

Complete unedited discussion [Coral-List] Chagos Islands

Peter Mandara [pm at coralcay.org](mailto:pm@coralcay.org)

Thu Jan 14 11:53:48 EST 2010

Dear Coral-List Editor,

Would you please review the following entry:

Re: The UK government's three-month public consultation on extending conservation protections for the Chagos Islands and its surrounding waters.**

Now is the time to consider the future of the world's largest coral atoll -- the Chagos Islands as the government has issued a consultation on the issue.

This archipelago in the Indian Ocean has been compared to the Galapagos or Great Barrier Reef in terms of its importance as one of the greatest marine environments on the planet. It is one of the most pristine tropical marine environments on Earth; home to 17 species of breeding seabirds, about 1000 species of fish, around 220 species of coral and 2 species of endangered turtles the area needs to be protected. Its protection is supported by the leading UK scientific societies and NGOs.

To find out more about this unique and special place and the proposition to declare it as the world's largest marine reserve please visit - www.protectchagos.org

Coral Cay Conservation

Regards,

Peter Mandara MSc

PR and Communications Manager

Coral Cay Conservation
Elizabeth House
39 York Road
London
SE1 7NQ
United Kingdom

www.coralcay.org

Tel: +44 (0)20 7921 0463

Fax: +44 (0)20 7921 0469

Email: [pm at coralcay.org](mailto:pm@coralcay.org) <[mailto:pm at coralcay.org](mailto:pm@coralcay.org)>

Skype Name: Peter Mandara

.....

[Coral-List] 1. Chagos Islands (Peter Mandara)

David Evans [davidjevans1818 at yahoo.com](mailto:davidjevans1818@yahoo.com)

Tue Jan 19 15:06:17 EST 2010

Dear All,

I write to comment on a recent post about the Chagos Archipelago in the Indian Ocean. I hope the comment is taken as civil and professional and not just contentious, as the subject can tend to get (and I don't think is helpful for anyone). What I am saying, Jim, is that I don't mean to be stirring any pots.

I'll phrase my comment as two points.

First, I think it is disingenuous to present the creation of an extensive conservation zone out of a magnificent region of islands and ocean (which is indeed magnificent), without mentioning its background and darker side. The former inhabitants of the archipelago, the Chagossians, were removed in the late 1960's by the UK and US when the US Naval Support Facility at Deigo Garcia was planned and established. Without going into detail, the removal planning and its process did not live up to the human rights tenets of either of our two nations by a wide margin. That much has been stated by the legal system in the UK within the last decade. The Chagos Islanders have been struggling for their right to return to their homes. The Chagos Islanders are in fact in favor of creating a conservation zone in the region. They have, however, no representation in the process. They want to be incorporated into the conservation zone and involved in its management. To summarize my first point, creation of this conservation zone is not a simple matter of: "here's a magnificent marine region, let's conserve it..."

My second point I pose as a question. What is the role of scientists and conservationists when the subject of study and conservation comes up against social considerations? I know it's not a new situation and has come up many times in the past and present and, with an increasingly more populated world, will continue to increase in occurrence. In dealing with business and industry, it seems to me that adjusting profits and practices is not too big of a sacrifice to make (such as with logging industries or fisheries). When dealing with health, adjusting also seems the logical thing to do (such as with mining operations). When dealing with traditional ways of life and generational homelands it can be a difficult decision to sacrifice for the sake of the environment and conservation, but in the long run worth it for the sake of preserving ecosystem services and protecting species populations (such as with farming, ranching, and fisheries). But when

Human Rights are involved (that is: treating each other badly) what is the role of the scientists and conservationists wanting to capitalize on preserving the habitat involved?

My personal view with this situation of the Chagos Islands and the Chagossians that want to return there is that given the circumstances, creating the wholly exclusionary conservation zone is not the best thing to do for the sake of conservation. My opinion is that creating the conservation zone at the Chagos would be an excellent opportunity to create a community that is geared toward living with its environment. And my understanding is that that is what the Chagossians are interested in as well. With growing human populations and lagging solutions to environmental problems (theory as well as action), might not the Chagossians present an excellent example to the world? My concern (besides that for the Chagossians' plight) is that an exclusionary conservation zone set aside as a jewel in a degraded world, with ever increasing human populations, will eventually be overtaken anyway through encroachment of human activities and abandonment of conservation laws by future governments. Whereas, having an established community with a vested interest toward conservation would create a stronger and longer lasting presence in the Chagos islands to ward against encroachment. Treating local communities badly does not serve the cause of conservation around the world now and in the future.

I understand that in the past governments have often acted this way, treating peoples poorly for the sake of their own agendas. I personally, don't want the practice to continue into my generation and beyond. I don't want the legacy of a magnificent conservation zone to be tarnished by its history, when positive alternative solutions are available.

I ask any that have read and have been interested to consider these points sincerely.

I have posted photos and commentary about the atoll of Diego Garcia in the Chagos, both above and below the waves, in the past few years. Please be welcome to view the island and its reefs:
(scroll through my lists of posts over several pages to find those for Diego Garcia)

My Posts

<http://www.gather.com/viewPostsByMember.action?memberId=59629>

Photo Log: Diego Garcia II - Chagos, Indian Ocean - 'Footprint of a People'

Photo Log: Diego Garcia, Chagos, Indian Ocean

Photo Log - Marine Life: Diego Garcia, Chagos, Indian Ocean I

(let me know if links don't work - you can try www.djem18.gather.com and look for "Posts")

Related:

Deslarzes, KJP, DJ Evans, and SH Smith. 2005. Marine Biological Survey at United States Navy Support Facility, Diego Garcia, British Indian Ocean Territory, July/August 2004. Cont. No. N62470-02-D-9997, Task No.

0044. Geo-Marine, Inc., Plano, TX; Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Pearl Harbor, HI; Department of Defense Legacy Resource Management Program, Proj. No. 03-183

Best Regards,

David J. Evans
Marine Biologist/Photographer

[davidjevans1818 at yahoo.com](mailto:davidjevans1818@yahoo.com)
www.djeml8.gather.com

.....

Coral-List] 1. Chagos Islands (Peter Mandara)

Jim Hendee [jim.hendee at noaa.gov](mailto:jim.hendee@noaa.gov)

Wed Jan 20 08:01:01 EST 2010

Now it's me who is guilty of drifting a little off-topic (I guess). I recently read a fascinating article about Diego Garcia and the displacement of their inhabitants:

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/22691>

I mention this to provide further context (i.e., "the darker side"). I personally see the consideration of establishing a conservation zone as a good thing, but I can see your point about representation in management.

At any rate, I can see this is a fine but important line between politics and a Chagos Island conservation zone. I guess we'll see how this discussion goes.

Jim

[Coral-List] Chagos Islands

David Evans [davidjevans1818 at yahoo.com](mailto:davidjevans1818@yahoo.com)

Wed Jan 20 15:27:03 EST 2010

Dear List -

There is a petition to show support for concerns of the Chagossians (please visit the link included below). I received this today from the

UK Chagos Support Association. They do not have the financial resources that some conservation groups have including PEW and Coral Cay but they are trying to get the word out.

I think a conservation zone is a good thing too (I was part of a team surveying Diego Garcia in 2004). But after being treated the way they were in their removal and being swept under the rug for so long after that, I can't see disregarding them again as acceptable to either the UK or the US.

Best Regards,
David J. Evans

Marine Biologist/Photographer
[davidjevans1818 at yahoo.com](mailto:davidjevans1818@yahoo.com)
www.djeml8.gather.com

>From the UK Chagos Support Association:

Sent: Wed, January 20, 2010 4:12:37 AM
Subject: UK Chagos Support Association: Update Special

Dear Supporter,
The Chagos Environment Network lobby campaign is circulating a petition to encourage the Secretary of State to create a Marine Protected Area covering the Chagos Archipelago. A wonderful environmental initiative BUT it disregards the rights of the illegally exiled islanders. Conservation and human rights MUST go hand in hand. The Chagossians do not have the influence and resources available to the CEN but the Marine Education Trust have designed a petition which recognises that the Chagossians have a vital part to play in the future marine conservation and environmental protection of their homeland.

Please sign this and encourage all your friends and contacts to sign as well.
<http://www.marineducationtrust.org/petition/protect-chagos>
More information in this article for the Mauritius Times by Dr. Sean Carey.

http://mauritius-times.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=93:sean-carey-&catid=1:latest-news&Itemid=5



Coral-List] Chagos - whoever said conservation was simple

Mark Spalding [mark at mdspalding.co.uk](http://mdspalding.co.uk)

Thu Jan 21 05:27:45 EST 2010

This is a fascinating challenge for how best to do conservation. Its a big enough area of coral reefs (>1% of the world's reefs - more than Belize, more than double Florida!) that most readers should be interested.

The Chagos Archipelago is a vast area of healthy reefs in the Indian Ocean. The UK government's consultation is a fantastic opportunity to encourage comprehensive and sensible conservation. The fight for the human rights of those exiled from Chagos continues, however. A large number of UK Members of Parliament are now supporting their cause, and the case has been taken to the European Court.

The UK government is consulting on 3 main options plus an "any other suggestions" option. The first three are 1 - complete no-take over the entire EEZ (making the largest no-take in the world by some margin); 2 - complete EEZ MPA, zoned and with no-take in shallow waters but continued pelagic fishery; or 3 - no-take over the reefs and shallow waters only (2 and 3 are effectively the same).

Powerful conservation and science groups are arguing strongly for 1, but the exiled Chagossians as well as Mauritius (who claim the islands) were largely excluded from initial discussions and are very upset. All have made clear calls that they too want conservation, but not total no-take everywhere. Some fear it may be a ruse to continue their exile.

