

Alderney's West Coast and Burhou Islands

Ramsar Site

Annual Action Programme

2018

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Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Background	3
3. Objectives	4
3.1 Seabirds	4
3.2 Terrestrial	4
3.3 Marine	4
3.4 Events	5
3.5 Advisory and Legislative	5
4. Work Programme	5
4.1 Seabirds	5
4.1.1 Monitoring	5
4.1.2 Cameras and Equipment for Burhou	5
4.1.3 Puffin Rafting Exclusion Zone.....	5
4.1.4 South Cliff Monitoring.....	6
4.1.5 Coque Lihou Seabird Census	6
4.1.6 Track A Gannet (TAG).....	6
4.1.7 Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS).....	6
4.2 Terrestrial	6
4.2.1 Burhou Path Network	6
4.2.2 Small Mammal Trapping	6
4.2.3 Rat Control Programme	6
4.2.4 Invasive Species Management.....	6
4.3 Marine	7
4.3.1 Eelgrass Survey.....	7
4.3.2. Phase I Biotope Surveys	7
4.3.3 Phase II Monitoring Species Survey	7
4.3.4 Strandline Surveys.....	7
4.3.5 Green Ormer Survey	7
4.3.6 Invasive Species Assessment	7
4.3.7 Capturing our Coast	7
4.3.8 Cave Surveys	7
4.3.9 Benthic Desk-based Review	7
4.3.10 Support of Seasearch surveys	7
4.3.11 Fish and Shellfish Survey	8

4.3.12 Pelagic Desk-based Review	8
4.3.13 Monthly Water Quality Testing.....	8
4.3.14 Marine Mammal Desk-based Review	8
4.3.15 Grey Seal Survey	8
4.3.16 Grey Seal Photographic ID Catalogue	8
4.3.17 British Marine Life Rescue Divers	8
4.3.18 Marine Management	8
4.3.19 Academic Projects.....	8
4.4 Events	9
4.4.1 Boat Tours	9
4.4.2 LIVE: Teaching Through Nature	9
4.4.3 Community Engagement.....	9
4.5 Advisory and Legislative.....	9
4.5.1 Burhou Signposting.....	9
4.5.2 Ramsar Steering Committee	9
4.5.3 Bird Protection Law (BPL)	9
5. Bibliography.....	9

1. Introduction

In 2018 Alderney's West Coast and Burhou Islands Ramsar Site enters the second year of its third five-year Management Strategy (ARS3).

This document will highlight the planned works to be carried out during 2018; adhering to requirements set out by the 5-year Management Strategy, and with consideration to the 2017 Annual Review of the Ramsar site.

