



Chagos Conservation Trust

Report of the Trustees

The Trustees present their report and the accounts of the charity for the year to 31st August 2024.

Highlights from the year

The Chagos Conservation Trust (CCT) launched its 2023-2028 five-year strategy in August 2023, which sets out its vision and mission, its strategic objectives, and how these are to be achieved. Given the potential political changes surrounding the Chagos Archipelago, CCT held a strategy session in October 2024 to update the five year strategy at its half-way mark. The updated strategy has been distributed.

The Trust continued to assist the Chagossian community group, Chagossian Voices, with ongoing support for their website. Including the training and employment of a community member as a part-time Content Officer, using the remaining Chagos Connect funding.

The Trust applied for a Darwin Plus, plus three Darwin Local grants, as well as funding from the Blue Nature Alliance to run another Connect Chagos programme: to train members of the Chagossian community in conservation skills.

After completing the Rat Eradication Operational Plan, and the Vegetation Management Operational Plan, *Healthy Islands, Healthy Reefs* Project Manager Dr Pete Carr undertook a data gathering expedition to complete the overall Rewilding Operational Plan, to be ready to commence the project once funding is secured.

A series of presentations were held at the Geological Society of London after the Annual General Meeting to showcase the Trust's work, concurrent scientific research in the area, with the hope that this will help boost awareness, membership and donations over the longer term.

The annual Trust publication, *Chagos News*, was published in January 2024, and is available on the CCT website and from the British Library's archives. The next issue is due to be published in January 2025.

The Trust released a book authored by staff member Dr Pete Carr entitled 'Guide to the Birds of the Chagos Archipelago', which is available from the CCT online bookstore and in Diego Garcia's store.

During the period of the report, FOUR Trustees resigned, including the Chair and Treasurer, and TWO Trustees joined the Board.

CCT launched its first internship programme in partnership with Swansea University, recruiting its first-ever intern who started in September 2024 and will be taking a year out from their marine biology degree.

To increase its Trustees' skill sets, CCT held a media training session in London in December 2023 at London's Somerset House, attended by Board members and members of the Chagossian community.

The relationship between the UK and US Trust was deepened, with US-CCT Board members being invited to attend Board and other meetings. Plus their website redesign is part of the overall CCT website revamp project, which will enter into its final stage in 2025, together with the proposed Chagos Information Portal upgrade.

Increasing the amount of posts across the four CCT social media platforms led to an increase in re-posts, 'likes', and engagement.

1. Objectives and activities

Vision and mission

CCT's vision is to ensure the globally important natural environment of the Chagos Archipelago is well protected, conserved and understood, inspiring the better management and protection of our planet and the animals and people that populate it. Its mission is to promote and undertake environmental, scientific and historical research, and advance education concerning the Chagos Archipelago.

Key aims

To build a Trust fit for the Chagos Archipelago

CCT is committed to running a professional organisation. This enables the Trust to play a leading role in conservation, research, and raising awareness about the environment of the Chagos Archipelago. We will ensure CCT is managed through best practice operating systems, diversifying income for sustained growth, and securing a pipeline of programme funding in line with our strategic priorities.

To inspire action

CCT is committed to increasing the knowledge and understanding of the importance of the Chagos Archipelago globally, and building an international network of supporters championing its protection. Our activities include increasing the reach of science, conservation, and history within diverse audiences, including the Chagossian community, CCT members, donors, the media, plus our partners. We continue to build strategic partnerships to undertake more conservation work.

Protecting a global asset

CCT is committed to working towards fully understanding the globally important and precious natural environment of the Chagos Archipelago, ensuring it is well-protected and conserved for the benefit of our planet, and all those who populate it – both animals and people.

All research has been completed, and our Rewilding Operational Plan is ready to start our *Healthy Islands, Healthy Reefs* programme, once funding is secured.

By eradicating rats and managing the abandoned coconut plantations, a more natural environment will regenerate, resulting in healthier islands. These create a refuge for native species from the iconic coconut crabs to breeding (threatened) turtles and native seabirds. The transfer of nutrients from breeding seabirds on islands assists coral reefs recover from, and builds resilience to the effects of climate change, with the additional effect of helping marine ecosystems to flourish.

Strategy

CCT's 2023-2028 Strategic Business Plan launched in August 2023 explains the importance of conserving the Chagos Archipelago's valuable natural environment, including how it can act as an exemplar for conservation and management of similar environments across the planet. This strategy was revisited at a session in October 2024, before the half-way mark, and updated.

In a world ravaged by destruction and exploitation, the Archipelago remains a rich and precious marine environment. The Trust continually strives to preserve this collection of over 55 islands and 274km² of reefs for the many species that call it home, and for future generations to appreciate. With the right care, the Archipelago can be a reminder of how tropical reefs flourished many hundreds of years ago - and can offer vital insight into how they might be saved for generations to come.

We support and carry out conservation work, plus scientific and historical research, and strive to highlight the global importance of this incredible marine ecosystem. We recognise that we are not the only organisation interested in science, cultural and/or conservation work in the Chagos Archipelago, and nor do we want to be. We believe the more interest there is from others in protecting this global asset, the more likely we are to achieve our ultimate aims and mission.

