

Protect Sustain Inspire



A values-driven approach to the stewardship of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands 2021 - 2025

Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands



Photograph: John Dickens



Contents

4. South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands
5. The Vision
6. The Guiding Values
Environmental Protection /
Evidence-based Decision Making
7. Sustainability / Openness
8. The Priority Areas
9. Biosecurity
10. Marine Protection
11. Building Future Resilience
12. Local Science, Global Impact
13. Facilitating Sustainable Visits
14. Accessing Cultural Heritage
15. Enhancing Relationships
16. Monitoring South Sandwich Islands
17. Future South Georgia Competition



The stewardship of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI) is a privilege and a great responsibility.

South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands

The Territory is a success story and a shining beacon in a world where it has become common-place for unsustainable human activity to result in environmental deterioration and a decline in biodiversity. The overexploitation of its marine resources, the industrial legacy of a whaling era, and the introduction of invasive species of flora and fauna provided harsh lessons that have been learnt from the Territory's history.

Recovery of the ecosystem would not be happening without sustained active management by successive governments. Since the cessation of whaling, this ecosystem restoration has been championed through environmental remediation; ongoing habitat restoration projects and biosecurity measures; the establishment of a Marine Protected Area and science-led precautionary use of marine resources; the highly regulated permitting of visitors and fishing; and the removal of some of the most harmful alien species.

It is important to celebrate the successes where concerted efforts have enabled these ecosystems to recover. Whales are now returning to the 1,240,000 km² maritime zone in numbers not seen for almost a century. Eradication of reindeer, rats and mice from South Georgia has allowed native vegetation, including tussac grass, to thrive and ground-nesting bird populations to recover, including the South Georgia Pipit, and the South Georgia Pintail; the world's only known carnivorous duck. Meanwhile the presence of non-native vegetation on South Georgia provides a reminder of the need for excellent biosecurity and constant vigilance to reduce their impact on native flora.

South Georgia is not immune to global environmental challenges, none of which are more important and unpredictable than climate change. As a barometer in the Southern hemisphere, what happens here offers a glimpse of potential impacts across the whole world. Whilst the rapid glacial retreat at some sites is a clear sign of a warming planet, it is likely that climate change is affecting ecosystem processes at all levels. The world-leading science taking place at South Georgia will not only be critical to understanding and managing local impacts but will also enhance global knowledge of climate and environmental issues.

There are likely to be many other effects of climate change not yet fully understood, potentially even more so on the remote South Sandwich Islands. In order to raise awareness of these critical issues and influence positive change beyond our waters, we must work with the international community of people and organisations who play a part in the stewardship of the Territory, bringing together policy-makers, industry and scientists with the passion and determination to help bring about positive change.

As a United Kingdom Overseas Territory (UKOT), SGSSI serves as an example of world-leading, evidence-based, sustainable management delivering globally-significant environmental recovery. The Government of SGSSI will continue to work in partnership with the UK FCDO to maintain the remarkable success story that is unfolding on South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands.

The Vision

This document sets out our 7 priority areas for the period 2021 to 2025. It looks across the key areas of work to protect and sustainably manage the Territory's environment and inspire a wider audience to play a part in its future. It provides an overview of the range of activities and delivery commitments that will take priority in the coming years, all underpinned by 4 guiding values: Environmental Protection, Evidence-Based Decision-Making, Sustainability, and Openness. These values will not only guide the Government of SGSSI in how it assesses current and future activities, but will underpin all activity in the Territory; these are the values for the whole of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands and all who work, operate or visit there.

At the heart of this document is a vision for the future of the Territory.

Environmental recovery and resilience through world-leading evidence-based sustainable management.





The Guiding Values

Environmental Protection

This is fundamental to all activity. Anyone operating in the Territory including its maritime zone will need to demonstrate how their activity will support and not impede the ongoing environmental recovery.

Minimising Environmental Impact

In order to safeguard the long-term protection of SGSSI, we must first understand the changes to the environment that may result from any activities. Our Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process will ensure environmental risks are identified and mitigated before activities are permitted.

We will monitor for change and act quickly to prevent conservation efforts from being undermined or damaged. Environmental impacts will be considered against the benefits that the proposed activity might bring and how it supports delivery of our vision.

Presence Provides protection

SGSSI will continue to be a UKOT with a year-round presence on South Georgia. Together with colleagues from the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) the science conducted at Bird Island and King Edward Point (KEP) is a critical part of maintaining presence and thereby protection.

Visitors have a positive role to play on a Territory with no resident population. SGSSI is protected from unregulated activity by being open to authorised vessels, people and activities including fishing, tourists, scientists, invasive plant management and Government personnel. Well-regulated and compliant fisheries and tourism activities can act as sentinels on the water to support the protection of the maritime zone.

Evidence-based decision-making

The use of robust evidence from a range of trusted sources and experts, including established advisory groups, will inform decisions on the most appropriate place to apply resources, both financial and human, to best effect.

Continuing Long Term Studies

We will work with BAS, Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science and other organisations to deliver science that assists us in benefiting responsibly from natural resources, developing resilience to environmental hazards, supporting management of environmental change, answering fundamental questions about how the Earth-System works, and which, in turn inform Government of SGSSI and international policy makers.

