



**MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND PERMITS SECTION (E.A.P.S)
SCOPING VERIFICATION FORM**

PROJECT TITLE: Assomption Island Tourism Development

EIA CONSULTANT: Island Conservation Society (ICS) - 4375354, 2539529, 2506437

LOCATION: Assomption Island

ISSUES DISCUSSED

(Please use additional sheets if required – a separate sheet is to be used for each organisation/person undergoing scoping)

Island	Impact category	Impact description
ASSOMPTION	Biodiversity and ecosystem services	Disturbance and reduction of endangered green turtle nesting habitat on the prominent beach crest (west beach is the largest turtle nesting beach in Seychelles) and the effect of light pollution on nesting turtles and especially hatchlings who rely on natural light sources to reach the ocean quickly.
		Sand extraction from the beaches, dunes (unique and diverse flora and fauna) or the seabed, causing coastal erosion and coral reef damage through sedimentation and smothering of corals.
		Dune adventure activities pose risks to the unique dune environment and biodiversity. Assomption’s dunes are the highest dune system in Seychelles and provide coastal protection, act as a windbreak on this exposed part of the island, and host diverse native flora and fauna. Recommend limiting activities to hiking up dunes along fixed routes and using highest point as a lookout. Trails should be limited and not criss-cross the surface of the dune to avoid erosion of the dune.
		Pollution of the marine environment from sewage, food waste, general waste, packaging waste, sun cream and textile waste, landscaping runoff, and noise and light pollution. A waste disposal plan should be submitted including planned management for horses feed/excrement.
		Disturbance to marine environment from additional boat traffic, plus snorkelling and diving activities, breakage of coral, touching turtles etc. Impacts of private residency, hotel guests and staff fishery will quickly reduce the abundance of target fish.
		Destruction or degradation of habitats will affect population recovery of native land birds, such as the white-eyes
		Removal of native vegetation to clear space for the development will damage the island’s vegetation and ecosystem services it provides (soil formation and stabilisation, erosion protection, shade, foraging and nesting resources for native species)
		Impact on coastal and marine ecosystems by by-product of desalination plants (toxic brine) disposal
		Loss or alteration of biodiversity and ecosystem services from the scale of the construction footprint (coral rock, corals and sand extraction + cladding and terrain levelling)
		Disturbance from helicopters, planes and UAVs to Assomption’s wildlife, particularly nesting birds and restoration efforts for seabirds
		Damage to scientifically valuable geological features including paleological specimens (fossils) which document the natural history of the island.
	The international airstrip will limit the ability for tortoises to cross Assomption and there should be careful consideration of a wildlife corridor that allows organisms, including giant tortoises, to move freely and safely between different parts of the island.	
Biosecurity	Strict biosecurity protocols for flights and vessels arriving and departing from Assomption are essential to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive alien species and diseases that could harm the biodiversity of Assomption and Aldabra, compromise restoration efforts, and risk the health and well-being of the guests and staff. This is particularly high risk because of the plans to receive international flights on the island. SIF should have a role in managing and monitoring biosecurity risks from Assomption to Aldabra.	