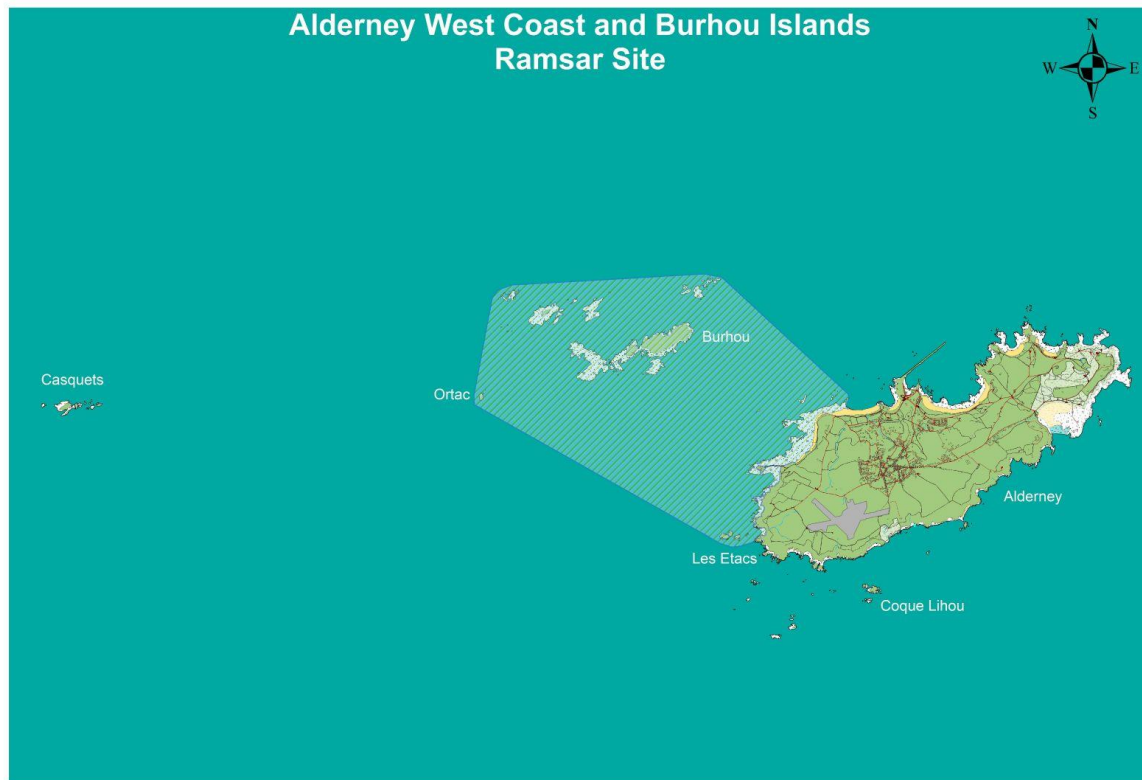


Figure 1. Shows the Ramsar site boundary in relation to Alderney and its surrounding islets.

2. Background

On 25th August 2005 the Alderney West Coast and Burhou Islands Ramsar Site was designated and gained global recognition as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

The site covers 1,500 hectares of land and sea and was the first Ramsar designated site in the Bailiwick of Guernsey.

In 2006 on behalf of the States of Alderney (SoA), the General Services Committee (GSC) requested the support of the Alderney Wildlife Trust (AWT) in the preparation of a management strategy. This is required under the commitments of the Ramsar Convention. The completed Ramsar site strategy outlines the need to monitor seabird population trends (including population and distribution assessments) and to continue the management of these populations where necessary.

The objectives of the strategy are assessed annually through various research projects and conservation management techniques. The Ramsar Site Five-Year Management Strategy and annual Action Plan are prepared by the AWT on behalf of the SoA.

3. Objectives

To meet with the objectives of the 2017- 2021 Ramsar Site Management Strategy, the following areas of work are to be completed in 2018.*

**Please note that by approving this Action Plan the SoA is agreeing to all the proposed work therein. Similarly, the AWT commits to the delivery of the work described (accepting the availability of resources necessary and favourable weather conditions) and accepts the Committee's requirement to inform the appointed SoA representative if any aspect of the work requires significant alteration from the parameters contained within the Action Plan, or if any new element of work not described in the Action Plan is found to be required, prior to altering the details of the Action Plan.*

3.1 Seabirds

- Continuation of all seabird monitoring on Alderney, Burhou and other islets.
- Re-installation and maintenance of the Puffin monitoring cameras and equipment on Burhou, to coincide with LIVE: Teaching Through Nature.
- Work with Marine Management Forum to introduce a marine exclusion zone around rafting Puffins during their breeding season, through liaison with stakeholders.
- Seabird monitoring of South cliffs from Sula of Braye (or other suitable vessel).
- Population counts of Seabirds on Coque Lihou during ringing effort with the Alderney Bird Observatory (ABO).
- Continuation of 'Track A Gannet' (TAG) programme.
- Organise local Wetland Bird Surveys (WeBS), submitting monthly data to the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and AWT Ramsar databases.

3.2 Terrestrial

- Creation of a simple coastal path network on Burhou to reduce potential damaging of puffin and storm petrel burrows.
- Deployment of small mammal monitoring stations and subsequent live traps on Burhou to determine presence (or absence) using chew sticks and Longworth traps.
- Work with the Public Services Department of the SoA to implement a rat control programme at Bibette Head and Houmet des Pies.
- The continued control of bracken and the invasive species Hottentot Fig on Burhou.

