



Media Release from Alderney Wildlife Trust

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The Channel Islands' only dedicated wildlife survey vessel comes of age

In 2012 the Alderney Wildlife Trust (AWT) purchased Rye Harbour's pilot boat, Rother III, for use as a wildlife survey vessel. She sailed from her previous home of 30 years on the River Rye to the picturesque Braye Harbour, the northernmost port in the Channel Islands, in April of that year. At the time AWT made a commitment to scale up its marine work because there were no suitable vessels working in Alderney. The investment necessary was provided thanks to generous private loans made by AWT members.

Over the following 12 years Sula has been used primarily as a survey vessel, undertaking hundreds of vitally important survey trips including monitoring seabird breeding counts, keeping watch of the local seal population and how rising sea levels are affecting our coastline, to name just a few. Sula also taken many thousands of passengers to experience the ferocity of Alderney's tides, as well as catch a glimpse of the spectacular seabird colonies that call our island home. Another crucial role Sula has filled is as a platform for film crews. Crews and presenters from TV shows as diverse as the BBC's Coast, Blue Planet, Countryfile and The One Show, as well as French and American film crews, have all stepped onboard. This attention has, for more than a decade, helped to highlight the importance of wildlife to Alderney's residents and visitors alike.

Originally commissioned for pilotage, Sula is a 33-foot purpose built Lochin workboat, with outstanding seakeeping qualities. She is stable and has a large deck area, which makes the transport of equipment for offloading on remote islets, such as the locations of the island's remote puffin and gannet webcams, easy work.

The operation of a commercially coded vessel is far from easy and only possible thanks to support from local donors and the tireless team of Wildlife Trust volunteers. In 2020-21 the AWT invested more than £40,000 re-engining and installing new electrics in the vessel, which extended her life by many years and made her a much more sustainable vessel.

In 2024, Sula will be working on projects ranging from reducing the impact of rats on Guillemot colonies, to wildlife rescue, and from mapping Alderney's tidal flow and marine habitats, to providing free trips out to explore Alderney's waters for the island's school children. One of the other key areas of growing work is the monitoring of the island's Grey Seal population, which currently has no formal legal protection on Alderney.

The Alderney Wildlife Trust is planning significant improvements to Sula over the coming weeks; this will include installing a new shelter for passengers and fitting the boat with additional scientific survey

equipment. To help meet this goal the Wildlife Trust is looking to attract business and private sponsorship or partners from within the Channel Islands' wider community. If you're interested in becoming a partner, please get in touch with Paul (communications@alderneywildlife.org) for more information.

Quote 'Over the last decade and more Sula has enabled Alderney to record its seabird life in more detail than any other island. I have had the pleasure of watching children see a Puffin for the first time and the trauma of recording the impacts of Bird Flu. Sula is a truly valuable resource, the only full-time wildlife survey vessel operational in our region, and we are hoping that we can find partners who would like to help her do even more.' - Roland Gauvain (CEO, Alderney Wildlife Trust)

Background

About the Alderney Wildlife Trust

The Alderney Wildlife Trust is one of the 46 Wildlife Trusts working across the British Isles. We are the youngest of the Wildlife Trusts, forming 20 years ago and since then the AWT has received incredible support from a dedicated team of wildlife enthusiasts, what we like to think of as the 'TeamWilder'. This team isn't just limited to residents and AWT members, it includes people from all walks of life who have an interest in our island's wildlife, as well as supporters and organizations from around the world. We work with the local community to engage them with their natural environment in order to protect Alderney's wildlife for the future.

[Our mission is to study, protect and champion Alderney's wildlife. We wish to see a thriving natural island where wildlife and natural habitats play a valued role in addressing our island's future and the climate and ecological emergencies that face us.](#)

Alderney is a very special place and by helping the work of the Alderney Wildlife Trust you can make a difference. After all, if you love where you live, you'll want to look after it - Dr. George McGavin, Patron AWT

Notes to Media

For further information, please contact:

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