

IAATO 2019 Annual General Meeting at Cape Town

Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands Update



For those I have not met, my name is Nigel Phillips, HM Commissioner for SGSSI.

Just reflecting on the themes we were discussing before lunch, I am pleased to say that Government House in Stanley has been avoidable single use plastic free since November last year - and we are also using the same micro plastic filters introduced by Argos, a company that operates 50% of the vessels in our Toothfish fishery.

Before we get into the detailed brief from Ross, I have a few headline thoughts that I would like to share with you. Ross and I will then be happy to take questions at the end.

The past year has demonstrated once again how unpredictable and at times, cruel nature can be. Without an airfield of any type and with very limited infrastructure, South Georgia as you know is a very austere destination, particularly if major medical intervention is required. On both land and at sea, the focus on safety and learning what lessons we can, must be unending. Yet occasionally even complete dedication to these principles is not enough and I would like to express the GSGSSI's condolences for those lost over the past season.

Last year you may recall that I undertook to share with you our developing thoughts on tourism management. We have delivered on that promise Our draft paper was shared with the secretariat earlier this year. Work on the paper continues and we will share more widely when it is complete.

Our tourism operating model ideally needs to be developed in partnership with IAATO to ensure consistency of policy and procedures. Win-win has to be the goal and if we are to have the confidence that we are getting it right, we need to know how the industry is developing. Transparency is critical and we welcome any initiative that will promote this outcome. Looking toward next year, perhaps there may be a range of issues currently discussed in closed sessions that would benefit from greater open discussion with government representatives.

Permitting is a fundamental building block of protecting the environment and we continually work to develop the envelope. The goal is to understand how we deal responsibly with the evolving tourist business. As I said last year, we must take care not to love South Georgia too much. The predicted growth in visitor numbers and the manifest emergence of ever more capable super yachts will require careful consideration. Site management is a key element and

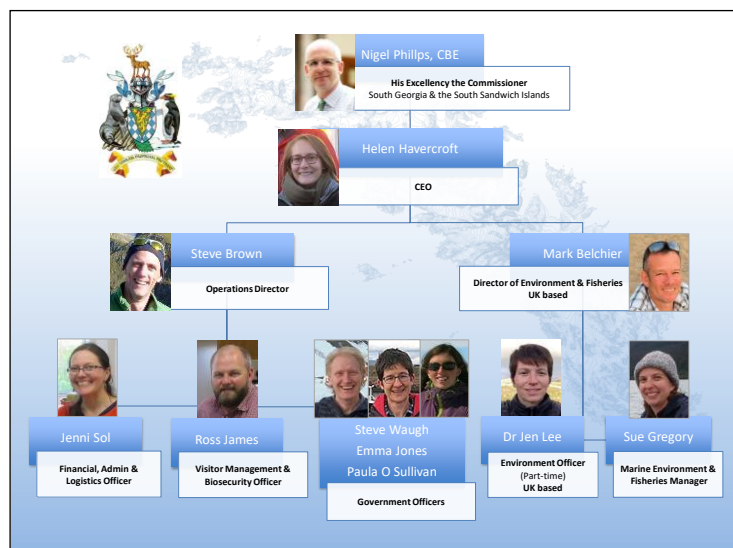
I am pleased that Ross will in his brief outline some exciting site availability possibilities that we are considering.

Evidence based decision making is something of a mantra for me and my team. We seek to ensure any policy the government adopts is based on sound evidence. Science is of particular importance and let me say simply that we are very interested in deepening our understanding of how the tourist industry can contribute to the debate. Rejuvenating the breadth of science undertaken on South Georgia is a theme that runs across several pillars of the government's activity - because let's face it, there is far more to South Georgia than charismatic mega fauna.