Developing and Advocating Best Practice

We will engage with Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), as well as with other UKOTs including Falkland Islands and British Antarctic Territory, and the wider sub-Antarctic community, to develop best practice that can sustain long-term environmental recovery and protection.

We will integrate new technologies and innovation for data collection with expertise and interpretation as drivers for evidence-based decision-making. We will lead through proactive engagement to be an example of world-leading evidence-based sustainable management delivering globally significant environmental recovery.

Sustainability

When considering any activity, the approach will be to ensure long-term sustainability and prevent nature or human activity being pushed to its limit.

Precautionary Approach

We will act before anthropogenic pressures cause a negative environmental impact. Taking this approach to decision-making has always formed part of the management regime which will continue, this includes the highly regulated fisheries operating in the maritime zone.

In a territory where undetected damage could be devastating, adopting precautionary measures is particularly important, especially where robust scientific evidence about the impact on the environment or to human health is incomplete.

Sustainable Use

Sustainable use is predicated on our precautionary approach.

Highly regulated fisheries, tourism & science will be permitted, but must adhere to the highest standards in biosecurity and human & environmental safety.

Sustainable Finances

The revenue streams generated for the Government from these activities are vital to delivering all our environmental protection and enforcement work.

Enforcement

A strong legal framework allows us to enforce protection of the environment and take immediate action when required.

Highly regulated fisheries and tourism activities provide revenue critical to the operational delivery of marine & terrestrial protection and enforcement.

Openness

Collaboration and partnership with stakeholders to meet our shared challenges will lead to better decision-making, compliance and outcomes.

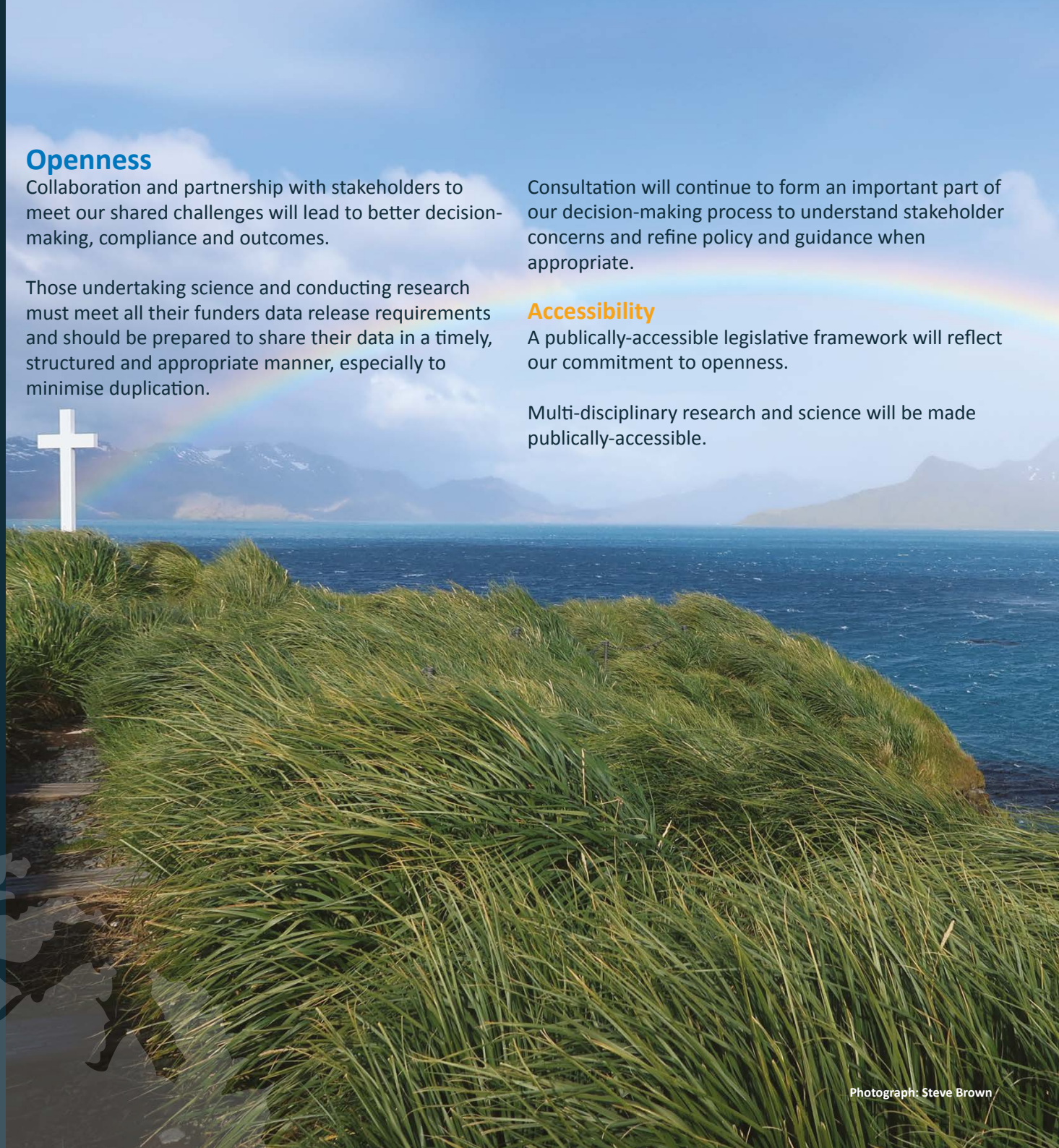
Those undertaking science and conducting research must meet all their funders data release requirements and should be prepared to share their data in a timely, structured and appropriate manner, especially to minimise duplication.

