

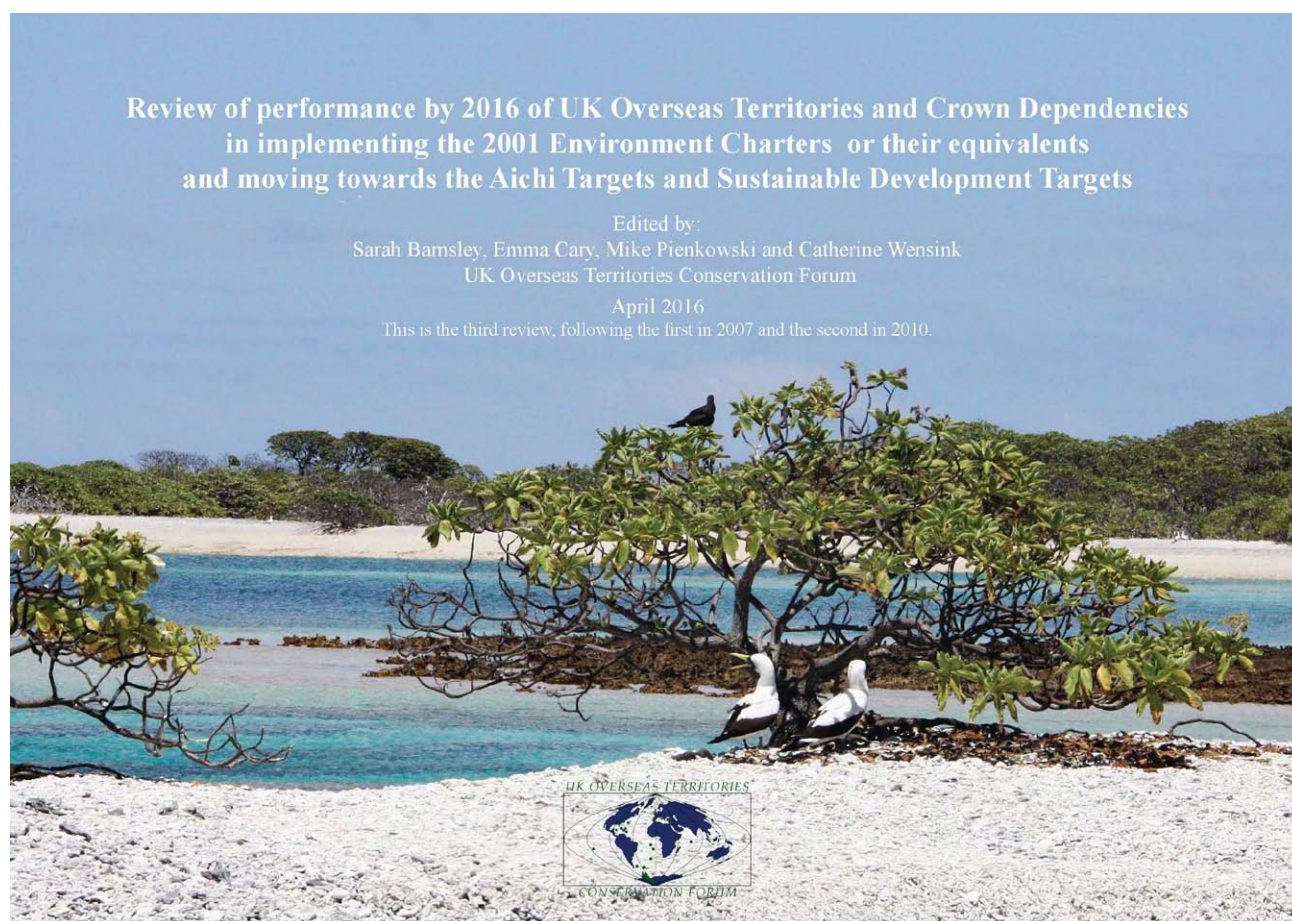
FORUM NEWS 45

OCTOBER 2016



www.ukotcf.org

UKOTCF completes collation of information from territories reviewing progress in implementing the Environment Charters and towards the Aichi Targets and related Sustainable Development Goals



*Above: Front cover of report: masked boobies shelter from the sun under bush with noddy, Ducie Island, Pitcairn Group.
Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*

The Environment Charters, signed in September 2001 between the UK Government and the Governments of UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs), are important documents which encapsulate the shared responsibility of the UK Government and the Government of each Territory for the conservation of the environment in the UKOTs and international commitments to this. If these are to have real meaning, it is necessary to have some means of assessing progress in their implementation. This need has been recognised by UKOTCF, which has been putting considerable effort into

developing a set of measures to achieve this end.

Following similar reviews in 2007 and 2009/2010, UKOTCF officers embarked on a further review of progress in 2015. This initiative aimed to collate information from the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies on progress towards implementing the 2001 Environment Charters (or the equivalent international commitments for those territories without Charters). At the same time, we tried to assess progress towards the Aichi Targets, internationally agreed by the Parties to the Convention



Puffins on Burhou, in Alderney's Ramsar Site. Photo: Bill Black, Alderney Wildlife Trust © AWT Ltd

on Biological Diversity and other Conventions, and the related UN Sustainability Goals. Using published material, information gathered for other purposes, and the Forum's network, UKOTCF personnel formulated the initial drafts, in order to minimise the loading on very busy colleagues in the territories. The accuracy of this initial collation was

then checked by those working on-the-ground and so, for 9 months after the initial collations, several rounds of email consultations were undertaken to check for errors and omissions. The gathering of the Gibraltar conference in July also proved to be a useful opportunity to consult with colleagues from the territories on this matter face-to-face.

The exercise was completed and the results published on www.ukotcf.org in April 2016. The main part of the report includes: some background to this review and its predecessors; the derivation of another way of summarising the results, based on the Environment Charter/Aichi Targets classification, together with the structure of the conclusions and recommendations of the conference in July, and areas of shared interest identified by a series of meetings between NGOs and UK Government in 2014-5. The main body of the report then summarises the results for each territory using this classification, and includes a case study showcasing some of the territory's achievements. This is followed by a summary of cross-territory results on main further needs, an analysis requested by some of the territories to aid future common planning. We did not attempt a formal analysis of progress by UK Government in meeting its own Commitments under the Environment Charter. This is because, in both previous reviews, UK Government found it difficult, partly because of the structure of those Commitments, to assemble information on progress. Instead, the review, and the discussions that it will assist, are intended to help UK Government to support the priority needs that are identified.

The exercise proved to be an interesting one for those involved, and the results have been generally well received. One colleague in-territory commented on how positive an experience it was to see a tangible record of achievements for their hard work. Since the 2009 review, there have been some excellent moves towards meeting the Environment Charter Commitments, and individual territory case studies throughout the report demonstrate some of these achievements. Notable areas include: designation of Anguilla's first Ramsar Convention Wetland of International

Importance at Sombbrero Island; successful MPA designations at Chagos Bank and South Orkney, and the planned MPA around Pitcairn; Cayman Islands' Conservation Law; Ascension's seabird restoration success; BVI's leading voice in matters of climate change in the Caribbean; the ambitious South Georgia Habitat Restoration Project; Sark's designation as a Dark Sky island; pioneering local consultation for sustainable marine resource-use on the Isle of Man, and many more.

The analysis shows that the majority of elements have shown at least some progress in most territories in the nearly 15 years since the Environment Charters were signed between UK Government and most UKOTs. Of these, almost all cases of progress have depended on cooperation between UKOT governments and UKOT NGOs, in many cases with support from UK NGOs and UK Government. Although a few isolated aspects in some territories have seen significant set-backs, for some of these, there has been some recovery since. In terms of work still to do, we identified gaps in the areas of: protected area designation, including Ramsar sites, the need for legislation and regulations and their implementation, sign-ups to Multilateral Environmental Agreements and resources to increase capacity. We found that several areas could be largely improved with relatively little cost, including incorporation of the polluter-pays principle, the need for best-international-practice environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments, and creation of environment funds based on tourism taxes. For some aspects, spread unevenly across all territories, work is effectively complete; for most it is in progress; a few have yet to start.

Three versions of the report are available on the website: with detailed appendices; just the main report; and a shorter 10-page summary. Limitations on time available to territory partners mean that the report includes some errors and omissions despite best efforts to minimise these. UKOTCF remains open to receiving corrections and updates, and one UKOT has already taken advantage of this. The report has been shared on social media and on the IUCN Europe Territories Google Group, and it will also be feeding into the next meeting of UKOT/CD Environment Ministers at their request. We look forward to working with partners in governments and NGOs in UKOTs and elsewhere to build further on these analyses and opportunities.



