

Alderney's West Coast and Burhou Islands Ramsar Site Annual Action Programme 2016

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1. Introduction

In 2016 the Alderney West Coast and Burhou Islands Ramsar Site goes into the final year of its second five-year Management Strategy. 2016 will also see the creation of the third five-year Management Strategy.

This document outlines the planned works for 2016.

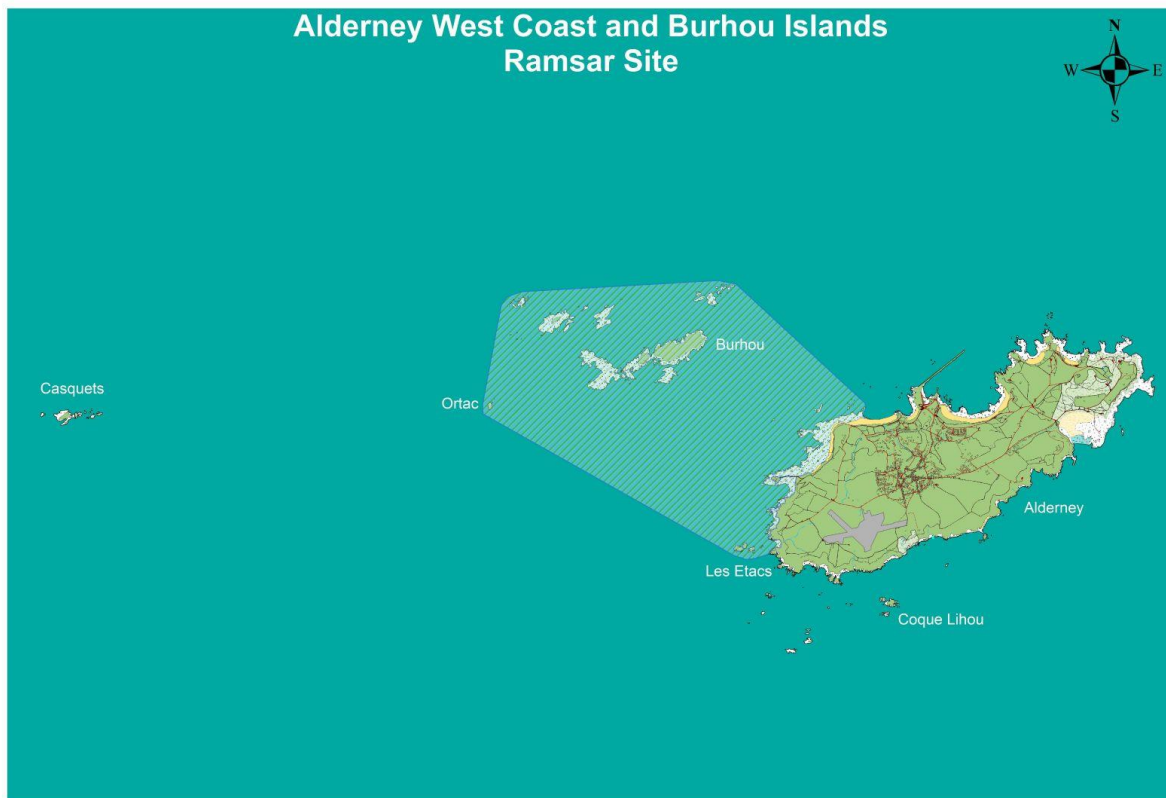


Figure 1. Shows the Ramsar site boundary in relation to Alderney and all other surrounding islets.

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 current 2012-2016 Ramsar Site Management Strategy, the following areas of work are to be completed in 2016.

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 their altering the details of the Action Plan.

Seabirds:

- Continuation of all seabird monitoring on Burhou, Alderney and other Islets, with the exception of the breeding Shags on Burhou.
- Re-installation of Gannet Cam on Ortac and Puffin Cam on Burhou to coincide with our LIVE: Teaching Through Nature programme.
- Continuation of Storm-Petrel ringing with the Channel Island Ringing Scheme using playback methods to accurately estimate the Burhou breeding population.
- Continuation of Gull ringing on Burhou, inclusive of Herring, Great Black-backed and Lesser Black-backed Gulls.
- Continuation of Gannet ringing on Ortac and Les Etacs, focussing on immature birds.
- Signpost and exclusion zone placement for public awareness of nesting Ringed Plovers at Platte Saline, Clonque and Saye, with regular monitoring of the three sites.
- Signpost placement for public awareness of nesting Common Terns at Bibette Head.
- Signpost placement alerting the public to the closed season on Burhou, at four main landing points on Burhou.
- Ramsar specific interpretation board placement on Burhou and at the Guns.
- Participation in the 2015/16 National Seabird Census for the Channel Islands as a part of a wider UK National Seabird Census.

Terrestrial:

- Phase 1 Habitat survey of Coque Lihou, South Cliffs and Burhou.
- Small mammal trapping on Burhou using Longworth traps and hair traps to understand what, if anything is present.
- Monitoring of the invasive Hottentot-fig will continue on Burhou.

