



Guidance for your application to visit Beauchene Island

FIG Environment Department

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1 Introduction

Beauchene Island, found 80 km south of the tip of East Falkland and 50 km from Sea Lion Island, (52° 54' S and 59° 09' W) is the most remote island in the Falkland Islands, and also remains its most pristine island. The island is 3,000 m long and 900 m wide at its widest point, with an area of 187 ha. It has never been grazed and there are no introduced plants or animals.

Indeed, its special and unique nature and the fact that it has been relatively untouched is celebrated in the Falkland Islands. It has been rarely visited since its discovery by Jacques Gouin de Beauchêne in 1701, receiving only sporadic landings by sealers in the 1800s and 1900s and later by conservationists and scientists. It was granted protection as a seal reserve for over sixty years under the Seal Fishery Ordinance and was declared a wild animal and bird sanctuary under the Wild Animals and Birds Protection Ordinance in 1964, later converting to a National Nature Reserve under the Conservation of Wildlife and Nature Ordinance (1999). It is also recognized as an important bird area, with the largest population of rockhopper penguins in the Falkland Islands (estimated at 105,000 pairs in 2010), the second largest population of black browed albatrosses (estimated at 139,000 pairs in 2010) and is the only breeding site of fairy prions in the Falkland Islands (ExCo 35/15).

Concerns were raised as early as the 1980s about the importance of protecting the island from multiple landings that could pose threats to the birdlife of the island and increased fire risk (Smith & Prince, 1985). There are also concerns around wildlife disturbance and the potential to introduce invasive species and the devastating impacts that these could have. Given this, access to the Island has been strictly controlled by the Falkland Islands Government (FIG); since 1964 less than 30 visits have been allowed, and those only in exceptional circumstances. In 2015 FIG's Executive Council approved the retention of existing policy that visits to Beauchene Island might be approved for scientific purposes where the impact on the resident wildlife was negligible and that visits for purposes of tourism and wildlife filming would *not* be approved under the delegated authority. However, the process was changed such that applications would be considered by the FIG Environment Committee (ExCo 35/15).

It is therefore government policy that visits will only be considered by the Environment Committee for scientific purposes in *exceptional* circumstances. Furthermore, with modern technology it is now possible to perform many scientific assessments of the island remotely, further reducing the need for



access onto the shore for scientific purposes. Limiting access to the island means that environmental risks associated with visits, e.g. introduction of invasive species or diseases, will be kept to an absolute minimum.

Given this position, it should be noted that the likelihood for any application to visit Beauchene Island to be granted is very low. Prospective applicants are advised to manage their expectations accordingly and to contact the Falkland Islands Government Environment Department prior to making any applications.



Figure 1: Looking north on the western side of Beauchene. Image credit: Al Baylis

2 General Information

2.1 Designations

Beauchene Island is owned and managed by the Falkland Islands Government (FIG) with the Environment Department responsible for its management. Beauchene Island was declared a Wildlife Reserve on the 30 December 1964, and in accordance with the Conservation of Nature and Wildlife Ordinance 1999 the reserve was re-designated as a National Nature Reserve (NNR) in 1999. The Order for Beauchene Island states that no wild animals and birds can be wilfully killed, injured or taken and no domestic or carnivorous animals can be introduced.

Beauchene Island is also recognised as an Important Bird Area (IBA). The IBA status is issued under a programme co-ordinated by BirdLife International, and IBA listing has no international or national legality.

2.2 Geology

Beauchene Island has a uniform geology of quartzite and is heavily jointed, with a prominent joint located towards the south of the island (Edwards 1997). The northern two-thirds of the island are a plateau, with 30 – 60 m high cliffs on the east side, and lower cliffs and rock platforms and boulder beaches on the west coast. This section is covered with tussac grass, underlain by peat. There is a large hole, 100 m in circumference and 50 m deep, which connects via a cave/tunnel to the sea 150 m away in the centre of the island.

The southern end of the island is much narrower, with vertical cliffs and boulders and rock slabs on top of rock platforms.