We consult and work with the Chagossian community and other like-minded organisations including the Zoological Society of London, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew. We particularly recognise the invaluable role of the Bertarelli Programme in Marine Science, and the many scientists involved in its work.

We will work with the community, these institutions, and others, to implement actions that are complementary to their work – for example, our major *Healthy Islands, Healthy Reefs* rewilding programme. Throughout our work, we are very conscious of the damaging effects of climate change on the coral reefs of the world, including those of the Chagos.

By maintaining (or where necessary restoring) these islands and reefs as unpolluted and in as natural a state as possible, we are providing the best possible conditions for corals – including the endemic and endangered Chagos Brain coral – to survive in a world which is likely to be a very challenging future environment for these wonderful and economically important species.

It is the voices of passionate citizens that will protect this Archipelago for years to come. By sharing knowledge and understanding, we aim to convince people of its value to the world, and to more than a thousand different types of fish and coral that call it home. We want to be an enduring voice of support for the Archipelago. By building a solid organisation, we can maintain and strengthen our role as a leading protector, researcher, and educator in this area.

CCT's financial strategy is to invest the great majority of the founder's legacy in order to generate a return averaging 5% a year; this should allow us to preserve the value of our assets, subject to any decisions to invest additional funds in progressing the Trust's objectives, with any surplus being used to fund the organisation's work. The Trust will also seek donations from external funding organisations and individuals – these funds, together with some of the legacy capital each year, provide support for research and conservation projects.

Staff

CCT employs a full-time Director who works with the Trust's Trustees to take forward our conservation, fundraising and communications work. It has also employed a part time Project Manager to lead on the Trust's *Healthy islands, Healthy Reefs* rewilding project, plus a member of the Chagossian community to spend a few hours per week managing a CCT-sponsored Chagossian community website. All other work between August 2023-2024 was performed by the Trustees, and other individuals on a voluntary basis.

2. Achievements and performance

How our activities deliver public benefit

The Chagos Archipelago, and the seas surrounding its islands, have been designated as one of the world's largest fully protected Marine Protected Areas by the UK Government.

The CCT's charitable purpose is carried out for the public benefit, through a mixture of direct research and conservation work, communication and outreach.

Increasing the knowledge and understanding of the importance of the Chagos Archipelago, its scientific, historical and cultural value, is at CCT's core.

Communicating science to the public helps build an understanding of the urgent need to conserve areas such as the Chagos Archipelago, which provide a refuge for biodiversity in the face of threats such as climate change and invasive species.

CCT has developed the Chagos Information Portal, an online, open-source library of research, data, educational tools and communication materials such as photos and videos for use by the public.

The Trustees confirm that they have complied with the duty in Section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to the Charity Commission's general guidance on Charities and Public Benefit.

How our activities deliver environmental benefit

The Chagos Archipelago is home to some of the richest and most diverse coral reefs on the planet. Three hundred types of coral, and 800 species of fish are found in the Archipelago's waters, including rays and more than 50 different types of shark. The islands are globally important breeding sites for the endangered green and critically endangered hawksbill turtle, the vulnerable coconut crab is common throughout and over a million seabirds are present in the Archipelago.

Today, this important ecosystem is under new pressure as the damage caused by invasive species, illegal fishing, and the historic loss of native forests is being compounded by the effects of climate change, leaving it facing an uncertain future unless we take action.

The British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) Administration, which currently administers the Archipelago, has identified 11 conservation and environmental priorities to ensure the protection of the Chagos Archipelago's environment for the future. CCT has been approached to help deliver two of these priorities: (1) Restoring the islands through eradicating invasive rats and controlling invasive plants, both of which threaten native seabird populations and impact the delicate balance of BIOT's ecosystem, and (2) Understanding more about BIOT's unique terrestrial environment. CCT plans to deliver these priorities through our *Healthy Islands, Healthy Reefs* project, led by a Project Manager who is an expert in the region, Dr Peter Carr.

Healthy Islands, Healthy Reefs is based on sound science highlighting the significant linkages between the health of the islands of the Chagos Archipelago and their surrounding coral reefs and marine environs. In 2018, scientists discovered a relationship between healthy seabird populations on islands and healthy reefs and surrounding seas. The researchers found that after seabirds forage for food in the ocean, they return to the islands and their droppings act as a natural fertiliser for the surrounding seas.

By rehabilitating environmentally degraded islands through managing the abandoned coconut plantations to make space for native habitat to grow back, and eradicating invasive rats, a more natural, seabird-driven ecosystem will regenerate. This will result in healthier islands, helping coral reefs and the surrounding marine environment recover from and build resilience to the effects of climate change.

How our activities deliver community benefit

There is currently no resident community in the BIOT islands. In Diego Garcia, which is displaced well to the south of the main group of islands, there is a major military facility, with numbers of military and support personnel stationed there. The Trust is able to sell a range of educational materials, on the Chagos Archipelago, to these personnel.