Marine:

- Marine intertidal habitat mapping of Burhou and South Cliffs.
- Intertidal strandline survey of Clonque Bay and Hanaine Bay.
- Intertidal species surveys of Clonque Bay, which include locally important species and invasive species.
- Sub-tidal habitat and species assessments of Clonque Bay, using snorkel and video techniques.
- Intertidal or sub-tidal eelgrass survey, using snorkel and video techniques.
- Continuation of marine mammal species surveys.
- Promoting marine mammal species and other marine species recordings by relevant marine users and the public.
- Three MSc academic research projects:
 1. Ecology of intertidal rock-pool habitats
 2. Barnacle population dynamics: measuring future climate change impacts on Alderney
 3. Investigating the invasive species *Sargassum muticum* on Alderney

Events:

- Continuation of boat tours on Sula to increase public awareness of the Ramsar site while contributing to costs.
- Continuation of LIVE: Teaching Through Nature programme.

Legislation:

- Working towards the establishment of an Alderney Conservation Act which will deliver legislative protection for Alderney's key environments and habitats.
- Drafting a review of the Bird Protection (Alderney) Ordinance 2005.
- Use any potential opportunities that may arise to establish a Channel Islands Steering Group to ensure standardisation and thus comparable data between Islands.

Pending:

- Any marine renewables work that may be contracted within Alderney's territorial waters.

4. Work Programme

4.1 Seabirds

4.1.1 Monitoring

All seabirds across the West Coast of Alderney and the surrounding islands (Burhou, Coque Lihou, Ortac and Les Etacs) will continue to be monitored across the breeding season in accordance with the JNCC Seabird Monitoring Handbook, with the exception of the breeding Shags on Burhou.

The Ramsar Steering Group concluded last year that due to excessive disturbance to the breeding Gull colonies on Burhou, continued monitoring efforts for European Shag would not go ahead this year. Continued monitoring methodology is to be revised in the next five-year strategy, which will be written this year.

4.1.2 Cameras

The re-installation of Puffin Cam on Burhou and Gannet Cam on Ortac will go ahead as in previous years. As well as providing up-to-date images for the general public, the footage will also be used as part of an on-going educational programme, LIVE: Teaching Through Nature, which is aimed at Primary school children both in the Channel Islands and UK.

4.1.4 Ringing

Thanks to the continued work of the Channel Islands Bird Ringing Scheme (CIBRS) the existing ringing effort will continue in 2016.

This work will include ringing all Gull species present on Burhou, inclusive of Lesser-black Backed, Great-black Backed and Herring Gulls, in June and July. The methodology used in previous years will be revised for 2016: We will have a team of six individuals visiting the colonies for two one day sessions, one in June and the other in July. This is to minimise disturbance to the birds' breeding success.

Around the same time we also hope to ring Storm-Petrels using playback methods. Ringing of the Les Etacs and Ortac Gannets will continue in June or July.

4.1.5 Public Awareness Signs

In mid-April signage and exclusion zones will be placed at the main entrances to beaches at Platte Saline, Clonque and Saye to increase awareness about nesting Ringed Plovers.

Signage will also be placed around Bibette Head to safeguard the Common Terns breeding at Houmet des Pies.

It is hoped that planning permission will be secured to erect signage at the four main landing points on Burhou, alerting the public to the closed season.

Installation of Ramsar specific interpretation boards on Burhou and at the Guns also requires planning permission.

4.1.7 Channel Islands Seabird Census

The UK National Seabird Census is conducted every 10-15 years. The results help us to understand the state of seabird populations across Britain and Ireland.

Alderney will contribute to the completion of the Channel Islands Seabird Census which began in 2015, the results of which will feed into the UK National Seabird Census.

4.2 Terrestrial

4.2.1 Phase 1 Habitat Survey

It is intended that Phase 1 habitat surveys will be done on Burhou, the South Cliffs and Coque Lihou.

4.2.2 Small Mammal Trapping

Using both Longworth traps and hair traps on Burhou we hope to determine which mammal species are present on the island and eventually establish population estimates of each species, and understand if control measures will be necessary in the future.

4.2.3 Invasive Species Management

Hottentot-fig monitoring will continue on Burhou.

4.3 Marine

4.3.1 Intertidal Habitat Mapping

Marine intertidal habitat mapping surveys will be undertaken across Burhou and Alderney's South Cliffs. The survey follows guidance from the JNCC and has been used to produce marine habitat maps of other sites within Alderney including Clonque Bay and Hanaine Bay.

4.3.3 Intertidal Strandline Survey

Marine intertidal strandline surveys will be conducted across Clonque Bay and Hanaine Bay. This survey follows guidance from the Marine Biological Association and will potentially include collaboration with local youth groups and the school. The survey method is used to produce quantitative information of marine species found across strandlines, and has been used throughout the Channel Islands and UK.

