

The Peaks National Park (NP2): Management Development Plan 2013 – 2023.

BACKGROUND.

This development plan aims to guide conservation management within the Peaks National Park (PNP). It is intended to reflect the views of local communities and other interest groups of St Helena. There is a need to interweave these interests with national and international policies and laws signed by the St Helena Government (SHG). By weaving these interests, opportunities for maintaining the Saint sense of identity, managing ecosystem services (such as the PNP water catchment) and increasing tourism can be realised. It is within this context that nature conservation on St Helena will be carried forward.

Under the Land Development Control Plan (LDCP)¹ 23 National Conservation Areas (NCAs) have been established. The next stage is to create Development Plans to direct ongoing management of these areas. Of the 23 NCAs, 14 have been designated for their natural and habitat features. The Development Plans will provide the foundation for land use management within these locations to enhance their ecological value. All of the 'natural' NCAs hold high numbers of native and endemic species or valuable habitat for these species, for example, High Peak holds valuable fragments of endemic cabbage tree woodland. Unfortunately, all of the NCAs are being threatened by a suite of impacts including Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) and habitat loss. Thus, it is important that the development plans are effective and take into account a wide range of viewpoints.

Many elements of the flora in the PNP are of considerable antiquity having occupied St Helena for millions of years. The result is a high diversity of unique native and endemic species which reflect a long period of isolation. These species are relicts of types once found on the African continent. A high degree of ecological separation in habitat use between species reflects rapid evolution of the early arriving species into the numerous available habitat types. This diversity within the PNP adds to the aesthetics of the location and offers a site of high scientific interest.

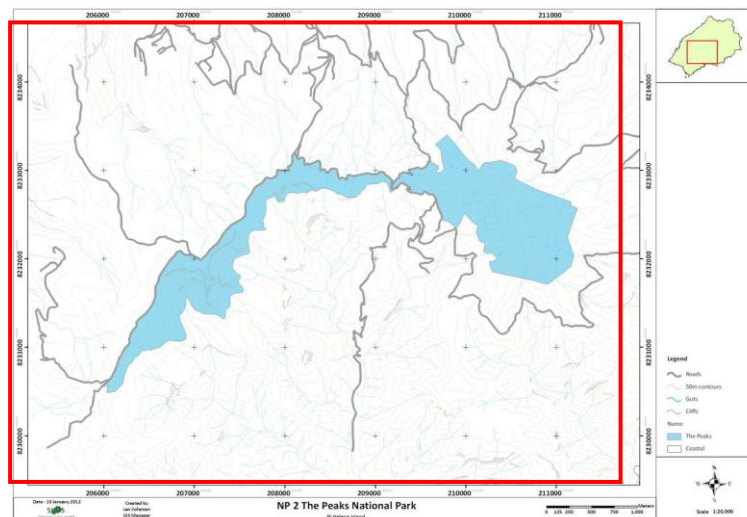
Over the past 25-30 years there has been a change in the way protected areas are managed. This is being directed by national and international policy which place

¹ The principal policy document for regulating development is the Land Development Control Plan, adopted in 2012. It sets out policies to guide development for three planning zones and for specific topics including conserving the natural heritage. This Development Plan for the sets out more specific policies and management applicable to the National Park, reflecting its characteristics and values.

greater emphasis on collaborative work between local communities, civil society and government. There is increased recognition of community rights, livelihood support and empowerment. In addition, cultural aspects of the NCAs must be recognised to ensure the historic value and traditional roles of the locations are accounted for. This development plan has been devised to incorporate the views of the St Helena community.

The PNP (map 1) provides a large percentage of the water catchment for the island. Water provision within the park is an essential function for the inhabitants of St Helena and must be central to any plan for the PNP. There is good evidence that well-structured native vegetation is better at collecting and storing moisture from clouds, and releasing water for drinking supplies and irrigation at an efficient rate. Many of the INNS, such as a monoculture of New Zealand flax or forestry plantations, are unable to offer the same service. This is the main example of a ‘provisioning’ ecosystem service² within the park. Natural management to improve the water catchment function offers a win-win situation. Thus, habitat management for native species can offer a more robust water catchment. Such a situation improves native habitats making the island increasingly attractive to walkers and eco-tourists whilst providing a source of additional revenue for the island. At the same time such management benefits the local community in a number of ways. A more robust water provision function is perhaps the most obvious.

