

SPEECH FOR RESEARCH INSTITUTE LAUNCH – 12 NOVEMBER 2019 AT ANNE'S PLACE

Good afternoon. Thank you all for coming to this event and showing your support for St. Helena's Research Institute.

The original inspiration for the St Helena Research Institute came from Tara Pelembe, for whom this was a long-held dream. For those of you who are not aware Tara is the daughter of Basil and Barbara George and is the current Deputy Director of SAERI the South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute.

Shortly after the launch of the St Helena Community College in 2016, Tara contacted the Director of Education who was at that time Mrs Shirley Wahler, to propose a possible partnership to foster research on the island. Enterprise St Helena was already a strong advocate for any developments that promoted and supported wider interest in St Helena, and ESH, SAERI and the Education Directorate quickly developed a strong working partnership to take the idea forward. In doing so, there was strong support at every stage from a wide range of key stakeholders, most notably the Education Committee. Former Chief Secretary, Mr Roy Burke and our now Chief Secretary Mrs Susan O'Bey, The St Helena National Trust and the then Environmental and Natural Resources Directorate were also early and vital partners in this project.

The group quickly realized that there were tremendous synergies and efficiencies to be gained by building a close alignment and connection between the St Helena Community College and the proposed research facility. As work continued, it also became clear that in addition to the need for an organization to support and promote research, there was a real need for St Helena to manage research activities and to ensure that the island's precious heritage and environment were protected for future generations. Again, there was a clear message from elected officials and from key stakeholders that protection of the island must go hand in hand with promotion of scientific inquiry.

After many months of hard work, initial policy proposals were agreed and approved in November 2018 and the past year has been devoted to building the organisational structures and policy documents to make the St Helena Research Institute a functional reality.

So what does the research and the Institute mean for us in Education and St. Helena? It is recognised that research is an important part of our learning and development. St. Helena's Sustainable Economic Development Plan identifies research as a key element of bringing economic prosperity to St. Helena. The recent visit of researcher Professor Schaffer and his team of 10 MSc. students from the Technical University of Munich is an example of this. In addition, many of the aspirations for how we want St. Helena to grow and develop contained in our 10 Year Plan relies on research to improve knowledge and understanding to be able to determine the way forward.

St. Helena's uniqueness was and still is an attraction for researchers. We want to facilitate the opportunity for responsible research. Through the policies and practices of the Research Institute we hope that:

- Researchers are supported with advice, guidance and facilities to carry out their research on St. Helena.
- Research on St. Helena is monitored and conducted responsibly.
- The outcomes of research will broaden our knowledge and understanding of St. Helena and can be used to inform practical improvements on St. Helena both now and in the future.
- Information learnt can be archived and preserved for future generations.
- Most importantly that subjects of interest such as the whale sharks, Jonathan the tortoise, our unique and endemic flora and fauna, our heritage; are given protection from being 'over researched' increasing the chances for them to be there for future research and for future generations to enjoy.

A tremendous amount of work has gone on behind the scenes to plan and organise the launch of the Research Institute both here and the UK and it would not have been possible without the team effort of a number of people. However I must recognise the hard work and dedication of one lady. Here I would like us to recognise and commend the dedication and hard work of Dr Rebecca Cairns-Wicks. She has been the driving force in making the Research Institute a reality. She along with members of the Steering Group, the Research Council, members of ESH, Mrs Kedell Worboys our UK Rep and her team have worked tirelessly to ensure that all is in place for our launch today. On behalf of Education and SHG I would like to express sincere thanks to Rebecca and all those involved both here and in the UK for helping us launch St. Helena's Research Institute.

I now hand you over to Rebecca to tell you more about the Research Institute.

Director of Education
12 November 2019