

ST HELENA GOVERNMENT'S POLICY STATEMENT FOR THE  
MANAGEMENT OF ST HELENA'S FISHERIES

January 2020

# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 St Helena's marine environment, with its significant resource of fish and other aquatic organisms, is one of the Island's most valuable assets. Its value lies not only in what can be harvested on a sustainable basis from this environment, but in the physical environment itself that shapes the lifestyle and culture of the community and attracts tourists who visit each year. With 90% of the UK's marine and terrestrial biodiversity contained within the Overseas Territories, St Helena's marine environment is also a globally significant ecological asset.
- 1.2 For many in the community, eating seafood or catching their own is an integral part of the St Helena way of life. For many years recreational and commercial fishing has formed a large part of the social fabric creating both local employment opportunities and supply of fresh local produce, and will continue to do so in the future.
- 1.3 While our fisheries are important social contributors they also contribute to the St Helena economy. The Island's fish resources have become important to sports fishing operators and it is important that customary commercial and recreational fishing and the increasing interest in sports fishing is managed within a framework that enables sustainable fishing practices, conserves the marine environment and facilitates economic development for St Helena through its fishing, marine and tourism related businesses
- 1.4 For St Helena's aspirations and its population, sustainable, healthy and viable fisheries are of utmost importance. This applies not only to food provision, but to the maintenance of a healthy ecosystem to support other interactions and growth sectors such as marine tourism.
- 1.5 This policy statement outlines the St Helena Government's (SHG) position on, and aspiration for the management and use of the Island's fish resources for the customary commercial and recreational fishing activities, and also for sport fishing activities (together called "fishing"). The statement confirms SHG commitment and aspiration for sustainable management of the Island's fisheries; and its dedication to an effective legislative and regulatory framework to ensure the fisheries remain sustainable and profitable into the future.
- 1.6 In doing so, it is hoped that Government's aspirations for its fisheries will provide certainty to fisheries stakeholders as they make decisions regarding investments and activities in the fisheries and the wider fishing sector.
- 1.7 For the purposes of this policy statement, 'fisheries' means *the area, locality or place in or on which a fishing appliance is used, and the area or stretch of water in or from which fish may be taken by the fishing appliance.*

# 2 Our Responsibilities

- 2.1 The Environment, Natural Resources and Planning Directorate (ENRP) is the Government authority for the management of fisheries, with primary responsibility to conserve, develop and manage the fisheries for the benefit of current and future generations. It does this through managing and licensing fishing activities, and by protecting the environment and ecosystems on which fish depend. The Directorate's management responsibilities for its marine resources extend across all fish and aquatic resources. Pursuant to the St Helena <sup>1</sup>Fisheries Limits Ordinance, and <sup>2</sup>Environmental Protection Ordinance,

includes fisheries within our 12 mile territorial waters and those within the waters extending out to the 200 nautical mile boundary of St Helena's Exclusive Fishing Zone (EFZ).

- 2.2 Each Ordinance sets out its objectives in relation to protection of the environment, establishes the roles of relevant Directorate personnel, and sets out statutory responsibilities with relation to marine management and fishing activities.
- 2.3 The 200 nautical mile zone is also designated an IUCN Category VI Marine Protected Area which is defined as a "Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources" which is managed through the <sup>3</sup>Marine Management Plan and aforementioned Ordinances.

### 3 Policy Context

- 3.1 St Helenian's love to fish and love to eat seafood. Our fisheries are an important resource that must be managed for future generations. However, St Helena's fisheries are being faced with a number of challenges arising from a range of factors, including reduced financial resources to subsidise fish processing and sales activities, shifts in community attitudes (especially as to the environment), a changing climate, interest in growing the economic return from our fisheries and foreign interest in fishing in St Helena.
- 3.2 Participants in the commercial sub-sector have, and continue to experience, difficulties from a combination of an uneconomical fish processing and sales operation, low fish catches, high fuel and labour costs, environmental and biological impacts on fish stocks. Commercial fishing is a low technology sub-sector with growth influenced by a range of factors including investment made in the sector and the effectiveness and efficiency of regulation.
- 3.3 The recreational and sports fishing sub-sectors is also faced with challenges including impacts on fish stocks arising from pressure on some fish species and technological advances which increase the efficiency of fishing.
- 3.4 While these sub-sectors are often thought of as separate, they are closely linked and participants in, and issues relating to, each sub-sector may overlap. Our fisheries therefore require an integrated approach to management.
- 3.5 Government is participating in a number of reforms aimed at improving fisheries management and governance in St Helena and meeting future challenges. The reforms are focussed on fisheries science and monitoring programmes, establishing a more structured approach to management of fish stocks and resources, developing clearer policy and procedures for managing fishing activities, working with Blue Belt partners on options for fisheries monitoring and surveillance, and developing a risk-based fisheries compliance and enforcement strategy.
- 3.6 To underpin the reform process, work has also commenced on a new Fisheries Law to replace the 1977 Fisheries Limits Ordinance to provide a solid foundation for the management of fish resources in St Helena into the future.

