

Environmental Incident Report

Client

National Parks and Wildlife Services

Site Location

Skellig Michael

Date of Incident

30th May 2022

On Site Personnel

Brian Power - Senior Ecological Clerk of Works

Reported to

Maurice O'Connor Senior Project Manager

Date and Time First Reported

30th May 2022 at 4.30pm

Investigated by

Brian Power and Maurice O'Connor

Overview

As per request of both OPW and NPWS, Brian Power, Envirico Ecological Clerk of Works, oversaw activities in relation to a sweep that took place on the Island on Monday afternoon, 30th May 2022. This area lies above Seal Cove and was the site of a boulder fall during the winter months. The general purpose of the works was to assess and remove potential loose material in a controlled manner as there was a risk to the public and onsite personnel from falling rock during the tourist season.

Report of Brian Power

I assessed the area of descent from above as it runs through one of the smaller Puffin colonies and has been known to contain nesting Manx Shearwater. I had no issues here as the ground is hard packed, and the majority of nests are under gaps in boulders. As the team entered the area, some disturbance was noted, however, as workers descended birds returned to the area. Following this I made my way back to view works from the lower lighthouse.

The entire process was completed in approximately two hours, the majority of this taking place in a restricted access area with ropes used by the team to carry out the work. The actual rock removal works took approximately 25 minutes to complete. It was anticipated that rock fall or movement would be minimal, however, this was not the case on the day, and a substantial amount of debris

made its way down onto the path.

A considerable amount of debris made it over the wall, and as a result, immediate disturbance was noted with Kittiwake and Fulmar taking to the air. Impacts on the birds below cannot be ruled out and the response of Auk species below could not be seen from the vantage point. The timing of this heavier fall lasted approximately 15 minutes and it would have been unsafe for the workers to continue to base without completing the process. A considerable amount of data is available on the cliff nesting birds in this area and this may contribute to an assessment on any potential impacts on the birds from the rock fall.

This sweep appears to be part of the normal procedure during early season on the island, however, the works at this section was delayed until now, possibly due to weather issues with accessing the island.

Recommendations

Given the extent of material that came down, and while understanding the health and safety related issues, if possible, I would strongly recommend that this work not be carried out this far into the season. It would also be beneficial to have the early season sweeps observed to assess potential impacts.

Report Issued to

Dr. David Tierney - National Parks and Wildlife Services

Dr. Philip Buckley - National Parks and Wildlife Services

Feergus McCormick Senior Architect Heritage Services/ Conservation - Office of Public Works

Attached Photos



Figure 1: Debris on a known Fulmar ledge



Figure 2: Debris around a known fulmar ledge



Figure 3: Path prior to works



Figure 4: Path post works