Given the parlous state of the world's coral reefs it may indeed be the case that protection of this vast reef tract should be a leading priority. ...and of course it has been argued that the protection and management could be re-negotiated should the situation change on the ground. You can support option 1 by signing the following petition www.protectchagos.org

Others are worried that an MPA on such a foundation will be undermined should the Chagossians win their court case or the Mauritians be handed sovereignty (the UK government has promised this once the military base is no longer needed (yeah, right!)), but there is also a small possibility that the northern atolls may be handed over sooner). They worry that under these scenarios the MPA might be repealed and further that these groups, whose trust in the conservation and science community has been seriously undermined, would not then be willing to listen to any further advice from the same groups. This body of opinion would suggest that the best way forwards, both for stable, long-term conservation AND for human rights issues, is in dialogue. Ideally to develop an MPA with very large no-take elements, but with provision for continued conservation under future scenarios of Chagossian return or even perhaps Mauritian sovereignty. There is enough reef, and a small enough land area that the no-take proportion could be very large indeed. This is an "option 4" route, and there's a petition for that too
<http://www.marineeducationtrust.org/petition/protect-chagos>.

Of course further consultation would likely delay any decisions.

Or just send your own comments to the UK government on links via eg. <http://ukinmauritius.fco.gov.uk/en/working-with-mauritius/MPA> (ironic url considering Mauritius is furious over this whole thing!)

....but of course the UK government could decide its all too difficult and do nothing!

Best wishes

Mark Spalding, PhD
mark"at"mdspalding.co.uk
Conservation Science Lab, Dept Zoology
University of Cambridge, UK

[Coral-List] Chagos Islands

Ted Morris [easy501 at zianet.com](mailto:easy501@zianet.com)

Thu Jan 21 11:36:07 EST 2010

The process of protecting the marine environment of the Chagos Archipelago is at a critical point, and signing the petition at <http://protectchagos.org> is the very minimum anyone concerned with the reefs of the Chagos should do.

Politicizing the process by insisting on the inclusion of Chagossian claims, all of which have been dismissed by UK and US courts, would be unwise. That said, there are certainly many people who wonder just what really did happen to the islanders back in the early 70s, and would like to ensure that a suitable political solution is arrived at on their behalf. To fully participate in that discussion, one should reflect on the economic and geo-political context of the times, and not solely on emotional appeals. There is also a huge amount of data concerning the demographics and population that is germane to the discussion, but is not included in the arguments posted to date.

I've been a student of the islands, it's history and current uses for many years, and about 18 months ago I wrote a short paper summarizing the various British Court cases, the Chagossian lawsuit in the US, and the available published literature at the time. That information might be of interest to readers as they attempt to determine what role the Chagossian community should play in the future of the islands. The paper is on line at <http://www.zianet.com/tedmorris/dg/chagossians.pdf>.

Meanwhile, the goal is to fully protect the near-pristine coral reef and other marine environments of the central Indian Ocean, and anything that would delay or derail that effort should be avoided. Conservation now would be to the advantage of any future resident population, should things change in that respect, and to no one's disadvantage, least of all to other residents of the Indian Ocean.

Ted A. Morris, Jr.
<http://www.zianet.com/tedmorris/dg/stc.html>

[easy501 at zianet.com](mailto:easy501@zianet.com)
skype: ted.morris.501

[Coral-List] Chagos Protected Area

Sheppard, Charles [Charles.Sheppard at warwick.ac.uk](mailto:Charles.Sheppard@warwick.ac.uk)

Thu Jan 21 15:21:14 EST 2010

As earlier writers note, the British government has issued a Consultation seeking views on whether the Chagos Archipelago should be designated a very large protected area, and the degree of protection it should have. The primary reason is its reefs. The proposal is that this be made an enormous protected area. Supporting this is the Chagos Environment Network (CEN), a collaboration of several leading conservation and scientific organisations including the Linnean Society of London, Marine Conservation Society, Pew Environment Trust, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Royal Society, RSPB, Zoological Society of London, etc.

The CEN campaign website, www.protectchagos.org
<<https://mywebmail.warwick.ac.uk/exchweb/bin/redirect.asp?URL=http://www.protectchagos.org/>> and the website of the Chagos Conservation Trust www.chagos-trust.org <<http://www.chago-trust.org/>> contain many downloadable pdfs with much information.

The science: These websites include the report from a workshop at the UK's NOC last year, whose participating organisations included more than just the above. Its output "Marine Conservation in the British Indian Ocean Territory: Science issues and opportunities", concluded that there is sufficient scientific information to make a very convincing case for designating all the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Chagos Archipelago as a Marine Protected Area.

Chagos contains 49% of the 'Least Threatened' reefs in the Indian Ocean, all within one jurisdiction. If protection of such a significant area can happen anywhere, it is here. It is as much the poor state of so much of the rest of the region as it is the good state of reefs in Chagos that creates the need for a reference site, a refuge, and more. I hope you will visit these sites, read some of the large amount of information, and petition for Option 1: a no-take protected area.

Protecting this area would be an enormous contribution to the conservation of the world's marine environment. The UK Government has no other marine area under its jurisdiction that is as rich biologically, which could be protected as cheaply, or which would be so universally beneficial.

Chagossian removal in the 1970s was the issue mainly focussed on by earlier writers. For a well-documented account of events,

demographics, and compensation details see <http://www.zianet.com/tedmorris/dg/chagossians.pdf> <<https://mywebmail.warwick.ac.uk/exchweb/bin/redirect.asp?URL=https://mywebmail.warwick.ac.uk/Exchweb/bin/redirect.asp?URL=http://www.zianet.com/tedmorris/dg/chagossians.pdf>> , The days of viable, remote copra plantations were ending in the 1970s (when people were removed), but in fact the first two Chagos atolls were evacuated many years before the last ones, for reasons of failed economics. CEN takes a strictly environmental, non-political view, which is that whatever the eventual legal outcome turns out to be, any conservation of the archipelago and its resources now will be beneficial to all, under ALL possible future scenarios. That is why many of us are urging that the Chagos Islands and their surrounding waters be designated as a no-take marine reserve, "without prejudice" to the outcome of the legal process.

I cannot see any circumstances in which it would be disadvantageous to anyone (other than ocean fishing fleets) to have this large reef system protected in their entirety now, given that in the event of a change in sovereignty or settlement, conservation arrangements could be modified. Designating these reefs, islands and surrounding waters now as fully protected would safeguard them for the future, whatever that may be.

Tuna fishery objections are one of the key objections to a no-take MPA. One doc available for download (or soon will be) is a thorough scientific report commissioned by the CEN on this whole issue, and its results contrast with some tuna interests' view. We have the strongest support from tuna fisheries experts. While protecting or improving tuna stocks is not the goal of the proposal, it is likely to have that effect and enhance stocks elsewhere in the Indian Ocean. Regarding demersal reef fishing, we generally believe that at least this one large area should be maintained in undamaged condition. The Indian Ocean needs it. The bycatch from the offshore fishery is striking - our estimate (see the shortly to be uploaded document I refer to) is that almost 60,000 sharks were caught in a five year period by longliners in BIOT waters, with additional very heavy bycatch of other species. The IOTC Performance Review Panel has reported very high levels of uncertainty and very limited quantitative data for many of the stocks under the IOTC Agreement, and low levels of compliance with IOTC measures and obligations. (Report of the IOTC Performance Review Panel: January 2009. Indian Ocean Tuna Commission). None of which is any good for conservation.

It has been suggested that protecting this fishery may be losing an important stream of funding for current efforts to prevent illegal fishing methods in the waters around Chagos. The total value of the licences is about £1 million a year and it costs about that amount to patrol the fishery. But might it not be worth closing the fishery and protecting these fish? We know that open ocean fishing is the recent 'tragedy of the commons'.

Other downloadable docs from the websites mentioned, include general scientific docs, an economics assessment and several others. These will allow people to make informed views and to balance them with the sometimes erroneous information which is available. I hope many of you will read some of them, and will then support the move for very strong protection, by emailing the government site suggested, and by the petition on the protectchagos.org site. Those wishing to petition and

express concern for the Chagossians can of course do so. But delaying or oppose the conservation of this last very large 'Least Threatened' reef system in the Indian Ocean because of this could be very damaging.

Best wishes
Charles

Professor Charles Sheppard
Dept Biological Sciences
University of Warwick
Coventry, CV4 7AL,
UK
[charles.sheppard at warwick.ac.uk](mailto:charles.sheppard@warwick.ac.uk)
tel (44) (0) 2476 524975

[Coral-List] Chagos - whoever said conservation was simple

Richard Dunne [RichardPDunne at aol.com](mailto:RichardPDunne@aol.com)

Fri Jan 22 07:53:38 EST 2010

Dear Listers

(In view of the nature of Coral List I have deliberately avoided political opinion or bias in this e-mail which simply sets out the facts as they exist I trust the Jim Hendee will let it through)

Mark Spalding (and others before) have drawn the issue of the possible Chagos MPA to our attention. The UK Government have set a deadline for 12 Feb 2010 for public consultation.

We, as coral reef scientists and other interested parties, are being canvassed for our support by a number of bodies, inter alia:

1. The "Protect Chagos Org" encourages us to sign a petition that supports "a full no-take marine reserve for the whole territorial waters and EPPZ/FCMZ".
2. The "Marine Education Trust" encourages us to sign a petition that does not support any of the 3 options proposed in the consultation document because none would permit the Chagos islanders to use their marine resources, and it goes on to encourage the UK Government to work with the islanders and the Government of Mauritius to devise an appropriate MPA solution. Alternatively you could:
3. Individually write to the UK Government with your views.

The UK Government Consultation document asks the question "Do you believe we should create a marine protected area in the British Indian Ocean Territory?". If the answer is Yes, then it goes on to propose 3 protection options. The most extreme of which is that proposed by the "Protect Chagos Org" (1 above).

So what should you do? The answer will depend as much on what you believe to be morally correct as it does on any notion of protecting

coral reefs. Why? Because of the recent history of the BIOT and Diego Garcia in particular.

My own experience.