3.3 Marine

- Eelgrass surveys at selected sites within the Ramsar Site using snorkel and video techniques.
- Phase I biotope surveys of intertidal habitats within the Ramsar Site.
- Phase II monitoring species surveys at Hanaine Bay.
- Strandline surveys at Clonque Bay, Hanaine Bay and Platte Saline Bay.
- Green Ormer population assessment at Clonque Bay.
- Invasive species assessment at Clonque Bay and Hanaine Bay.
- Capturing our Coast citizen science project at Clonque Bay to promote marine life within the Ramsar Site.
- Intertidal habitat survey of selected South Cliffs caves and investigation of the coastline to establish the presence of any additional caves within the Ramsar site.
- Benthic desk-based review of surveys conducted within the Ramsar site.
- Continue to liaise with and support Seasearch groups in undertaking marine ecological surveys.
- Conduct a fish/shellfish survey at selected areas within the Ramsar Site, subject to feasibility following desk-based review and project proposal.
- Pelagic desk-based review of surveys and activities within the Ramsar Site.
- Monthly sea water quality testing of Clonque Bay, Hanaine Bay and others around Alderney.

- Marine mammal desk-based review of surveys conducted within the Ramsar Site.
- Grey seal population dynamics study.
- Grey seal photographic ID catalogue.
- Support the local British Marine Life Rescue Divers group on Alderney.
- Support marine management activities and the community led Marine Management Forum where required.
- Support and lead marine based academic projects within the Ramsar site.

3.4 Events

- Continuation of boat tours on Sula of Braye to increase public awareness of the Ramsar site while contributing to costs of boat operation by the AWT.**
- Continuation of LIVE: Teaching through nature programme
- Community engagement and public awareness of the Ramsar Site through rock-pooling and beach cleaning events.

*** The AWT maintains a 10m coded Cat 2 (MCA Coded) vessel to undertake all its works within the marine environment of the Ramsar site. This work is charged at base costs back to the Ramsar budget and the AWT must then charter or operate scheduled services to cover all other costs of operating the vessel in order to maintain it in operation.*

3.5 Advisory and Legislative

- Signpost placement alerting the public to the closed season on Burhou, at four main landing points on Burhou.
- Maintain communication links and collaboration with Channel Islands Ramsar Steering Committee.
- Review Bird Protection Law (BPL) – liaise with ABO and Conservation Officer to include legal implications for disturbance to breeding sites.

4. Work Programme

4.1 Seabirds

4.1.1 Monitoring

The seabirds to be monitored during the breeding season across the West Coast of Alderney and the surrounding islets (Burhou, Coque Lihou, Ortac and Les Etacs) include Gannets: productivity and ringing; Fulmar: productivity; Puffin: raft counts and burrow entrance census; Gull: ringing; European Storm-Petrel: ringing.

Monitoring will continue in accordance with the JNCC Seabird Monitoring Handbook and in collaboration with the Alderney Bird Observatory (ABO) wherever ringing is involved. All ringing excursions are to be planned to minimise disturbance to seabird colonies in collaboration with the ABO and with input from the Alderney Ramsar Steering Group (ARSG). All data will be added to the AWT seabird data sheet at the end of the season.

4.1.2 Cameras and Equipment for Burhou

The re-installation of Puffin cameras on Burhou will proceed as in previous years to provide up to date and live images to the public and act as a source for educational content produced for the ongoing LIVE: Teaching Through Nature programme.

4.1.3 Puffin Rafting Exclusion Zone

Within the framework of the Alderney Marine Management Forum, work is underway to introduce an exclusion zone to marine traffic in an area surrounding the main Puffin colony rafting locations.

Consultation will be undertaken through the Alderney Harbour Office with local stakeholders and once finally agreement has been issued by the GSC the area will be delineated on a Notice to Mariners and on a tourist information leaflet given to all visiting seafarers upon arrival into Alderney harbour.

4.1.4 South Cliff Monitoring

In accordance with the Ramsar 5-year Management Strategy's rotational seabird work plan, the South Cliffs are to be monitored for seabirds by conducting population counts this year. Sula of Braye will be deployed for the survey providing a wildlife tourism venture by allowing keen birders a chance to accompany the bird monitors.

4.1.5 Coque Lihou Seabird Census

On the recommendation of the Ramsar Site 2017 Annual Review, a seabird population count should take place on Coque Lihou due to it not taking place in the 2017 season. This work should be done in collaboration with the ABO during the scheduled ringing effort visit to the islet so as to minimise disturbance.

