St Helena Government

St Helena
Marine Management Plan Annual Report 2023 to 2024

March 2025

Acknowledgements

This MPA Annual Report has been developed by the St. Helena Government with assistance from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) within the UK Government's Blue Belt Programme.

Document layout was designed by Ralph Design Ltd, UK.

Introduction

The St Helena Marine Management Plan (MMP) was published in May 2023. It sets out what will be done to effectively manage St Helena's Marine Protected Area (MPA) over the five-year period between 2023 and 2027 in the context of the goals, objectives and actions set.

The MPA goals and objectives as outlined in the St Helena MMP are supported by a management effectiveness framework, which clearly sets out the practical targets, milestones, indicators of success and means of verification to keep management focused and alert to progress.

St Helena's goals are ambitious, but achievable. The realisation of these goals will take time. This annual review summarises what has been undertaken and achieved during the period 1st June 2023 to 31st May 2024 to work towards achieving our overall goals and indicators of success within the timeframes and to the expected milestones set.

Highlights

For such a small island with very limited resources, St Helena has achieved a lot and our efforts to date have been acknowledged locally and internationally. In November 2023, the marine conservation non-profit organisation Mission Blue named St Helena a 'Hope Spot' in honour of the island's ongoing initiatives to manage and monitor its marine environment as well as to grow a sustainable ecotourism economy, recognising its special biodiversity value and its role in conserving the ocean. St Helena also continues to collect important data on highly migratory species present within its waters including tunas which is used to support both local and international management of these important populations. There are many more, most of which will be detailed throughout this report.

Goal 1: The island's marine environment and natural ecosystems are protected, conserved, and (where necessary) restored, with appropriate monitoring to track short and long-term changes

To demonstrate that the MPA is achieving its objectives, that St Helena Government (SHG) has a good level of understanding of its marine environment and has a grasp on the future risks posed to the MPA, we intend to create a State of the Marine Environment Report on a biannual basis. We also plan to formally assess our management effectiveness at least three times over the 5-year period to demonstrate improvement over time.

The objectives below are relevant to achieving these targets, and outline what has been achieved to date.

Objective 1.1:
The existing management framework is implemented within current resources to manage and protect the marine environment

Indicator of success: *Implementation of the Marine Management Plan (Target: Operational plan developed by April each year informed by annual review of MMP)*

Most of the work undertaken on island to implement the actions of the MMP is funded by outside organisations such as the Blue Belt Programme, Blue Marine Foundation and the Darwin Initiative, with a smaller percentage covered by the SHG recurrent/core budget. Associated work plans are developed for each funding stream by SHG's Marine and Fisheries Conservation Section (MFCS) and St Helena National Trust (SHNT) relative to the work they lead on. Together, these form a full annual operational plan for the MMP. These work plans are integrated into the MFCS fiscal year work plan and further implemented into the Environment, Natural Resources and Planning (ENRP) Portfolio and SHNT Strategy and Delivery Plans that support the island's wider aspirations and vision.

Indicator of success: *Management effectiveness evaluation undertaken (Target: 3 protected area management effectiveness (PAME) evaluations completed by Year 5)*

St Helena has been using a Protected Area Management Effectiveness (PAME) tool called the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool version 4 (METT-4). The METT-4 is a tool that is used globally to measure progress in management effectiveness of a protected area over time. It uses a simple questionnaire approach and includes a series of questions under five management elements which are scored by the MPA management authority. They are:

- Planning – assessment of MPA legislation, design and planning
- Inputs – assessment of resources; staff, budget, equipment and facilities
- Process – assessment of the way in which management is conducted
- Outputs – assessment of the implementation of management actions
- Outcomes – assessment of the extent in which management has achieved the MPA's goals and objectives

The first official PAME baseline assessment was undertaken reflective of the status of management of the MPA as of June 2023. The assessment was conducted in a workshop setting, where representatives of SHG and the SHNT discussed and collectively agreed the scores for each question. The detail was collated and finalised in September 2023. A basic summary report for stakeholders highlighting the results was produced in March 2024 and will be published on the SHG website in parallel with this report.

The PAME baseline assessment showed that the St Helena MPA achieved an overall score of 86 for management effectiveness equating to 75.44%.

Consultation session for the PAME evaluation

For the 'Planning' element, the St Helena MPA scored well, achieving 90%. This element scored highly because the MPA is legally designated, and it has a management plan. For the 'Outputs' element, the St Helena MPA scored 61% because there is evidence that the significant threats to the MPA are being managed. For 'Outcomes', we scored 66% as evidence suggests that the natural and cultural values of the MPA remain intact and the conservation status of important marine species and habitats are at satisfactory levels.

The assessment highlighted key areas which need improvement, mostly relating to the 'Inputs' and 'Process' elements. These reflect the fact that on-island management is heavily reliant on external funding and support, posing a risk to long-term sustainability of effective management and desired outcomes. The process of monitoring and evaluating the success of management activities is new, and this report is a start in introducing a regular form of assessment.

For those areas that were highlighted as needing to improve, some associated actions were proposed:

- Enhance fisheries monitoring to include stock assessments of offshore environments
- Finalise regulations for marine development activities including license monitoring and awareness raising
- Sustain engagement with marine tour operators and promote the marine accreditation scheme both on island and off island
- Address known sources of pollution
- Update and review the Compliance and Enforcement Strategy
- Ensure that stakeholders (internal and external) continue to be actively engaged.

This work ensures that we continue to keep our finger on the pulse, address our deficiencies and not lose sight of our strengths to appropriately prioritise work.

Indicator of success: *Adequacy of staff numbers for management (Target: Full complement of staff in post over 5-year period)*

To ensure effective management of the MPA, a full complement of staff is needed to undertake the work required of the MMP and Monitoring and Research Plan (MRP). This covers the MFCS, SHG Blue Belt Project staff, Marine Compliance and Enforcement Section (MC&ES) and SHNT and is a total of 15 staff members supported by organisational leadership. Throughout the period of review, staffing levels have been adequate with only one post being vacant within MFCS for more than 6 months: the Fisheries Science Programme Coordinator (FSPC). During this time, support was provided by the Senior Marine and Fisheries Conservation Assistant. Senior leadership within the ENRP Portfolio has remained stable during the period of review. The SHNT had one vacant post for more than three months which was a project post. MCE has had a full complement across the year.