In 1979 I visited Diego Garcia as a young Lieutenant in the Royal Navy. One of my roles was as the Ship's Diving Officer and I took my team diving around the atoll. We also landed on the now deserted part of the atoll where the islanders had lived. It was a surreal experience - the deserted houses which had scrawled messages in French on their walls - heartfelt pleas from the islanders as they had been forced off into exile - overhead US heavy transport planes thundered into the US Air Base, in the lagoon were the rusting hulks of the 19thC coaling ships and on the beach was a decaying WW2 flying boat. Even as UK military personnel we were not allowed near the US Air Base. Ten years later I found myself as the Legal Adviser to the Commander in Chief Fleet during the first Gulf War. We were the de-facto commander of Diego Garcia with a small UK contingent alongside the US Air Base. I was aware of the huge military importance of the base to the US even at that time.

What happened to the Chagos islanders?

In 1971 the UK Government used an immigration ordinance to remove the islanders so that Diego Garcia could be used as a US base. In 1998 the islanders began legal proceedings and the Divisional Court ruled their eviction illegal. The Foreign Secretary then agreed that they should be allowed to return to all islands except Diego Garcia. After 9/11 that position was swiftly reversed following the US and UK stance that the base had become a vital facility in the war against terror in the Middle East. As a result the UK issued an Order in Council preventing the islanders return. Orders in Council are not debated in the UK Parliament - they are laws passed directly by the Government. In 2006 the High Court ruled again in favour of the Chagossians. The UK Government appealed the decision and lost in the Court of Appeal. Finally, the highest UK court - the House of Lords ruled that the UK Government 2004 Order in Council was legal in a 3-2 majority judgement (2 judges strongly dissenting). That judgment was clearly based on security interests of the UK and the US. After the case, the Foreign Secretary declared "We do not seek to excuse the conduct of an earlier generation. Our appeal to the House of Lords was not about what happened in the 1960s and 1970s. It was about decisions taken in the international context of 2004. This required us to take into account issues of defence [and] security of the archipelago and the fact that an independent study had come down heavily against the feasibility of lasting resettlement of the outer islands of BIOT."

If you want to read the judgment of the House of Lords - see - <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200708/ldjudgmt/jd081022/banc-1.htm>

The case has now been taken to the European Court of Human Rights. If the UK Government loses, the Chagos islanders should be entitled to return to at least some of their islands.

Notwithstanding this position, the UK Government maintains that the Chagos islanders have no right of abode and ignores their right to be consulted on the MPA proposals.

In the light of this I ask 'What is the haste to proceed with the designation of an MPA?' From a conservation point of view the region is remote and the reefs have remained in remarkable health for the last 40 years. The area is also already extensively protected by conservation legislation. What extra immediate protection will this designation achieve - particularly given the lack of real resources to enforce it? Are we fearful of imminent development on any of the BIOT islands - hardly, when the security of the Diego Garcia base is uppermost in both US and UK Government minds, and this is the prime reason for preventing even the islanders from returning to the area. Are there concerns of pollution or desecration of the marine resources?

Declaring a MPA would make the UK Government look good on the international stage. It could also be used by them as a further nail in the coffin of the Chagos islanders case. Having removed the islanders from Diego Garcia where they had been for generations, the UK Government now declares that the area cannot support re-population. It would be convenient if it was also a marine no take reserve so that the islanders could not even fish for their own food.

Morally what should we do? The answer is very simple we should await the outcome of the Chagos islanders ECHR court case. The UK Government should not be encouraged to declare an MPA in these circumstances - it should bide its time.

I have signed the Marine Education Trust petition and I encourage you to do the same or to write to the UK Government stating that there should be no MPA in the British Indian Ocean Territory pending the outcome of the Chagos islanders case in the ECHR.

Richard P Dunne
Lt Cdr (RN) rtd
Barrister at Law
sometime coral reef researcher

[Coral-List] Chagos Protected Area

Richard Dunne [RichardPDunne at aol.com](mailto:RichardPDunne@aol.com)

Mon Jan 25 06:31:56 EST 2010

Dear Listers

Charles Sheppard (a proponent of the BIOT MPA) writes below in response to my earlier post:

"But delaying or oppose the conservation of this last very large 'Least Threatened' reef system in the Indian Ocean because of this could be very damaging."

but does not give any justification for why a 'delay' in the implementation of the MPA pending the European Court of Human Rights case by the Chagossians would be "very damaging". As I have already pointed out :

"From a conservation point of view the region is remote and the reefs have remained in remarkable health for the last 40 years. The area is also already extensively protected by conservation legislation. What extra immediate protection will this designation achieve - particularly given the lack of real resources to enforce it? Are we fearful of imminent development on any of the BIOT islands - hardly, when the security of the Diego Garcia base is uppermost in both US and UK Government minds, and this is the prime reason for preventing even the islanders from returning to the area. Are there concerns of pollution or desecration of the marine resources?

If we are to be persuaded to overrule any moral right that the Chagossians have in favour of scientific or conservation issues then I feel that we should be provided with the justification and rationale.

Richard P Dunne

[Coral-List] The Story of the Chagos Islanders

Richard Dunne [RichardPDunne at aol.com](mailto:RichardPDunne@aol.com)

Mon Jan 25 13:28:19 EST 2010

Dear Listers

Jim Hendee has asked me to post some accessible information concerning the Chagos islands and the fate of the Chagossians in the light of the current debate on the new proposed Marine Protected Area in the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT).

There is an excellent website hosted by the UK Chagos Support Association at <http://domain1164221.sites.fasthosts.com/index.htm> I recommend that you visit it. This Association is directly supported by a serving and one ex Member of the UK Parliament. Its opening page features an aerial picture of the US Air Base on Diego Garcia in which I could count thirty-one B52 bombers and other large military jets.

I also invite you to visit the Marine Education Trust Petition at <http://www.marineeducationtrust.org/petition/protect-chagos> where you can see all the signatories to date from those who support the rights of the Chagossians. Inter alia it includes a former Deputy Commissioner of the BIOT and British High Commissioner to Mauritius, David Snoxall.

I re-iterate my personal stance here lest it has been misunderstood, namely "that there should be no MPA in the British Indian Ocean Territory pending the outcome of the Chagos islanders case at the European Court of Human Rights". I fully support the MPA concept from a purely scientific and conservation standpoint.

I include some additional very recent material below which re-iterates

the rights that should be accorded to the Chagossians in the MPA deliberations and which they have currently been denied by the UK Government.

Letter to the Sunday Times Newspaper 17 January 2010 by the former High Commissioner to Mauritius, David Snoxell

// Mr Snoxell was responding to a letter by the current Mauritian High Commissioner, printed last week, which had asserted the Mauritian government's right to be involved in deciding the future of Chagos. Both letters relate to Charles Clover's article several weeks ago about how a marine protected area around the Chagos islands could help boost Gordon Brown's personal "legacy." The text of Mr Snoxell's printed letter is reproduced here:

/*In his letter (last week) commenting on Charles Clover's article "Brown can build his legacy on coral reefs", the Mauritius High Commissioner raises two issues, sovereignty and resettlement, which need to be addressed if the proposed Chagos marine protected area is to be legitimate and workable. It was a Labour government in the 1960s that expelled the islanders. What better legacy for a Labour Prime Minister than to resolve one of the most shameful episodes in recent colonial history, while also agreeing a timetable for transfer of sovereignty to Mauritius and creating the largest marine reserve in the world?

David Snoxell

Former High Commissioner to Mauritius and Co-ordinator of the Chagos Islands All Party Parliamentary Group */

Mr Snoxell's attempt to link the MPA issue to the wider context is especially pertinent given the Chagos Environment Network's current campaign to impose a no-take fishing ban throughout the Chagos islands. The CEN are presenting their proposal as a benign measure to ensure the protection of the Chagos archipelago and its wildlife, but in actual fact it would be disastrous to the Chagossians' cause: banning the indigenous people of Chagos from fishing their own waters is patently the wrong thing to do. It would also create a further bone of contention between the UK and Mauritian governments. As Mr Snoxell points out, the CEN are actually doing the conservation cause a great disservice by attempting to ignore the issues of sovereignty and resettlement: for an environmental protection regime to be successful, it must be part of a holistic solution.

On 7 January 2010 a Workshop was convened at the University of London. The following statement was issued:

Following the launch last March of the proposal by the Chagos Environment Network to create a Marine Protected Area (MPA) for the Chagos Archipelago, experts gathered at Royal Holloway, University of London on 7 January 2010 to consider the socio-economic issues surrounding this proposal. This workshop was chaired by Professor David Simon, Head of Geography at Royal Holloway, and its findings will contribute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's consultation on the Chagos' MPA.

While the 55 islands of the Chagos Archipelago have a combined land area of just 16 sq km, their total Exclusive Economic Zone for jurisdiction of marine resources, based on 200 nautical mile limits, is 635,000 sq km² - nearly three times greater than the UK land area. This marine space includes abyssal habitats of the open ocean as well as coral reefs and banks, and has exceptional biodiversity value due to its species richness and the low level of human impacts. The near-pristine Chagos Archipelago area provides both a source region and refuge for marine life in the wider Indian Ocean.

A workshop held at the National Oceanography Centre Southampton in August discussed the science issues and opportunities related to the potential creation of a substantial MPA in the Chagos Archipelago.

The principal aim of the workshop at Royal Holloway was to bring together participants from Marine Centres, Universities, and NGOs who have practical experience of MPA development and management, as well as Chagossian, Government and marine industry stakeholders, to discuss socio-economic obstacles and opportunities in the context of a possible MPA in the Chagos Archipelago. The meeting provided the opportunity for input from stakeholder groups, particularly representatives from the Chagossian community, the Indian Ocean fishing industry, and the Government of Mauritius.

Dr David Bellamy, the world-renowned conservationist, sent a message of support: "I am delighted that this workshop took place, and commend the organisers for having taken this initiative. It has long been my contention that the preservation of this unique Archipelago requires everyone to work together - Chagossians, the British and Mauritian Governments, scientists, environmentalists and conservationists across a wide spectrum of disciplines."

