**EXCO REPORT - meeting of 8 January 2013**

First of all, I should like to wish everyone on St Helena, Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.  I’m very pleased to be back on St Helena and just in time to meet and congratulate the teams who competed so well in the exciting Governor’s Cup Yacht Race.

While I was away I called at the False Bay Yacht Club in Simon’s Town to receive the Governor’s Cup for onward transmission to St Helena and tomorrow I look forward to presenting it to the winning team.  While in South Africa I also followed an intense programme with Julian Morris of Enterprise St Helena, and other colleagues, to promote St Helena to potential investors.  I’m pleased to say that the results of that work look very encouraging.  In London, Councillor Derek Thomas, Kedell Worboys and I represented St Helena at the Joint Ministerial Council hosted by the Foreign Office. I also represented Ascension Island with Councillor Cathy Cranfield and Tristan da Cunha with Chris Bates.  I had several useful meetings with colleagues in the Foreign Office; and Tamara and I had the great pleasure of an audience with Her Majesty at Buckingham Palace.  After a short holiday in Germany with our daughters we enjoyed a family Christmas in London. On 30 December I flew to Ascension Island where I held meetings with Councillors and others and hosted a reception on New Year’s Day for some 60 people.

On returning to St Helena and to Plantation House I was greatly impressed by the hard work done while I was away to repair and refurbish parts of this historic house. It is looking much refreshed and I’m pleased to report that the work is now nearing completion.

 So back to our short EXCO meeting today at which we had one urgent paper needing a decision on options for improved sea access and one routine paper for information confirming revised fuel prices.

 The urgent paper noted that the Jamestown Wharf Development Works Phase II and the Permanent Jetty in Rupert’s Bay both came in well over budget. European Union (EDF) funding is allocated to the Jamestown Wharf while DfID has set aside funds for the Permanent Jetty at Rupert’s Bay.  Although there are insufficient funds to proceed with both projects now, the possibility exists to combine the funds allocated for the two projects to enable one of them to be completed. In light of this, an economic study was done to establish which of the two projects would bring the highest returns to the Island at this time. The study concluded overwhelmingly that a Permanent Jetty at Rupert’s’ Bay would easily bring the most gain.

Council accepted the recommendation to proceed with Rupert’s Bay and for officials to begin immediately to prepare submissions to the European Commission and to DfID to seek agreement to combine the available funds as proposed. The urgency attached to this matter arises from time limits being placed on use of the funds.

The Information Paper simply confirmed the recent revision of petrol and diesel prices which saw a small increase in the price of diesel.

Our meeting today started at 09.30 and finished at just after 11.00.

**Mark Capes**

**Governor**

**8 January 2013**