



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



Department  
for International  
Development

# UK Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy

## UK Government Activity

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## Background

The UK Government wishes to ensure that the rich environmental assets of the Overseas Territories (OTs), which attract international recognition, are cherished. Our role is to work in partnership to provide Territory Governments with the technical advice and support they need to make this a reality.

The Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy (UKOTBS) is a key tool to achieve this with its overarching objective being: “to *enable the UK and Overseas Territory Governments to meet their international obligations for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the Overseas Territories.*”

Since its adoption, a number of activities have been initiated across Government to support the UKOTBS and considerable progress has been made in its implementation. This note gives examples of some of the ongoing and planned activities that are supported by UK Government Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Department for International Development (DFID) and its statutory advisor the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) in each of the areas under the UKOTBS.

Delivering on the commitments made in the UKOTBS is an on-going process. This document is not designed to capture all the support that is being provided by HMG, but to highlight key areas that are delivering on these commitments.

This document reports against each of the commitments identified in the UKOTBS in three key areas<sup>1</sup>:

- delivering strategic priorities;
- financial support and
- improving communication and engagement.



Figure 1: Seeing the big picture.... South Georgia ([18-019](#)) Credit: A Cordingley

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<sup>1</sup> The specific commitments in the UKOTBS under each area are shown in text boxes for ease of reference.

# Delivering Strategic Priorities

**Strategic priorities for the UK Government's support for biodiversity conservation in the Overseas Territories comprise the following:**

- i. obtaining data on the location and status of biodiversity interests and the human activities affecting biodiversity to inform the preparation of policies and management plans (including baseline survey and subsequent monitoring);**
- ii. preventing the establishment of invasive alien species, and eradicating or controlling species that have already become established;**
- iii. developing cross-sectoral approaches to climate change adaptation that are consistent with the principles of sustainable development;**
- iv. developing tools to value ecosystem services to inform sustainable development policies and practices; and**
- v. developing ecosystem-based initiatives for the conservation and sustainable use of the marine environment.**

## Finding out more about biodiversity in the OTs

### **The UK's wildlife overseas: A stock take of nature in our Overseas Territories'**

The FCO has recently provided funding to an RSPB-led project which aims to produce a 'stock take' of species in OTs. This work will compile existing species population data from across the OTs and assess the data for geographic and taxonomic coverage to identify where survey work could be directed in future. This will quantify the information which is already available to describe species' populations and also where information regarding species incidence or density is absent. The RSPB are working closely with Territory Governments and other NGOs in its compilation.

## Tackling Invasive Alien Species

In 2011, Defra initiated a series of research projects to address threats to biodiversity in the South Atlantic OTs. These projects were designed to bring UK and OT expertise together to address issues specifically identified by the Territory Governments. The funding for these was separate from Darwin Initiative Funding. Three projects were funded:

- A review of the potential for bio-control of invasive species in the Falklands and South Georgia, published on the Defra science website in 2012.
- A review of the rate, spread and risks posed by invasive species in the Falklands. This research looked at a range of invasive plants in the Falklands and has supported the production of a draft strategy for invasive species control in the Territory.
- An assessment of the impacts of predation on the critically endangered wirebird on St Helena

#### Case study 1: Improving bio-security in Antarctica

The introduction of non-native species of animals, insects and plants has significantly altered the ecosystems of many sub-Antarctic islands. Although the Antarctic continent has few confirmed non-native species, the threat is significant. Future increases in human presence may raise the risk of introductions and at the same time climate change may increase the chances of establishment and expansion. The UK has facilitated the contributions to recent international research to identify the likely pathways by which non-native species enter Antarctica. Last year the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) produced a detailed and easy to follow handbook setting out practical bio-security measures to be undertaken by British Antarctic programme operators to minimise the risk of introduction or spread of non-native species and advice on how to deal with incidents should they occur. BAS will monitor the effectiveness of the handbook and will review it regularly to ensure that it contains best practice.

The invasion of lionfish (*Pterois miles* and *Pterois volitans*) in the Caribbean ocean has recently been recognised as one of the world's top marine conservation issues and may well prove to be one of the greatest threats of this century to warm temperate and tropical Atlantic reefs and associated habitats. JNCC has taken the lead by organising two FCO-funded workshops in the Caribbean Region, enabling UKOTs to develop a long term response strategy for sustainable control of lionfish.



**Figure 2: Lionfish in Bermuda ([DPLUS001](#))**

The first workshop was held in Anguilla in February 2013<sup>2</sup> and resulted in the identification of key research needs and a list of priority actions needed for effective management. The second workshop, held in the Cayman Islands in July 2013<sup>3</sup> served as a platform to share expertise and provide tools for implementing some of these priorities.

In addition to the FCO-funded workshops, a Darwin-Plus grant is helping the Bermuda Zoological Society to research the scale of the lionfish problem and to develop measures to control the lionfish invasion.