My final thought seeks to draw together the points I have made thus far. The over-riding purpose of the Government of SGSSI is to be a good steward of this remarkable UKOT. We unashamedly seek to drive continuous improvement in the hope that not only does South Georgia and SSI benefit, but that what becomes accepted as best practice is shared more widely. We recognise that collaboration is the only way forward and it is through developing effective strategic relationships that we will achieve our aim. IAATO is absolutely key to us - and the proof of the pudding is in the eating. By way of example, what has been achieved on bio-security management over the past year is really impressive and I am grateful for all your support. Looking across the horizon of activity, it is my assessment is that we need to do more to raise visibility with our visitors of what the government's collaboration with its strategic partners is achieving. It is something we will work on and you will hear more as we move forward.

Hopefully there is enough in there to stimulate some useful conversation in the remaining days of the conference... I will now handover to Ross.

Here is the small but perfectly formed team that makes up the Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands. Possibly the smallest government on earth. Most of us call Stanley home but we also work out of the UK and South Georgia itself.



We have just heard from The Commissioner, Nigel Phillips, but not able to be here today is Helen the Chief Executive, who leads a team passionate about delivering World-class environmental management underpinned by the highest standards of governance.

Steve in addition to being the Operations Director with all the logistical and infrastructure work that entails, also leads the team of Government Officers who maintain a year round presence at King Edward Point.

I lead on visitor management and developing biosecurity policy, and many of you will have worked with Jenni, who manages finances and provides logistical support as well as Visitor Permitting and Post Visit Reports with myself.

Mark is the Director of the Environment & Fisheries, Sue is the Marine Environment & Fisheries Manager, and Jen Lee leads for regulated activity permits.

I should also mention the work of the British Antarctic Survey who have a year round presence on South Georgia with research stations at Bird Island and King Edward Point. BAS are our key strategic science partners and the reasons are multi layered. Without a permanent resident population, they are an important part of our sound management; sovereignty and presence.

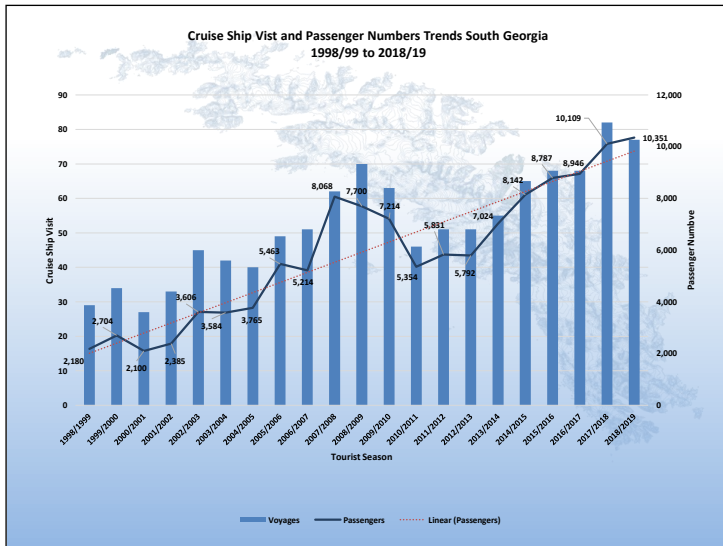


This season in terms of visitor numbers wasn't hugely different from last. We had 77 cruise ship visits, against 82 last year, slightly more cruise ship visitors with 10,351 up about 300 from last year, and 10 yachts and 6 expeditions. We seem to be attracting more super yachts each year, though the numbers are still relatively few.

Season overview - Visitors

- 77 ⁽⁸²⁾ Cruise Ship visits; including 4 Super Yachts
- 10,351 ^(10,060) cruise ship visitors
- 10 ⁽¹³⁾ Yachts
- 6 ⁽⁴⁾ Expeditions





Looking back over the last 20 years, the growth trend has remained steady to date with the exception of the world economic crisis about 10 years ago. You can see this season topped the chart in terms of numbers, but with fewer vessel visits compared to last.

This season Government Officers conducted biosecurity inspections on all cruise ships. This was similar to previous years but with a more standardised approach, which we called the biosecurity audit.