Consultation will continue to form an important part of our decision-making process to understand stakeholder concerns and refine policy and guidance when appropriate.

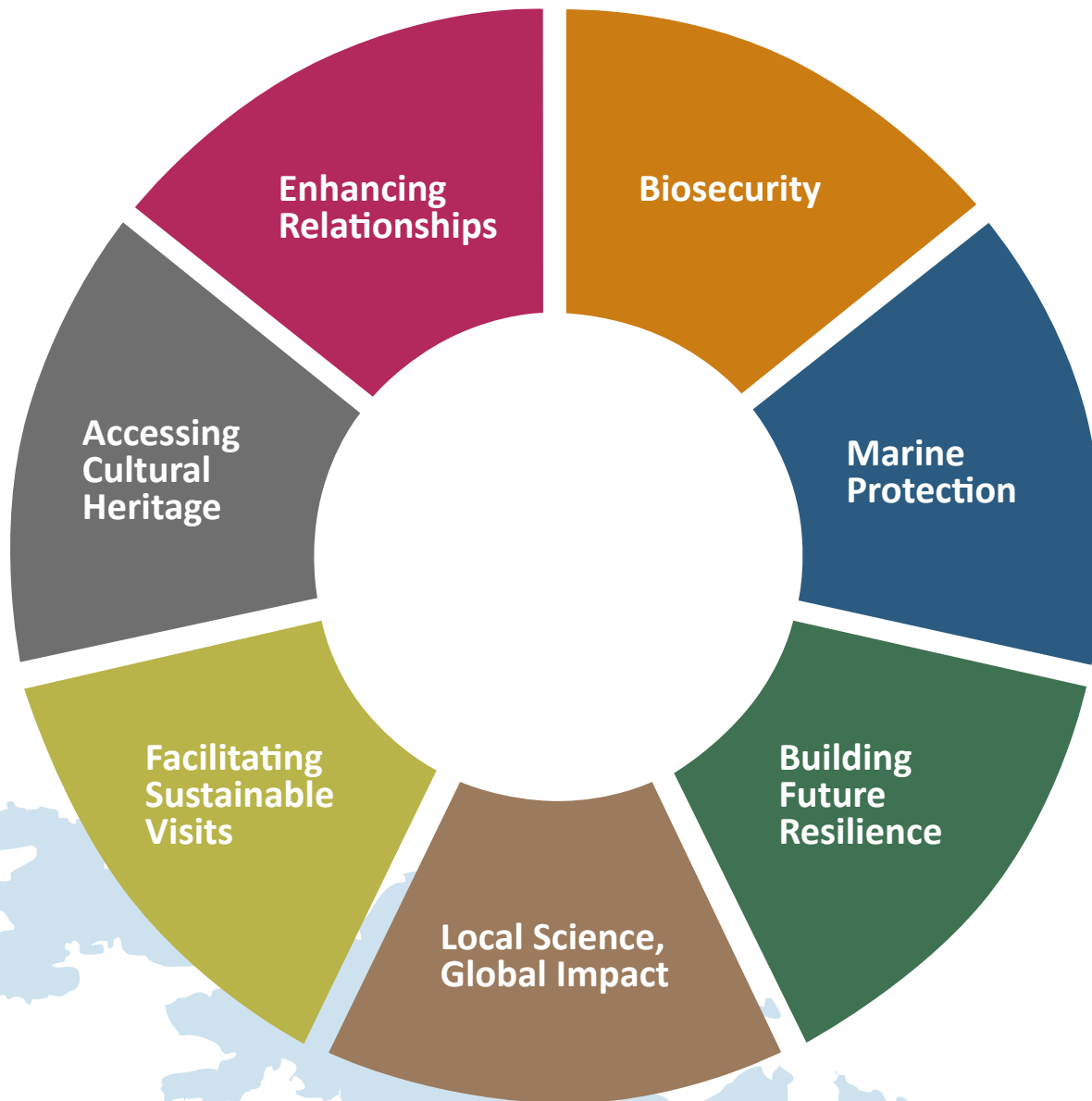
Accessibility

A publically-accessible legislative framework will reflect our commitment to openness.

Multi-disciplinary research and science will be made publically-accessible.



The Priority Areas



Biosecurity - To protect ecosystems through active management and monitoring.

Marine Protection - To set an exceptional standard for management of our marine environment, underpinned by robust science.

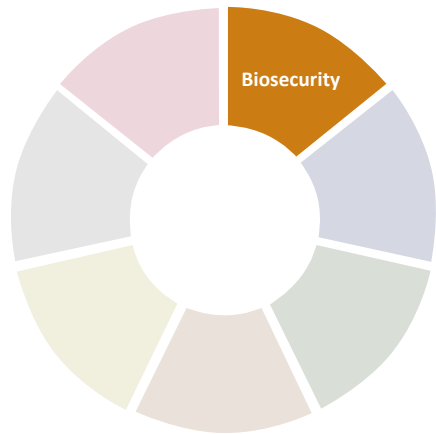
Building Future Resilience - To meet the long-term infrastructure and development requirements in a changing climate.