The Marine and Fisheries Conservation Officer (MFCO) has been working with the SHG Graduate Scheme this year which has a returning graduate who has completed there studies in marine science an oceanography. They will be given a full two-year working programme to immerse them into marine management. The purpose of the scheme is to build resilience within SHG. It provides opportunities for returning graduates to acquire the necessary skills to complement their academic achievements to aid their personal development and also supports SHG succession planning.

Indicator of success: *Staff skill level (Target: All staff fully competent in all work areas in assessments every 2 years)*

In-house training activity logs have been developed and populated by both the trainee and the trainer; formal training is also logged, supported by certificates where appropriate.

Twenty-nine different areas of training and staff upskilling have been undertaken by 11 staff across SHG over the year, ranging from on boarding training, technical, quality assurance, health and safety, and upskilling and reskilling. Key highlights include: 2 MFCS staff completed exposure training with the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) in the UK, the MC&ES received practical compliance and enforcement training from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), support was provided by Cefas to enable MPA staff to understand R coding and Shiny applications and Plymouth Marine Laboratory (PML) Applications provided training in surveying techniques for marine invasive non-native species (INNS). Overall training completed was in excess of 2,284 hours over the year.

MFCS staff undertaking their boat operations and safety at sea training

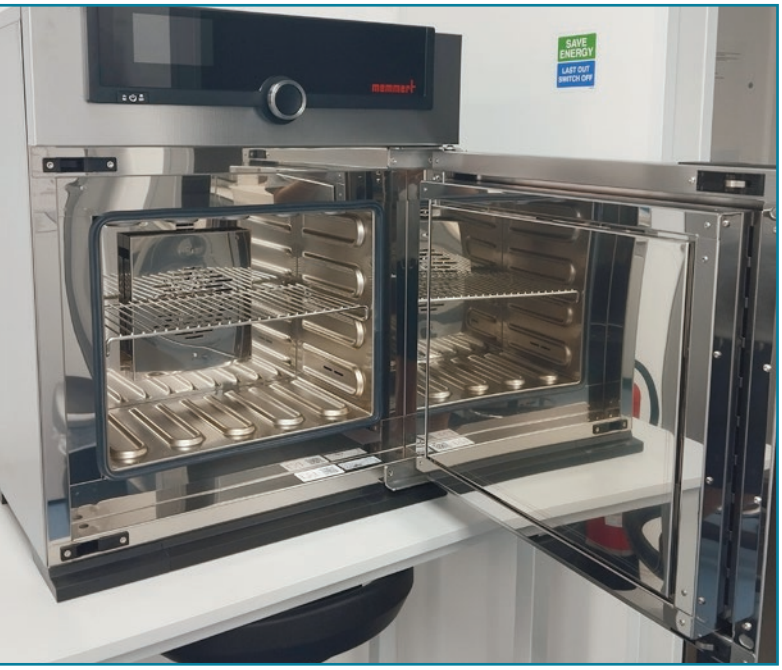
The turnover of core MFCS staff is low meaning the capacity in-house is stable, and that skill transfer can always be facilitated to new staff. All practical work areas have associated training and assessment materials which provide the framework necessary for competency assessments. This means transitions between staff were well handled. For example, the MFCO was new in post in July 2023 and received a two-month training scheme and the new FSPC completed a three-week training scheme with the previous post holder. We host an apprenticeship scheme funded by the Blue Belt Programme which offers one-year contracts to local school leavers to ensure that marine conservation skills are instilled in future employees. Apprentices are generally new to the working environment and the first 6 months of their contract is dedicated to training and mentoring, focusing mainly on data and data management. This training time is omitted from the calculations of training time, taking into account level of ability and training needs.

Indicator of success: *Adequacy of equipment and facilities for management (Target: No outstanding need for equipment or facilities by end of Year 3)*

We received a range of equipment to enhance the lab facility and support all research plans for the year and forward planning. This included:

- Autoclave
- Drying oven
- CTD (conductivity, temperature, and depth)
- Digital public engagement equipment
- High spec laptop for better data management and storage
- Tagging equipment – grouper tags, electronic tags for tuna
- Enhanced Baited Remote Underwater Video (BRUV) rigs
- Purpose made plankton trawl net

There is an inventory, and equipment lists are reviewed monthly with a repair, maintenance, calibration programme in place. Equipment with a value over £5,000 is placed on the SHG assets register. Identified equipment gaps are being sourced (target Year 3).



New drying oven

New CTD

The lab operates within predefined lab procedures and all users have completed mandatory lab induction training.

Equipment was also purchased by MC&ES to support marine enforcement activities including CCTV systems and a new vessel. The new vessel allows the team to be more robust and efficient by having the ability to undertake sea patrols and boarding inspections. A CCTV system has been in place on the Jamestown Wharf since 2021 providing the MC&ES with an additional tool to monitor the landing area outside of normal working hours. In 2024 two additional, higher quality cameras were purchased, one of which has been installed to cover the view of the boat moorings to enhance vessel monitoring. The second camera is due to be installed at the second landing site at Ruperts Bay for monitoring coverage within that area. Having access to the CCTV system has really benefited the team and it has become a valuable tool for monitoring fishing activities when the team is off duty.

Two REM systems were purchased to monitor offshore fishing effort. One of the systems has been installed on the only vessel that is currently fishing offshore. Since installing the system, MC&ES has come across a few technical difficulties that have prevented the system from working correctly. The Blue Belt Programme has now provided funding to purchase additional equipment that should allow the system to work correctly. The equipment arrived in October 2024 and will be installed soon.

Indicator of success: *Existence of an MPA sustainable financing strategy (Target: MPA sustainable financing strategy finalised by end of Year 3)*

Work has been completed to map the MPA finances (costs of implementing the MMP for 10 years plus current known sources of income) and to identify funding gaps. With project partners, we are now assessing different financing options to identify opportunities and inform development of the MPA sustainable financing strategy (target Year 3) for SHG review and potential implementation.

