



ST HELENA AMBASSADOR

MARCH 2026



Editorial by Katelyn Benjamin

Welcome to the March edition of the St Helena Ambassador!

In February, a Major Incident at the Airport led to the temporary suspension of flights. A coordinated response across multiple agencies ensured that essential services continued, while recovery work was carried out efficiently. With support from local teams and international partners, full operations were restored by the end of the month.

Marine Awareness Week 2026 also brought the community together to mark ten years since the establishment of the island's Marine Protected Area. The week included a range of activities involving schools, community groups and the public, highlighting the importance of protecting St Helena's marine environment.

The island has also taken steps to strengthen its identity and services with the official registration of the "A Breath of Fresh Air" destination brand and the launch of a refreshed government website, improving access to information and digital services.

Meanwhile, St Helena's cricket team is representing the island in Ghana, and the Festival of Walking has continued to attract strong participation, combining outdoor activity with an appreciation of the island's landscape and conservation work.

This month, also features Neurodiversity Celebration Week (16-22 March), which embraced the theme of recognising strengths, challenging stereotypes, and celebrating difference. To mark the week, an organisation-wide seminar was held on 18 March, bringing together 28 colleagues from across portfolios

IN THIS ISSUE

ST HELENA AIRPORT
INCIDENT - FEBRUARY 2026

MARINE AWARENESS WEEK

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR -
NOW FORMALLY REGISTERED

ST HELENA CRICKET TEAM
REPRESENTED IN GHANA QUALIFIERS

FESTIVAL OF WALKING

NEURODIVERSITY WEEK

If you'd like to contribute a story to the St Helena Ambassador or have suggestions for future editions, please contact katelyn.benjamin@sainthelena.gov.sh or call 22470.

ST HELENA AIRPORT INCIDENT - FEBRUARY 2026



In early February, The St Helena Resilience Forum declared a Major Incident and activated a coordinated, multi-agency response when St Helena Airport failed to meet international safety requirements. Flights in and out of the island were suspended immediately. At the centre was the Gold Command Group, which brought together key agencies from across the Public Service and the private sector. Meeting daily, the group oversaw recovery work, monitored progress, and ensured clear updates reached the community.

Agencies worked quickly to stabilise the situation. HM Customs confirmed their services were not required operationally but continued monitoring. Health & Social Care teams supported patients scheduled for overseas medical referrals, while the island pharmacy assisted visitors struggling to access prescribed medication.

A breakthrough came when Airport Safety Support International (ASSI) granted permission for the Airport to operate at Category 4, allowing medical evacuation flights to continue. This was possible thanks to the St Helena Fire & Rescue Service, who provided cover during reduced fire safety capacity.

Recovery efforts then gathered pace. Replacement fire tender parts were dispatched from Germany, and residents in Cape Town were relocated to Johannesburg for better support. Medevac flights continued successfully, and specialist engineers arrived with additional equipment. Charter flights delivered spare parts, tools, and engineers, with seats prioritised for essential medical and critical staff. The community rallied to support further charter flights, enabling more passengers to move.

Soon, the Airport confirmed that operations would resume. Fire tender R1 passed its commissioning tests, supported by R3 and the Fire & Rescue Service. Scheduled flights restarted, with seats allocated fairly based on the length of passengers' delays. Commercial flights quickly followed, allowing most delayed residents and tourists to finally travel.

Future bookings reopened, additional parts for fire tender R2 arrived, and an early flight window to Ascension Island was agreed to support those whose plans had been disrupted.

By the end of February, the Major Incident was formally stood down. Gold Command concluded its final briefing, and thanks were shared across all agencies involved.

Looking ahead, a formal multi-agency debrief will capture lessons learned, identify areas for improvement, and highlight strengths shown through joint working. Work will continue in the coming months, including procurement of a replacement fire tender, support for affected businesses, and a full investigation into the root cause.

Travellers expressed appreciation for the consistent updates and support they received while overseas. Their messages reflected a shared understanding: although the disruption was significant, it was met with clear communication, strong cooperation, and commitment across the Public Service. This incident showed how much can be achieved when agencies and the wider community work together to overcome challenges.

MARINE AWARENESS WEEK



Photo Creds: Lauren Duncan



Photo Creds: Adam Riggs

Marine Awareness Week 2026 marked a major milestone for marine conservation in St Helena as we celebrated ten years since the designation of the island's Marine Protected Area (MPA). Established in 2016, the MPA covers St Helena's entire Exclusive Economic Zone of 200 nautical miles, spanning 448,411 km² (an area the size of France)!