2.3 Terrestrial habitats

The current terrestrial habitats on Beauchene Island are thought to have remained similar for the last 12,000 years, due to the fact that the island has not experienced any recent glacial action (Smith and Prince 1985). The peat is extremely deep, being up to 5 - 13 m deep in some places.

There are four main habitats found on Beauchene; Tussac, Standing Open Water, Littoral Sediment and Maritime cliff. There are two freshwater ponds on Beauchene Island, one in the north and another towards the south, however both of these may on occasion dry up and contain predominantly peaty water.

2.4 Plants

A number of higher and lower plants have been observed on Beauchene. Five vascular plants have been recorded on Beauchene Island (Table 1).

Table 1: IUCN and Falkland Islands Red List status of vascular plants on Beauchene Island.

Scientific name	Common name	Falkland Islands status	Global conservation status
<i>Poa flabellata</i>	Tussac Grass	Least Concern	Least Concern
<i>Cardamine glacialis</i>	Bitter-cress	Least Concern	Not assessed
<i>Apium australe</i>	Wild Celery	Least Concern	Not assessed
<i>Callitriche antarctica</i>	Water starwort	Least Concern	Not assessed
<i>Senecio vaginatus</i>	Smooth ragwort	Least Concern	Least Concern

Surveys of lichens, moss and fungi have been carried out at various sites around the Falkland Islands during the last 150 years, but no specific surveys have been conducted at Beauchene Island (Engel 1990; Watling 2002; Ochyra and Broughton 2004). Smith and Prince (1985) recorded four moss species and five liverwort species (mostly on moist, shaded tussac grass litter), twelve lichens and two species of fungi. Some of the lichens were species found only on stranded timber from continental South America.

2.5 Invertebrates

Smith and Prince (1985) conducted invertebrate surveys on Beauchene Island. Spiders and beetles were the most abundant larger invertebrates, with seven spider species (Usher, 1983), 12 Coleoptera, 15 Diptera (flies) and three hymenoptera taxa and smaller mesofauna consisted of mites, springtails and psocids.

2.6 Birds

A number of bird surveys have been conducted on Beauchene Island since the 1960s. Twenty-one species of birds have been recorded as recent or regular breeders on Beauchene Island (Table 2).



Figure 2: South of Beauchene Island overlooking Albatross colonies. Image credit: Al Baylis

2.7 Marine mammals

The South American fur seal (*Arctocephalus australis*) is found in southern parts of continental South America, and it is known to breed at 12 sites in the Falkland Islands. The Falkland Islands has the largest breeding population of South American fur seals, based on a population census in 2018, with the majority of breeding colonies located in the Jason Islands group. There are accounts from nineteenth century sealers that suggest South American fur seals bred on Beauchene Island, and hairs in peat deposits indicate a presence for approximately 11,000 years on the island (Smith and Prince 1985). Presently, fur seals do not breed on Beauchene Island, but it is an important haul-out site during the non-breeding season (Smith and Prince 1985). Occasionally southern elephant seals and leopard seals are seen hauled-out ashore on Beauchene Island (Smith and Prince 1985). In 2018, a small number of breeding South American Sea Lions (*Otaria flavescens*) were reported in Blinn's Bay with approximately 6 pups (Al Baylis, personal comment).

Table 2: IUCN Red List status for breeding birds found on Beauchene Island.

