

SAERI Officially Opened on 12th November 2012

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The South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI) was created in March, 2012 with a view to expanding the knowledge economy and environmental research within the Falkland Islands and beyond, within the South Atlantic. Director Dr Paul Brickle was appointed in March, 2012 and has spent the intervening seven months developing the institute. The



focus has been on creating public awareness of the institute, creating and driving forward new projects, and forging links with other potential collaborators. The work has been steady and at times, perhaps, challenging, given the need to discover potential sources of funding, which of the myriad projects are feasible, and which scientists/institutes would be best placed as collaborators in each.

In the seven months since the Director was appointed the institute has created, and become involved in several different projects. These projects include are very varied and cover a wide geographical area. One project is investigating the benthic biodiversity around Tristan da Cunha, in collaboration with British Antarctic Survey (BAS) and the Shallow Marine Surveys Group (SMSG). A relatively short term project, but with far



reaching potential application, which started in July 2012 is the Falkland Islands Marine Biodiversity Archive project (FIMBAR) which has the aim of collating historical and current biodiversity data from the waters surrounding the Falkland Islands. A diving survey has also been instigated with SMSG to

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ascertain the marine flora and fauna around Ascension Island. Similarly, SAERI will also be providing support to a Darwin project which will map the marine habitat of St Helena. Two PhD projects have also been started in association with the University of Aberdeen, one of which is studying mackerel ice fish around South Georgia, and the other is investigating the algae around the Falkland Islands; and another up-coming PhD project, being undertaken by a Falkland Islander is studying the benthic ecology around the Islands on spatiotemporal scales. There are also many other potential projects which are currently under discussion and development, and are in varying stages of readiness.

For many months, the small, but expanding, SAERI team (Paul Brickle, Rachael Crowie, and Deborah Davidson) have been working towards the official opening of the institute. His Royal Highness, Prince Edward, the Duke of Kent came to the Falkland Islands in November, 2012, as part of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. The Duke had a whirlwind tour of various places within the FI and kindly officially opened SAERI on Monday 12 November. Dr Brickle gave a presentation to the Duke and seven other honoured guests, including His Excellency Nigel Haywood, the Governor of the Falkland Islands, about the creation of the Institute, and Dr Deborah Davidson gave a short presentation about the Falkland Islands Marine Biodiversity Archive project which she has been working on since July. This was followed by the presentation of several posters by several collaborating scientists. Finally, the Duke gave a speech to a small assembled group of approximately 30 people, including the Governor, a UK MP, local MLAs, various scientists, and local media and unveiled the plaque. The SAERI team then had three and a half days to finish preparations for the unofficial opening on Friday 16 November. This was a much larger, evening soiree and many friends from the FI joined them for a convivial, celebratory evening.



All in all, it has been a busy and extremely productive seven months since the creation of SAERI, and as HE Nigel Haywood intimated in his speech at the unofficial opening, it bodes well for an exciting and prolific future for the South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute.