity, lighting fires, smoking and proximity to wildlife.
- 7.5 As with all visits to FIG-owned Islands, a Post Visit Report will be required to be completed and returned to the Environmental Planning Department. This will provide an update on the general environmental condition of Beauchêne Island.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no implications which directly flow from the recommendations within the report however Honourable Members may wish to note that as part of the EPD 15/16 budget submission, proposed charges for visits to islands have been put forward as discussed in the November Environmental Committee meeting.

7.0 Legal Implications

- 7.1 None.

8.0 Human Resources Implications

- 8.1 None.

Appendix 1: Scientific visits to Beauchêne Island between 1962 and 2014.

| Date | | | Scientific party | Study | |
|-------------|-----------|-----------------------|---|--|------------|
| 1962 | Dec | Day | HMS Protector | Wildlife surveys, Establish Trigonometry Point | Vessel |
| 1963 - 1972 | | Multiple days | I. Strange | Wildlife surveys, 6 visits | |
| 1977 | Mar | Day | R. Lewis-Smith | Wildlife surveys | |
| 1980 | Dec | Multiple days | R. Lewis-Smith and P. Prince | Wildlife surveys | Vessel |
| 1983 | Feb | Multiple days | I. Strange | Wildlife surveys | |
| 1987 | Feb | | A. Douse | Wildlife surveys | |
| 1991 | Mar | Multiple days | Falklands Conservation | Wildlife surveys | Vessel |
| 1992 | Mar | | Mike Riddy and Conor Nolan | Effects of fishing vessel sinking | Vessel |
| 1992 | Sep | | Falklands Conservation (M. Riddy) | Oil sticks in place | Vessel |
| 1992 | Oct | | Falklands Conservation (M. Riddy) | Check of oil sticks | Vessel |
| 1995 | | Multiple days | Falklands Conservation (M. Riddy) | Seabird surveys | |
| 1996 | Feb | Day | E. Edwards and K. Curle | Geology survey | Vessel |
| 1996 | Nov | Multiple days | G. Robertson and T. Chater | Photography | |
| 1998 | Dec | | National Geographic with I. Strange | Filming | Helicopter |
| 2000 | Oct | | <i>Galatee Films - refused</i> | <i>Filming</i> | |
| 2000 | Feb/Mar | Multiple days | Falklands Conservation (N. Huin) | Albatross tracking | Vessel |
| 2000 | Oct | Multiple days | Falklands Conservation (N. Huin) | Seabird surveys Albatross tracking | Vessel |
| 2005 | Nov | Multiple days | Falklands Conservation (N. Huin) | Seabird surveys | Vessel |
| 2009 | Dec | Day visits from yacht | Shallow Marine Surveys Group (P. Brickle) | Shallow Marine Survey | Vessel |
| 2010 | Oct & Dec | Multiple days | Falklands Conservation (S. Crofts) | Seabird surveys Rockhopper tracking Insect Collections | Vessel |
| 2011 | Mar & Nov | Multiple days | Falklands Conservation (S. Crofts and R. Upson) | Rockhopper tracking Plant and Lichen survey | Vessel |
| 2011 | Nov | Multiple days | Max Planck Institute (J. Masello) | Seabird surveys | Vessel |
| 2014 | Nov | Multiple Days | Falklands Conservation (M Reeves) | Striated Caracara survey | Vessel |

Appendix 2

Conditions of visits to Beauchêne Island and all FIG-Owned Islands

Dear Sir/Madam,

Your application to visit Beauchêne Island in XXX was approved by Environmental Committee on XXX, subject to the following conditions:

