

UNITED KINGDOM

Henderson Island

Brief description

Henderson Island, which lies in the eastern South Pacific, is one of the few atolls in the world whose ecology has been practically untouched by a human presence. Its isolated location provides the ideal context for studying the dynamics of insular evolution and natural selection. It is particularly notable for the 10 plants and four land birds that are endemic to the island.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription

1988

Agency responsible for site management

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2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria

N (iii) (iv)

Justification by the State Party

Henderson Island is of outstanding universal value because:

- It is the only raised and forested coral atoll with its ecology virtually intact. It is thus a unique example of the natural heritage of man demonstrating the dynamics of evolution and natural selection.
- The undisturbed condition of Henderson makes it uniquely valuable for research. The importance of the island for study by generations of scientists cannot be over-estimated. Henderson is still little known and remains of immense importance for geological, biogeographical and biological research. Comparison with inhabited and exploited oceanic islands elsewhere will help in the understanding of the processes of island modification and conservation.
- Elevated atolls are generally more species-rich than low-lying coral islands and have more endemic species. Henderson shows a particularly high

degree of plant endemism, with ten endemic taxa, and also has a unique terrestrial fauna with four endemic landbirds and endemic invertebrates. It is highly likely that further endemic taxa will be found on the scarcely studied and undisturbed island.

iv. Endemic species on oceanic islands throughout the world are highly vulnerable to the threat of extinction. In the Pacific region for example 113 island birds have become extinct and 130 are endangered. The Henderson crane, fruit dove and lorikeet, all belong to families which are among the most vulnerable groups. As yet these birds are not thought to be under threat on Henderson but their long-term conservation is vital. Henderson's endemic plants have also remained safe from the pressures generally suffered by endemic island floras.

v. The breeding seabird populations of Henderson are internationally important. The three closely-related and potential interbreeding *Pterodroma* petrels are in need of further study. Populations of this genus have suffered severely elsewhere.

vi. The marine life of Henderson is scarcely known but the extensive and pristine fringing reefs are likely to provide a haven for both endemic species and species under threat elsewhere.

As provided in IUCN evaluation

Although every oceanic island is "unique" in some way, Henderson Island is truly outstanding and merits inscription as a natural World Heritage property on two criteria: (iii) superlative natural phenomena, and (iv) significant natural habitat for threatened species. Henderson Island is one of the few raised oceanic coral atoll with its fundamental features intact. It is thus of immense value for biogeographical and biological research on the processes of island conservation. Henderson Island also has a high degree of plant endemism and a unique terrestrial fauna. The island is important for nesting seabirds and supports four endemic land birds. Its marine environment is little known but may be equally important.

Committee Decision

Bureau (1988): the Bureau recommended that this site be inscribed on the World Heritage List.

The Bureau requested that the British authorities provide a description of the extent of the marine boundaries of the nominated site. The Bureau also wished to encourage the British authorities to:

- work with the Pitcairn islanders to ensure on-site protection;

b) review the legal status of the island and consider up-grading this status to a nature reserve and prepare a management plan for the site:

c) consider more involvement in the strengthening the protection of the site within the framework of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme and the Convention on the Protection of Natural Resources in the South Pacific and the Convention on the Conservation of Nature in the South Pacific.

Committee (1988): the Committee requested the British authorities to report back on the Bureau's recommendations concerning the involvement of Pitcairn islanders to ensure on-site protection and the review of the legal status of this island, including consideration to upgrade its status of a nature reserve and the preparation of a management plan. The Committee recommended that the British authorities consider extending the property to include the marine areas particularly used as feeding areas for marine birds within the 3-mile limit of the island. Finally, the Committee wished to commend the British authorities for having strengthened the protection of this property by signing the Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region on 16 June 1988.

- A new Statement of Significance has been developed for the management plan. The State Party will discuss and agree a statement of outstanding value which will be submitted in due course for consideration by the World Heritage Committee
- No change required to UNESCO's official description of the site

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: inadequate
- Buffer zone: no buffer zone has been defined but none is needed
- State Party states that a three-mile marine zone could provide a de facto buffer zone

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained
- Probably the greatest threat to the site is from the introduction of new and invasive alien species (e.g. guava). The risk of such an introduction would undoubtedly be increased were there ever to be permanent or semi-permanent residents on Henderson Island

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- Visitors are normally restricted to the beach areas, and this encouraged in the code of conduct for visitors. The zoning and other legislative issues will be addressed by the management committee
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

Actions taken/proposed:

- A priority matter for the management committee is to investigate whether the legislation protecting Henderson is adequate
- Timeframe not provided

