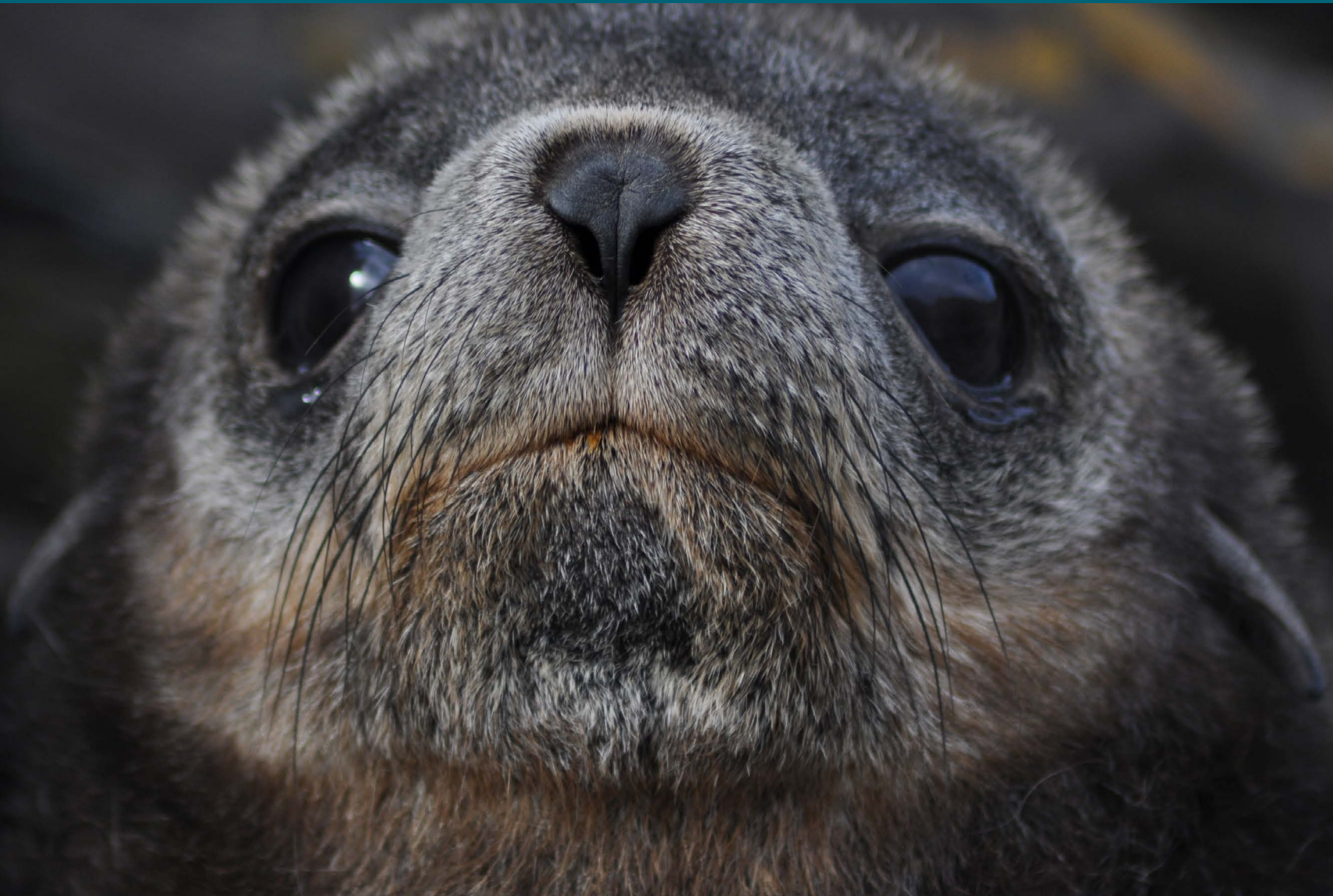




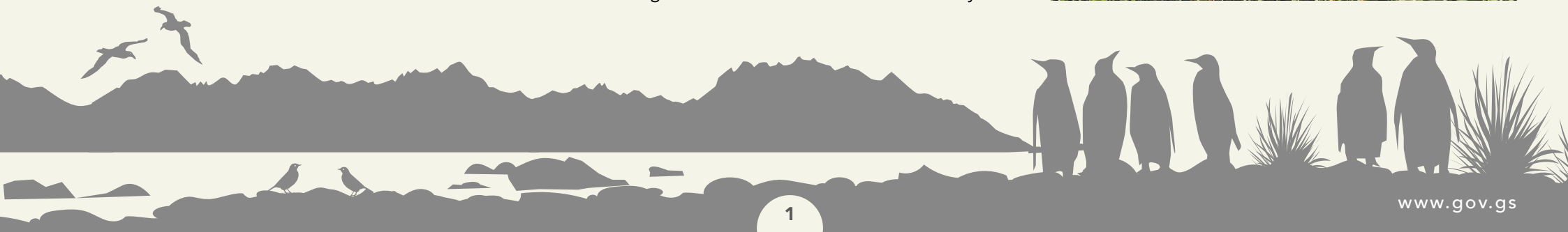
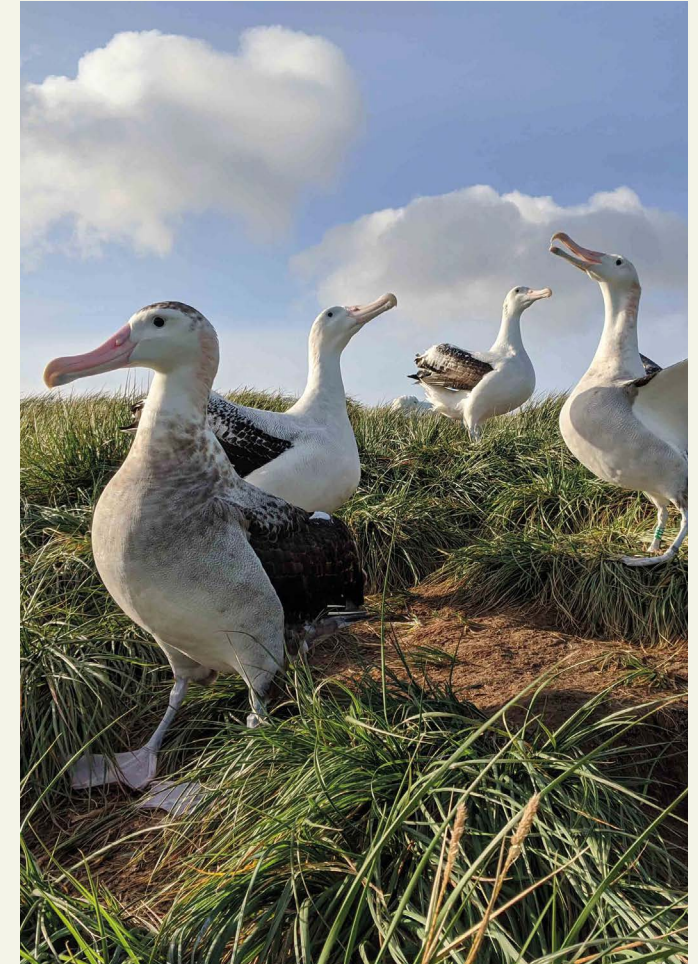
# South Georgia & The South Sandwich Islands