4.3.4 Intertidal Species Survey

Marine intertidal species surveys will be conducted within Clonque Bay. The surveys will assess locally important species (i.e. Green Ormer, *Haliotis tuberculata*) and invasive species (i.e. Japweed,

Sargassum muticum). This survey follows guidance from the Marine Biological Association and will include collaboration with other Channel Island organisations, including La Société Guernesiaise.

4.3.6 Sub-tidal Video Habitat and Species Assessment

Marine sub-tidal video habitat and species assessments of specific areas within the Ramsar Site will be conducted. This survey will use snorkel and drop-down camera video techniques, following guidance from the JNCC. The survey method has been used to identify marine habitats and species within other locations across Alderney including Braye Beach Bay and Casquets Islet.

4.3.5 Intertidal or Sub-tidal Eelgrass Survey

Marine intertidal or sub-tidal eelgrass surveys will be conducted across specific areas within the Ramsar Site. This survey will use snorkel and drop-down camera video techniques, following guidance from the JNCC. The survey method has been used to identify eelgrass within other locations across Alderney including Braye Beach Bay and Longis Bay.

4.3.7 Marine Mammal Species Survey

A number of marine mammal species surveys will be conducted across the Ramsar Site. Surveys will include grey seal population dynamics assessment, grey seal photographic ID catalogue and effort based land/boat surveys. These surveys follow guidance from the Sea Watch Foundation and the Cornwall Seal Group and have been used throughout Alderney to record marine mammal species both quantitatively and qualitatively with the public (through observational spotting events and promotion of marine mammal species recording forms).

4.3.9 Promotion

Continue promoting and engaging with the public and specific marine users (i.e. commercial shipping companies, tourist vessels) regarding the marine environment within the Ramsar Site. This includes promoting the recording of marine life through the production of recording forms and organising marine events (i.e beach cleaning, rock-pooling sessions and marine mammal observational watches).

4.6.3 University of York MSc Projects

1) Ecology of intertidal rock-pool habitats.

Investigating species biological diversity and composition of intertidal rock-pool habitats on Alderney, using field based methods. This will include researching different rock-pool habitats (*Ulva* spp, *Sargassum muticum* and *Corallina officinalis* rock-pool habitat types) in terms of species bio-diversity, composition and ecological status (invasive/rare species). Surveys will be completed across different intertidal environments including bays within the island's Ramsar Site, harbour and recreational areas. Research methods will include timed species searches and environmental parameter assessments (size, depth of rock-pools, water temperature).

2) Barnacle population dynamics: measuring future climate change impacts on Alderney.

Investigating barnacle species population dynamics across different intertidal environments (bays and shoreline heights) within Alderney. This will include barnacle species presence, bio-diversity, population density (% proportion), individual age structure (adult or juvenile) and predator presence. The field based survey methods will follow the 2008 MarClim survey protocol which uses barnacle species as a biological indicator of climate change impacts.

3) Investigating the invasive species, *Sargassum muticum* on Alderney.

Investigating the invasive intertidal algae species *Sargassum muticum* on Alderney, using field based and desk based methods. The field based survey methods will include determining the presence, distribution, frequency and the composition of associated marine species (i.e. attached marine species) of this invasive species within different intertidal environments. Desk based methods could include comparative assessments from previous anecdotal surveys and records using GIS analysis.

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 other privately operated charter boats such as Lady Maris and Voyager.

4.4.2 LIVE: Teaching Through Nature

Our Live: Teaching Through Nature programme will run from 25th April and will incorporate many aspects of Alderney's history and wildlife. The programme will use the cameras on Burhou and Ortac to give the children an idea of seabird behaviour in breeding colonies, specifically Puffins on Burhou and Gannets on Ortac. The project will also help children understand how we monitor the birds. The live camera feed and more information on the project will be available at www.teachingthroughnature.co.uk through the season.

4.4.3 T.A.G (Track A Gannet)

The Gannet tagging project will continue this year, pending sufficient sponsorship, tracking the foraging movements of Ortac's birds.

4.5 Legislation

4.5.1 Alderney Conservation Act

As described in the Ramsar Management Strategy initial work is required to consider the creation of an Alderney Conservation Act which will establish criteria for the protection and wise use of the Alderney Ramsar site and Alderney's terrestrial and marine habitats.

4.5.2 Bird Protection (Alderney) Ordinance

As approved by the GSC in 2014, to review of the Bird Protection (Alderney) Ordinance 2005, to ensure greater protection for Alderney's resident and migratory birds.

4.5.3 Establishment of a Channel Islands Steering Group

With the help of the other Channel Islands the aim is to establish a Channel Islands Steering Group. This will ensure every Island has representatives who are easily contactable regarding immediate conservational, terrestrial and marine monitoring issues.

4.6 Pending

4.6.1 Responding to Marine Renewables Work

To provide a response to development processes **which require information pertinent** to the Ramsar Site's status (as occurred in **2013/15 with the Navitus Bay development**).

5. Bibliography

A.Bohan (2012) Alderney West Coast and Burhou Islands Ramsar Site Management Strategy 2012-2016. Version 1. In House Publication.

J.Godber, M.Broadhurst & C.Michel (2015) Annual Ramsar Project Review. In House Publication.