## 4 Management Framework

### Marine Protected Area (MPA)

- 4.1 The primary goal of St Helena's sustainable use Marine Protected Area as stated in the Marine Management Plan, is: *'to conserve the marine environment and its associated biodiversity, habitats and ecosystems'*.

### Approach to Management of the Fisheries

- 4.2 St Helena government's approach to management of fisheries within the MPA is based on *'ensuring St Helenians both today and in the future, are able to fish and have access to high-quality seafood, sourced from sustainably managed fisheries within a framework of good governance'*.

### Fisheries Management Goal

- 4.3 In managing fishing activities, our overarching goal is:

*'Our fisheries resources are sustainably managed for the long term to benefit current and future generations'*.

Our management goal will be achieved through ensuring that fishing activities:

- are environmentally sustainable and managed in a way that is consistent with the objectives of achieving social, economic, and environmental benefits, and contributing to the availability of food supplies;
- identify and mitigate harmful impacts on marine habitats;
- identify and mitigate harmful impacts on by-catch species, marine mammals and seabirds.

The goal and associated activities is aligned with the following MMP objectives:

- To protect natural ecosystems and use natural resources sustainably, when conservation and sustainable use can be mutually beneficial
- To manage sustainably the marine natural resources of St Helena including fisheries and mineral extraction with minimum impact on species abundance, diversity and habitats.

Significant progress towards achievement of this objective goal will also help SHG to achieve one of the goals of the <sup>4</sup>St Helena Fisheries Sector Strategy, namely: *'there is trust and confidence in the sustainable management of St Helena's fisheries and marine resources'*

- 4.4 **Principles** – Government's approach to management of fisheries to achieve the overarching objective is guided by the following principles:

- Sustainability: our fisheries will be managed in a manner consistent with the principles of sustainability of target and non-target species and associated habitats, and we will work in partnership with ICCAT for the recovery of overfished ICCAT managed stocks/resources.

- Science-based and local experience decision-making: fisheries management decisions will be based on the best available science and appropriate local information.
- Resource sharing: recognising the important role of commercial fishing in the supply of quality seafood, employment generation and support of small business whilst ensuring access opportunities for sports and recreational fishermen to our shared fisheries resources.
- Quota and species based fisheries management: we will manage the harvest of fish resources through the use of a combination of management tools to include total allowable catch (TAC), size, seasonal and geographic restrictions for fishing activities. For ICCAT managed species we will introduce measures over and above ICCAT provisions to provide enhanced protection and more robust local management (if the science suggests these are necessary).
- Maximising utilisation and productivity: where possible, we will manage our fisheries to increase the value of, and economic return from the fisheries in support of aspirations of the <sup>5</sup>Sustainable Economic Development Plan (SEDP) where this is compatible with the policy goal and MMP objectives.
- Regulatory effectiveness: we will provide regulatory requirements that are fit for purpose and where possible, minimises regulatory burden on users of the fisheries. A Marine Compliance and Enforcement Strategy will be developed and implemented to support improved fisheries regulation.
- Transparency in decision-making: policy will be developed and implemented to outline a transparent approach to decision-making for fisheries management.
- Meeting our international obligations: our fisheries are managed in a manner that is consistent with our international obligations, in particular cooperation in the management of highly migratory fish stocks.

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<sup>1</sup> *St Helena Fisheries Limits Ordinance, 1977*

<sup>2</sup> *St Helena Environmental Protection Ordinance, 2016*

<sup>3</sup> *Marine Management Plan: SHG, September 2016*

<sup>4</sup> *St Helena Fisheries Sector Strategy 2016-2025: SHG.*

<sup>5</sup>*Sustainable Economic Development Plan 2018-28: SHG*

## 5 Important Fisheries Management Themes

- 5.1 This fisheries management framework draws on a number of important policy themes. These are to be considered in relation to fisheries management decision-making for St Helena's fisheries resources:

### ***Our fisheries belong to all St Helenians***

- 5.2 Fishing is part of our culture and whilst recognising the valuable contribution of commercial fishing to St Helena, our fisheries resources will be shared, between commercial, exploratory, sports and recreational fishing interests to provide a range of benefits for the community.

