

## **EXECUTIVE COUNCIL TOP LINES – TUESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2020**

- There was a large crowd in the gallery for the two items on the Open Agenda for this meeting of Executive Council. These items, namely the Trans-Atlantic Slave Memorial Master Plan and the St Helena Commercial Fishermen's Association Petition, have garnered plenty of public interest.

### **Trans-Atlantic Slave Memorial – St Helena, Master Plan**

- **Executive Council considered the recommendations proposed within the Trans-Atlantic Slave Memorial – St Helena, Master Plan, and ratified this Master Plan for adoption by St Helena.**
- Recommendations proposed within the Master Plan:
  - St Helena Government (SHG) to designate the No.1 Building in Rupert's Valley as the Interpretation Centre for the Trans-Atlantic Slave Memorial – St Helena
  - For SHG to formally recognise the Upper and Lower Burial Grounds as such, by designating plot numbers to each site
  - For SHG to designate the Liberated African Establishment in Rupert's Valley as a National Conservation Area
  - For SHG, Education Directorate to incorporate St Helena's slave history, in the first instance the Liberated African Establishment in the National Curriculum
  - For St Helena Tourism to develop the Trans-Atlantic Slave Route and Liberated African Establishment product for market

### **Background:**

- SHG is committed to support the reinternment of 325 intact human remains that were unearthed in 2008 during the building of the Island's airport, as per the mitigation planned under the Environmental Statement for the Airport Project.
- In 2018, the Liberated African Advisory Committee (LAAC) presented a report to the Executive Council on 'Options for the Reinternment of the Excavated Liberated African Remains'. The report recommended:
  - The reburial at the site identified in Rupert's Valley
  - No subset of the remains should be retained for further study
  - The artefacts (grave goods) unearthed during the 2008 excavation to form part of the reburial
  - A memorial is created at that site
  - An interpretation centre is developed ideally at the No. 1 Building in Rupert's
  - To explore the tourism potential/commercial benefits from telling the story
- Executive Council endorsed the recommendations.
- Following this, £20 000 funding was provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to assist the LAAC to develop a Master Plan and

Business Cases using the support of the 2008 Archaeologist, Dr Andrew Pearson and Project Coordinator, Annina Van Neel.

- In 2020, the 'Trans-Atlantic Slave Memorial' Master Plan was established to guide St Helena in respectfully laying to rest the excavated remains and to achieve a 'proper' memorialization of the cultural heritage sites associated with the Liberated African Establishment on St Helena. The Master Plan also provides guidelines on how the cultural asset should be treated for future development.
- To complete the immediate project, the LAAC broke the project into phases that can realistically be achieved.
  - Phase 1 – The immediate term.

The immediate term will focus on the reburial of the 325 articulated remains and disarticulated remains that were excavated in 2008. It is intended to rebury the remains in coffins, using St Helena's burial traditions. The artefacts found with the remains will also be reburied. The artefacts will be digitally replicated for future story telling. The 2018 recommendation proposes that reburial should be carried out on the site identified (immediate south of St Michael's Church). However, it will be a few years before the site becomes available. This would significantly delay the reburial and the remains will stay in storage. Therefore, the area immediately east of the Lower Burial Grounds has been identified as an alternative and favourable site. This will allow immediate reburial.

The cost to implement Phase 1 - £95,325
  - Phase 2 – The short to medium term.

Phase 2 will focus on the education, interpretation and awareness raising of St Helena being pivotal during the slave trade and the thereafter abolition of slavery; creating the Island's wealth of cultural resources. This includes development of the No.1 Building, an original physical asset as an Interpretation Centre. The economic and educational opportunities available to St Helena as a result of being part of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Route is vast. St Helena serving as a hub for global scholarly research, discourse and cultural tourism is achievable.

The cost to implement Phase 2 - £91,000
  - Phase 3 – The medium to long term.