In summary, we found that 8% of PAX 'Failed' as opposed to 11% last season; a 3 % improvement overall. Of failures, 56% were found on clothing & bags, and 44% on footwear.

Season overview - biosecurity

- 100 % of cruise ships inspected by GOs
- 8% of PAX 'failed'
(11% 17/18 season)
- Of failures, 56% on clothing & Bags, 44% footwear

Biosecurity Audit

Name of Vessel: Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands

Name of Expedition Leader: Date of Audit:

Sample Size: Boot Failures: Clothing & Bags: Total Failures: Threshold:

2018/19 pass rates: 85% - Unacceptable, 85-94% - Acceptable - Requiring Improvement, 95-100% - Good

- Risk thresholds set on previous year's results.
- Biosecurity audit reports sent to the EL, Operator & IAATO.

100	Good
95	
94	
93	Acceptable - Improvement Required
92	
91	
90	
89	
88	
87	Unacceptable - Urgent Action Required
86	
85	
84	
83	
82	

The biosecurity audit was implemented from the 1st of December. Its purpose was to accurately measure biosecurity risk associated with visitation to South Georgia, and to increase efficacy of biosecurity procedures, such that there would be an improvement on all landings, not just at Grytviken where the checks took place.

We used a statistically significant sample size providing confidence that our results are a true reflection of risk, not a reflection of inspection effort. This sampling technique actually resulted in a 30 % reduction in the number of biosecurity checks by

Government Officers, with 3600 checks against 5500 last season. This saved time for Government Officers, passengers and expedition staff.

It's difficult to set a level of acceptable risk, but we based our thresholds on last season's findings, and may adjust them in future if appropriate.

A pass rate of less than 85% was deemed unacceptable, and resulted in us following up with the operators and requiring their first call of their next visit to be at Grytviken for a repeat audit. The repeat audit assured us that the extra measures taken were effective at reducing the biosecurity risk.

Vessels with a pass rate of between 85 and 94% were acceptable, but we made recommendations for improvement.

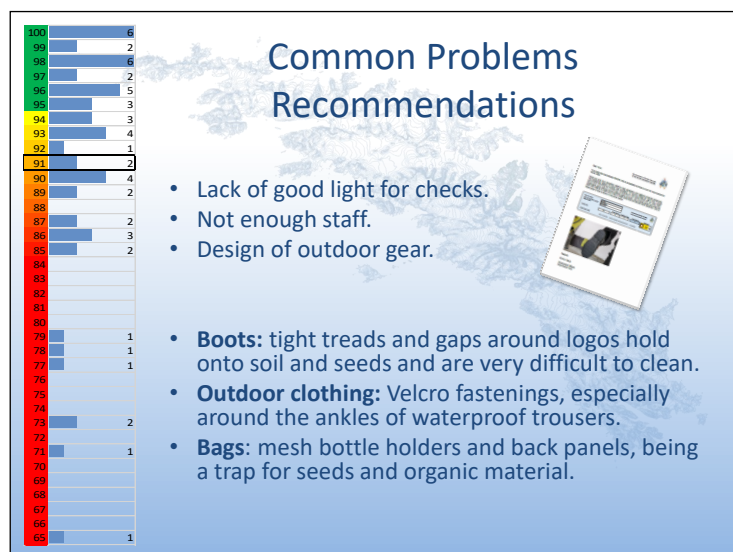
Vessel's achieving pass rates of 95% or above were classified as good, and we thanked them for their efforts.

Results of each biosecurity audit were shared with the Expedition Leader, the operator, and with IAATO. This open policy ensured that information was disseminated at all levels, recognising that the cause of a poor result is sometimes beyond the remit of the expedition staff to rectify.

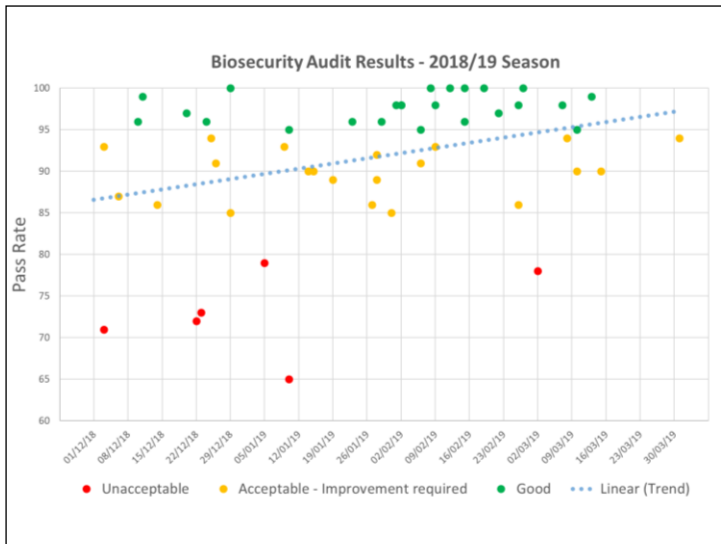
Problem areas became apparent quite early in the season, and stemmed from a mixture of factors, such as a lack of light in the boot room, insufficient staff to assist passengers, and outdoor gear not being well designed in terms of ease of biosecuring.

This manifested in biosecurity risks like seeds and soil, being lodged in boot treads, Velcro fastenings, and the mesh panels of backpacks.

Providing paperclips as tools to remove seeds from boots and Velcro, and the recommendation that guests adopt a 'buddy system' to help each other with their biosecurity checks, seemed to be effective.



At a glance, the overall season results show a wide spread of pass rates. Six vessels achieved the perfect score of 100%, but the lowest score was 65%. The average pass rate over the season was 91%.



If you break the data down to show how they changed over the course of the season, you can see a significant trend of improvement, with pass rates at the start of the season averaging about 85%, increasing to over 95% at the season’s close. Furthermore, the ‘high risk outliers’ denoted by the red dots were much reduced, which is exactly what we hoped to achieve by this system.

I haven’t presented the results in more detail, but I can also report that generally, vessels returning to South Georgia, improved with each visit.

Next season, we hope that we will see further improvements. We accept that there is a cost to the expedition staff and passengers, in both time and effort in raising these standards, but we firmly believe this represents good value for better protecting South Georgia.

Importantly, we believe that further systemic changes, will not only reduce risk, but make it easier to sustain by increasing efficiency.

One exciting example of this, has come from Ship to Shore – a supplier of outdoor clothing to the cruise ship industry. Ship to Shore have announced that they will be supplying vessels visiting South Georgia, with a modified supply of Parka and footwear, which will be easier to biosecure. Improvements

include implementing a unisex boot with easier to clean tread and removing the traditional more difficult to clean boots, as well as reduced Velcro, and reduced mesh.

Biosecurity Audit

- Systemic changes will make this effort sustainable, e.g. Ship to Shore Traveler:
 - Boots with easier to clean ‘open’ treads.
 - Parkas with reduced Velcro (it will only be present on cuffs).
 - Specially produced Velcro-free waterproof trousers.
 - Reduced mesh on backpacks, and designing internal bottle holders, rather than external mesh holders.



The single most important thing an individual can do to protect South Georgia, is to practice good biosecurity.

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The outcome of all of this is not merely a line on a graph, or a dry statistic, but a tangible improvement to the way we protect South Georgia from the introduction and spread of invasive species.

We believe that biosecurity shouldn't be a chore, but a way of adding value and appreciation for a truly special part of the world.

Our message to visitors is simple, the single most important thing an individual can do to protect South Georgia, is to practice good biosecurity.