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Visitor attraction
- The Pitcairn Islanders visit the site roughly once a year to harvest carving woods

Management/Administrative Body

- Steering group formally set up on 01 January 2005 to put into effect the provisions of the management plan
- Site manager: responsibilities have been added to an existing job
- Consensual management
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national (DCMS; FCO); local
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

Actions proposed:

- Consideration should be given to encouraging the Pitcairn Islanders to visit Henderson Island once a year to undertake both a biological 'health check' and management of miro saplings (but without harvesting of wood). Funding might be needed
- No timeframe provided

5. Management Plan

- Management plan is being implemented
- Implementation commenced: May 2004
- Effective
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: Foreign & Commonwealth Office, London, represented by the Governor of the Pitcairn Islands who is also

the Wellington-based British High Commissioner to New Zealand.

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- There is no operating budget or core funding yet for this site
- In financial year 2002/2003, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London, covered the costs of a visit by two consultants to the Pitcairn Islands to complete writing of the management plan for Henderson Island, in consultation with the Pitcairn Islanders. In FY 2003/2004, the (British) Royal Society for the Protection of Birds provided funding for the printing of this plan and for studies of the impact of rats on the site's breeding seabirds
- Funding drawn in through the World Heritage Fund
- FCO/DFID funds have this year been identified under the OTEP (Overseas Territories Environment Programme) scheme to hire a consultant to draw up an environment strategy for the Pitcairn Islands, which will specifically incorporate the needs of Henderson Island as a World Heritage site. Once this strategy has been drawn up (during financial year 05-06), it will be used as a tool to facilitate future applications to the OTEP scheme for further funding of specific projects identified within the strategy
- Costs have been identified from the FCO/DFID OTEP fund to draw up an environment strategy for the Pitcairn Islands, to include the needs of Henderson.
- insufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 0

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Good: conservation, management
- Average: promotion, education, visitor management
- Bad: interpretation
- Staff resources are inadequate
- There is no staff on the site. Conservation input is received from various scientists, mostly from the UK, who have first-hand experience of the site. Otherwise, the Pitcairn Islanders visit Henderson Island about once a year. While these visits are primarily to harvest carving wood, they do afford some protection to the site.

They would, for example, detect signs of regular overnight stays by fishermen, or the arrival of some unwelcome alien species. Among the Pitcairn Islanders is the Island's Conservation Officer who includes Henderson Island within his biosecurity remit

- Much of the advice provided to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office comes from persons knowledgeable about the site, and work as volunteers.

8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques

- Not applicable as there are no staff on site
- Training on site management for stakeholders

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 140 in 1991. Trend: static
- Visitor facilities: None except a small plaque indicating that the site is a World Heritage site and giving the address of the British High Commission in Wellington, to which queries might be addressed. Otherwise no onshore facilities. This status quo should be maintained since the site merits World Heritage status precisely because it is so free of human influence
- Visitor facilities are inadequate
- Visitor needs: the site would benefit the long-term protection of the site if leaflets could be made available to yachts departing for Henderson from various ports (e.g. Easter Island, Mangareva). These leaflets would apprise those aboard of the special features of the island and inform them how to ensure that their visits caused no damage
- There is a tourism/visitor management plan for the site (part of the management plan)

10. Scientific Studies

- There is no agreed research framework/strategy for the site
- Studies related to the value of the site, archaeological surveys
- Ecological studies summarised in biological journal of the Linnean Society (Vol. 56, 1995). These studies provided the most comprehensive account of the geology, archaeology and ecology of the Island
- Studies used for management of site: The studies reported here set the baseline against

which any future changes might be assessed. One of the studies reported very heavy rat predation on the Henderson petrel *Pterodroma atrata*, a seabird for which Henderson is the world headquarters. Similarly heavy predation was recorded in July/August 2003. If the petrel is not to be extinguished by rats, the possibility of eradicating rats from Henderson should be considered very seriously

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- An adequate number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem not used on publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local communities, local authorities. Businesses: not applicable as there are none on the island
- There is an education strategy for the site
- The recently completed management plan has specific provision for education. The environment strategy, when it has been drawn up, should also incorporate education re Henderson Island.
 - The management plan is designed to provide sufficient information for visitors to understand the reasoning behind the visitors' code of conduct and other regulations.
 - Key sections of the plan should be made readily available to tour companies and the yachting community. A means of achieving this would be via leaflets available at such departure points as Easter Island and Mangareva.
 - Information boards should be considered (funding permitting) to cover the eventuality that unaccompanied visitors are not aware of the visitors' code of conduct.
 - Researchers visiting the island are encouraged to produce popular articles to inform the broader public of Henderson Island's remarkable geology, unique flora and fauna, and its global conservation and cultural status.
- Website available
- Local participation: at the time of designation, the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee specifically asked that those charged with the management of the site should work with the Pitcairn Islanders to ensure on-site protection. Thus finalising of the management plan in 2003 was achieved in consultation with the Islanders on Pitcairn. Moreover, the plan makes specific provision for the continuation of the Islanders'

traditional harvesting of carving woods, miro and tou, from Henderson. Sale of these carvings provides a major source of income for the Islanders.