Indian Ocean littoral states stand to benefit from the marine reserve as a potential breeding haven for overfished stocks of fish such as tuna. The worldwide community will benefit from the knowledge gained from this near pristine environment where, for instance, corals damaged by sea temperature rise have been seen to recover at much faster rates than in most other parts of the world and fish stocks exist at near natural levels, which is much higher than in other parts of the Indian Ocean.

CCT also engages on a regular basis with the UK-based Chagossian community and has elected a Trustee of Chagossian descent to its Board. We have advertised for another Chagossian community member Trustee, plus a Mauritian Trustee with conservation knowledge, too. In 2024, a part time Chagossian community website Content Manager was employed to keep a community website (which CCT supported the creation of) up-to-date, paid from the remaining Connect Chagos Funds. This website not only provides the Chagossian community with vital information, it also educates all interested visitors on the Chagossian community and islands.

The Trust continues to look into ways to work with, and involve the Chagossian community with the work CCT plans to undertake, especially with cultural conservation on the islands which are part of our rewilding the Chagos Archipelago plans.

Achievements in the 2023-2024 year

To build a Trust fit for the Chagos Archipelago	<p>At the 2024 CCT AGM, a new Chair, Deputy Chair, and Secretary were approved, along with another Trustee.</p> <p>Two new Trustees joined the Board - although four stepped down during the period covered in this report.</p> <p>The AGM and Speaker Event were hybrid, to increase participation, and recorded the largest-ever turnout for a CCT event.</p>		
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	<p>which is available to buy from the CCT online bookshop.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Users of the Chagos Information Portal averaged 250 users/month and the CCT website around 1000 users/month, with the CCT YouTube channel now at 69 subscribers; - Facebook likes are now over 7k, with 6.7k followers; - Instagram followers have increased to 664 followers; - X followers have increased to 329 followers; - LinkedIn's followers have increased to 277 followers with nearly 1.6k impressions, and a 10% increase in engagement. <p>CCT has 60 members as of the end of 2024 financial year, managed by a Membership Secretary.</p>	<p>After the success of the Trust's 30th year anniversary speaker event, another was held after the Trust's Annual General Meeting at the Geological Society of London in March 2024, to showcase the Trust's work and concurrent scientific research, which drew the largest-ever audience for any CCT event in its history.</p> <p>Together with Swansea University, CCT devised an internship scheme and recruited its first-ever intern which will join the CCT team for an academic year starting October 2024.</p> <p>CCT held its first media training event at London's Somerset House in December 2023, training Board members and members of the Chagossian community in skills including interviews, social media, and statement writing future-proofing the team faced with a change in the administration of the islands.</p> <p>With the ongoing politics, CCT published a statement reiterating its political neutrality and commitment to working with any and every person, government and organisation committed to the continued protection of the unique and precious environment of the Chagos Archipelago, and the seas around them.</p> <p>As the five-year strategy reaches its half-way point in 2025, a meeting was held to ensure things are going in the right direction and do any needed updates.</p>
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Protecting a global asset	<p>CCT's <i>Healthy Islands, Healthy Reefs</i> rewilding programme is now ready to action once funding is secured, after a Darwin Plus grant of £74,000 in May 2021 funded a Project Manager who has spent the three years since completed all the necessary research needed to create the Operational Plan.</p> <p>Funding has also been applied for for four further projects focussing on: Chagossian community training, invasive species control, and information management.</p>
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Challenges and changes in the 2024-2025 year

A new Digital Lead, Joshua Greateorex-Davies will join the Board in October to help start online members' talks. Also in October, CCT takes on its first intern from Swansea University, Martina Reina-Cantrot, who is taking a year out 'industry' from her marine biology degree and will gain experience across the Trust and assist the Director, increasing capacity. It is also hoped a Trustee will join next June to lead on events. Abel Seow will step down in November 2024.

The *Healthy islands, Healthy Reefs* Project Manager Dr Pete Carr has completed the 'Rewilding Operational Plan' and is ready to commence the rewilding work once funding is secured.

Although the dispute between the UK and Mauritius over the sovereignty of the Archipelago continues, public awareness of the importance of conservation seems to have risen globally. It is hoped the dispute will not affect any future activities and/or fundraising for any of our projects.

The new website revamp is ongoing, and hoping to launch in 2025. This will include a redesign of US-CCT's site, and a planned upgrade of the Chagos Information Portal, both will be brought onto the new CCT site.

Virtual talks for members aim to start in 2025, to act as a membership offering for both the UK and US CCT, to help increase visibility of the Trust, plus members and donations.

Plans are being made, and a Trustee recruited to make the post-AGM Speaker Event a one day scientific conference due to its success. It is hoped the first event will be spring 2026.

A CCT Strategy review will take place after two years, half-way before the next strategy is written, to ensure the Trust is on-track and its work still aligned to its vision and mission. This review was completed in October 2024.

The Trust will reach out to the new Mauritian government, and aim to get more Mauritian conservation contacts, partners, and it is hoped a Mauritian Trustee will join the Board once the changing political situation allows.