Objective 1.2:
A monitoring strategy is in place to understand baselines and track changes to the marine environment

Indicator of success: *Existence and adoption of Monitoring and Research Plan (MRP) (Target: Minimum of 3 monitoring surveys conducted per year in line with the MRP objectives)*

The St Helena MRP was created, consulted on and adopted by ENRP in May 2023 as an internal document that guides its research and monitoring needs to support achievement of the MPA objectives. This document outlines the key research and monitoring themes that need to be undertaken. Under each theme, monitoring activities and research needs are outlined depicting if they are short or long-term work areas/ projects, in the context of what is already known and what research is required to fill data gaps.

The target is to ensure that at least 3 monitoring surveys are conducted each year. Since June 2023, there have been 14 dedicated monitoring surveys:

Theme	Monitoring surveys	
Ensuring the exploitation of the pelagic fish is within safe biological limits	Baited Remote Underwater Videos (BRUVs) (BB)	Tuna (BB) Inshore Acoustic Array (BB)
Ensuring the exploitation of ground fish and crustacean is within safe biological limits	Underwater Visual Censuses (UVCs)	(Core/BB) Grouper (BB)
Protecting biodiversity and important species	Marine Sighting scheme (Citizen science) (Core) Invasives (Core/BB)	Seabirds (SHNT) Whale Sharks (SHNT)
Protecting marine habitats	Drop down cameras (BB)	
Oceanographic monitoring and climate change resilience	PIRATA (external) HOBO loggers (Core)	SHOT's (Core)
Maintaining water quality, and ensuring threats from pollution and marine litter are understood	Beach Surveys (Plastic) (SHNT).	
Understanding the social, cultural and economic values of the MPA.		

All Blue Belt (BB) supported monitoring has been completed and reviews of monitoring strategies with recommendations have been made. All historical data sets held by ENRP have supporting metadata and are shared with the custodians of the St Helena Data Portal.

During the year under review, the MFCS has undertaken a number of surveys as detailed above, to the long-term data sets of habitat data which will be analysed in due course. Five full island BRUV deployment have been conducted during the year and St Helena has received two analysis reports which is the start of a time series dataset.

MFCS staff undertaking a UVC survey

As a result of the research cruise conducted in December 2022, St Helena has been able to update the bathymetry maps, adding to the collection the full survey of a new seamount "Captain Rodney Young". In addition, both Bonapart and the Cardno Seamounts have been subject to habitat ground truthing assessments (drop down cameras) (see section 2.2 of DY159 Cruise report). The MFCS continues to collect and store plankton samples although no analysis has been undertaken in this time frame.

The SHNT has been undertaking a variety of research projects. These include whale shark surveys aimed at identifying individuals and assessing the abundance of the population that visits St Helena. A range of reports has been produced, reflecting the work completed each year in line with the research plan. Additionally, census surveys have been carried out for the Madeiran storm petrels at Egg Island, along with shark species identification using BRUVs and colony assessments of masked boobies. Monitoring of whales and dolphins is ongoing, supported by citizen science initiatives such as the marine sightings scheme and fisher logbooks.

Finally, work was undertaken by Mission Atlantic to compare reef fish communities of mid Atlantic ridge islands and scientific literature has been produced:

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0141113624002721?via%3Dihub

https://lbmm.ufsc.br/pdfs/(2024)_Ferrari_et_al_MEPS_compressed.pdf

The level of understanding of St Helena's marine environment is high and the MPA staff's understanding has been facilitated through many work areas and resulting reports directly complimenting Objective 1.1. Through the Blue Belt Programme, a number of reports have been produced over the past 4 years which will inform the formal State of the Environment Report when analysed, collated and summarised.

These include:

- Long term monitoring review (CR193 – 05/2024)
- Fisheries Profile (CR190 – 03/2024)
- Lab business plan (CR189 – 12/2023)
- Comparative Productivity and Susceptibility Analysis (PSA) (CR187 – 08/2023)
- Cephalopod guide (CR186 – 07/2023)
- Sport fishing literature review and PSA (jacks and trevally) (CR185 - 07/2023)
- Sand extraction baseline characterisation and impact monitoring (CR183 – 03/2023)
- Water quality recommendations for investigating fish deaths (CR182 – 03/2023)
- Climate risk for important marine fish and invertebrate species (CR181 – 03/2023)
- Fisheries advice – lobster (CR180 – 11/2022)
- Fisheries advice – groundfish (CR179 – 11/2022)
- Fisheries advice – tuna (CR178 – 11/2022)
- Water quality faecal indicators (CR176 – 09/2022)
- Fisheries short summary report (CR174 – 11/2022)
- Fisheries advice – groundfish (CR170 – 10/2021)
- Fisheries advice – tuna (CR169 – 10/2021)
- Fisheries advice – baitfish (CR168 – 10/2021)
- Oceanographic modelling (Telemac3D) (CR163 – 11/2021)
- Environmental Profile (CR098 - 11/2021)
- Fisheries advice – tuna (CR087 – 04/2020)
- Fisheries advice – baitfish (CR085 – 02/2020)
- Fisheries advice – grouper (CR071 – 07/2020)
- Futures Assessment Report R.4151 – 03/2023

A summary of the number of products (reports, advice, literature reviews, theses, papers and books) currently used for each indicator is provided in Figure 1 below.

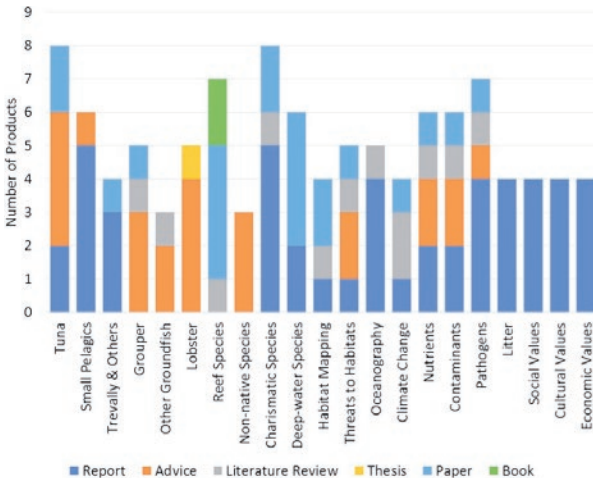


Figure 1: Number of products produced to date

SHG has undertaken a full review of the MRP leading to production of the St Helena Monitoring Review. Data has been collected and continues to be collected through catch landings, logbooks, biological sampling, BRUVs and UVCs. Each dataset is supported by a metadata forms and reports have been produced.

