

**REQUEST FOR AN EXTENSION OF THE DEADLINE FOR COMPLETING THE DESTRUCTION OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 5 OF THE CONVENTION**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

1. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) signed the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (hereby referred to as the Ottawa Convention) on 3 December 1997 and ratified it on 31 July 1998. The Convention entered into force for the UK on 1 March 1999. The UK extended the treaty to the Falkland Islands and other Overseas Territories on 4 December 2001. The UK strongly upholds its commitments under the Convention. Article 5.1 requires the UK to destroy all anti-personnel landmines in mined areas “under its jurisdiction or control”. The deadline for compliance was 1 March 2009. On 30 May 2008, the UK submitted a request to the President of the Eighth Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention for a ten year extension to clear the Falkland Islands. The extension was granted and expires on 1 March 2019.
2. The UK has made significant progress in the clearance of the Falkland Islands and towards meeting its obligations under the Ottawa Convention. Since 2009, the UK has completed four phases of clearance work at a cost of £11,000,000 and is currently engaged in the fifth phase at a further cost of over £27,000,000<sup>1</sup>. Of the 122<sup>2</sup> mined areas which existed in 2009, and as at 5 March 2018, only thirty seven remain to be cleared; however, these are the most complex mined areas. The UK now has a fully funded programme in place to reduce this number to eight mined areas by 31 March 2020 using the same methods and means of high quality land release processes with strongly experienced contractors. The UK requests the opportunity to continue this valuable activity for an extended period of five years from 1 March 2019 to 1 March 2024, with the strong intention of fulfilling the UK’s obligations.
3. Despite the significant progress made, the environment of the Falkland Islands has posed a unique challenge throughout. Factors include the adverse weather conditions, (all four seasons can be experienced on one day), that enforce an annual three month stand down in the winter months because of the risks to safety, quality and productivity. The inaccessibility of the Falkland Islands means they have limited capacity to support an expanded workforce that would enable us to increase the rate of work. In particular local resources such as accommodation, equipment hired locally and medical resources are limited. Furthermore, considerations including the environmental consequences of demining and the tough financial climate are all aspects with which the UK has contended in taking forward this work over the last decade. These factors are becoming increasingly significant as we tackle the more technically-challenging and environmentally-sensitive minefields in Phase Five. Consequently, to address many of these considerations the UK has increased its funding commitment. Phase 5 represents a significant acceleration in the UK’s efforts to demine the Falklands, with the project receiving a substantial funding uplift and operating at the largest capacity yet.
4. All work completed on the Falkland Islands meets or exceeds IMAS standards, by adapting IMAS standards to meet the specifics of the situation found on the Islands. Operational efficiency has continually improved as a result of a clear strategic commitment from the UK Government.

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<sup>1</sup> Funding has been increased from £20,000,000 as announced on 14 September 2016, now to over £27,000,000 to support continued activity in the Falkland Islands into the extension request period.

<sup>2</sup> See 1.2.2. The 2007 Feasibility Study stated that there were 117 mined areas, as, in a few instances, it combined two separately numbered mined areas together. To maintain accurate accounts of progress, the true figure of 122 is now used.

Consequently, incremental experience has been gained over the period of the extension in five phases of demining. Efficiency improvements have also been made possible by the use of experienced, resourceful and meticulous operators, employing highly effective processes, techniques and equipment (including flails, tillers and drones) to manage the varied conditions of rock scree, dry and water-logged peat, mined areas laid at the edge of the sea, beach and sand dunes. The processes of data collation and analysis, non-technical survey, technical survey and clearance are well understood and employed on the project.

5. Looking ahead, as stated in the first extension request, the Falkland Islands contain some sensitive flora, fauna and fragile terrain which require careful consideration before any clearance work begins. The earlier phases of work focused on tasks where the greatest impact could be achieved in the shortest time; minefields with environmentally sensitive issues were left until later. This procedure was used to refine the approach and to learn throughout. To foresee the challenges, an environmental impact assessment was conducted in 2017 on these areas. The assessment identified two particular issues alongside mitigation mechanisms to reduce the environmental risks and to ensure that impact to the existing environment is limited to the minimum practicable. The first area of concern is to achieve sensitive clearance in the minefields within which some penguin species breed and nest in burrows. The second area of concern to manage is the operationally and environmentally challenging natural landscape at Yorke Bay.
6. The task at Yorke Bay will be split into two parts. Firstly, all the mined areas will be subjected to technical survey and the survey reports will be analysed and the clearance work costed. This will be completed within the UK's current extension period which expires on 1 March 2019. The second part will be the clearance of the mined areas and, for reasons explained later, this is neither possible within the current extension period nor, indeed, within the current Phase 5 project which is now scheduled to end on 31 March 2020. Clearance, when it commences, will be very complex. Requesting the additional funding to complete the clearance of Yorke Bay and, once approved, contracting the remaining work may take an additional year, thus already two years beyond the existing 1 March 2019 deadline. It is possible that work can be completed in a single further year but that cannot be certain at this stage. Rather than request a three year extension which may prove insufficient, thus necessitating a further extension request, the UK requests a five year extension until 1 March 2024 to continue the much-reduced, but significant demining challenge.
7. The areas containing mines are identified and contained within perimeter-marked and fenced areas, as required under Article 5(2) of the Convention. To date there have been no civilian casualties and the clear marking will continue to mitigate against such an incident. The last British military casualty was in 1983. Apart from the denial of access to the social amenity which will be alleviated by the clearance of Yorke Bay, there is no other impact. Hence, the Falkland Islands are considered to be 'mine-impact free'. Most of the remaining mined areas are in remote locations, and pose negligible risk to civilians. In all phases of demining, safety is paramount. Environmental and community issues are also a high priority, and the project seeks to cause as little disruption to local residents and wildlife as possible. All demining projects are conducted in close cooperation with the Falkland Islands Government.