



Formal meeting of the Ascension Island Council Public Works Committee

16:30 on Wednesday 29 January 2025 at the Court House

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Alan Nicholls [Chair]
Councillor Gordon Worthington

In attendance: Director of Operations & Facilities, David Mills

Project Manager, Frikkie Myburgh
Lead & Trainer – Sea & Land Rescue Services,
Herbert Meth
Fiona Benjamin, Ag. Clerk of Council

1. Welcome

Councillor Nicholls [Chair of the Public Works Committee] welcomed all parties to the first meeting of 2025 and thanked those in attendance for joining to provide updates on matter of interest to the Public Works Committee.

2. Approval of Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the formal Public Works Committee meeting held on 9 July 2024 was accepted and agreed by Committee Members.

3. Review of 2024 and Plans for 2025

The Director of Operations and Facilities [DoOF] and Projects Manager [PM] provided an update and overview of activities and a review of 2024 and plans for 2025 to the Public Works Committee by way of a power point presentation.

The following progress in the last twelve months of projects that have been completed, many of which are down to the PM are as follows:

- i. Hospital mini refurbishment.**
- ii. Dental surgery refurbishment.**
- iii. Residency works.**
- iv. Two Boats flood defence (stage 1):** stage 2 is currently ongoing.
- v. Replacement of MT & MEP roof areas.**
- vi. New fire alarms were installed at the Hospital, School & AIG Main Building.**
- vii. Secured £379,000 in funding from MCA:** Most of the external funding secured was a team effort not only from DoOF and PM, but from The Shipping & Operations Officer, Lead & Trainer – Sea & Land Rescue Services & the Head of the Administrator's Office. Most of this funding will be used for the Sea Rescue Projects.
- viii. £681,000 secured from the FCDO IP Fund:** DoOF said that with both funding from MCA and FCDO IP, roughly a million pounds in funding was secured
- ix. NASA Road repairs:** Repairs have been completed on the Nasa road. Whilst there is still some work to be carried out the road is now open to the Public.
- x. Marty Wade Track:** Repairs to the Marty Wade Track have been completed. The track is now fully opened.

xi. Waste Water Treatment Plants: The Waste Water Plants have been fully commissioned. PM explained that the plants are ready to re-work the sewage, but additional work had been required to filter out items in the sewage system that should be disposed of by other means. Councillor Nicholls asked whether a public notice should be issued to say what should not be flushed down the toilet system. DoOF confirmed this would occur when both plants become fully online.

PM said on the next ship will be some piping for the Two Boats Plant which will enable water to be piped down to be used at the Hydroponics.

Councillor Nicholls also questioned the security of the sewage plants and asked if have they been fenced off. DoOF confirmed that this would follow.

xii. Land Rescue Training: The L&MP's Training (Lost & Missing Person) was funded by MCA. 2 instructors from the UK carried out the training with Sea & Land Rescue, Conservation & Police.

xiii. New Barge: IP funding secured the buying of a new Marine Barge which has been deployed and used for Ship Operations since May.

xiv. Study into the future of Housing on Ascension: This study has been completed. The report recommended what housing should no longer be used, what housing should be renovated and how we should construct future housing on Ascension Island. DoOF commented to say this is a project that will cost a lot of money over the years and the current outline plan is to create a prototype structure based on the recommendations in 2027/28. It that proved to be successful a comprehensive housing replacement/refurbishment programme would take place over 20 years. Councillor Nicholls said if we don't have the money to action the works rapidly, the reports will become outdated and the process will need to start all over again. DoOF acknowledged that and said that is why the current plan looked to do something tangible to improve matters based on the reports received.

xv. Landslide Consultant's Report: The landslide consultant's report gave an insight and recommendations on how to improve the unsafe areas of Green Mountain. Different steps and phases were recommended over a period of time and at the end of February a team of contractors will arrive from UK to undertake work on the road to the Residency where there is a risk of rock fall/landslide. DoOF said a bid will also been placed to IP funding for future works relating to this report which will be ongoing for the foreseeable future as climate change will affect landslides around the island.

xvi. Replacement Water Tanks on Green Mountain: The tanks by the Marine Barracks on Green Mountain have been replaced and all works have been completed.

