

Charles Hamilton

From: charles sheppard [csheppard@bio.warwick.ac.uk]
 Sent: Tuesday, May 14, 2002 1:49 PM
 To: charles.hamilton@fco.gov.uk
 Subject: review of the Posford report

Dear Charles

I have just mailed to you my completed report, and append below this email the first page summary of it. The original in the mail has another dozen pages of detail and supporting points.

To judge the science as you asked of me, I did this wearing the hat of a science editor (I am in fact chief editor of one of the main marine science journals). You will see that I consider some parts to be strong and sound and others to be hopeless, and some key elements not even attempted, even though they are in the report.

Actually, resolution of that might not be too difficult as far as the resettlement issue is concerned, as the sound sections reach conclusions that are clear and in my view correct, and indeed are supported by ongoing science connected with tropical areas generally. However, others on e.g. resources are poor and so the present Posford report should not be viewed as released in its present form; some of its science would be badly savaged by anyone not happy with your conclusions, and so, by implication, could some conclusions themselves. The tasks omitted, incidentally, would be very useful, even essential, to BIOT Administration for general future management, regardless of any resettlement issue.

There is more to say on this, and I would be happy to talk with you at your convenience if you wish. I would be happy to come down again too, if you wish (and return the volumes at the same time). Meanwhile let me know if I should elaborate on the report in any more detail for you. I hope the mail delivers it shortly, but I can email the full text if you wish too.

Best wishes

Charles Sheppard

Review of Posford report on possible resettlement of BIOT

Dr Charles Sheppard

Summary

- * Three development scenarios are postulated which correspond broadly to artisanal, intermediate, and top-end commercial tourism.
- * Oceanographic, climate, groundwater and soils sections are scientifically sound (with some queries and revisions suggested). These broadly show that development in the islands is not sensible, long term nor sustainable (and may even become dangerous) for the first two development scenarios.
- * Most sections on natural resources are dismal. They are sampled and reviewed inappropriately and inadequately, and can support no conclusions of any kind. They did not and could not achieve the required information.

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sections, and by implication conclusions and propositions generally, would be badly mauled if contested. Several aspects of the ToR do not appear to have been addressed (even allowing for information still being processed). Some can be done from 'home', but some required proper initial field work. Volume III on 'Resettlement issues' contains little of value. There is a huge amount of repetitive waffle and padding. Whole sections are very vague and banal. There is evidence of irrelevant 'cut-and-pasting' from other reports.

There is too little drawing together of separate sections, so conclusions written in isolation sometimes do not agree with each other; for example, suggested maximum populations vary widely depending on the basis of calculation. Resolution of this is one of the points of the exercise. Each section focuses on its own subject matter to the exclusion and compromise of others. Balancing such resource uses is what environmental management is all about, yet this is not addressed. A synthesis would be a useful part to BIOT Administration.

- * In many cases, text on one subject is scattered throughout the volumes instead of being concisely presented once, in one place. This would read much better, be clearer, be more internally coherent, and could say more, if it was one third the length.
- * The executive summary misses several important emphases made in the main text.
Reasons for not carrying out some of the work are stated often – no consultation with Ilois, aerial photos not supplied, diving was too dangerous; some snorkelling was too dangerous; etc. There are many suggestions for further work which should have been done by this project.
- * Major omissions include provision of the GIS (a 'proper' one – not just some island outlines and transect locations), remote sensing results such as ground-truthed island and shallow habitat maps, work on shoreline markers using differential GPS (for future erosion monitoring), marine resources assessments; and others.
- * If the gaps cannot now be filled, the issued report should include only the sound sections, whose general message is clear. Other ways of filling the gaps would need to be found for future management in BIOT.
- * Development scenario 3 (high end tourism development etc) becomes the obvious and only development possibility. This may create great interest in some quarters yet neither it nor its consequences are adequately discussed.