Phase 3 will then concentrate its efforts on creating a memorial which accumulate the story of the Rupert's Valley as a Liberated African Establishment, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and the Abolishment thereafter. The memorial will be situated on the site proposed by the 2018 recommendation (immediately south of St Michael's Church). St Helena will capitalize on holding one of the world's well preserved primary locations for the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Route. The cost to implement Phase 3 - £147,000

### At the meeting:

- Chair of the Liberated African Advisory Committee (LAAC), Helena Bennett, presented the master plan.
- It was emphasised that Executive Council is not being asked to endorse the costings provided in the Report nor is it being asked to allocate or approve funding to implement these recommendations. These would be for other forum to decide.
- Members congratulated and paid tribute to the LAAC and its members for the work that went into putting together the Master Plan and recommendations.
- Members recognised the importance and magnitude of moving forward with the Master Plan in terms of securing an important part of St Helena's history.
- It was mentioned that a past commitment some years ago of £90,000 had previously been made with regards to works around the Liberated African remains, but that this was later withdrawn.
- This subject was recognised as being important not just within the history of St Helena and Britain, but also in the history of the World with the remains being recognised as first generation remains – the first known trace of these in the world.
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- Recommendation four and five, (*'For SHG, Education Directorate to incorporate St Helena's slave history, in the first instance the Liberated African Establishment in the National Curriculum' and 'For St Helena Tourism to develop the Trans-Atlantic Slave Route and Liberated African Establishment product for market'*) was noted as not having input from the relevant departments, namely the Education Directorate and Tourism Office, within the Master Plan to give advice on whether the recommendations were viable.
  - Chair of the Education & Employment Committee stated that while slave history is covered in both the primary and secondary education sectors already, a view to expanding on this and adding more on St Helena's role can certainly be looked into.
  - Helena Bennett advised that there is a potential market in terms of tourism, where many people travel to find out about their ancestral history. This could be something in which St Helena could benefit with the Island being more widely recognised as a middle passage during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Whereas the United Nations does recognise St Helena as a middle passage, this could be made more prominent during the recommended Phase Three of the Master Plan.
- Members wanted to be satisfied that the Upper and Lower Burial sites were not competing with land for business and that land had been earmarked for businesses following the development of Rupert's.
  - Helena Bennet confirmed that site visits took place between the LAAC and the Land Department, and that the Upper and Lower Burial

Grounds, which have long been considered as burial sites, were not thought to be competing with any other business and/or organisation.

- Members enquired on whether timeframes had been allocated to each of the three phases laid out in the Master Plan.
  - Helena Bennett advised that the timeline which was originally set out was disrupted by the global pandemic of COVID-19. Despite this, she suggested that the phases could be run in tangent and that it did not need to be rolled out consecutive of each other.
- It was recognised that while ExCo can give support of the recommendations, due processes (property/land disposal allocation and planning) would still need to be followed. This included the designation of the Number One Building as the Interpretation Centre for the Trans-Atlantic Slave Memorial, designation of plot numbers to the Upper and Lower Burial Grounds, and designation of the Liberated African Establishment in Rupert's Valley as a National Conservation Area, which would all be subject to the necessary land and planning processes.
- It was agreed that while the Master Plan was well put together and fully supported, in principle, more work would need to be done moving forward with the Phase One activities.
- The discussions and final decision was filmed by James Fantom for a film crew who have been following St Helena's Liberated African story.

### **St Helena Commercial Fishermen's Association Petition**

- **Executive Council considered the Petition from the St Helena Commercial Fishermen's Association entitled "Fishing is Everybody's Business"**
- **Executive Council considered the Advice Note and options to respond to the Petition and recommendation from the Economic Development Committee**
- **Executive Council agreed to adopt Option 2 to continue discussions with the investor and to encourage all parties to work together to make that investment work to the best of the island and its people**
- **Executive Council agreed that SHG would provide a written response to the petition put forward by the St Helena Commercial Fishermen's Association**

### **Background:**

- The St Helena Commercial Fishermen's Association (SHCFA) launched a Petition entitled "Fishing is Everybody's Business" to "terminate the current fisheries procurement process undertaken by St Helena Government." The formal submission of the Petition to Governor in Council took place on 24 August 2020.
- Despite the Petition referring to a "procurement process", there is no procurement process currently in place with regard to commercial fish

processing. The original procurement that commenced in 2019 was closed due to none of the bids received fully complying with the tender criteria. For avoidance of doubt, it is assumed that the reference to the “procurement process” refers to the current work being undertaken by SHG to facilitate the investment by PQ Trading STH (Pty) Ltd.

