

A Sense of Direction: a conference on conservation in UK Overseas Territories and other small island communities

Bermuda 22nd-27th March 2003

Edited by Dr Mike Pienkowski
UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum
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Organised by:

Bermuda Ministry of Environment, Bermuda National Trust, Bermuda Zoological Society,
Bermuda Audubon Society and UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum



A Sense of Direction: a conference on conservation in UK Overseas Territories and other small island communities, Bermuda 22nd-27th March 2003 - Introduction

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Background

Bermuda hosted an international environment conference from 22nd to 27th March 2003, with a focus on UK Overseas Territories and other small islands.

The conference was organized jointly by the Bermuda National Trust, the Bermuda Zoological Society, the Bermuda Audubon Society, the Bermuda Ministry of the Environment and the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum. It was the third such conference following those held in London and in Gibraltar. The proceedings of the Gibraltar conference can be seen at www.ukotcf.org

The conference provided a forum for government environmental agencies and NGOs to discuss key conservation issues, to highlight success stories, exchange ideas, and to forge partnerships. It was planned that Overseas Territories, and other small island communities that share similar environmental problems, should benefit from Bermuda's experiences and history of planning and conservation initiatives. Bermuda planned to learn from the success of environmental programmes tried and tested elsewhere.

The main topics were determined after wide consultations amongst conservationists working in the Overseas Territories. The sessions were:

- Conservation issues of Bermuda and conference initiation by field visit

- Environmental Charters and strategic planning
- Managing conservation organizations
- Implementing management plans
- Climate change
- Dealing with invasive species

The final programme is at Appendix 1.

Acknowledgements

In closing the conference, the organisers noted how pleased they were that the whole exercise had proven as collaborative as they had hoped. This involved a partnership between the organising bodies, partnership with the supporters, and partnership between all the participants in this working conference. The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum itself is a partnership of many organisations and individuals, and all involved constitute an important part of that Forum in action.

The success of the conference depended on many individuals and organisations working together. Here, we acknowledge them, with apologies to those who may somehow have been omitted.

To add to the work and other contributions of the organising bodies, the organisers are grateful for financial support from:

The Government of Bermuda

The Environment Fund for Overseas Territories of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office



Bank of Bermuda Foundation
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Capital G

The organising committee of the conference consisted of Annie Glasspool of the Bermuda Zoological Society, Andrew Dobson of the Bermuda Audubon Society, Amanda Outerbridge of the Bermuda National Trust, Jack Ward of the Bermuda Government, and Mike Pienkowski and Frances Marks of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum.

The organising committee would like to thank two other people who also played a key part in their work. Wayne Carey of Bermuda National Trust originally, in 1999, suggested the idea of hosting such a conference in Bermuda, and persisted through considerable difficulties in sticking with the idea, helped when Annie shared carrying the baton after the Gibraltar conference. Brian Rowlinson, who was Permanent Secretary in the Bermuda Ministry of the Environment until shortly before the conference, gave invaluable support over the two years of planning.

While the Forum handled some aspects of the logistics, the smooth running of local logistical arrangements was led by Starla Williams and Vivian Blanchard of Select Sites Group. Whatever the crisis, they could find a solution, and no one noticed. In fact, so effective was the back-room nature of their efforts that, to the disappointment of many, we have not been able to find a photograph of them in action to include!

The professionals' efforts were complemented most effectively by Judie Clee and her team of volunteers from Bermuda Zoological Society and elsewhere. They manned the conference desk, greeted, sorted delegates' problems throughout the conference, advised on local facilities, and much else. In the two days of intensive final preparations by Select Sites and Forum personnel immediately before the start of the conference, a slightly worried look on the face of any organiser was immedi-

ately attended by a volunteer asking "what do you need?" or "can I help?". Bermuda maintained the fine standard set by Gibraltar in the outstanding role of local volunteers in helping the conference run smoothly and productively.

The organisers would also like to thank the staff at the Elbow Beach Hotel, the coach and taxi drivers, the boat crews and others for their efficient and helpful service. The conference is grateful too to the staff of the Aquarium and their caterers for the final reception and dinner in such a fine and appropriate location.

The conference is grateful to the Governor, H.E. Sir John Vereker, for his support to the conference, and to him and Lady Vereker for hosting a most enjoyable reception at Government House. The organisers would like also to express their appreciation to the Deputy Governor, Tim Gurney, for his help, encouragement and support throughout the planning period; they hope that he will regard the successful conference near the end of his term of office as one of the achievements during his occupancy of this post.