		Biosecurity impacts of planned nursery, landscaping and seed bank on biosecurity of Assumption/Aldabra. Crucial to prioritise non-invasive and native plant species in nursery and garden development and consider the resident plant communities.
	Climate and environment	Monitoring and adaptation to the seasonal and dynamic changes in the island's environment and climate, including the seasonal shift in the dunes, are likely to affect anything constructed at its base (proposed wellness centre). The dunes also provide essential protection against wind erosion and storm surges.
		Monitoring and adaptation to the seasonal and dynamic changes in the coastline, especially in the areas of planned development (the proposed Chinese restaurant is in an area of high sand movement), and adoption of measures to prevent or minimise the shoreline change and erosion. On the current proposal buildings are less than 20m from the high water mark (considering spring tides and storm surges) and need to be built further inland. Note that the image on the overall master plan was captured at low tide and should not be taken to represent the high water mark.
		Impacts on climate change and adaptation from the use of backup diesel generators and the increase in water consumption.
	Conservation and restoration	Disturbance of the sand dunes and the terrestrial habitats and endemic species.
		Development poses additional challenges and complications for rat, mouse and cat eradication and compromises chances of success. Ideally an eradication would be done before development. Presence of these invasive species is potentially problematic for guests and smooth-running of the hotel. With these species present on Assumption, restoration/rewilding opportunities for the island are very limited (e.g. not possible to translocate Aldabra rails or other land birds, seabirds will not return) so biodiversity and ecosystem services on the island will remain limited.
		The conservation and restoration potential of Assumption is immense. Beyond the construction of the hotel, what will the setup on the island look like for research and for evaluating and mitigating the long-term impacts of development on the island.
		Development will introduce artificial lighting including airstrip illumination that will confuse animals and disrupt natural light cycles especially for the substantial number of avian flocks migrating over Assumption.
		Impacts on conservation and restoration from the implementation of active terrestrial restoration measures and the adoption of appropriate restoration methods of guano and degraded areas.
	Safety and health	Safety risks from offering horse riding activities in the water to the rider and the horse given the strong currents close to the shore and sharks on the west beach.
	Infrastructure and logistics	Challenges from the salt spray (planned staff house development) on the east of the island and strong currents/sea state of the identified beach for staff during the southeast monsoon.
		Substantial biosecurity infrastructure will be required for SIF as part of the development (clearance areas) for both the boat landing and the flight arrival areas.
		Possibility of having an SIF office on Assumption which could facilitate biosecurity of guests/supplies going to Aldabra but also entail challenges and costs, such as transport, communication, infrastructure and security.
ALDABRA	Biodiversity and ecosystem services	Increase in tourist arrivals and activities, causing disturbance and stress to the wildlife and habitats. Unclear for SIF the tourism management plan including visitor limits (optimal tourism numbers to minimize disturbance) and monitoring (regularly assess impact and adjust strategies) of development.
		Introduction of invasive alien species, pests, and pathogens from the visitors and their equipment, and construction of infrastructure.
		Increase in demand for water, energy, and other resources, creating pressure on the island's carrying capacity and sustainability.
		Increase in waste generation and disposal, posing risks to the marine and terrestrial environment.
		Potential conflicts and competition between the tourism sector and the conservation and research activities on the island.

		Cumulative and long-term impacts of increased tourism on the ecological and cultural values of the atoll, and the resilience and adaptation of the ecosystem to climate change and other threats.
	Infrastructure and logistics	Impacts of helicopter access to Aldabra. Environmental impact assessment (EIA) to assess the impacts of helicopter access to Aldabra including noise, air, and water pollution, disturbance to wildlife, and alteration of the natural and cultural landscape of the atoll. Reviewed flight regulations if necessary to regulate flight frequency, altitude etc.
		Resources available to SIF in protecting and conserving Aldabra, and in accommodating and regulating the increase in number of visitors including additional staff and infrastructure for this purpose.
	Biosecurity	Biosecurity protocols and extra measures and staff will be required for the extra flights and vessels arriving to Aldabra to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive alien species, pests and diseases that could harm the biodiversity of Aldabra, and the health and well-being of the guests and staff. SIF should have a role in managing and monitoring biosecurity risks from Assomption to Aldabra. There is a particularly acute risk of accidental introduction of yellow crazy ants, which are common on many Seychelles islands, and would devastate Aldabra if established. Another major risk is the presence of mice on Assomption, which could more easily spread to Aldabra via the multiple new pathways brought by increased tourism and infrastructure.
	Conservation and restoration	Clear stipulations for incoming and outbound flights are crucial. Reviewed flight regulations are necessary for Aldabra and should include designated flight corridors (minimise overflight of sensitive areas); altitude restrictions (set altitude limits to avoid disturbing wildlife and nesting sites); frequency control (regulate frequency to prevent cumulative impacts) and reporting procedures (for flight operators to track compliance).
		Impacts on SIF's potential application for the International Dark Sky status for Aldabra. Potential impacts on other designations (e.g. UNESCO) that recognise and acknowledge Aldabra's lack of disturbance. It is crucial to conduct a risk assessment as part of the the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) on the potential impacts of this development on Aldabra's Outstanding Universal Value and its ecosystem.

PERSON/ORGANISATION SCOPED

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Date: 14/02/2024

The completed form can be posted on the following e-mail address Class1@env.gov.sc; or contact the ENV ASSESSMENT AND PERMITS SECTION- Environment Department-Tel; 4670594 to organise for collection.

DEADLINE: 15th February 2024