Local Science, Global Impact - To foster science and research that takes advantage of the opportunity afforded by SGSSI's distinctive location.

Facilitating Sustainable Visits - To put sustainability at the heart of every visit and inspire future ambassadors for the Territory.

Accessing Cultural Heritage - To conserve, share and extend remote access to the cultural heritage.

Enhancing Relationships - To inspire learning, partnership, collaboration and success.



One of the greatest risks to our marine and terrestrial biodiversity is the introduction and spread of alien invasive species. The highest standards of biosecurity will help mitigate that risk.

Pre-border Prevention – The successful major rodent eradication likely could not be repeated today because of glacial retreat making prevention all the more fundamental to the sustained environmental recovery. By preference all biosecurity risks will be dealt with before arrival in South Georgia or the South Sandwich Islands.

By providing clear biosecurity policies and guidelines together with a robust legislative framework, we will help vessels, cargo and visitors reduce the risk of bringing non-native species and pathogens with them to South Georgia. This will include standard procedures to biosecure cargo and biosecurity dog searches to further reduce the risk of rodents being reintroduced to South Georgia.

Visitors will be briefed and inspired to protect South Georgia's ecology by playing their part and ensuring they thoroughly clean their outdoor clothing, equipment and footwear.

To protect ecosystems through active management and monitoring

We will develop and implement procedures to minimise the threat of marine invasive species transmitted by vessels, with a process of pathway analysis and mitigation measures.

Vessels Arriving – All visitors are already required to thoroughly biosecure their outdoor clothing, equipment and footwear and all vessels are required to adhere to the biosecurity and environmental protection protocols reducing the introduction of new biosecurity threats, but also reducing intra island transfer of non-native species. We will continue to conduct inspections aboard visiting vessels, seeking feedback and adjusting our biosecurity procedures to ensure they remain practical and effective.

We will continue the rodent detector dog programme.

Post-border Monitoring and Response – We will monitor for, and seek to identify, novel species in the marine and terrestrial environments. We will continue to refine incursion response procedures and ensure they follow best practice. We will monitor ecosystems and species to understand their recovery following habitat restoration projects, and to identify change which may result from anthropogenic pressures.

We will continue to put in place measures to protect the Territory from new invasive species and target existing ones to ensure they do not spread. This work will bolster resilience of the Territory's biota to stressors such as climate change.

We will build up a publically accessible digital knowledge bank to identify and respond to threats posed by non-native species.

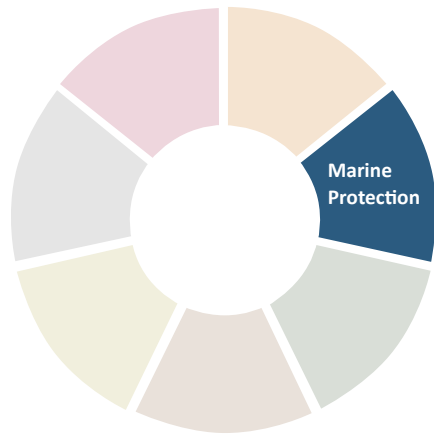
We will continue to fund a comprehensive invasive plant management programme to drive down prevalence of key invasive species, building on the success of the last 5 years.

Outreach – We will continue to maintain high standards in biosecurity and promote them as a model of best practice whilst continuing to research and develop new and better procedures in response to threats and emerging technologies. We will share what we have learned about the significant impact alien species have had, continue to have, and could have again on South Georgia, and use our story, as told in the 'South Georgia – A Visitor's Guide' film, to inspire positive change in others.

Collaboration – We will continue to work with, and draw upon, the expertise provided by external agencies to maintain rodent free status, and drive down threats to ecology from invasive species and pathogens. The landmark result delivered by the South Georgia Heritage Trust (SGHT) to rid South Georgia of rodents is an example of how Government can work with partners to deliver environmental achievements of global significance.

Enforcement – We will put in place accessible guidance and a legislative framework for compliance and enforcement.





Scientific evidence will continue to be the cornerstone of how we manage our marine environment. Science, research and monitoring will be undertaken from all available platforms, including fishing vessels, United Kingdom research vessels, Government patrol vessels, cruise ship fleet & expedition vessels, and through collaboration with other national research programmes including the UK Government's flagship Blue Belt programme.

A network of Marine Protected Areas (MPA)

– The SGSSI MPA should not sit in isolation and we will seek opportunities, such as through CCAMLR and the sub-Antarctic forum, to be a part of a wider network of marine protection measures in the region, thereby making the collective voice for positive change elsewhere louder and clearer.

We will work hard as a member of the UK delegation to CCAMLR to support the raising of marine conservation standards whilst operating an ecosystem-based fisheries management regime for krill and fin fish.

To set an exceptional standard for management of our marine environment, underpinned by robust science

Climate Change Resilience – At a time when the rate of adoption of neighbouring MPAs may be slower we will promote the benefits of having an MPA with varying levels of restrictions on activity. The region is likely to play an important role as a refuge or stepping stone for species whose distributions are anticipated to move south as a result of climate change.