The conference is grateful to the Premier, the Hon. Jennifer M. Smith JP DHumL MP, finding time in her busy schedule to join the initial dinner and open the conference.

Participants greatly appreciated the close personal interest taken in the conference by the Minister of the Environment, the Hon. Dennis Lister JP MP, as well as approval of the involvement of his staff. It is not many Ministers from any administration who would sit through so many technical sessions and be prepared to speak on issues which might have controversial aspects! The Editor particularly appreciated the Minister's fine example in personally editing and providing his text for the proceedings in remarkably fast time; other contributors to this and any future conferences are invited to adopt this commendable approach!

The core of the conference depends on the work by speakers and poster-presenters, as well as their

collaborators, for their work in preparation and presentation. These provide the stimulus for the discussions and exchange of ideas leading to conservation progress. Included in these thanks are all their colleagues in the wide network of Forum member organisations, local administrations, and others, for the work on which these presentations are based. The organising team is grateful also to those who agreed to chair sessions.

Field workshops are always a worry, especially when (as in this case for various reasons) they have to be planned over a short time scale. That these were so successful is due to David Stroud stepping into the breach for overall coordination; Dr Annie Grasspool, Jack Ward and Joe Furbert for sorting much background information; the local experts who guided at each site; and the “volunteers” who acted as facilitators and rapporteurs for the various groups. Thanks are due also to the team of Dr Oliver Cheesman, Dr Karen Varnham, Dr Colin Clubbe and Dr Annie Glasspool who coordinated the workshop on Invasive Species.

Perhaps the worst job in any conference is to assemble the conclusions. The conference is fortunate that the lead in this task fell to Dace Ground, who was supported by Denise Dudgeon, Joeline Foster, Sarita Frances, Mike Pienkowski, Jack Ward (with help in the preparation, although illness prevented attendance, by Isabel Peters of St Helena). That they should have such good material on which to work is due to the enthusiastic participation of the conference delegates themselves.

Finally, a tale - or is it a tail? Acknowledgement should be given to Tim Heath of the Institute of Imagination who designed the conference logo, both the original and the slight modification used for this conference. Most people think that it is a fish but, in fairness to the designer, he has always noted that it is a design, not a picture, and what anyone sees is at least partly due to their own imagination. When one of the conference organisers first saw an early draft emerging from his fax machine (and therefore in ‘portrait’ rather than ‘landscape’) he assumed it was based on a flower. A Tristan da Cunha delegate complained at Tristan’s placement in the tail of the fish - but they could equally be at the top of the flower. Like our designer, the conference avoided fixed perceptions and took a fresh view of many things. The organisers hope that these Proceedings give some reflection of that.

Editor’s Preface

In producing these Proceedings, the Editor has tried to stay as closely as possible to the structure of the conference. Efforts have been made to secure texts from all speakers, and thanks are due to those who obliged for tolerating this irritation. Unless authors opted otherwise, the illustrations from their conference presentations have been used to illustrate their papers in these Proceedings. In those few cases where texts were not supplied, papers have been constructed from Powerpoint presentations where practicable; the Editor regrets that it has not always been possible to explain some abbreviations and references in these cases.

In editing the texts, insofar as was practicable in the transition from spoken to written formats, the original styles have been retained. The degree to which tenses etc have been adjusted in this context has been determined pragmatically in relation to content and clarity. As most UK Overseas Territories opt for UK English, this has been used except for proper names, but some other versions of English may have crept through under the Editor’s radar.

In a few cases, speakers were unable to attend the conference at the last minute, in the rather unusual week for international travel that the conference took place. In the cases where the authors have been able to supply their contributions, these have been included.

Versions of poster papers have been included where authors opted to supply these. They have been placed in the most appropriate sections.

The selection of topics was chosen on the basis of a wide consultation conducted well before the conference, with the constraint that the total number of topics had to be restricted if useful progress were to be made. Inevitably, any classification does not fit all items. Where papers in other sessions are particularly relevant to any one session, this is noted in the session introductory note.

Authorship has been attributed as indicated by the authors themselves, rather than relating simply to whoever actually presented the materials at the conference.

