

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Environment & Natural Resources Committee held on Monday 08th June 2015 @ 10.30am in the Attorney General's Chambers.

Present:	Hon. Gavin Ellick	-	Acting Chairman
	Hon. Cyril George	-	Member
	Hon. Dr. Corinda Essex	-	Member
	Hon. Mrs Christine Scipio-O'Dean	-	Member
	Mr Derek Henry	-	Deputy Director of ENRD
Invited:	Mrs Sarah Troman	-	Head of Property & Housing Division
	Mr Darren Duncan	-	Head of Agriculture & Natural Resources Division
	Mr Ben Sansom	-	Head of Environmental Management Division
	Mr Nicky Lawrence	-	Secretary
Apologies:	Hon. Wilson Duncan	-	Overseas Conference
	Mr Trevor Graham	-	Overseas Conference

The Acting Chairman welcomed everyone and opened the meeting.

Open Agenda.

26.1 End of Year Progress Report on Strategic Development Plan 2014-2015.

The Deputy Director gave an introduction to the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) and then invited Heads of Division (HoD's) to update Committee on progress with their targets in their respective Divisions for the past year.

A member asked for the focus to be on targets not met rather than those that are in progress or have been achieved. Members were reminded that as this is a three year plan there are still ongoing projects and therefore all targets will not have been achieved.

Agriculture & Natural Resources Division (ANRD).

The Head of ANRD told members that replanting of forest plantations did not meet the target due to insufficient tree seedlings. This was due to a delay in obtaining a specific variety of pine seed from offshore. There are Bio-Security issues involved when importing seed, however, seed has now been received and certification obtained for its use. The target for 2015-2016 has been revised to include the acreage that was not planted in 2014-2015.

There was no progress with the establishment and implementation of a Weeds Management Action Plan (WMA) due to no funding being approved for the activities required under such an action plan.

A member asked when will a revised version of the Strategic Development Plan 2015-2016 be available to members. The quarterly Progress Report will reflect changes for the past three months and a revised Strategic Plan will be issued in conjunction with this for the July meeting.

A member complained that the new ENRD Strategic Plan had not been shared with Committee although the SDP was referred to in the Budget review. The Deputy Director indicated that the draft plan had been emailed to members and discussed with them. Another point raised by a Member was that ENRD had submitted a budget to Committee that was not balanced but unwittingly endorsed by Committee. The first submission of the budget reflected the cost of running a basic service and Committee had endorsed it on this basis.

The member stressed that Committee needs to be involved in the development of the Budget in the early stages.

Deputy Director undertook to provide an updated SDP and a quarterly progress report for the July meeting.

Action: Deputy Director

Bio-Security and Pesticides.

The Pesticides Policy and Implementation Plan has been endorsed by the Economic Development Committee (EDC) and is in the implementation process.

Model legislation has been researched with a view to producing first time Pesticides legislation. To date there has been no legal assistance available to enable drafting of the required legislation but will be addressed in early 2015.

Legislation had been researched to improve Bio-Security legislation in the form of assigned matter under the Customs Ordinance and passed to Attorney General's Office for assistance in drafting. No assistance has been available to date and target will be progressed in early 2015 with legal support.

The Head of ANRD stressed the importance of Bio-Security and Pesticides legislation being drafted and implemented with the imminent opening of the Airport in 2016 and said he would like to present the related documents to a formal Legislative Council (LegCo) this year. A member told him that issues such as this should not be held back as more LegCo meetings could be arranged for urgent matters.

A member suggested that it would be valuable for Heads of Divisions to attend ENRC meetings for the quarterly progress report of the SDP. Members agreed to this.

Action: Deputy Director

Environmental Management Division (EMD).

The Head of EMD told Committee that he wished to 'pick up' on invasive species control as this is a crossover between ANRD and EMD. There is a particular section within the ANRD plan which has a bearing on what the EMD does.

Within EMD work is ongoing with the Peaks team managing the habitats, clearing invasive species and replanting. There is no specific funding available for weed management across the island dealing with wild mango, whiteweed and flax. Funding for the invasive species control project ended about three years ago. Further funding for this project has not been approved.

A member asked why was this matter in the SDP and no money budgeted for it. The Deputy Director replied that a bid for funding for invasive weeds management was submitted in the last budget round but this was not successful.

The Head of EMD told members that his staff are now doing 'pocket' clearing and planting in which small areas of flax are removed and new endemics are planted. These are maintained over a six month period until they are free standing.

The Head of ANRD told members that he has approached the relevant people to try and secure funding for these operations with no success.

A member asked if a proper Business Case has been worked up with input from Enterprise St Helena (ESH) to quantify the impact on farming with regards to invasive weeds etc. which also has a negative impact on sustainable economic development. Head of ANRD replied that a report had been made with regards to Diversity. The member felt it was far more important to look at economic development and a strong business case for ESH to work in collaboration with regards for funding.

The Head of EMD went on to say that there are other sources of funding such as the Darwin Project, but this money is only made available for certain qualifying projects such as plans and research. Another organisation called BEST provides funds for specific projects.

Under the National Environment Management Plan (NEMP) 40% of works are to be led by other organisations but the other organisations do not see NEMP works as a priority. There is a need to re-base the NEMP targets and programme. The Head of EMD reported that NEMP targets had slipped due to work related to the Airport not being recognised.

Targets that were achieved are that much Landscape and Ecology Mitigation Project (LEMP) work has been completed, new operational manuals for the landfill site and incinerator have been written. Bird strike reports have also been completed for airport certification. Also new meteorological forecasting equipment is being installed at the airport meteorological forecast desk. The

Met Office was restructured, funded by the UK Met Office and will be managed by EMD.

The LEMP team has provided support to the Air Access Directorate for plant propagation and seed collecting services with two more members of staff being employed (in May 2014 under separate LEMP contract). Propagation capacity has been increased with the provision of extra shadehouses (mainly funded by ENRD – 30% LEMP funded).

The Marine team finished the Darwin Marine Mapping Project, with the Marine Management Plan, Marine Protection Areas and Marine Guide as outcomes of the project. Work is on-going with the new Marine Economy Darwin project.

The draft Environmental Protection Ordinance is with the AG for review.

Property and Housing Division.

The Head of Property and Housing reported that with the target being fifteen housing plots including the Comprehensive Development Areas (CDA's) only ten plots have been sold for development this year. This is due to delays and technical issues concerning CDA's. It is felt that there is little development land left due to difficulty to access and unavailability of the relevant services. The Property Division is exploring ways to sell un-serviced plots at a reduced rate. It is proposed to offer for sale eight plots below High Knoll in the coming year.

A member asked about progress on the Half Tree Hollow and Bottom Woods CDA's and was told that the project is delayed for further drawing design and waiting until Connect St Helena Ltd has the sewage system in place. The Bottom Woods CDA is at a similar stage awaiting drainage and services.

Crown Estates does process and complete all documentation within the allotted timeframe of two weeks but final registration is limited by the availability of the Chief Magistrate who is the Registrar of Lands.

Within the Geographic Information System (GIS) the timescale for completion of most survey work is two months with the target being met. However, in some instances major works with clients such as Connect St Helena Ltd take longer.

New software is being developed to create a comprehensive property database and management tool with 50% of the data being populated on the register by March 2015.

The Land Disposal Policy is currently under review and being consulted internally with anticipation of a final draft being submitted to the ENRC Sub-Committee for implementation in June or July 2015.

All SHG properties have been surveyed and a maintenance programme is almost complete to inform implementation decisions.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11.55am.

Confirmed..........Date..........