

KEY FACTS

Official name: St Helena Colony with Dependencies

Head of State: Queen Elizabeth II, represented by Governor and Commander-in-Chief Mark Andrew Capes (from 29 Oct 2011)

Ruling party: All members of the legislative council stand as independents

Area: 122 square km

Population: 4,250 (2010)*

Capital: Jamestown

Official language: English

Currency: St Helena pound (StH£) = 100 pence

Exchange rate: StH£2.70 per US\$ (Jul 2013); (pegged to pound sterling)

* estimated figure

St Helena

COUNTRY PROFILE

Historical profile

1502 St Helena was sighted by Portuguese mariners on 21 May (St Helena's Day).

1513 The island was first settled.

1633 The Dutch claimed possession.

1659 The East India Company took possession of the uninhabited island.

1673 The island was briefly captured by the Dutch, before being regained by the East India Company.

1815 Napoleon Bonaparte was exiled to the island, where he died in 1821; his body was returned to France in 1840.

1834 The island passed under British control.

1981 The Nationality Act ended the islanders' British citizenship and right of abode, which they had held since 1673.

1992 The islanders established a Citizenship Commission, which began its case to regain full British citizenship.

2002 Full British citizenship was restored to the islanders.

2004 Michael Clancy became Governor and Commander-in-Chief.

2005 An environmental team from the UK conducted the first stage of investigations required to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the proposed new airport on Prosperous Bay Plain.

2007 Andrew Gurr took office as governor.

2008 The UK government's plans to sponsor construction of the airport were halted. A population census was undertaken; there were a total of 710 residents.

2009 The proposed new constitution was debated in the Executive Council (Exco), but failed to be passed. Governor Gurr, in an article printed in the *St Helena Herald*, said that it was 'inarguable that our progress as an island will be held back if we remain stuck in the time warp of the existing 1988 constitution'. He also said that the UK Parliamentary undersecretary of state at the foreign and commonwealth office would continue to consult with the elected members of the Exco, to ensure he had the most complete advice available before making a decision. Tristan da Cunha and Ascension Island have already voted in favour of the proposed changes. Elections for the Exco were held and the six candidates who won the most votes

from both the East and West constituencies were elected.

2010 A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the UK's Department for International Development (DfID) and St Helena. The signing indicated that both parties agreed on what St Helena intended to do to implement the reforms needed in preparation for the new airport. It was a wide ranging document and included a series of undertakings to see through substantial improvements in organisation, legislation and performance to stimulate local and inward investment related to the airport and tourism.

2011 At the end of June the Exco signed a MoU with the UK 'to implement the reforms necessary to open the island's economy to inward investment and increased tourism'. The act will simplify the requirements for non-St Helenians to enter, settle and work on the island and acquire land. In September, Governor Gurr's term in office ended and Attorney General Ken Baddon was sworn in as acting governor on 24 September, until Mark Andrew Capes took up the post on 29 October.

2012 On 31 July the Executive Council unanimously approved a revised design for the external finish of the Airport Terminal. The Land Development Control Board said it represented a 'vast improvement' on the original 2008 version.

2013 St Helena raised its first ever flag on 11 May. It features the Ascension Island Crest, the Green Turtle, volcanic landscape, seabirds and endemic plants. Minimum wages of £2.30 for all employees over 18 years and £1.45 for all employees aged 16 and 17 years came into force on 1 June.

Political structure

St Helena has an appointed governor assisted by an Executive Council (the chief secretary, the financial secretary, attorney general and committee chairmen) and also by a Legislative Council (made up of the same ex-officio members and 12 elected members). Restoration for the islanders of full British citizenship was granted in May 2002.

The creation of a new overseas territories minister within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the establishment of an Overseas Territories Consultative Council were both

implemented in 1999, but responsibility for the British Overseas Territories, including St Helena, remains divided between the FCO and the Department for International Development.

Constitution

The 1988 St Helena Constitution Order came into force in February 1989. It sets out the separation of powers and the responsibilities of the executive, legislature and judiciary.