We have aimed to make these Proceedings available as rapidly as possible, so that they can serve as

aide-memoires for participants as well as to respond to the flow of requests already being received from those unable to attend. This has meant some compromising in that some aspects might have benefited from an alternative approach. Undoubtedly, there will be errors, for which the Editor apologises in advance. He would be grateful if information on any substantive ones could be sent to him (pienkowski@cix.co.uk) so that periodic errata may be issued.

Given the widely dispersed nature of users (as well as economy), we decided on publication on the internet. Again, even despite using very efficient software, there are compromises between image quality and file size. The format used is intended for users to download before keeping on file and/or printing, rather than reading by internet on each occasion of use.

The Editor would like to thank all those who have assisted, by supplying materials, answering queries, finding or providing illustrations, etc, and particularly Frances Marks for undertaking much of the chasing, and Ann Pienkowski for additionally checking and editing.

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EC: Liz Charter, Isle of Man;
FM: Frances Marks, UKOTCF;
JW: Jack Ward, Bermuda Conservation Services;
MP: Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF.

Front cover pictures of turtle, Bermudiana, longtail and Portuguese man o'war courtesy of Bermuda Zoological Society, Richard Ground and MP.

Conference participants



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The conference at work (BP, MP)



Conference conclusions

Preamble

This conference was designed to be of help in some of the priority issues identified by workers in small territories. The conference was deliberately participatory for all, rather than segregated into speakers and audience, because exchange of experience was a key. For this reason, the organisers wanted to capture rapidly some of the main conclusions arising from discussions. Throughout the meeting, a small team kept track of these. This was led by Dace Ground, Turks & Caicos, UKOTCF, with the help of: Denise Dudgeon & Joeline Foster, FCO; Sarita Francis, Montserrat National Trust and Permanent Secretary Montserrat Chief Minister's Dept; Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF; and Jack Ward, Bermuda Department of Conservation Services. Isabel Peters, of St Helena Government was to have been part of this team, but was unable to attend the conference due to illness; she kindly provided some comments to help some aspects. Participants were encouraged to draw the attention of members of the team throughout the conference to points they thought important to include in the conclusions.

In the final session of the conference, Dace Ground presented the first draft of the conclusions. This was then discussed and approved by the conference. The version given below incorporates additional points made in that discussion.

The contributions from the conference are gathered together here, for publication on this web site. As a first element, here are the conclusions.

Stakeholders/Public Awareness and education

In everything we are doing all over the world, stakeholder participation is an important factor. In projects as diverse as developing Bermuda's Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan to convincing independent tour guides in the Falkland Islands that conservation will improve their livelihoods, consultation early and often means the results work for the community and the community has a sense of ownership of both the resource and the product.

This was really clear in the case of the Biodiversity Management Plan centred on the Turks and Caicos Ramsar site; the community told the experts what they wanted: the preservation of their communities and way of life as well as the environment, and that drove the development of the plan, and is the reason for its deep support in the community. Brendan Godley used his very real respect for the turtle fishermen and all they know as the means to defuse their suspicion that he was there to shut them down. The Bahamas Trust takes its guidance as much from the great depth of local knowledge as from experts and they have people asking for more protected areas, a pretty amazing feat. The same trick worked in Tristan, where the image will stay with us for a long time of Gough Island as the Trojan horse, creating pride of the local people in the declaration of World Heritage status and converting them to support for other protected areas.

It is no news to anyone here that public education and awareness are essential to every aspect of concern, from global warming to protecting penguins from clumsy humans. In the case of the penguins and their neighbours, Becky Ingham told us how Falklands Conservation are addressing the growing numbers of cruise ship visitors and the environmental concerns this is raising – by placing their office where the liners arrive at Stanley and, at sensitive sites, introducing interpretation and guidance. Our workshops identified many education opportunities in the protected areas all over Bermuda, and each of us has similar opportunities at home. It was interesting to learn that ten years on, the programme carried out by the conservation NGO RARE in Cayman has left lasting benefits in the conversion of the indifferent majority to conservation values. A similar programme is being carried out in New Caledonia, and the sense of pride created by a new NGO in a local parakeet has helped to ensure its survival and inspired the awakening of an environmental consciousness.

Environment Charters

This was the first formal review of the Charters since they were signed in September, 2001. We heard from Valerie Caton about the UK government's priorities for the Charters for the

coming year and the various funds available to the UKOTs for environmental projects. Valerie invited participation from the UKOTs in the SPAW (Specially Protected Areas for Wildlife) Protocol of the Cartagena Convention, in the Sustainable Tourism Initiative and in the workshop connected with the “White Water to Blue Water” initiative.