4.1.6 Track A Gannet (TAG)

The TAG programme will continue this year, monitoring Gannets from Ortac.

4.1.7 Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS)

Organise monthly wetland bird surveys at six designated locations around Alderney with the help of volunteer surveyors. Volunteers are provided with data sheets and results should be submitted to the BTO and AWT database. These surveys will help the AWT and the BTO gain a better understanding of the abundance and distribution of wetland birds as well as identify important sites for wetland birds.

4.2 Terrestrial

4.2.1 Burhou Path Network

Using a handheld roller, a simple coastal path is to be created on Burhou before the breeding season. The footpath will help reduce disturbance to Puffin burrows, and other nests on the island while reducing tripping hazards for visitors to the island. The paths will be mapped out and included on tourist information guides for Burhou.

4.2.2 Small Mammal Trapping

On Burhou an effort to determine small mammal presence on the island will be made by deploying Longworth traps and chewsticks/wax blocks, potentially in conjunction with camera traps. Through this monitoring effort and seabird nest checks, future recommendations can be made as to the potential need for invasive species control measures on Burhou.

4.2.3 Rat Control Programme

Although not situated in the Ramsar Site, Houmet de Pies hosts the only nesting site for Common Terns in Alderney. The nesting area is accessible at low tides and therefore vulnerable to predation by rats that are known to be present on Bibette head. With the Public Services department of the SoA, options will be explored to monitor and control rats in an attempt to improve the Common Tern breeding success as the population failed to fledge any chicks last year.

4.2.4 Invasive Species Management

On Burhou the presence of the invasive Hottentot-fig will be monitored and managed accordingly. The extent of bracken will also be managed on Burhou as needed.

4.3 Marine

4.3.1 Eelgrass Survey

A survey of Eelgrass presence in the Ramsar site will take place at thus-far un-surveyed locations of possible presence. Aerial photographs will be used a low tide to survey the sites in conjunction with snorkel surveys to map out the important habitats.

4.3.2. Phase I Biotope Surveys

Habitat mapping surveys of areas within the Ramsar site that are yet to be surveyed are to take place in the summer. On recommendation of the 2017 Ramsar Site Annual Review, the Phase I surveys of the area between Hannaine Bay and the south-western Ramsar boundary will result in the complete habitat mapping of the entire Ramsar Site. The surveys follow JNCC Procedural Guideline 1-1 Intertidal Resource Mapping using Aerial photographs.

4.3.3 Phase II Monitoring Species Survey

A Phase II monitoring species survey will take place at Hannaine Bay in April or May to increase knowledge of the area following last year's intertidal habitat mapping of the bay. The survey will follow JNCC Procedural Guideline 3-11 Littoral Monitoring using Fixed Quadrat Photography.

4.3.4 Strandline Surveys

Strandline Surveys will take place at Clonque Bay, Hannaine Bay and Platte Saline Bay in spring and summer. These will assess strandline presence, size, and composition (dead, live, and litter content). There is the potential for this project to be taken up by a University student.

4.3.5 Green Ormer Survey

Green ormer population assessments will take place at Clonque Bay in spring and autumn. The surveys will assess ormer presence, shell size, and quality in April and October in conjunction with La Societe Guernesiaise.

4.3.6 Invasive Species Assessment

An invasive species assessment will be carried out at Clonque Bay and Hannaine Bay during spring and repeated in autumn. This is conducted using ShoreSearch timed species survey methods to record the presence and location of species such as the Pacific oyster and American Slipper limpet.

4.3.7 Capturing our Coast

The citizen science project Capturing our Coast (CoCoast) will continue this year to provide the public with training to conduct the intertidal surveys of species and invasive species. The surveys will be carried out at Clonque Bay and other rocky shore locations.

4.3.8 Cave Surveys

The locations of any caves within the Ramsar Site will be mapped and intertidal habitat surveys will take place at selected caves along the south cliffs adhering to JNCC standards. The possibility of conducting bat surveys at the selected sites will be investigated. This project has the potential to evolve out of the scope of Ramsar management with dedicated funding streams to be explored.

4.3.9 Benthic Desk-based Review

From October onwards, a desk-based review of all benthic survey methods undertaken in the Ramsar Site during the year will be carried out.