He adds, "The issues are complex and challenging but with good will and cooperation on all sides we can help to bring about a secure future for the Chagos Islands that protects the environment and bio-diversity as well as the interests of the Chagossian people. Carefully managed, a limited resettlement should be compatible with conservation, and indeed could enhance the overall protection of the Islands. The challenge to us all is to make this possible."

Professor David Simon adds, "This specially convened workshop formed a vital step in the contentious process of negotiation over the future status of the renowned Chagos Archipelago in the Indian Ocean. It brought together many interested parties and stakeholders who debated how to secure the environmental integrity of the islands and their marine resources in a manner compatible with the interests of the Chagossian people who were evicted some 40 years ago and who may yet have their right of return restored by the European Court of Human Rights. Viable proposals must also take account of the possible future change of sovereignty from Britain to Mauritius. It was a great honour to have been asked to host and chair this important event at Royal Holloway."

The workshop contributed in important ways to the ongoing debate. For many participants, it was their first exposure to the firmly held views

of the Chagossian representatives. These perspectives, echoed by some other participants, informed debate and the strong feeling that the FCO consultation required a fourth option that includes resettlement as a fundamental component and which would be acceptable to whichever government exercised future sovereignty over the archipelago. Unfortunately, the Mauritian High Commission withdrew shortly before the event due to dissatisfaction with the FCO's handling of the MPA consultation prior to resolving the sovereignty dispute between the two countries.

--

Richard P Dunne

[Coral-List] Chagos conservation

Sheppard, Charles [Charles.Sheppard at warwick.ac.uk](mailto:Charles.Sheppard@warwick.ac.uk)

Tue Jan 26 06:24:42 EST 2010

Richard Dunne again asks 'why protect Chagos' and 'why hurry?', and urges people to 'vote' no to the government's enquiry about whether to establish greater, clearer and easier conservation. My posting last week said the answers are in the several documents available on www.chagos-trust.org and www.protectchagos.org.

But Mr Dunne conflates issues and asks what is the urgency given that, he says, a year or two more waiting can't hurt? The urgency is partly the state of so much of the Indian Ocean: in a break-out session in one of the workshops on this last year, people came up with several biological reasons why more protection is merited now, but these really shouldn't need explaining here. Partly because of the continued damage from (legal) fishing to numerous species, particularly threatened sharks, but partly because we have the opportunity now caused by government interest in doing something, which may not re-occur if we put this opportunity off. Partly too because the consultation deadline itself is February 12th, if you want your views to be recorded.

Mr Dunne's desire for delaying conservation appears to be based on the bad treatment of people removed in the 1970s and because a no-fishing declaration would prohibit the only means of livelihood of anyone returning. But as whole paragraphs say in several docs, the whole proposal is 'without prejudice' to the court case, and explains that if Chagossians do return then revisions would be made (I imagine changes would be needed to several other laws too).

Any implication that urging stronger conservation on the UK government now is somehow being 'against' Chagossians would be false. The two issues run in parallel and are not exclusive (as several docs also explain). There was only one group identified who would be directly disadvantaged now: blue water fishing interests. Last week's London Times

(<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/environment/article6997414.ece>) ran an article on the present fisheries interests. It shouldn't need

noting on a scientific list like this, but the tuna fishery, with its only partly quantified but huge by-catch, is quite distinct from demersal reef fishing by some local inhabitants.

Voting against a protected area now will do nothing for the Chagossians and nothing for conservation of these islands or reefs and nothing for threatened species. On the other hand a full no take protected area out to the 200 mile limit would do much to ensure these islands, reefs and threatened species were preserved - something much needed for the marine environment and Indian Ocean. Should the Chagossians return, then it would be to their advantage too.

Best wishes
Charles

Professor Charles Sheppard
Dept Biological Sciences
University of Warwick
Coventry, CV4 7AL,
UK
charles.sheppard@warwick.ac.uk
tel (44) (0) 2476 524975

[Coral-List] Chagos conservation

Richard Dunne RichardPDunne@aol.com

Tue Jan 26 10:56:23 EST 2010

Dear Listers

Charles Sheppard (the BIOT Scientific Advisor to the FCO) replies to my questions of "Why the haste?"

His Reply: /"Partly because of the continued damage from (legal) fishing to numerous species, particularly threatened sharks"/
My Comment: The present position is that under Fishery Limits Ordinance there is a 200-mile Fishery Management Conservation Zone which was established on 1 October 1991 and a fisheries regime covering all BIOT fishing waters was established on the same day by the Fisheries (Conservation and Management) Ordinance 1991. Commercial fishing within this zone is only allowed under licence. Tuna fishing is prohibited within 12 nautical miles of land. Inshore fishing for demersal species is only permitted from 1 April to 31 October, by hook and line, and not within lagoons. Effort controls are further implemented in both fisheries by limited licensing, based on the best scientific information and adopting the precautionary approach. Hunting of green turtle /*Chelonia mydas*/ has been completely banned since 1968.
Response: Why is the current legislation ineffective? Surely it is a matter of management and the BIOT Commissioner already has the powers to reduce the legal fishing if there is evidence of damage as alleged. Likewise to sharks?

His Reply: /"Partly because we have the opportunity now caused by government interest in doing something, which may not re-occur if we put this opportunity off."

/_Response:_ The framework for any further conservation measures is already in place by virtue of the work done by the Chagos Environmental Network and other persons. The consultation will indicate whether the scientific and conservation aims have support. _All that is required is final legislation which does not require input from the UK Parliament since it can be enacted under the powers of the BIOT Commissioner_ (as the FCO consultation makes clear to all). Indeed as the FCO points out, because of the peculiar nature of BIOT there is actually NO LEGAL REQUIREMENT for any consultation at all. In all these circumstances it is something that is not driven by any one political party nor by the incumbent government other than on issues of administrative cost to the UK Treasury.

Neither of Charles' replies are therefore sustainable without further justification. Furthermore I am accused of conflating (blending together or mixing up) the issues. Not so, I say that on science and conservation grounds alone the idea of an MPA should go ahead. The issue of the rights of the Chagossians is separate and remains unresolved. If the scientific and conservation grounds for proceeding to enact further legislation were overwhelming then I acknowledge that the rights of the Chagossians may well have to be subjugated (temporarily or permanently). \Has the CEN or Dr Sheppard made this case? I think not.

Delaying the implementation of the MPA pending the European Court of Human Rights case is both the morally correct path to follow and the logically correct one. Logically it allows the legislation to be correctly drafted from the outset with full consultation with those with a right of abode so that it is workable. Indeed the Chagossians themselves could be entrusted, employed and paid to enforce it - what better solution than this to the difficulties of management and the sustainability of their island life?

*

Here are the essential and additional facts that you may all wish to have before reaching your decision which proposal you should support:

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office consultation question is:
/DO YOU BELIEVE WE SHOULD CREATE A MARINE PROTECTED AREA IN THE BRITISH INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORY?/
/If yes - 3 broad options for a possible framework:
(i) Declare a full no-take marine reserve for the whole of the territorial waters and Environmental Preservation and Protection Zone (EPPZ)/Fisheries Conservation and Management Zone (FCMZ); or
(ii) Declare a no-take marine reserve for the whole of the territorial waters and EPPZ/FCMZ with exceptions for certain forms of pelagic fishery (e.g., tuna) in certain zones at certain times of the year.
(iii) Declare a no-take marine reserve for the vulnerable reef systems only./

Considerations:

1. The formal UK Government position is that "there is no right of abode in the Territory", it follows that there can be no de- facto consultation with the Chagossians and can be no provisions for them within the legislation. To consult or legislate would mean an acknowledgement of rights.
2. The UK Government recognises that there is an ongoing legal dispute concerning the right of abode by the Chagossians in the BIOT and on Diego Garcia in particular and that should the Chagossians succeed with their case before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) then "all the options for a marine protected area may need to be reconsidered".
3. Additionally, neither the UK Government nor the US would want the creation of a marine protected area to have any impact on the operational capability of the military base on Diego Garcia. For this reason, it may be necessary to consider the exclusion of Diego Garcia and its 3 mile territorial waters from any marine protected area.
4. BIOT has already been declared an Environmental (Preservation and Protection) Zone with legislation in place to protect the natural resources which include strict controls over fishing, pollution (air, land and water), damage to the environment, and the killing, harming or collecting of animals. Some of the most important land and sea areas have already been set aside for additional protection. Most of the lagoon areas and a large part of the land area of Diego Garcia are protected as Restricted Areas, four Special Conservation Areas and a Nature Reserve. Strict Nature Reserves cover the land and surrounding reefs and waters of the islands of the Great Chagos Bank and a large part of Peros Banhos Atoll. The Territory is also subject to further levels of internationally binding legal protection. This includes the designation of part of Diego Garcia as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention; the Whaling Convention (including an Indian Ocean Whale Sanctuary); the Law of the Sea Convention (with provisions to protect fish stocks); the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission; CITES (regulating trade in wildlife, including corals); and the Bonn Convention (with provisions to protect marine turtles and cetaceans).