## Terrestrial Protected Area Management Plan



# Executive summary

- The Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI) is committed to a system of terrestrial protected areas and has chosen to adopt a phased approach to deliver this.
- As part of the initial phase of this work, two Specially Protected Areas have been designated; the South Georgia Terrestrial Protected Area (SG TPA) and the South Sandwich Islands Terrestrial Protected Area (SSI TPA). Together they cover the whole landmass of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, including all offshore islands to the mean high-water mark.
- The overarching conservation objectives for both the Protected Areas are (a) the conservation, protection and preservation of the ecosystem and restoration of biodiversity; and (b) ensuring that any activity in the specially protected areas is managed sustainably, with minimal impact on the ecosystem.
- Recognising the different characters, ecological pressures, and restrictions on access of Protected Areas, these overarching conservation objectives are further refined within this Management Plan.
- Activities which are consistent with the conservation objectives defined for the Protected Area are encouraged, but certain activities have been regulated to ensure the environment is protected. Details of activities which are prohibited are provided, along with details of the circumstances under which a permit can be granted.
- Access to the SSI TPA is prohibited. Access will only be granted under Special circumstances. Guidance is provided as to the circumstances under which access may be permitted. These include a range of scientific activities and work that improves public knowledge and perception of the SSI.
- Details of activities which will contribute to the Protected Areas conservation objectives are found across a range of GSGSSI policy, strategy, and operational documents. A summary of activities which will support the delivery of the management of the Protected Area, and associated time frame, are mapped against conservation objectives.
- Accompanying this management plan, a separate document has been produced that gives a detailed overview of the terrestrial environment.
- This management Plan will be reviewed within 6 years.





# 1 Global context and principals of protection



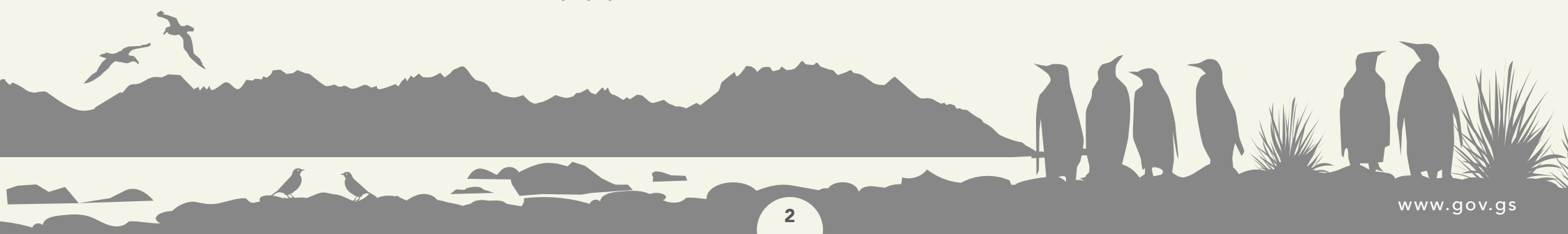
South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI) are a UK Overseas Territory. The application of the UK's ratification of the **Convention on Biological Diversity** (CBD) was extended to SGSSI in 2015. Accordingly, the Government of SGSSI is committed to delivering its contribution to the implementation of the UK's CBD obligations with respect to SGSSI. A key part of implementation is the delivery of protected areas. Protected areas are also key components in delivering the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**, in particular SDG 14 and 15.

The Government of SGSSI fully supports the aim of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework including **Target 3**, to ensure that at least 30 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas, and of marine and coastal areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures. SGSSI has already made a significant contribution, through its Marine Protected Area, to delivering on the proposed 30% ocean target. **'Protect Sustain Inspire'** sets out the desire to 'design and roll out island-wide terrestrial protection' so that we can make a similar contribution to that future target for land.



A protected area is defined by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) as "a geographically defined area, which is designated or regulated and managed to achieve specific conservation objectives." Under South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands legislation, a protected area is designated under Part III of the **Wildlife and Protected Areas Ordinance (2011)** which makes provision for the Commissioner to designate "any area of land [that] is in need of a high level of protection to preserve its special values".

In 2018, the Government of SGSSI commissioned an **extensive review** from the UN Environment World Conservation Monitoring Centre to determine options for strengthening terrestrial protection. The final range of options were drawn together following a long consultative process and highlighted the global significance of the Territory in terms of wildlife and wilderness and the robust mechanisms already in place to manage many potential threats. In 2021 the Government of SGSSI committed to being stewards for this ecosystem in recovery setting a clear vision for the future underpinned by four guiding values: environmental protection, evidence-based decision making, sustainability and openness.





## 2 Phased approach

In order to deliver a system of terrestrial protection which meets the values-based management, in the **Pathway to Protection**, the Government of SGSSI chose to adopt a phased approach. As a part of Phase I, Specially Protected Areas which cover the whole of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands have been designated with the following objectives:

- (a) the conservation, protection and preservation of the ecosystem and restoration of biodiversity; and
- (b) ensuring that any activity in the specially protected areas is managed sustainably, with minimal impact on the ecosystem.

Phase I constitutes the issue of this Management Plan and associated Regulations.

Phase II will use a range of methods to identify assess, focus, manage and monitor the TPAs in order to refine regulation and management into the future.

To aid in delivery of the TPA programme, GSGSSI has established an advisory group (TPA AG) of invited representatives covering a range of interests including the tourism industry, scientific community, government administration and relevant conservation groups. The TPA AG provides specialist advice to Government on matters relating to the development and ongoing monitoring of TPA on SGSSI. Final decisions on how to implement and manage TPAs rest with the Government.





# 3 Legal context



Section 16 of the Wildlife and Protected Areas (WPA) Ordinance 2011 enables the Commissioner to designate any area of land in need of a high level of protection to preserve its special values as a Specially Protected Area by Order. The Wildlife and Protected Areas (Specially Protected Areas) Order 2022 specifies the boundary of the area to be protected, the features which are to be protected and conservation objectives for the area. It also prohibits entry to the South Sandwich Islands.

Section 17 of the WPA Ordinance 2011 makes provision for the implementation of Management Plans and Regulations in relation to Specially Protected Areas designated under the Order. This is detailed in the Wildlife and Protected Areas (Specially Protected Areas) (Management Plan and Prohibited Activities) Regulations 2022.

This Management Plan provides details of protection of the entire landmass of the territory, and therefore the term Terrestrial Protected Area (TPA) will be used in the Management Plan in place of Specially Protected Area.