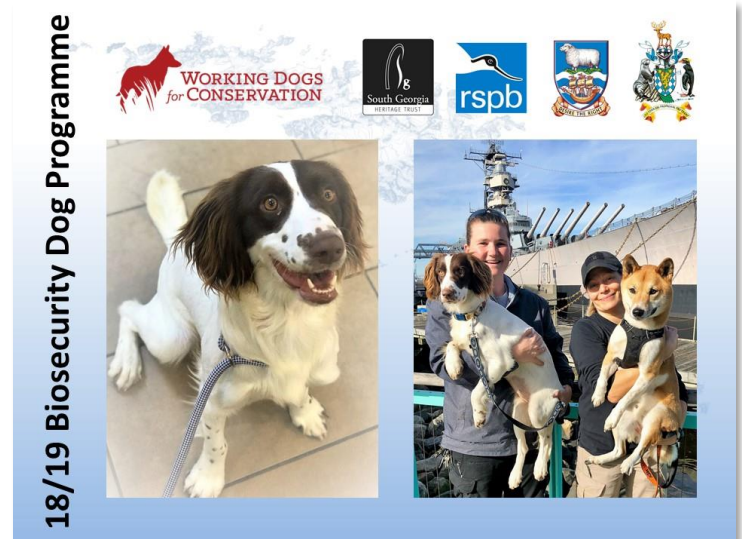
Last year, at Rhode Island, I updated you on the trial rodent detector dog programme. The trial was a great success and we are continuing to develop the programme.

This season we have seen the dog team return, with a new dog who will remain in the Falklands as part of a permanent detector dog programme. The dog has been aptly named 'Pipit' after the endemic South Georgia birds she has been charged to protect.



17/18 Rodent Detector Dog Trial

Pipit is still in training, but she has already shown great promise in her rodent detection work,



18/19 Biosecurity Dog Programme

and she has stolen the hearts of many visitors and passers-by. Thank you to all of the operators who have welcomed the dog team back on board their ships this year.

Work is ongoing to train a local handler, and in collaboration with the Falkland Islands Government identify other practical applications for biosecurity and conservation in the Falklands as well as the obvious benefits to South Georgia.

It's been another busy year at Grytviken, with some fascinating and important projects to help preserve South Georgia's heritage.

Much progress has been made towards completing recommendations following the publication of the Conservation Management Plan. This work will not only help conserve heritage, but make the visitor's experience of Grytviken more valuable. The works done on the Main Store, will allow it to be opened for visitors to explore.

Season overview - Grytviken

Work following the recommendations from the Grytviken Conservation Management Plan, including:

- Exposing timbers of the old slipway.
- Completion of the church windows restoration.
- Repairs, painting and environmental clean of the Main Store, to allow public access.



Season overview - Grytviken

Repairs to the stone surround on Ernest Shackleton's grave and making up the ground.



Repair works to the Cemetery fencing, more improvements to this next season are planned.

Shackleton's grave was sensitively restored to rewind the effects of decades of visitors paying their respects. A programme to improve the cemetery fence has begun which will be continued next season.

Shackleton's cross at Hope Point has been restored which included making a replica cross for the cairn and placing the original in the museum. The cairn has been rebuilt in stone (rather than mortar) in sympathy with the original which you can see in the black and white photograph from 1938. We like to think that we've done 'the Boss' proud.

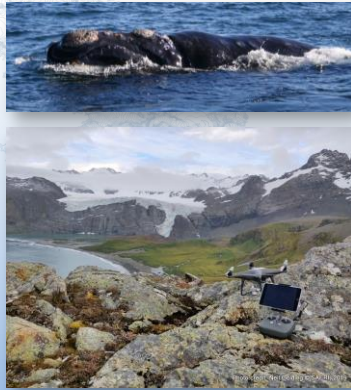
Season overview - King Edward Point

Repair works to Shackleton memorial cross and cairn.



Season overview - Projects

- The Weed Team
- The Right Whale project
- Microplastic project
- SGHT archaeology project
- Coastal Mapping Project



It's been another busy season with world class science taking place, and projects to understand and protect our natural and cultural heritage. Just a few of these include:

Ongoing work by the 'weed team' to eradicate invasive plants, A fascinating project to understand the recovery of the Southern Right Whales after whaling.

A project to study the extent of microplastics in the ocean

surrounding South Georgia.