The position of a growing number of influential figures, coral reef scientists and others (399 as I write) is to _"fully support the UK Government's efforts to protect the Chagos archipelago through the declaration of a Marine Protected Area within the territorial waters and Environmental Preservation and Protection Zone/Fisheries Conservation and Management Zone."_ BUT _"We do not support any of the three broad options proposed in the consultation documents, however, because full no-take protection of reef areas would provide no means for resettled islanders to utilise their marine resources for subsistence or income generation. Communities and Marine Protected Areas coexist across the world, and there is no reason why the islanders could not be successful towards of their coral reef environment."_ AND _"We urge you to work with the Chagos islanders and the Government of Mauritius to devise an MPA solution that makes provision for resettlement and that protects Mauritius' legitimate interests. This could be achieved through, for example, zonation that permits the sustainable use of marine resources in specific reef, lagoon and open ocean areas."_

You can find this petition at the Marine Education Trust website at

<http://www.marineeducationtrust.org/petition/protect-chagos>

Amongst the signatories are:

David Snoxall - a former Deputy Commissioner of BIOT and the former British High Commissioner to Mauritius

John Howell - former Director, Overseas Development Institute

Graham Watson - Member of the European Parliament for South West England

Marius Wanders - Secretary General of Caritas in Europe

SCIENTISTS: Prof David Simon, Dr Judith Lang, Dr Bill Burnett, Dr Mark Spalding, Dr Sidney Holt, Dr Deborah Potts, Dr Tom Spencer, Dr Anthony Lemon, Dr Tracy Harvey, Prof Barbara Brown, Dr Tom Goreau, Dr Ben-Tzvi, Dr Martin Little, Prof Chris Perry, Dr Elizabeth Gladfelter, Prof John Ogden, Dr Elizabeth Andrew, Dr Martina Burtscher,

ATTORNEYS/ LAWYERS: Durkje Gilfillan, Richard Dunne, Hans A. De Savornin Lohman, Maite Momo, James McGowan

In a letter to the Times (London) Newspaper, today 26 January 2010 signed by eminent UK Parliamentarians: Don't forget the role of Chagos Islanders - *The Chagos Islanders want to be involved with the conservation and environmental protection of the islands*

Sir, Your report (Jan 22) on the proposed Chagos Islands Marine Protected Area (MPA) stated that 2,000 Chagos Islanders were "relocated" to Britain and Mauritius to make room for a US base on Diego Garcia. In fact, about 1,500 Chagossians, of whom some 700 survive, were moved against their will to Mauritius and Seychelles in the early 1970s. How many would wish to return, and the nature of a resettlement on two atolls, 150 miles north of the US base, is impossible to determine at this stage. The Chagos Islanders want to be involved with the conservation and environmental protection of the islands. Careful management and planning can, at modest cost, avoid degradation of the environment.

The All Party Parliamentary Group has urged the FCO to commission a rapid independent study of the numbers who would wish to resettle and the practicalities of resettlement. Many Chagossians will not want to live permanently in the islands but they all want the right to visit their homeland at will. The way forward is to make provision in the proposed marine protected area for Chagossian interests (such as local fishing) and those of Mauritius. Conservation and human rights must go hand in hand. We urge the Government, before the election, to lift the ban imposed in 2004 on the return of the Chagos Islanders and so end this tragedy that has dogged the UK's reputation for respect for human rights and its international obligations.

Jeremy Corbyn, MP, Chair, Chagos Islands APPG

Baroness Whitaker

Lord Luce

Lord Ramsbotham

Lord Steel of Aikwood

Lord Wallace of Saltaire

Andrew Rosindell, MP

The solution that I propose is to delay consideration of the Chagos MPA pending the outcome of the ECtHR case. This pragmatic approach recognises that until the issue of right of abode is resolved the UK

Government cannot liaise with the Chagossians concerning the MPA legislation, furthermore any legislation that may have been enacted without such consultation and without the right of abode having been finally determined may well be deemed illegal, and at the very least may need to be repealed or amended as the FCO itself recognises.

Consider also this question: If the right of abode had been recognised by the House of Lords judgment and the UK Government was instituting the ECtHR case to overturn this decision, then would they be pursuing MPA legislation which would have to recognise the Chagossian's rights? I think not - they would stay the matter. Why then should we rush to implement in the present circumstances? It is morally unjust, nor is it required.

Richard P Dunne

Richard Dunne [RichardPDunne at aol.com](mailto:RichardPDunne@aol.com)

Tue Jan 26 12:00:53 EST 2010

Dear Listers

An earlier post on the issue of the Chagos MPA posted by Ted Morris Jr almost escaped my attention until I revisited it and followed his links to his website.

Mr Morris encourages us to protect the marine environment of the Chagos by signing up to the proposed MPA. He also thinks that in protecting human rights we are politicising the process. I would love to endorse his viewpoint if it could be considered to be serious in the light of his website which whilst containing some interesting 'facts' about Diego Garcia has some fairly alarming facts and statements, for example:

_On the construction of the runway on DG by US SeaBees: _(photos cannot be reproduced here)And then came Tom Grenier and his buddies. They dredged the coral used to build the runway. Here's a little photo essay on how they did it.First, you set your charges and blow a big hole in the coral....Then you bulldoze out the rock....Then, Harry and Joe haul all the "little rocks" to the crusher...Then you have a party.....and another.....and anotherOr, you could go fishing and looking around the reef for whatever you could find...

You might also like to visit the page on blowing a hole in the reef for a ship canal. and I am sure that there is something there about dredging the lagoon for the Navy ships and submarines._

Elsewhere Mr Morris says_

"Finally Those of you who have read my website, or know me personally, know that my first and foremost concern is for the defense of the United States and our democratic republic. Diego Garcia is essential to that defense, and therefore anything that would limit our use of Diego Garcia would not receive my support."

All I can say is that clearly the environmental 'protection' afforded by the presence of the US base has been fairly alarming and that Mr Morris is very lucky to live in a democracy which has not yet illegally evicted him to another country as the UK Government did to the rightful inhabitants of the Chagos, as it seems in the interests of UK and US defence.

I hope that the debate on conservation in the Chagos can proceed from a more serious and open-minded angle.

Richard Dunne

Coral-List] Chagos Conservation

Ted Morris [easy501 at zianet.com](mailto:easy501@zianet.com)

Tue Jan 26 14:16:56 EST 2010

Dear Listers,

Mr. Dunne's response to my posting involves what I attempted to point out - that criticism of the current effort to protect the Chagos by tying it to actions taken at the height of the Cold War four decades ago is inappropriate.

The construction activities and the treatment of the islanders was not unusual given the circumstances of the time, and I do not defend them. However, I do not condemn them either. It simply was the way things were done. If you have read the resettlement proposals of the UK CSA, you can see that their plan to resettle thousands of islanders will be as disruptive to the Chagos as that of the SEABEES in the 1970s.

The appropriateness of the islanders' compensation is really Mr. Dunne's concern, is it not? Isn't the subject still in play in the ECHR? Won't it be a subject of legislation in the democracies involved as time goes by, regardless of the ECHR outcome? Of course. Therefore, I think where Mr. Dunne and I differ is that I believe that those are the forums in which resettlement should be discussed. Mr. Dunne's effort appears to be to halt the conservation of the Chagos by using the emotional and politicized question of the islanders' compensation. This will help no one and is potentially damaging to the marine environment of the islands for the reasons given by Dr. Sheppard in other posts in this thread.

Regards,
Ted Morris

[Coral-List] Chagos, now or never? or better later?

Mark Spalding [mark at mdspalding.co.uk](mailto:mark@mdspalding.co.uk)

Tue Jan 26 14:47:12 EST 2010

It is reassuring to hear Charles Sheppard's message.

1 - Neither the Chagossians nor the Mauritians have heard this clearly. If I can (I think) paraphrase, it might go like this. "Look guys, we've got the UK government offering us something we could all benefit from, but we've got 2 weeks left and they might never come up with an offer like this again. Of course we'll change things and accomodate your needs should the poltical situation change". Of course it may be true that the MPA would be easily altered as the poltical situation changes, but by not involving these key groups in the discussion from the start they have developed a deep distrust of the whole agenda and there is a very real risk that the MPA would be totally dismantled if the situation changes (which could be within 6 months). The world's largest and the world's shortest lived no-take zone.

2 - There are ominous other hints of "get out clauses":

- MRAG Ltd who currently manage the fisheries and patrol the waters, want to keep the pelagic fishery going...and they happen to be owned by the UK government's chief scientific advisor (to be fair they have suggested they will go with whatever is decided, but there will be some strong influence here);

- it appears that the waters around the military base will be excluded from protection;

- there are arguments that the only commercial licensed reef fishery currently permitted, run from Mauritius could be excluded from the MPA;

- I have also already been told that the visiting yachts who currently spend time in Chagos would be allowed to carry on fishing (and lets be honest it would be impossible to stop them).

- \- and its not exactly a get out clause, but there is no mention of funding for this new MPA.

So a no-take MPA that allows ALL of the current fishing? Hmmm
....and one that is legally highly dubious because of the Mauritius claim to Chagos, and that may even be dismantled under any of several likely future scenarios.

Hindsight is easy, but I have to say that many people have been calling for collaboration with Chagos and Mauritius on this for a long time (not "informing", or "telling", or even "discussing", out and out partnership),

They should have been at the table from the start, and had they been we might be in a very different position now. Just last week France and

Mauritius agreed a joint management agreement over Tromelin, a much smaller Indian Ocean island which they both claim but which France administers.

So I would say even from a purely, selfishly, fish-centric view-point the debate is still open. One strategy states "go for a strict MPA because it might be the only chance we get...and because the UK might never let Chagossians return or Mauritius re-take sovereignty, so from the fishes point of view its a great opportunity". The other says "there are too many risks, that legislating in haste will leave too many loop-holes and too much bad-taste among the stakeholders. Look how many protected areas failed because they didn't engage the vested interests".

Is a compromise not possible? Couldn't those calling for immediate total closure now raise their concerns about the loop-holes AND clearly state their open-ness to changes in management as and when there are changes to politics and sovereignty. Surely that would be pretty close to stating the need for another option - an MPA without loop-holes, that makes space for future change. Unanimity would strengthen our hand, and it might be enough to persuade the UK government to proceed, but buy more time for ironing out concerns AND, belatedly, bringing in the stakeholders.

All best

Mark

[Coral-List] Chagos Conservation

Richard Dunne [RichardPDunne at aol.com](mailto:RichardPDunne@aol.com)

Wed Jan 27 01:36:33 EST 2010

Ted

On your rationale it is of course possible to excuse any of man's actions on the natural environment or against his fellow humans, and neither condemn nor defend past transgressions. "It was simply the way things were done". As human society evolves and matures it develops practices to protect nature and other human beings. So we have evolved national and international laws on environmental protection, Humanitarian Law and the Geneva Convention, the Laws of War, the Law of the Sea, and bodies such as the United Nations. Underlying all this is basic morality - a sense of what is right and wrong. Without these rules or in the absence of morality there would be anarchism.