#### Case study 2: Lionfish control

The Governor's Office in the Turks and Caicos provided funding for the equipment and certification necessary for ten Department for Environment and Maritime Affairs officers to receive a full-day's open-water training on lionfish control, involving techniques in safely capturing and handling the fish. The training is an important step towards the development of a strategy to control lionfish numbers in the Territory's waters.



**Figure 2: Myviken, South Georgia (18-019) Credit: Peter Bucktrout**

#### Case study 3: Reindeer eradication

Reindeer were introduced to South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands by Norwegian whalers in the early part of last century. As a result of the availability of grazing areas and the absence of any predators, reindeer populations expanded, causing significant damage to both native plant species, (some of which are now completely absent from grazed areas) and to the burrows of native seabirds, as the result of trampling. To remedy these issues, the Government of SGSSI developed a project to eradicate the reindeer from the island completely, beginning the humane cull in January 2013. The FCO were strongly supportive of the proposal, not least as the success of a separate project to rid the island of invasive rats (which predate seabird chicks and eggs) was also dependent on the exclusion of all reindeer. The FCO provided financial support for the project; specifically £20,000 towards post-cull monitoring. As the reindeer were successfully eradicated in early 2014, this funding is now being used to develop radar imagery of vegetated areas, to allow recovery to be monitored on a very large scale.

<sup>2</sup> See [http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/ot\\_LionfishWorkshopAnguilla\\_20130602.pdf](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/ot_LionfishWorkshopAnguilla_20130602.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> See [http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/ot\\_LionfishWorkshopCaymanIsland\\_201307.pdf](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/ot_LionfishWorkshopCaymanIsland_201307.pdf)



#### Case study 4: Rat eradication

Rats and mice have colonised South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands since the advent of shipping to the islands, beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Populations have since spread across the north and east coasts, and have devastated the island's unique bird populations. To remove this threat to seabird chicks and eggs, the South Georgia Heritage Trust conceived and has begun implementation of a rat eradication project. The UK Government has provided a significant financial contribution to the project, providing £500,000 in the form of a grant of £250,000 from DEFRA and £253,000 from the Darwin Initiative. The project has recently completed its second stage, such that rats have now been removed from 720 km<sup>2</sup> of the island, or 67% of the rodent-infested area of South Georgia. South Georgia Heritage Trust has seen no indication that rats are still present in the treated areas, and there are some early signs of bird recovery.

## Developing Tools to Value Ecosystem Services to Inform Sustainable Development

Environmental Mainstreaming is an innovative approach by the UK Government to help the Territories put environmental considerations at the heart of decision making. Projects have been completed in the Falklands, British Virgin Islands (funded by the FCO) and Anguilla (funded by Defra). We are in the process of extending the initiative to Bermuda and the Turks and Caicos Islands.



**Figure 4: Seed collection in the Caribbean ([DPLUS006](#))**

The mainstreaming process is designed to assist individual OTs in identifying the key issues that need to be addressed to ensure the environment is properly taken into account in all aspects of economic and infrastructure planning. The Territories are highly dependent upon the assets provided by their natural environment – their terrestrial and marine ecosystems – for their economic wellbeing. The long term management of these assets is essential for the development of sustainable ('Green') economies in the OTs. The

mainstreaming initiative has engaged senior politicians and civil servants in a new debate about the value of ecosystems in supporting economies and ensuring the environment is properly taken into account in all aspects of infrastructure planning.

#### Case Study 5: South Atlantic Information Management System

The FCO provided £185,000 to help establish a South Atlantic Information Management System and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) Centre for the South Atlantic Territories, which is managed through the Falklands-based South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI). Establishing this centre was a key requirement to achieve the key recommendations of the environmental mainstreaming workshop that took place in the Falkland Islands in 2012.

The Centre establishes an information management system, including shared GIS capabilities, which is accessible to all of the South Atlantic UK OTs (Falkland Islands, South Georgia, Tristan da Cunha, Ascension and St. Helena). Training OT personnel across the region is also a priority to ensure capacity is built up in the region and dependence on outside assistance reduced.

The benefits of this new initiative include: immediate follow-up to the Falklands Environmental Mainstreaming workshop addressing the need for development of a GIS system that will underpin a wide range of environmental work in the islands; a shared information management and GIS capacity will support existing and future research in the region, provide a synergy between and add value to a range of current projects, and add significantly to the regional capacity to undertake ecosystem assessments and monitoring; and provide training to all OTs that will significantly increase regional capacity.

The mainstreaming projects completed to date in the Falkland Islands, British Virgin Islands (BVI) and Anguilla have generated additional technical and financial support. This includes a JNCC-led project examining the value of the natural environment in BVI, financial support to the South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute to develop a Falkland Islands and wider South Atlantic Information Management System, and support to the Government of Anguilla through Darwin Plus to complete a National Ecosystems Assessment. Projects such as these allow policy makers to draw on a substantial environmental evidence base. The initiative also assists Territories in understanding the value of public participation in environmental decision making.

## Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Marine Environment

### Providing expertise to help the Overseas Territories develop sustainable fisheries

The FCO financially supported two sustainable fisheries projects in the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) in 2013: i) encouraging the development of a sustainable pelagic fishery through financing a baseline study of species availability; and ii) financing a population monitoring study of the Queen conch to ensure that exploitation levels can be accurately informed by recent stock assessments and thus sustainability can be achieved. In addition, the FCO has recently provided specialist technical support to Ascension Island as

it seeks to improve the sustainability of its fisheries through an improved licensing and monitoring regime.



**Figure 11: Turks and Caicos Fish ([EIDCF010](#)) Credit: Susan Baker**

From 2013-2017, working in close association with fisheries officers on Ascension Island, DFID will provide approximately £4.5m to Enterprise St Helena to support the development of the private sector on the island. One aspect of this is a feasibility study for the development of a sustainable pelagic fishery for St Helena.

Ascension Island Government Conservation Department is currently working with the Biodiversity and Fisheries Committee of the Island Council, the Solicitor General and the Administrator to bring about a significant expansion of the island's protected areas network to include all of the most celebrated sites for wildlife. Specifically, it is proposed that the major green turtle nesting beaches – Long Beach, Pan Am Beach and North East Bay– along with the principle seabird nesting sites of Boatswain Bird Island, the Letterbox Peninsula, Mars Bay and the Wideawake Fairs are afforded protection under the National Protected Areas Ordinance. This significant expansion in Ascension's protected areas network will help the UK to meet its commitment under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to conserve at least 17% of terrestrial habitats. Together these new/ amended Ordinances represent a significant step forward for safeguarding the native biodiversity of Ascension Island.

The UK Government and OTs are committed to fighting illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing. The UK has a range of support in place, including working with the Territories to strengthen their enforcement capacity as well as their legislation and legal processes.

Currently Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Turks and Caicos Islands and St Helena are the UK OT members of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). The FCO works together with the OTs in meeting the commitments that ICCAT membership entails. For example, submission of UK OT data to the ICCAT Secretariat is co-ordinated by the FCO to ensure the compliance with the extensive reporting and monitoring obligations required, when fishing in line with ICCAT recommendations. The FCO has also provided technical expertise regarding ICCAT requirements in the context of St Helena's current pelagic exploratory fishery.



**Figure 12: Penguins in the Falkland Islands ([EIDP0041](#))**

The FCO continues to contribute to the sustainable management of the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) area, in particular the South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI) fisheries, through coordinating the scientific stock assessment of the target species in this area (toothfish and icefish), and using this evidence base to advocate and achieve a sustainable Total Allowable Catch. This is a key part of achieving the sustainable management of the Marine Protected Area in SGSSI, which is managed by the Government of SGSSI.

FCO's wider engagement has also involved providing political support for various Marine Protected Area proposals in Antarctic waters (for example in the Ross Sea and East Antarctic) at recent CCAMLR meetings. The designation of further Marine Protected Areas in the CCAMLR Convention area is a goal the FCO will continue to work towards with CCAMLR and OT partners.

**Case study 6: Sustainable marine and fisheries management plan for the Pitcairn Islands**

The Government has awarded £249,946 through the Darwin Initiative to develop a sustainable marine and fisheries management plan for the Pitcairn Islands. The project, led by the University of Dundee, will produce a fully-operational fisheries and marine management plan that is ecosystem-based and sustainable, which is crucial to providing a secure future for the Island community and protecting the unique marine biodiversity of the Pitcairn Islands.

## Financial Support

**Providing financial support (within the resource limits of each department) to address the priorities listed above, facilitating access to other sources of funding, and helping to build capacity within the Territories**

### UK Government Environment Funding

Since 2004, the first joint FCO-DFID funding mechanism – the Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP), has disbursed £8 million through more than 140 projects across the Territories, in areas such as climate change, renewable energy, recycling, and species protection.

The other widely utilised cross-Government environmental funding scheme, the Darwin Initiative, has been funding projects in the UK OTs since 1998. Since the launch of the OTBS in 2009 Darwin has funded eleven main projects and two post projects in the OTs totalling almost £3m and established the Challenge Fund which provided new funding for potential OT projects to scope out the feasibility for a main application. This provided 20 awards totalling £459k between 2010 and 2013.

Main projects have included saving the critically endangered mountain chicken frog in Montserrat and developing a sustainable marine and fisheries plan for the Pitcairn Islands. A Challenge Fund award in 2010 paved the way for a current main project (2012-2015) looking at reducing conflict between raptors and sheep farming in the Falklands.



**Figure 5: Mountain chicken frog in Montserrat (18-018) Credit: Gerardo Garcia**

#### Case Study 7: Saving the Mountain Chicken

In 2009 a chytrid fungus appeared amongst Montserrat's *Leptodactylus fallax* (better known as the Mountain Chicken). This frog is found only on Montserrat and Dominica and it is reported that the fungus is on both islands. The fungus has decimated the frog population on Montserrat.