Map 1: the Peaks National Park arcs around the central ridge of St Helena and is contained wholly within the LDCP Green Heartland.



² Ecosystem services are the range of benefits people derive from nature. Broadly speaking these include 1) the supply of environmental goods from ecosystems such as natural foodstuffs, medicinal products and fresh water, 2) the role of ecosystems in regulating the earth’s natural systems such as water purification and stabilisation, climate/air regulation, pollination and natural hazard regulation, 3) the services required for the generation of other ecosystem services such as nutrient cycling, photosynthesis and soil formation, and, 4) the non-material benefits human beings derive from natural ecosystems such as recreation, aesthetic and spiritual appreciation as well as education.

A number of Multi-lateral Environmental Agreements have been extended to St Helena. Many of these are pertinent to management within the PNP. For example, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the World Heritage Convention and CITES (Control in trade of endangered species) have an element of influence within the PNP. In addition, St Helena has signed a regional Invasive Species Strategy. These agreements help direct biodiversity and habitat conservation as well as bio-security measures within signatory countries.

Finally, the development of conservation areas is vital to St Helena's international commitments. The primary commitments include the Convention on Biodiversity measures such as the Programme of Work on Protected Areas and Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Annex I). Importantly, such measures will assist with the effective conservation of biodiversity with the PNP and the other NCAs concerned primarily with the islands natural heritage.

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK.

NCA Development Plans are requirements under the LDCP and are likely to be required under new environmental law. LDCP zone policies will apply outside of areas with NCA Development Plans. Where NCA Development Plans do exist planning policies for that area defer to the NCA Development Plans. Thus, the Development Plans will provide the higher tier of legislation within the NCAs.

The PNP lies entirely within the Green Heartland Zone formed under the LDCP. For the area delineated as the PNP the following primary and secondary implementation policies (Annex II) apply in their entirety for the Core and Isolated Hotspot Zones as well as the Paths and Trails Zone [see section ___ 'Management Zones']:

GH1 (Green Heartland 1): Primary policy 'There will be a presumption in favour of retaining the underdeveloped nature of the Green Heartland and its natural ecology. The grant of development will therefore be strictly controlled by the following implementation policies: -

Implementation Policy GH2: No development permission will be granted for development which includes the construction of buildings above the contour line of 550m except for:

- a. Development required for the conservation, interpretation, study and appreciation of the natural ecology of the area (e.g. walk-ways, interpretation centre etc.). **(Ref LDCP 2012-2022)**

For buffer zones and roadside verges all other GH policies apply except: -

- a. G.H.2b: tourism related development within established forest areas in the form of eco-lodges³ that will, as an element of the development proposal, remain forested sufficient to conceal the development from any viewpoint within the Peaks National Park or visible in any view towards the national Park from a public road or public place.
- b. G.H.2c: tourism related development in the area of Broad Bottom below the contour line of 600m that will, as the first principle of its design detail, and operation (including transport) be an example of international best practice of sustainable development with the minimum disturbance to the natural ecology of the area and the principal method of grassland maintenance to remain pasture grazing.

The presumption through this plan will be for no development within the PNP in recognition of its ecological and amenity value and the fragile nature of the area.

VISION:

To manage the native habitats and species of the PNP, for their intrinsic values and for the ecosystem services including education, agriculture, forestry, recreation, tourism and eco-tourism, to be valued by present and future generations.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES:

1: this document will allow SHG to develop a management regime for the PNP, and NCAs in general, based on participation and consensus.

2: an important aspect of natural area management is to incorporate the plan into the wider social, environmental and economic context.

³ Eco-lodge means residential accommodation available solely and continuously for tourist use, including that no individual occupancy shall exceed a continuous period of 183 days, which is designed, built and managed such that it is sustainable and makes the minimum impact on the ecology and appearance of the area. Such development will not normally have vehicular access nor mains serviced to the accommodation."

3: adjoining and nearby NCAs (Sandy Bay, Man and Horse) should be managed in conjunction to enhance the biodiversity of each by increasing the available habitat area.

4: wherever possible NCA management should be open to other community initiatives such as SHAPE, the Duke of Edinburgh Award and student work experience.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

1: to conserve and enhance the specialist and typical St Helena habitats and species within the PNP.