Indicator of success: *Data portal updated annually (Target: Annual updates completed each year)*

MFCS currently holds 81 different data sets (historic and current) each with its own associated metadata forms. Metadata records are updated on a regular basis dependant on status of data.

During the year, ENRP conducted an internal review of data to ensure that there is a complete record of metadata. Thirty-seven seabird metadata sheets were finalised and sent to the GIS Data Manager in September 2022. Five drafts prepared by a Marine and Fisheries Conservation Data Apprentice were also finalised and sent to the GIS Data Manager. In June 2023, updates were made to existing metadata for surveys that had been completed during the reporting year. Three drafts for new work were prepared and distributed to relevant offices. The number of total complete metadata sets currently available is 53.

Metadata records are held centrally by the SHG GIS department and added to the island's data portal to allow data sharing. Unfortunately, within the year the data portal has not been in working order. Nevertheless, the MCFS has received and been able to process a number of data requests and all finalised metadata will be displayed once the data portal is operational.

Indicator of success: *Application of scientific research and monitoring to management (Target: At least 2 policies / management strategies reviewed and updated in line with outputs and recommendations from scientific reports per year)*

Evidence from the long-term monitoring programme has informed 6 new policies / management measures as detailed under Objectives 2.1, 2.3 and 2.4 below

Objective 1.3:

Current and future threats to the marine environment are understood and risk assessed to enable a proactive approach to risk management

Indicator of success: *Knowledge of future pressures on St Helena and the MPA (Target: At least 1 risk assessment conducted each year. Results of risk assessments actively used to inform management decisions on an annual basis)*

The starting point for St Helena to understand climate change in the marine environment was in March 2023 when an initial assessment of 'Climate Risk for important marine fish and invertebrate species in St Helena', was produced and helped prioritise future climate change related research and monitoring. From this, a 'Climate Projections and Future Thermal Suitability Assessment for Priority Marine Species in St Helena' was completed in May 2024 by Cefas. This document provides an overview of the current knowledge of climate change effects in St Helena and considers the future thermal suitability of 23 priority marine species and their risk to climate change. Having this information helps guide SHG to determine how to fill current data gaps, and which have already been addressed.

Marine INNS monitoring - hull fouling survey

The previously established oceanographic monitoring programme has been enhanced to include measurement of additional environmental metrics which will support the long-term assessment of environmental risk.

Invasive specialists from PML Applications in the UK visited St Helena in December 2023 to support the establishment of a marine INNS monitoring programme. The MFCS has conducted two hull fouling surveys and one targeted settlement plate deployment for visiting ships. From October 2022 to December 2023, settlement plates were deployed at the yacht moorings to assess and establish the baseline on marine INNS presence. In addition, UVC data has been used to better understand sea grapes abundance and distribution. St Helena's biggest risk is from visiting ships and therefore, a monthly vessel biofouling survey plan was created and implemented.

Prior to the period of this review, a futures assessment was undertaken in March 2023 by ABPmer. This assessment was informed by consultation with a number of local and international stakeholders. This assessed the emerging activities that may impact St Helena's marine environment over the next ten years. The study considered future trends in human activities across different sectors including fisheries and fish processing, energy production, ports and shipping and tourism and recreation. The study assessed the potential threats to the MPA from these activities and made recommendations on management options to support sustainable economic development whilst ensuring that it would be compatible with the goals of the MPA.

Indicator of success: *Application of scientific research and monitoring to management (Target: At least 2 policies / management strategies reviewed and updated in line with outputs and recommendations from scientific reports per year)*

Research undertaken between 2020 and 2023 has provided a quantifiable baseline for water quality around St Helena and identified a need for mitigation measures. This then led to the development of the Marine Pollution Policy which was approved by the ENRP Advisory Board on 22nd November 2023, and which sets the direction for management of pollution in the marine environment. Implementation of this policy is ongoing.

In the absence of a marine biosecurity policy, in December 2023 SHG included service agreements within the new shipping service contract to reflect biofouling management mitigation measures. This kick-started a new monitoring scheme for SHG to ensure the protection of the MPA against marine INNS.

Reports produced in 2022 cite the risk of current sand pumping operation to be low. SHG has not undertaken any sand resource survey or yet implemented the policy for managing development activities within St Helena's marine environment into regulations. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that activity levels remain the same and there is no risk of a significant change to current status.

Goal 2: Use of natural resources is managed sustainably, using evidence-based decisions for appropriate management of human activities, aimed at securing economic, food and cultural security for St Helena.

To manage sustainably, sustainability must be understood. MPAs that promote economic, social and cultural improvements along with nature conservation can improve the long-term sustainability of human uses in the area.

Management measures are needed to ensure that human activities within the MPA are compatible with the site's objectives and that the condition of the key values of the MPA: the unique assemblage of marine species (e.g. fisheries species, endemic species, marine megafauna and seabirds) and their supporting habitats as well as the social, cultural and economic values are maintained or improved over time. Implementing management measures alone does not however ensure success. The local community and marine users must also be empowered with knowledge to understand the threats that the MPA faces, the rules and regulations that are in place and importantly why these rules exist.

To be effective, management must be evidence-based. To determine whether the management measures are working and having the desired effect, long-term monitoring is therefore essential to assess trends over time. If monitoring shows that the condition of the MPA values is declining, this highlights that management measures may need to be adjusted or that new management measures may need to be introduced through an adaptive management approach. The first step is to determine a robust baseline against which to assess change over time. SHG, in collaboration with Cefas, undertook a full review of the MRP in March 2024. This highlighted where there are gaps in data collection, data analysis and on-going monitoring (see Figure 2). Addressing the identified gaps will ensure that evidence-based decisions on appropriate management measures can be made to mitigate threats and manage natural resources sustainably.