Scientific name	Common name	Falkland Islands status	Global conservation status
<i>Catharacta antarctica</i>	Falklands Skua		
<i>Carduelis barbata</i>	Black-chinned Siskin		Least Concern
<i>Chloephaga hybrida malvinarum</i>	Kelp Goose	Sub-species	Least Concern
<i>Cinclodes antarcticus antarcticus</i>	Tussac bird	Sub-species	Near Threatened
<i>Eudyptes chrysocome</i>	Southern Rockhopper Penguin		Vulnerable
<i>Eudyptes chrysolophus</i>	Macaroni Penguin		Vulnerable
<i>Garrodia nereis</i>	Grey-backed Storm-petrel		Least Concern
<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	Giant Petrel		Least Concern
<i>Melanodera melanodera melanodera</i>	Black-throated Finch	Sub-species	Least Concern
<i>Muscisaxicola maclovianus maclovianus</i>	Dark-faced Ground-tyrant	Sub-species	Least Concern
<i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>	Wilson's storm petrel		Least Concern
<i>Pelecanoides urinatrix berard</i>	Common Diving Petrel	Sub-species	Least Concern
<i>Leucocarbo atriceps albiventer</i>	Imperial Shag	Sub-species	Least Concern
<i>Phalacrocorax magellanicus</i>	Rock Shag		Least Concern
<i>Phalcoboenus australis</i>	Striated Caracara		Near Threatened
<i>Ardena grisea</i>	Sooty Shearwater		Near Threatened
<i>Pygoscelis papua</i>	Gentoo Penguin		Least Concern
<i>Spheniscus magellanicus</i>	Magellanic Penguin		Least Concern
<i>Tachyeres brachypterus</i>	Falkland Steamer Duck	Endemic	Least Concern
<i>Thalassarche melanophris</i>	Black-browed Albatross		Least Concern
<i>Troglodytes cobbi</i>	Cobb's Wren	Endemic	Least Concern

2.8 Built Heritage

A small hut (2 x 2 x 2 m) was built in 1972 by Ian Strange as a cooking hut. It is now in a poor state of repair and is somewhat buried in a mature stand of roof-high tussac grass. The exact condition of the hut would need to be assessed as the island has not been visited in a number of years and no information is kept on it. If you were to be allowed to spend the night, the best place to camp is in the vicinity of this hut.

3 The Application Process

Anyone wishing to visit Beauchene must obtain a valid permit through the FIG Environment Department from the Environment Committee. An official application form can be requested from the FIG Environment Department or can be downloaded from our website:

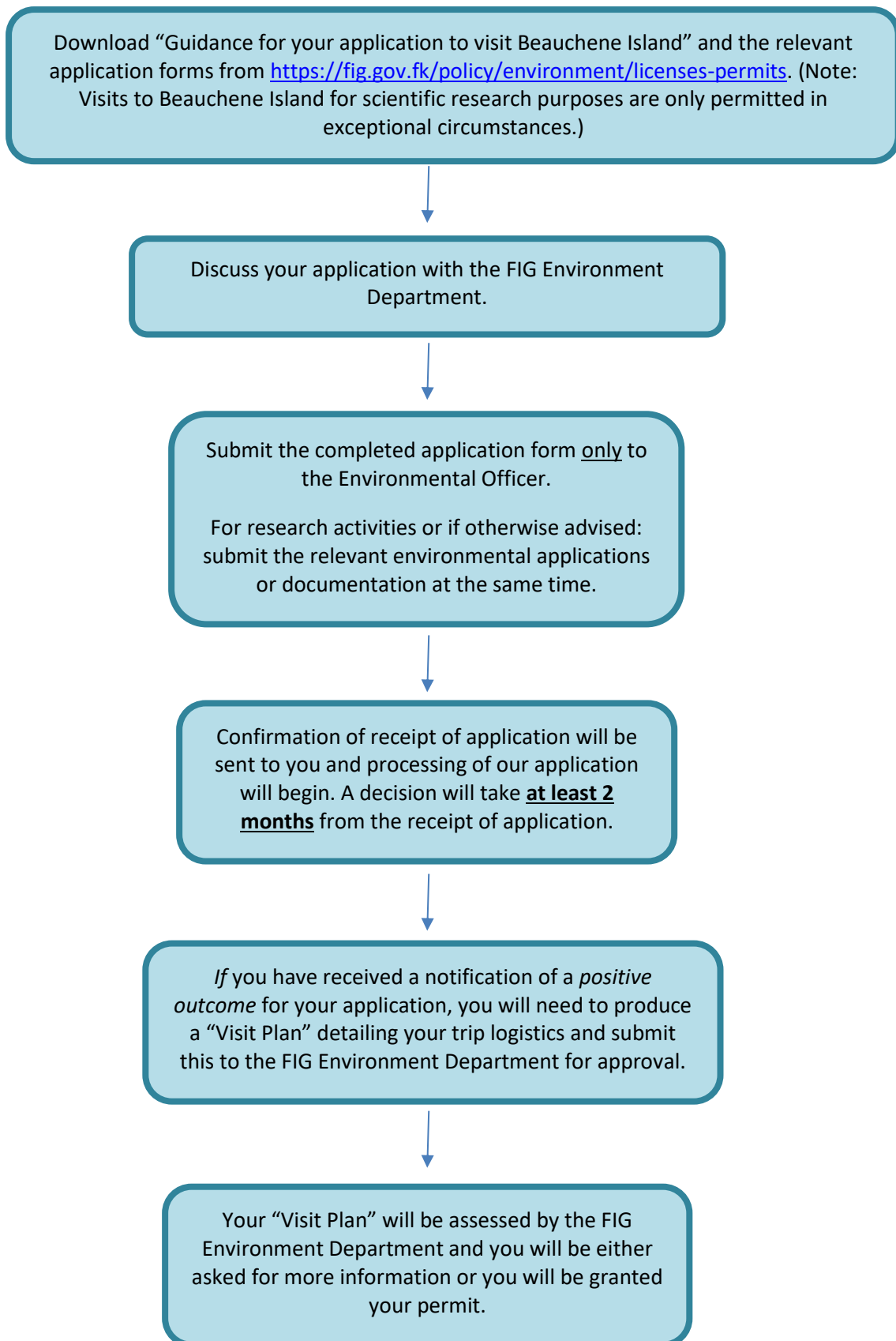
<https://fig.gov.fk/policy/environment/licenses-permits>