Grand Cayman blue iguana. Photo: F.J. Burton, Blue Iguana Recovery Programme

Partnership for sustainability in every nook and cranny of Montserrat



In March, the new round of Darwin Plus projects were announced (see full list on page 9). One of the successful projects *Maximising long-term survival prospects of Montserrat's endemic species and ecosystem-services* is the culmination of several years of discussions with partners on Montserrat. The project is part-funded by UK Government's Darwin Plus: Overseas Territories Environment & Climate Fund, and is a partnership coordinated by UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF). Other project partners include: Montserrat Government (Department of Environment; DoE); Montserrat National Trust (MNT); Trewick Environmental Consultants (TEC); and Montana State University, USA (MSU). May 2016 saw a series of meetings and planning activity in Montserrat, supported by others in UK and USA, to set up the 2-year project.



(From left:) Dr Mike Pienkowski (Honorary Executive Director of UKOTCF), Hon Claude Hogan (Montserrat's Minister of Agriculture, Trade, Lands, Housing & Environment) and Mrs Dulcie James (President of Montserrat National Trust) celebrate the Memorandum of Understanding that they have just signed
(Photo: Ravo Ratianimarina, MNT).

Hon Claude Hogan, Montserrat's Minister of Agriculture, Trade, Lands, Housing & Environment said: "Montserrat welcomes collaboration with international partners and recognises that such partnerships are often fundamental in order to take new and innovative work forward. We have worked with the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum for over 20 years and value its role in coordinating activities both locally in the UK Territories and beyond. Montserrat will continue to need some buoyancy and hands-on support from especially UKOTCF and other UK partners in the short to medium-term. This will require some staff and technical persons to travel between Europe and the Caribbean; that will deliver the capacity support we need at the right times for this project to be successful; and also allow us to gradually mainstream the lessons learnt and the transfer of skills, know-how and best practices that will ensure the sustainability of the outcomes from this project."

UKOTCF has worked with Montserrat partners on a variety of activities. Most recently, these included the EIA workshop, and publishing a guide on bird-watching and other natural and

historical heritage to support efforts to bring tourists to the island, particularly those interested in its nature and history (see *Forum News* 43: 3-4 and 44:13).

Dr Mike Pienkowski, Honorary Executive Director of UKOTCF, explained that "the linking rationales of the project are both to help increase this local capacity and to give the best chances possible for Montserrat's unique and rare species of wildlife to survive in the long term. This is done most effectively by allowing the range to be as extensive as possible – something of a challenge in a small island, especially one which has lost a great deal of its vegetated area to the volcano in the short term. The wildlife is important not only in its own right and for the quality of life of Montserratians, but also as a major draw for tourists, increasing in the future to the benefit of Montserrat."

Mrs Catherine Wensink, UKOTCF Manager and Senior Conservation Officer, added "One of the ways that this will be achieved is by making available to Montserrat the data, initially on invertebrate animals, collected by various institutions over the years. Dr Mike Ivie, an old friend of Montserrat from MSU, will be leading this work, and will visit in mid-2017 to show how to use the computer system, as well as to collect more information and enthuse local persons who might like to take part. Dr Ivie has discovered that, despite its much smaller size, Montserrat is even richer in insect species than Dominica."

A second element of the programme will be more time donated by world expert on environmental impact assessment, Dr Jo Trewick, and her colleagues, to continue the programme started early in 2015 in helping integrate environmental aspects into physical planning (see *Forum News* 43: 3-4).

Mrs Sarita Francis, MNT Executive Director, noted that: "Montserratians will be welcome to participate and learn from all these elements, but a further component is being designed to be centred on their volunteer efforts to enhance the native wildlife in their local areas. MNT and UKOTCF colleagues are out in the field at present developing these options, which will be announced soon."

Hon Minister Hogan added: "As well as these project elements which will be active throughout the 2 years, there is a further important component which will be concerned mainly with planning future activities. The reason that we



Ann Pienkowski (UKOTCF Honorary Environmental Education Coordinator; left) and Sarita Francis (Montserrat National Trust Executive Director) talk about the project on Rose Willock's Saturday programme on Radio ZJB
(Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF).



*Project Officer Nicolas Tirard, together with UKOTCF Conservation Officers Sarah Barnsley and Emma Cary, survey part of the Silver Hills.
Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*

are being so slow – and careful – is that this is an attempt to work out how best Montserrat should use the south in the medium to long term. This is important both for Montserrat’s wildlife and for its economy. Obviously, there are lots of constraints, as well as opportunities, to be taken into account – and lots of people have interests and views. The aim is to listen to and consider all these, and try, over two years, to reach a consensus plan, against which we can then try to secure outside resources to help Montserrat make the most of this for its future. After all, doing nothing is also an option – but one which is unlikely to be the best for Montserrat.”

Dr Pienkowski noted “There will be lots more from the project over the coming months, both to keep Montserratians informed but, even more importantly, to invite their views and participation in the various elements of the project.”

Nicolas Tirard has been appointed Project Officer. Nicolas holds a Masters degree in Agronomy from the École Nationale Supérieure Agronomique de Toulouse, France (ENSAT), and a Masters in Education from the Université Montpellier, France. During his degree at ENSAT, he worked with Réseau tortues marines in Guadeloupe to develop a protocol for monitoring sea-turtle populations. He has worked as a secondary school biology and geology teacher and as a plant nursery manager in France.

He moved to Montserrat in 2012. While on island he has been very busy. He is the co-founder of Montserrat Hydroponics Ltd, which aims to introduce the technique of hydroponics to Montserrat. Hydroponics is the process of growing plants in sand, gravel, or liquid, with added nutrients but without soil. The technique can be used to produce vegetables with no significant impact on the environment. It requires few resources to implement. For example, it uses recirculated rain water, takes up little space and does not require pesticides. He has been working with farmers and the Montserrat Community College to transfer his knowledge and skills. He has authored a book about the trees of Montserrat and has been a volunteer in the Montserrat National Trust botanic gardens, initially providing guided tours and later to provide a listing of names and descriptions of all the plants displayed in the gardens.

During the intensive period of work in May, as one of the components of the new project, 20 people took-part in the first workshop examining possible options for the future of the south of the island. The project is based on the fact that, despite two-thirds of Montserrat being zones of restriction due to volcanic activity, Montserrat remains hugely important for endemic species. Earlier part-Darwin funded work focused on the Centre Hills (and included partners from Durrell, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Montana State University and Royal Society for the Protection of

Birds). A strategic view of the whole island is needed to identify and minimise pressures, and ensure that the natural resources are safeguarded, thereby also underpinning economic recovery. This particular element of the work seeks, over the 2 years of the project, to develop by consultation a widely shared vision and initial plan for the future use of the south, emphasising (but not limited to) restoration of natural ecosystems. This is because of both their intrinsic importance and their potential value to Montserrat’s future economy. This project will not implement the plan but is aimed at providing a sound basis for seeking the resources for that.

The primary consideration of local stakeholders appeared to be biodiversity conservation. Many participants mentioned particular species that they felt were part of Montserrat’s identity and that could benefit from work in the south. These included the Montserrat oriole, mountain chicken frog and Montserrat orchid. In addition to individual species, the recovery of ecosystems as a whole was seen as a benefit, such as through protection and management to reverse degradation of areas, and the regeneration and restoration of tropical forest. Participants recognised the importance of the ecosystem services provided by the forest, such as the island’s pure water supplies and drainage, and the need for an assessment of the water-table to enable long-term survival of these services. It was noted that the water supply is being threatened by the breakup of forest due to activities of feral livestock, as is forest regeneration in Roche’s.

Stakeholders noted that the lands in the south are historically more fertile than in the north, and therefore have the ability to be very productive. Suggestions of how to best use the non-forest areas included farming and pastureland, harvesting fruit such as guava and the planting of fruit trees, charcoal production (for the control of casuarinas and acacia as well as economic benefit), and use of existing tree cover for both cocoa and shade coffee plantations.

The first of the project newsletters was published in July: *Saving Our Special Nature* can be viewed at: www.ukotcf.org. Further stakeholder meetings are due to take place later in the year and will be reported in the newsletter and *Forum News*.

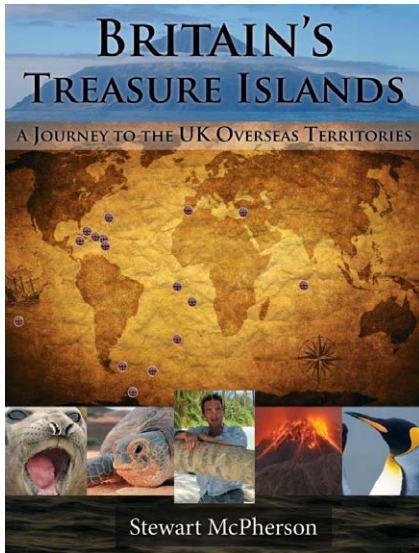
Petroglyphs in Soldier Ghaut, Saint Peter, Montserrat

Earlier this year, hikers on Montserrat discovered several petroglyphs (pictured below) in the Soldier Ghaut area. These markings are thought to have been made by Amerindians, the first known people of Montserrat. The Montserrat National Trust is particularly excited by this discovery as, although found across many Caribbean islands, they have never been found on Montserrat or Antigua.