REM system on fishing vessel

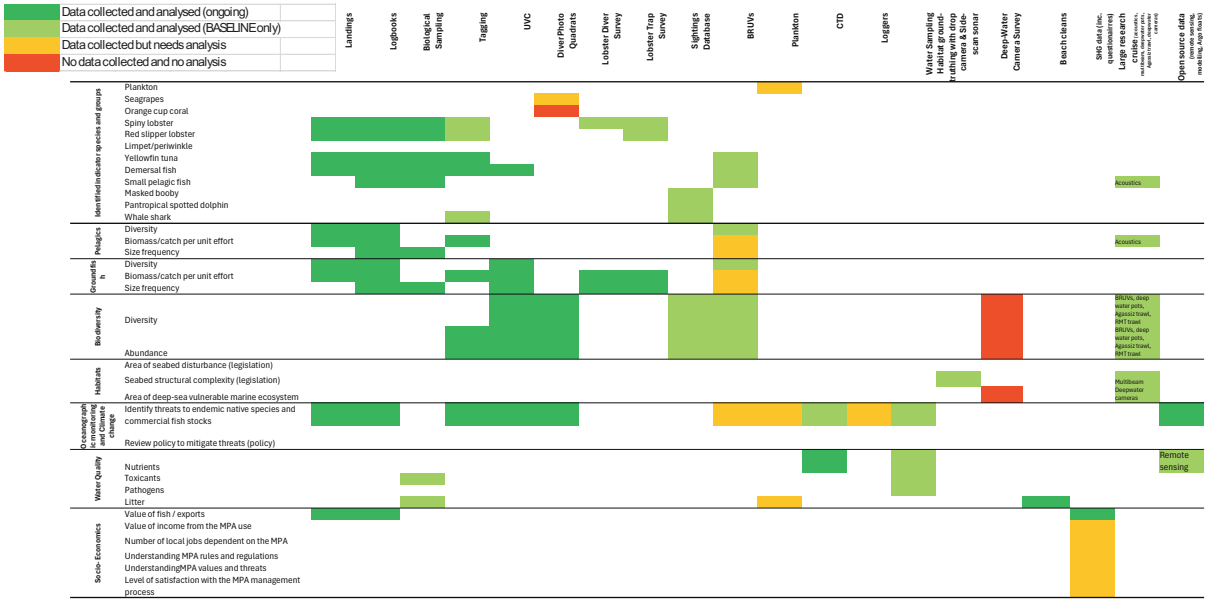


Figure 2: Assessment of current status of implementation of the MRP

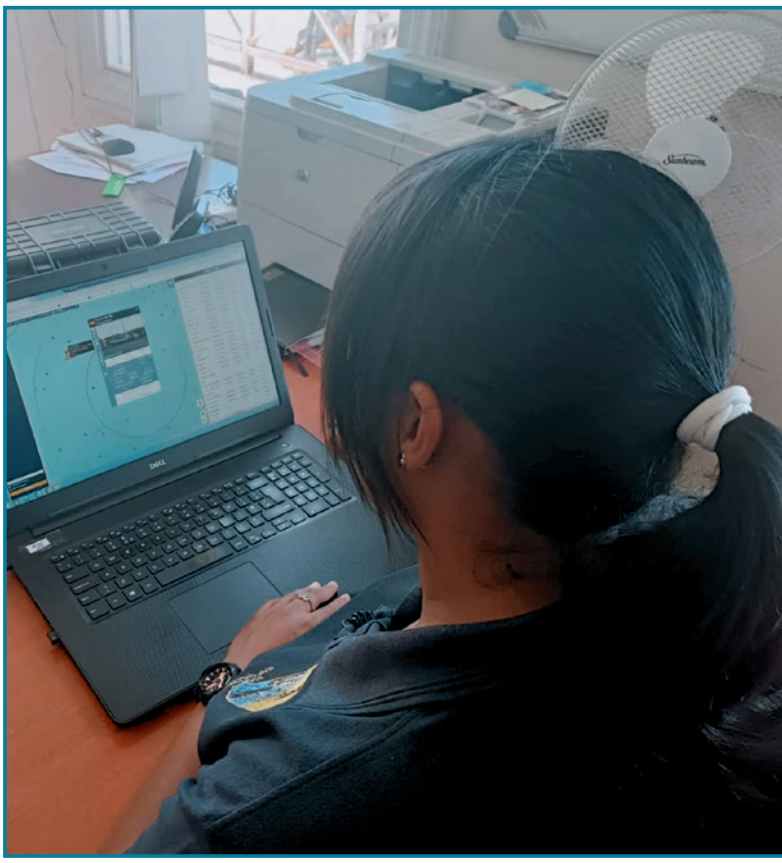
The objectives below are relevant to achieving these targets and outline what has been achieved to date.

Objective 2.1:

Fishing practices are sustainable, with management methods for target species informed by scientific evidence and local knowledge

Indicator of success: *Existence and adoption of Fisheries Management Plans / Monitoring and Research Plan (Targets: Fisheries Management Plans implemented each year after advice is revised; Monitoring and Research Plan implemented each year; ICCAT data requirements are met annually)*

