

The Isles of Scilly Seabird Recovery Project

‘Working with the local community and visitors on the Isles of Scilly to enhance their important seabird heritage’

Welcome! This is the Seabird Recovery Project’s very first newsletter.

No. 1: April 2013

This major new 25-year partnership project to provide a safe future for internationally important seabird populations on the Isles of Scilly is now underway thanks to financial backing from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the EU LIFE programme. The islands are home to breeding populations of 14 species; approximately 20,000 birds in all. This includes both European storm-petrel and Manx shearwater, for which the UK has a global responsibility. Since 1983, however, populations have been in decline.

The project has a number of aims including reversing the recent drop in numbers by removing invasive rats from St Agnes and Gugh and increasing the number of people actively involved in seabird conservation. The project seeks to encourage the islands to make the most of their natural environmental assets by enhancing access and visitor enjoyment, thus serving to boost local incomes at the same time as securing the future of seabirds on the archipelago .

The project is run by a partnership of organisations; RSPB, Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Duchy of Cornwall, Isles of Scilly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).



Manx Shearwater. Photo: Joe Pender



European Storm-petrel. Photo: Joe Pender

A view from the community
“We are very much looking forward to the project starting. We are a proactive community who work together and it will be great to work on a project which helps to safeguard the natural environment.”
Mollie Peacock
St Agnes Boating

In addition to generous support from LIFE, the EU’s programme for financing key environmental schemes across the continent and the UK’s own Heritage Lottery Fund, the Seabird Recovery Project is also being supported by the Defra funded Isles of Scilly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and the Isles of Scilly Bird Group.

We need your support!

It is only through the active involvement of residents and visitors alike that Scilly’s seabird heritage will be safeguarded and have a brighter future. We will be looking for a range of people to become involved in activities around seabird conservation.

Do contact the team (see over page) to register your interest, whether it be in simply posting leaflets or regular hands-on active conservation work – there is scope for both. The choice is yours!



St Agnes schoolchildren assisting with a Scilly Shrew survey. They have pledged their support to carry on monitoring shrews as part of the seabird project . Photo: Jaclyn Pearson



Meet the team on the islands



Project Manager

Jaclyn Pearson

My role is to oversee the day-to-day management of the project. I am passionate about the conservation of **the islands' seabirds and for the past three years** have worked for both the RSPB and Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust. I see my role as challenging, yet **incredibly rewarding and I hope you'll** join me on this journey to protect our seabirds for future generations.

jaclyn.pearson@rspb.org.uk



Community Engagement Officer

Bob Dawson

My role will be to support and develop opportunities for islanders and visitors alike to celebrate what we hope will prove an enviable legacy for both our seabirds and other wildlife. I will be aiming to work with everyone from school children to local businesses. I previously worked for the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust and very much look forward to working with you all on this project.

bob.dawson@rspb.org.uk



Wildlife Management International Ltd (WMIL), the firm that ran the feasibility study into rat removal from Scilly two years ago, has won the contract for undertaking the removal work itself.

Based in New Zealand, WMIL has more than 20 years of international experience of island restoration projects, including major rat eradication exercises in the South West on Lundy and in Scotland on the Isle of Canna.

The company regularly manages and trains up teams of staff, community members and other volunteers on its many schemes. Senior ecologist Elizabeth Bell and key members of her team are due to be on the islands in June for pre-assessment work prior to the commencement of rat removal in November.

Steering Group

The Steering Group is responsible for overseeing the activities of the partnership, current members are;

[Paul St Pierre](#)

Project Supervisor, RSPB

[Jaclyn Pearson](#)

Project Manager

[David Mawer](#)

Senior Conservation Warden, Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust

[Trevor Kirk](#)

AONB Manager, Isles of Scilly AONB

[Richard McCarthy](#)

St Agnes representative

[David Appleton](#)

Landscape Scale Project Leader, Natural England

[Will Garratt](#)

Estate Assistant, Duchy of Cornwall

[Paul Buckley](#)

Regional Conservation Manager, RSPB

[Leigh Lock](#)

Species Recovery Officer RSPB

Did you know?