If you have any questions or queries during the application process please do not hesitate to contact the Environmental Officer, Denise Blake, at environmental.officer@sec.gov.fk. We highly recommend that you contact us prior to submitting your application to discuss this with us. *As outlined in the introduction, permission to access Beauchene Island is only granted by FIG in exceptional circumstances for scientific research purposes and applicants should manage expectations accordingly.*

A decision on your permit application will be at least 2 working months from receipt of application. You should therefore leave plenty of time between application and intended visit date to allow for the application process and all subsequent planning. Permits are considered by the Environment Committee. An expedited process for these permits is not available. Please ensure that you sign and date your application and ensure that all information that has been provided is accurate. Once it has been received by the Environmental Officer you will receive a confirmation of receipt, and the FIG Environment Department will begin processing your application. Please note that your application may be approved, deferred (more information requested from you) or not approved.

Once the Environmental Committee have considered your application and it is deemed for approval, we will then ask you to submit a detailed "Visit Plan" (see Section 4) with logistical arrangements for your trip to the FIG Environment Department. This plan will be need to be agreed with and approved by the Environment Department before your permit is issued.

Flow Chart of Application Process:



If your application is considering environmental research, a separate research permit application will also need to be made for this research. Guidance for this and the appropriate application forms can be found on our website at:

<https://fig.gov.fk/policy/environment/licenses-permits>

for information, or to see if you need an additional environmental permit, please contact the FIG Environment Department prior to submitting your application.

4 Guidance Notes for completing the application form

The “Application for Visitor Permit to visit Beauchene Island” must be completed, in English, by the lead applicant/expedition leader. It should not be completed by a third-party that is not leading the visit. If you have any questions or need assistance for your application please contact the FIG Environmental Officer.

4.1 Part 1: About the Applicant

The application should always be in the name of the lead applicant who is the expedition and group leader. Your name, contact e-mail, telephone and address as well as your professional affiliation are required. These will be used to contact you should we have any questions and to notify you of the outcome of your application. This information is required and your permit will not be issued without it.

4.2 Part 2: About your visit to Beauchene

In this section you will be asked to provide information on the logistics of your visit. When counting the number of people in your group please count adults and children separately and provide these figures separately. This will aid our risk assessment for your visit.

We understand that weather and other factors such as travel availability to the Falkland Islands can impact your intended day of landing on Beauchene Island so if you do not have a specific date, it is fine to provide a specific range of dates or calendar months. We need a minimum of a range within one month however to ensure that we can provide the appropriate assessment for your permit. Within this range, please also note the number of days and, if applicable, nights that you will be spending on the island. Please ensure that you state the total number of days and nights separately and should you require a repeat visit detail this here as well.