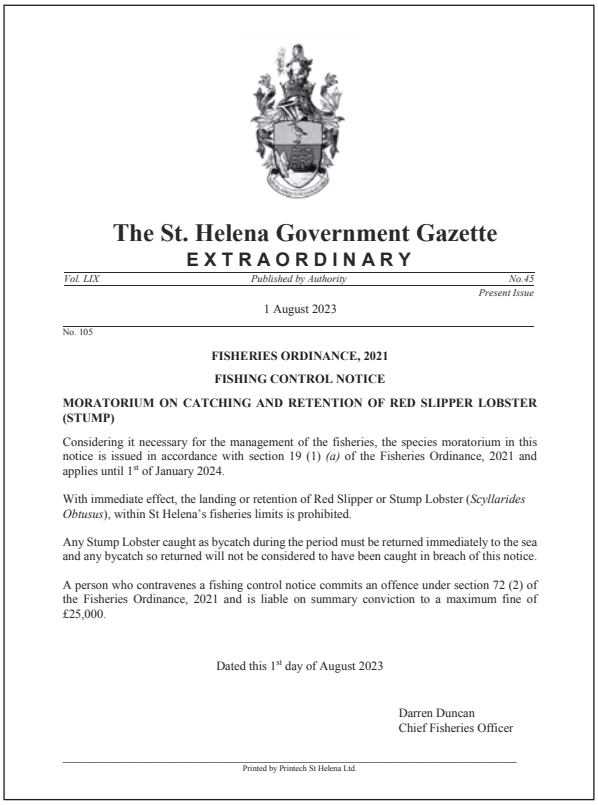
To date, commercial and recreationally important species such as yellowfin tuna, grouper and various redfish have been subject to scientific studies. These aim to determine status of stock, understand spatial movement, biology and ecology of these species relative to the landings and efforts used in their harvest to gain a comprehensive overview. Fisheries science programmes include tagging, biometric sampling, monitoring of fisher logbook data and undertaking independent fisheries observer trips. This data is collected and collated within St Helena's fisheries database which is used to monitoring landings against Total Allowable Catches (TACs) and shared with Cefas who undertakes analysis and provides St Helena with management recommendations to consider. St Helena has used the results from these scientific research and monitoring programmes to update or inform the fisheries management initiatives. Monitoring reports are not published on SHG's website, however, abstracts of relevant public or stakeholder information is developed and disseminated as appropriate (press releases, social media, public meetings etc.).



MC&ES staff monitoring fishing vessels in St Helena's EEZ

This work has informed application of the following management measures:

1. In August 2023, fisheries landings data reflected that the set TAC of red slipper lobster (stump) had been exceeded. As a result, a Fisheries Control Notice (FCN) was raised and issued which gave immediate legal effect to the introduction of a temporary suspension on the catch and retention of stump until 1st January 2024 (the new season).



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FISHERIES ORDINANCE, 2021

FISHING CONTROL NOTICE

MORATORIUM ON CATCHING AND RETENTION OF RED SLIPPER LOBSTER (STUMP)

Considering it necessary for the management of the fisheries, the species moratorium in this notice is issued in accordance with section 19 (1) *(a)* of the Fisheries Ordinance, 2021 and applies until 1st of January 2024.

With immediate effect, the landing or retention of Red Slipper or Stump Lobster (*Scyllarides Obtusus*), within St Helena's fisheries limits is prohibited.

Any Stump Lobster caught as bycatch during the period must be returned immediately to the sea and any bycatch so returned will not be considered to have been caught in breach of this notice.

A person who contravenes a fishing control notice commits an offence under section 72 (2) of the Fisheries Ordinance, 2021 and is liable on summary conviction to a maximum fine of £25,000.

Dated this 1st day of August 2023

Darren Duncan
Chief Fisheries Officer

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2. In December 2023, as a result of a long-term grouper monitoring programme and subsequent management recommendations, a reduction on the TAC of grouper (after consultation) was approved by the ENRP Advisory Board. All fishers in receipt of fishing licences were issued formal letters advising them of the new grouper TAC and licences were changed to reflect the revised management measure.
3. Between October 2023 and March 2024, ENRP conducted a revision exercise of all fishing license templates and conditions. The work area was supported by the development of a 'Fisheries Licensing Administration Process for St Helena Government' document. After final review and approval by the Chief Fisheries Officer (CFO), licences were issued in April 2024 reflecting updated conditions and revised recommendations from the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).
4. Grouper (Minimum Landing Size) and marlin (Catch Method) – Based on an assessment of size at maturity by the Blue Belt Programme, FCNs were drafted and are currently being addressed as part of fisheries licencing policy review.

ICCAT data reporting requirements are met annually including quarterly tropical tuna catch and annual catch and effort.

Objective 2.2:

Development activities in the marine environment are effectively managed to prevent, minimise and mitigate adverse impacts, whilst supporting sustainable economic development

Indicator of success: *Implementation of policy and legislation (Target: All new development activities apply for a Marine development licence by end of Year 3)*

Revisions to the 'Policy for managing development activities within St Helena's marine environment' are currently being made to inform drafting of new Regulations under the Environmental Protection Ordinance.

Objective 2.3:

Marine tourism activities minimise their impacts on the marine environment and large charismatic marine species, whilst supporting economic development

Indicator of success: *Implementation of policy and legislation (Target: All commercial marine tour operators hold a valid marine tourism licence by end of Year 2. Compliance with licence conditions is 95% by end of Year 3)*

The Marine Regulations (Tourism and Interaction with Marine Life), 2023 was gazetted on 9th October 2023 to minimise disturbance to marine wildlife and habitats within the MPA. Through the Marine Environment Accreditation Scheme for St Helena, best practice guidelines have been introduced. Fifteen marine tour operator personnel were provided with training in September 2023, and all attained the required levels of competency to receive their accreditation certificate. Licensing desk notes were developed by the MMO as a regular point of reference for SHG officers when processing licence applications. Mechanisms for licensing have been set up, ready for their roll-out during the next tourist season.

Objective 2.4:

A suitable level of prevention preparedness and response to a marine pollution incident is developed, established and maintained

Indicator of success: *Existence and implementation of policy and legislation (Target: Marine Pollution Policy approved and implemented by end of Year 2)*

The Marine Pollution Policy was approved by the ENRP Advisory Board on 22nd November 2023 to set the direction for the management of pollution and minimise risks to the marine environment.

Indicator of success: *Existence and implementation of marine pollution incidence response plan (Targets: Marine pollution incidence response plan approved and implemented by end of Year 3)*

St Helena has in place an Oil Pollution Response Plan, as well as equipment to contain oil spills and preserve wildlife. St Helena Government has also developed and adopted a Port Pollution Response Plan; Port Control have identified additional risk operations and have, to date, drafted a response plan for the bunkering of fuel.