Photo: Ravo Ratianimarina, Montserrat National Trust

Britain's Treasure Islands TV series, free-access videos and book published



The wildlife, history and cultures of the UK Overseas Territories are explored in an exciting new natural history book by naturalist and explorer Stewart McPherson.

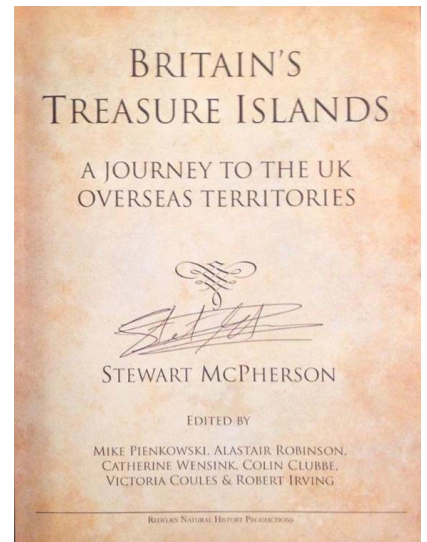
In March, UKOTCF helped Stewart McPherson to organise an evening at the Royal Geographical Society as a climax to his journey to visit all the UKOTs over the last 3 years. This was to document the true treasures of these important parts of the United Kingdom – their

wildlife and habitats, and the people working so hard to conserve them. UKOTCF had also supplied information on content. Over 300 people attended the event held on 24th March, which was very pleasing considering there was an Underground strike and torrential rain on the night. In April, Stewart's series of three 1-hour programmes was shown on BBC4 and was watched by a staggering 700,000 viewers.

In addition to the series and accompanying book, Stewart embarked on an additional side-project, at the suggestion of UKOTCF and others, to use the footage not used in the series to make a short 10-minute video on each UKOT and a variety of subject areas not covered in the TV series. Also with the support of UKOTCF and others, a Kickstarter campaign was launched to raise the costs for the material to be edited. UKOTCF and other partners also donated video and still images to fill gaps in coverage. The project made its target of £11.5k, and now there are many mini-films, which can be used by anyone to showcase the UKOTs' natural treasures. The films are available via UKOTCF's website (www.ukotcf.org/videos/).

UKOTCF personnel advised and commented on the accompanying book, and donated also many of the images used. After mammoth efforts to finish the book, which Stewart admits was rather a lot more work than he had originally planned, it has now been published and orders are being fulfilled.

The text is complemented by over one thousand spectacular, full-colour images (by Stewart's team, UKOTCF personnel and others), including dozens of full-page and double-page spreads, and 17 specially-commissioned gatefold maps that showcase the geography of each territory. The book will resonate particularly with all those interested in natural history, travel, exotic places, culture, geography, as well as British and world history. UKOTCF has been helping Stewart with the book and series, using its experience of 30 years working in the UKOTs, as well as its library of photos and videos. As such, UKOTCF personnel are pleased to be co-editors of *Britain's Treasure Islands*. It is hoped the book will help raise awareness of the biodiversity and cultural importance of the UKOTs, the challenges they face and the opportunities that exist to protect and conserve their important features. The book is available to order now through the UKOTCF website (www.ukotcf.org/treasureIslands/). Buying via UKOTCF results in a contribution to UKOTCF's conservation work at no extra cost to yourself.



And more videos and virtual tours from UKOTCF

Ann Pienkowski of UKOTCF, along with several partner organisations, donated video footage of species that Stewart's team had not managed to film, so that the "shorts" noted in the above article could be more complete. Ann is also editing more of her own video recordings, gathered in the territories over several years, to make more available in her own series. Already available are an introduction to Montserrat (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkJydGp_Ydw), as well as an earlier one produced for the opening of the bird-trails on Grand Turk, Turks & Caicos Islands (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThN1FQ-7Gmc>). More will be made available as they are edited.

The UKOTCF Virtual Tours series (www.ukotcf.org/1_vTours/intro.cfm), started by Ann some years ago at the request of students and tourism agencies in the territories, is slowly being extended. Conservation Officers Sarah Barnsley and Emma Cary are currently working on VTs for Jersey and Alderney.

Screen shots from Ann's Montserrat video: Centre Hills; young male Montserrat Oriole; purple-throated Carib hummingbird.



Falkland Islands join UK's ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity

The United Kingdom ratification to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was formally extended to the Falkland Islands in June 2016. This extension follows the territory's adoption of a new Biodiversity Framework earlier in the year, replacing the 2008 Biodiversity Strategy. The principles in the CBD are acknowledged through the revised Framework, which also includes a summary of progress towards Aichi targets. The CBD is a global agreement which came into force in 1993, following the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro. It addresses all aspects of environmental management and best practice through 3 main objectives: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of the components of biological diversity and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. UKOTCF has long worked to inform Territories of the implications of joining international conventions. Later, a JNCC-supported workshop in 2012 brought together representatives from across various UKOTs and CDs to explore the implications of signing up to the CBD (via extension from the UK's ratification), including Jersey, Guernsey, Falkland Islands and the Isle of Man. Since then, further extensions have been declared for the Isle of Man in 2012, which explored and solved many of the challenges



Imperial shags. Photo: Falkland Islands Government

for others, and South Georgia in 2014. UKOTCF, in collaboration with Defra, organised a further workshop at the 2015 Gibraltar Conference.

This means that 10 of the 20 territories (UKOTs & CDs) eligible to join have now done so. Further advice is available to the others.

Progress on site-protection to fulfil some of these commitments...#

Several articles on this follow.

Anguilla designates its first Ramsar site

Anguilla has successfully designated its first Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. Lying 65km north west of the main island of Anguilla, Sombrero Island is a remote, flat-topped rocky outcrop, home to an important seabird colony, the endemic Sombrero black lizard *Ameiva corvina* and a number of endemic invertebrates. There are five nesting bird species on the island: brown booby *Sula leucogaster*, brown noddy *Anous stolidus*, sooty tern *Onychoprion fuscatus*, bridled tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* and masked booby *Sula dactylatra*. The waters surrounding Sombrero are rich with marine



Booby chick on Sombrero Island. Photo: Anguilla National Trust

life, including giant barrel sponges, vibrant coral reefs and patchy seagrass beds. Its designation follows a US\$30,000 grant from the Ramsar Secretariat for wetland conservation work in Anguilla. The funding enabled the collection and analysis of further local wetland data, and the development of a framework to guide conservation action for wetland policy, in a joint project between Anguilla National Trust, Department of Fisheries & Marine Resources, Department of Environment and RSPB.

The Ramsar Convention was signed by 21 countries in 1971, and now 169 are party. The agreement extended to Anguilla in 1991. The Convention promotes and supports the conservation and wise use (this has since been defined by the Contracting Parties as sustainable use, a term not used in 1971) of wetlands. To date, there are 41 Ramsar sites designated across 20 Caribbean countries. Sombrero Island was one of 5 sites in Anguilla identified in UKOTCF's/Defra's 2005 review of existing and potential Ramsar Sites in the UKOTS and CDs, and its designation marks a significant step in the territory's fulfilment of multilateral environmental agreement (MEA) obligations. The island is owned by the Crown and already protected through the Marine Parks Act and the Biodiversity and Heritage Conservation Act (2009). It is an ideal candidate for designation, fulfilling 5 Ramsar criteria (i, ii, iii, iv & vi). Sombrero is a haven for bird watchers and researchers, and is a popular location for sports fishing. Its designation as a Ramsar Site does not impact fishing around the island, but it does ensure that all activities on and around Sombrero are sustainable. It is hoped the designation will raise international awareness of Anguilla and its valuable biodiversity, as well as increase potential for eco-tourism and other economic ventures.

UK's 30th World Heritage Site: Gorham's Cave Complex

In July 2016 Gibraltar's Gorham Cave complex was inscribed on to UNESCO's World Heritage list. The steep limestone cliffs on the eastern side of the Rock contain four caves with archaeological and paleontological deposits that provide evidence of Neanderthal occupation over a span of more than 100,000 years. The Government of Gibraltar had its proposal accepted in 2011, for the cave complex to be included in the UK World Heritage Tentative List, and intense research and preparatory activity has been undertaken since then to make the bid a success. The site provides exceptional evidence of Neanderthal cultural traditions, including the hunting of birds and marine animals for food, the use of feathers for ornamentation and the presence of abstract rock engravings. Scientific research on these sites has already contributed substantially to debates about Neanderthal and human evolution.