European storm-petrels are tiny, they are our smallest breeding seabird.

Community update



*Community Project Update Presentation.
Photo: Harry Legg*

On the coldest day of the year so far (yes it actually snowed in Scilly on March 11th!) Jaclyn Pearson headed over to St Agnes to give residents an update on the project. There were afternoon sessions for farm tenants and the school and then two evening talks for the wider community. Thanks to Richard McCarthy for making the arrangements and to **the Turk's Head Pub for playing host in the evening.**

It was great to have representatives from so many households come along to hear that the project is about to get underway and what they can do to support it over the **next five years and beyond. Currently it's** a question of what preparation work needs to be undertaken to ensure the islands are in the best possible condition to carry out conservation work this winter. Important early ingredients will be the removal of rat habitat and food sources, the storage of hay on pallets and the securing of rat-proof feed bins and composters.



Young People Supporting the Project

During their latest update St Agnes schoolchildren can be seen proudly displaying the 'Save our Seabirds on Scilly' tea towels which they helped design last year along with pupils from other Five Island primary school bases. Sale of the tea towels generated £130 towards the Seabird Recovery Project – so a big well done and thank you!



*St Agnes school pupils.
Photo: Jaclyn Pearson*

The Local Authority's Extended Services 'Youth Hub' also gave a thumbs-up to getting involved and backing the project. 'Youth Hub' members are always keen to learn more about and explore the natural environment on Scilly and they are currently looking forward to finding out more about the islands' seabird heritage as part of their out of school activities.



*Youth Hub members in support of the project.
Photo: Katie Playle*

What the funders say;

Speaking for HLF, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund South West, **Richard Bellamy said; "We have some wonderful native wildlife on the Isles of Scilly and collectively we have a responsibility for its survival. It is the prospect of glimpsing rare species, such as the storm petrel and Manx shearwater, that attracts many visitors to our shores bringing much-needed tourist income to our rural communities."**

Head of the LIFE Nature Unit within the European Commission, **Mr Angelo Salsi, said; "I am delighted that EU life funding will allow restoration of the islands for the benefit of seabirds. These islands form a vital part of the Isles of Scilly Special Protection Area, which in turn is part of the EU-wide Natura 2000 network of sites, including all the best and most valuable examples of our common European natural heritage. The work that the team will carry out will be of great benefit to the seabirds that breed on St Agnes, Gugh and the neighbouring island of Annet, and will also help to improve the quality of life of the people who live on St Agnes and Gugh."**



Northern Fulmar in flight. Photo: RSPB

Did you know?

Manx shearwaters can and do live to more than 55 years old.



The Seabird Recovery Project was invited to participate in the recent 'Walk Scilly Festival' and so we agreed to put our best foot forward for the occasion with special 'Sirens of the Sea' seabird walks. We teamed up with the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust's conservation warden Darren Hart and he was happy to explain how important this partnership project is for the islands' fauna and flora.

Braving bitter easterly winds, the walks were based on St Agnes and St Mary's. Taking in the beautiful beaches and cutting across the heathlands on both islands we glimpsed the first signs of spring along these coastal habitats, not least by the picture of kittiwakes returning to their nest sites on cliffs beneath the Turk's Head pub—welcome back kittiwakes! Each walk was enjoyed by everyone, the first of many such project activities.



'Sirens of the sea' walks as part of Walk Scilly. Photo: Jaclyn Pearson



Atlantic Puffin returning to its nest site. Photo: RSPB

The project is almost up and running **but we need your help...**

Keep an eye out for our 'Volunteers Sign-up Day' on St Mary's and updates across the islands.

So do get involved!

Contact us

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The Isles of Scilly Seabird Recovery Project

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The Partners



The Funders



The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no. SC037654.

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And finally...

Thank you again to the funders and all members of the community and volunteers who have helped us so far. We look forward to working with you over the years to come.