3. Financial review

The Trust ended the year in a strong financial position with reserves of £1.0m (2023: £1.0m), which includes £74k (2023: £172k) in cash, which is enough to cover fixed costs in the near future. CCT was affected by the global downturn in equity and bond markets in the prior year, with the investments recovering in the current year, with a gain on investments of £114k in the current year.

In relation to delivering our *Healthy Islands, Healthy Reefs* programme, CCT have applied for a Darwin Plus grant (which will announce the successful applicants in early 2025), plus two Darwin Local grants for smaller projects, and a joint Darwin Local grant for a project in collaboration with the

UK Overseas Territories' Conservation Forum which will focus on updating ChIP. We are using the remaining Chagos Connect funds to support a website Content Manager.

CCT's investment target is to achieve a return of 5% per year over the long term. Following a number of years of achieving returns significantly above this target, we sustained a gain of 14% over the 2023-24 financial year (2023: gain of 0.1%). This was due to the stabilisation of the global equity and bond markets. We still have a strong reserves position above the amount originally bequeathed by John Topp and with flexibility to invest some of our own funds in project work, as we have done with the *Healthy Islands*, *Healthy Reefs* project, as well as funding our routine operating expenditure.

To manage these risks the Finance Committee of the Board scrutinises investment performance regularly and the Board regularly reviews its investment policy, risk tolerance and portfolio allocation. Currently two Trustees have financial qualifications. In the current market environment, the Trustees are closely monitoring expenditure and consider spending decisions in the context of the performance of the investment portfolio. As part of setting our new strategy for beyond 2023, the Trustees has developed a medium-term financial plan to guide use of our reserves to invest in the CCT's work while also ensuring our financial viability.

As a result of overall expenditure of £90k and a gain of £114k on investments this year's result was a surplus on unrestricted funds of £32k (2023: £71k deficit) and a deficit on restricted funds of £7k (2023: £63k deficit).

During the year the principal sources of income and the proportions they provided were as follows: grants 0% (2023: 82%), members' subscriptions 23% (2023: 8%), sales of CCT publications 24% (2023: 6%), other donations 5% (2023: 2%) and investment income and bank interest 48% (2023: 2%).

Sales of publications comprises income from CCT publications, which aim to promote knowledge of the history and environment of the Chagos Archipelago and raise awareness of CCT's work. Sales of *Chagos: A History: Exploration, Exploitation, Expulsion*, *Peak of Limuria: The Story of Diego Garcia and the Chagos Archipelago*, *A Guide to the Birds of the Chagos Archipelago*, the *Sad Story of the Conceicao 1555*, and leaflets, amounted to £1,342 (2023: £1,054).

Reserves policy

In 2011, CCT benefited from a legacy from its founder John Topp. His stated aim was to put CCT onto a permanently secure financial footing, with the majority of the legacy being retained to underpin the strength of the Trust.

The Trust is unusual as it has to maintain sufficient reserves to promote environmental conservation work over 55 islands and a Marine Protected Area of 640,000 square kilometres, for the foreseeable future, against increasing threats to the global environment. Our policy is therefore to preserve as much as is practical of the capital sum of the legacy, and to fund operational spending out of returns gained from investments.

Given that the *Healthy Islands*, *Healthy Reefs* programme will bring with it a significant amount of expenditure, and a change in the profile of our operational and financial risks, the Trustees will keep the reserves policy under review to ensure it is fit for purpose.

Investment policy and objectives

Our policy is to invest our capital in a medium risk strategy aiming for an average return of 5% per year. At year end £0.937m (2023: £0.822m) was invested in managed portfolios and commingled funds. Our investments are held with one fund manager in socially and environmentally responsible

commingled funds for charities. Our portfolio's target allocation as at August 2024 was 70% equities, 15% bonds, 5% real estate, 10% cash.

The Board is satisfied with the performance of the investment portfolio during the year and the risk level of the investments. The Finance Committee has opted to review the portfolio allocation on an annual basis and the next such review is due in H2 2024.

4. Plans for future years

To build a trust fit for the Chagos Archipelago

CCT is committed to running a professional organisation that allows us to play a leading role in conservation, research and raising awareness of the Chagos Archipelago.

We also plan to:

- Replace retiring Trustees with the specialist skills needed to move the Trust forward, including Mauritian and another Chagossian Trustee, plus training the Board in media skills to prepare for a potential change in administration and the media opportunities that would bring;
- Continue to manage the organisation using best practice operating systems and effective operating policies and procedures, to ensure regulatory compliance;
- Revamp the website, so all the information is up-to-date and easy to find for all audiences;
- With all the political challenges and changes, work more closely with our sister organisation US-CCT on information and fundraising campaigns;
- Update, amend, and improve the Chagos Information Portal, bringing it onto the new CCT website to allow our audience to access it more easily, with all Chagos Archipelago and Trust information in one place;
- Look to action our *Healthy Islands, Healthy Reefs* Rewilding Operational Plan;
- Diversify our income for sustained growth by approaching a wide range of potential donors;
- Develop and implement fundraising activities for the next stage of our *Healthy Islands, Healthy Reefs* project.

To inspire action

CCT is committed to increasing the knowledge and understanding of the importance of the Chagos Archipelago, and build a network of supporters championing its protection.