Finally, we ask you to provide the details of the vessel and skipper. If you do not know, or have a number of options at the time of applying for a permit please let us know. We will need this information, however, before your permit is issued as this will be specified on the permit and will form a key component of the biosecurity and other requirements for your visit.

4.3 Part 3: About your Experience

In this section we ask you questions that will help us understand what your and/or group members' previous experience is in landing on Beauchene Island or another remote offshore island.

Under question 3.1 please indicate if you have visited Beauchene Island, or a member of your group has ever visited Beauchene Island. Please note that if both you and members of your group have visited Beauchene Island in the past then please only complete this for yourself but mention the

number of other group visitors who have. In this instance you will only need to respond to question 3.3.

For question 3.2 please provide contact details of all the members of your group who have previously visited the island. Depending on the relevant experiences we will contact members of your group who have visited when you, the main applicant, have not previously visited. This is so that we can contact them to assess their experience and understand how this is to be /can be applied in the visit. You may wish to contact those listed prior to submitting your application and ask them to act as group leader. In this capacity the group leader is responsible for ensuring that all impacts are mitigated to a minimum, ensuring the safety of the group and overseeing all considerations for the visit detailed in section 4 below.

If you have never visited Beauchene Island before you will need to detail landing experience on similar small and remote offshore Islands. Please detail which Islands you have visited previously and provide details of your visit. Please be as specific as possible and include details such as length of stay, arrival to the island, work carried out on the island as well as the precautions used to prevent undue disturbance and biosecurity risks to the island.

4.4 Part 4: Reason for Visit

In this section of the application form we ask you to detail the reason why you wish to visit Beauchene. It is important to identify this clearly here and provide some background on your research, its methodologies and why you need to visit Beauchene Island. You should substantively explain why this work cannot be carried out anywhere else. Guidance on each of the questions is given here:

4.4.1 Question 4.1

This question seeks to identify what the main reason is for your visit to Beauchene Island. Please provide an over-arching reason such as:

- Scientific Research;
- Conservation or Biosecurity Activities;
- Media and Filming;
- Tourism;
- Or any other activities

In addition to this we ask that you provide details on the nature of your work, such as description or project title and any associated methodologies that describe the work. For example, if you are carrying out Scientific Research, you should provide us with the title of your research and what research methodologies or techniques you will be employing.

4.4.2 Question 4.2

As with the above question, please use this space to fill in a secondary purpose for visiting Beauchene Island providing an over-arching reason as well as the details and nature of your work as above.

4.4.3 Question 4.3

This question enables us to check whether you already have a valid research permit in place. Please provide us with the details of your application; if you have applied already then please let us know the date received and if you have received your permission already then please provide us with the research permit number. If you are unsure then please contact us.

4.4.4 Question 4.4

Beauchene is a special place with a pristine environment, as such we want to ensure that your visit helps fill a vital gap or benefits our management of the island. This question is your chance to explain to us how your trip will benefit the island, which knowledge gap it fills and what the management implications are likely to be.

Some of our priorities and identified gaps can be found within our Biodiversity Framework and its strategies as well as our Islands Plan. For a copy of these please visit our website or contact us:

Environmental Officer:

environmental.officer@sec.gov.fk or +500 28427

Please note, that even if your intended visit is to benefit Beauchene Island in some way or fill a knowledge gap for the Falkland Islands, it does not guarantee that your application will be successful.

4.4.5 Question 4.5

The outcome of your work and trip is important to us and we would like to see any of your outputs once they become available. Outputs can include anything from a report, test results, policy recommendations or any other outcomes.

Please note that, at a minimum, the completion of a short post-visit report is mandatory and should be submitted to the Environment Department as soon as is practicable after the visit, but not more than two months later. Structure of the report will need to be discussed with the Environment Department when a visitor's permit is issued.