The subject of human rights is not an "emotional" one. Furthermore, where does one draw the line in the sand? The eviction of the Chagossians by the British Government? The Burmese junta? Apartheid? Saddam Hussein's persecution of the Kurds? The Nazis and the jews? The

Slave Trade? Some of these issues are in the past and have been followed by legal process: e.g. the Nuremberg trials; or the recent trial and execution of 'Chemical Ali'. Others remain in the present and are still to be determined as is the case of the Chagossians.

The House of Lords judgment in 2008 was solely concerned with the validity of section 9 of the British Indian Ocean Territory Order in Council which stated: "Whereas the territory was constituted and is set aside to be available for the defence purposes of the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of the United States of America, no person has a right of abode in the Territory." Earlier courts (the Divisional Court and the Appeal Court) had held this section to be invalid. It was not about compensation. Nor is my concern about compensation. Nor will the ECtHR case be about compensation.

Nor do I seek "to halt the conservation of the Chagos" on these or any other grounds. True I argue that it should be stayed until the ECtHR (the final court of jurisdiction on this matter) has ruled. This will then determine whether the Chagossians must be consulted and involved in any future legislation concerning the Chagos. This is entirely reasonable and logical as I argue in earlier posts. Neither has Charles Sheppard justified why such a delay would be potentially damaging as Ted Morris alleges here. There is already extensive Fishery and Conservation legislation in force - it only a matter of enforcing it appropriately.

The question of the resettlement of the islanders is a side issue. The House of Lords noted that there were less than 1,000 inhabitants on three islands in 1962. Presumably the numbers wishing to return now are smaller. The British Government commissioned its own report in 2002 into the feasibility of the resettlement of only Peros Banhos and Salomon (Diego Garcia, the most inhabitable island was not considered). It concluded that agroforestral production would be unsuitable for commercial ventures, that fisheries and mariculture offered opportunities although they would require investment, tourism could be encouraged, although there was nowhere that aircraft could land. It might therefore be feasible in the short term to resettle the islands. But introduced into that report was the effect of global warming which was raising the sea level and already eroding the corals of the low lying atolls. In the long term, it was concluded that the need for sea defences and the like would make the cost of inhabitation prohibitive. Of course on this premise, the conservation of the coral reefs and islands of the Chagos and indeed the future of the US Base on Diego Garcia are also called into question. None are tenable. Perhaps nature's course will determine all these issues.

The largest and most inhabitable of the BIOT islands is Diego Garcia. Charles Shepherd has said in an earlier post " ... a full no take protected area out to the 200 mile limit would do much to ensure these islands, reefs and threatened species were preserved - something much needed for the marine environment and Indian Ocean. Should the Chagossians return, then it would be to their advantage too." But we also know that it is the British Government intention that "Additionally, neither the UK Government nor the US would want the creation of a marine protected area to have any impact on the operational capability of the military base on Diego Garcia. For this reason, it may be necessary to consider the exclusion of Diego Garcia

and its 3 mile territorial waters from any marine protected area." Indeed this is the most likely outcome. Diego Garcia would not therefore be protected under any new MPA, either for the good of the marine environment or for the possible future benefit of the Chagossians. The north western segment is already extensively covered in concrete, and a deepwater port and anchorage constructed. Presumably there may be continued construction, certainly continued dredging of the anchorage, discharge of sewage out to sea, etc. Diego Garcia is to be afforded no future protection under these proposals. The argument that an MPA of the type envisaged can protect the Chagos for the Chagossians is therefore flawed.

There are not two forums, one for conservation and one for the Chagossians rights. These issue are inextricably linked. I am no expert on social aspects of MPA creation but I would have thought that in all cases a holistic approach is required. That is why (and for the reasons above) the decision should be stayed.

Richard P Dunne

Coral-List] Chagos and Hitler

tim ecott [timecott at hotmail.com](mailto:timecott@hotmail.com)

Wed Jan 27 12:22:33 EST 2010

- Previous message: [\[Coral-List\] Marine Environments of Palau- new book](#)
- Next message: [\[Coral-List\] cold water coral kill](#)
- **Messages sorted by:** [\[date \]](#) [\[thread \]](#) [\[subject \]](#) [\[author \]](#)

Coral-listers,

What a wonderful example we have here of the mess that surrounds any attempt to get governmental level involvement in the creation of an MPA. All coral-listers should note the level of acrimony entering the debate. No wonder it is so hard to do anything about marine conservation and dwindling fish stocks - no sooner does one person advocate setting aside a marine reserve than another immediately pops up to denounce the negative human impact of such a move.

The debate as conducted here could provide a Ph.D case study in why marine conservation is doomed in most cases to failure. Once again does it not seem that the parties involved are arguing 'rearranging the deckchairs on the deck of the Titanic'?

And if 'Mauritius' is to be involved then why not Seychelles? The Chagossians on Agalega have been frequently looked after by the

Seychelles administration because little help or effort was forthcoming from Mauritius. And, while it may not be politically correct to point this out - the evidence of Indian Ocean states being able to adequately manage or preserve their marine environment is without a shadow of equivocation - abysmal.

Unfortunately there is a good reason for the healthy status of Chagos reefs: lack of people. I for one would vote for pretty much anything that kept it that way.

And by the way - do the arguing parties know Godwin's Law - which states that

"As an online discussion grows longer, the probability of a comparison involving Nazis or Hitler approaches 1."

a subsidiary Law states that once Hitler is mentioned the debate is to all practical purposes over.

we reached that point today - so let's move on. please.

Tim Ecott is the author of
Neutral Buoyancy: Adventures in a Liquid World (Penguin)

[Coral-List] Chagos Conservation

Richard Dunne [RichardPDunne at aol.com](mailto:RichardPDunne@aol.com)

Fri Jan 29 10:46:14 EST 2010

Dear Listers

This is an extract from the Mauritius Times published on Friday, 29 January 2010 written by Dr Sean Carey (Research Fellow at the Centre for Research on Nationalism, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism (CRONEM) at Roehampton University, UK)

The original posting is
[onhttp://mauritiustimes.com/index.php/the-news/111-sean-carey](http://mauritiustimes.com/index.php/the-news/111-sean-carey)

//

It refers to an article published in the Times Newspaper (London) on 26 Jan 2010 to which Charles Sheppard drew our attention in his post that day
(<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/environment/article6997414.ece>)

Frank Pope's article in /The Times /last week, "Investment is essential

for biological wonderland of the Chagos islands", was written to highlight the pristine state of the British Indian Ocean Territory and why the area should be designated a Marine Protected Area (MPA). "There is none of the fertiliser, pesticide, silt or construction debris that are choking reefs elsewhere," he says before issuing a series of warnings about the various categories of people who, with the notable exception of "scientists who go without sunscreen for fear of contaminating the water", would mess up the area if allowed in. Put simply, the claim is that the current pristine quality of the Archipelago is all down to "the lack of inhabitants". Tourists are particularly problematic we are told: "Conservationists warn that even small numbers of visitors would risk destroying the area's value as a scientific reference point against which to gauge climate change." Fishermen are also dangerous because according to one marine scientist "the position of the islands and the prevailing currents helps to seed fish stocks and reefs elsewhere in the Indian Ocean".**

But then we come to Pope's real target: the possible return of some of the exiled Chagos Islanders whose case is currently before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

**

Their return to their homeland would involve "constructing an airport and town" which would be "both financially and environmentally ruinous" to the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office although Pope conveniently omits to mention that Mauritius has stated that it will pick up the costs of resettlement and install suitable transport links (not necessarily an airport) once sovereignty of Chagos is regained from the UK.

**

It is also revealing that Pope does not provide any details of the negative environmental effects of the population of around 3500 people (who may or may not use sunscreen) composed of US and British military personnel and their predominantly Filipino workforce on the base on Diego Garcia, the largest in southernmost island in the Chagos Archipelago. For the record, the base boasts the world's longest runway built on crushed coral -- after a total of 5 million cubic yards of 'coral fill' was blasted and dredged from the reef and the lagoon for construction purposes (or "harvested", as the US Navy puts it).

Nor do we read anything about the significant number of people that sail through the area and armed with the appropriate £100 a month permit issued by the BIOT authorities can moor on the outer islands of the Archipelago like Peros Banhos and Salomon where some of the Islanders once lived.

In fact, Pope's highly selective account well illustrates a general problem with a traditional and conservative approach to conservation that has a long but not very glorious history. Last year leading US investigative journalist, Mark Dowie, published /Conservation Refugees: The Hundred -Year Conflict between Conservation and Native Peoples/(MIT Press) where he exposed some of the injustices that have often been at

the heart of many apparently successful land conservation projects.

At Yosemite in the eastern Sierra Nevada Mountains of California, for example, there was a concerted and ultimately successful effort from the mid-19th -century until 1914 when the area became a national park, to expel a small group of Miwak Native Americans who are thought to have settled in the valley some 4000 years ago.

Similarly, nearly all of the other national parks in the USA, including Everglades, Glacier, Grand Canyon, Mesa Verde, Mount Rainier, Yellowstone, and Zion, were created by expelling, sometimes violently, tribal peoples from their homes and hunting grounds so that the areas recovered could remain in a "state of nature" free from human contamination.

This process has been replicated in other parts of the world as well. Indeed, Dowie estimates that over the last 100 years at least 20 million people, 14 million in Africa alone, have been displaced from their traditional homelands in the name of nature conservation by consciously employing "the Yosemite model" (which in Africa was renamed "fortress conservation") often with the tacit backing of NGOs like The Nature Conservancy, the World Wide Fund for Nature, and the African Wildlife Foundation.