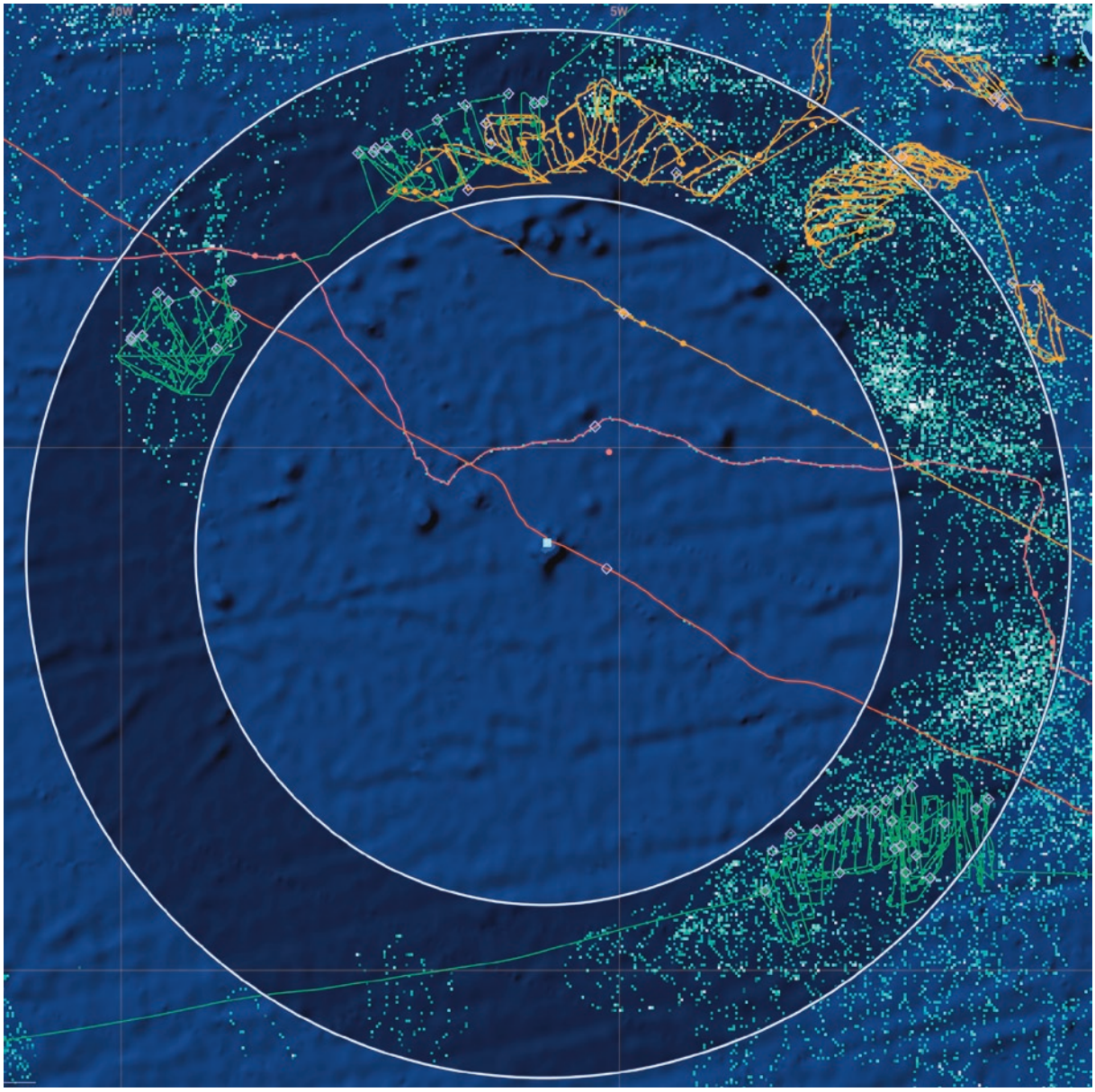

Figure 3: *Image from the platform Global Fishing Watch showing 'apparent fishing activity' from 1 June 2023 – 01 June 2024 around St Helena's EEZ and 100nm buffer zone. On further investigation the activity inside the EEZ was found to be vessels transiting through*

Indicator of success: *Staff skill level (Target: All staff fully competent in all work areas in assessments every 2 years)*

Key personnel on island have been trained to respond in the event of a pollution incident.

Objective 2.5:
Activities within the marine environment are regulated and enforced, with clear and transparent information provided to all users

Indicator of success: *Implementation of Compliance and Enforcement Strategy (Target: Decrease in number of enforcement actions taken between Year 1 and Year 5)*

The MC&ES has produced letters and actions for fisheries infringements. All letters sent are saved and an Excel spreadsheet is populated detailing verbal warnings issued. Data will be analysed in order to show effectiveness of enforcement actions.

The Marine Compliance and Enforcement Strategy was internally reviewed in February 2024. This review has provided recognition that a formal revision of the Strategy must be undertaken.

As part of the Blue Belt Programme, intel analysts from the MMO conducted near daily checks of vessels' Automatic Identification System (AIS) within and around the MPA. These showed 100% compliance with the MPA (Figure 3). Ten instances of suspicious activity were investigated. In four cases, the vessel or flag State were contacted for further information. Investigations revealed no Illegal, Unreported or Unregulated (IUU) fishing had taken place within the MPA. A formal written warning was sent on one occasion in relation to an incident of perceived fishing while at the dock in St Helena. From March 2024, checks of open-source satellite imagery from the online platform Skylight were incorporated into the daily checks. Images are available over St Helena approximately twice a week.

Goal 3: St Helena's marine environment, its importance, and management methods are better understood by both the local and international community, with all provided the opportunity to input into securing its future.

A big part of managing MPAs is about managing human behaviours and perceptions. Establishing meaningful engagement with local communities and other marine resource users is therefore essential to ensure effective management of the St Helena MPA and to secure the sustainable future of the island's marine resources. It provides a mechanism for stakeholders to input into the decision-making process in a way that is transparent and accountable. This will ensure that they understand the reason for any new management measures and are therefore more likely to be supportive of it, resulting in a higher level of compliance. To support effective stakeholder engagement, it is important for everyone to have a good understanding of the values of the MPA and why they are important to encourage behaviour that is consistent with the objectives of the MPA. Management of the MPA therefore aims to increase awareness of the marine environment in St Helena, its importance and the relevant management methods amongst both the local and international local community.