In an effort to save the frogs, Darwin funding has helped to save the species by allowing the collection of still healthy frogs and sending them to zoos in Europe, for example Jersey, for a

programme of captive breeding. In 2013 a number of healthy specimens were flown back to the island so that they could be released back into the mountains. This was successfully completed.

## Dedicated Environment Funding for UKOTs: Darwin Plus

Following commitments made in the 2012 White Paper, the current cross-Government Darwin Plus fund was created, into which DEFRA, DFID and FCO all contribute. The new Darwin Plus fund brings together the previous UK Government funding from OTEP and Darwin, providing a new one-stop shop for OTs; without an overall reduction in funding. The Government has committed to maintaining its spending commitments on OT natural environment issues over the current spending review period.

The aim of Darwin Plus is to contribute to the long-term sustainable environmental management of the Territories. The fund dedicates around £2m per year to supporting environment and climate projects in the Overseas Territories and has been widely welcomed, including by the Overseas Territories themselves and UK-based environmental organisations, such as RSPB.

The first two rounds of Darwin Plus have seen approximately £4m supporting twenty-nine projects across the Territories, including projects ranging from habitat restoration in the South Atlantic Territories to mapping marine habitats in the Caribbean.



**Figure 6: Albatross on Nightingale Island with Tristan in the background (12-010) Credit: Paul Tyler and Alison Rothwell**

### Case Study 8: Estimating the population of the Atlantic yellow-nosed Albatross

Using Darwin Plus funding of approximately £82,000, the RSPB are working with the Tristan da Cunha Conservation Team to obtain robust population estimates of Atlantic yellow-nosed Albatross on Tristan da Cunha. They aim to train local staff in monitoring techniques in order to provide standardised monitoring data on population trends, and establish a population trend monitoring programme on Tristan.

## Providing funding through small grants schemes



*Figure 7: Spiky Yellow Woodlouse of St Helena ([EIDCF004 and Flagship Species Fund project](#)) Credit: E Thorpe*

### Case Study 9: Flagship Species Fund funded project on St Helena's Spiky Yellow Woodlouse

The population of this unique St Helena invertebrate species has declined catastrophically over the last ten years due to habitat deterioration and the effects of predators (rats and mice) and competitors (non-native woodlice). Recent observations suggest that the population may be as low as 50 individuals. This project aimed to gather sufficient evidence to develop a Species Recovery Plan for the Spiky Yellow Woodlouse and enhance skills for invertebrate monitoring among local staff as well as raising the local and international profile of St Helena's threatened endemic invertebrates and their cloud forest habitat.

In addition to an annual contribution to Darwin Plus, Defra has also provided direct funding for other projects in our OTs, including:

- Rodent eradication projects on Henderson (£200k in 2010/11), Gough (£250k in 2011/12) and South Georgia (£295k in 2011/12);
- Co-funding an officer based in the Falkland Islands responsible for implementing the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels on behalf of the South Atlantic OTs (£20k per annum);
- OT Invasive Alien Species Prioritisation – RSPB (£21.5k in 2011/12). Defra contributed towards the development of a prioritised framework for invasive eradications in the Overseas Territories. The project produced an evidence-based list of species to assist the OTs and donor organisations to prioritise their actions.
- OT Plant Pest Identification Service - Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA) (the annual cost of the service is approximately £25k and to date this has been met by Defra);
- Invasive Alien Species (IAS) eradication in the Caribbean UKOTs – RSPB (Defra funding of £50k in 2012/13) towards this EU BEST project. It aims to protect threatened species and safeguard internationally important sites by eradicating IAS in the Caribbean OTs, sharing best practice and building local capacity, with a focus on invasive vertebrates.

- A research project on the threats to marine biodiversity in the Caribbean OTs (£14k).
- A contribution towards a biosecurity review for Tristan da Cunha (£15k).
- A study by the National Oceanography Centre that assessed the depth ranges and seafloor morphology within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of each OT (providing an indication of likely habitats) and the extent of scientific seafloor bathymetric mapping data available. In total, 0.9 million km<sup>2</sup> of multi-beam bathymetry data were identified in UKOTs, equating to about one-fifth of the total area. The UK Hydrographic Office is currently co-ordinating efforts to address the remaining data shortfall in the UKOTS.
- The **Flagship Species Fund**, which was launched in 2001 with the aim of providing practical support for small-scale projects to conserve endangered species and their habitats in developing countries. It is a partnership between Defra, Fauna and Flora International (FFI) and private-sector companies. In 2009 Defra asked FFI to widen the Fund's remit to encourage applications from the UK Overseas Territories. Since then the Fund has supported a number of projects in the OTs, most recently *Operation Land Crab* in Ascension Island and projects conserving the spiky yellow woodlouse and black cabbage tree in St Helena.