2: to encourage sustainable enjoyment of the PNP, it's wildlife, habitats and scenery

3: to foster positive partnerships and encourage further volunteer groups

4: to enable sustainable economic use of the PNP resources where they do not conflict with (2) and (3)

MANAGEMENT ZONES:

Under the Development Plan 5 different types of zones within the PNP have been identified. Each type of zone will have different management action plans associated with it, which will be devised later. The zones are:

- **Core zones:** these areas that are already established as large management sections that hold the best habitat patches. These areas include Diana's Peak, High Peak, The Depot and Casons.
- **Isolated hotspots:** for the purposes of this development plan an isolated hotspot can be defined as a location containing the remaining individual specimens of any native or endemic species and the range of species associated and dependent on them. These hotspots are sensitive, often small areas, either inside or outside of core zones. They are critical to the survival of individual species, plant or animal, and hence require highly specific and targeted management.
- **Roadside verges:** these provide much of the boundary of the PNP. These verges can be corridors for both invasive and native species. The aim will be to enhance their function as corridors).
- **Paths/Trails:** these are essential for their amenity value. However, management must be sensitive to ensure they do not further fragment valuable management or further spread INNS during management operations whilst also providing safe routes for walkers.

- **Buffer zone:** these hold all the land outside of the above zones. This area will act to protect the zones of active management. Ultimately the hope would be to use this area to connect core zones and, importantly, the isolated hotspots.

KEY TARGETS AND ACTIONS.

An example of what key targets and actions under this plan could be:

Conservation zone/target	Area	Action needed	plans	Lead	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Core zones	Diana's Peak National Park			EMD	Yellow										
	High Peak			SHNT	Yellow										
	Depot					Yellow									
	Casons						Yellow								
	Mount Vesey							Yellow							
Isolated Hotspots	Last wild false gumwoods				Yellow										
	Bellflower					Yellow									
	5 whitewoods						Yellow								
	Mount Vesey														
Roadside verges	Roadside verges				Yellow										
Paths/Trails	Paths/Trails					Yellow									
Buffer zone	Buffer zone						Yellow								
Public amenity	Public amenity			ESH (Tourism)				Yellow							
Funding for implementation of action plans	Darwin Plus				Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
	Darwin				Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow

Annex I: Aichi Biodiversity Targets

Strategic Goal A: Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society

Strategic Goal B: Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use

Strategic Goal C: To improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity

Strategic Goal D: Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services

Strategic Goal E: Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building

Strategic Goal A: Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society

Target 1

By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.

Target 2

By 2020, at the latest, biodiversity values have been integrated into national and local development and poverty reduction strategies and planning processes and are being incorporated into national accounting, as appropriate, and reporting systems.

Target 3

By 2020, at the latest, incentives, including subsidies, harmful to biodiversity are eliminated, phased out or reformed in order to minimize or avoid negative impacts, and positive incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are developed and applied, consistent and in harmony with the Convention and other relevant international obligations, taking into account national socio economic conditions.

Target 4

By 2020, at the latest, Governments, business and stakeholders at all levels have taken steps to achieve or have implemented plans for sustainable production and consumption and have kept the impacts of use of natural resources well within safe ecological limits.

Strategic Goal B: Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use

Target 5

By 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced.

Target 6

By 2020 all fish and invertebrate stocks and aquatic plants are managed and harvested sustainably, legally and applying ecosystem based approaches, so that overfishing is avoided, recovery plans and measures are in place for all depleted species, fisheries have no significant adverse impacts on threatened species and

vulnerable ecosystems and the impacts of fisheries on stocks, species and ecosystems are within safe ecological limits.

Target 7

By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity.

Target 8

By 2020, pollution, including from excess nutrients, has been brought to levels that are not detrimental to ecosystem function and biodiversity.

Target 9

By 2020, invasive alien species and pathways are identified and prioritized, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and measures are in place to manage pathways to prevent their introduction and establishment.

Target 10

By 2015, the multiple anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs, and other vulnerable ecosystems impacted by climate change or ocean acidification are minimized, so as to maintain their integrity and functioning.

Strategic Goal C: To improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity

Target 11

By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

Target 12

By 2020 the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained.

Target 13

By 2020, the genetic diversity of cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and of wild relatives, including other socio-economically as well as culturally valuable species, is maintained, and strategies have been developed and implemented for minimizing genetic erosion and safeguarding their genetic diversity.