To celebrate the anniversary, a week of activities brought together schools, community groups, decision-makers and the wider public. On display was a marine and fisheries conservation timeline, tracing the section's development from its establishment in the 1990s through to the present day. The display highlighted the wide range of projects delivered over the years and the ongoing work that continues to protect St Helena's marine environment.

Education and engagement were at the heart of the week. A total of 22 school groups attended, including Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 classes, students from St Helena Secondary School and home-schooled learners. After a brief discussion of our timeline, students were invited to share what they love most about the ocean, with their responses displayed in the Porteous House window during Marine Awareness Week and for the week after. Younger children also enjoyed creative activities, colouring fish species found in St Helena's waters and crafting their own fish and jellyfish, while interactive games and outdoor activities added energy and fun to the learning experience.

Beyond this, a range of community events also took place. An information session brought together Ministers, Councillors and key stakeholders. A fishers' social combined presentations and practical elements before continuing at the Yacht Club and Dive Club, with drinks and food, encouraging open discussion within the fishing community.

The week also featured a well-attended Quiz Night, held in collaboration with the Good Tern Charity at Ann's Place. Twelve teams took part in an evening of lively competition, with funds raised through entry fees, raffle ticket sales, donations and an impromptu auction.

Activities continued into the weekend with a disco hosted by New Horizons on Friday evening. On Saturday, attention turned to the theme of keeping oceans clean, with a wharf clean-up in Jamestown and James Bay. Volunteers from the St Helena Rainbows, Brownies and Guides, Scouts, the St Helena Dive Club and the wider community worked both along the seafront and underwater to remove litter and debris.

And finally, the celebrations concluded with a sponsored swim organised by the Yellow Fins Swimming Club. More than 40 swimmers took part, creating a vibrant and fitting finale to a week that showcased ten years of marine conservation and protection.

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR - NOW FORMALLY REGISTERED



St Helena Island[®]

A breath of fresh air

We are pleased to share that the “A Breath of Fresh Air” destination logo has now been formally registered in the UK and locally.

This logo forms part of the Celebrating St Helena destination brand, managed by St Helena Government and used by Tourism and Investment to share our island with the wider world. It captures what makes St Helena special as a place to live, learn, work, visit and invest would list them all as tourism marketing would cover all of these.

The brand was shaped through extensive community research and is captured in the Celebrating St Helena booklet. It reflects the qualities Saints told us matter most, including community, authenticity and sustainability. It speaks to the freedom, safety and clean air that so many people describe when they talk about home. It is, quite simply, a description of who we are at our best. You can view the booklet [here](#).

Registering the logo means it is now legally protected. This matters because the destination brand represents all of us. Protecting it helps ensure it continues to be used with care, stays true to the identity defined by the community, and is not diluted or misrepresented over time. It also gives greater confidence to those discovering St Helena for the first time.

In time, the registered version of the logo, which includes the ® symbol, will be made available under a structured licensing arrangement. This will support the development of accreditation pathways, helping to recognise businesses and services that reflect the values and standards of the destination brand. Existing informal use externally will continue while this framework is being developed.

This milestone reflects a shared commitment to protecting what makes our island unique, so that the qualities we value today remain strong and recognisable for future generations.

ST HELENA CRICKET TEAM REPRESENTED IN GHANA QUALIFIERS



The St Helena cricket team has now concluded their participation in the Sub-regional qualifiers in Ghana and are on their way back to the island. Travelling between 15 March and 04 April, the team played their first match against Eswatini on 24 March at the Achimota Cricket Grounds, representing St Helena with pride on the international stage.

Before departing, players gathered at Richards Travel Lodge for a kit presentation, where they received their official team gear along with final words of encouragement. Led by Captain Cliff Richards, the team featured a strong blend of experienced athletes and promising young talent, including Kirk Lawrence, Jordan Yon, Aiden Leo, Jordi Henry, Andrew Yon (Vice Captain), Brendan Leo, Delroy Leo, Stefan Leo, Rhys Francis, Barry Stroud, Joey Thomas, Jamie Essex, and Dane Leo.

They were supported throughout the tournament by Coach Nadeem Ahmed and Team Manager Derek Richards.

Beyond the matches, the team also had the chance to explore Ghana's culture during a guided tour of Jamestown in Accra - one of the city's most historic districts. During their visit, the players also gave back to the local community by donating to the *Keep Off The Streets Foundation*, an organisation dedicated to supporting and empowering vulnerable young people in Accra.

During the competition, the team earned one point in the tournament and continued to carry the island's spirit, determination, and sportsmanship into every match. Unfortunately, their final game against Malawi was cancelled due to a storm in Ghana.

Although the tournament has come to an end, supporters can still catch up on all the action with highlights of every match being available on ICCtv.