The FCO has provided direct project funding to the OTs which includes:

- A project by the Ascension Island Government to improve waste management practices on the island (£70.5k);
- Assistance to establish a South Atlantic Information Management System and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) Centre for the South Atlantic OTs (£185k) (see case study 5).
- A project managed by JNCC to develop environmental value mapping tools for Caribbean Territories (£100k).



**Figure 8: BIOT Patrol Ship  
(19-027) Credit: John  
Turner**



#### Case study 10: Supporting science and conservation in the British Indian Ocean Territory

The British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) is situated in the middle of the Indian Ocean and comprises 50 islands (the Chagos Archipelago) in 640,000 square kilometres of the ocean that make up the world's largest no-take Marine Protected Area (MPA), established in May 2010. The Great Chagos Bank is the world's largest atoll. The islands, reef systems, biodiversity and waters of BIOT are among the richest on the planet, containing about half of all the reefs of this ocean which remain in good condition and are the subject of justifiable and increasing scientific interest from the UK to Hawaii to Samoa. BIOT Administration encourages scientific projects to understand more about the 98% of these waters that are unexplored, and provides support in kind to a three year programme funded by Darwin Plus to study the effectiveness of the MPA on conserving biodiversity, and establish a baseline for future conservation plans. Typical projects in BIOT cover a considerable range of scientific interest- from coral transects to shark tagging; from recording populations of protected coconut crabs, to piloting rat eradication projects. Support is provided through the free use of a vessel to carry scientific expeditions in BIOT waters at least once a year, worth over £100,000.

DFID has funded a number of OT initiatives directly, providing technical assistance, and providing environmental mitigation and management planning via capital expenditure projects. In Montserrat, for example, DFID has worked with the FCO, Defra, Darwin Initiative and the RSPB on a number of conservation initiatives:

- Feral Livestock Project - maintaining reliable ecosystem services by reducing the impact of loose and feral livestock in and around the Centre Hills;
- Montserrat Environmental Education Project (MEEP) – aiming to increase the awareness of environmental issues, both local and global, and encourage positive behaviour towards the environment and discourage negative practices;
- Turtle Project - ensuring the preservation of nesting turtles on the shores of Montserrat; and
- Montserrat Oriole Species Action Plan review - reviewing and updating the management plan to ensure Montserrat holds a self-sustaining population of the endemic Oriole.

JNCC is pursuing a strategy that aims to provide support for both small-scale Territory and Dependency-proposed projects as well as more strategic work that supports both long term OT capacity building and UK Government policy objectives. Under the research contribution scheme<sup>4</sup>, JNCC is periodically able to offer financial contributions to biodiversity research in the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. Up to two invitations will be issued each year to members of the 'UK Overseas Territories and Crown

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<sup>4</sup> <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5105>

Dependencies Steering Group', inviting them to submit requests for contributions to biodiversity research projects.



**Figure 9: Coral biodiversity in Ascension ([EIDCF012](#)) Credit: Shallow Marine Surveys Group**

#### Case study 11: Identifying areas likely to provide resilience to climate change impacts

The FCO provided funding (through the World Wildlife Fund) to support new international work to identify areas across the Antarctic Peninsula that may be significant for building ecological resistance to the local impacts of climate change. Traditionally, areas protected under the Antarctic Treaty System have been those with specific concentrations of threatened plants and animals or which are particularly diverse. This new approach, which will hopefully build on, rather than replace, the current system, focuses on four bio-geographic regions within the British Antarctic Territory which may provide resilience for species in the event of rapid climate change. It is expected that over the course of the next few years it will provide the necessary evidence for such potential 'safe havens' to receive official protection under the Antarctic Treaty's environmental protection provisions. The programme is known as RACER (Rapid Assessment of Circum-Arctic Ecosystem Resilience) and is a positive example of adapting conservation planning tools from one region to work successfully in a similar, but different, location.

## Securing Access to EU Funding

Working with NGOs and MEPs, the UK secured explicit inclusion of the EU's Overseas Countries and Territories in the new EU LIFE programme. Although we recognise that the conditions are likely to restrict the breadth of projects in practice, we are committed to working with OT Governments and partner organisations to secure LIFE funding for projects within the OTs. We will hold the European Commission to its declared intention to also support OT biodiversity and climate change projects through Global Public Goods and Challenge fund of the Development Cooperation Instrument.

Defra held a stakeholder workshop in March 2014, with participation from the European Commission, to identify possible projects and stakeholders to take forward applications for LIFE funding for our Overseas Territories. Defra also provided training on logical frameworks for OT projects. Although the initial indication from the Commission suggests that it will apply restrictive criteria that severely limit the likelihood that OT projects will be successful, we will continue to work with stakeholders to ensure that all opportunities are fully exploited.

Officials are engaging in the IUCN-led Europe Overseas Roundtable and with the European Commission's Overseas Countries and Territories Task Force, in particular concerning the next phase of the BEST Scheme and will continue to engage proactively in this process going forward.