The announcement was made at the 40th annual meeting of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Istanbul, Turkey.

Professor Clive Finlayson, Director of the Gibraltar Museum and of the new World Heritage Site, said: *"It is a fairy tale come true. None of us could have suspected all those years ago when we started this project that we would be here today. There are so many people to thank for their involvement over the years – they have all contributed to this wonderful moment – that it would be impossible to list them all here and now. But I have to highlight the support of Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar throughout this process. Without that support, active interest and participation we*

would never have got to where we are today. I wish to thank the Chief Minister, Fabian Picardo for his belief in our work and his unstinting support; the Deputy Chief Minister, Joseph Garcia, for his leadership and commitment throughout the process; and to Ministers Steven Linares (Heritage) and John Cortes (Environment), for their support and for making a course, which involved many government departments, a smooth one. Finally, I wish to thank my wife Geraldine, who has been with me in this project from the very beginning, for her encouragement, belief and professionalism; and my son Stewart who grew up in Gorham's Cave and has been a staunch companion, full of ideas, throughout the process."

Minister for Heritage, Steven Linares, said: *"I know how much the Museum team have been working on this project and it has been due to their commitment and professionalism that we have world recognition of this world class site. I would like to thank them and look forward to continue working with them to make this site one which visitors and locals can appreciate fully."*

The UK Heritage Minister Tracey Crouch said: *"It's fantastic news that the Gorham's Cave Complex has become the UK's 30th World Heritage Site. It gives a unique insight into the culture and traditions of Neanderthals thousands of years ago and demonstrates the exciting range of the UK's cultural heritage."*

For more information visit www.gibraltarmuseum.gi.



Photos courtesy of The Gibraltar Museum and the individual photographers, as indicated:

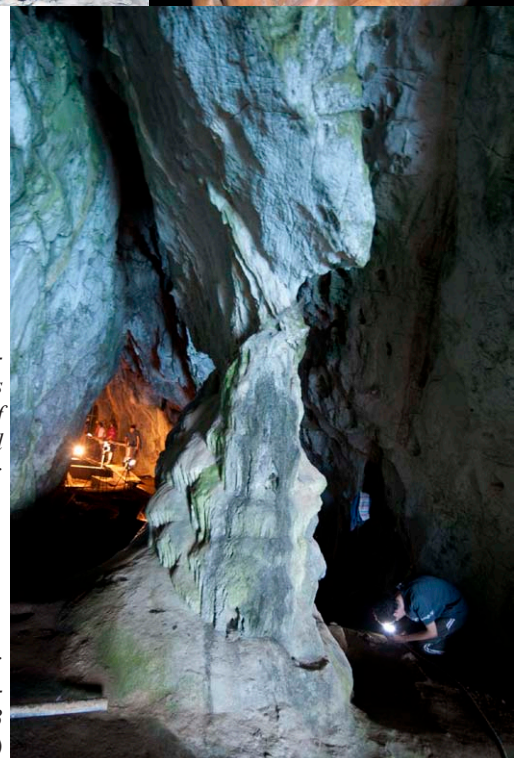
Top left: Gorham's Cave Neanderthal engraving (S.Finlayson);

Top centre: Reconstruction of the coastal plain landscape outside Gorham's Cave during a cold period at the time of the Neanderthals (S.Finlayson)

Top right: Nana-Kennis & Kennis reconstruction of the Gibraltar 1 skull (S.Finlayson);

Bottom left: Excavations - Vanguard Cave (J.C.Finlayson);

Bottom right: Excavations - Gorham's Cave 3 (J.C.Finlayson)



St Helena proposed Marine Protected Area

St Helena continues to make great strides in marine conservation. The enacting of the Environmental Protection Ordinance (EPO) in February has been followed by a proposal for a new Marine Protected Area (MPA) in the waters surrounding the island. The proposed MPA would classify the territory's entire 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as an IUCN Category IV protected area, promoting sustainable use of natural resources, and conserving ecosystems and habitats, together with associated cultural values and traditional natural resource management systems. The proposal comes after the conclusion of a 2-year Darwin Initiative-funded project to identify potential MPAs and produce a Marine Management Plan (MMP) for the island.

The waters around St Helena are rich in marine life, from charismatic cetacean and turtle species, to devil-rays, whale-sharks and a beautiful array of bedrock, boulder, cobble and sandy habitats. The Darwin-funded project identified 14 species which were new to science, including shrimps, flatworms, seaslugs and sponges. By raising local and international awareness of the island's unique marine life, and building capacity for local personnel to implement marine monitoring and management strategies, the project aimed to enable the protection and sustainable use of their marine resources in the long-term. The MMP was developed with stakeholder input and public consultation, and identifies existing and potential pressures in St Helena's waters, including pollution, fishing, biosecurity, tourism and construction. The Plan specifies the management strategies that should be adopted to ensure the island's natural marine resources are used sustainably. Chief Environmental Officer, Isabel Peters, said: *"Having a Marine Protected Area designated and its management plan in place puts St Helena in good stead for meeting both local and international commitments – and protecting local interests."* The consultation period for the proposed designation of a Marine Protected Area in St Helena's waters closed on 8th August 2016, and the result was announced the following month (see *UK Government Announcement* on this page).



Hawksbill turtle.

Photo: St Helena Government Marine Conservation Section

Great British Oceans reception

This event was hosted at the House of Lords and was attended by members of the Great British Oceans Coalition (Greenpeace, Blue Marine Foundation, Pew, RSPB and others), several Ministers: Rory Stewart MP, then Defra Minister, and James Duddridge MP, then FCO Minister (more on the changes since on page 16), UK Government officials, members of UKOTA, other NGOs such as UKOTCF, scientific researchers and others.

Oliver Letwin MP, who together with Zac Goldsmith MP, is a supporter of the GBO initiative, said in his speech that, whilst the UK Government had committed to ensuring that uninhabited UKOTs waters were protected and being managed sustainably, they envisage that there is a need for UK Government to support inhabited UKOTs in the same way, taking into account their individual challenges and circumstances. The successful Darwin Plus grants for the 2015 round, announced in 2016 (see page 9), reflect this in that several projects are helping the UK Government meet their 'blue-belt' manifesto commitment.

UK Government announcement

In September 2016, the UK Government made a major step towards its "blue belt" commitment with the announcement by Foreign Office Minister Sir Alan Duncan, at the Our Oceans conference, of plans to double the area of ocean under marine protection around the UK Overseas Territories to about 4 million square kilometres. This includes the designation of protected areas around St Helena (as noted above) and Pitcairn and a commitment to designate marine protection zones around Ascension by 2019 and Tristan da Cunha by 2020.

UK Government will provide £20 million over the next 4 years, for Phase 1, which will support *"the implementation, management, surveillance and crucially the reinforcement of these new Marine Protected Areas"* in the UKOTs waters listed above. Phase 2 is expected to provide support for other marine protected areas in other UKOTs.

Efforts by a number of NGOs, UKOT departments and UK Government are to be congratulated given the progress in this area, particularly in meeting target 11 of the Aichi Targets that *"by 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem service, are conserved though effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscape and seascape."* It is pleasing to see that the marine section on the Environment Charters review by UKOTCF already needs to be updated in this regard!

We look forward to seeing further financial commitment for Phase 2 and additional projects under the Darwin Plus which support UKOTs in managing their marine resources sustainably.

Several UKOTs are exploring the use of remote applications to combat illegal fishing, which is a major challenge to those UKOTs with large EEZs. Bermuda is the latest UKOT to benefit from the technology being developed by UK-based satellite applications technology – in part funded by UK Government.

Montserrat Government and Falklands Government through SAERI and JNCC, have recently embarked on a cross-territory project which looks at marine spatial planning. The project will enable fisherfolk to collect valuable data. UKOTCF, UKOTA and Montserrat's Chief Fisheries Officer had identified the need for more information on Montserrat marine resources and it is pleasing to see cross-territory collaboration being resourced.

Informed by the information gathered at the UKOTCF-organised conference in Gibraltar last year, submissions were made to three Environment Audit Committee inquiries to ensure that the UKOTs were not overlooked. These included one on Marine Protected Areas, as well as others on Sustainable Development Goals and the results of the EU referendum.

Isle of Man Biosphere Reserve

As recorded in the *Annual Report*, in March 2016, the island and the territorial waters around it were adopted into UNESCO's network of Biosphere Reserves.

UNESCO defines Biosphere Reserves as “*areas of terrestrial and coastal ecosystems promoting solutions to reconcile the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use. They are internationally recognized, nominated by national governments and remain under sovereign jurisdictions of the states where they are located.*”

The Isle of Man is now able to say that it is the first country in the world to be recognised in its entirety by UNESCO as a World Biosphere Reserve.

