

This webinar brought together voices from the Americas and Europe to share experiences and solutions as we seek to strengthen island resilience.

It was one of a series organised under the <u>Celebrate Islands</u> banner organised by the <u>Conservatoire du Littoral</u> and their partners. Normally a physical event, this year's 'Celebrate Islands' has gone online. Coronavirus is affecting all our islands and this virtual mobilisation, through videos showing what island communities are doing during the crisis and a series of webinars in different languages, has been a great way to maintain connectivity. Whilst stressing the richness of our islands and how important it is to protect them.

The common themes from the webinar were:

- How everyone has taken their work online, even Mare, living a traditional island life, now has an Instagram account!
- Need to cut costs and impacts (through renewables)
- Working in partnership across different disciplines, but with local leadership
- Loss of tourism and its impacts (and opportunities)
- Developing new skills in lockdown and reviving old ones (traditional approaches are often better)
- Nature coming back (and being appreciated more)
- Make it local, make it direct
- Plan, respond, recover and flourish
- Importance of not going back on environmental advances



The first half of the discussion focussed on lessons learned from the coronavirus pandemic and good practices implemented on islands. We heard some good practical solutions for getting ready to reopen and reengage from Stuart Wilson of the <u>Cayman Islands National</u> <u>Trust</u>. The importance of being flexible, ready and proactive. Karetta Crooks Charles told us the <u>Saint Lucia National Trust</u> has been developing creative solutions and growing virtual engagement amongst its members and supporters. Online events themed around environmental observances, like Earth Day or World Turtle Day, have provided opportunities to share conservation messages. Both organisations talked about redeploying staff, learning new skills and sharing responsibilities.



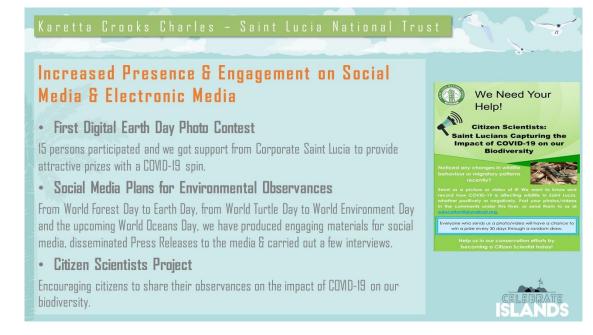
On Kinhu Island in Estonia, coronavirus has seen the revival of traditional skills and a return to a simpler way of life. Mare Matäs and her community have become more self-reliant and independent. One gets the feeling that they are quite enjoying quarantine!

However, the lack of tourists is impacting on all three islands. And this was echoed by the Justin Albert of the <u>National Trust in Wales</u> where island communities like Anglesey rely on tourism. We heard that nature is coming back (something also observed in Saint Lucia) and people are noticing it more. Coronavirus is offering us an opportunity to rethink as individuals, communities, organisations and even whole countries.



Norma Hogan said that Orkney was the best place to live in Scotland, if not Europe! And it is certainly developing some world leading marine renewable projects, which the <u>Highlands</u> and Islands Enterprise have invested heavily in. Some interesting synergies with Wales where the National Trust has developed many renewable energy projects from photovoltaics to heat pumps, hydroelectricity to biomass – all sensitively installed at historic sites or in areas of natural beauty.

We learned this resilience mantra from Stewart Sarkozy-Banoczy of Precovery Labs: 'plan, respond, recover and flourish' which is so relevant to the post-corona world. The importance of holistic solutions, and one which drew on traditional knowledge (like on Kinhu) were also stressed. We were urged to ensure that progress achieved on environmental issues is not lost, as coronavirus creates a flurry of plastic waste, for example. And to maintain some of the good habits that the pandemic has created, like daily walks and growing our own food.



In the discussions we talked about biodiversity and nature recovering, from wild goats in Wales to flying fish in Saint Lucia! All our islands are pivoting, like the gin distillers in Scotland who are now making hand sanitiser or the National Trust taking their work online and turning their focus to local audiences rather than tourists to build sustainability. Wherever we are in the world, we share the same challenges. We are all at different stages, whether in our response to the coronavirus or in our island resilience, so the value of exchanging ideas and experiences internationally is extremely valuable.

We are grateful to our colleagues at the Conservatoire and their partners for organising and hosting the webinar; our speakers and of course the 50 or so participants!