

Notes of the Community Working Group Meeting

Lord Howe Island Museum Library 24/2/2016

4.35pm – 5.25 pm

Attendees: Penny Holloway (CEO LHIB Board); Anthony Wilson (LHIB Board); Mark McKillop; Jack Shick; Rodney Thompson; Pam Goyen; Esven Fenton; Therese Turner; Helen Tiffin; Peter Curtin.

Apologies: Andrew Walsh (LHI Board); Bronwyn Tofaeono; Ian Hutton; Rob & Carole Rathgeber; Barbara Ardill

1. Introductions and apologies

Penny opened the meeting, welcoming all present and noted the apologies. Peter said that he was attending the meeting in place of Rob and Carole Rathgeber.

Penny asked if anyone from the group would like to chair the meeting. No one accepted and all agreed that Penny should chair the meeting.

2. Notes from last meeting: Action items and matters arising

The notes from the last meeting were discussed and members asked for any amendments.

Helen wanted to make some corrections, as follows:

- Helen asked whether a rat behaviour expert has been asked for input into the program to which Andrew replied no
- Helen reported on discussions with Peter Harrison, the world expert on sea birds and rat eradications, and other scientists, on why the eradication had failed on Henderson Island. Helen reported that Peter had overseen and raised money for rat eradications on a number of islands including Oeno, Henderson, South Georgia and the Channel Islands and had told Helen that the reason for failure on one of the Channel Islands was because not 100% of the population was in favour of the program. Helen said that Peter did not believe the program could work here due to the number of people against it. One of the reasons it failed on the Channel Islands was 30% of the population were against it. The overall topography of Lord Howe was a problem. Two of the scientists currently on Henderson Island said one reason why the poison drop had failed there was because the vegetation was too thick and there were too many nooks and crannies in the rocks for rats to hide in. Rat numbers had been reduced to between 17-30 rats but were now back to their original numbers. Helen said she was always against the program but after talking to Peter Harrison and realising it will fail is now certainly against it.

Peter mentioned that Rob didn't agree with the notes also.

The CWG members present agreed to the notes as amended.

Penny gave an update on the Action items from the last meeting:

- The Chief Scientist's scope of work has still not been received but we will keep the group up to speed as information comes to hand.
- Anthony presented the group with the Pestoff 20R bait product information including material used and country of origin. He explained that this product had just arrived in Australia from New Zealand for the mouse toxicity trials. He also explained that the product had to be irradiated before being released once it came into Australia as extra precaution for quarantine measures.

Penny said that no other agenda items had been received for discussion. However there was plenty of opportunity for members to raise issues during the meeting.

Peter tabled questions for discussion to be answered at the next CWG meeting (attached).

3. Planning and Approvals – update on progress to date

Anthony gave an overview of the Property Management inspections that he had been undertaking. He explained that we are still working on an individual property basis with people and no agreements have been signed. He will continue to make appointments to do the inspections and have discussions with residents in the coming months as some people are hard to catch up with because of their work commitments during the day.

Rodney asked about the Norfolk Island Conferences and whether Penny could shed some light on what the people who were attending from Lord Howe Island were going to talk about. Penny explained that there were two quite separate conferences organised by two different groups taking place: Australian Small Islands Forum (ASIF) from 14 to 19 February and Island Ark Symposium from 20 to 25 February. ASIF (the first Conference took place on LHI in 2012) was supposed to have taken place in September 2015 and a number of people from LHI had paid to attend (Esvan Fenton; Barney Nichols). However there had been insufficient numbers registered for September and so the timing had changed to February 2016. This meant that those people originally intending to go to the Forum had to change their plans. She explained that Dave Kelly from the Board was attending and speaking at the Australian Small Island Forum. Board member Rob Pallin was also attending at his own expense. Hank and Sue Bower, Christo Haselden from the Board were attending the Island Ark Symposium and Ian Hutton had received a grant from a philanthropic trust to attend the Symposium as well. Rodney asked whether they were talking about rat poisoning and could the group see what they were speaking about. Penny explained it was about conservation issues on islands, such as weed eradication, and it should be easy to obtain a copy of all the talks provided when published.

Peter asked about the approvals process for the activities involved in the program and said that he had seen legal advice saying that Part 5 of the *Environment Planning and Assessment Act 1979* would be invoked. Penny explained that Andrew had given an overview of the approvals process at the last meeting and that the Board, having considered both Parts 4 and 5, had decided to seek approval under Part 5 of the Act

Rodney asked if the Board cared what the Minister for the Environment thought regarding the program and were the Board quite confident that it won't cause death to birds, fish etc. Helen said that by-kill is something that hasn't really been discussed yet. Penny said that there was a risk of non-target species impacts and these impacts would be taken into consideration in the planning so that they could be minimised.

Mark said that programs like this have been conducted on other islands and by-kill would have been looked at in their circumstances. Jack said that we are going to have to accept some by-kill during the program because every night rodents smash bird life on the island; it's just that we don't see it.

Helen replied that by-kill isn't accepted as a natural process when people are involved. Jack replied that rats aren't natural here either.

Esvan commented that everyone is entitled their opinion and the questions will be looked at during the planning process. Helen said that Peter Harrison bird report states there are knowledgeable opinions and non-knowledgeable opinions.

Rodney stated that on Henderson Island there were dead seabirds everywhere but rats were still alive. Jack asked what sort of seabirds they were. He asked if he could get a copy of the Henderson Island report. Penny mentioned that Jennifer Lavers had given a presentation on the Henderson island program here on Lord Howe last year.

Jack discussed the Macquarie Island report and said that some skuas had been killed by secondary poisoning by eating the poisoned rabbits. He mentioned that calici virus had then been released and that had knocked the rabbit population first which minimised the secondary poisoning of skuas in the second round of baiting.

Peter said that a knowledgeable opinion is only one that you pay for. Mark mentioned that the independent experts who will be assessing the program should have all that information.

Helen said the analogy to Macquarie Island being like Lord Howe isn't right as there were only 15-18 scientists on Macquarie Island during the baiting program.

Rod said that insects will eat the bait and die and will be picked up by woodhens who in turn will die. He asked Anthony if he had anything to do with the initial rodent plan and what his thoughts were on that.

Anthony said that he didn't have any input into the initial draft plan but that insects wouldn't be affected by brodifacoum poisoning because they don't have the clotting agents in their systems that brodifacoum acts on. Therese asked: if the poison accumulates in your liver, wouldn't this affect your whole system? Anthony explained that when small doses of non lethal toxicity of any chemical enter your body it will be stored in certain parts of the body depending on its compound and how it works in the body. With non lethal doses of brodifacoum, it is stored in the liver until it breaks down over time.

Actions – source Henderson, Stuart and Channel Island reports

Peter said he would provide a copy of the report from the Island Conservation website as discussed.

Jack explained why the bait had to be spread across the island to give the rodents the greatest chance of accessing bait. He also explained that woodhens can access baits via bait stations. Pam agreed.

There was a query about how many bait stations would be needed to cover the whole Island.

Action – Provide information on the number of bait stations needed to cover the whole Island

4. Communication

Penny asked what information should be provided to the community at this stage. Peter said that facts needed to be provided: numbers, dates, timelines, approval dates etc.

Meeting finished at 5.25 PM.

Next Meeting: in a month's time – date to be determined.