Since the Charters were the product of so much work by the institutions represented here, we were delighted to see from the tables developed by Denise Dudgeon that progress on implementation is being made. Each of the UKOTs is responsible for developing a strategy for action which will identify what it needs to implement the Charter. Until that is done, it will be harder for the UK Government to carry out its own Charter commitments to maximum effect.

Each UKOT will have a different approach to this: Bermuda’s Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan is an excellent example. The FCO is funding both the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) and the Falkland Islands to carry out two contrasting approaches which will serve as models for other UKOTs. The TCI exercise will also result in a guidance document which we hope will help other UKOTs in this process.

We also heard about a Charter implementation process in Montserrat (a member of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, OECS) which is also implementing their St George Declaration on the environment, and learned that the two are entirely compatible and implementing both is a feasible task – at least it is if you’re Gerard Gray, and even he is worried about funding. Anguilla and British Virgin Islands (BVI) are also members of OECS and signatories to both charters.

Whilst welcoming the increasing involvement of the Crown Dependencies in the Forum, on the official side we should also note the long-standing problem experienced by the Crown Dependencies: they link into UK Government through a different route and fall into a gap which means no Environment Charter and no external sources of funding for conservation projects.

The conference appreciated the strong commitment by the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office to the UKOTs and the Environmental Charter process by the attendance of senior and supporting staff from both Environmental Policy

Department and Overseas Territories Department – in what was clearly a challenging week for FCO. Disappointment was expressed at the lack of representation of the Department for International Development (DfID) and the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra). The Managing Director of Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) indicated that, as statutory adviser to Defra, JNCC would ensure that they were briefed on the important issues of the conference, and FCO personnel indicated that they would brief UK Government (HMG) colleagues generally, and it was suggested that the Forum send the conclusions to the UK Minister leading in this area.

Funding

The UK Government has specific commitments to the UKOTs, as mentioned in the Charters, and funding is a matter of great concern. The DFID fund promised in the White Paper is only now being created, and at about 40% of the annual level originally announced, with a total over the years of about 2/3 the level promised in 1999. The UKOTs are unable to access many kinds of international funding, and amalgamation of the separate FCO Environment Fund for Overseas Territories (EFOT) into a wider global fund, although providing access to more funding, also results in the UKOTs having to compete against larger and better resourced countries. It was unnerving for the UKOTs to learn that the fund which is specifically mentioned in the UK’s Charter Commitment 8 as the source of funding for Charter implementation had ceased to exist as a guaranteed resource only eighteen months after the Charters were signed. Experience has not taught us to be optimistic about this amalgamation: problems over the years with trying to access global funds were what led to the creation of the EFOT in the first place in 1999.

This first year of the amalgamated fund, however, seems to be going well: there is a strong likelihood that the UKOTs will attract more than the half-million pounds in this year’s funding round than previously allocated under the EFOT. The FCO urged more feedback from the UKOTs on project success stories to help secure more funding in future, and urged the UKOTs to liaise with Staff Officers and the FCO, as well as the Forum, for advice on putting together high quality bids. (We should note that the Forum’s database module on projects provides a convenient means of gathering and reporting data while the project proceeds. The

headings were based on those then in use for EFOT applications; although EFOT's headings have since changed, the module can readily accommodate the information in its varied fields.)

The UKOTs' concerns about the loss of our dedicated fund are alleviated at present by the incredibly supportive attitude towards the UKOTs now current in the FCO. We can only hope that this will carry on through the staff changes that must inevitably come, but we know that corporate memory is not very effective. The conference encouraged the Forum to write to HMG on the need for a specific fund to support the Environmental Charters.

We were also glad to learn that there will be FCO help for UKOTs accessing EU funding. Given that the EU preference is for a few large projects, much of the small-scale work we do will not rise to that level, but if the EU could be convinced to give Fred Burton the \$8 million needed to take Cayman's Blue Iguana off the endangered species list, every one of us would celebrate.

We heard about other funding approaches, notably the Bahamas' enviable endowment fund, the ultimate in sustainability, and about the Netherlands Antilles' efforts to create an even larger endowment. The desire for a permanent funding source is universal, and in the Bahamas, at least, we learned that many donors are happy to donate substantial funds on the guarantee that their funds will be used only to generate income and never be spent. We know that is not true of many institutional donors, but the Bahamas Trust has encouraged all of us that an endowment is an achievable goal. Of course, we all join Catherine Leonard in wishing that these parts of UK territory could access the UK's Heritage Lottery Fund. But since that is not so likely to happen, we heard a call for a focus on fundraising at the next meeting.