A copy of all data collected on the visit to Beauchene will need to be provided to the FIG Environment Department for FIG to use as they see fit in perpetuity.

4.4.6 Questions 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8

As Beauchene is a near pristine environment, these questions will help you carry out a mini-risk and impact assessment for your trip to Beauchene. Consider any:

- invasive techniques or disturbance on animals or plants;
- biosecurity risks;
- location of a campsite or work;
- footfall;
- waste disposal;
- any other risks that you may anticipate.

and note what these risks are (Question 4.6), how you will monitor and measure any changes (Question 4.7), and what you can do to mitigate any of the impacts or risks for your trip (Question 4.8).

4.4.7 Question 4.9

Ensuring that Beauchene Island is kept as pristine as possible is our priority. This question asks whether you have considered any other locations on the Falklands and why you need to visit Beauchene specifically or have ruled out other locations. Please provide details on any other locations you may have considered and why you have ruled these out. You should provide substantive justification of why other sites are not suitable for this work.

Please note, that providing justification for why this work cannot be completed elsewhere does not guarantee that your application will be successful.

5 Consideration for your Visit Plan

Carefully planning your visit to Beauchene is imperative to ensure that the impact to the Island will be kept to a minimum. As such, we ask you to provide us with a detailed Visit Plan which provides information on the logistics and risk mitigation considerations for your trip. Some of these considerations form a key part of your permit and are reflected on here. To help you meet these requirements we have included here useful information to take into consideration when planning your trip.

5.1 Logistics

Beauchene is a remote offshore Island making planning of your trip essential. Before you start planning your trip, familiarise yourself with those parts of the Countryside Code that are essential to Beauchene as well as the advice and any additional guidance that may be provided to you by the Environment Department, should your application be successful. You should carry a copy of all guidance with you. You will also need to carry a copy of the visitor permit issued to you and ensure that you comply with all conditions on the permit.

The types of things you should consider in drafting up your visit plan should include the following.

Permission for landing:

You need permission from FIG, the landowner, before entering Beauchene Island. Should you be issued a visitor permit for Beauchene Island, you will be given permit conditions that you need to follow. You will also need to follow your agreed site visit plan.

Access:

Plan your access onto the island carefully noting that access beaches may be occupied by marine mammals. Where they are occupied an alternative access route should be considered and used, if necessary. This will not only help ensure your group's safety but also prevent disturbance to animals. As you make your way across the island be sure not to disturb the burrows or nests of any birds, many of which burrow underground.

Please also note that it is not possible to anchor in the vicinity of Beauchene Island.

Shelter:

There is a hut on the island and previous visits to Beauchene have camped outside this hut. As the exact condition of the hut is unknown, care should be taken not to damage or remove it.

Safety:

Your safety is equally as important as is protecting the natural environment of the island. Please ensure you take all appropriate steps and that all members of your group are physically fit enough for the visit. At a minimum a satellite telephone or radio should be carried with you at all times in the case of an emergency. You will need to produce an emergency plan that takes account of risks to safety and how you plan to mitigate these, as well as what you plan to do in case of an emergency.

5.2 Biosecurity

There are no known invasive or non-native species on Beauchene Island and it is our intention to keep it that way. In order to ensure that we continue to protect Beauchene Island against any unwanted visitors, whether this is a plant, animal or pathogen we ask that all visitors follow the guidance below.

Before you arrive on the island please check all luggage and equipment that you are bringing ashore and make sure there is no vegetative matter nor animal matter anywhere. Make sure there are no rodents or signs of rodents (droppings or chew marks) in any of your bags or equipment. This is also true for any clothing. Please check any pockets, creases, Velcro and zippers and remove any visible matter. To aide in ensuring that your items remain rodent free you may contact the rodent detector dog handler, Naomi Baxter, on +500 55166 or biosecurity.doghandler@gov.gs.

Prior to accessing the island, you should wash any boots and weatherproof clothing and equipment with a biocide such as Virkon. This is available locally through some supermarkets or by contacting the Environment Department and will help protect against the spread of any pathogens.