Strategic Goal D: Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services

Target 14

By 2020, ecosystems that provide essential services, including services related to water, and contribute to health, livelihoods and well-being, are restored and safeguarded, taking into account the needs of women, indigenous and local communities, and the poor and vulnerable.

Target 15

By 2020, ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks has been enhanced, through conservation and restoration, including restoration of at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification.

Target 16

By 2015, the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization is in force and operational, consistent with national legislation.

Strategic Goal E: Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building

Target 17

By 2015 each Party has developed, adopted as a policy instrument, and has commenced implementing an effective, participatory and updated national biodiversity strategy and action plan.

Target 18

By 2020, the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and their customary use of biological resources, are respected, subject to national legislation and relevant international obligations, and fully integrated and reflected in the implementation of the Convention with the full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities, at all relevant levels.

Target 19

By 2020, knowledge, the science base and technologies relating to biodiversity, its values, functioning, status and trends, and the consequences of its loss, are improved, widely shared and transferred, and applied.

Target 20

By 2020, at the latest, the mobilization of financial resources for effectively implementing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 from all sources, and in accordance with the consolidated and agreed process in the Strategy for Resource Mobilization, should increase substantially from the current levels. This target will be subject to changes contingent to resource needs assessments to be developed and reported by Parties.

Annex II: Green Heartland Policies

GH1 Primary Policy: There will be a presumption in favour of retaining the undeveloped nature of the Green Heartland and its natural ecology. The grant of development permission will therefore be strictly controlled by the following implementation policies.

Implementation Policies

GH 2: No development permission will be granted for development which includes the construction of buildings above the contour line of 550m, except for:

- a) development required for the conservation, interpretation, study and appreciation of the natural ecology of the area (e.g. walkways, interpretation centre, etc.) and,
- b) tourism-related development within established forest areas in the form of eco-lodges that will, as an element of the development proposal, remain forested sufficient to conceal the development from any viewpoint within the Diana's Peak National Park or visible in any view towards the National Park from a public road or public place, and,
- c) tourism-related development in the area of Broad Bottom below the contour line of 600m that will, as the first principle of its design, detail, and operation (including transport) be an example of international best practice of sustainable development with the minimum of disturbance to the natural ecology of the area and the principal method of grassland maintenance to remain pasture grazing.

GH.3: Except as provided for in policy GH2, permission will not be granted in the Green Heartland for development which includes the creation of sleeping or catering facilities or new dwellings; save that permission will be granted for the extension of existing buildings and re-use, reconstruction and extension of existing derelict buildings provided the resultant total floor area is not more than 93m² (1,000 sq ft) or not more than 75% larger than the original floor area, whichever is the greater, and normally not more than 223m² (2,400 sq ft) in any case; and,

- a) the resultant building follows, in its form, scale, proportion, details and external materials the traditional buildings and construction methods of the area, and,
- b) no change to existing ground levels of 3m or more are made in connection with the building or its surroundings, or in gaining access to it, and,
- c) it can be provided with water and electricity supplies and means of dealing with sewage in a sustainable manner and without risk of pollution.

GH.4: Development permission will be granted in the Green Heartland for development (not including dwellings) relating to commercial agriculture and forestry, provided buildings for such purposes will be permitted only if they are below the 550m contour line, or have a height of under 2m and floor area not exceeding 50m²,

such as small animal shelters, or are grouped within an existing complex of farm buildings and will not extend it, and,

- a) such development is designed to comply with the aims of the primary policy, and,
- b) development which includes polytunnels, glass houses or shade houses complies with the policies specific to them, and,
- c) development which includes housing for livestock shall not be brought into use until provision has been made to deal with effluent sufficient to avoid pollution of water courses and water catchment areas.

Note: *policies specific to polytunnels, glass houses and shade houses form Appendix 5 to this revised Plan.*

GH.5: Where development permission is granted in the Green Heartland it shall be subject, in all cases, to the requirement to landscape the site sufficient to conceal the development or blend it in to the landscape, including a proportion of indigenous species appropriate to the scale and nature of the development.

GH.6: In considering any development proposal in the Green Heartland there shall be a presumption in favour of identifying, protecting and promoting established footpaths; development which fails to do so will not normally be permitted.