- This investment proposal follows SHG’s request for Expressions of Interest for an alternative business model for fish processing and sales on St Helena. Executive Council on 25 February 2020 agreed in principle to PQ Trading STH (Pty) Ltd.’s investment proposal to develop the St Helena Fisherman’s Co-Operative (SHFCO) to undertake fish processing operations on St Helena. A Project Board, established to facilitate the investment, has supported the investor and local stakeholders with various aspects to make the investment a reality.
- The Petition requests the Governor and Members of Executive Council to *“terminate the current fisheries procurement process undertaken by St Helena Government.”* and states that *“We, the undersigned residents of St Helena Island, are opposed to the current investment procurement process being undertaken by the St Helena Government to secure a successful business/company to manage St Helena’s commercial fishery.”*
- In addition, the Petition requests His Excellency the Governor and Executive Council to stop the:
  - a) Conflicts of interests;
  - b) Exclusion of local fishers;
  - c) Threats to our food security;
  - d) Lack of openness & transparency;
  - e) Non-science based decision making;
  - f) Potential violations of Human Rights;
  - g) By ‘invite only’ commercial venture; and
  - h) Threats to local livelihoods.
- The SHCFA has stated that the Petition has 1,191 signatures from on-Island residents (including c. 50 solicited from minors) and 228 from overseas. The main request from the Petition is for the St Helena Government to terminate the current fisheries investment process.
- The Economic Development Committee (EDC) considered the Petition and Advice Note at their meeting on 24 September 2020. Two options were considered to respond to the Petition request with three sub-options under Option 1 and these are outlined with the associated implications as follows:
  - **Option 1:** Agree with the request outlined in the petition and stop the investment proposal led by PQT (SH) to set up the SHFCO;
    - a) SHG continues to operate the Cold store; or
    - b) Ask NEWCO (alternative bidder) if they would take over the Cold store; or
    - c) Close the Cold store
  - **Option 2:** Do not agree with the request outlined in the petition and continue with the investment proposal led by PQT (SH).

- The EDC recommended that the current process to facilitate the investment proposal from PQT (SH) should continue however, they also recommended that a representative from SHCFA and a representative from the group of fishermen who supports the setup of SHFCO, should also join the Project Board that are supporting the investment proposal.

#### **At the meeting:**

- It was recognised that the ExCo Memo did not look further into the requests made by the SHCFA (listed in the background as a-h above) because no evidence was given within the petition to back up the claims making it almost impossible to address these points.
- Members recognised the support gathered for the petition.
- It was also recognised that there were many on-Island who did not support the petition and had different viewpoints to those which were outlaid within the petition
- Despite the support, Members could not see any justification within the context of the petition to terminate the current work being undertaken by SHG to facilitate the investment by PQ Trading STH (Pty) Ltd.
- Members stated that since their appointment in 2017, there had been continuous ongoing issues with the fisheries and yearly subsidies on average of £277,000 had to be given out to help address these issues. This year the subsidy was in the region of £240,000.
- It was stressed that this continuous handout of subsidy could not continue as this large amount of money could be put to essential use throughout other sectors of SHG including in places such as Health and Social Welfare.
- It was also noted that this decision did not mean the Council did not support the island's fishing industry, but that the current way of working was just not financially viable.
- It was noted that in Option 2, a capital investment of up to £500,000 would be needed to upgrade the factory. The asset created would continue to be owned by SHG. This was urged to be seen as a benefit to everybody within the fishing industry on St Helena and not just the Co-Operative.
- It was suggested by one councillor that since the closing down of the Corporation, the fishing industry had improved whereby a more variety of fish was available on the local market. It was however noted that some people still struggle to purchase local fish.
- The PQ Trading option was seen as a great opportunity to local fisherman to fish inshore and offshore. It was also suggested that the presence of offshore vessels at the sea mounts would go some way in deterring potential illegal fishing in St Helena's waters
- Fairness, integrity and teamwork was mooted as the way in which the process should be followed to allow for the best outcome for all parties and St Helena as a whole. It was suggested that so far, the process had seen no signs of parties working together for a successful outcome

- Members urged local fisherman to buy-in to the proposal so as to reap the benefits that it will present to them
- It was suggested an Audit be done, either internally or externally, on the procurement and investment process so far. The Governor took on an action to examine if or how this could be done.
- Exco concluded a written response to the petition would be provided to the petitioners.

**ExCo**

**13 October 2020**