

Kishore Rao
Director, World Heritage Centre
UNESCO
7 Place de Fontenoy
75352
Paris 07 SP
France

26th January 2012

Dear Kishore

GOUGH AND INACCESSIBLE ISLANDS (UNITED KINGDOM) (N740)

In accordance with Decision 33COM 7B.32, I am pleased to send you a State of Conservation Report for Gough and Inaccessible Islands for consideration by the Committee at its 36th Session in June 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]

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-09/33.COM/7B,

Noted

2. Recalling Decisions 28 COM 14B.17 and 32 COM 7B.27 adopted at its 28th (Suzhou, 2004) and 32nd (Quebec City, 2008) sessions respectively,

Noted

3. Notes the ongoing research efforts taking place at the property;

Noted; see below for ongoing research into bird populations

4. Notes with concern the threats to the property by invasive species and the decline in conservation status of Northern Rockhopper Penguin, Tristan Albatross and Gough Bunting;

5. Requests the State Party to ensure continuous programmes of eradication of *Sagina* for at least the next three years, and to eradicate mice within five

years; and urges the State Party to make sufficient funds available for the rapid implementation of projects for the eradication of the introduced species;

Sagina eradication

Eradication of alien *Sagina* continued on the coastal cliffs of Gough Island during September-October 2009. Activities were undertaken under the auspices of the Tristan Conservation Department with funding and management provided by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds from the United Kingdom's Overseas Territories Environment Programme.

No further spread of *Sagina* was found outside its known distribution. Inspection of areas previously stripped to bed rock suggested that the eradication programme was working in that no plants were found growing in areas actually stripped of the plant. No plants were seen in the island interior. Eradication activities continued into 2010 and will be maintained through until 2012 at least using field workers trained in accessing cliffs using ropes.

The eradication protocol ensures that very few plants remain and experiments have confirmed that the seed bank has been drastically reduced.

Rodents (mice)

At the 2011 Overseas Territories Consultative Council the Parliamentary Undersecretary for the Natural Environment and Fisheries, Richard Benyon, announced that funding of £250,000 would be dedicated towards a contribution towards the RSPB's initiative to eradicate mice on Gough Island, a site of international significance for breeding seabirds.

A draft operational plan for the eradication of Gough's invasive mice has been prepared. Rodent eradication experts and experienced operational managers from New Zealand were recruited as consultants in 2010 and visited Gough Island to prepare a provisional draft Operational Plan.

6. Also requests the State Party to support research to identify the causes of bird population declines and identify conservation measures to reverse these declines; including an assessment of possible management interventions to address seabird population declines caused by long line fishing;

In 2010, an international team of marine ornithologists, island conservation managers and rope-access technicians visited Gough to continue research activities on demographic monitoring of Tristan and Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatrosses, began a new demographic study of the Southern Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus* and continued monitoring of breeding success of Grey Petrels *Procellaria cinerea*, as well as of other species of burrowing petrels

and the Northern Rockhopper Penguin *Eudyptes moseleyi*.

The research is largely funded by the United Kingdom Government's Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) and Darwin Initiative.

7. Further requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2012, an updated report on the status of the eradication programme and an assessment of the status of and threats to the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, for review by the World Heritage Centre and IUCN.

This letter forms the report requested

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]

There are no other conservation issues identified by the State Party

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 more information

Yours sincerely



Mr. Paul Blaker
Head of World Heritage
Department for Culture, Media and Sport

cc: H.E Mr. Matthew Sudders, the Permanent Delegate of the United Kingdom to UNESCO
United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Tony Weighell, Joint Nature Conservation Committee