We plan to:

- Increase the reach of the science and conservation work of the Chagos Archipelago;
- Continue to strengthen our relationship with Chagossian communities in support of conservation, education and research, including continuing to employ a member of the Chagossian community to manage the community website CCT helped create;
- Deepen our current and create new strategic partnerships for conservation to drive our *Healthy Islands, Healthy Reefs* project through funding and technical expertise.

Protecting a global asset

CCT is committed to working towards fully understanding the precious and globally important natural environment of the Chagos Archipelago, ensuring it is well-protected and conserved for the benefit of our planet and all the animals and people who populate it.

We plan to:

- Commence our *Healthy Islands, Healthy Reefs* Rewilding Operational Plan, once funding is secured.project;
- To involve a Chagossian representative to ensure cultural conservation is included in the rewilding work, as well as being part of our core vision.

5. Structure, Governance and Management

Governing document

CCT's governing document is its Constitution, last updated in October 2013 (and amended to allow hybrid and virtual annual meetings 2021).

Organisational structure

The Trustees, who must be full members of CCT, are responsible for the general control and management of CCT and meet approximately every three months for this purpose.

A partner charity (CCT-US) has been established in the USA to promote the CCT's aims in that country. CCT-US is structurally and financially independent of the CCT.

In 2011 the Trust gained a major legacy on the death of its founder, Commander John Topp RN. To handle the investment of this legacy the Trustees set up a Finance Committee, as described below.

Finance Committee

The Trustees have established a Finance Committee comprising the Treasurer and several other Trustees. Its role is to advise the Trustees on the CCT's investments and other financial matters.

Recruitment and appointment of Trustees

Trustees are elected at CCT's Annual General Meeting, in accordance with Clause 13 of the Constitution. One third of the Trustees must retire each year but are eligible for re-election, those to retire being the ones who have been longest in office since their last election.

Training of new Trustees depends largely on their background and their geographical location, and is partly by set briefings by appropriate other Trustees, and partly by handover, where applicable. All newly-appointed Trustees will be guided to the Charity Commission's publication *The Essential Trustee: What you need to know*.

Risk Management

CCT has a Risk Register that identifies potential risk to the organisation and includes governance, operational, financial, reputational and compliance risks. Mitigation controls to limit any risk are included. The risk register is reviewed on an annual basis and adjustments made accordingly, with the last review taking place in March 2024.

Statement of Trustees' responsibilities

Under charity law, the Trustees are responsible for preparing a Trustees' Annual Report and financial statements for each financial year which shows a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity, including any excess of expenditure over income for that period. The Trustees have elected to prepare

the financial statements in accordance with UK Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland*.

In preparing these financial statements, generally accepted accounting practice entails that the trustees:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- State whether the recommendations of the Statement of Recommended Practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- Assess the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern; and
- Use the going concern basis of accounting unless they either intend to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

The Trustees are required to act in accordance with the Constitution of the charity, within the framework of trust law. They are responsible for keeping proper accounting records, sufficient to disclose at any time, with reasonable accuracy, the financial position of the charity at that time, and to enable the trustees to ensure that, where any statements of accounts are prepared by them under section 132(1) of the Charities Act 2011, those statements of accounts comply with the requirements of regulations under that provision.

They are responsible for such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and have general responsibility for taking such steps as are reasonably open to them to safeguard the assets of the charity and to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the financial and other information included on the charity's website. Legislation in the UK governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

The Trustees have a legal duty to act in the best interests of CCT, to manage CCT's resources responsibly, and to act with reasonable care and skill. Their responsibility to act in the best interest of CCT includes a responsibility to do what the Trustees have collaboratively decided will best enable CCT to carry out its charitable purpose. The Trustees must be able to demonstrate that CCT is complying with the law, is effective and well run, and they must ensure appropriate accountability to its members.

The Trustees, for the purposes of charity law, who served during the year and up to the date of this report, are set out in Section 7 below.

6. Legal and Administrative Information

Legal information

The charity is called the Chagos Conservation Trust, registered number 1155836. It was founded in 1992 and became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), taking over the assets and liabilities of the previous Charity of the same name, on 1 September 2014.

Trustees

The Trustees during the year to 31 August 2024 were as follows:

Chris Davies, appointed Chair 27 March 2024
James Clarke, appointed Treasurer 11 May 2023
Kenneth Johnson, appointed Secretary 27 March 2024
Nicole Pozas Esteban, appointed 5 January 2024
Natasha Gibson (Chair), resigned effective 27 March 2024
Rachel McGoff (Secretary), resigned effective 27 March 2024
John Turner, appointed Deputy Chair 27 March 2024
Bryan Wilson, appointed 12 October 2024
Amy Wilson, resigned effective 18 January 2024
Jodey Peyton, resigned effective 28 September 2023
Colin Clubbe
Steve Cole
Jean-Francois Nellan
Abel Seow

Bankers

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Approved by the Trustees on 16 January 2025.