The Management Plan provides details of Phase I of the TPA programme and includes spatial extent and protected features of the South Georgia TPA, spatial extent, and protected features of the South Sandwich Islands TPA, conservation objectives, implementation and details of regulated activities, and details of procedures for permit applications.

Accompanying this Management Plan, a separate document has been produced that gives an overview of the terrestrial environment. This includes a description of physical environment, historical context and flora and fauna which together contribute to making the protected features of the Terrestrial Protected Areas of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.



# 4 South Georgia Terrestrial Protected Area

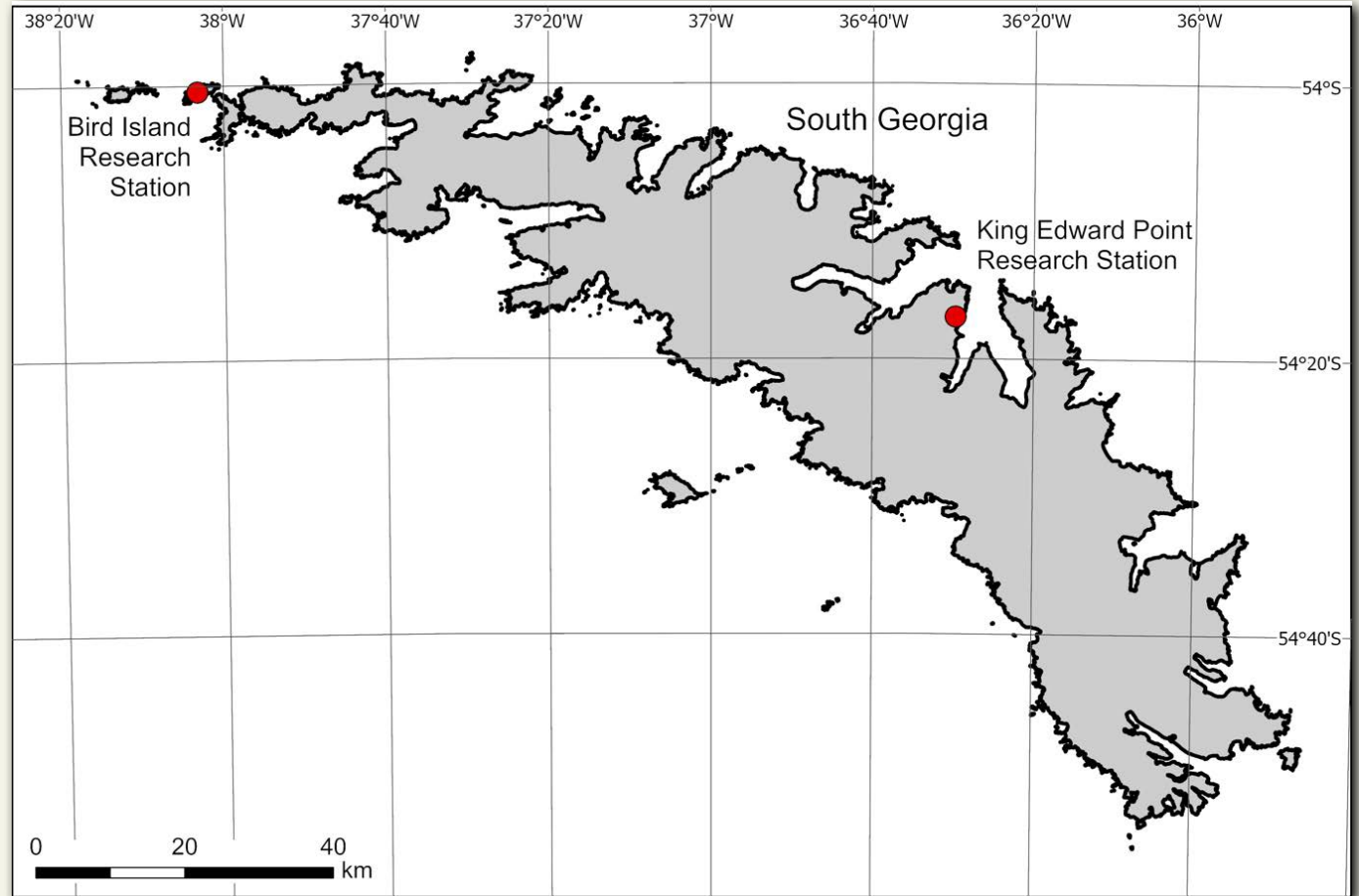
## 4.1. SG TPA - Spatial Extent

The South Georgia Terrestrial Protected Area (SGTPA) will cover the island of South Georgia and its offshore islands to the mean high-water mark including Shag Rocks and Clarke Rocks. The area below the mean high-water mark is protected through a Marine Protected Area designated under Section 18 of the WPA Ordinance 2011.

The focus of the SGTPA is to deliver the **holistic protection of the terrestrial environment** and **conservation and restoration of biodiversity** within which **globally significant science and sustainable tourism**, can be undertaken.

## 4.2. SG TPA - Protected Features

The South Georgia TPA will give protection to all elements of the South Georgia terrestrial ecosystem including native flora, native fauna, habitats, and geological features.