Any foodstuff brought ashore must be kept in a transparent air-tight container and should be checked thoroughly before arriving. If you do take any fresh produce (meat, vegetables and fruit or dairy products) with you ashore, these must be taken off the island again including any wastes.

As FIG has ongoing development of biosecurity protocols and measures, you may be required to meet further biosecurity requirements or have goods destined for the Island inspected by the biosecurity officer. Please discuss this with the Environment Department should your application for a visitor permit be successful.

5.3 Rubbish and Waste

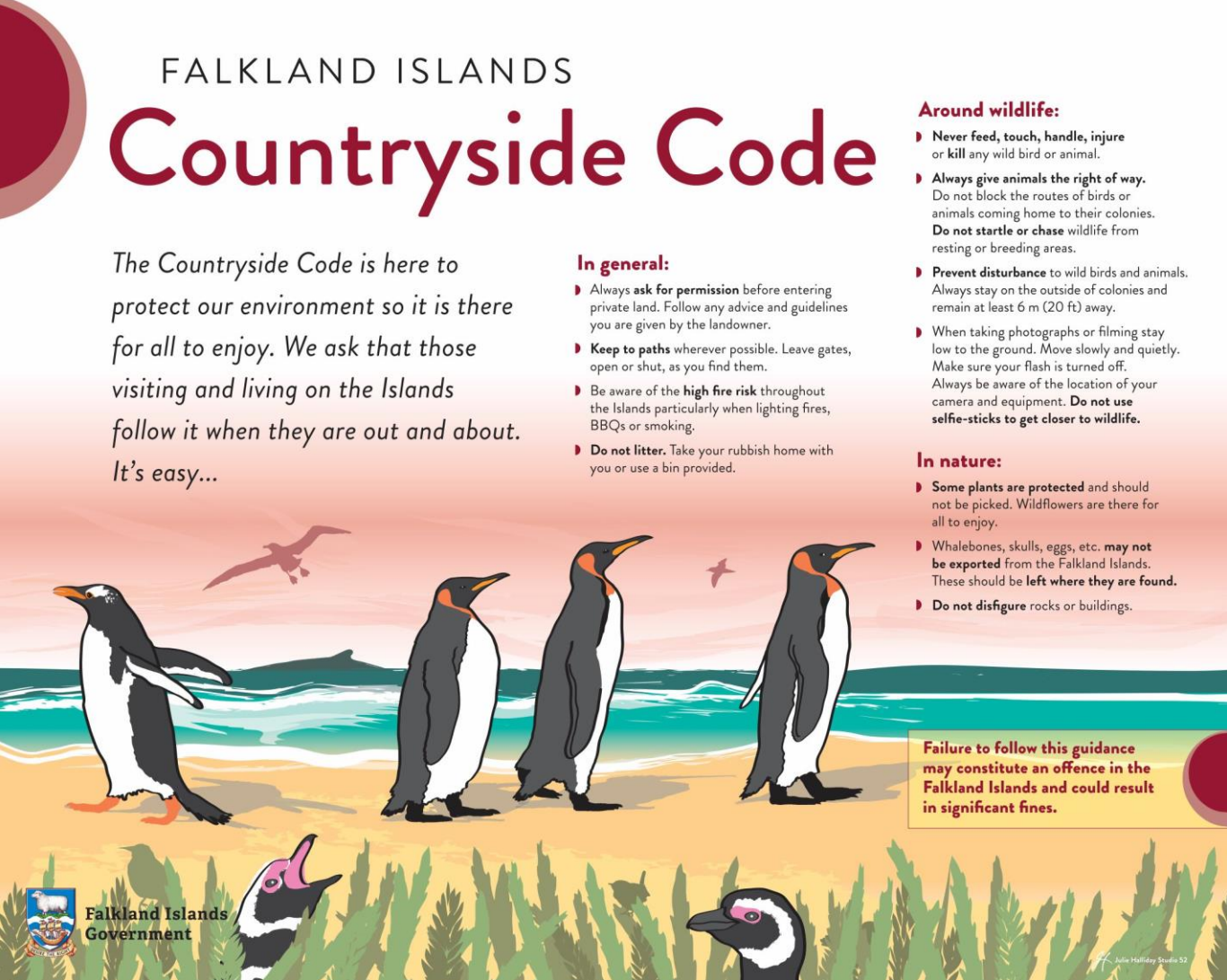
Please take all rubbish with you off the island after the trip. During the trip, please store any rubbish in sealed containers, bearing in mind that glass and household metal waste can be recycled upon your return to Stanley. No material, apart from biodegradable toilet paper should be left on the islands. Toilet facilities should be located where there is access to the sea.