This month, the Isle of Man was represented at the 4th UNESCO Training Course for Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserve Managers in Jeju, South Korea. Peter Longworth, Project Leader for the Reserve said that: “*It was particularly interesting to understand more about the challenges facing other parts of the world. While the event took place, Jeju had heavy rain from the outer edges of the typhoon which made landfall in Japan. Our colleague from Haiti travelled home into Hurricane Matthew.*”

“*The Isle of Man's attendance at gatherings such as this will give us a greater understanding of, and commitment to, resolving global challenges.*”

Dr Han Qunli, Secretary of UNESCO's *Man and the Biosphere* (MAB) Programme will visit the island in November to present formally Membership of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR). He will be given a special set of commemorative stamps issued to mark the occasion.

More information can be found at: www.biopshere.im

List of other Darwin Plus awards

In addition to the grant to UKOTCF and partners re Montserrat (see pp 3-4), the following awards were announced in March for the 2015 round:

Creating a Terrestrial Action Plan for the Chagos Archipelago, Chagos Conservation Trust

Dolphins of the kelp: Data priorities for Falkland's inshore cetaceans, South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute

Consolidating local capacity for sustainable restoration in BVI Protected Areas, National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands

Assessment, protection and actions for important seabird populations in the Cayman Islands, Government of Cayman Islands

Mapping Anguilla's Blue Belt Ecosystem Services, Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Research Anguilla

Tracking marine megafauna at Ascension Island: towards evidence-based blue belts, Government of Ascension

“Reduce, reuse, recycle”: developing a waste management strategy for Ascension, Government of Ascension

South Georgia Habitat Restoration Project: Post-Baiting Phase, South Georgia Heritage Trust

Waste to warmth - cardboard into insulation boards and fuel bricks, SHAPE - St Helena, Active Participation in Enterprise St Helena

Water Security and Sustainable Cloud Forest Restoration on St Helena, Government of St Helena

Mapping St Helena's Biodiversity and Natural Environment, Government of St Helena

Project Pinnamin: conserving northern rockhopper penguins on Tristan da Cunha, RSPB

Managing Antarctic krill fisheries: identifying candidate marine areas for protection in South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands, British Antarctic Survey

Continued results and legacy of the Gibraltar/UKOTCF Conference 2015

UKOTCF-organised conferences depended on a substantial amount of funding from the sponsoring bodies, the time (both paid and very largely volunteer) of organisers, and certainly not least the time and effort of all the participants. In order to secure funding for future such conferences (should they be requested) we assess outputs and the benefits of such networking opportunities. These often include projects/activities which would otherwise not have happened. The most recent of these was the involvement of Gibraltar Botanic Gardens in the Darwin Project in British Virgin Islands.

Recently, Gibraltar Botanic Gardens curator Andrew Gdaniec, an expert on succulents, joined the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew team in the BVI, where he spent time training staff at the J.R O'Neal Botanic Gardens in order to establish an *ex situ* conservation programme for BVI's succulent plants, many of which are threatened. The visit was part-funded by the British Cactus & Succulent Society (BCSS).

The Gibraltar Botanic Gardens have experience in the cultivation of succulent plants. Andrew was able to use this to advise and train staff to improve their collections for conservation, growing media and propagation. As part of this, some field-work was also conducted to better understand growing conditions of BVI's plants *in situ*.

This sharing of expertise will help to improve J.R. O'Neal Botanic Gardens' collections management and conservation of succulents in the British Virgin Islands. It is a core part of what UKOTCF strives to achieve through the conferences. Depending on funding, it is hoped that another will take place in 2018.

Another legacy of the 2015 conference was the first meeting of UKOT/CD environment ministers and equivalents. UKOTCF was very pleased to be able to assist Gibraltar's Minister, Dr John Cortés, in this initiative. Minister Cortés and UKOTCF have continued to advance this series. Minister Claude Hogan of Montserrat worked hard to host a meeting in Montserrat in 2016, but eventually this could not be, for reasons outside the control of either Montserrat or UKOTCF. We are pleased, however, to be able to announce that Victor Brownlees, Chief Executive of the Crown Dependency of Alderney, in the Channel Islands, has arranged to host the second meeting of UKOT/CD environment ministers in spring 2017.

Meetings with new Governors

UKOTCF is pleased to note very constructive meetings with Governors-Designate.

Mike Pienkowski and Catherine Wensink met with the Governor-Designate for TCI, Dr John Freeman, previously Ambassador to Argentina, and Mrs Freeman in September.

In October, both of these, together with Lady (Dace) Ground met the new Governor of Bermuda, Mr John Rankin, previously Head of Mission at the British Embassy in Nepal.

UKOTCF wish the new Governors enjoyable and constructive periods of office.

St Helena Airport

Over a decade ago, the long-running idea of building an airport at St Helena eventually came to a definite proposal. It was obvious that there was only one feasible location for this - unfortunately, in an area of exceptional endemic biodiversity, i.e. holding lots of species of wildlife found nowhere else in the world. As UKOTCF said at the time, if the proposal had concerned almost anywhere else in the world of such unique importance and sensitivity, conservationists would oppose totally the proposal.

However, St Helena is not a pristine environment. To maintain the biodiversity after centuries of human occupation and impact requires active management - something for which St Helena National Trust and the St Helena Government's environment sections have built up a formidable record. Such active management requires human presence, and this in turn requires a viable economy. For these reasons, both UKOTCF and local conservation bodies took the somewhat controversial view (in conservation circles) that they would not oppose the airport development. This was provided that everything was done to confine all activity to the smallest "footprint", preceded this by appropriate studies and compensatory provision, with impacts monitored, and adjustments made as necessary.

Whilst there has been some reasonable criticism that, amongst other problems, the environmental provisions were very late in being started, the conservation bodies have maintained their supportive stance, and indeed have worked hard in voluntary capacities to assist the airport authorities in many ways.

Despite this, some voices have been raised that St Helena National Trust is somehow to blame for the current airport problems. This is nonsense. The airport's current problems are entirely due to a failure to predict or measure adequately the severe wind-shear - despite much advice in advance by the aviation industry that this should be done. We are not in a position to say who were responsible for this, nor would we want to. Our emphasis remains on encouraging solutions to be found, providing a reasonable access service to the Island and minimising negative environmental impact. It is the quality of this environment which will provide a key basis for St Helena's future economy.

In this context, we are pleased to reproduce (with permission) the following letter, first published in the *St Helena Independent*.

A Mountain out of a Mole Hill

Dear public of St Helena,

A number of times now I have been told by my staff that the opinion on the street is that the St Helena National Trust is to be blamed for the island's airport related woes. In all honesty I hesitate to respond in any way to the wonderful rumours that spread like White weed across this island. I largely enjoy them if I am honest. When they are not spiteful or hurtful to an individual or group, they provide amusement and could be seen as a comical cultural quirk but this one has come to me once too many times. So perhaps against my better judgement I'm taking a few minutes to write this letter.

My first response is one of pride. I am flattered that the public thinks that the Trust has the kind of power and influence that would be required to shift an airport or runway from where the powers that be have decided it should go. Next, I am amused at the mountain that is being made from the wonderful little mole hills that the Mole spider makes. From what I hear, this secretive little beast is at the heart of the speculation. I wonder how many people know that in an early survey of where the runway now lies;

a significant population of Mole spiders was discovered living quite happily. As soon as this came to light, the whole lot were dug up and unceremoniously dumped on a nearby hill. Honestly the Trust and the conservation community on the island weren't too pleased about that but there really wasn't much to be done about it. Thankfully it doesn't appear as though the forced relocation was catastrophic and the spiders are making the best of their new home on Mole Spider Hill.

Finally and more seriously now, I find myself saddened that some of the community on St Helena think that the Trust wouldn't want what is best for the island's population. The Trust exists to support the people of St Helena first and foremost. We believe strongly that the unique environment and the many weird and wonderful plants and creatures that are only found here are important. We long for them to be valued by you as they are by us but not at the expense of your prosperity or happiness. That choice is simply not how we think. We don't believe that it is an either/or type question. We are always looking for the solution that will benefit both St Helenians and the environment. We believe firmly that this solution exists in every difficult decision. The airport project is no different.

So, did the Trust or the Mole spider make the powers that be put the runway in a place where it would be crippled by windshear? Put simply, no. If the solution is to build another runway will we try to force those that know where runways should go to put it somewhere that it won't work? Again, no of course we would and could not.

Would we like to have the opportunity to protect our environment as options for a solution to the airport problem are considered? Absolutely and we believe that one will exist, whatever the proposal ends up being for getting us airborne. We have St Helena's best interests at heart. We exist to benefit the island and her people. Please trust us that we are working hard to get the balance right between people and their environment. We are after all the Trust.

