

St Helena Airport

The long awaited announcement about an airport has been made, giving rise to a great deal of excitement in St Helena. The Governor hosted a press conference to announce that an airport will be built on St Helena. The timing of bringing into operation will coincide with the decommissioning of the RMS in 2010. The long- haul runway option of 2500 m was announced - a surprise perhaps to some, but perhaps not all, that this was the preferred option.

The picture shows the Governor, Michael Clancy making the announcement - which is the single largest development on St Helena – and which all are hoping will be a turning point in the lives and fortunes of Saints and St Helena.



Protected Area Planning for the Central Peaks

Alien plant control at High Peak and Casons

A primary output for the first year of this OTEP-supported project was to carry out weed control in accessible areas at High Peak (and associated Peaks), through a combination of contract and volunteer programmes, to reduce the threat of loss of native plant species and establish a publicly visual impression of project progress and improved amenity.

A tiny fragment of tree ferns and cabbage trees cling to the steep southern slope below the peak of High Peak. However, the relentless spread of flax from the abandoned flax plantations below is succeeding in destroying what little remains. With the area cleared of invasives, the ebonies, rebonies, gumwoods and Large Jellico are clearly visible and now have room to grow, whilst ferns are colonising open ground. A small number of the critically endangered Large Bellflowers were found after flax was removed from the base of High Peak cliff face. This is a really exciting discovery and gives hope that more individuals will be found when work starts to control flax on the cliff face. Effort now needs to be focused on the sheer slope above and on finding ways of sustaining conservation effort in the area

Work is well underway surveying the vegetation along the central ridge. The survey will confirm the status of the native plants, and give information on under-recorded endemics. It will track changes in the different plants growing in the Peaks and their range over time. This is useful because it will give hard evidence

of the level of success of alien plant control programmes and whether populations of endangered species are increasing or decreasing.



Volunteers clearing weeds from around Small Bellflower plants High Peak

Advice and experience sharing has been exchanged with other OTEP project managers, Tara Pelembe on Ascension Island regarding digital mapping and data basing and Peter Ryan in South Africa regarding Tristan da Cunha flax control on Inaccessible. Through Tara we have had contact with Ian Fisher, who visited Ascension last year for the RSPB and Alan Mills, who will be visiting Ascension later this year to support their mapping and database project. In addition other colleagues here and abroad, in particular Mike Pienkowski, Chair UKOTCF, and Adrian Mallia, from Adi Associates Environmental Consultants who carried out a consultancy on the Island last year, have been consulted on aspects of project development. The support given is much appreciated because the collective advice, which it should be noted is given free, helps to build our confidence that we are ‘on-track’ and gives us a broader outlook.

For further information about the OTEP Protected Area Planning Project for the central Peaks contact Rebecca Cairns-Wicks on tel. +290 4419 or email Mount.Pleasant@helanta.sh

Strategy for Action to implement the Environment Charter, St Helena

The Environment Charters set out an agreed policy framework between the UK Government and individual Overseas Territories.

The Environment Charter was signed in 2001 on behalf of the people of St Helena by Councillor Eric George. Progress has been made towards implementation, but only as possible within normal day-to-day work within various government departments and by NGO's. There was no comprehensive island-wide strategy for action for implementing the Charter, and this was much needed.

To achieve this, a project “Facilitation of the Development of a Strategy for Action to Implement the Environment Charter” (the Environment Charter Project) was drawn up and funding sought and approved from the Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) in 2004.

With the experience gained from the pilot study in the Turks and Caicos Islands, to achieve the first completed strategy for action to implement the Environment Charter, Dr Mike Pienkowski was the most likely person to facilitate this project for St Helena.