### ***Access to our fisheries***

- 5.2 Access to the fisheries will be granted for commercial, exploratory, fishing for scientific purposes as well as sports and recreational fishing interests. Fishing by both St Helenian and foreign fishing vessels will be permitted to contribute to a safe, sustainable and economically viable fishing industry.

- 5.3 Access to the fisheries by a foreign fishing vessel for commercial fishing purposes will be managed under Goal 3 of the Fisheries Sector Strategy 2016-2025 - '*There is capacity to catch the available fish resources in a safe, sustainable and economically viable manner*'. Access by a foreign fishing vessel, to collaborate with local fishing business, where possible, will increase the fishing fleet's catching capacity for pelagic fish catches to contribute to a viable fishing industry. Fishing by a foreign fishing vessel will only be considered for the offshore fishery (the fishery beyond 30 nautical miles from the coastline).

- 5.4 Opportunity for a foreign fishing vessel or foreign owned pleasure vessel (even if the latter is registered in St Helena) to undertake sports fishing in the fisheries will only be granted where an application for a license provides demonstrable evidence of the provision of a new sports fishing service not available through St Helenian marine tourism operators, or in-sufficient capacity exists amongst such operators to meet market needs and requirements stated in the application.

- 5.5 A new fishing licensing policy will be introduced to manage access for all fishing activity, apart from traditional rock fishing which will not be licensed. Although traditional rock fishing will not require a licence to fish it will be governed by provisions in the EPO where applicable (i.e. such as catching of prohibited species).

- 5.6 Government will seek a return to the community for access to and the use of fish resources. For all licensed fishing activities, this will be by way of a fishing license fee.

### ***Best available science and local fisheries experience for good fisheries management***

- 5.7 Science is the foundation to successful management of St Helena's fisheries.
- 5.8 Science-based stock/resource assessments will inform the setting of quantitative catch limits, size, seasonality and geographical restrictions (if appropriate).

- 5.9 Our fisheries management system will take account of the cumulative effect of all users of the fisheries, including commercial, sports and recreational users.
- 5.10 Investment will be actively sought for research and science for evidence-based information, policies and species management planning.
- 5.11 Both science and local knowledge and experience will be utilised to establish and implement improved fisheries management policies and practices.

### ***Fishing methods***

- 5.12 One by one fishing (pole-and-line, rod and reel, trolling, and hand line) are extremely selective fishing methods and are widely regarded as the most low-impact, environmentally responsible and equitable methods of harvesting fish species. It is essentially about one fisherman, one line and one fish at a time.
- 5.13 One by one methods are the traditional methods of fishing in St Helena and these will be the only methods licensed for fishing in the fisheries.

### ***Fishing rights provide certainty and security***

- 5.14 Fisheries will be managed in a way that is respectful of the needs of users of the resource, particularly those who rely on it for their livelihood.
- 5.15 Clarity on fishing licensing provisions through the introduction of a licensing policy for fishing and a clear position on access to the fisheries, will provide commercial, sports and recreational operators with clarity on access to fish resources, whether those rights are tradable, and assist with decision-making in respect of fisheries investment proposals.

### ***Engagement with stakeholders***

- 5.16 Government have been and will continue to consult regularly with all stakeholders with interests in the management of St Helena's fisheries. Stakeholders in our fisheries include commercial, sports and recreational fishers, non-Government fishing entities, our science partners and any fish processing and sales entity.
- 5.17 A Fisheries Management Advisory Committee will be established to allow key stakeholders to participate in the fisheries management process and provide a united voice to Government for fisheries management.

### ***A commitment to best practice***

- 5.18 Here we demonstrate how our commitment to: science, species management planning, utilisation of sustainable fishing practices and gears, stakeholder engagement and involvement in fisheries management, a legislative framework and compliance and enforcement strategy, and meeting our international obligations is facilitating and enabling best practices within the limits of our resources.
- 5.19 We will evolve towards use of a fisheries management system for our fisheries; and standards and management plans will provide the key tools for delivering management outcomes and coordinating research, compliance, and observer services for our fisheries.
- 5.20 Government and NGO's will engage in international forums to secure the fisheries management interests of St Helena.

- 5.21 St Helena is a party to the ICCAT regional fisheries management organisation and Government will continue to engage with ICCAT and adopt its management measures with relevance for St Helena, to improve management standards for the fisheries.
- 5.22 Government will continue to seek appropriate and affordable solutions to ensure St Helena sovereignty over the St Helena Exclusive Fishing Zone (to 200 nm) and where possible, to protect it from illegal fishing.
- 5.23 St Helena seeks to ensure responsible and sustainable fishing by local and foreign owned fishing vessels flagged in St Helena — particularly of fish stocks important to our own fishing industry.