Successes

Valerie Caton urged us to tell about our successes, and we certainly heard a lot of success stories, starting with our tours of Nonsuch Island, the kind of success that left every one of us awed and inspired. We heard about a cat eradication programme in Ascension which had sea-birds nesting on the main island before the programme was even completed. We heard about species revival programmes bringing the cahow, the Cayman Blue Iguana, and the Uvea parakeet back

from the brink of extinction. We heard about how one park director in the BVI went on a course about the use of Information Technology databases and from that developed a comprehensive monitoring system for managing a system of 20 terrestrial and marine parks. We learned how an adaptive management approach over a period of centuries has kept Jersey's beloved ormer on tables throughout the Channel Islands (and who would have thought a spinach-eating mollusc would be a comforting pet for a Jersey student away from home!)

Success stories teach us a lot about best practice, and other people's trials and errors, i.e. the "lessons learnt" also teach us a great deal. We need to report on our failures as well as our successes, and we thank Tara George for leading the way.

Sometimes best practice is best practised in the breach: in the Bahamas when a huge amount of park area was offered, we learned that seizing the moment and getting the parks designated, even if they are going to be paper parks for a long time, can be the smart thing to do. Science and management schemes can come later. The lesson we learned was to temper the need for science with basic pragmatism: *Carpe Diem!*

Success stories also come from international cooperation. Fred Burton told us what can come out of two days with the right set of scientists when conserving Cayman's "Blue Dragon" is the job. But we also saw that in the case of the international body charged with developing appropriate management for Caribbean sea turtles, that the international body could not do the job without its local partners.

Valerie's plea for success stories underlines one of the basic principles of successful fundraising: tell your donors what you are doing with their money and they will give you more.

Economic impacts

David Suzuki told us that traditional economists would consider all of the foregoing as "externalities" but we did learn some things that they might consider relevant, like the job multiplier the UK National Trust has documented: between five and nine community jobs for every job directly created by the Trust. Over and over, from Middle Caicos to New Caledonia, we learned

that conservation creates jobs and sustains communities.

David Suzuki also reminded us of the World Conservation Union (IUCN)'s standard that 12% of land should be specially protected, and we saw some pretty amazing achievements on that score, from the Bahamas 20% to Tristan's fantastic 44%.

Institutional Issues

We learned a great deal about the different institutional arrangements people have come up with to achieve conservation goals and cope with special problems. The Bahamas and the BVI have Trusts which are closely aligned with government, in which the governments seem almost to have delegated responsibility for legislation. Another model is the Bermuda Aquarium, an unusual and highly effective combination of a government department supported by an NGO. St Helena is the newest National Trust among us, its creation aided by both the FCO and the Forum.

We were surprised and delighted to learn that Bermuda reorganised its Environment Ministry using a checklist developed by the Forum.

Over and over we heard about the importance of exchanging information and expertise. People are concerned about the same work being repeated and lessons not being shared – this came up strongly in the discussion about invasives, where the need to maintain contact and share experiences was felt to be especially important. That, of course, is one of the Forum's central roles, as well as capacity building, and with better resources for the Forum itself, more can be done in more UKOTs. One key tool for information exchange is the Forum's database which is designed as a means of helping people in the UKOTs make the most of their very limited time. The information module, for example, could be used to advise the UKOTs of the expertise available in the UK and other UKOTs and to post model legislation. Database entry needs the time to enter information but that can be done by copying-and-pasting from, for example, your newsletters. Recycle your work for future use!

There was also discussion of the use of existing capacity of the Forum's website for discussion groups or chat rooms. This needs volunteers interested in the relevant topics to act as moderators.

From the Isle of Man we learned of an approach for the perennial problem of the limited staff resources of small territories. Two particular points were the structured approach to deciding between conflicting priorities and the development of integrated biological records systems and land use information to aid planning and decision-making.

Challenges

We learned a lot about sustainable use, from the former fishery in Jersey and sea turtles in the Caribbean to the use of fanner grass in Middle Caicos. And we became aware of the need to consider the sustainability of conservation efforts themselves.