# 5 South Sandwich Islands Terrestrial Protected Area

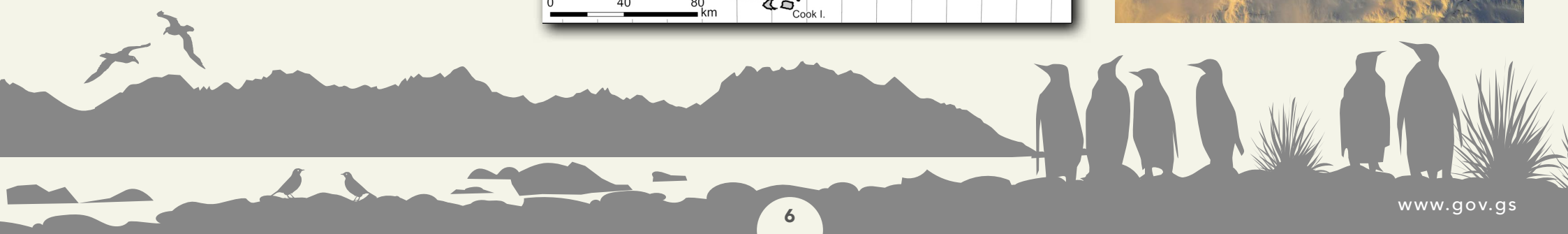
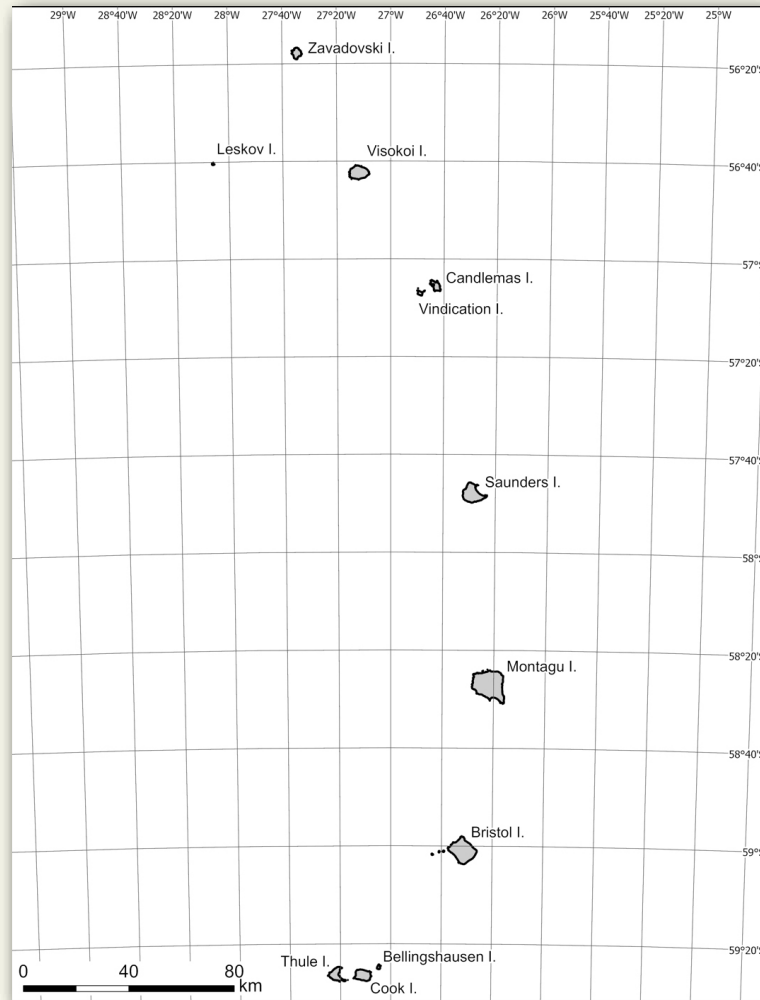
## 5.1. SSI TPA - Spatial Extent

The South Sandwich Islands Protected Area (SSI TPA) will cover the islands of Zavodovski, Leskov, Visokoi, Candlemas, Vindication, Saunders, Montagu, Bristol, Bellingshausen, Cook and Thule including all offshore stacks and islets to the level of the mean high-water mark. Areas below the mean high-water mark are protected through a Marine Protected Area designated under Section 18 of the WPA Ordinance 2011.

The focus of the SSI TPA will be to protect the islands pristine nature, assumed absence of introduced species, and strengthen the inherent protection that arises from their remote location and difficulty to access.

## 5.2. SSI TPA - Protected Features



The South Sandwich Islands TPA will give protection to all elements of the South Sandwich Islands terrestrial ecosystem including native flora, native fauna, and geological features.





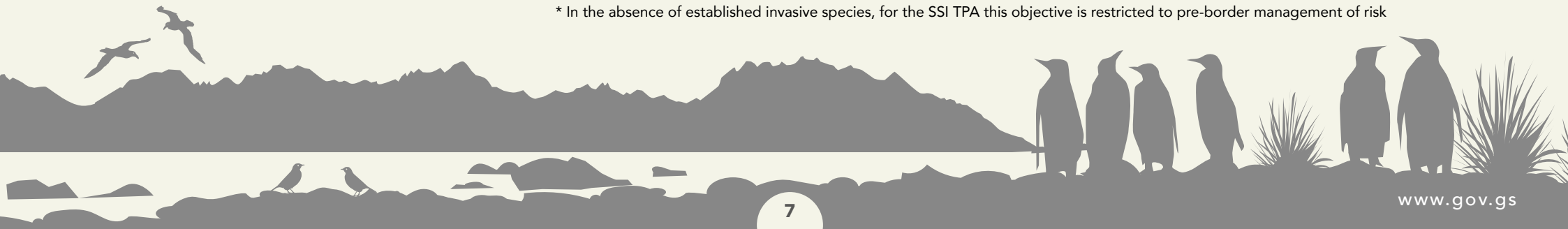
# 6 Conservation Objectives of the South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands TPAs

Overarching conservation objectives detailed in The Wildlife and Protected Areas (Specially Protected Areas) Order 2022 are common to both the SG and SSI TPA. Recognising the different characters, ecological pressures, and restrictions on access to each TPA, these overarching conservation objectives have been further expanded opposite:

-  Objective applies to SG TPA
-  Objective applies to SSI TPA

Overarching objective	Detailed conservation objective	SG	SSI
Conservation, protection and preservation of the ecosystem and restoration of biodiversity	Conservation, protection and preservation of the ecosystem and restoration of biodiversity		
	Management, monitoring and control of invasive species*		
Activities carried out are managed sustainably with minimal impact on the ecosystem	Environmentally responsible research		
	Promoting wilderness and wildlife		
	Facilitating sustainable visits		

\* In the absence of established invasive species, for the SSI TPA this objective is restricted to pre-border management of risk





# 7 Implementation

Successful implementation of the management aims of the SG and SSI TPAs requires several elements:

**Regulation of Activities** – to ensure conservation objectives are met, and monitored, it is necessary to regulate certain activities. Sections 7.1 and 7.2 provide details of which activities will be regulated. Section 7.3 and 7.4 provides details of procedures to undertake regulated activities.

**Sustainable Management** – sustainable management involves considering what activities take place and ensuring those that do have minimal impact on the environment. This is a core aim of GSGSSI. Details of activities which constitute sustainable management and contribute to the TPA conservation objectives are found across a range of policy, strategy, and operational documents. Section 7.5 details the management aims for each conservation objective and maps this against the planned activities required to achieve success.

**Research and Monitoring** - A Research and Monitoring Plan (RMP) will be developed within 18 months of the Management Plan being adopted. The plan will review existing monitoring and data gathering activities within the Territory and map these against TPA management aims. This will allow evaluation of the extent to which



management aims are being met. Based on this assessment, identified gaps will be listed as priorities for further research and management actions or further monitoring will be initiated.

Progress on the implementation of the Management Plan will be published by GSGSSI. A full review of actions arising from the Management Plan will commence within six years of publication.