MPA science, data and review – The 2023 MPA 5-year independent review will be an opportunity for stakeholders to make evidence-based recommendations to the Government of SGSSI about further enhancements to the MPA. To support that review, a data portal and research & monitoring plan will identify the key science areas of research needed to support robust decision-making and active marine management. This transparency and accessibility will be promoted as a model for marine protection in the region and for other similar highly biodiverse small islands.

Fisheries - Part of the Solution – The SGSSI maritime zone is vulnerable to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Each legal fishing vessel is a sentinel, providing eyes on the water, and exemplars of sustainable management and compliance in a highly regulated environment. Without a fishing fleet there is no longer an opportunity to shape and influence global fishing practises. We will work with our licensed operators, across the fisheries to help raise global standards of fisheries management and develop a communications plan with our stakeholders for sharing positive messages about the important role fisheries play in marine protection including the work carried out by independent observers aboard every licensed vessel. We will make best efforts to ensure our fisheries continue to be recognised as among the world's most sustainable and best managed, including maintaining our position as one of the highest scoring Marine Stewardship Council certified fisheries.

Human Lives at Sea – We expect every vessel operator to show high standards of welfare and respect for their crew. Using the framework of ILO188, we are committed to ensuring all vessels that operate within the SGSSI maritime zone provide safe and ethical living and working conditions for all on board. We will engage with appropriate groups and organisations who represent these issues to understand what we can do better and what opportunities may exist for the Government of SGSSI to drive up welfare standards.

Compliance and Enforcement – We will support remote technologies, including the increased use of electronic monitoring and encourage innovation in how technology can be used to monitor all human activity (legal and illegal). We will respond proportionately but robustly to any incidents of non-compliance. The MPA and its fisheries will be a test-bed for developing surveillance technologies and vessel activity tracking capability.





11

The environmental impact of humans is left bare for all to see on South Georgia with the derelict whaling stations reflecting an era of exploitation and continuing to act as a salutatory lesson leaving abandoned buildings and waste. This serves to remind us of the need to consider the long term impact of any infrastructure or development on South Georgia.

Future Building Projects – The principal focus of any redevelopment will be at KEP and Bird Island research stations. This will support and accommodate a reinvigorated science community and upgrade outdated facilities. We will make better use of existing space to support science before new buildings are considered. We will work with BAS to minimise our environmental footprint using innovation and new technology at both KEP and Bird Island.

Other than in an emergency, by 2025 we will ensure all power generation on the land mass of South Georgia comes from renewable energy.

To meet the long-term infrastructure and development requirements in a changing climate

Financial Resilience – Being largely self-financing, the Government of SGSSI must continue to live within its means to meet all operating expenditure. Surplus revenue is used to support larger scale priority projects such as reducing environmental impact of any redevelopment at KEP or upgrade to facilities. We will continue to apply financial rigour to our budget setting and development plans. We will remain alert to opportunities for partnership financing initiatives.

We will be cognisant of the impact sustaining and maintaining any infrastructure brings when considering any restoration, redevelopment or new infrastructure proposals.

Climate Change Impact – We will monitor the impact of the changing climate on the facilities at KEP. This might include the impact of rising sea levels, and the impact of warming on the buildings and their substructures. Where infrastructure work is planned consideration of climate change impacts will be built into the EIA conducted making sure it meets the highest environmental standards. We will accelerate the review of infrastructure and facilities at KEP with an emphasis on how using sustainable technology could reduce our carbon footprint still further.

The Government will be single-use plastic-free by 2025. We will work with suppliers and partners to uphold the same standard.

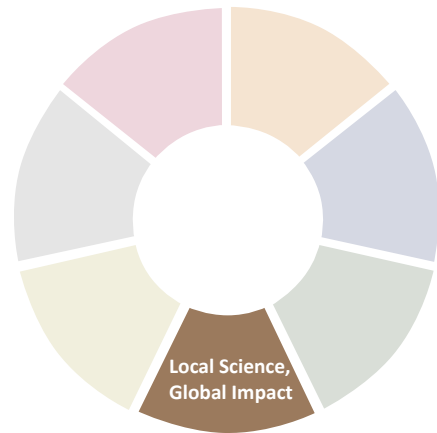
We will continue to support global efforts to remove plastic debris from our beaches by working with International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) to encourage 'beach cleans' to form a part of the visitor landing experience as debris poses an immediate threat to wildlife.

Fisheries Patrol Vessel – Government fisheries patrol vessels will support and protect the marine environment by providing a platform for ecosystem recovery science, while maintaining their primary enforcement function. We will carry out a review to determine the level of scientific and accommodation capacity required, and to understand the feasibility of commercially sub-chartering the vessel for specific projects.

Derelict Whaling Stations – Beyond dealing with the toxic legacy of oil and asbestos and reducing safety risks, we will not conduct any rebuilding of derelict whaling stations.



Photograph: Steve Brown



The Territory and its surrounding maritime zone are a natural laboratory for conducting research of global significance and benefit. We will continue to support the science and research undertaken, in part under the KEP Science Plan and at Bird Island research station, to inform the good governance of our highly regulated fisheries and broader aims of marine & terrestrial protection.