Jeremy Harris

Director of the St Helena National Trust

As these final words are being written, just before *Forum News* goes to press, a short-take-off jet aircraft is about to try a test landing at St Helena. These British-designed aircraft are excellent and hard-working planes which used to be a main-stay of many of the internal UK services and between regional British airports and the near continent. They are still much used throughout the world. We hope that the tests go well, and that this or another relatively simple solution gets St Helena's long-awaited air service into operation soon.



Wolf spider carrying brood of young, Prosperous Bay Plain, St Helena, prior to airport construction. The Plain, where the airport is being built, is an outstanding centre of global biodiversity for invertebrates, with many endemic species. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

Model garden using rainwater harvesting gets a boost

Back in 2013, UKOTCF and the Turks and Caicos National Museum were awarded a grant from the Royal Bank of Canada Blue Water initiative to develop a garden which showcased the use of rainwater harvesting, once a traditional method used widely in the islands. It was reported in *Forum News* 42: 1-4.



From left: Candianne Williams (Manager, Turks & Caicos National Museum, Providenciales), Sanfra Foster (Manager, Royal Bank of Canada, Providenciales) and Bryan Naqqi Manco (DECR and TCNM).
Photo: Dr Eric Salamanca, DECR

The project was supported by the Department of Environment and Maritime Affairs and the Department of Agriculture, who provided expertise to design and develop the garden, including providing the plants needed for the garden from their nursery on North Caicos. The aim of this was to show the benefits of planting native species for landscaping (as they require fewer resources in the arid conditions) and the benefit of using traditional methods to grow crops to produce food locally (the three-sisters method).

Funds for the project came to an end in 2014, but it was always intended that the garden would be maintained largely by volunteer effort and providing Royal Bank of Canada employees with an opportunity to get involved. This could have multiple benefits to them, e.g. health and fitness, a reconnection with outdoors, and a feeling of responsibility for sustainable use of resources on their island. It was particularly pleasing to note that, in 2016, RBC employees took on this role and are now actively managing the garden on the site of the new TC National Museum building on Providenciales (complementing the original in Grand Turk).



The RBC and Turks & Caicos National Museum team.
Photo: Dr Eric Salamanca, DECR

An inadequate EIA for the dophinarium development proposal for Grand Turk

Regular readers of *Forum News* will have followed the issue of the dophinarium development proposal for Grand Turk (and also Providenciales) in Turks & Caicos Islands, over several years. Unfortunately, despite going against the tide of scepticism from the general public with regards to keeping marine mammals in captivity, particularly from the *Black Fish* film and campaigns by Born Free Foundation etc, the proposed development continues to be a possibility.

Earlier this year, an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) was carried out, which might be seen as an important step in TCI, given that these are lacking in many developments across the islands. However, local environment groups and qualified ecologists report that this EIA was totally inadequate, not carried out by qualified personnel, inaccurate, and without relevant data. It was submitted to the Planning Department. The TCI Government are reported as under pressure from the Grand Turk taxi-drivers (a locally influential group) to support the development, because these desperately need more work. It seems that the drivers believe the foreign promoters' claims that much work will be generated for the taxi-drivers. This is despite one of the few things clear on the early plans being that the developer planned to use coaches, not taxis, to transport clients from the cruise-liner dock to the dolphinarium.

Local interests note that TCI Government had never yet rejected a development proposal, with one exception, which was for a nudist colony. Any objections have been dealt with normally by putting conditions on the development permission, but these conditions do not always relate to the objections and fulfilling of them seems not to be monitored in most cases.

Residents of Grand Turk were not aware of the problems and issues with this development proposal, despite the information being available online. The site for the dolphinarium was North Creek, which actually conflicted with the 3-part development plan for Grand Turk, which designated the northern part of Grand Turk as a "Natural" area. There were concerns also that granting permission for a dolphinarium on Grand Turk would set a precedent for one on Provo. Once they managed to obtain, with difficulty, some of the supposedly public documents, the TC Reef Fund (TCRF), together with the Turks and Caicos Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (TCSPCA), wrote to the Turks and Caicos Government with regards to the EIAs, highlighting the errors/omissions. They are now reaching out to the international community for support. This includes an online petition on the TCRF Facebook page to the CEO of Carnival (www.facebook.com/TCREEF/).

Overseas Entities Roundtable meetings in Brussels

The 8th meeting of the Roundtable took place at the European Commission Directorate-General Environment (DG Env) offices in Brussels in June. The meeting involved Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs, including most UKOTs) and Outermost Regions (ORs) of European Territories, non-government organisations and EU institutions. A number of presentations were given, including one from Esther Wolfs, of Wolf's Company. Many UKOTs will be familiar with her work on environmental economics. Overall her work, together with the Vrij Universiteit, Amsterdam, has found that there are high levels of 'willingness to pay' amongst local businesses and the tourism sector but, in order for them to

invest in the environment, they need incentives by governments to protect their ecosystem services.

IUCN's presentations included an update on monitoring the Message from Guadeloupe and on the outcomes of the funding calls under BEST.

The successful grant applications were as follows:

Small Grants

Indian Ocean

- Dynamique et Conservation de l'Ile Tromelin (DyCIT)
- "REPT'ILE" REPTiles Terrestres des Iles Eparses
- British Indian Ocean Territory Environmental Interpretation and Education Project

Subpolar

- Détermination des zones d'alimentation utilisées par la communauté d'oiseaux marins se reproduisant sur l'île du Grand Colombier, Archipel de Saint Pierre & Miquelon South Atlantic
- Forest Restoration and Improved Biosecurity on Nightingale Island
- Trails and interpretation improvements in the Peaks National Park, St Helena
- Restoration of Peak Dale's St Helena gumwood forest
- Developing a site-based conservation approach for sei whales *Balaenoptera borealis* at Berkeley Sound, Falkland Islands

Medium grants

Caribbean

- Securing pockets of paradise in the Caribbean, embedding capacity for Invasive Alien Species (IAS) management in UKOT based organisations. Training to local staff, raising awareness locally. RSPB.
- Restoration of Ecosystem Services and Coral reef quality (RESCQ). Conservation Foundation, STENAPA, Nature Foundation St Maarten and Turks and Caicos Reef Fund.
- Marine Park Aruba led by Directie Natuur en Milieu
- Saving the sea turtles of Anguilla: combining community action with scientific evidence to drive legislative change

Pacific

- Biodiversity of oceanic pelagic ecosystems for a better conservation and management of outstanding natural areas (BIOPELAGOS)
- Pacific Biodiversity Blue Belt
- Protéger et restaurer la forêt sèche du littoral de Nouvelle-Calédonie
- Sauver de l'extinction les deux oiseaux les plus menacés de Polynésie française

Directorate-General Development (DG Dev) had underspent on some of its other programmes, so it was able to inject an additional €2million into this round. This meant that 8 medium projects were funded in this call. DG Dev thought that there were few concept notes for BEST 2.0, although it may be comparing the OCTs with other EU calls. IUCN thought this was because local actors were fearful of entering into EU contracts. In its view, there was a good quantity of applicants. BEST 2.0 coordinators have tried to understand the organisations and their capacity to deliver projects. That underpinned the reasoning for the swift and small grants.

The results of the small grant call for Caribbean and Pacific and the medium grant call for Indian Ocean/Sub polar/South Atlantic

were due shortly. Although the impact of 'Brexit' for the UKOTs is unknown, another round of calls is expected to take place next year.

Overall, IUCN thought that there had been a good spread of projects and that there was no evidence of over-representation of some types of projects. It seems that the successful projects were very much in dialogue with the regional hubs asking for advice etc.

The Commission welcomed the willingness to collaborate on cross-territory projects. There was a good mix of continuation and new grants.

Most of the ecosystem profiles have now been finalised and regional hubs are now working on financial investment plans for tentative future programmes.

Catherine Wensink, on behalf of UKOTCF, gave an invited presentation on its recent work on Environment Charters and Aichi targets (see opening article of this *Forum News*).

Presentations from the meeting are available at:

<https://www.iucn.org/theme/marine-and-polar/our-work/eu-overseas/europe-overseas-roundtable>

Council Members: many thanks to Joseph

At the AGM in 2016, Joseph Smith Abbott's term on UKOTCF Council ended.

Joseph Smith Abbott joined the National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands in August 1996 as the Deputy Director/ Science Coordinator. He was promoted to the directorship in December 1999 and continued to act in this capacity until 2014. Joseph was responsible for the overall management and planning of the territorial protected

area system. He has served as the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas Vice Chair for the Caribbean and as a member of the IUCN Iguana Specialist Group. He is a Chartered Manager and Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute. He has collaborated with various UK and US institutions in the identification and implementation of research needs and management approaches in order to improve protected area management in the Territory.