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Chris Davies

Chair of the Board

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE CHAGOS CONSERVATION TRUST

I report on the accounts of Chagos Conservation Trust (the 'CIO') for the year ended 31 August 2024.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity Trustees of the CIO you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the CIO's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. Accounting records were not kept in respect of the CIO as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. The accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. The accounts do not comply with the applicable requirement concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Jason Foxwell FCCA FCIE

PO Box 9846, Poole, BH15 9JZ

Date: 6 February 2025

Chagos Conservation Trust

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 August 2024

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted income funds £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Incoming resources (Note 3)				
Income and endowments from:				
Donations and legacies	1,599	-	1,599	16,050
Other trading activities	1,342	-	1,342	1,054
Investments	2,404	263	2,667	314
Other	-	-	-	-
Total	5,345	263	5,608	17,418
Resources expended (Note 4)				
Expenditure on:				
Raising funds	10,524	-	10,524	8,823
Charitable activities	48,998	18,781	67,779	125,209
Other	17,082	-	17,082	18,288
Total	76,604	18,781	95,385	152,320
Net income/(expenditure) before investment gains/(losses)	(71,259)	(18,518)	(89,777)	(134,902)
Net gains/(losses) on investments	103,165	11,278	114,443	1,515
Net income/(expenditure)	31,906	(7,240)	24,666	(133,387)
Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-
Net movement in funds	31,906	(7,240)	24,666	(133,387)
Reconciliation of funds:				
Total funds brought forward	892,276	99,386	991,662	1,125,049
Total funds carried forward	924,182	92,146	1,016,328	991,662

Chagos Conservation Trust

Balance Sheet as at 31 August 2024

		Unrestricted funds £	Restricted income funds £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Fixed assets					
Investments	(Note 9)	844,304	92,298	936,602	822,159
Property, Plant and Equipment	(Note 10)	10,589	-	10,589	8,153
Total fixed assets		854,893	92,298	947,191	830,312
Current assets					
Stocks	(Note 11)	3,749	-	3,749	3,051
Debtors	(Note 12)	2,073	-	2,073	15,675
Cash at bank and in hand	(Note 16)	69,430	4,492	73,922	172,261
Total current assets		75,252	4,492	79,744	190,987
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(Note 13)	4,980	4,644	9,624	28,637
Net current assets/(liabilities)		70,272	(152)	70,120	162,350
Total assets less current liabilities		925,165	92,146	1,017,311	992,662
Creditors: amounts falling due after one year	(Note 14)	983	-	983	1,000
Total net assets or liabilities		924,182	92,146	1,016,328	991,662
Funds of the Charity					
Restricted income funds	(Note 19)			92,146	99,386
Unrestricted funds	(Note 19)			924,182	892,276
Total funds				1,016,328	991,662

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 16 January 2025 and were signed on its behalf by:



Chris Davies – Chair of the Board of Trustees

Chagos Conservation Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 August 2024

1. Legal Form

Chagos Conservation Trust is a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) registered with the Charity Commission in England. The registered office is noted on page 13.

2. Accounting Policies

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charity which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard application in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland and the Charities Act 2011. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention with the exception of investments which are included at market value, as modified by the revaluation of certain assets

These accounts are compliant with the Update Bulletins 1 and 2 and FRS 102 Section 1A.

These accounts have been prepared on a going concern basis; there are no material uncertainties related to events or conditions that cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

Income

Grants are recognised once the charity has entitlement to the resources, it is certain that the resources will be received, and the monetary value of the grants can be measured with sufficient reliability. Where grants are received in advance of the recognition criteria being met, recognition is deferred and included in creditors and where entitlement arises before income is received, income is accrued.

Annual memberships are credited to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate. Memberships received in advance are deferred and included in creditors.

Legacies and donations are recognised once the charity has entitlement to the resources, it is certain that the resources will be received and the monetary value of grants can be measured with sufficient reliability. Legacies can be categorised as either pecuniary (specific cash amount) or residuary (share of an estate). Pecuniary legacies are recognised as receivable once probate has been granted and notification has been received. Residuary legacies are recognised as receivable once probate has been granted, where they can be valued.

Income from sales of publications is recognised as earned as the related goods are distributed to customers.

Investment income is credited to income on the accruals basis.

Debtors are measured at transaction price initially and then at the recoverable amount.

Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all costs related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Chagos Conservation Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 August 2024

The role of CCT's Director involves work on charitable projects and programmes, fundraising activities and activities related to the governance and administration of the charity such as organising Board meetings and the AGM. Therefore, the costs of employing the Director are split between these activities. The appropriate split is reviewed each year based on the particular activities the Director has undertaken. As limited separate projects have been undertaken in the current year, support costs have been disclosed separately, in the event of a greater number of activities being undertaken, support costs will be apportioned against those activities on a basis deemed appropriate by the Trustees.

The split of activities determined for the current and prior periods is as follows:

	FY24	FY23
Charitable Activities	70%	70%
Fundraising	12%	12%
Governance and administration	18%	18%

Governance costs comprise all costs involving public accountability of the charity and its compliance with regulation and good practice.

Creditors are measured at their transaction price initially and then at the amount payable.

Stocks

Stocks are valued at the lower of cost and net realisable value, after making due allowance for obsolete and slow moving items.