St Helena remains incredibly proud of the team's efforts, especially with the inspiration they continue to bring to young aspiring cricketers, including the youngest squad member, Kirk Lawrence, who experienced his first major international tournament.

FESTIVAL OF WALKING 2025/26



Photo Creds: Katie-Ray Williams



Photo Creds: St Helena Tourism

The Festival of Walking commenced late December 2025 offering residents and visitors the opportunity to explore St Helena's varied landscapes with selected walks guided by local tour guides. The event was organised by St Helena Tourism in collaboration with iRecord St Helena, the island's National Biological Records System, for walkers to record and share wildlife sightings thus contributing to wildlife observations and supporting citizen science throughout the festival. The festival showcased the Post Box walks of various challenges with special guests sharing insights into St Helena's history and conservation efforts.

Over the season, over 200 walkers participated in the event, covering around 60km in total and spending about 45 hours on the trails. Lot's Wife Ponds and the Fairyland Flax Mill to Peak Dale route proved the most popular, while the Post Box walks and family-friendly trails were made accessible for walkers of all abilities.

Each walk highlighted different aspects of the island's scenery, from volcanic terrain to pastureland and coastal paths. Using iRecord QR codes along the routes, walkers were able to log wildlife sightings, adding useful records to the island's National Biological Records System, contributing to local conservation efforts whilst enjoying time outdoors.

By the end of March, the Festival of Walking 2025/26 will come to a close with the final few walks scheduled which includes a family walk from Casons to Rosemary Plain and the last walk to Lemon Valley.

Organisers reflected on a successful event that balanced recreation with education, and looked ahead to building on this year's achievements for future festivals.

Tourism Manager, Dianne Venning commented:

"The Festival of Walking 2025/26 has continued to grow as a celebration of St Helena's unique landscapes, heritage and conservation. Following a public vote, the spectacular walk to Lot's Wife Ponds was chosen to officially open the festival, highlighting one of the island's most dramatic coastal routes.

This year's festival has seen encouraging participation from visitors, locals and returning Saints, who have taken to the paths with local walking guides, sharing insight into St Helena's history, biodiversity and conservation efforts.

The continued enthusiasm and collaboration between visitors, the local community and conservation partners demonstrates how the Festival of Walking is evolving into a meaningful way to experience and protect St Helena's natural and cultural heritage."

Thank you from St Helena Tourism:

St Helena Tourism would like to extend a huge congratulations and heartfelt thanks to everyone who took part in the Festival of Walking 2025/26.

A special thank you goes to our incredible walking guides, whose passion, stories, and knowledge of the island made each walk a truly memorable experience for all participants.

This year's festival was a success, with over 200 participants and covering a combined distance of just over 60km across all routes. From breathtaking landscapes to rich history and meaningful connections, we hope every participant enjoyed discovering the unique spirit of our island.

If you captured moments from your walks and would like to help us promote St Helena, we would love to hear from you. Contact us at: visit@sainthelena.gov.sh

NEURODIVERSITY CELEBRATION WEEK 2026



Recognising strengths. Challenging stereotypes. Celebrating difference.

Neurodiversity Celebration Week ran from 16–22 March, a global initiative founded by Siena Castellon to challenge misconceptions about neurological differences and to highlight the unique strengths of neurodivergent people. The week encourages workplaces to build cultures where individuality is understood, valued, and supported.

How We Celebrated

On Wednesday 18 March, we hosted an organisation-wide seminar attended by 28 colleagues from across portfolios.

Expert Presentation

The session began with a recorded webinar from Dr Mike Talbot, CEO of UK Mediation, exploring:

- What neurodiversity really means
- How neurodiversity relates to conflict
- Considerations for supporting neurodivergent colleagues
- Practical insights for managers

His presentation offered helpful tools for building understanding and strengthening inclusive working relationships.

Lived Experiences

The second half of the session featured our own neurodivergent colleagues, who courageously shared their personal experiences and reflections. Their openness offered valuable insight into both the strengths and challenges of neurodiversity in the workplace.

A huge thank-you to everyone who shared their stories, your honesty supports meaningful positive change.

What Happens Next

One of the first actions underway to become a more neuroinclusive organisation, is updating wording in our application forms to help applicants feel more comfortable and supported when sharing information.

These changes are currently being discussed in Senior Management Meetings and will be shared with all staff once finalised.

Want to Get Involved?

We'll continue to explore opportunities to support neurodivergent colleagues and build a culture where everyone can bring their whole selves to work. More activities and learning sessions will follow throughout the year. For more information, contact Organisational Development Manager, Laura Stroud at Central HR & OD.

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