The proposed new constitution was debated in the Legislative Council (Legco) on 29 June 2009. The vote was four Elected Members in favour and four against; the Speaker voted against and the motion for change failed. Governor Gurr, in an article printed in the *St Helena Herald*, said that it was ‘inarguable that our progress as an island will be held back if we remain stuck in the time warp of the existing 1988 constitution’. He also said that the UK Parliamentary under secretary of state at the foreign and commonwealth office would continue to consult with the Elected Members of the Legco, including the 4 members not present at the vote, to ensure he had the most complete advice available before making a decision. Tristan da Cunha and Ascension Island have already voted in favour of the proposed changes.

Form of state

As a British Overseas Territory, St Helena is a dependency of St Helena.

The executive

As a British Overseas Territory, St Helena has an appointed governor assisted by an Executive Council with three *ex-officio* appointments (the chief secretary, the financial secretary, attorney general and committee chairmen) and five elected members of the Legislative Council.

The creation of a new overseas territories minister within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the establishment of an Overseas Territories Consultative Council were both implemented in 1999, but responsibility for the British Overseas Territories, including St Helena, remains divided between the FCO and the Department for International Development.

National legislature

The unicameral legislative assembly has 12 members elected for four-year terms. There are also three *ex-officio* appointments including the chief secretary, the financial secretary and the attorney general.

Last elections

17 July 2013 (Legislative Council)

Results: Legislative Council: the six candidates who won the most votes in both the East and West constituencies (12 in total) were elected, with a turnout of 55 per cent (1,264 voters).

Next elections

2017 (Legislative Council)

Political parties

No parties exist.

Ruling party

All members of the legislative council stand as independents

Political situation

St Helena, suffers from depopulation and dependency. As experienced by so many small communities, St Helena is losing too many of its young and potentially most valuable members to the outside world, even though families welcome the immediate value of remittances.

The goal the UK government towards its dependency is self-sufficiency. In its 2008 *Sustainable Development Plan* (SDP) it outlined six objectives necessary for future sustainability: improved access – there is no air access and sea connections are slow and costly; improved standard of education; development of a sustainable and vibrant economy; and promote and develop a sustainable workforce; develop a healthy community in a safe environment and establish the democratic and human rights and self-determination of the people of St Helena.

However even as it published its SDP the UK government halted plans to build an airport on St Helena, closing off one avenue of economic growth. Better education is a long-term objective but in the meantime newly qualified students and possible entrepreneurs are leaving and depriving the island of most of its talent.

Whether St Helena can reverse the stance by the new UK administration remains to be seen.

Population

4,250 (2010)*

In addition to the island population, 1,250 St Helenians are employed elsewhere: Ascension Island (550), Falkland Islands (350), UK (250) and onboard the RMS *St Helena* (100).

Last census: 10 February 2008: 710

Population density: 43.8 inhabitants per square km.

Annual growth rate: -0.3 per cent (1998–2008)

Ethnic make-up

Black African (50 per cent), white (25 per cent), Chinese (25 per cent).

Religions

Anglican (majority), Baptist, Seventh-Day Adventist, Roman Catholic.

Health

Life expectancy: 74.5 years (estimate 2003)

Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate: 1.5 births per woman (2003)

Birth rate/Death rate: 13 births per 1,000 population; 6.3 deaths per 1,000 population (2003).

Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000): 21 per 1,000 live births (2003)

Main cities

Jamestown (capital, estimated population 429 in 2012), Half Tree Hollow (1,126), Longwood (473), Saint Pauls (444).

Languages spoken

Official language/s

English

Media

Press

Weeklies: The *St Helena Herald* (www.news.co.sh) is government funded while *The St Helena Independent* (www.saint.fm/Independent/) is independent.

Business: A publication, giving sailing, details of the Royal Mail Service (RMS) ship *St Helena*

(www.albionshipping.co.uk), which has a regular service to the island from UK and Cape Town. The Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation publishes a newsletter concerning fishery matters (www.gulfsouthfoundation.org/newsletters).

Periodicals: The St Helena News Bureau publishes the periodical *St Helena and South Atlantic News Review* and the monthly *The St Helena Catalogue*.

Broadcasting

Radio: The government-funded Radio St Helena (www.news.co.sh) operates on short wave (AM) daily, with relays of a number of BBC World Service programmes. Saint FM (www.saint.fm) features music, local events and information.