xvii. AIG Fire Risk Assessment: AIG Fire Risk Assessments have been completed across the portfolio and WB (Wayne Benjamin) our Health & Safety Officer is working through the measures that need to be done to meet the recommendations of the report. Councillor Nicholls asked if there are funds to meet the requirements as suggested in the FRA report. DoOF confirmed AIG does not have the funds to address all the issues immediately, so a phased approach was being used to address the issues over a number of years based on WB's assessment of where need was greatest. Some of the funding secured this year from FCDO has been prioritised by WB to deal with the most urgent needs. On the next ship another consignment of Fire extinguishers /signage will be arriving and will be put where most needed. A further bid for £200k of IP funding will be submitted for the new financial year. DoOF added that WB works closely with Councillor Worthington's colleagues at the Mitie Fire Section relating to matters of Fire Safety.

xviii. Supporting Operations of on Island Partners: DoOF said AIG has been working in partnership supporting other organisations on the Island, such as Yang, Encompass & Sure.

xix. Installed improved diesel tank at Fuel Station: A new diesel tank was installed at the One Boat Fuel station to replace the old underground tank which was unsafe and unreliable. Councillor Nicholls queried if the Fire Hydrants have been resolved at the fuel station. PM said AIG works are complete, the remaining works require assistance from Encompass.

xx. Two Boats Play Area. The expansion of this area was completed.

xxi. Training for fuel spill mitigation and AIG vessel inspections: AIG hosted a fuel spill mitigation

- and vessel inspections training. All AIG vessels are now inspected by certified instructors to ensure all boats are sea worthy before being deployed.
- xxii. **New vehicles:** Four new vehicles were obtained; road sweeper, plumbers ford ranger, painters van and post office van.
 - xxiii. **Refurbishment of English Bay BBQ's Areas.** This was completed.
 - xxiv. **General Waste now collected from Travellers Hill and the Airhead:** DoOF said there is great progress in terms of Waste Management partnerships with Mitie and AIB. General waste from Travellers Hill and the Airhead now goes through the AIG Incinerator, which mean there has been a substantial reduction in open pit burning.
 - xxv. **FCDO funding to improve landfill site:** £30,000 has been funded by the FCDO IP to improve the landfill site. Councillor Nicholls asked what improvements will be carried out. DoOF said Council have given us some assistance with this and the plan is to have tidier fencing and to place skips at the front of the landfill site to stop people needing to go deeper into the site. This will enable AIG to create a tidier site with more control and less risk.
 - xxvi. **Incinerator using waste oil from Mitie and Encompass as part of its fuel:** Waste oil from Mitie and Encompass is being used to fuel part of the incinerator burn process. This is both good for AIG financially (as it means less Diesel is needed) and good for Mitie and Encompass as it means they do not have to find a way to dispose of waste oil (by returning to the UK for example). Councillor Nicholls asked if the use of waste oil has any adverse impact on the incinerator. DoOF confirmed that was not the case and that the use of waste oil had been approved by the engineer who represents the manufacturer of the incinerator.
 - xxvii. **Major breakthrough on returning recyclable materials to UK:** There has been a major breakthrough on recyclable materials. For a number of years, the cans that AIG have been collecting and crushing, as part of the recycling program, had been going nowhere. However, thanks to assistance from AIB/MOD crushed cans will be sent to the UK on the next FIRS for re-processing. DoOF said if this works then it opens up the possibility of similar schemes in the future.

The DoOF provided an overview of the following FCDO funded projects:

DoOF said the backing via both IP Funding or MCA funding should be seen as really strong support for AIG and Ascension. The projects covered were:

- i. **Survey of road network.**
- ii. **Confined space training/equipment.**
- iii. **Landfill site improvements.**
- iv. **Flood mitigation works.**
- v. **Fire Safety remedial works.**
- vi. **Marine Maintenance Shelter.**
- vii. **Port Security Kiosk.**
- viii. **Obtaining Starlink systems:** Councillor Nicholls asked who will be responsible for installing Starlink. DoOF said FCDO have funded the installation of Starlink Capable systems to be installed in all AIG work buildings, however it is still in the early stages. If the equipment arrives on the FIRS's it will be installed either late February or early March. The same company used by Mitie will be installing the Starlinks for AIG.
- ix. **Container lifting frame.**
- x. **Oil Spill Response Equipment/planning.**
- xi. **Oil Spill contingency Planning:** It was noted that all the major organisations (including AIB, Yang, Mitie and Encompass) had training relating to the Oil Spill Response at the different levels. The training was shared with most Companies on island including Yang, Encompass and Mitie.
- xii. **Marine Navigation Equipment.**
- xiii. **Landslide Prevention work.**
- xiv. **New Sea Rescue 1 Vessel.**
- xv. **Expansion of Sea Rescue Building.**