# 7.1. Regulated Activities under the Wildlife and Protected Areas (SPA Management Plan and Prohibited Activities) Regulations 2022



The Government recognises and encourages a range of activities on South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands where these are consistent with the aims and objectives of TPA and related policies. The legislation introduces a number of prohibitions and where these activities are likely to involve prohibited activities an assessment of their impacts will be required and a Regulated Activity Permit (RAP) may be issued. These are activities that involve:

- (a) the deliberate or reckless disturbance of, or interference of any kind with, any native or wild bird or marine mammal;
- (b) the erection of any structure or installation, whether temporary or permanent, including affixing any such structure or installation to any protected feature or any building;
- (c) the use of any mechanically-propelled vehicle that is not a wheelchair designed for, and used by, a person whose physical mobility is restricted;
- (d) the use of small unmanned aircraft at 400 feet or less above ground level;
- (e) the use of any aircraft that is not small unmanned aircraft at 2000 feet or less above ground level;
- (f) the removal of any peat, topsoil or subsoil;
- (g) the removal, quarrying or extraction of any mineral (including stone, shingle, sand or gravel);
- (h) the disposal of waste by burial, landfill or incineration; and
- (i) any development, whether temporary or permanent, including the carrying out of building, engineering, demolition or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land.

Guidance on when and what activities would typically require a permit in the SG and SSI TPA is provided in on the [GSGSSI website](#).

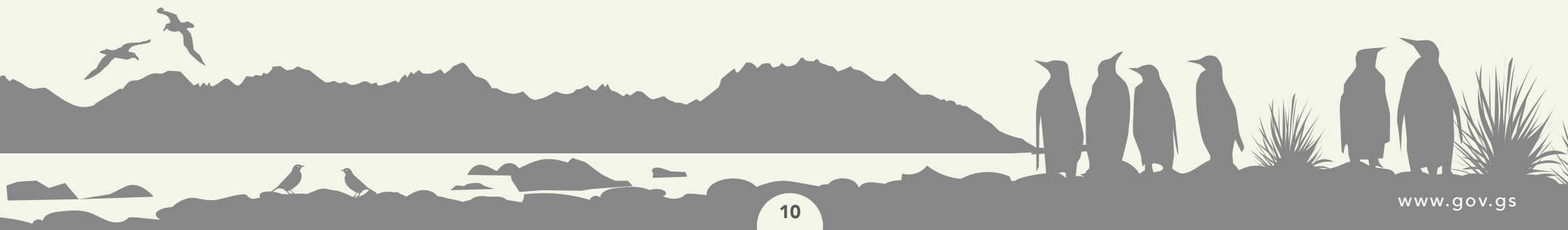
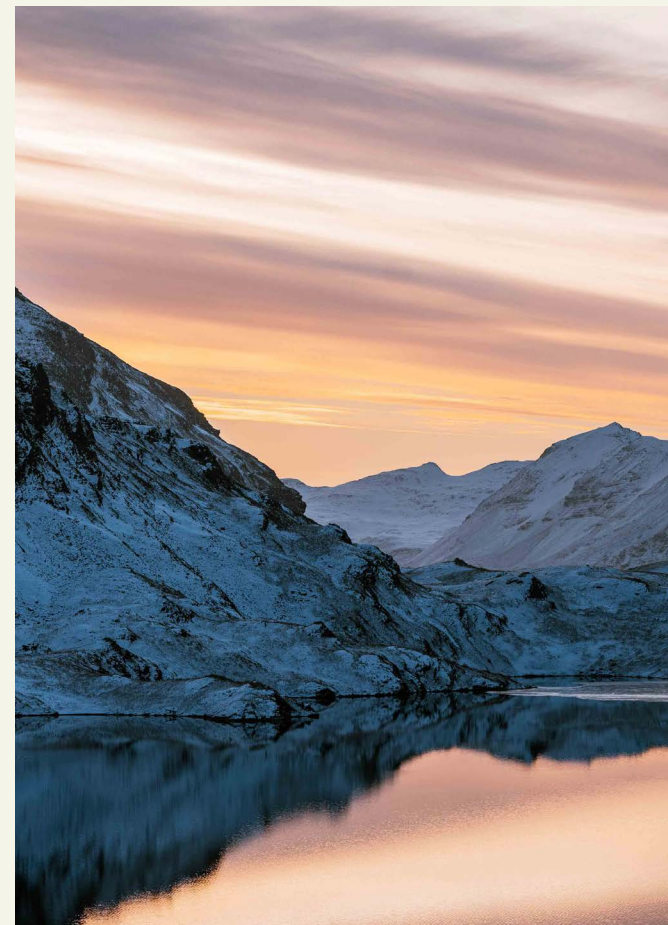
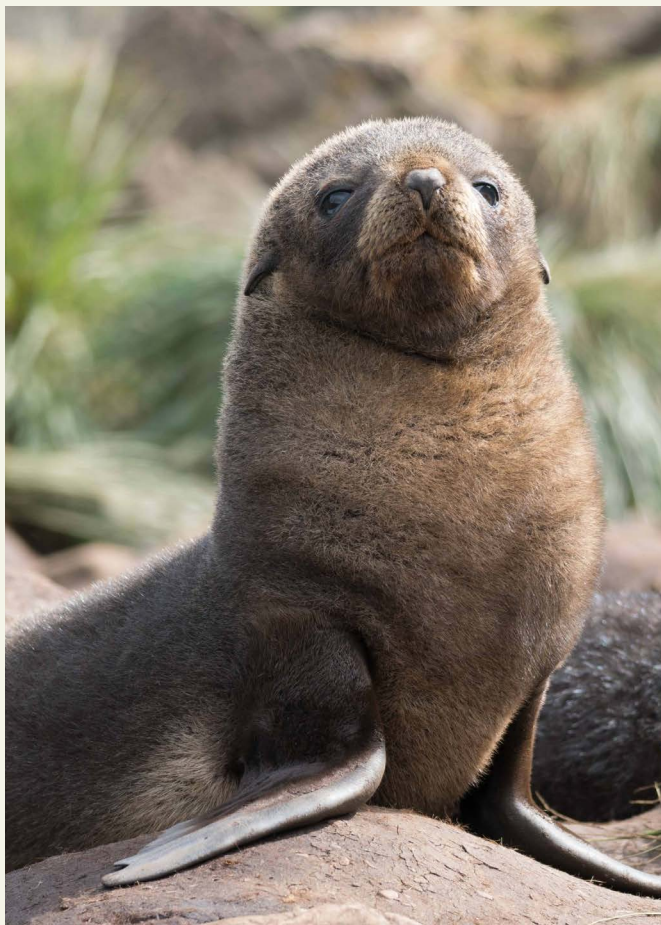




## 7.2. Exemptions

**No activity prohibited above apply to the activities of:**

- The Government or any person acting on behalf of the Government, providing best endeavours are made to ensure that such activities are undertaken in a manner that is consistent with this Management Plan
- Naval, Military or Air Forces of the Crown when acting in the course of their duties



## 7.3. Procedures to Undertake Regulated Activities within a TPA - General Procedures

Persons wishing to undertake activities which are identified in Section 7 of the Wildlife and Protected Areas (Specially Protected Areas) (Management Plan and Prohibited Activities) Regulations 2022, as requiring a valid permit, must apply to the Commissioner. Applications are made via the Regulated Activity Permit system. Such permits will be issued in accordance with section 21(3) of the WPA Ordinance 2011.