Like stakeholder consultation, the problem of invasive species came up in many presentations. If we had not thought of humans as an invasive species before, we certainly do now. Nick Bates told us that we are such a successful invasive species that we can consider ourselves now to be in the Anthropocene Era.

But since invasive species are such a universal problem, we spent the final afternoon listening to each other, sharing an endless variety of problems associated with this. We recognised that Invasive Alien Species (IAS) are a major threat to biodiversity – second to habitat loss and fragmentation, but still the number one threat to biodiversity on islands. This is clearly demonstrated in Bermuda where IAS are a huge problem with about 95% of the islands' flora and fauna being introduced. We debated three components of the problem: awareness raising, control of already introduced aliens and preventing future introductions. If ever there were a subject rich with both successes and failures, as well as endless management, this is it. Just the thought of a million Brazil Pepper seedlings each year on Nonsuch Island alone leaves one limp.

We also learned that nearly extinct natives can teach us about themselves, if you know how to listen. David Wingate told us how the plants themselves are teaching him about the pre-colonial Bermuda landscape, while Fred Burton in Cayman is learning about habits of iguanas in the wild by watching released captive-bred iguanas.

Climate change is another challenge, and we learned more than we wanted to know about the

impact on coral reefs. We learned that conservation of high latitude reefs such as those in Bermuda is even more important than we had thought, and that the need to prevent overfishing and pollution is heightened by the ongoing stress of global warming. The situation in British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) is particularly grim. And if that is not bad enough, David Wingate tells us that global warming has already had a negative impact on nesting seabirds in Bermuda, and active intervention is essential. It is difficult to see any solution without changes in the energy policies of certain major developed countries. It was suggested that a letter should go from this conference to HMG on the importance of climate change to islands.

Another major challenge which we could address more easily is illustrated by the introduction of intensive cruise liner development in the Turks and Caicos Islands. We hope that when the current strategy for action for the Environment Charter is fully in place, this will lead to more sustainable decisions.

JNCC Conclusions

Representatives of Joint Nature Conservation Committee (the UK Government's statutory advisor on nature conservation) offered some comments for the wrap-up and the committee thought them so interesting and potentially valuable that we have included them verbatim:

UKOTs provide one of the few opportunities to resolve some of today's biodiversity challenges by an ecosystem-type approach – considering the joined-up components and impacts. The learning from projects/pilots would be of significant value to more developed and complex parts of the world. The UKOTs can therefore be considered as an opportunity for investment with two major benefits:

1. to meet obligations under Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEA)s, or global conventions
2. to provide cost effective and transferable solutions to global environmental problems

However, investment will only be attracted if there is confidence and belief that real benefits/gains are likely. To ensure this, not only direct funding will be needed, but also the appropriate levels of scientific and business skills. There are likely to be special requirements for project planning and

management, resource management and negotiating skills. These should not be regarded as an overhead as they are critical to the long-term success and permanent adoption of new approaches by stakeholders and particularly those with governance responsibilities. Should a proposal of this nature be made, JNCC would be willing to make some investment.

Bermuda

And finally, we got to know a bit about Bermuda, its great beauty as well as its problems. Bermuda's Minister for the Environment told us at the outset that we are all visionaries like David Suzuki. While most of us know just how low our visionary energy is most of the time, we did learn about true visionaries like Olivier Robinet in New Caledonia, and we had the great privilege of meeting Bermuda's genuine visionary, David Wingate. And we heard over and over about the importance of highly-dedicated individuals in progressing conservation all over the world.

The workshops on Bermuda taught us about the challenges of management here, and we hope some of our ideas will be of help to the Bermuda site managers. The unique opportunity to secure Cooper's Island for conservation management seemed the most pressing issue. The restoration of this island is strategically important in the context of the management of adjacent protected areas of international importance, and would not only be a huge win for biodiversity but also give Bemudians a major area for recreation and generally for enhancing the quality of island life. Generally it was felt that the protected areas in Bermuda – even those that are degraded – have significant recreational and educational potential and should be top priorities for conservation and management.

Future conferences

Do we need them? Are they useful? If we do want future meetings, then we need some good solid reasons for them, and we need a venue.

And of course you didn't need me to read this to you, as we all know that all you have to do to learn anything under the sun is to log on to Forum's website, that would be www.ukotcf.org...



The conference at work (MP), while (bottom left, FM) in the breaks some of the conclusions team engage in animated debate before Dace Ground presents the final results (bottom right, BP).