## **Securing Access to International Funding**

The UK Government is exploring with the International Union for Conservation and Nature (IUCN) possible options to expand the scope of the IUCN Save Our Species (SoS) Fund to make Overseas Territories eligible for funding. We will also explore whether the OTs can access funding through the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund.

# Improving Communication and Engagement

Improving the flow of information and advice with and between the Overseas Territories, and supporting engagement with regional and international initiatives.

## Sharing Information and Experience

### Joint Ministerial Council

The Joint Ministerial Council (JMC) is an annual event which brings together Territory Leaders and HMG Departments to discuss key issues. At the 2012 JMC, Mr Simmonds, former Defra Minister Mr Benyon and a senior official from the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) discussed environmental issues with Territory leaders in a plenary session. The UK and Territory Governments agreed a very ambitious communiqué<sup>5</sup> with a focus on cherishing the environment and creating green growth.

In response to feedback from the Territories that they wanted a better understanding of the technical advice and expertise on offer from HMG on environment issues, in 2013 we agreed with the Territories to have a separate session on the environment that would allow each Territory to interact directly with experts from UK Government Departments and agencies including Defra, Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC), the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), the National Maritime Information Centre (NMIC), the Food & Environment Research Agency (FERA) and the Department for International Development (DFID).

The 2013 JMC also had a specific focus on renewable energy, with the British Photovoltaic Association joining DECC Minister Gregory Barker and FCO Minister Mark Simmonds on a panel discussion with Territory leaders. The 2013 JMC communiqué<sup>6</sup> included specific commitments on green energy and the environment.

#### Case study 12: Cayman Islands National Conservation Bill

On 13 December 2013 the long awaited national conservation bill was passed. The law will, for the first time, give legal protection to Cayman's unique and diverse land-based and marine based natural resources. Although a delegated area of responsibility, the UK Government provided political support for the passing of the Law, demonstrated by including an environment segment during the Minister Simmonds' visit in November 2013, and again, following the passing of the law, during Overseas Territories Director, Peter Hayes' visit in March 2014, making clear that the Cayman Islands had the full support of the UK Government.

<sup>5</sup>[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/39257/Overseas\\_Territories\\_Joint\\_Ministerial\\_Council\\_Communique.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/39257/Overseas_Territories_Joint_Ministerial_Council_Communique.pdf)

<sup>6</sup>[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/261234/131126JMC\\_2013\\_communiqueFINAL.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/261234/131126JMC_2013_communiqueFINAL.pdf)

## Providing access to UK-based expertise to meet Territory needs

Defra funds the Overseas Territories Pest Identification Service, which is operated by the Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA). This service was established to identify invasive invertebrate plant pests in OTs in order to improve bio-security.

Since the Identification Service was launched, eight OTs have made use of it and submitted a total of 395 samples. At least 77 of the invertebrate species examined to date have never before been reported from the UK OTs. A total of 16 species new to science have been observed and are being studied further and the service has produced a wealth of new and useful data: 132 samples were received from the OTs during 2012/13; and at least 15 economically important, invasive, plant pests were recorded from three of the OTs for the first time last year. A summary of the distribution, host range, biology and economic importance is provided to the OTs when new pests are recorded. This information assists the UK OTs in making a rapid assessment of the potential risk posed by the organism.

Case study 13: Capacity Building in the Turks & Caicos Department of Environment and Maritime Affairs (DEMA)

The Governor's Office provided funding for two DEMA officers to attend a Port State Control conference in Southampton, UK. The conference, hosted by The International Chamber of Commerce Crime Services, presented developments on the major conventions, regulations and codes related to shipping and maritime affairs. Such training is essential to officers working in maritime law enforcement, including for environmental crimes.

## Organising workshops on subjects that are of particular interest and relevance to Overseas Territories



**Figure 10: Anguilla Lionfish Workshop Credit: JNCC**

The Government plans to host a series of technical workshops for the OTs to provide the opportunity for peer group discussions and also to establish links between the OTs/CDs and UK and international experts. Workshops completed/planned (through to summer 2014) include:

- Geographic Information Systems (GIS), held in Gibraltar in October 2013<sup>7</sup>. The purpose was to consider the use of geographic data technology available as a key part of communicating research results and tools to make them widely accessible. It is intended that a second workshop will be held during 2014
- Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), hosted by JNCC and held in November 2013. The purpose of this workshop was to examine and give advice in relation to issues around MPAs such as the establishment of MPAs, gathering evidence and the management of MPAs post-designation.
- LIFE workshop, training and information day. These sessions, organised and hosted by Defra, were held in March 2014 and provided training in the development of logical frameworks, as well as discussion with the European Commission of possible LIFE projects in the Overseas Territories.
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). This Defra workshop was held in March 2014, with support from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, JNCC, UK Border Force and the National Wildlife Crime Unit. The purpose of the workshop was to bring together OT officials responsible for CITES implementation to discuss issues related to licensing, enforcement and policy.
- Fisheries and marine management- scheduled for May/June 2014. This will be part of exploring the options for a regional approach to developing an evidence-base for marine management in the South Atlantic.

