

NOVEMBER 2023

# THE ST HELENA AMBASSADOR



## Editorial

Hi, welcome to the St Helena Ambassador!

In this edition you can read about a certificate presentation that was held for participants of St Helena Tourism's Hospitality Training and a reception that was held at Plantation House to award certificates to newly accredited Marine Tour Operators. In this edition we also review St Helena's Fibre Optic Cable Project and shine a spotlight on the process of obtaining the funding for the project.

If you'd like to contribute a story to the St Helena Ambassador, please feel free to contact me on tel: 22470 or via email:

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# Certificate presentation for participants of St Helena Tourism's hospitality training



A presentation to award certificates to persons who participated in hospitality skills training took place at the Mantis Hotel in Jamestown on Friday 10 November 2023.

The training took place over a two week period, between 27 October and 10 November 2023, and was provided by NQtac, a well-established South African hospitality training and hotel management school. The training was primarily provided for businesses on St Helena within the hospitality and tourism sectors. This first round of training was delivered in early November to prepare for the Island's peak tourist season, noting this also sees the resumption of midweek flights alongside the weekly weekend flights.

Courses were offered in Customer Service, Hospitality Management, Leadership, Hospitality Operations (including Culinary, Food & Beverage, Front Office and Housekeeping), as well as a Train the Trainer course, to develop those at a supervisory or management level to strengthen their training skills. The courses were very well attended, with well over 100 trainees participating in the different courses, with wide representation from organisations and businesses from across hospitality, tourism and business sectors. Courses were a combination of

classroom-based sessions as well as practical, in a setting tailored to the particular area of training.

The training took place at the Canister meeting room (classroom based), and for practical sessions, in situ, at various business locations. Training within a business allowed participants to take what they'd learned in the classroom and apply and tailor it directly to that businesses' to day-to-day operations. This is particularly valuable as no two businesses will have the same layout, staffing, menu, room offering, equipment, etc.

Tourism Manager, Dianne Venning, commented: *"Within two weeks, the NQtac trainers delivered various courses to businesses that took advantage of this opportunity to refresh or learn new skills. The graduation ceremony was an occasion for everyone to come together and be recognised for their achievements. St Helena Tourism has received lots of positive feedback from awardees, and it is great to hear that they will now apply what they've learnt in their place of work. Additionally, this first round of training has highlighted the need for further training across the sectors, over the coming year and beyond, to ensure standards are raised and maintained, and that our tourism and hospitality businesses continue to meet the high expectations of international visitors."*





# St Helena's Fibre Optic Cable Project – a spotlight on obtaining the funding for the project



L-R: SHG UK Representative, Kedell Worboys MBE, and Director for Latin America & Caribbean, Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, Jolita Butkeviciene, signing the Financing Agreement for the Territorial Allocation of the 11th European Development Fund

St Helena's Fibre Optic Cable Project (delivering high-speed internet connectivity to St Helena) is now 100% complete following the final commissioning works in June 2023.

The six-year long cable project has been one of the most significant projects the Island has ever undertaken, and there were a number of significant milestones which had to be reached in order for the project to progress.

In this month's edition of the Ambassador we will focus on one of the earliest, the signing of the financial agreement for funding the project. St Helena's Fibre Optic Cable Project was funded by the 11th European Development Fund (EDF11), with the objective of *'Supporting Improved Accessibility and Connectivity for St Helena'*.

Prior to Brexit, St Helena, Ascension Island, and Tristan da Cunha were eligible to receive funds from the European Development Fund.

In 2013, former Councillor Lawson Henry, SHG UK Representative, Kedell Worboys MBE, and then Assistant Financial Secretary Dax Richards, attended the 12th Overseas Countries and Territories – European Union Forum in Brussels, Belgium. During this forum it was announced that St Helena, Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha would be eligible to receive indicative EDF11 funding of €21.5 million over the period of 2015-2020.

In order to then receive the funds, St Helena Government had to make an application to the European Development Fund.

To do so Financial Secretary and Territorial Authorising Officer Dax Richards, former Assistant Chief Secretary Paul McGinnety, and Programme Manager (Capital) & Deputy Territorial Authorising Officer Alfreda Yon, produce a 150 page programme document detailing the wider benefits for the Island. This covered a broad range of economic and social benefits including improved telemedicine services for the hospital, online learning and other education improvements, and new opportunities for digital businesses. The programme document was submitted to the European Development Fund for their consideration.

On 20 June 2018, SHG's UK Representative Kedell Worboys MBE, along with European Commission Director for Latin America & Caribbean in the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, Jolita Butkeviciene, signed the Financing Agreement for the Territorial Allocation. €21.5 million was released to St Helena, Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha over a number of years. St Helena received €17.2 million, and used this money to support the delivery of the SHG Digital Strategy, mainly through securing access to a submarine fibre optic cable. Doing so has vastly improved the Island's connectivity, enabling faster and more reliable internet connectivity on the Island.

SHG is very grateful to the support of the European Union to help realise this, which could not have been self-funded.

In the next edition of the St Helena Ambassador newsletter we will shine a spotlight on the milestone of SHG and Google signing the contract to include a St Helena branch on the Equiano subsea cable.

# Reception hosted to awarded certificates to newly accredited Marine Tour Operators



A reception to award marine accreditation certificates to Marine Tour Operators was hosted by Acting Governor, Greg Gibson, at Plantation House on Thursday 2 November 2023.

The certificates were awarded to Marine Tour Operator owners, along with their staff, who had successfully completed the Environmental Accreditation Certification Scheme training. This training was organised and facilitated by St Helena Government's (SHG) Marine and Fisheries Conservation Section, in September 2023. The training covered wildlife interaction, wildlife viewing and diving. There was also a 'best practice' information session for recreational users.

During the reception, the Acting Governor said:

*"Tonight we celebrate the commitment made by you all as current or aspiring Marine Tour Operators. Completing training and assessments demonstrates your respect for our ocean and to uphold the St Helena's Marine Protected Area (MPA) values."*

Following the Marine Regulations (Tourism and Interaction with Marine Life), 2023 coming into effect earlier this year, all persons who conduct or facilitate marine activities for payment or reward must obtain a licence and must hold a valid accreditation certificate. In order to be accredited, operators must undergo training, which then permits them to undertake regulated marine activities within St Helena's MPA.

The Acting Governor concluded: *"The Marine and Fisheries Conservation Section, both past and present, must be commended for all of the work done here and a huge shout out to UK Governments Blue Belt Programme. You should all be proud of the roles you have played in helping St Helena to now have in place policy, legislation, regulations, licensing, enforcement and a full complement of environmentally conscious marine tour operators."*

