

Francesco Bandarin
Director
UNESCO World Heritage Centre
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France

1 February 2010

Dear Francesco

STATE PARTY REPORT 2010: STATE OF CONSERVATION OF HENDERSON ISLAND (UNITED KINGDOM) (N487)

I refer to your letter of 12 August 2008 to H.E. Mr Peter Landymore and to the World Heritage Committee's Decision **32 COM 7B.27** following examination of the state of conservation of Henderson Island World Heritage property at its 32nd session (Québec City, Canada, 2008).

In accordance with paragraph 5 of Decision **32 COM 7B.27**, I am pleased to submit to the World Heritage Centre a report on the state of conservation of the property, in the indicative format, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 34th session in July this year.

1. Response from the State Party to the World Heritage Committee's Decision, paragraph by paragraph

[Note: this information has to refer to developments over the past year or since the last decision of the Committee for this property]

Decision: 32 COM 7B.27

The World Heritage Committee,

- 1. Having examined Document WHC-08/32.COM/7B,**
- 2. Recalling Decision 31 COM 7B.34, adopted at its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007),**

Noted

3. **Welcomes the completion and dissemination of a visitor code of conduct;**

Noted.

4. **Notes the importance of decisive action in relation to threats to the property and requests the State Party to finalise plans for rapid implementation of eradication of the invasive Polynesian rat and to consider the appointment of a ranger for Henderson Island;**

Rat Eradication

In our 2008 state of conservation we reported that a feasibility study for rat eradication on Henderson Island, funded by the UK Government through the UK Government Overseas Territories Environmental Programme (OTEP), had been completed which considered that eradication of rats from Henderson was probably feasible. The feasibility study had identified two issues that needed to be resolved before eradication could proceed: how to avoid bait consumption by land-crabs preventing all rats from taking a toxic dose; and whether Henderson crabs could be captured and maintained in captivity during a poison bait drop.

A project to investigate how to resolve these problems, funded by the UK Government through OTEP, was carried out in 2009. The team captured 20 Henderson rails and successfully held these birds for four weeks in captivity, paving the way for a similar approach to be adopted during an actual eradication. It was also established that, despite the high density of land crabs, all rats were able to access and feed on bait pellets. In addition, trials with toxic bait pellets and endemic snails revealed no significant snail mortalities, indicating that this group of animals was not at risk from a rat eradication programme. These positive results have removed the last remaining conservation obstacles for an eradication programme.

A detailed Operational Plan for rat eradication, funded by OTEP, has now been prepared as part of a project managed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). Work is now underway to secure the necessary funding needed to carry out the eradication operation which is provisionally estimated to cost around £1.25 million.

The World Heritage Committee will wish to note that the Henderson Petrel has been added to the appendices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS), following a proposal by the UK Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) with the full support of the Henderson Island Management Committee. More details can be found on the CMS website: <http://www.cms.int/>

Ranger Post

The Pitcairn Governor's Representative visited Henderson in February 2009 and, after discussion with Pitcairn islanders, reported that a Ranger Post would be feasible. The topic was explored in detail by the Island Council and in the wider community. The Natural Resources Division Manager consulted the scientific team and accompanying islanders who visited Henderson in September 2009. A job description was drafted, a basic accommodation plan was developed and shipping logistics were considered. Care was taken to ensure that the plan would keep impact on the environment to a minimum.

An application for funding a Ranger posting has been submitted by the Government of Pitcairn Islands to OTEP. A decision on funding is expected in February 2010 and we will keep the World Heritage Committee informed of progress.

5. ***Also requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2010, a detailed report on the overall state of conservation of the property, including reference to alien fauna and flora, sustainable use of timber, turtle nesting beaches, extinctions, ex situ conservation and translocation as well as the planned ranger appointment and rat eradication scheme, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 34th session in 2010, and further requests the State Party to provide the World Heritage Centre with a copy of the Environmental Strategy for the Pitcairn Islands, when it is available.***

Sustainable Use of Timber

The Pitcairn Islanders have not visited Henderson to harvest timber (miro and tou) since 2004. The Mayor of Mangareva Island donated miro wood to Pitcairn in 2007 and the islanders have been using this supply for carvings, supplemented with a small amount of harvesting of miro wood on Pitcairn Island. There is currently no risk to the sustainability of miro and tou stocks on Henderson.

Turtle Nesting Beaches

The most likely threats to turtle nesting beaches remain increased visitor numbers and/or tourism development on Henderson. There has been no evidence of an increase in visitor numbers to Henderson and there are no immediate plans for any tourism developments.

Ex situ Conservation, Translocation and Extinction

In the absence of increased threats, no plans for ex situ conservation or translocation have been made with the exception of testing whether the Henderson Island crane can be captured and kept in captivity, which would be necessary before any rat eradication programme was implemented.