5.4 Fire Risk

Beauchene is a peat island and so the fire risk is high. As a result, we *do not permit the use of open fires or smoking on the island*. The only exception to the use of flammable equipment on the island is that of a small camp cooker which may be used in a rocky area of the island away from wildlife and any flammable material. No electrically powered equipment should be used unless this is battery operated as this may also pose a fire risk.

5.5 Countryside Code

Your Visit Plan should incorporate all relevant elements from the Countryside Code and also adhere to the stringent details noted above. The Countryside Code is found below:



FALKLAND ISLANDS

Countryside Code

The Countryside Code is here to protect our environment so it is there for all to enjoy. We ask that those visiting and living on the Islands follow it when they are out and about. It's easy...

In general:

- ▶ Always **ask for permission** before entering private land. Follow any advice and guidelines you are given by the landowner.
- ▶ **Keep to paths** wherever possible. Leave gates, open or shut, as you find them.
- ▶ Be aware of the **high fire risk** throughout the Islands particularly when lighting fires, BBQs or smoking.
- ▶ **Do not litter.** Take your rubbish home with you or use a bin provided.

Around wildlife:

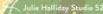
- ▶ **Never feed, touch, handle, injure or kill** any wild bird or animal.
- ▶ **Always give animals the right of way.** Do not block the routes of birds or animals coming home to their colonies. **Do not startle or chase** wildlife from resting or breeding areas.
- ▶ **Prevent disturbance** to wild birds and animals. Always stay on the outside of colonies and remain at least 6 m (20 ft) away.
- ▶ When taking photographs or filming stay low to the ground. Move slowly and quietly. Make sure your flash is turned off. Always be aware of the location of your camera and equipment. **Do not use selfie-sticks to get closer to wildlife.**

In nature:

- ▶ **Some plants are protected** and should not be picked. Wildflowers are there for all to enjoy.
- ▶ Whalebones, skulls, eggs, etc. **may not be exported** from the Falkland Islands. These should be **left where they are found.**
- ▶ **Do not disfigure** rocks or buildings.

Failure to follow this guidance may constitute an offence in the Falkland Islands and could result in significant fines.

 Falkland Islands Government

 Julie Holliday Studio S2

6 Decision-making for your visit to Beauchene explained

As explained in section 2, your application to visit Beauchene Island can take a minimum of 2 months to be decided once appropriate information is obtained. To facilitate this process please ensure you provide the appropriate level of detail. Your application is decided by the Environmental Committee of the Falkland Islands.

Your application is assessed based on the purpose and benefits of your visit to our management of the island and the amount of risk that your visit poses. Each application is unique and assessed on a case-by-case basis. As such, it is important that you contact us prior to applying and discuss your application with us.

In general, only visits where the primary objective is for scientific research or conservation and there is a demonstrable benefit to the island will be considered. As such, it is important for you to provide as much detail as possible in support of the relevant questions. To identify whether or not your application is likely to be accepted, we will assess your application against whether you are researching or conserving a species, habitat or natural feature that is a national priority or identified as a gap in knowledge or the need for its conservation. We are assessing whether your visit will fill that gap and whether there is an alternative location where your work could be carried out.

In addition to this we are also assessing the risk and impact of your visit to the island and the work you are carrying out. Will your work influence national priority habitats, species or natural features? We also look at what the impact is likely to be and whether we believe there to be a net benefit of your visit to the Islands, whether the risks outweigh the benefits.

Finally, your previous experience of visits Beauchene Island or a similar island is also extremely important to our decision-making as it helps us to assess the residual risk of your planned visit.

7 References

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