#### Case study 14: Gibraltar GIS workshop

HM Government of Gibraltar's Department of the Environment hosted the first Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Conference on Geographical Information Systems (GIS). The conference was jointly organised by the Department of the Environment together with JNCC. The aim of the conference was to highlight the different areas of work in which the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies are involved in relation to GIS and its application in environmental management, particularly in the field of marine resources, which are important assets of all of the Territories. Participants in the conference included the Falklands Islands, Anguilla, British Virgin Islands and St Helena.

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<sup>7</sup> [http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/ot\\_GibraltarGISabstracts.pdf](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/ot_GibraltarGISabstracts.pdf)

## **Providing expertise to help the Overseas Territories integrate sustainable development principles into their planning processes**

DFID is providing £895k over four years (2013-17) for the Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP), the purpose of which is to minimise the visual impacts of the airport and associated infrastructure through sensitive on and off-site planting of native species, which will also increase the biodiversity, ecological value and habitat interest of the areas treated. The scope of the LEMP extends throughout the entire Airport Development Area.

The LEMP will deliver landscape and ecological mitigation requirements determined by the Airport Development EIA and the Environmental Management Plan of the airport contractor. The aim of LEMP is to reduce and offset the permanent direct loss of habitat and the direct and indirect impacts on the visual amenity of the island as a consequence of the construction of the airport and supporting infrastructure.

## **Improving the Flow of Information and Advice**

### **The Overseas Territories Biodiversity Group**

The Overseas Territories Biodiversity Group (OTBG) is a cross-departmental official-level group chaired by Defra. In accordance with its Terms of Reference, the role of OTBG is to oversee delivery of the UK Government's strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the Overseas Territories. OTBG does not report to the Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Biodiversity, but will elevate any issues that need ministerial attention as required. OTBG is not a policy-making group. Policies are made by individual departments/organisations.

The last meeting of the OTBG, chaired by Defra, was on 27 January 2014. In addition to the core OTBG members the meeting was attended by representatives of the Ministry of Defence and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Other government departments, including the Department for Energy and Climate Change, the Department for Transport, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Communities and Local Government are invited to attend meetings where the agenda raises issues connected with their areas of responsibility. The meeting discussed a number of issues, including: next steps in respect of LIFE funding for projects in the OTs; and the EU Overseas Conference, which is scheduled for October 2014. A note of that meeting has been posted on the JNCC website<sup>8</sup>.

The next meeting of OTBG will take place in May 2014. A stakeholder meeting will be held back to back with that meeting. Going forward, OTBG has decided to keep its Terms

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<sup>8</sup> <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=4080>

of Reference under regular review and hold an annual stakeholder event on the Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy, back to back with the spring meeting of the OTBG.

## **Making it easier to contact us**

Defra's International Biodiversity team acts as a focal point for engagement with the OTs and has established a shared mailbox ([UKOTEnquiries@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:UKOTEnquiries@defra.gsi.gov.uk)) to make it easier to contact us. The mailbox is monitored on a daily basis and queries are directed to those best placed to help to ensure access to the full range of Defra's expertise.

## **Making it easier to find out what we are doing**

Details of activities to implement the UK Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy will be included on the GOV.UK pages on *Supporting the Overseas Territories*<sup>9</sup> and will be updated on an annual basis.

## **Assisting OT Governments to understand and meet international commitments**

Defra officials are working with five UK OTs on the extension of six Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and are discussing with OTs whether they wish to be included within the UK's ratification of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing, which in some cases could also mean extension of the Convention on Biological Diversity to the Territories in question.

Defra officials have established a programme to assist the OTs to which CITES has been extended to meet the basic obligations of the Treaty. This includes advice on CITES processes; reviewing draft implementing legislation; answering queries; liaising on their behalf with the CITES Secretariat; and, in some cases, providing scientific support. Defra is holding a workshop at the end of March 2014 for OT officials involved in CITES, with support from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, JNCC, Border Force and the National Wildlife Crime Unit.

In addition, Defra and the FCO are working with Overseas Territory Governments on the designation of new sites under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

In June 2012 Defra's Marine and Fisheries Minister signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Migratory Shark Species<sup>10</sup> on behalf of the UK and a number of Overseas Territories (Bermuda, the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands). This agreement is the first of its kind to address the global conservation of sharks. Many of the species covered by the MoU are not only found in UK

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/protecting-and-developing-the-overseas-territories>

<sup>10</sup> A daughter agreement to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).



waters, but also in the waters of the Overseas Territories making their involvement crucial in ensuring these vulnerable species get the protection they need. The first meeting of the signatories was held in September 2012 where a conservation plan was agreed.