### Permits will only be granted for the purposes of:-

- (a) scientific, research and educational purposes;
- (b) conserving wild birds, marine mammals, native invertebrates or native plants or for re-introducing them to the Territory or re-establishing them in particular areas within the Territory;
- (c) conserving or restoring, habitats;
- (d) preserving public health or public safety;
- (e) preventing the spread of disease; and
- (f) any other purpose for which the Commissioner believes that a permit may properly, in all the circumstances, be granted.

In the case of (f) this may include any activity with the Commissioner believes is in support of the conservation objectives of the TPA.

Procedures for applications for Regulated Activity Permits will be published on the [GSGSSI website](#) on an annual basis.

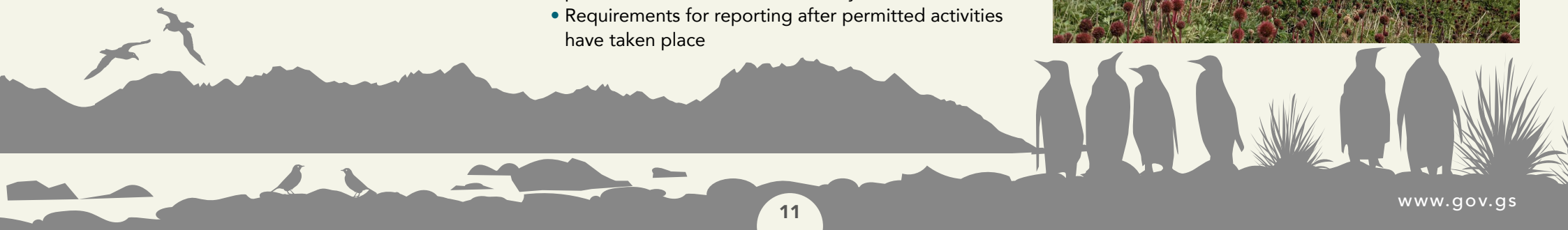
Applications will be assessed on the feasibility of proposed activities, their compatibility with the conservation objectives and management aims of the TPA and any future site-specific Management Plans, and the likelihood of risk of harm to the environment. The level of assessment will be commensurate with risk.

### Permits will specify:

- Locations where activities may take place within the TPA;
- Dates / duration when permitted activities may take place;
- A description of the activities which are to be undertaken;
- Conditions which must be followed to ensure that activities are consistent with the conservation objectives and management aims of the TPA;
- The name of the individuals, or groups of individuals permitted to undertake the activity;
- Requirements for reporting after permitted activities have taken place

Some activities may require permission under other legislation such as the Air Navigation (Overseas Territories) Order, Prohibited Areas Order, Entry Control Ordinance or Immigration Ordinance. Permission granted under the WPA does not predicate permission under any other legislation.

Exempt persons undertaking activities on behalf of, or under the authorisation of the Government will be required to, as far as practicable, follow the same application and assessment procedures as other groups. This ensures that activities undertaken by the Government represent best endeavours to be consistent with the Management Plan, that appropriate environmental mitigation measures are in place to minimise harm to the environment, and that there is a clear record of where and why activities that would otherwise be prohibited by Regulations have been undertaken.

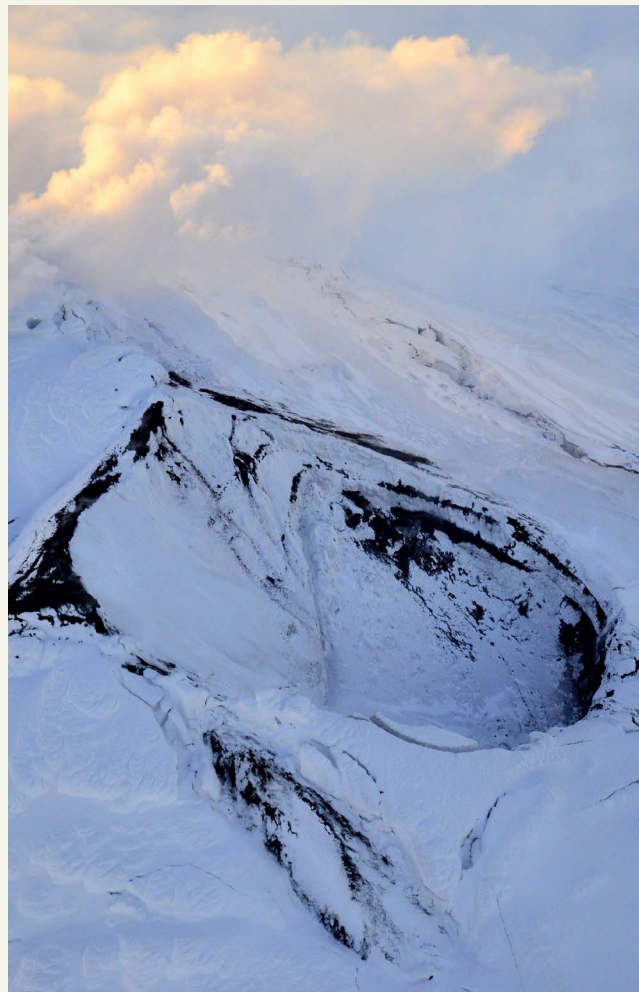




## 7.4. Special Procedures for Entry to the South Sandwich Islands

**Entry to the South Sandwich Islands will only be granted under Special circumstances. These include:**

- a) Activities that can be shown as necessary to meet the conservation objectives for the SSI, including an assessment of:-
  - The population of species, including information on location, distribution and population trends;
  - Factors affecting the populations, including breeding success, disease, predation and diet;
  - Where entry is required to SSI to assess such information in relation to species occurring in the Marine Protected Area surrounding SSI.
- b) Work related to the assessment of seismic and volcanic activity on SSI, including its effects on biodiversity;
- c) Other scientific work to which information from SSI is likely to provide significant new knowledge in the areas of ecology, geology, glaciation and the effects of climate change;
- d) Work that will significantly improve the wider public knowledge and perception of SSI;
- e) Any other matter that the Commissioner feels is significant enough to warrant a permit to be granted.

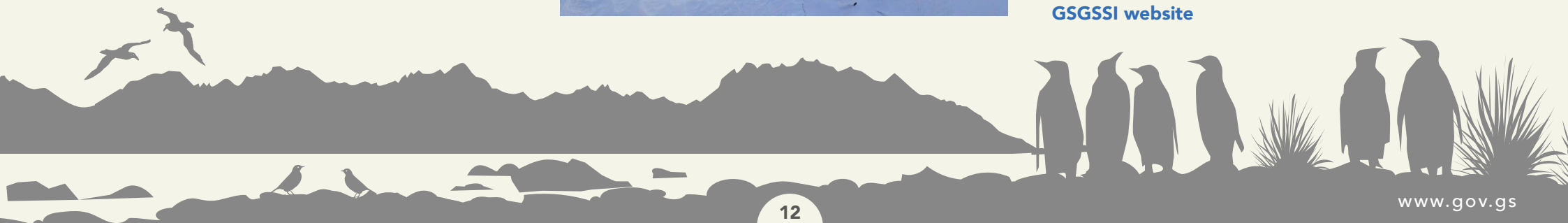


Applications to undertake activities on the South Sandwich Islands will follow the same assessment procedures as applications for South Georgia. Applications will be assessed on the feasibility of proposed activities their compatibility with the conservation objectives and management aims of the TPA and any future site-specific management plans.

