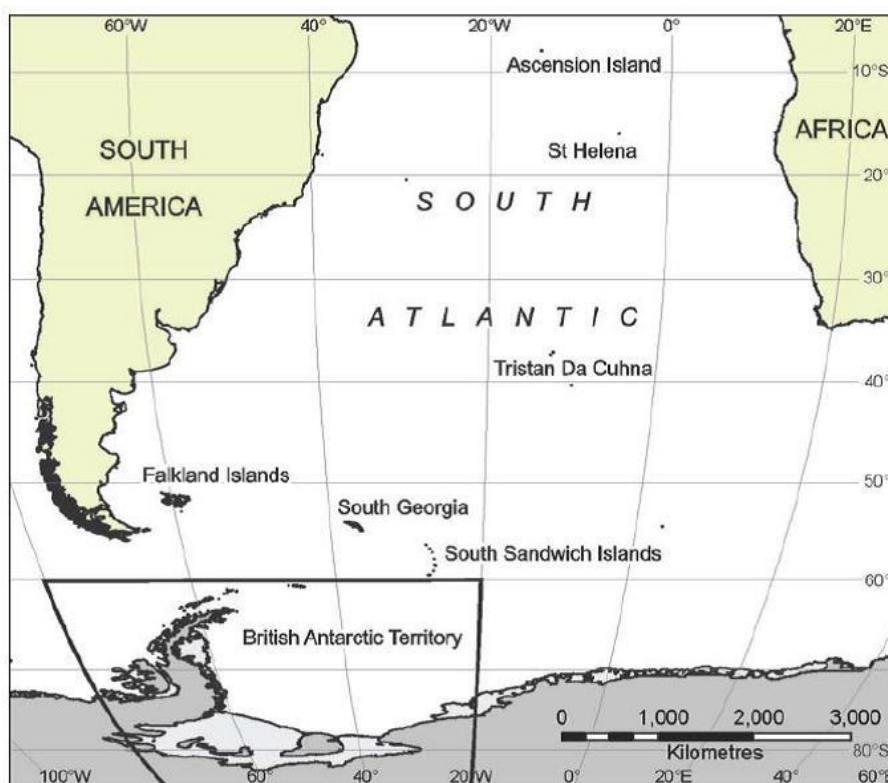


Developing a Falkland Islands and wider South Atlantic Information Management System and GIS Centre

By Paul Brickle

The South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI) is delighted to announce a new programme, the South Atlantic Information Management System and GIS Centre, which officially binds the UK South Atlantic Overseas Territories in SAERI's South Atlantic scope that ranges from the equator down to the ice. The Centre is funded by the FCO via the UK's Joint Nature Conservation Committee. Falkland Islands Governor Nigel Haywood commented "This is very exciting news. The development of robust information systems is vital in underpinning environmental research in the South Atlantic. This project will enable us to assemble baseline information, manage knowledge and establish linkages to enhance even further the outstanding scientific work already being done in the region." St Helena Governor Mark Capes added "St Helena, Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha warmly welcome this exciting opportunity to work with our friends in the Falkland Islands on this valuable project, which provides a fine template for further co-operation in our South Atlantic Community".



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The objective is to establish an information management system, including shared GIS¹ capabilities, accessible to all of the South Atlantic UK OTs (Falkland Islands, South Georgia, Tristan da Cunha, Ascension, and St. Helena). Training OT personnel across the region is also a priority to ensure capacity is built up in the region and dependence on outside assistance reduced.

The benefits of this new initiative will include: immediate follow-up to the Falklands Environmental Mainstreaming² workshop addressing the need for development of a GIS system that will underpin a wide range of environmental work in the islands; a shared information management and GIS capacity will support existing and future research in the region, provide a synergy between and add value to a range of current projects, and add significantly to the regional capacity to undertake ecosystem assessments and monitoring; and provide training to all OTs that will significantly increase regional capacity.

SAERI Director, Dr Paul Brickle, said “This is an incredible opportunity that will make environmental data storage and management more efficient across the territories. It will offer state of the art geo-spatial analyses in all areas of the environmental sciences being conducted in the South Atlantic.”

SAERI has the support of all of the South Atlantic OTs and can implement a cross territory project of this kind which will benefit all OTs in the region. Supporting the institute at this early stage of its life demonstrates the UK Government’s commitment to capacity building in the region and will help the institute to secure additional funding on the back of this commitment.

SAERI is also well placed to assist the regional OTs to become more self-reliant in the future in terms of their ability to identify and undertake their own research work and act on the results, in terms of using and sharing regionally available skills, and drawing upon international sources of funding. Early support for SAERI will help to ensure that the institute can fulfil this role.

The funding will directly support acquisition of hardware and software for use by all South Atlantic OTs; training for relevant personnel in the region; employment of a GIS specialist based in the Falklands for a fixed term; development of an environmental data repository in the Falklands for the regional OTs to enable geospatial data to be analysed; integration of the St Helena marine mapping data into a GIS system; and terrestrial and marine ecosystem mapping within the Falkland Islands.



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SAERI will investigate sources for longer term funding to ensure continuity of the work beyond the two year life of the current project.

Tara Pelembe, Director of the Environmental Management Directorate in St Helena said "SAERI is an exciting initiative that is providing a long-awaited tangible way to share resources, expertise and develop new areas of research across the South Atlantic Overseas Territories."

1 GIS (Geographic Information System) Is a system designed to capture, store, manipulate, analyse, manage, and present all types of geographical data. The acronym GIS is sometimes used for geographical information science or geospatial information studies to refer to the academic discipline or career of working with geographic information systems. In the simplest terms, GIS is the merging of cartography, statistical analysis, and database technology.)

2 Environmental mainstreaming is the informed inclusion of relevant environmental concerns into the decisions of institutions that drive national, local and sectoral development policy, rules, plans, investment and action

First published 2nd March 2013