The Regulated Activity Permit system which will include an EIA when necessary will continue to ensure the environmental impact of science work is fully considered, sample collection is appropriately managed and the highest standards of animal welfare and safety are maintained.

Science Strategy – We will collaborate with stakeholders to deliver a science strategy that considers both the global opportunities and the local need to support the management of the Territory. Laboratory and associated accommodation space will be available at KEP to external scientists and researchers. Use of these facilities will be promoted and encouraged across a range of disciplines as the renaissance of science on South Georgia develops.

To foster science and research that takes advantage of the opportunity afforded by SGSSI's distinctive location

Together with the fisheries research vital to ensure world-leading conservation and fisheries management, we will encourage Earth-Systems science that contributes to the sustainable management of the Territory, together with developing a greater knowledge of local, regional and global processes.

The new strategy will include science which considers the following areas:

- **Ocean ecosystem function** – How are ocean ecosystems around SGSSI changing in response to multiple pressures from climate change and what are the implications for conservation and sustainable management of the marine protected area?
- **Role of SGSSI in the Earth-System** – What does SGSSI and the surrounding ocean contribute to global biogeochemical fluxes, and in particular, to the drawn-down of anthropogenic carbon dioxide and marine methane emission? How do physical and biological systems on SGSSI support, and limit, biogeochemical fluxes in and between the atmosphere and ocean?
- **Environmental history** – How has SGSSI's position, role and significance changed in the regional climate system over different timescales? Can an understanding of earlier change in the region help provide context and increase capacity to predictive future climate change and environmental impacts?
- **The Coastal zone** – What is the relationship between marine and terrestrial environments when considering the marine mammals impact on the coastal zones on SG and SSI?
- **Ecosystem function** – Are changes to the climate and in policy and practice on SGSSI, coupled with the long-term recovery of predator populations and habitat restoration, driving quantitative and functional changes in marine and terrestrial ecosystems?
- **Cultural and historical research** – How can the political, economic and cultural history of SGSSI be analysed and interpreted through the combined study of archaeology, artefacts and historical sources?
- **Future integrated projections** – Can projections of future change, such as glacial retreat or ice melt, inform and support the management of the Territory and its continued recovery?





Each visitor should experience the wildness of South Georgia, and leave with a sense of wonder and a greater understanding of the importance of seeking out nature and protecting it wherever they can. South Georgia and its demonstration of ecosystem recovery will inspire visitors to be ambassadors for the region with an understanding of the environmental issues which threaten it. Sustainable visits are a force for good.

Welcoming Visitors – A Tourism Officer based at Grytviken will engage with visitors, to help people understand how their visit plays a positive and active part in the protection of South Georgia. They will articulate how by doing thorough biosecurity checks before and after every landing, visitors may play their part in protecting South Georgia, and how the revenue generated from their visit is reinvested into continuing the ecosystem recovery.

Visitor Experience – We will listen and learn from visitors so that we can enhance their experience and build on their commitment to be ambassadors for the region. This will be done in collaboration with SGHT who operate the South Georgia Museum.

To put sustainability at the heart of every visit and inspire future ambassadors for the Territory

Arm-chair Explorers – We will seek to engage people of all ages and backgrounds by providing relevant and valuable digital content. This will help us tell South Georgia's story and highlight the benefits of our approach of sustainable environmental management and encourage participation in remote citizen science projects.

Terrestrial Protection – We will work with IAATO and our Expedition Advisory Panel to design and roll out an Island-wide terrestrial protection. We will use a range of methods including citizen science projects to identify, assess, manage and monitor for change in visited areas as part of terrestrial protection plans. These will comprise a comprehensive monitoring programme to build a better-informed picture of the impacts of visitation on natural and cultural aspects of a site, where negative impacts will trigger proportionate site-specific management.

Partnership Working – Positive change and raising of standards can only be done successfully in conjunction with industry. We will periodically review and enhance our approaches to visitor management to reflect the changing trends in tourism on SGSSI. Concurrently we will strengthen our relationship with IAATO and others working together on shared challenges such as whale strike incident, pollution generated by visiting vessels and potential risks to the environment in the event of a maritime incident.

Marine Protection – Like the licensed fisheries vessels during the winter months, cruise ships and yachts provide an important presence in the water during the summer, acting as sentinels and deterring IUU activity. We will consider the benefits to recording, monitoring and protecting marine mammal distribution and MARPOL compliance through an observer programme and encourage visitor participation in citizen science projects.

South Sandwich Islands (SSI) – Consistent with our wider approach to visitor management and terrestrial protection, recreational tourism landings will not be permitted in the SSI in order to safeguard their pristine nature and due to the inherent safety risks of landing there.





The 2017 Heritage Strategy sits at the heart of the Government's efforts to record and manage the history of the Territory. It will continue to be the central document for the island-wide approach to protecting, preserving and sharing our heritage with a wider international audience. The focus is on how to make visitors, both in person or remotely, feel a connection to the broad cultural stories that South Georgia offers.

Grytviken Conservation Management Plan (CMP) – The CMP will help Government engage with stakeholders about the priority areas of focus at Grytviken. We will continue to work with SGHT on projects that seek to maintain specific elements of remaining physical heritage at Grytviken whilst promoting the international significance of the Territory's cultural heritage.