When deciding on whether to grant a permit to enter SSI, the Government will consider how closely the planned activities align with the special circumstances outlined in sections (a) – (e) above and to what extent environmental risks will be mitigated. Only projects where it can be demonstrated that the environmental risk, including the risk of introduction of non-native species, has been reduced as far as possible towards near zero will be granted permission to access SSI. In addition, applicants will need to demonstrate how they will ensure, preferably through a health and safety plan, how they will minimise risk to any personnel.

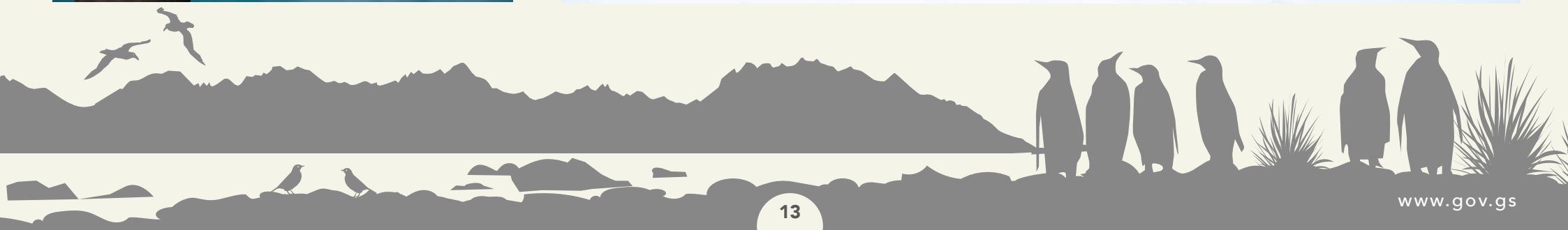
Tourism landings on the South Sandwich Islands will not be permitted. Regulation of activities in the marine environment is not within the scope of this Management Plan but it is noted that small boat or ship cruising is likely to be permitted.

Full details of the policy for issuing of permits to enter the South Sandwich Islands can be found on the [GSGSSI website](https://www.gov.gs)



## 7.5. Management aims and supporting activities

Conservation objectives and management aims for the SG and SSI TPAs have been drawn from existing GSGSSI policies and are based on advice from the TPA AG. Supporting activities which will be undertaken by GSGSSI to achieve these management aims are identified below. Where appropriate, specific time scales have been identified, but many of the activities are ongoing, iterative processes which will be undertaken across the whole timeframe of this Management Plan. Progress against all activities will be reviewed within the 6-year review cycle. Details of the responsible person for each activity within GSGSSI are available on request.





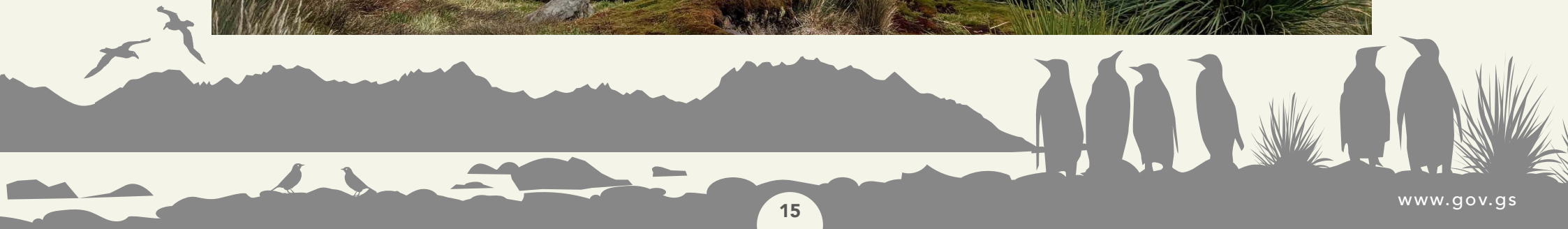
# 7.5.1 Conservation Objective: Conservation, Protection and Preservation of Biodiversity

Management aim	Supporting activities
<p>Ecosystems are protected from present-day and future pressures and recovering from historic human-exploitation</p>	<p>By the end of 2024 the Government will set out how it intends to deliver on those aspects of the Global Biodiversity Framework where it is best placed to act, including identification of contributions to meet specific targets and identification of work required in terms of the monitoring framework</p> <p>Activities that are prohibited by Regulations may be granted a permit following assessment to ensure appropriate mitigation measures are in place to protect biodiversity.</p> <p>Long-term monitoring projects that document baseline of biodiversity levels (species, population numbers) will be maintained, and developed as required, to be used as an indicator against which to measure change.</p> <p>In 2024, surveys of terrestrial communities in less frequently visited areas, including the south coast of South Georgia, will be undertaken to inform future management.</p> <p>An assessment will be made to determine if additional monitoring at new sites, or for new species, is required in order to monitor change and as appropriate steps will be put in place to instigate this.</p> <p>Assessments will be made to determine if specific areas on SG or SSI, or populations of particular species, are at environmental risk and to advise Government of any actions that should be considered to mitigate this. Site- and species-specific management plans will be developed and adopted as appropriate.</p>
<p>Acknowledging the profound impacts on biodiversity, measures are in place to contribute to global efforts to halt climate change</p>	<p>By 2024, a report on the effects of climate change in terms of the terrestrial ecosystems in SGSSI will be completed, including an assessment of potential future changes and approaches.</p> <p>Projects which use SG and SSI's unique location to contribute to global understanding of climate change and steps that can be taken to mitigate impacts, will be encouraged.</p> <p>A micro-hydro plant will be installed at King Edward Point to supplement existing hydroelectric power generation</p> <p>100% of power on South Georgia will be available from renewable sources</p>
<p>Increased awareness of conservation success stories and promotion of SG and SSIs unique biological assemblages</p>	<p>The GSGSSI website will be updated and will include a section recognising science and outreach support.</p> <p>High quality media projects with global reach will be encouraged.</p> <p>GSGSSI will contribute to international fora including CBP, IUCN etc and other relevant bodies working in UK OTs</p>