Television: There is no locally made television service. Cable & Wireless provides a two channel television service relaying selected programmes from BBC World, CNN, Supersport, Discovery Channel and MNET, a South African commercial service.

Economy

St Helena depends on aid from the UK for between 20–25 per cent of its recurrent public sector budget. In 2010 the Department for International Development (DfID) provided over £20 million (US\$31 million) in budgetary aid, educational support and development programmes among others. The St Helena Development Agency (SHDA) is a government sponsored agency set up to attract inward investment, help local business development, support start up schemes and encourage youth entrepreneurship.

Other means of income include fishing licence sales, local fishing catches,

philatelic sales, coffee, livestock and timber, together with remittances from the estimated 1,700 offshore workers.

Andrew Weir Shipping Ltd manages the Royal Mail ship *RMS St Helena* which provides a regular re-supply service. Plans to build an airstrip were approved in a referendum held in 2002, but due to the rising cost planning was halted in 2008.

Minimum wages of £2.30 for all employees over 18 years and £1.45 for all employees aged 16 and 17 years came into force on 1 June.

St Helena was originally developed as a re-victualling post for East India Company ships returning from the east. With the decline of sail from the 1870s, the island has struggled to find a basis for its economy. The production of New Zealand flax was started in 1874 and had some success during times of high world prices. However, St Helena's terrain is not suited to plantation cropping and the industry, heavily subsidised for most of its history, finally collapsed in 1966.

External trade

As a UK Overseas Territory St Helena is a part of the European Union's Association of Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT Association), and some EU laws apply.

The small quantity of coffee exported, three tonnes per year, produces one of the world's most expensive beverages. Fishing licences and frozen and canned tuna provide most foreign earnings.

Imports

Principal imports are foodstuffs, tobacco, petroleum, animal feed, building materials, vehicles and parts, machinery and parts.

Main sources: UK (typically over 50 per cent of total), South Africa (10 per cent), Spain (10 per cent).

Exports

Principal exports are fish (frozen, canned, and salt-dried skipjack, tuna), coffee and handicrafts.

Main destinations: Tanzania (typically over 35 per cent of total), US 15 per cent, Japan 15 per cent.

Agriculture

St Helena's volcanic origins, hills and deep valleys dominate the landscape. Semi-desert gives way to upland grasslands and lush valleys over a very short distance.

Arable and garden land is about 3 per cent of the total area, forest and woodland 5 per cent, pasture 11 per cent, barren and badland 53 per cent. New Zealand flax (hemp) was grown until the 1960s, but much of this land is now planted with trees. Principal crops include potatoes, coffee, bananas, vegetables, sweet potatoes.

Livestock raising is a main activity but there is no dairy production and all dairy products are imported.

Agricultural production does not meet demand. Seed potatoes, onions and eggs are all imported in quantity.

In the past, the government of St Helena earned StH£1.0 million (US\$1.4 million) per annum from fishing licence revenue, but fish stocks have declined.

There is a local fishery run by the St Helena Fisheries Corporation, which buys the fish from the local fishermen.

The fishing boats range from eight to 13 metres in size and fish on a daily basis.

They meet EU standards and carry ice with them. All of the catch is landed within 12 hours.

St Helena has satellite surveillance, but no patrol boat to stop unlicensed boats fishing the waters.

Industry and manufacturing

Local fishermen sell their catch to the St Helena Fisheries Corporation (a government parastatal). St Helena Fisheries Corporation sells its product in frozen and smoked form primarily to the UK and South Africa and supplies the domestic market.

Working in partnership with the St Helena Fisheries Corporation, Argos Helena Ltd, a joint UK-Spanish owned company, runs a blast freezer and fish processing/canning facility. Locally caught high-quality tuna is processed for export to the European Union and the Far East. The Corporation's fish products have organic certification from the Soil Association in the UK.

Tourism

St Helena has few resources and a declining population. Tourism is seen as a means of rescuing the island's economy and future. However, until the new airport is ready, access is restricted. Heavy seas make yachting anchorage unsafe.

The only means of reaching the island at the moment is by the *RMS St Helena*, which carries only 128 passengers on a round trip from UK (Portland) twice a year, and monthly from Cape Town to Walvis Bay (Namibia), St Helena and Ascension Island.

