

**ADDRESS BY ALEX CAMERON, HEAD OF FCO'S SOUTHERN OCEANS
DEPARTMENT**

May I begin by asking that you join me in expressing our thanks to Sean for his sterling work as Acting Governor, and to the many people who have clearly spent hours in constructing this incredible Saint welcoming party.

We received word that Jamestown was being beautified while we were on the RMS last week, but I don't think we could have imagined something this wonderful.

Thank you for your warm welcome to St Helena. The Governor and I have been travelling for nearly two weeks now, mingling with the passengers and crew of the magnificent RMS. I will, like many here, mourn the departure of this outstanding vessel when she's taken out of service later this year. She's been the lifeline to the Island for many years. I'm sure most assembled here have at one time or another travelled on her. She is your family when onboard, an extension of the Island, and a symbol of the community.

It is poignant to reflect that Lisa Phillips has become the 68th, and final, Governor to have arrived on St Helena by ship. But the past gives way to the future. Last week, an international jet landed on this Island for the first time. And so this Island is not just looking towards the future. It is living in the future.

In many people's eyes that future began with the arrival of Mark Capes as 67th Governor. During his tenure the long-held dream of many Saints became a reality. He announced the airport on his sixth day in the job, and over the past four and a half years carefully steered the Island to turn the words he arrived with into action. It is simply staggering to appreciate how quickly a world-class airport has been built. It's changed the geography, and even the shape of the Island. This change could only take place with the huge commitment of the Saint people, of Basil Read and its employees and of course the skills and commitment of all those who have worked in St Helena Government and elsewhere during this time.

We would like to thank Governor Capes for his leadership during this period. Mark should rightly be remembered as someone who reached out to the wider Saint community. He had a passion to lead the Island down the road to economic development and to financial independence. He championed an outward-facing St Helena, an Island and community that was open for business. Mark was a staunch supporter of the communities of St Helena, Tristan and Ascension, promoting all that was good and defending them resolutely through difficult times. He worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure the interests of St Helena were taken in to account. Mark, we are all grateful for the work you undertook.

So where next for St Helena? The opening of the Airport and Lisa's arrival are just the beginning. We held a South Atlantic event for the Governor in

Cape Town two weeks ago, and I saw for myself in Cape Town just how many people are passionate about St Helena. A long line of people are queuing up to see for themselves the jewels that this Island possesses.

The UK remains resolute in its commitment to St Helena and has honoured that commitment by investing in the Airport Project. This has opened the door. We're also aware that St Helena has committed to enact reforms and open up in order to seize the opportunities it now has. We're grateful for the work that has gone on to date and urge you to keep the pace up. I look forward to hearing how this is all being implemented from the many people I hope to meet this week.

And so to your new Governor. When we selected Lisa Phillips as the 68th Governor of St Helena, we were inspired by her development background. Lisa has worked in DFID all of her career, at every grade in the organisation, so she knows the business well! She is passionate about the future of St Helena, and has already told you how she wants Saints to be the prime beneficiaries of the opening of this Island. I'm convinced she will deliver. You're in safe hands.

And we shouldn't forget that Lisa is Governor not just of St Helena, but of Tristan Da Cunha, and Ascension too. These are three of the most beautiful places on earth. They represent our rich history and our shared bonds. They're inhabited by some of the most resilient people on earth, tied to the UK in a unique way. They harbour magnificent environments, being home to one third of the UK's endemic species. Lisa has promised to be an active Governor across all her patch. She was visibly moved by her recent visit to Tristan and has told me how much she is looking forward to visiting Ascension.

So may I finish by asking that you join me in congratulating Lisa on becoming the 68th Governor of St Helena. And to all on St Helena, Tristan da Cunha and Ascension, the UK sends its best to you.

Alex Cameron
Head of FCO's Southern Oceans Department
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