A South Georgia archaeology project to uncover information about the early sealers.

And a coastal habitat mapping project, using state of the art LIDAR technology.

The output from the Coastal Mapping Project will be invaluable in many ways, including building a higher resolution data set, such that we can better understand visitor sites and other areas, potentially enabling monitoring and early detection of visitor impacts. The maps are stunning, and we are considering how they might be best used as resources for visitors and expedition staff.

Coastal Habitat Mapping of South Georgia



- Tackling South Georgia priorities – Feb/March 2019
- Ground validation & collection of drone imagery

- Working alongside SGHT 19th C archaeological sealing expedition
- Based on Hans Hansson visiting various locations around SG



Looking towards 2019/20



Looking towards 19/20... and beyond...

Administration 2019/20

- Fees increase for 2019/20 season by £5 per person from £125 to £130 (for up to 3 days, additional £20 per day thereafter, up to a maximum of £210).
- We are streamlining documentation and the application process to make it more user friendly and easier to navigate.
- Visit applicants are reminded that applications must be received at least 60 days in advance of their visit, or a late submission fee will be applied.
- Application packs will be available in June

Fees will increase for the 2019/20 season by £5 per person, from £125 to £130.

We are continuing to review and streamline our application procedures. I'd like to take the opportunity to thank all of those who responded to our recent request for feedback on this matter. Your input has been extremely useful, and although I haven't yet fully assimilated the feedback, there appears to be

some common factors which we hope to be able to improve on.

Once I have more information on that, I'll ask the secretariat to distribute it in an IAATO update.

We are a small team and although we try our best to make sure your applications are processed in good time, this depends on timely submission, so please ensure they arrive to us with all the information required, at least 60 days in advance of the visit.

We are still working on next season's paperwork, but application packs will be published on our website in June.

South Georgia has seen record breaking visitor numbers again this year (just). How will we manage future growth?

We are working on a strategy to ensure that growth in tourism remains within our strategic objective, that is "To facilitate visits that are safe, responsible, environmentally-sensitive and contribute to sustainable management, creating future ambassadors for the Territory"



How much can SG Take?

- All vessels are required to visit Grytviken to fulfil Customs & Immigration.
- Grytviken's infrastructure limits ship calls to 2 per day, and therefore limits the total number of vessels visiting South Georgia.
- Grytviken is a bottleneck for overall visitor numbers to South Georgia.



All vessels are required to visit Grytviken for Customs and Immigration, and since Grytviken can only process 2 ships per day, this forms a 'bottleneck' limiting how many vessels can visit South Georgia.

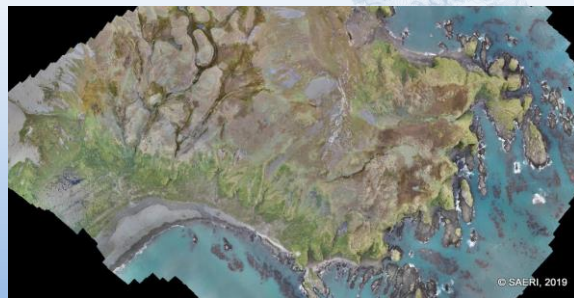
Of course, there are many variables but at this rate, Grytviken could cope with somewhere in the region of 30,000 visitors per season.

Each visitor landing site will have its own carrying capacity before ecological impacts are felt, depending on many variables, including the size of the site and presence of sensitive flora and fauna.

Whilst we must be precautionary in safeguarding SG's environment, we won't close or restrict access without good scientific reasoning.

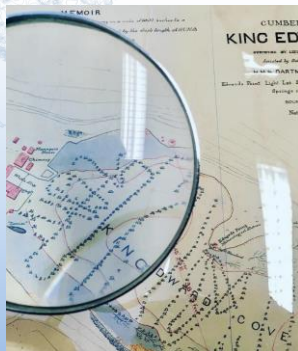
How many visitors can a site take?