Tourism is a key target area in developing St Helena's economy. In June 2010 a Provisional Tourism Commission was appointed to oversee the future development of the tourist industry; in July a new Tourism Development Executive was appointed, as well as a sales and marketing executive, who will be based in the UK and liaise closely with Andrew Weir Shipping Ltd to increase traffic on the *St Helena*. In April 2013 a contract was awarded to Marine Maven (T&T) Ltd, to assess St Helena's needs to exploit its long

and proud maritime tradition, including the potential for recreational tours, water sports, observation of local marine life and sports fishing.

In January 2013 a team of six from the Mantis Collection, a group of privately owned boutique hotels and eco-escapes across the globe, visited St Helena, which they have described as 'exceptional'.

Environment

St Helena's National Environmental Management Plan (NEMP) setting out a blueprint for delivery of National Goal 3, *Effective Management of the Environment* was officially launched on Tuesday 9 October 2012.

Hydrocarbons

St Helena does not have any hydrocarbon reserves and relies entirely on the import of petroleum products to meet energy needs. St Helena does not import natural gas or coal.

Energy

The installation of a wind turbine in 2007, by the UK government, provided 240kW for the 1MW power grid, reducing the island's dependence on diesel fuel.

Time

GMT

Geography

St Helena is situated in the South Atlantic Ocean and is 1,950km (1,200 miles) due west from the south-west coast of Africa and 2,900km (1,800 miles) east of South America. The nearest land is one of its dependencies, Ascension Island, 1,130km (700 miles) to the north-west.

The island is of volcanic in origin. It is mountainous, presenting an almost continuous line of high, sheer cliffs, cut only by a few narrow and steep-sided valleys around its coastline. It is criss-crossed by deep valleys and slopes steeply from the central ridges to the sea. The highest point is Diana's Peak (820 metres above sea-level).

Hemisphere

Southern

Climate

Summer temperatures range from 21–29 degrees Celsius (C); winter 18–24 degrees C on coasts; inland temperatures may be five degrees lower; annual average rainfall in Jamestown is around 200mm, inland up to 950mm.

Entry requirements

Passports

Required by all.

Visa

All visitors must have the Administrator's written permission to land, before travelling. An *Ascension Island Entry Permit* form (valid for St Helena), to be

completed, can be downloaded from www.ascension-island.gov.ac/visitors.htm. Entry is only granted with evidence of visitors full medical insurance policy, covering medical evacuation by air, when necessary.

Currency advice/regulations

Travellers cheques are accepted in the bank.

Prohibited imports

Obscene or pornographic materials are prohibited.

Firearms, ammunition, fruit, vegetables and plant materials require an import permit.

Health (for visitors)

There is one general hospital based in Jamestown and six health clinics on the island. The health service is not free and all St Helenians have to pay fees for medical treatment. UK Passport holders visiting the island pay local rates for medical treatment, while non-UK residents have to pay higher fees.

Mandatory precautions

None.

Hotels

There are three hotels on the island, reservations are necessary from December–March.

Credit cards

Major credit cards are accepted in a few locations.

Public holidays (national)

Fixed dates

1 Jan (New Year's Day), 21 May (St Helena Day), 25–26 Dec (Christmas).

Variable dates

Good Friday and Easter Monday (Mar/Apr), Pentecost (May/Jun), August Bank Holiday (last Mon in Aug).

Working hours

Banking

Mon–Sat: 0845/0900–1500/1600; except Thu: 0845–1200. Opening hours may be varied when a cruise ship is visiting.

Business

Mon–Fri: 0830–1230 and 1300–1600.

Government

Mon–Fri: 0830–1230, 1300–1600.

Shops

Mon–Sat: generally 0900–1700.

Getting there

Air

St Helena has no airport and can only be reached by sea. Wideawake Airfield on Ascension Island is the nearest airfield. It is a US military base, and will allow private air-charter access to Wakefield in 2007–08. Passengers for St Helena will need to transfer to a boat to reach the island.

Surface

Water: The *RMS St Helena* operates twice a year from the UK (Portland) and monthly from Cape Town to Walvis Bay (Namibia), St Helena and Ascension Island. The ship is operated under contract by Passenger Services Department, Andrew Weir Shipping Ltd (see travel information addresses).