4.3.10 Support of SeaSearch surveys

Throughout the course of the year, continued support will be offered to SeaSearch surveying groups conducting marine ecological research around Alderney.

4.3.11 Fish and Shellfish Survey

The possibility of conducting fish and shellfish abundance and diversity research using Baited Remote Underwater Video (BRUV) survey techniques will be explored this year. Currently there is no quantitative data of mobile marine fauna around Alderney.

4.3.12 Pelagic Desk-based Review

From October onwards, a review of all pelagic survey methods, results and activities of the Ramsar site will be conducted.

4.3.13 Monthly Water Quality Testing

Monthly sampling of water quality at low and high tides of the Bays in the Ramsar site and around Alderney will take place this year. Key seawater parameters will be measured from March to October.

4.3.14 Marine Mammal Desk-based Review

From October onwards, a review of all marine mammal survey methods, results and activities of the Ramsar site will be conducted.

4.3.15 Grey Seal Survey

From August to October grey seal monitoring will take place following JNCC grey seal survey methods during their breeding season at offshore islets of known breeding locations. A population dynamics study will be conducted following the survey.

4.3.16 Grey Seal Photographic ID Catalogue

A grey seal photographic ID catalogue will be kept up to date throughout the year following the guidance from the Cornwall Seal Group Research Trust.

4.3.17 British Marine Life Rescue Divers

Continued support for the British Marine Life Rescue Divers group on Alderney.

4.3.18 Marine Management

Support Alderney's Marine Management Forum with a representative from the AWT present at meetings providing input and supporting marine management activities as required.

4.3.19 Academic Projects

Hosting of and supporting an MSc student from the University of York with the research project:

1. *Examining human use and importance of designated Sites on Alderney*

Assessment: The project will entail examining the human use and importance of designated Sites, on Alderney. This will include developing engagement survey methods (for example: hosting interviews, street questionnaires and web-based questionnaires) to examine how the public and stakeholders currently use and view Alderney's key designated Sites (such as the island's Ramsar Site and local nature reserves). It will also involve comparing results with recent public surveys regarding the island's greenbelt (a terrestrial designated area with restricted building regulations) and general marine environment.

This project is particularly important, as there is currently limited information on how the public and stakeholders (such as fishermen) regard these conservational sites of importance on Alderney.

2. Depending on interest, another potential project for a student to undertake would be to examine the strandlines around Alderney and assist in the conducting of those surveys mentioned in section 4.3.4.

4.4 Events

4.4.1 Boat Tours

The AWT boat, Sula of Braye, will continue to be used to transport staff (to Burhou, Les Etacs and Ortac) and for public boat tours to increase public awareness of the Ramsar Site, while also contributing to the costs of the seabird and marine mammal monitoring effort. This is in addition to tours offered by the two other privately operated charter boats Lady Maris and Avante.

4.4.2 LIVE: Teaching Through Nature

The LIVE: Teaching Through Nature Programme will continue with the same aims and objectives but will undergo an update to its curriculum this year.

4.4.3 Community Engagement

Other community engagement events will take place throughout the year such as beach cleans and rock-pooling tours of the Ramsar Site. These events will promote environmental awareness to the public and engagement in the Ramsar site.

4.5 Advisory and Legislative

4.5.1 Burhou Signposting

Replace derelict signage on Burhou which establishes the closed season for the island at the 4 regularly used landing areas. The new signs will clearly indicate that no public landing on Burhou shall take place during the Puffin breeding season between the 15th of March and 31st of July.

4.5.2 Ramsar Steering Committee

Keep communication links with the ARSG and attend annual meeting with the other Channel Islands' Ramsar Steering Groups at the Inter-Island Environmental Meeting to be held in Jersey this Autumn. This will be an opportunity for the other islands to share their thoughts and ideas.

4.5.3 Bird Protection Law (BPL)

Liaise with the ABO and AWT Conservation Officer to review BPL to include legal implications for disturbance to breeding sites.

5. Bibliography

Copping, J. (2017) *Alderney West Coast and Burhou Islands Ramsar Site Annual Review: 2017*. In House Publication.

Wieckowski, F. & Ferrar, A. (2017) *Alderney West Coast and Burhou Islands Ramsar Site Management Strategy 2017-2021*. In House Publication.