Exactly 40 years ago, a British social anthropologist, Mary Douglas, in a lecture delivered at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London pointed out that in assessing risks to environments caused by "human folly, hate and greed" it was vitally important to achieve a moral consensus by carefully scrutinising the concepts and theories which powerful groups used to explain things to themselves (and others).

But Douglas also issued a warning that relying on mainstream scientists who had absorbed not only the biases of their own professions but were also possessed by the emotional (and she might have said political) attachment to system-building was of little use for guidance in trying to resolve serious environmental problems. Insight was much more likely to come from those operating at the margins or where a number of disciplines intersected, she claimed.

History has proved Douglas right. According to Mark Dowie and others, the old model of conservation which falsely opposed nature (good) and culture (bad) is being replaced with something much more dynamic, a new transnational conservation paradigm. A younger generation of scientists recognise that properly engaged indigenous and traditional peoples have a vital role to play in preserving fragile ecosystems.

Which brings us neatly back to the Chagos Islanders. They may be relatively recent inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago (they first arrived in 1783) but no one can legitimately claim that they do not possess the status of an indigenous or traditional people just like those descendants of former African slaves and Indian indentured labourers who live on other Indian Ocean islands like Mauritius, Reunion, Rodrigues and the Seychelles. And the only reason the Chagossians no longer reside in their homeland, part of the colony of Mauritius until it was illegally excised in 1965, is because they were forcibly removed by the British authorities.

While the evidence is clear that uncontrolled fishing can have catastrophic consequences the idea that a small settlement of Chagossians and a carefully controlled number of eco-tourists are going to destroy the pristine qualities of the proposed MPA in the Chagos Archipelago is nothing short of preposterous and flies in the face of evidence from other parts of the world like American Samoa, Australia, Chile, Indonesia and the Philippines where indigenous and traditional peoples are fully involved in the conservation and maintenance of marine reserves.

Environmentalists like Pope may be able to line up a fair number of scientists and traditionally-minded conservation groups to back their argument, but the rest of us realise that the game has moved on. This is not just because of evolving social and political realities which have undermined a hierarchical view of the world based on the principle that conservationists always know best, but because the old opposition between nature conservation where humans were seen as "the enemy" in the preservation of biological diversity has been rightly found wanting and is being slowly but surely being replaced by a much better model.

*/
/*

Richard Dunne

[Coral-List] Chagos (again!)

Mark Spalding [mark at mdspalding.co.uk](http://mdspalding.co.uk)

Fri Jan 29 12:24:24 EST 2010

Perhaps I'm pushing people's tolerance, but I'm concerned that this subject has been oversimplified.

Tim Ecott wrote "Unfortunately there is a good reason for the healthy status of Chagos reefs: lack of people. I for one would vote for pretty much anything that kept it that way" - fine, but what would he vote for? It really isn't a decision of being for or against, fish versus people. So here's a possible scenario:

June 2010 - UK govt declares no-take MPA over all of Chagos. Gordon Brown's legacy (hooray)

Sept 2010 - Chagossians granted right to return by European Court of Human Rights (hooray (different people shouting))

Sept 2010, 2 weeks later - First Chagossians arrive back in Chagos (remember they were given this right once before, just 5 year or so ago, and are not there now only because they didn't move fast enough). Sure the UK government won't fund them, but there are plenty of rich people out there who do care about human rights and might even fancy getting access to some beautiful islands at the same time

Oct 2010 - FCO repeal MPA (as they have said they would)

Nov 2010 - horrified environmentalists learn of plans for an airstrip, a hotel, a live-fish export trade from northern Chagos. They try to step in, some through the courts (ha ha) others through diplomacy. They find the Chagossians don't trust them, I wonder why?

Dec 2010 - FCO, far from being concerned, decide to cede the northern atolls of Chagos to Mauritius. They are far enough away from the military base for the US not to care.

I'm not saying this will happen, or even anything like it, but the various elements are all possible. The all-out anti Chagossian, anti-Mauritian approach is, in my mind a very high risk strategy FOR BIODIVERSITY. It might pay off and then some can say "I told you so" but I will have to say that, right now, they don't have a clue, because no-one does. Alternatively design a strategy that builds a scenario for the POSSIBLE resettlement of Chagos, in the eventuality that it could happen.

I am concerned that a poll, apparently with some 10,000 signatures, has over-simplified the matter. A lot.

Mark Spalding
Cambridge etc.
[mark at mdspalding.co.uk](mailto:mark_at_mdspalding.co.uk)

[Coral-List] Chagos Conservation

Bill Allison [allison.billiam at gmail.com](mailto:allison.billiam@gmail.com)

Fri Jan 29 20:12:32 EST 2010

"...nearly all of the other national parks in the USA, including Everglades, Glacier, Grand Canyon, Mesa Verde, Mount Rainier, Yellowstone, and Zion, were created by expelling, sometimes violently, tribal peoples from their homes and hunting grounds so that the areas recovered could remain in a "state of nature" free from human contamination.

"

As another seaman put it:

"The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretense but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea-- something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to. . . ."

Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness

Coral-List] Proposed Marine Protected Area in the Chagos - The Plight of the Chagos Islanders

Richard Dunne [RichardPDunne at aol.com](mailto:RichardPDunne@aol.com)

Sun Jan 31 15:38:10 EST 2010

Dear Listers

For those of you following the debate about the proposal for a Marine Protected Area in the Chagos Archipelago (BIOT). There is a film (55 minutes long) by John Pilger, an Australian journalist. It was made in 2004 and describes what happened to the Chagos Islanders. It can be viewed on Google videos at the link below. It contains several interviews with Prof David Stoddart OBE, the founder of the International Society for Reef Studies (ISRS) whom many of you will know and who deprecates the treatment of the islanders by the British Government.

STEALING A NATION (John Pilger, 2004) is an extraordinary film about the plight of people of the Chagos Islands in the Indian Ocean - secretly and brutally expelled from their homeland by British governments in the late 1960s and early 1970s, to make way for an American military base. Stealing a Nation has won both the Royal Television Society's top award as Britain's best documentary in 2004-5, and a 'Chris Award' at the Columbus International Film and Video Festival.

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-3667764379758632511#>

IF YOU HAVE ALREADY SIGNED THE PETITION IN SUPPORT OF THE MPA on the Chagos Environment Network website. WERE YOU AWARE OF THESE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES? or did you get the impression from that website that it was simply the case of establishing a MPA in a remote uninhabited part of the world?

Are you entitled to think again? Certainly if you feel that you did not know the full facts. If you wish to do this then simply sign the Marine Education Trust petition

(<http://www.marineeducationtrust.org/petition/protect-chagos>) and send an e-mail to [info at marineeducationtrust.org](mailto:info@marineeducationtrust.org) with any further details.

Here are just a few of the signatories to that petition who support the idea of an MPA BUT ONLY with the participation and consultation with the Chagossians and the Mauritian Government.

Coral Reef Scientists, former diplomats, politicians, lawyers, academics. If you want to see the full list then go to the website.

Former President of the Republic of Mauritius - Cassam Uteem
Former British High Commissioner to Mauritius and Deputy Commissioner for BIOT - David Snoxall
Emeritus Professor Barbara Brown - Newcastle University UK, co-founder

and former Vice-President International Society of Reef Studies, former Editor in Chief 'Coral Reefs' 2005-8, Founder and Director of Centre for Tropical Coastal Management Newcastle University

Dr Alasdair Edwards - Newcastle University UK, former Director of Centre for Tropical Coastal Management, Chair of GEF/World Bank 'Reef Restoration and Remediation Working Group.

Dr Tom Goreau - USA President Global Coral Reef Alliance

Professor Chris Perry - Chair, Tropical Coastal Geosciences, Manchester University UK

Dr Sue Wells - Coral reef conservation consultant, Cambridge UK

Professor Andrew Balmford - Professor of Conservation Science, Cambridge University

Dr Elizabeth Gladfelter - coral reef biologist USA

Professor John Ogden - Director, Florida Institute of Oceanography USA, former President International Society of Reef Studies (ISRS)

Dr Mark Spalding - Global Conservation Specialist - Cambridge UK - co-author of the Chagos Conservation Plan 2003

Dr Tom Spencer - Geography University of Cambridge

Professor David Simon - University of London

Associate Professor Kenneth Cathan - Mauritius

Professor John Eade - London

David Evans - Marine Biologist

Dr Judith Lang USA coral reef researcher

Dr Emma Mawdsley - Geography Department Cambridge University

Dr Ester Peters - USA coral reef scientist

Dr Elizabeth Tyler - Tropical Ecology Group, Oxford University

Dr Deborah Potts - Geography Kings College London

Katherine Muzik - Marine Biologist

Dr Lynn Dicks - Conservation Science Group, Department of Zoology, Cambridge University

David Vine - Assistant Professor, American University Washington USA - author of 'Island of Shame: The Secret History of the US Military Base on Diego Garcia'

Dr Carlos Ruiz Sebastian - marine biologist South Africa

John Howell - Former Director of Overseas Development Unit

Jack Everett - USA Saving Our Environment Campaign

Andy Vivian - BBC Producer - UK

Dr Bill Burnett - Head of Biology St Paul's School, London - UK

Dr Sean Pyne-O'Donnell - Norway

Graham Pascoe - Lecturer - Germany

Dr Liz Andrew - University of Manchester, Fellow Zoological Society London, UK

Dr Tony Lemon - Dept of Geography Oxford University

Erich Hoyt - research fellow Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society UK

Abigail Moore - Marine Conservation volunteer Indonesia

Ofer Ben-Tzvi - PhD candidate coral reef biology - Israel

Dr Martin Little - Biologist UK

Adel Heenan - PhD candidate University of Edinburgh

Dr Basia Zaba - University of London

Sabrina Meunier - Field Centre Manager Shoals Rodrigues, Mauritius

Dr Martina Burtscher - University of the Highlands and Islands UK

Dr Emmanuel Gregoire - Directeur de recherche IRD France

Dr Sean Carey Research Fellow at the Centre for Research on Nationalism, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism (CRONEM) at Roehampton University - UK

Durkje Gilfillan - Attorney South Africa

Jim McGowan - Cmdr RN (rtd) Barrister - Hong Kong - former Legal Adviser to the Commander in Chief Fleet
Hans A. De Savornin Lohman - Netherlands Attorney at Law
Maite Mompo - Spain Lawyer
Richard Dunne - Lt Cdr RN (rtd) BA (Cantab) Barrister UK, former Legal Adviser to the Commander in Chief Fleet 1988-91, editor The Manual of Naval Law (1991 ed)
Rebecca Musarra - Lawyer - USA
Amir Matar - Research Associate, Public International Law and Policy Group, Washington - USA
--

Richard P Dunne

[Coral-List] Chagos Conservation

Richard Dunne [RichardPDunne at aol.com](mailto:RichardPDunne@aol.com)

Tue Feb 2 08:28:42 EST 2010

Dear Listers

Jim Hendee's post (below) is interesting and touches on considerations which have not been discussed. As has already been pointed out in earlier posts, it would appear that the intention of the UK and US Governments is to exclude Diego Garcia from the proposed MPA in the British Indian Ocean Territory, notwithstanding that it is the largest area of land.