### ***A commitment to improved regulation***

- 5.24 Fisheries management will be underpinned by investment in an effective legislative base, in combination with effective compliance and enforcement and administrative services, to improve opportunities to ensure sustainability of our fisheries and protect the integrity of fishing interests.
- 5.25 Our legislative reform project will improve our fisheries legislative framework to address shortcomings and to support better outcomes from the use and conservation of the fisheries. The legislation will help to strengthen the fisheries science work, contributing to sustainable uses.
- 5.26 We will take action with regards illegal fishing activities where we are able to secure appropriate intelligence to do so. An education, compliance and enforcement strategy for fisheries management will be implemented through transparent arrangements.
- 5.27 A risk-based intelligence led approach to detecting non-compliance in the inshore and offshore fisheries will be implemented. When non-compliance is detected fisheries rules and regulations will be effectively enforced and investigated objectively. Enforcement actions and decision-making will be fair, consistent and proportionate to the level of offence.
- 5.28 A financial administrative penalties system will be introduced to manage a range of minor offences that impact the fisheries and their successful management. Although outreach and education will be implemented to encourage high levels of fishing compliance, implementing the fixed penalty system as well as pursuing prosecutions through the courts for non-compliance will help to reduce illegal fishing and fishing offences for all fishing activities that threaten our inshore and offshore fish stocks.
- 5.29 Access to regulatory information resources, fisheries guidelines and reporting systems will be improved.

### ***Fisheries are sustainably managed to improve economic return***

- 5.30 St Helena's fisheries directly contributed to the national economy over the last 3 years (annual average) as follows:
- £242,000 per year through fish purchases from fishermen, with the highest value of £250,000 achieved in 2018-19;
  - £187,000 per year of local fish sales, with the highest value of £206,000 achieved in 2018-19;

- £300,000 per year of sustainably caught, high-quality seafood exported by sea and air.

5.31 Government will continue to work with the fishing industry to improve the economic return to the community where possible from the use and management of the fisheries, whilst recognising the need to conserve the marine environment and its resources. However, initiatives will be fishing sector-led.

5.32 If a fish species is unfished within St Helena's fisheries and there is interest in determining if a fishery exists for the species, an exploratory license may be approved to establish the distribution and abundance of the resource and help determine if harvestable quantities exist to sustain a commercially viable operation, and to collect biological data.

### ***St Helena seafood is safe and healthy***

5.33 St Helena's seafood is an important source of protein, is healthy, safe and sourced from a clean environment.

5.34 All seafood sourced for commercial purposes from St Helena's fisheries will be landed at an approved fish processing and sales facility, and resulting seafood products sold in local retail outlets will continue to be packaged and labelled.

## **6 Actions, Results and Monitoring**

6.1 This fisheries management policy statement represents a start in some areas of fisheries management and a continuation of actions that has already begun over a period of time. Strategic actions in support of policy commitments included within the statement will be developed and included within the ENRP Directorate's annual Strategy and Delivery Plan. The need to think about the future and the challenges facing management of the fisheries is an ongoing process. By necessity this requires the consideration of new ideas, new actions, monitoring of performance, and new learning. Over time, adjustment will be needed as actions are met, and results from monitoring performance are taken into account. As part of this review process fisheries stakeholders will have the opportunity to provide input to the fisheries management planning process.

6.2 Government will measure, and report on, the actions and results to gain a common understanding of progress towards the statement's Goal, and to adjust the actions in light of experience gained.

6.3 An effective monitoring regime will be implemented which needs to be able to assess fisheries performance over long periods of time in a consistent, clear, and cost-effective way. The Government, the Fisheries Management Advisory Committee, fisheries stakeholders and elected members, must be confident about its integrity and practicality.

6.4 Performance indicators will be used and the means by which the relevant information is obtained, and the reporting process itself, will be an important part of improving fisheries management performance. Government and stakeholders will need to be confident that the indicators used are appropriate, and that the "progress reports" are a helpful and accurate reflection of the impact that the actions are having.

## 7 Explanation of Terms

### *Principles*

The guidelines, or general approach, that we will use when making decisions on which fisheries management actions need to be taken.

### *Sustainability*

Fisheries based on healthy functioning ecosystems that provides for the wellbeing of society, now and in the future

### *Viable*

The fishing industry has the resources to function properly and grow in order to succeed.

### *Scientific purposes*

Fishing activity is directed towards the practice of science and includes research.