## 7.5.2 Conservation Objective: Management, Monitoring and Control of Invasive Species

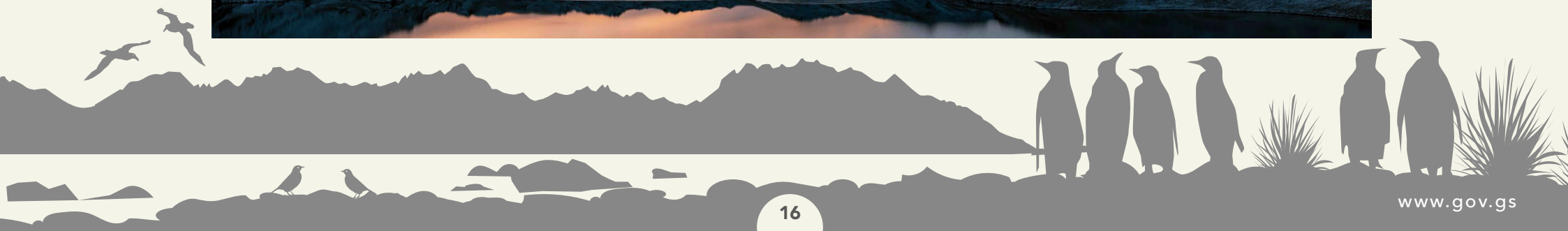
Management aim	Supporting activities
Measures are in place to manage and if practicable, prevent, the establishment of new non-native species and to reduce the number of non-native species already established.	Measures to enhance the infrastructure required for effective biosecurity will be developed.
	The rodent incursion response plan and risk assessment will be kept under review to ensure it remains effective and implementable.
An awareness of the risks of invasive species is at the forefront of all activities.	Data on biosecurity activities will be collected and regularly reviewed by appropriate experts to ensure efficacy. Changes to protocols will be made as required.
	Non-native plant management will be undertaken in accordance with the non-native plant management strategy.
	All activities which have the potential for introducing non-native species will be preceded an assessment which considers and mitigates biosecurity risk.
	By 2024, a new legislative framework for biosecurity, including measures for compliance and enforcement will be developed.
	The legislative and policy framework for activities on SGSSI will be reviewed and updated where necessary in view of the latest international legislation, guidance and standards, including the delivery of an environmental impact assessment regime that is proportionate and effective in maintaining biodiversity conservation and sustainable activities.





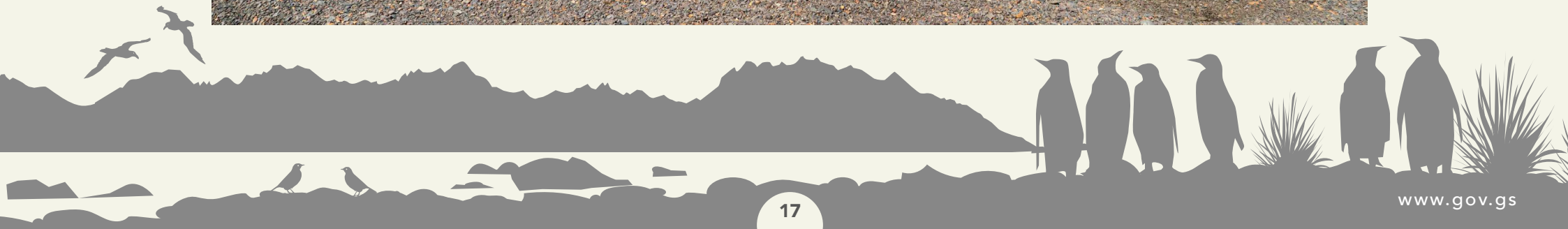
## 7.5.3 Conservation Objective: Environmentally Responsible Science

Management aim	Supporting activities
Research activities and methods have minimal impact on the environment.	<p>Research involving activities that are prohibited under the SPA Regulations will only be permitted following assessment to ensure mitigation measures are in place to ensure wildlife and the environment are protected.</p> <p>Any activity involving handling of wildlife will only be permitted if it has been subject to appropriate ethical review processes.</p>
Research which contributes to conservation, protection, reservation and restoration of biodiversity on SG and SSI is supported and encouraged.	<p>By 2024 a science strategy will be developed that identifies the science required to enable wider management of the Territory and promotes scientific research of regional and global importance.</p> <p>Projects which can demonstrate their objectives are consistent with those identified in this Management Plan and the science strategy, will be offered priority for support in funding bids.</p> <p>Within 18 months of the initiation of this Management Plan, a research and monitoring plan will be developed that will map existing monitoring against management aims and identify knowledge gaps which should be subject to further research.</p> <p>Research proposals to access the most sensitive sites, including the SSI, will be expected to demonstrate novelty and scientific value and a highly precautionary approach will be adopted when considering environmental risk.</p>
Encourage collaboration between researchers and the sharing of data and logistic support, including free access to the public.	<p>A policy of open access will be the default position for all data arising from research and monitoring funded by the Government, collected by the Government or carried out under permit or licence from the Government, except in specific circumstances.</p> <p>A data portal for upload of georeferenced drone imagery, facilitating collaboration and the development of AI monitoring tools will be developed.</p>



## 7.5.4. Conservation Objective: Promoting Wilderness and Wildlife

Management aim	Supporting activities
SG and SSI are internationally revered as a wild space where natural forces dominate	Recognising its varied meaning, impressions of SGSSI wilderness will be captured and quantified.
High quality, media outreach projects which promote SGSSI wildlife and its conservation are encouraged.	By 2025 a communications plan will be developed to promote wilderness values and coordinated protection is shared and in use by multiple stakeholders.
Human activities are undertaken sympathetically and strive to leave no permanent mark on the landscape.	Commercial media projects will be required to provide information about the reach and target audience of their productions and demonstrate how the production promotes SG and SSI conservation values.
	Media projects wishing to access the most sensitive sites, including the SSI, will be expected to demonstrate a greater outreach potential and a highly precautionary approach will be adopted when considering environmental risk.
	Activities that are prohibited under the SPA Regulations will only be granted permission if it is assessed that appropriate mitigation measures are in place to ensure wilderness values are conserved.





## 7.5.5 Conservation Objective: Facilitating Sustainable Visits

Management aim	Supporting activities
South Georgia is a global role model for responsible tourism, where stakeholders and Government work in partnership.	Clear, evidence-based, guidelines for visits to South Georgia will be available and will be reviewed regularly.
	New site-specific guidelines and management plans will be developed as required and in collaboration with IAATO.
Visitors are actively engaged in the conservation of the island.	Onboard education of passengers and increased participation in citizen science programmes will be supported through IAATO.
	Visitor site monitoring tools will be developed with IAATO.
	Opportunities for fundraising initiatives relevant to enhancing the conservation of South Georgia will be highlighted.
Systems are in place to recognise and mitigate possible impacts from to visits before the environment is harmed.	GSGSSI will work with IAATO to continue to develop best practice guidelines for landings to mitigate the risk of harm before it occurs.
	All visits will continue to be followed by a post-visit report which will provide details of locations and activities undertaken and note any impacts.
	A series of Site Inventories will be developed by GSGSSI to document the physical and biological characteristics of visitor sites and will act as a base line against which to recognise and monitor change.

