



Montserrat sees start of project on conservation and the island's future

May 2016 saw a series of meetings and planning activity in Montserrat, supported by others in UK and USA, to set up a new 2-year project *Maximising long-term survival prospects of Montserrat's endemic species and ecosystem-services*. The project is part-funded by UK Government's Darwin Plus: Overseas Territories Environment & Climate Fund, and is a partnership coordinated by UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF). Other project partners include: Montserrat Government (Department of Environment; DoE); Montserrat National Trust (MNT); Treweek Environmental Consultants; and Montana State University, USA (MSU).

Hon Claude Hogan, Montserrat's Minister of Agriculture, Trade, Lands, Housing & Environment said: "Montserrat welcomes collaboration with international partners and recognises that such partnerships are often fundamental in order to take new and innovative work forward. We have worked with the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum for over 20 years and value its role in coordinating activities both locally in the UK Territories and beyond. Montserrat will continue to need some buoyancy and hands-on support from especially UKOTCF and other UK partners in the short to medium-term. This will require some staff and technical persons to travel between Europe and the Caribbean, but that will deliver the capacity support we need at the right times for this project to be successful; and also allow us to gradually mainstream the lessons learnt and the transfer of skills, know-how and best practices that will ensure the sustainability of the outcomes from this project."



(From left:) Dr Mike Pienkowski (Honorary Executive Director of UKOTCF), Hon Claude Hogan (Montserrat's Minister of Agriculture, Trade, Lands, Housing & Environment) and Mrs Dulcie James (President of Montserrat National Trust) celebrate the Memorandum of Understanding that they have just signed (Photo: Ravo Ratianimarina, MNT).

Dr Mike Pienkowski, Honorary Executive Director of the UKOTCF, explained that "the linking rationales of the project are both to help increase this local capacity and to give the best chances possible for Montserrat's unique and rare species of wildlife to survive in the long term. This is done most effectively by allowing the range to be as extensive as possible – something of a challenge in a small island, especially one which has lost a great deal of its vegetated area to the volcano in the short term. The wildlife is important not only in its own right and for the quality of life of Montserratians, but also as a major draw for tourists, increasing in the future to the benefit of Montserrat."



Ann Pienkowski (UKOTCF Honorary Environmental Education Coordinator; left) and Sarita Francis (Montserrat National Trust Executive Director) talk about the project on Rose Willock's Saturday programme on Radio ZJB (Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF).

Mrs Catherine Wensink, UKOTCF Manager and Senior Conservation Officer, added "One of the ways that this will be achieved is by making available to Montserrat the data, initially on invertebrate animals, collected by various institutions over the years. Dr Mike Ivie, an old friend of Montserrat from MSU, will be leading this work, and will visit in mid-2017 to show how to use the computer system, as well as to collect more information and enthuse local persons who might like to take part. Dr Ivie has discovered that, despite its much smaller size, Montserrat is even richer in insect species than Dominica."

A second element of the programme will be more time donated by

UKOTCF Conservation Officers, Sarah Barnsley (standing, centre) and Emma Cary (standing, right) facilitate the first of a series of workshops on the future options for the south of the island (Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF).



world expert on environmental impact assessment, Dr Jo Treweek, and her colleagues, to continue the programme started early in 2015 in helping integrate environmental aspects into physical planning.

Mrs Sarita Francis, MNT Executive Director, noted that: “Montserratians will be welcome to participate and learn from all these elements, but a further component is being designed to be centred on their volunteer efforts to enhance the native wildlife in their local areas. MNT and UKOTCF colleagues are out in the field at present developing these options, which will be announced soon.”

Hon Minister Hogan added: “As well as these project elements which will be active throughout the 2 years, there is a further important component which will be concerned mainly with planning future activities. The reason that we are being so slow – and careful – is that this is an attempt to work out how best Montserrat should use the south in the medium to long term. This is important both for Montserrat’s wildlife and for its economy. Obviously, there are lots of constraints, as well as opportunities, to be taken into account – and lots of people have interests and views. The aim is to listen to and consider all these, and try, over two years, to reach a consensus plan, against which we can then try to secure outside resources to help Montserrat make the most of this for its future. After all, doing nothing is also an option – but one which is unlikely to be the best for Montserrat.”

Dr Pienkowski noted “There will be lots more from the project over the coming months, both to keep Montserratians informed but, even more importantly, to invite their views and participation in the various elements of the project.”

More info:

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