South Georgia Museum – The museum is visited by the majority of tourists to South Georgia and as such, it is our best resource for educating visitors about the history of the islands and their role in exploration, historical exploitation, scientific endeavour and significant ongoing conservation projects.

To conserve, share and extend the remote access to the cultural heritage

We will work with SGHT, the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust and the Falkland Islands Museum, as well as UK and international museums, to seek new ways to increase our heritage outreach including through seeking the museum's inclusion in the UK Arts Council Museum Accreditation scheme.

A Living Heritage Record – Significant work has already been conducted to provide a comprehensive record of many of the Territory's physical heritage assets and artefacts with a ranking of their importance against set criteria. We will develop this work into an online resource, adopting recognised referencing models for ease of comparative work to which enthusiasts and experts can contribute photography, oral histories and monitoring records. This record will allow historians and future generations to understand and study the important history of the islands, long after the physical heritage has been allowed to safely decline.

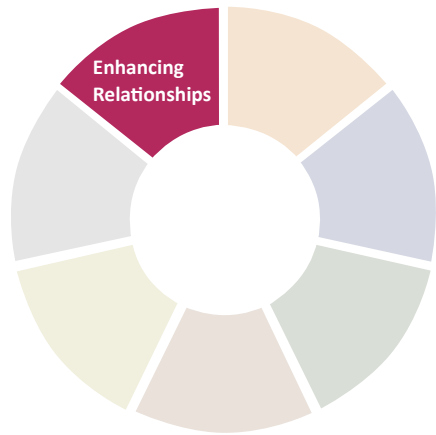
The Heritage Advisory Panel will continue to provide Government with recommendations on approaches regarding heritage matters.

Categorisation of Heritage – We will decide how to manage the recent assessment of heritage assets of the Territory and ensure any decisions are underpinned by appropriate legislation. Much like the UK grade listing system, we will develop rules as to how certain categories of heritage are managed, preserved and protected. When making these decisions we will consider the level of long-term liability that might fall to the Government. We will maintain a strong collaboration with the Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage and other relevant Norwegian expertise, recognising Norway's particular connection to the Island's history.

Research and Discovery – We will highlight how South Georgia's geographical significance continues to place it at the forefront of global science and exploration. This ongoing endeavour follows Cook's discovery in 1775, and Sir Ernest Shackleton's crossing of South Georgia to save his men, whilst Discovery House at KEP housed the first laboratories of the Discovery Investigations in 1925. We will work with SGHT and others to mark the centenary of Shackleton's death in January 2022 and celebrate his contribution to South Georgia and the Polar Regions.

Collaboration and Outreach – We will continue to develop the digital methods to record historic sites and share that with others. As we work to sustain the environmental recovery in South Georgia, we will use our living cultural heritage to celebrate the return of the whales to these waters and highlight what can be achieved.





The Government of SGSSI is a small government. It is only able to deliver on its ambitious aims by working with others. Each stakeholder can enrich our understanding and approach to sustainable environmental management. We will continue to use a broad engagement approach to inform how we best deliver our vision.

No relationship is more important than that enjoyed between the Government of SGSSI and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office.

Stakeholder Relationships – Relationships with stakeholders will be nurtured with a broader base of individuals and organisations coming together to help inform on how we continue to create conditions that allow nature to flourish. Partnerships will leverage our approach.

To inspire learning, partnership, collaboration and success

Inter-Governmental Relationships – We will work across UK Government Departments covering environmental, heritage and sustainability agendas to learn from UK best practice.

Working with others – We will work across the UKOTs to share skills and support cross-territory research, to grow closer links and learn from one another.

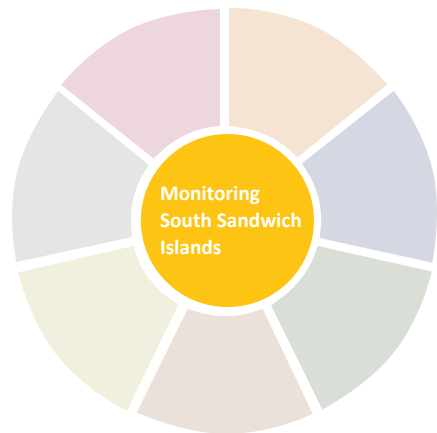
Outreach – We will work with communication specialists to establish how we can share the good news stories of the Territory; boosting the numbers of subscribers to our newsletter and being active about reaching out to other conservation groups, with a focus on sub-Antarctic Islands and the UKOT community. We will share information based on the best available science and evidence relating to a range of current issues to help prevent potentially harmful and misinformed negative public opinion.

Openness – The Government's website will be refreshed to make legislation, policies and plans more accessible to all. The refresh will be shaped by our vision, values and deliverables to support gap analysis and areas that may require consultation.

Communications – We will be open and transparent in our communications. To achieve this we will:

- Develop a communications strategy that sets out wider narrative; drawing together different areas of work, key projects, articulating how activities meet our values and help deliver our shared objectives to protect, sustain and inspire.
- Ensure our communication will appropriately acknowledge the work of partners and stakeholders creating far-reaching networks with global impact.
- Continue the annual stakeholder meeting with an emphasis on discussion and active engagement.