Flora and Fauna

No flora or fauna identified as being endemic to Henderson Island has become extinct in the life of the current Henderson Management Plan and there is no evidence of any new invasive species on Henderson over the last year.

Cetaceans

In July 2009, the Governor of Pitcairn Islands signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Island Region. The MOU had been concluded under the auspices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). Pitcairn's signing followed a unanimous agreement by the Pitcairn Island Council. Two Pitcairn Islanders reported that about 6-8 Humpback whales, generating 91 sightings, were resident off Henderson Island over a six-week period in August/September 2009.

Planned Ranger Appointment and Rat Eradication

See response to Decision Paragraph 4 above.

Environmental Strategy for the Pitcairn Islands

A copy of the Pitcairn Islands Environment Management Plan 2008 is attached with this report. The Henderson Island Management Committee was involved in the creation of the Environment Management Plan and took care to ensure its compatibility with the Henderson Island Management Plan.

This Plan sets out ten key objectives based on the Environment Charter guiding principles for managing the environment of the Pitcairn Islands. These targets aim to address the issues contained within these principles which include ensuring that all stakeholders play a part in decisions affecting the environment; increasing environmental awareness; highlighting the need for documentation and protection of the existing biodiversity and aiding development of the island group while integrating environmental protection. These objectives also address areas in which current environmental legislation can be improved and international obligations complied with and extended where necessary to the island group

2. Other current conservation issues identified by the State Party

[Note: conservation issues which are not mentioned in the Decision of the World Heritage Committee or any information request from the World Heritage Centre]

We wish to report progress against targets set out in the Henderson Island World Heritage Site Management Plan 2004-2009.

Target 1 – To appoint Members of the Henderson Island Management Committee

The Henderson Management Committee was established in 2004. It consists of environmentalists, representatives of the UK Government and representatives of the Government of Pitcairn Islands. Members of the Committee have submitted a funding bid to OTEP to update the Henderson Island Management Plan. A decision on funding is expected in February 2010.

The Pitcairn Government introduced a new internal governance structure in April 2009. The Pitcairn team involved with Henderson issues now includes the new Natural Resources Division Manager, the Director of Bio-Security, and the Quarantine Officer. They are assisted on Pitcairn by an officer from the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office - the Governor's Representative – who is based full-time on the island. This represents a significant commitment given the tiny size of the Pitcairn community which numbers only 53.

Target 2 – Draft Modification to Ordinances to afford Henderson Island appropriate conservation status and empower the Management Committee to take appropriate decisions

The Henderson Island Management Committee has determined that amending legislation

which changes the status of the Committee to enable it to pass bye-laws is unnecessary. The Committee can provide draft bye-laws to the Governor's Office for consideration.

Target 3 – Investigate feasibility of a Ranger on Henderson Island

See response to Decision Paragraph 4 above.

Target 4 – Write funding proposals for establishing a Ranger post on Henderson Island; develop visitors guides and notice boards to be erected on North Beach; preparation of a multi-lingual leaflet for distribution at departure points; establish new economically advantageous posts for Pitcairners to undertake forestry operations and monitor regeneration experiments

See response to Decision Paragraph 4 above for Ranger post and response to Decision Paragraph 5 for sustainable use of timber.

Visitor Guides and Notice Boards

We reported in 2008 that visitor guides on the ecology and conservation status of the Henderson Island, along with Pitcairn, Oneo and Ducie Islands were published in late 2007 and included a Code of Conduct for visitors to Henderson Island which advises how to minimize ecological footprints when visiting and specifically advises on the prevention of the introduction of alien species. The visitor guides are distributed at key points where visitors are likely to transit before visiting Henderson Island. The cost of translating the Code of Conduct for non-English speaking visitors is currently being investigated.

Notice boards have been created for erection on North Beach. The signs display the Code of Conduct for visitors to Henderson Island and also provide some educational information about the island and its status as a World Heritage Site. It is envisaged that the notice boards will be erected when Pitcairn Islanders next visit Henderson, at some point in 2010.

Target 5 – Monitoring and research on priority species of Henderson Island

See response to Decision Paragraph 4 above.

Target 6 – To agree on broad areas that should be a priority for scientific research

Scientific work continues to be focussed on rat eradication. Given the risk that the rats pose to the endemic fauna on Henderson Island, this must continue to be a priority.

3. **In conformity with paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, please describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) within the protected area (core zone and buffer zone and/or corridors) that might be envisaged.**

The State Party is not aware of any such issues.

Please let me know if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caity Marsh', enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

CAITY MARSH
International and Cultural Property Unit

cc: H.E. Mr Matt Sudders, UK Permanent Delegate to UNESCO
IUCN
ICOMOS
FCO
United Kingdom Commission for UNESCO

Enclosed: 1 x hard copy and 1 x cd copy of The Pitcairn Island Environment Management Plan
2008