In 2014, Joseph was promoted to Deputy Permanent Secretary in BVI's Ministry of Natural Resources and Labour, where he is able to continue with many of his previous interests.

UKOTCF owes Joseph a great debt of gratitude for many years of support, both before his term on Council and during it. Council hopes that Joseph will continue to stay in touch and give advice, and wishes him well with his new(ish) challenges.



Professor Tony Martin named Conservationist of the Year

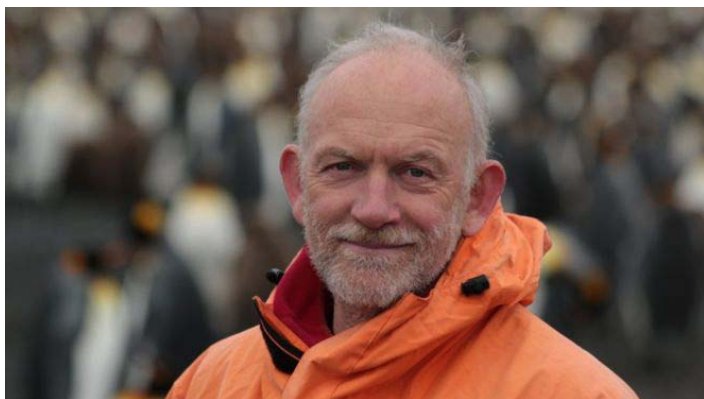


Photo: Roland Gockel

UKOTCF congratulates Professor Tony Martin, Project Director at the South Georgia Heritage Trust (SGHT), and Professor at the University of Dundee, who has been named Conservationist of the Year by the Zoological Society of London. Professor Martin, a respected marine mammal and seabird biologist, received the award following his successful leadership of the SGHT Habitat Restoration Project, an ambitious project to eradicate introduced rats and mice from South Georgia, and enable the restoration of the island's endemic and native species.

Although only a fairly small charity, the scale of the project undertaken by SGHT was vast, costing £7.5m over four seasons of fieldwork (three baiting and one survey) and involving the eradication of rodents from more than 1000 square kilometres of sub-Antarctic wilderness. Professor Martin said: *"I am immensely proud to receive ZSL's Conservationist of the Year award, and do so on behalf of the many people who contributed to this landmark project. It was a privilege to lead such a remarkable team of people, 'Team Rat' as we became known on this breath-taking sub-Antarctic island. It's gratifying that there are already signs of recovery on South Georgia, thanks to our combined efforts."*

At the 2015 Gibraltar conference, he amplified *"The cost of any large scale eradication operation is normally measured in the millions of pounds or dollars. This has meant that large-scale eradications were only attempted on islands within a very few countries with enlightened governments (e.g. New Zealand and Australia), or those selected for priority consideration by the world's largest environmental charities and foundations (e.g. RSPB and Galapagos Conservancy). Until now, that is. The subject of my presentation [see his full article in the proceedings: www.ukotcf.org/confs/gibraltar2015.htm#proc] is an eradication operation on a vast scale, and one that was conceived, organised and funded by a small UK charity. As such, the South Georgia Habitat Restoration Project ... breaks the mould. With primary fieldwork completed in March 2015, and with an impeccable safety record and no budget overspend, this project demonstrates that globally important conservation work need not be the preserve of governments and only the largest charities."*

The project is now in its monitoring phase, with the last bait laid in March 2015. Initial signs are promising – the South Georgia Pipit is showing signs of recovery since efforts to eradicate rats commenced, with a nest found in January 2015 in an area previously overrun by rats. Over the next 2 to 3 years, it is hoped that careful monitoring will reveal whether this ambitious project has succeeded and that South Georgia can be declared rodent-free.

Life on Mars of the South Atlantic

The BBC Radio 4 *Costing the Earth* programme continues to showcase the work of dedicated conservationists in the UKOTs with its episodes and photos galleries on their work. Earlier in the year, they focused on Ascension Island. They interviewed a variety of those based on island and gave an interesting account of its history, geology and wildlife.

Dr Sam Weber of the Ascension Conservation Department, when asked about the striking contrast between the dry plains of Ascension and the lush vegetation found on Green Mountain, said: *"Everything you see around us is the result of an ecological experiment that was started in the mid nineteenth century. When people first settled on the island, when the British arrived and garrisoned it, it was an incredibly hostile environment. There was no natural fresh water running, just occasional drips. It was very poor in the way of agriculture. So, after a visit to Ascension in the mid nineteenth century, Joseph Hooker who was later the Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, encouraged by his friend Charles Darwin and his father, advised the Admiralty to launch in to this grand experiment to green Ascension Island, to plant trees at the summit to trap moisture in the mist that sweep over it and increase the supply of water for the garrison, to introduce grasses to create pasture for livestock and to create soil for agriculture for planting vegetables. As you can see by the vegetation around us, this planning was fantastically successful. Whether he was right is another question. Judged by today's standards, many conservation biologists would argue that this was a disaster, but he understood fully the implication of what he was doing. He was a fantastic botanist and he foresaw what would happen to the diminutive plants of Green Mountain, that they wouldn't be able to compete, but he made a value judgment: then, providing water for the troops on Ascension Island was far more important than preserving what he found up here."*

The programme then goes on to look at the island's interesting climate resulting from the experiment, the diverse and familiar vegetation planted there as well as the management, which is ongoing. Presenter Peter Gibbs then took a look at the island's unique biodiversity. He talks to Dr Weber about some of the current thinking around managing non-natural habitats. Green Mountain warden, Stedson Stroud, gives an account of the management techniques being used in the artificial habitat to ensure the long-term conservation of native species such as the endemic ferns. Together with Marcella Corcoran of Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and Jolene Sim, they talk about the rediscovery and conservation efforts of the endangered Ascension parsley.

Dr Weber and Mark Holland, Island Administrator, then discuss invasive species (mesquite and Texan fire-ants), the current biosecurity controls which are being put in place, and ambitions for future protection of the island terrestrial and marine resources.

The programme concludes with a look at the long-term sea turtle programme with Dr Nicola Weber, also of the Conservation Department.

The episode is available on BBC iPlayer, together with some stunning images of Ascension Island (www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b077ggv9#play).

Island Invasives Conference 2017

Details of the 3rd international Island Invasives conference 2017, to be hosted by Tony Martin and his team in Dundee on 10-14 July, were published in *Forum News 44*, and can be seen at www.islandinvasives2017.com

Guernsey hosts the Inter Island meeting 2016

Hosted by the States of Guernsey and La Société Guernesiaise, the Inter-Island Environment Meeting (IIEM) 2016, was held at Castle Cornet in St Peter Port, the capital of Guernsey. The conference was the latest in a series of meetings that began in 2000. These provide a platform for conservation practitioners, government representatives, and any other individuals/organisations interested in the environment, to provide updates and discuss the conservation issues, activities and successes of the Channel Islands. More recently, the conferences have experienced greater involvement from participants external to the Channel Islands, e.g. from the Isle of Man and UK and French organisations.



Castle Cornet seen from a distance – location of the IIEM 2016 conference. Photo: Sarah Barnsley

The meeting kicked off with various introductory speeches and opening remarks, which included a mention of Guernsey's Policy and Resource Plan (<https://www.gov.gg/policyandresourceplan>). This was published online on 10 October 2016. Environmental considerations are included within this underneath the *Quality of Life* section, a key reminder of how important conservation is, not only for preserving biodiversity, but also for preserving the well-being of human society.

The keynote speech by Paul Buckley of the RSPB therefore came as a stark warning. Paul provided an update as to the latest *State of Nature Report*, published the week prior to IIEM. The report was produced as the result of a partnership of organisations working to assess the status of biodiversity in the UK, its Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories. Worryingly, figures indicate that 56% of species have shown a decline since 1970, and only 44% have shown an increase. Marine wildlife, on the other hand, has experienced a 62% species increase and 38% decrease. The situation is more complex than this, however, as fish seem to be doing better than other species, disregarding the decreases still being seen in commercial fisheries. An important element influencing this figure is the fact that smaller fish are moving in, due to climate-change.

In light of this, Paul noted the need to establish protected areas in the marine environment, linking in nicely to the broad focus of this year's IIEM which was 'designations'. It was certainly exciting to hear about the enormous amount of work towards the creation of protected areas within the Channel Islands. These range from Guernsey's Sites of Special Significance (SSSs) to Jersey's National Park, which was announced this year.

It was inspiring to hear about the benefits that designating protected areas can lead to. For example, Paul Chambers of La Société Jersiaise noted that Les Minquiers islands off the coast of Jersey are currently in a good condition. The designation of a Marine Protected Area (MPA), in addition to the existing Ramsar Site status, therefore acts as a safeguard for maintaining this condition, e.g. by providing protection from the threat imposed by boats.