The inaccessibility of the South Sandwich Islands (SSI) has long offered protection from external threats. As a volcanic archipelago, they are largely inaccessible to humans but are home to significant numbers of penguins. Our approach to marine and terrestrial management in the SSI will be consistent with our approach for South Georgia: to deliver environmental recovery and resilience through world-leading evidence-based sustainable management, underpinned by our guiding values of Environmental Protection, Evidence-Based Decision-Making, Sustainability, and Openness. Management outcomes will reflect the islands' unique circumstances in the same way as for the most pristine and remote areas around South Georgia.

To protect and celebrate the South Sandwich Islands for their important wildlife and wilderness areas

Visiting South Sandwich Islands – Recreational tourism landings will not be permitted. Scientific and media visits will need to meet strict criteria to demonstrate their work is necessary at that location and can be undertaken in a safe and ecologically-sensitive manner. Through the Regulated Activity Permit system, we will ensure that biosecurity provision is appropriate to protect the SSI. Future terrestrial protection planning will recognise their unique endemic biodiversity. In particular, we recognise the globally significant penguin populations on the islands

Infrastructure on South Sandwich Islands – There will be no development of infrastructure. Temporary installations to support science and monitoring may be allowed after independent and external review of an EIA. Approval will also be subject to clear plans for the removal of any infrastructure at the end of the project life. The SSI will remain rarely visited.

Science and Collaboration on the South Sandwich Islands – As part of the science strategy, we will identify and develop science priorities for the SSI. With this in mind and recognising that these islands present a dynamic and dangerous environment with multiple natural hazards including extreme weather, our focus will be on establishing remote monitoring so the islands can be studied safely.

Although projects that utilise remote monitoring will be prioritised; it is recognised that visiting the islands will be necessary at times. To facilitate this, we will work with those who have experience and expertise in the SSI to develop specific risk assessments for the unique hazards on the islands to ensure safe visits.

The Deep – So far we have had only glimpses of the deep SSI ocean trench and hydrothermal vents adjacent to the islands and are only just beginning to discover their rich ocean flora and fauna. We will continue to unlock the secrets of this unique environment through a focus on international science co-operation in order to gain the highest quality information with the lightest possible footprint. The South Sandwich Trench is already protected by a complete No-Take Zone, but if additional areas of significant or unique biodiversity are discovered, we will act rapidly to ensure they are also safeguarded.

Outreach – We will promote the islands and their physical and biological features through our website, social media and philatelic outreach activities. Awareness of the natural history of the SSI will be raised by supporting high-quality science, media, art and educational programmes which highlight the islands' unique attributes.



Modified Copernicus Sentinel Data (2018), processed by ESA

Future South Georgia Competition

In early 2020 the Government of SGSSI launched a competition which invited children to consider what they would like South Georgia to be like in twenty years' time.

Inspiring the next generation is key to ensuring positive change endures.

Thank you to everyone who took part.

Twenty Years by Ruben Ellis

(Age Category 11 and over)

In twenty years I'd like to see,
South Georgia Wildlife flourishing endlessly;

In twenty years I'd like to think,
The South Georgia Pipit will not be extinct;

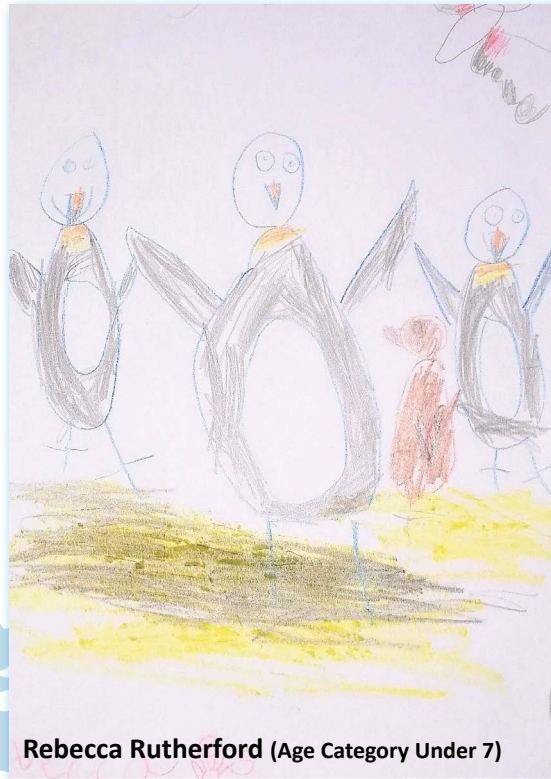
In twenty years I'd like to know,
That protected marine life has continued to grow;

In twenty years I really wish,
For no more pollution killing the fish;

In twenty years I hope there'll be,
Millions more Albatross soaring over the sea;

In twenty years I hope they locate,
Multiple pods of Whales safe to migrate;

In twenty years I hope we've all reflected,
And wildlife in South Georgia is forevermore protected.



Rebecca Rutherford (Age Category Under 7)



Callum Joseph (Age Category 7 to 10)

With your help we can deliver our vision and inspire others to drive for sustainable environmental recovery and safeguard the future of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.



Office of the Commissioner
Government House
Stanley
FIQQ 1ZZ
Falkland Islands

+500 28200

info@gov.gs

www.gov.gs

© Crown Copyright

Front cover photo by Rod Long
Design by artmattersstudio.co.uk