Air connections can be made with the ship either through Cape Town, via commercial flights, or via military flights from Royal Air Force Brize Norton in Oxfordshire, UK to Ascension Island.

Main port/s: Jamestown

Getting about

National transport

Road: Road network of 80–85km classified as all-weather; at least further 60km surfaced and 25–30km suitable for dry-weather travel only. Roads are best described as steep and tortuous. Because most roads are single lane, motoring etiquette requires the driver coming down to make way for upcoming traffic.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

The addresses listed below are a selection only. While World of Information makes every endeavour to check these addresses, we cannot guarantee that changes have not been made, especially to telephone numbers and area codes. We would welcome any corrections.

Telephone area codes

The international dialling code (IDD) for St Helena is +290 followed by subscriber's number.

Chambers of Commerce

St Helena Chamber of Commerce, c/o The Castle, Jamestown. (fax: tel: 22-58; fax: 25-98).

Banking

Bank of St. Helena, Post Office Building, Main Street, Jamestown STHL 1ZZ (tel: 2390; fax: 2553; internet: www.SaintHelenaBank.com).

Travel information

For air travel and bookings on the *RMS St Helena*:

Passenger Services Department, Andrew Weir Shipping Ltd, Dexter House, 2 Royal Mint Court, London EC N4XX, UK (tel: (+44-20) 575-6480; fax: (+44-20) 575-6200; e-mail: reservations@aws.co.uk).

St Helena Line, Andrew Weir Shipping (SA) Pty Ltd, 3rd Floor, BP Centre, Thibault Square, Cape Town, South Africa (tel: (+27-21) 425-1165; fax: (+27-21) 421-7485; e-mail: sthelenaonline@mweb.co.za; internet site: www.aws.co.uk).

Miss Kerry Yon, Solomon and Co plc, Jamestown (tel: 2523; fax: 2423; e-mail: solco.shipping@helanta.sh).

National tourist organisation offices

St Helena Tourism, Jamestown (tel: 2158; fax: 2159; email: StHelena.Tourism@helanta.sh; internet: www.sthelenatourism.com).

Ministries

Governor's Office, The Castle, Jamestown (tel: 2555; fax: 2598; e-mail: OCS@helanta.sh).

Other useful addresses

Argos Atlantic Cold Stores, PO Box 151, Jamestown (tel: 2333; fax: 2334; e-mail: argos@argonaut.co.sh).

Cable & Wireless Fax Bureau, The Briars, Jamestown.

Director of Inward Investment, Office of the Chief Secretary, Government of St Helena, Jamestown (tel: 2470; fax: 2598; e-mail: DEPD@atlantis.co.ac).

Information Office, Broadway House, Jamestown (tel: 2612; fax: 2159; email: StHelena.Tourism@atlantis.co.ac).

Miles Apart (books, maps, videos on South Atlantic Islands), 5 Harraton House, Exning, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 7HF, UK (tel: (+44-1638) 577-627; fax: (+44-1638) 577-874); 5929 Avon Drive, Bethesda, Maryland 20814, USA (tel/fax: (+1-301) 571-8942; e-mail: familycarter@msn.com).

The Postmistress, The Philatelic Bureau, The Post Office, Jamestown (fax: 2242).

St Helena Commercial Representative, Mr Wes Huxtable, 1 The Stables, Great Hyde Hall, Sawbridgeworth, Herts CM21 9JA, UK (tel: (+44-1279) 725-833; fax: (+44-1279) 724-894; e-mail: weston@huxtable.freemove.co.uk).

St Helena Desk Officer, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, King Charles Street, London SW1A 2AH, UK (tel: (+44-20) 270-2695).

St Helena Development Agency, No 2 Main St, Jamestown (tel: 2920, fax: 2166, e-mail: shda@atlantis.co.uk).

The St Helena Link (cultural information), Trevor Hearl, 49 Noverton Lane, Prestbury, Cheltenham, Glos GL52 5DD, UK (tel/fax: +44 (0)1242-244-430).

Internet sites

St Helena Development Agency: www.shda.helanta.sh/

St Helena government: www.sainthelena.gov.sh

St Helena News: www.news.co.sh

St Helena web portal: www.sthelenonline.com