1. All members of the Group shall be made aware of, and carry, a copy of the Countryside Code (see below) and be made aware of their obligations to comply with the Conservation of Wildlife and Nature Ordinance
2. The yacht and zodiac shall be thoroughly inspected for pests and organic material before each shore deployment. The biosecurity protocols listed below should be adhered to at all times.
3. Take note that access beaches may be occupied by southern sea lions, elephant seals or South American fur seals, so extreme caution must be taken while landing and alternative routes taken if necessary.
4. There is to be no smoking, use of fuel stoves or camp fires to be lit on any part of the island.
5. No rubbish of any sorts shall be left ashore.
6. Extreme caution shall be taken not to trample the burrows of nesting seabirds. Areas of high burrow density must be avoided.
7. Do not damage or remove historical objects.
8. No animals, plants or soil of any description to be brought ashore accidentally or intentionally.
9. No fresh meat, vegetables, fruit or dairy products (especially poultry products and eggs) shall be brought ashore. Food must be stored in airtight containers and be checked thoroughly before leaving the vessel.
10. Ensure boots, clothing and equipment are clean before going ashore, paying particular attention to soil and seeds. Boots should be washed in a biocide.
11. Unless agreed in advance with the Environmental Planning Officer, no person shall stay overnight or cook/heat food on the island, (except in an emergency).
12. A Post Visit Report form shall be completed and returned to the Environmental Planning Department.

For additional safety it is advised that:

1. A two-metre set and Satellite Phone must be carried and a contact arranged in case of emergency.
2. All persons requiring access to be physically fit, given that access is off launches/ zodiacs and across rocky beaches.

Finally, access to this island is entirely at your own risk and the Falkland Islands Government cannot accept any liability.

Biosecurity protocols for visits to all islands

| RISK | MEASURES |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of rodents via equipment, transportation • Introduction of noxious plant seeds • Disease • Introduction of invasive invertebrates. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before arriving at any island all luggage and equipment to be brought ashore will be inspected and brushed down, removing all organic material. • Bags and equipment will be thoroughly checked for rodents before landing on Islands. • All foodstuffs should be stored in see-through sealed plastic boxes to minimise the chance of rodents hitchhiking to islands. • Boots will be washed prior to going ashore in a biocide; in this case it will be <i>Virkon</i>. Removing all organic material. All clothing will be inspected prior to going ashore paying particular attention to pockets, Velcro, footwear, gaiters, trouser turn-ups and jacket hoods. • No fresh meat, vegetables, fruit or dairy products, especially poultry products and eggs, will be brought ashore. • The zodiac will be thoroughly inspected for pests and organic material before each shore deployment. • If any invasive species, especially rodents, are accidentally introduced to the island, every effort should be made to capture or kill it. If this is not possible the incident will be reported to FC/EPD in Stanley for response. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rubbish and waste | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All rubbish will be stored in sealed containers and taken off the island at the end of the visit to be disposed of at the nearest facility |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fires | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No fires will be lit and no smoking will take place on any of the islands. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand held VHF radio for communications from ship to shore will be carried by the survey team on the islands. |

(Signed) Head of Environmental Planning, Falkland Islands Government

The Falkland Islands Countryside Code

1. Always ask permission before entering private land.
2. Keep to paths wherever possible. Leave gates open or shut as you find them.
3. Be aware of the high fire risks throughout the Islands. Be extremely careful when smoking not to start fires. Take cigarette butts away with you.
4. Do not drop litter*. Take your rubbish home with you.
5. Do not disfigure rocks or buildings.
6. Do not touch, handle, injure or kill any wild bird or other wild animal*.
7. Never feed wild animals.
8. Always give animals the right of way. Remember not to block the routes of seabirds and seals coming ashore to their colonies.
9. Try to prevent any undue disturbance to wild animals. Stay on the outside of bird and seal colonies. Remain at least 6 m (20 ft) away. When taking photograph or filming stay low to the ground. Move slowly and quietly. Do not startle or case wildlife from resting or breeding areas.
10. Some plants are protected and should not be picked*. Wildflowers are there for all to enjoy.
11. Whalebones, skulls, eggs or other such items may not be exported from the Falkland Islands*. They should be left where they are found.

* Such actions (with a few special exceptions) may constitute an offence in the Falkland Islands and could result in fines up to £3,000.