The DoOF provided the following 2025/26 Capital Programme based on initial thoughts:

- i. Plans have been revised to be more financially realistic and to allow existing projects to be completed.
- ii. In addition to bids for AIG Capital, the intention is to bid separately for at least £800,000 in funds from the FCDO's IP Fund. If approved this money will be used to focus on the solar street lighting, emergency generators, fire safety work and pierhead repairs.
- iii. Bids for AIG Capital from Operations and Facilities have not been confirmed yet, but are likely to total no more than £230,000 and will focus on equipment. Listed below is a provisional list:
 - **Four vehicles requested by MT**
 - **Two Fuel tanks for incinerator site**
 - **Road signage/barriers to improve safety road works**
 - **Land mower for Garden Cottage Lawn:** It was noted there is a ride on lawn mower that is used between the Residency and Garden Cottage, but at the moment it is not working.
 - **Replacement forklift baskets**
 - **Safety devise/harness for Crane**
 - **Marine flood lights and reef marker buoy**
- iv. It is anticipated that the two fuel tanks for the incinerator site and the road signage/barriers will be funded by IP funding; if not they will look to AIG Council as a back up to have this approved.

The DoOF provided the following updates of what projects are planned to be completed for this year:

- i. **Two Boats painting project.**
- ii. **Waste water treatment plants.**
- iii. **Phase 2 flood defence works in Two Boats.**
- iv. **Sea and Land Rescue Building.**
- v. **Glass Crusher:** Should arrive on the April FIRS and once here works will start to have this installed.
- i. **Road Design & Survey:** Consultants will arrive on the Airlink in February and will be here for 4 weeks. They will do a full survey of the main ring road. This will allow for the consultants to give us a proper design of the road with drainage systems. In addition, AIG will receive feedback on matters such as likely costs of a road replacement programme, which part of the network should be addressed first (as AIG does not have the funds to replace all the roads) and whether on island materials could be used.
- ii. **Improving Landfill Site.**
- iii. **Improved efficiency and Project Tracking:** DoOF said he would be introducing a new system for the Committee to have a better insight into the work of the Operations & Facilities Directorate. This was partly driven by the fact that the present system means the Committee only get a small insight into the Directorates work. As an example, DoOF confirmed that they currently had over 47 projects of different sizes for 2025.

Councillor Nicholls queried if there are any projects that are exceeding 18 months/2 years old. DoOF said there will be for various reasons, but in any such cases there would be a valid reason for that being the case, such as having to switch resources to something that has become a higher priority. DoOF said clearing this backlog was one of the reasons AIG would not be seeking to add any capital building projects in 2025/26.

4. Update on Sea and Land Rescue Services

The Lead & Trainer – Sea & Land Rescue Services (HM) gave an update via a power point presentation on outlining the current state of the Service and Plans for future improvements at the Sea and Land Rescue Department:

- i. **Crew Status:** There are 18 volunteer crew members, which is currently 14 male and 2 females. Sea & Land Rescue (S&LR) has 7 coxswains with 2 training coxswains and 3 more to be appointed soon. S&LR are also in the process of recruiting for 2 more volunteers. Councillor Nicholls asked if there is a problem with recruiting. HM said no, and AIG has been very lucky to date with applicants that have been received for Sea Rescue. With the last advert that has been published a good number of applicants have already been received. The Crew is made up of by a mixed number of nationalities from Zimbabwe, Australia, South Africa, Scotland, Falklands, United Kingdom and St Helena.
- ii. **Training Internal:** HM said he is responsible for the local weekly training which is conducted with the crew and is based on:
 - Practical – drill and scenario-based training
 - Classroom theory
 - E – Learning

