



Trails and Interpretation Improvements in the Peaks National Park, St Helena

Targeted territory: Saint Helena

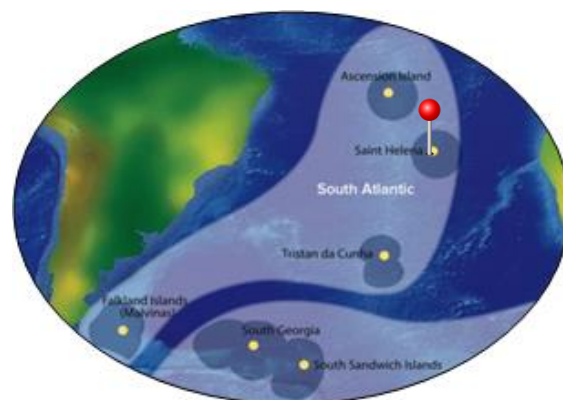
Total project budget: 99,531 Euros

BEST 2.0 grant awarded: 99,531 Euros

Duration: April 2016 – April 2017 (12 months)

Lead organisation: Government of Saint Helena,
Environmental Management Division

Partner organisation: Saint Helena Tourism



Background:

The cloud forest of the Peaks National Park is the only remaining densely vegetated habitat type on St Helena which can still be considered predominantly native. Approximately 20 hectares of this remarkable ecosystem remain, confined to the highest ridges generally above 750 metres in altitude. It is dominated by a rich community of tree-fern thicket, habitat for many of the island's rarest endemic plants, many of which are listed as critically endangered on the IUCN Red List.



In recognition of its ecological importance, the peaks were designated as a national park in 1996. Despite its biodiversity, the park is an extremely fragile ecosystem, constantly under threat from invasive plants, species loss, habitat fragmentation, climate change, and tourism.



It is important that the unique environment of the Peaks National Park can be accessed in a way that minimises disturbance and protects the fragile environment from potential impacts those park users might cause. However, due to a lack of funding much of the current network of trails have not been maintained and have become overgrown, inaccessible and fallen into disrepair. This is particularly relevant in light of the expected increase in tourism as a result of the opening of the island's first airport.

Description of the project:

The project will improve the trail facilities in the Peaks National Park by installing at least 242 metres of boardwalk, 393 metres of stairs, 160 metres of handrail and 32 square metres of lookouts, clearing vegetation away from 8,000 metres of overgrown trails and installing 20 interpretive signage panels.

Through an open day event and articles in local newspapers and online the project will promote the trail upgrades and raise awareness of conservation efforts in the park.

The project will be the largest ecotourism development of its kind on St Helena. Construction will use high-quality materials, and will be regularly maintained, so the facilities will be long-lasting and provide many decades of access for park users.

Intended results:

- Access for users of the Peaks National Park is improved and made safer providing better recreation opportunities whilst minimising disturbance to the sensitive environment.
- Increased awareness and knowledge of the biodiversity value of the Peaks National Park and a higher profile for conservation on Saint Helena.



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