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- World Heritage Committee sessions: 26th (2002; 27th (2003); 28th (2004); 29th (2005)

Conservation interventions

- In 1997, consultants from Wildlife Management International briefly visited Henderson to assess the feasibility of eradicating rats from the island, with likely benefit to petrels (see 10 above) and other species. The consultants' conclusion was that eradication would be feasible, using helicopter distribution of bait. This would be expensive and precautions to ensure the survival of endemic species would be essential
- Present state of conservation: very good

Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressure, environmental pressure, visitor/tourism pressure, agricultural/forestry regimes
- While there are no major problems at present, the integrity of the site would be significantly compromised by any substantial development. This would not only nullify Henderson's value as a near-pristine island, but substantially increase the risk of arrival of invasive alien species. This latter risk is ever-present, regardless of whether development takes place.
- Emergency measures:
 - 1- Alien fauna and flora:
 - Objectives: a) to prevent the introduction of new species to Henderson Island and b) to control or eradicate, where necessary and feasible, alien species that are already at Henderson Island. Species known to pose the greatest threat to Henderson or other island ecosystems should receive the highest priority for action.
 - Implementation measures:
 - No new species of fauna or flora shall be introduced to Henderson Island
 - Identify priorities for the control or eradication of alien species based upon their known or perceived threat to native wildlife
 - The Henderson management committee should seek funding for Islanders (or other persons) to identify and eradicate newly arrived

or localised species before they have had a chance to spread widely on the island

- Ensure through bye-laws that all visitors follow the visitor's code that includes specific instructions guarding against introductions. The visitors' code must be distributed to cruise ship operators, yacht crews visiting Pitcairn and other sanctioned visitors to Henderson and publicised in yachting publications and the Pitcairn Government website

2- Tourism

Objective: to ensure that tourism on Henderson Island is sustainable, non-damaging and contributes revenue to the Pitcairn economy and the management of the Island

Implementation measures:

-To establish a new ordinance or bye-law to enable effective enforcement of the visitors' code of conduct

-All visitors must follow the code of conduct, restrictions on landings and prohibitions concerning introductions and removal of material from Henderson

-A Pitcairn Islander may accompany visiting ships as a guide paid through funds (additional to the Henderson landing fee) levied by the ship. This will be particularly feasible for ships that pass Pitcairn on both legs of the journey to and from Henderson

-Information boards to be erected (funding permitting) at the North and North-west Beaches to cover the eventuality that unaccompanied visitors are not aware of the visitors' code of conduct

-Consideration should be given (by the management committee) to the eventual establishment of a ranger post on Henderson, funding and logistics permitting, and subject to Pitcairn Island Council support. The ranger may either be from Pitcairn (where it will be a government post) or from elsewhere. The ranger would be responsible for enforcing the visitors' code of conduct as well as implementing management activities of miro and tou. Facilities for the ranger will be designed to minimise the impact on the environment

13. Monitoring

- No formal monitoring programme
- One of the immediate tasks of the management committee, as outlined in the management plan, is to: "agree on a priority species list for monitoring programme. The list is likely to include further research on the impacts of rats

on gadfly petrels, an assessment of the status of other alien species, and a population census of certain threatened plant species."

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation
- Strengths of management: (i) extensive documentation of the ecology, geology and archaeology of the site; (ii) raised awareness of the site, particularly via the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum; (iii) completion of management plan for site.; (iv) appointment of management committee; (v) funding identified for drawing up of environment strategy for the territory
- Weaknesses of management: the site has retained its outstanding universal value because of its exceptional isolation. While this isolation is a strength, it is also a potential weakness in that it would be difficult to take restorative action should threats be detected. To deal with any such threats needs a monitoring strategy of an intensity appropriate for spotting the threats in a timely manner, and the legislative and financial means to deal with such threats

Future actions:

- Important tasks for the management committee are to develop a monitoring strategy, improve Henderson's legislative framework if necessary, and seek funding for future management
- No WH Funding is sought. Timeframe: not provided