HM said they go out to sea every Saturday for a least 2 hours and they do a combination of drill-based training or scenario-based training. Drill based training is teaching how to put down an anchor and scenario training is coming up with a scenario where you have an injured patient on the rocks and the team must get them onto the boat and off to hospital. HM said night training is also very important; operating at night time is a very different to training in the day and for those not use to it, it can be intimidating. HM said because there are not many calls which is fantastic, the negative is we lose out on that practical experience.
- iii. **External Training:** External training can be challenging due to funding, so when funding becomes available we are very grateful. Recently MCA (Maritime Coastguard Agency) funded the L&MP's Training (Lost & Missing Persons Search International). 24 candidates across Sea & Land Rescue, Police and Conservation received this specialised land-search technique training. HM said the training was really good and this will be followed up by practical training. Councillor Nicholls queried who would co-ordinate a missing person's incident. HM said ultimately the responsibility lies with the Police but they would be supported by the Sea and Land Rescue Department and would work the operation together. Councillor Nicholls queried if Sea and Land Rescue has a Drone. HM said he has been submitted a request for funding to purchase a Drone as an asset within the Sea and Land Rescue Department. At the moment if a drone was needed, the Police and Conservation do have one. HM also said one of the recommendations from the L&MP's Instructors was to have a drone with thermal imaging as it is a useful tool during search and rescue.
- iv. **IMRF Women in SAR Course:** Laura Shearer was selected to attend and represent the IMRF Women in SAR Course in Finland. Whilst in UK before attending the SAR Course, Laura also received training from the RNLI Centre. Laura did a short presentation about the training received at the Naafi after her returned to elaborate on the experience and what she had achieved. This training was partially funded by AIG. Councillor Nicholls queried if there will be any more funding for similar training, HM said he is always looking for funding as it is important that we send our people away or engage on any training that is offered.
- v. **IMFR Conference on Mass Rescue:** An IMRF conference will be held in Miami. HM & JW (Jonah Williams) were selected to attend. HM said they will be off island from 31 January – 10 February. This training will be fully funded by the MCA.
- vi. **Drone Training:** Conservation hosted drone training and Sea and Land Rescue were invited to attend. HM said that this was very valuable training, especially when trying to land a drone onto a boat out in the ocean.
- vii. **Coxswain Training & Assessments:** HM said he is in the process of arranging for Coxswain Training which would be funded by MCA. The trainer visiting does all of the Sea Rescue Training in St Helena.
- viii. **Crew Achievements:** 2 members of the Sea & Land Rescue received notable crew achievements. JW (Jonah Williams) received the Kings Coronation Medal and LS (Laura Shearer) was voted runner up of the IMRF (International Maritime Rescue Federation) Women in SAR award. Both JW and LS are crew leaders and coxswains.
- ix. **Stats:** HM confirmed the following: Call outs for 2024 were; 2 land rescue and 4 sea rescues. All

were minor related calls with no serious injuries.

- x. **Island Safety Awareness:** Every month all new AIG staff attend a Health and Safety Briefing delivered by the Health & Safety Officer and a Land and Sea Rescue safety Briefing by HM. HM said he feels by having these talks and educating our people, they are more aware of the situations here at Ascension and feels this has made an impact regarding the low stats.
- xi. **Community Engagement:** HM said Sea and Land Rescue are involved with many community engagements; float escort, Santa delivery for the kids at xmas parties, PR visits and Training. Mitie staff under-took the Maritime safety courses, services to fisherman especially on a Saturday morning when most of them are out on the ocean fishing and to Conservation for the yearly Marine Festival. HS said community engagements are really very important.
- xii. **Public Safety Equipment:** Public safety equipment is deployed all over Ascension to enhance public safety. They include; 13 AED's, throw bags, bleed control kits, 17 pink rescue buoys and 6 public emergency telephones. Councillor Nicholls queried if any of the equipment is tampered with. HM said routine checks are carried out on all of the equipment and nothing is tampered with.
- xiii. **Harbours Board:** HM said he is involved with the Harbours Board which has improved the safety standards of AIG vessels. HM also attended a vessel surveyor course, which will help him to survey vessel's which will all aid to help with Maritime Safety.
- xiv. **Professional Relationships:** HM said professional relationship is really important and having them does help. We do a lot of work with the UK Coast Guard's Phil Bostock and the RNLI. Phil Bostock is the Lead OTSAR. AIG are members of the IMRF, which is good, a lot of benefits comes from the IMRF. AIG also have good relationships with NSRI in South Africa and the team in St Helena.
- xv. **Maintenance:** HM gave thanks to the MT team who has always help with the maintenance of the Sea Rescue Equipment/vehicles. AIG has since employed a Marine Mechanic who is very knowledgeable and has enhanced the maintenance of the sea rescue equipment, which is more efficient and reliable which is very important. This department is very well supported, by both the Marine Mechanic and MT.
- xvi. **New Life Boat:** With funding received from MCA, on the next arrival of the MV Karoline late March/early April will be our current project which is an 8.8m Gemini life boat. Having this new vessel will enhance our rescue capabilities. This vessel will allow a stretcher to be housed should the need arise, due to the new vessel being bigger, it will can also be used to tow vessels. The build of the vessel is coming along really well and should be on schedule to arrive here as planned. The old boat shed was due an uplift and with the procurement of the new sea vessel MCA has funded money to allow for a bigger more robust boat shed which will cater for the new vessel, and works for this has started about 2 weeks ago. Councillor Nicholls asked if HM has a wish list for any further equipment. HM said once the new vessel arrives he pretty much has all that is needed.

