

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Trust for Jersey and Birds on the Edge launch new campaign to save Jersey's Puffins

The National Trust for Jersey, together with their Birds on the Edge partners are excited to launch a new campaign to save Jersey's puffins. As highlighted on Sunday's BBC Countryfile programme, Jersey's puffins are on the edge of local extinction. The new campaign will raise funds to create the Seabird Reserve by establishing a predator-safe area along the cliffs below the footpath found between the Lecq Clay Shooting range and the Plémont headland. A predator-exclusion fence will protect the puffins, their eggs and chicks from non-native predators such as rats and ferrets.

The launch of this campaign comes after five years of ecological research and independent consultations. A feasibility study concluded that non-native predators have been one of the main causes of the decline of Jersey's puffin population, from more than 200 pairs in the 1910s to only four pairs at present. The presence of predators on the cliffs where the puffins breed is most likely preventing the population from increasing and without intervention, puffins will eventually become extinct in Jersey.

The study also concluded that a purpose-built fence to keep predators out of the area, was the only viable option to safeguard the puffin population and allow it to recover to more sustainable levels. Alongside the building of the fence, a programme to relocate the predators from inside the reserve area, a bracken management programme aimed at restoring coastal grasslands, and long-term monitoring of the fauna and flora of the reserve will complement the positive effects of the fence on the nature of the area.

This long-term project to restore the puffin colony's all-important nesting grounds will also protect other native species of seabirds, land birds, mammals, reptiles and insects that are special to Jersey. It is hoped that even locally extinct species such as Storm Petrels and Guillemots will re-colonise the area.

Cris Sellarés, Project Officer for Birds on the Edge, stressed the importance of the project, "We can no longer take it for granted that this colourful seabird which plays such an important part in Jersey's natural heritage will keep returning to our shores; we must play our part to protect it now before it is too late."

"We believe the reserve will benefit not only the natural environment but will bring other benefits to the Island's community by providing employment for local companies, back to work schemes, volunteering opportunities, apprenticeships and education. It has the potential to become a tourism asset and to have positive effects on wellbeing and mental health by enhancing our connection with nature."

A public consultation has begun prior to a planning application for the installation of the fence needed to protect the puffins. We encourage every member of the public to get involved and share with us their help, feedback or concerns via email, via an opinion survey, or at one of the following drop-in sessions: At Santander Work Café on Wednesday 27 July and Thursday 4 August between 11am and 2pm, and at St Ouen's parish hall on Friday 12 August between 5pm and 8pm, and on Saturday 13 August between 10am and 1pm. A website with more details of the project can be found here <https://www.nationaltrust.je/seabird-reserve/> and the survey to gather feedback on views to help form the planning application and strategy of the Seabird Reserve can be downloaded here https://www.nationaltrust.je/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/2022_Plemont_Seabird_Reserve_Public_Survey.docx

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NOTES TO THE EDITOR:

70% of the world's seabirds are threatened, with introduced predators being the main cause of their declines. Non-native predators have been introduced by humans on islands all over the world, causing the extinction of over 150 species of wildlife. Projects to remove them have been successful in over 600 islands and have resulted in fast increases in numbers and recoveries of threatened seabirds. In some islands locally extinct species have returned and re-established. In instances where the predators can't be removed from a whole island, the creation of a predator-exclusion fence and the removal of the predators from within the fenced area has had similar results.

The episode of BBC Countryfile which highlights the campaign was shown on Sunday 24 July on BBC One at 6pm and will be available on BBC iPlayer.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/b006t0bv/countryfile>

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