Establishment of a long-term socio-economic monitoring programme is essential to determine whether the management actions in the MMP are working effectively and having the desired effect in terms of improving stakeholders' understanding of the MPA values and the threats to these values and their level of satisfaction with MPA management processes and actions. If long-term monitoring indicates that this goal is not being achieved, management actions and targets will be adjusted as part of an adaptive management approach.

Marine Awareness Week 2024

The objectives below are relevant to achieving these targets and outline what has been achieved to date.

Objective 3.1:
Users of the marine environment and stakeholders are able to participate in management decisions and activities to protect and enhance the MPA

Indicator of success: *Implementation of Stakeholder Engagement Plan (Target: Quantifiable increase in Stakeholder Engagement by Year 3)*

A Stakeholder Engagement Plan was drafted in October 2023 setting out who will be engaged, how and when over the year. Although this plan has not formally been approved by the ENRP Advisory Board, ENRP has undertaken a number of different stakeholder engagement activities to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the MPA and the management measures in place and that they have the opportunity to input into the decision-making process. These engagement activities have included marine accreditation workshops, lobster and grouper workshops and a compliance and enforcement workshop with fishers; they were attended by a total of 64 stakeholders. The main aim of these workshops was to ensure that the community has a good understanding of the subject specific information e.g. how to measure lobster, in order for them to understand and support the work being undertaken within the MPA

Following on from a workshop in March 2023, MFCS is considering how best to take forwards recommendations to establish an MPA working group. This would allow interested stakeholders to more actively engage in the management of the MPA. Workshop participants made recommendations on the aims of the group, who should be on the group, how the group should operate and what it should do. These recommendations are being taken onboard, and it is hoped that the group will be established later this year.

Objective 3.2:
An education and awareness campaign is in place to provide information about and promote St Helena's MPA to local and international audiences

Indicator of success: *Existence and implementation of Communications Plan (Target: 90% of Communication Plan implemented by Year 3)*

A communication activities plan is drafted on a monthly basis and includes all communication initiatives for the following month. On social media, MFCS has run a total of six campaigns over the year including meet the team, endemic species highlights and green turtle nesting, spanning 87 posts across Facebook and Twitter/X using the hashtag #smallislandBIGFuture. The St Helena MPA Twitter/X account currently has 576 followers whilst the Facebook account has 1,622 followers.

Other campaigns have focused on the Mission Blue Hot Spot designation. This included hosting community information sessions and doing interviews with local people asking, "What is your hope for your Hope Spot?". These were used to create a series of videos that were promoted on social media. MFCS also ran a competition to name a new seamount that was discovered in 2022 by the RRS Discovery. The seamount was officially named "Young Seamount" honouring the late Captain Rodney Young, the first St Helenian captain of the RMS St Helena.

Successful Marine Tour Operators at Plantation House

Filming for a St Helena MPA documentary has taken place in which MFCS staff were filmed undertaking routine monitoring and research and their day-to-day duties. The documentary will showcase St Helena's MPA and educate the international audience of what the MPA is, how it is managed and what research is done to underpin management measures. It will be premiered in August 2024.

Marine Awareness Week took place between 14th and 27th March 2024. This year, the MFCS hosted every school child in St Helena at sea to experience the wonders of St Helena's MPA themselves. Despite some technical issues, 177 students went out to sea with MFCS staff to learn about the MPA. Of these students, 20 had never been out on a marine wildlife boat trip before and so it was the first time they had seen dolphins from a boat. Marine Awareness Week also included a presentation by scientists from Georgia Aquarium at the Mule Yard. The Marine Centre was also opened up to the public, showcasing the lab facilities and equipment MFCS use, specimens from the RRS Discovery expedition and the Marine Apprentices also did a presentation about their experience working in the Marine Centre.

The MFCS has started work to establish a long-term monitoring programme to assess the cultural, social and economic values of the MPA. Working with the Blue Belt Programme, a questionnaire has been developed which will help to better understand how the MPA is currently used, how important the marine environment is to the local community and what benefits the MPA provides. The questionnaire will be conducted with key stakeholders and members of the wider public in St Helena. This will provide a baseline assessment of these values. The questionnaire will be repeated in 2 to 3 years' time to determine whether the status has changed over time.

Three staff from the MFCS attended the Blue Belt Symposium in London in February. The Symposium aimed to bring together stakeholders who work with the Blue Belt Programme to celebrate its legacy and impact and hear their vision for the future. It was attended by 168 people from over 70 organisations including all of the UKOTs working with the programme, UK Government Agencies, NGOs, consultancies and academic institutions. The St Helena Blue Belt Co-ordinator gave an opening speech about the work St Helena has been doing to effectively manage the MPA and also chaired a session on sustainable financing for MPAs and the MFCO highlighted what the MPA means to the local community in St Helena. This provided an excellent opportunity to showcase the work St Helena is doing to protect and sustainably manage our marine environment and enabled us to network with other organisations and other UKOTs. It also provided an opportunity to reflect on the status of the MPA and the successes and achievements to date.

The Minister for Environment represented St Helena at COP28 and gave a speech in the Commonwealth Pavilion during a side event titled "Opportunities, tools and challenges towards an inclusive and equitable approach for local and regional adaptation to a rapidly changing ocean". She emphasised the importance of St Helena's marine biodiversity and spoke about the steps that have been taken in order to establish a MPA. This was referenced by speaking about the recognition of our MPA, St Helena teaming up with the Blue Belt Programme, and being recognised as a Hope Spot.

The MFCO presented at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's, British Island and Mediterranean Region Conference which was hosted in St Helena in May 2024. Politicians from British and Mediterranean islands were in attendance, St Helena presented information on the designation and management of the MPA with a key focus on community involvement, specifically with science and monitoring.

Local Minsters host a weekly radio programme entitled "In-Scope". Members of ENRP are regularly interviewed about key marine environment topics and work areas.

Contact details:

Marine and Fisheries Conservation Section,
Environment, Natural Resources and Planning Portfolio,
St. Helena Government,
The Wharf, Jamestown, STHL 1ZZ

Tel: 25966/24724
Email: marine@helanta.co.sh

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