Councillor Nicholls gave thanks to HM for presenting the update on Sea and Land Rescue Services.

5. Any other Business

There were Seven items of other business.

- i. **Green Mountain Archway:** Councillor Nicholls asked DoOF to convey his sincere thanks and appreciation from the PWC to the team who had rebuilt the Archway at Green Mountain. He congratulated the Project Manager on a job well done and praised the skilled workmanship of the stone masons.
- ii. **Pot Holes:** Councillor Nicholls ask if the pot holes on the Nasa Road could be looked into and when convenient. DoOF said he understood there are concerns over pot holes and this was already on the programme to deal with as concerns had been raised by members of the public and Councillors. DoOF said that unfortunately due to the nature of the road surface on the NASA Road, repairs would be an ongoing issue and replacement of the road surface in the next decade

was unlikely.

DoOF highlighted that the team had been busy on the road network carrying out repairs on both Pyramid Point Road and North East Bay Road, they also have some work to do on Mars Bay.

- iii. **Fire Cover and EWS:** Councillor Worthington asked if an agreement could be finalised with Mitie regarding Fire Cover. Councillor Worthington said one of the tasks for his team is to go to Georgetown monthly to check the EWS tanks; mainly to check the depth of water and the locks. It was mentioned that sometimes the locks are broken off; when this does happen Councillor Worthington, asked if Mitie could be given a copy of the new key to the lock. It was also requested if the tanks could be topped up as sometimes the water levels have been low and without the Fire Hydrant, the EWS tanks will be used should an emergency occur. DoOF confirmed he would look into these issues.
- iv. **Thank you to AIG:** Councillor Worthington ask to convey his thanks to AIG. He said whenever he had small projects and safety request like cutting back of overgrown bushes on the road, the jobs were carried out day after requested. He said it was speedy, quick and a great job done. He thanked DoOF for being approachable and efficient. DoOF thanked Councillor Worthington for his comments and highlighted the hard work of the teams involved.
- v. **Appreciation:** Councillor Worthington conveyed his thanks to Miss Benjamin for stepping in to take the minutes until the new Clerk of Council has taken up the position.
DoOF asked if the Committee would consider a note of thanks to Miss Siobhan Stewart for all of her hard work and dedication to the PWC Committee during her time as Clerk of Council. Councillors present agreed and Cllr Nicholls asked for the note of thanks to be recorded.
- vi. **Fire Safety Presentation:** DoOF highlighted that previous the Committee had said that a future date they would like WB (Wayne Benjamin) Health and Safety Officer to attend a meeting. The Committee resolved to invite WB to the next meeting to give a presentation on work being done in relation to the Fire Risk Assessments carried out last year.

6. Proposed date of next meeting

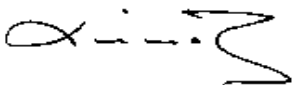
It was agreed that the next informal meeting of the Ascension Island Council Public Works Committee would take place on Wednesday 12th March 2025, followed by a formal meeting on Wednesday 16th April 2025.

There was no further business and the meeting ended at 17:46

Fiona

Fiona Benjamin
Ag. Clerk of Council

I certify that this is a true record of the meeting to which it relates.



*Councillor Alan Nicholls
Chair of the Public Works Committee*