There is a recently published article: Diego Garcia: British-American Legal Black Hole in the Indian Ocean? by Peter Sand of the Institute of International Law, University of Munich - Journal of Environmental Law doi:10.1093/jel/eqn034. It is Open Access at <http://jel.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/full/eqn034v1>

In particular the article highlights that:

1. The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) has consistently pursued a 'legal black hole' strategy for Diego Garcia with regard international environmental agreements, which continues into the foreseeable future.
2. Until the 1980s the FCO tried to suppress "any mention of Chagos in scientific reports" (Prof Charles Sheppard - BIOT Scientific Advisor).
3. FCO has vetoed an extension of the Biodiversity Convention to BIOT.
4. To avoid disputes on claims by the Mauritius Government, the BIOT fishing area map annexed to the 2006 Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) simply excludes the entire 200 miles zone around the Chagos - unfortunate in view of the growing threat of illegal fishing and the need for regional co-operation.

Of the Diego Garcia environment it highlights that:

1. Military construction work over the last 38 years has eliminated much of the tree vegetation (have a look on Google Earth or Google Maps).
2. Coral blasting has removed an estimated 5 million cubic yards (4.5

million cubic metres) by 1983. The scars on the reef can be seen from Google Maps.

3. Dredging in the lagoon has taken place over 30.8 square kilometres.
4. Approximately 100 acres was landfilled.
5. A total of more than 150,000 cubic yards of concrete has been poured for the construction of the airport, roads and other facilities.
6. When it was found that further coral mining could not meet the requirements, limestone, sand were imported from Malaysia and West Africa.
7. There are 1.34 million barrels of jet and diesel fuel stored on the island. A spill of approx 1 million gallons of jet fuel occurred as a result of a pipeline fracture in 1983. By the time the underground leakage had been found it had filled and replaced the entire freshwater lens below the base. All the spills exceed the reported spills from other US military bases in Panama, Puerto Rico and the Phillipines. The Chagos Conservation Trust itself noted in 2004 that the US Air Force had still not cleared up its oil spills.

Peter Sand describes the 'downtown area' of the base as more reminiscent of the Florida Keys than that of the Indian Ocean, with all the facilities of a small town.

One serious side effect of the importing of construction materials has been the introduction of invasive alien plant species, including *Leucaena leucocephala*. A botanical survey of Diego in 2005 noted that "if uncontrolled, this species can completely overtake all other species creating monotypic scrub".

Its is a pretty dismal account of the lack of adequate protection and the transformation of the atoll.

Not only is there a complete mess as regards involving those who actually lived in these islands from participating in the proposed MPA discussions, there is also a mess as regards the environmental protection of one of the main islands. If this is a sound strategy for implementing a MPA of global importance then it leaves a lot to be desired.

Richard P Dunne

Dr. C. Mark Eakin [mark.eakin at noaa.gov](mailto:mark.eakin@noaa.gov)

Thu Apr 1 15:53:06 EDT 2010

Begin forwarded message:

> From: PALMER Jennifer <[Jennifer.PALMER at iucn.org](mailto:Jennifer.PALMER@iucn.org)>
> Date: April 1, 2010 2:21:14 PM EDT
> To: PALMER Jennifer <[Jennifer.PALMER at iucn.org](mailto:Jennifer.PALMER@iucn.org)>
> Subject: DCMC: Britain approves Chagos Islands marine reserve
>
> Foreign & Commonwealth Office official site:
> <http://www.fc.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=News&id=22001512>
>
> 01 Apr 2010

> Foreign Secretary David Miliband instructs the Commissioner of the British Indian Ocean Territory to declare a Marine Protected Area.
> Foreign Secretary David Miliband today announced the creation of a Marine Protected Area (MPA) in the British Indian Ocean Territory. This will include a "no-take" marine reserve where commercial fishing will be banned.

>
> The British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) consists of 55 tiny islands which sit in a quarter of a million square miles of the world's cleanest seas.

>
> Announcing the creation of this MPA, David Miliband said:

>
> I am today instructing the Commissioner of the British Indian Ocean Territory to declare a Marine Protected Area. The MPA will cover some quarter of a million square miles and its establishment will double the global coverage of the world's oceans under protection. Its creation is a major step forward for protecting the oceans, not just around BIOT itself, but also throughout the world. This measure is a further demonstration of how the UK takes its international environmental responsibilities seriously.

>
> The territory offers great scope for research in all fields of oceanography, biodiversity and many aspects of climate change, which are core research issues for UK science.

>
> I have taken the decision to create this marine reserve following a full consultation, and careful consideration of the many issues and interests involved. The response to the consultation was impressive both in terms of quality and quantity. We intend to continue to work closely with all interested stakeholders, both in the UK and internationally, in implementing the MPA.

>
> I would like to emphasise that the creation of the MPA will not change the UK's commitment to cede the Territory to Mauritius when it is no longer needed for defence purposes and it is, of course, without prejudice to the outcome of the current, pending proceedings before the European Court of Human Rights.

>
> Further information
> The Chagos Islands have belonged to Britain since 1814 (The Treaty of Paris) and are constituted as the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). Only Diego Garcia, where there is a military base, is inhabited (by military personnel and employees).

>
> The idea of making the British Indian Ocean Territory an MPA has the support of an impressive range of UK and international environmental organisations coming together under the auspices of the "Chagos Environment Network" to help enhance the environmental protection in BIOT. Also, well over 90% of those who responded to the consultation made clear that they supported greater marine protection

>
> Pollutant levels in Chagos waters and marine life are exceptionally low, mostly below detection levels at 1 part per trillion using the most sensitive instrumentation available, making it an appropriate global reference baseline.

>

> Scientists also advise us that BIOT is likely to be key, both in research and geographical terms, to the repopulation of coral systems along the East Coast of Africa and hence to the recovery in marine food supply in sub-Saharan Africa. BIOT waters will continue to be patrolled by the territory's patrol vessel, which will enforce the MPA conditions.

>

> Download the full report [PDF]

>

>

~~~~~  
~~~~~  
> Britain approves Chagos Islands marine reserve

> <http://sify.com/news/britain-approves-chagos-islands-marine-reserve-news-international-kebwabididi.html>

> 2010-04-01 22:00:00

> Britain gave the green light Thursday for the creation of the world's biggest marine reserve around the Chagos Islands in the Indian Ocean, a plan which has provoked fury among some refugees.

> The reserve will protect an area campaigners say compares with Australia's Great Barrier Reef for its marine life, including coral reefs, yellow fin tuna, turtles and coconut crabs.

> It will include a "no-take" marine reserve where commercial fishing is to be banned, the Foreign Office said.

> "The MPA (Marine Protected Area) will cover some quarter of a million square miles (400,000 square kilometres) and its establishment will double the global coverage of the world's oceans under protection," said Foreign Secretary David Miliband.

> The Chagos Islands were ceded to Britain in 1814 and the archipelago was evacuated four decades ago to allow construction of a military base.

> Diego Garcia, the main island, is now populated by an estimated 1,700 US military personnel, 1,500 civilian contractors and around 50 British personnel.

> Around 2,000 Chagossians were moved to Mauritius, which claims the islands and whose prime minister has spoken against the plan. Most of the refugees are still campaigning to go back.

> Earlier this month, Olivier Bancoult of the Chagos Refugees Group accused Britain of "trying to create a protected area to prevent Chagossians from returning to their native islands".

> Miliband said in his statement that the creation of the reserve "will not change the UK's commitment to cede the territory to Mauritius when it is no longer needed for defence purposes".

>

>

> This communication, together with any attachment, may contain confidential information and/or copyright material and is intended only for the person(s) to whom it is addressed. If you are not the intended recipient of this communication, you received it by error and you are asked to please delete it and promptly notify us. Any review, copying, use, disclosure or distribution of any part of this communication, unless duly authorized by or on behalf of IUCN, is strictly forbidden.

C. Mark Eakin, Ph.D.
Coordinator, NOAA Coral Reef Watch

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Center for Satellite Applications and Research
Satellite Oceanography & Climate Division
e-mail: mark.eakin@noaa.gov
url: coralreefwatch.noaa.gov

E/RA31, SSMC1, Room 5308
1335 East West Hwy
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3226
301-713-2857 x109 Fax: 301-713-3136
301-502-8608 mobile

"A world without coral reefs is unimaginable."
Dr. Jane Lubchenco, March 25 2010

[Coral-List] Chagos Marine Protected Area

Pete Raines psr@coralcay.org

Fri Apr 2 10:29:24 EDT 2010

Dear Listers,

Yesterday Britain effectively doubled the global coverage of the world's oceans under protection. For further information, see:

[1]<http://protectchagos.org/>

All the best,

Pete Raines
Coral Cay Conservation
[2]www.coralcay.org

References

1. <http://protectchagos.org/>
2. <http://www.coralcay.org/>