Tangible Fixed Assets

Fixed assets costing more than £500 are capitalised and shown at cost. Depreciation is charged at the following rate:

- IT Equipment – over five years

Taxation

The charity is exempt from tax on its charitable activities.

Fund Accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the Trustees.

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes to the financial statements.

Foreign Currencies

Assets and liabilities in foreign currencies are translated into sterling at the rates of exchange ruling at the balance sheet date. Transactions in foreign currencies are translated into sterling at the rate of exchange ruling at the date of transaction. Exchange differences are taken into account in arriving at the operating result.

Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits

Chagos Conservation Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 August 2024

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the charity's pension scheme are charged to the Statement of Financial activities in the period to which they relate.

Fixed asset investments

Investments are included in the balance sheet at market value. The Statement of Financial Activities includes the net gains and losses arising on revaluation and disposals throughout the period.

Realised gains and losses

All gains and losses are taken to the Statement of Financial Activities as they arise. Realised gains and losses in investments are calculated as the difference between sales proceeds and opening market value (value at purchase date if later). Unrealised gains and losses are calculated as the difference between the market value at the period end and the opening market value (or purchase date if later).

3. Analysis of Income

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted income funds £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Charitable Activities				
Sales of publications	1,342	-	1,342	1,054
Investments				
Deposit Account Interest	2,404	263	2,667	314

Chagos Conservation Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 August 2024

4. Analysis of Expenditure

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted income funds	Total funds 2024	Total funds 2023
Charitable Activities				
	£	£	£	£
Healthy Islands, Healthy Reefs	520	16,365	16,885	77,032
Education, conservation and research	48,478	-	48,478	42,261
Connect Chagos	-	2,416	2,416	144
Chagos - A History	-	-	-	433
Sale of publications, new books	-	-	-	5,339
	48,998	18,781	67,779	125,209
Other				
Governance	17,082	-	17,082	18,288
Fund raising	10,524	-	10,524	8,823
	27,606	-	27,606	27,111

Governance costs include insurance, cost of Trustee meetings and the AGM and costs of the external examination (where required) and preparation of statutory accounts. It also includes the time spent by CCT's Director on preparing for Board meetings and communicating with Trustees.

5. Independent Examiners' and Accounting Fees

	2024	2023
	£	£
Independent examiner's fees	475	450
Other fees (payroll and accountancy services)	655	528

6. Staff Costs

	2024	2023
	£	£
Salaries and wages (including consultancy)	68,520	76,572
Social security costs	4,716	2,522
Pension costs (defined contribution scheme)	2,123	2,006
	75,359	81,100

The average number of employees in the year was as follows:

2024	2023
2	2

Chagos Conservation Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 August 2024

No staff worked for the charity whose contracts are with a related party.

No employees received total employee benefits of over £60,000 in the period.

Senior management personnel comprises the Board of Trustees and the Trust's Director. See Note 20 for details of amounts paid to Trustees. The basis for allocating staff costs between activities in the Statement of Financial Activities is explained in Note 2.

7. Defined Contribution Pension Scheme

The Trust contributed to a defined contribution pension scheme for its employees during the period. Total contributions during the year to 31 August 2024 were £2,123 (2023: £2,006).

8. Grant making

The Trust makes grants to third parties when this is judged to be the most suitable way of pursuing its charitable aims. During the year a grant of £2,416 was made from the Chagos Connect funds to cover IT and web management costs for Chagossian Voices (2023: £144).

9. Fixed asset investments

	Listed investments
Fair Value	£
At 1 September 2023	822,159
Additions	-
Disposals	-
Net gain/(loss) on revaluation	114,443
At 31 August 2024	<u>936,602</u>

All of the Trust's fixed asset investments are in funds with a readily observable price and therefore fair value is determined by the market price of the assets at the balance sheet date.

Investment management fees are estimated to be 0.85% of the value of the assets under management.

Chagos Conservation Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 August 2024

10. Tangible Fixed Assets

	Assets under construction	Computer Equipment	Total Assets
	£	£	£
Cost			
At 1 September 2023	7,314	1,589	8,903
Additions	2,754	-	2,754
At 31 August 2024	10,068	1,589	11,657
Accumulated Depreciation			
At 1 September 2023	-	750	750
Charge for the year	-	318	318
At 31 August 2024	-	1,068	1,068
Net Book Value			
At 1 September 2023	7,314	839	8,153
At 31 August 2024	10,068	521	10,589

The trust is working to update its website, depreciation will start once the new website is operational.

11. Stocks

	£
At 1 September 2023	3,051
Added in period	800
Recognised as an expense	(102)
At 31 August 2024	3,749

12. Debtors

	2024	2023
	£	£
Trade debtors	767	629
Prepayments and accrued income	1,306	15,046
Other debtors	-	-
	2,073	15,675

All debtors fall due within one year.