Whilst we must be precautionary in safeguarding South Georgia's environment, we won't start closing or restricting access without good scientific reasons.



Monitoring & Management

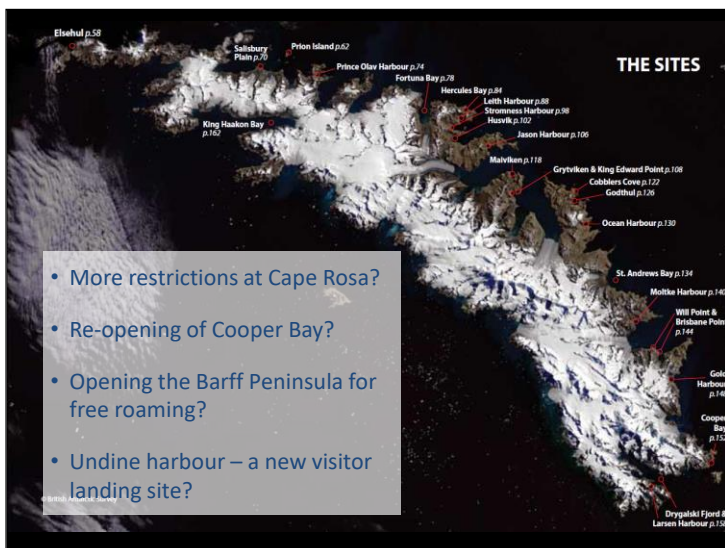
- Comprehensive ecological monitoring for impacts essential.
- Ten thousand pairs of eyes on the ground may help us do that.
- Citizen science programme will form a key part in environmental monitoring.



We need to keep a close eye on each site, so we can pick up on the very first signs of stress, and implement management to mitigate for that impact.

Monitoring will be essential, and Ten thousand eyes on the ground may help us do that. We are looking at the feasibility of developing a citizen science programme which will form a key part in environmental monitoring.

But all that monitoring and early warning is only good if you have some practical management to implement. We will develop comprehensive management plans for each site, and be ready to act when required. This might include spatial or temporal restrictions in the future.



More restrictions at Cape Rosa?

At Cape Rosa we have learned that visitors hiking up to the saddle may be causing damage to seabird burrows on the route. We will investigate this further, but it may result in the closure of the route from the beach up to the saddle. It is highly unlikely that access to the beach and cave would be restricted, and the rest of the site will remain open.

Re-opening of Cooper Bay?

Most of Cooper Bay, except the Macaroni colony was closed several years ago due to a suspected outbreak of avian cholera. This was a sensible precaution against spreading the disease, However, it has proved challenging to understand if the risk is still viable, and what testing would be required before re-opening the site.

We have engaged the services of a wildlife disease control specialist and will work on assessing the site over the 19/20 season, and pending those results we may be able to re-open the 4 closed sites of Cooper Bay.

Opening the Barff Peninsula for free roaming?

We are actively researching the feasibility of opening the Barff Peninsula as an area of free roaming, or to include more approved walking routes. Again, this is something we will work on over the coming season.

Undine harbour – a new visitor landing site?

We are looking at opening Undine Harbour as an approved visitor landing site. This will give vessels wishing to visit Elsehul another option if weather and conditions make a landing difficult.

KEP Wharf Development

- Commences January 2020
- Small, temporary aesthetic impact for visitors.
- No walking access to KEP or Shackleton's cross
 - Access via zodiac on beach at Eastern end of station.
- Completed wharf will not look significantly different to existing.



In January 2020, work will commence on the KEP wharf development. This is a sizeable engineering project and will have an aesthetic impact during works. It will also mean that the track to KEP will be closed to visitors.

Shackleton's cross at Hope point will still be accessible via Zodiac landing at the eastern end of the station. Government Officers will be able to offer further advice on the ground.

I'd like to reassure you that the impact to what visitors can enjoy at Grytviken will be minimalised as far as possible.

Thank you for listening, and thanks also to IAATO for organising this excellent event. I would be happy to take any questions.