**Case Study 15: Extension of UK ratification of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species**

The Government is actively providing technical advice and building capacity in relation to the extension of Multilateral Environment Agreements where requested to do so by Territory Governments. A recent example of this is the work that Defra carried out to ensure that the relevant conditions were met for the UK to extend its ratification of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) to Anguilla in February 2014.

## **Input into regional and global agreements and initiatives**

### **Encouraging and facilitating Overseas Territory participation in cross-territory and regional initiatives**

Since 1998 a series of regional programmes funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) were implemented in the independent Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries to assist them in planning for adaptation to climate change. These programmes are managed by the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC), a CARICOM specialised agency that became fully operational in early 2005.

Although the UK is a major contributor to the GEF, the OTs, because of the nature of their relationship with the UK, are not eligible to participate in GEF-funded projects unless they are independently resourced. The five Caribbean UK OTs – Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, and Turks and Caicos Islands indicated a strong desire to participate in the CCCCC's programmes.

DFID approved the ECACC project (£432,000 from 2008 to 2011) to assist the Caribbean OTs in building their capacity to plan and implement measures to adapt to climate change and variability within the context of their national development planning processes. The project built capacity in each Territory to: (a) assess vulnerability to climate change; (b) develop national climate change adaptation strategies and public educational programmes based on locally identified priorities; and (c) increased capacity to access funding and other assistance to increase resilience to the impacts of climate change.



*Figure 13: Turtle work in the British Virgin Islands (12-023) Credit: A McGowan/University of Exeter*

Case Study 16: Implementing the Hamilton Declaration on Collaboration for the Conservation of the Sargasso Sea.

The FCO worked closely with the Sargasso Sea Alliance and the Government of Bermuda to bring about the Hamilton Declaration on Collaboration for the Conservation of the Sargasso Sea which was signed in Bermuda on 11 March 2014 by the UK, US, Monaco, Azores and Bermuda. The Sargasso Sea is a region of the North Atlantic that is dominated by the sargassum seaweed and is an important breeding and feeding ground for many species of marine life. The Hamilton Declaration, a non-binding political statement, makes provision for a Sargasso Sea Commission based in Bermuda, to monitor the sea and its ecosystem and work towards conservation. Its collaborative work will seek to reduce the impacts of human activities on the sea and encourage its conservation.

The British Antarctic Territory is governed in-line with all the environmental provisions of the Antarctic Treaty System, within which the UK plays a leading international role. Most recently, the Antarctic Act 2013 ratified a new annex on liability for environmental emergencies to the Environmental Protocol of the Antarctic Treaty that will raise the standard of planning and response action in the event of an accident in the region.

### **Establishing systems to ensure that Overseas Territory Governments are consulted in advance of meetings under Multilateral Environmental Agreements that have been extended to them and have an opportunity to feed in comments on issues of concern**

We have established systems to ensure that notifications issued under MEAs are forwarded to interested Overseas Territories and to provide feedback on meeting attendance, where relevant. For example, Defra provides Overseas Territories with regular summaries of Notifications published on the CITES website to keep them up to date on developments and seeks input into CITES requests for information, as appropriate.

At the 16<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to CITES, the UK delegation provided scientific and drafting input to the Queen Conch Working Group and was instrumental in ensuring that

balanced decisions were taken to secure the continuance of sustainable trade in the species, which is a significant export for the Turks and Caicos Islands. In addition, after liaison with Bermuda, the UK delegation worked on their behalf to secure listing of the diamondback terrapin, which is found only in the USA and Bermuda.

## **Including Overseas Territory representatives as part of the UK delegation to critical international meetings**

DFID's Enhancing Capacity for Adaptation to Climate Change (ECACC) project facilitated the attendance of representatives from four of the Caribbean OTs at the UNFCCC COP in Copenhagen in December 2009. This was found to be a positive experience, following which several OTs expressed a desire to be more closely involved in the processes leading up to such international meetings and to have a greater opportunity for their views to be reflected in the UK's key messages and negotiating positions.

Building on this success, the UK's delegation to the 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD CoP11) in Hyderabad, India, in October 2012, included a marine expert from Bermuda, who provided support and input in relation to the CBD's programme of work on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity.



*Figure14: Blackbrow Albatross, Falkland Islands (18-019) Credit: David Barnes*

## **Reducing the burden of reporting under MEAs that have been extended to OTs, whilst highlighting and showcasing their activities to international audiences**

In addition to seeking information from Overseas Territory Governments, we will consult stakeholders, including within the Territories, and provide them with an opportunity to comment on the final version of the reports. JNCC is coordinating the UK 5<sup>th</sup> national report to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the national report to the 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties of the Convention on Migratory Species and the national report to the 12<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention. All three reports will include information provided by Territories to which the Conventions have been extended.

The consultation on the CBD national report began in December 2013 and ended at the beginning of February 2014. Consultations for the CMS and Ramsar national reports will

be carried out in 2014. The dates of the consultations are calibrated to the deadlines for submission of the reports, in accordance with the requirements of the MEAs.