Chagos Conservation Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 August 2024

13. Creditors falling due within one year

	2024	2023
	£	£
Accruals and deferred income	5,809	27,698
Taxation, social security, pension	3,815	939
	<u>9,624</u>	<u>28,637</u>

14. Creditors falling due after more than one year

	2024	2023
	£	£
Accruals and deferred income	983	1,000
	<u>983</u>	<u>1,000</u>

15. Deferred income

The charity offers members the option of purchasing membership for more than one year, the income from these memberships is deferred and recognised over the period of the membership, or over 10 years in the case of life members.

	2024	2023
	£	£
At 1 September 2023	1,283	987
Amounts added in current period	400	600
Amounts released to income from previous periods	(350)	(304)
At 31 August 2024	<u>1,333</u>	<u>1,283</u>

16. Cash at bank and in hand

	2024	2023
	£	£
Cash at bank and on hand	73,922	172,261
	<u>73,922</u>	<u>172,261</u>

Chagos Conservation Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 August 2024

17. Fair value of assets and liabilities

The Trust has limited exposure to credit risk as the balance of debtors is insignificant compared to other assets. Liquidity risk is also low as the charity has cash and investments that are in excess of liabilities. Investments can be liquidated with a short notice period and the Trust ensures it keeps enough cash in its bank accounts to cover operating costs for several months. The Trust has significant exposure to investment risk as it is reliant on income generated from its investments for long term financial security. The Trust manages this risk by retaining a Board member with investment management experience and seeking professional advice where appropriate. The charity conducts regular reviews on the performance of its investment managers and the overall investment markets and has a sub-committee of Trustees who are responsible for this.

There were no changes to the fair value of financial instruments in the period attributable to changes in credit risk.

18. Events after the reporting period

There are no material events after the reporting period but before the authorisation of the financial statements which require disclosure in accordance with FRS 102 Section 32.

19. Movements in funds

Details of material funds held and movements in the current reporting period

		At 1.9.23	Income	Expenditure	Transfer	Gains and (losses)	At 31.8.2024
Fund names	Type	£	£	£	£	£	£
General Funds	Unrestricted	892,276	5,345	(76,604)	-	103,165	924,182
Connect Chagos	Restricted	9,058	-	(2,416)	-	-	6,642
The Botanical survey fund	Restricted	88,328	263	(16,365)	-	11,278	83,504
The Chagos Information portal	Restricted	2,000	-	-	-	-	2,000
Total Funds		991,622	5,608	(95,385)	-	114,443	1,016,328

Chagos Conservation Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 August 2024

19. Movement in funds (continued)

Details of material funds held and movements in the previous reporting period

Fund names	Type	At 1.9.22 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfer £	Gains and (losses) £	At 31.8.2023 £
General Funds	Unrestricted	963,129	2,963	(75,144)	-	1,328	892,276
Connect Chagos	Restricted	9,202	-	(144)	-	-	9,058
The Botanical survey fund	Restricted	150,718	132	(62,709)	-	187	88,328
The Chagos Information portal	Restricted	2,000	-	-	-	-	2,000
Darwin Plus	Restricted	-	14,323	(14,323)	-	-	-
Total Funds		1,125,049	17,418	(152,320)	-	1,515	991,662

Purposes of restricted funds

Connect Chagos: Relates to grants received to implement an environmental education programme to improve the UK Chagossian community's knowledge of the Chagos Archipelago, and to enable them to assist in the conservation and protection of the archipelago.

The Botanical Survey Fund: This was part of the legacy of Commander John Topp's estate in 2012, and is to be used to conduct a periodical botanical survey of the Chagos Archipelago every 5 to 10 years as the Trustees shall determine.

The Chagos Information Portal: ChIP is a user-friendly, interactive and open-source reference library of science, research and conservation work conducted in the Chagos Archipelago. ChIP will continue to grow with new information as researchers and conservationists learn more about this iconic ecosystem. The John Ellerman Foundation provided a grant of £26,704 in 2017. Development of the portal was largely completed in 2018. The Trust is currently working on a website upgrade, including the information portal, and will look to apply the remaining funds towards this, if appropriate.

Darwin Plus: Grant received from Defra's Darwin Plus fund for British Overseas Territories to further our *Healthy Islands, Healthy Reefs* programme. The aim of this project is to collect data to fill knowledge gaps and inform a robust and effective Rat Eradication Operational Plan to successfully remove rats, allow rewilding and ultimately boost biodiversity across the archipelago.

Healthy Islands, Healthy Reefs: is an ambitious, large-scale rewilding project that will remove rats and enable the return of hundreds of thousands of seabirds to the Archipelago, helping its coral reefs recover from bleaching and build their resilience to the effects of climate change. Previously, CCT continued to seek external funding, as well as developing plans to invest its own funds in the programme, which will cost an estimated £5m in total.

Chagos Conservation Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 August 2024

20. Trustees' remuneration and benefits

No Trustees received remuneration or other benefits during the year ended 31 August 2024 (2023: nil). Three (2023: Five) Trustees were reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses during the period of £783 (2023: £1,397). The bulk of expenses were reimbursement for the costs of attending three in person meetings during the year (travel and subsistence) and has also historically included sundry expenses such as stationary for conducting CCT business. The Trust paid for Trustee liability insurance to the value of £377 (2023: £397) in the year.

21. Related Party Transactions

There were no related party transactions during the year.