As well as benefits for nature, protected areas can lead to economic and other benefits to human communities. Jane Norwich from La Société Sercquaise gave the example of Sark being a Dark Skies community, a status which was achieved in 2011 through the International Dark Skies Association (IDA). Jane explained that, since that time, Sark had enjoyed increases in visitor numbers out of season and international recognition, with one claim to fame being that Enya's latest album was named after Sark: *Dark Sky Island*.



The Humps, part of the Herm, Jethou & the Humps Ramsar Convention Wetland of International Importance. Photo: Sarah Barnsley

On the first day of IIEM, participants enjoyed a ferry trip across to the island of Herm. There they received a tour of the island to experience the Herm, Jethou & the Humps Ramsar Wetland Site for themselves. Participants heard about the grey seal population residing around the Humps, passed by Neolithic stones and enjoyed wonderful views over to Alderney, Sark, Guernsey and Jethou. The warmth and hospitality of the Herm tour guides and hosts did not stop there, as everyone met back at the Mermaid Inn for informal chats over dinner.

Environmental education and awareness-raising was highlighted several times during the meeting as being a particular topic of concern within the Channel Islands and more widely. It was inspirational, therefore, to hear how individuals and organisations had started to address this challenge. For example, Jersey's Barn Owl Conservation Network provides students with the opportunity to help install owl and kestrel boxes in their school grounds. The Alderney Wildlife Trust's (AWT) LIVE project encourages online learning, e.g. through Puffin webcams that provide live footage. It was explained that the idea behind this project was to integrate nature into the curriculum, and demonstrate that technology, which is frequently blamed for the disconnection with nature, can be used to do this.

The conference ended with a summary from Roland Gauvain of the AWT, who proposed three key messages emerging from the gathering: the need for engagement with stakeholders, schools, etc.; the need for robust and appropriate data; as well as the need for greater links between the Channel Islands.



*John Pinel
(States of Jersey
Head of Natural
Environment
& Principal
Ecologist)
presenting at IIEM
2016. Photo:
Sarah Barnsley*

New UK Ministers

The aftermath of the referendum on EU membership resulted in changes in almost all ministerial appointments, even though the Conservative Party continues to form the UK Government. Those appointments most likely to be involved with UKOTs, as well as the relevant Secretaries of State, are noted below.

Mr Boris Johnson MP was appointed Foreign Secretary. The Rt Hon Baroness Anelay of St John's DBE PC FRSA has been confirmed as the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with responsibility for the Overseas Territories. Her portfolio includes also the Caribbean and the Commonwealth. (Her appointment follows the departure from Government of Mr James Duddridge MP.) She is also the spokesperson in the House of Lords for FCO.

The new Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs is The Rt Hon. Andrea Leadsom MP. In Defra, the lead on biodiversity will be with Dr Thérèse Coffey MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment and Rural Life Opportunities. She will be looking after: the natural environment, including biodiversity, the marine environment, and international wildlife trafficking; rural life opportunities, covering rural childcare, education and skills, and health; floods, water and waterways; air quality; and resource and environment management. Some marine aspects will be dealt with by: George Eustice MP, Minister of State for Farming, Food and the Marine Environment Food and farming, who is looking after: food and farming, including CAP (Common Agricultural Policy), apprenticeships, exports, and bovine TB (tuberculosis) policy; fisheries; better regulation; and science and innovation. Lord Gardiner of Kimble is spokesperson in the House of Lords.

The new Secretary of State for International Development is The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP. In DFID, Rory Stewart MP OBE, Minister of State, was briefly looking after Overseas Territories. However, with the appointment of another Minister of State, The Rt Hon Lord Bates in October, this now passes to him. He is also DFID's spokesperson in the House of Lords.

Presentation in Parliament to the Young Fabian Society

Catherine Wensink (below: second from right) provided environmental expertise to the panel on Overseas Territories at a meeting of the Young Fabian Society in Parliament, at the invitation of Catherine West MP, Shadow Minister for the Overseas Territories (fourth from left).



South Georgia Stakeholders Meeting

The annual South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI) Stakeholder meeting was held on 12 September 2016 at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO). SGSSI Commissioner Colin Roberts opened the meeting with a mention of the ambitions of the Government of SGSSI's *Strategy 2016-2020*, and the fact that there is a lot of interest in South Georgia at present. One project mentioned by Colin, was the Antarctic Circumnavigation Expedition of Scientists, whose purpose is to “*measure and quantify the impact of climate-change and pollution in the Southern Ocean and the sub-Antarctic islands*”.

Jane Rumble, Head of the FCO's Polar Regions Department, continued the meeting with an update of current issues. She commended in particular the SGSSI team, who have worked hard to implement the Strategy. Updates were subsequently presented by James Jansen (FCO), Dr Jennifer Lee (SGSSI Environment Officer) and Dr Paul Brewin (SGSSI Marine Environment and Fisheries Manager) to bring stakeholders up to date regarding progress made since the launch of the Strategy approximately a year ago.

It was good to hear that feedback on the Strategy had been received from many stakeholders. As noted by James Jansen, with such a small team, the work is made possible only through the aid of stakeholders. It was exciting also to hear about the huge steps forward South Georgia is taking in terms of the environment as a whole. For example, the UK's ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity was extended to South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands last year, while a new delivery plan and action plans were being developed for ACAP (Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels). There is also a focus upon Risk Management Policies surrounding biosecurity, environment/pollution and communications.

Dr Lee continued describing the enormous amount of work going on in the Territory, with mention of the successful biosecurity meetings being held with the Falkland Islands Government and the Ministry of Defence, and the launch, in March 2016, of the *National Biodiversity Action Plan*. Progress is being seen across all sectors, from a new three-tiered system of Environmental Impact Assessment, to the production of a *Plant Management Strategy*.

There is much exciting new research, such as that being carried out by a PhD student looking at fungal biodiversity and the impact of herbicides. Monitoring continues also, for example through the establishment of a rodent monitoring system which allows a threat to be responded to rapidly. Dr Lee reported also on the work to increase SGSSI's environmental global reach, for example

through the revamping of the website, and through promoting collaboration with other Overseas Territory governments and non-governmental organisations. The next steps include turning the focus to terrestrial protected areas, which remain at present a bit of an unknown, as well as filling remaining data gaps.

Dr Brewin reported on marine aspects, mentioning, for example, the Marine

Protected Area review in 2018. An *ad-hoc* review group has been set up for this. He noted also the Government of SGSSI's aim to remain engaged with IAATO (International Association Antarctica Tour Operators), due to the contribution of tourism towards the Territory.

Following the Q&A session, Russell Gibb and Daniel McCurdy presented the Geometria project which, using laser-scanning and surveying, allows for improvements in the management and conservation planning of South Georgia's old whaling stations. The evening ended with an opportunity to have informal chats at the drinks reception at the Walkers of Whitehall pub.

All of the presentations can be found on the GSGSSI website: www.gov.gs/docsarchive/gsgssi/#tab-5

More information on the Geometria Project can be found via the following link: www.geometria.co.nz/

UKOTCF submissions to the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee

In July, the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee announced three Inquiries to which it was appropriate for UKOTCF to give evidence.

The first was on the future of the environment following the EU referendum. UKOTCF noted the many problems that would result for Gibraltar (the only UKOT within the EU) but also some effects on other UKOTs and CDs.

The second was on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For this, UKOTCF's recent collation of progress by the UKOTs/CDs on the Environment Charter commitments and towards the Aichi Targets was invaluable.

The third was on Marine Protected Areas. UKOTCF noted that the team had made sure that a range of approaches to marine conservation were being considered, not just no-take reserves, and indeed not just MPAs.

UKOTCF had circulated information to member and associate organisations so that they could supply input to UKOTCF's evidence or submit their own. UKOTCF's and other evidence can be viewed at www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environmental-audit-committee/inquiries/.

Help fund UKOTCF's work at no cost to yourself

Anyone who shops online at a wide range of UK suppliers can generate contributions to UKOTCF at no cost to themselves!

Easyfundraising.org.uk captures, at no cost to you, donations for a charity (in this case UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum) from many companies, equating typically to between 1% and 4% (or even, occasionally 10%).

To register for online use, the first thing to do is to go to easyfundraising.org.uk and register yourself as well as selecting UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum as your chosen charity. (By going in as easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/ukotcf, this gives a slightly quicker route.)

Once this is done, there are several ways to make sure that your purchases from these suppliers generate donations:

- 1) Start shopping at easyfundraising.org.uk, reaching the supplier's web-site through there. You will be surprised how many retailers are now using this site.
- 2) If using your PC you can download from that web-site a Donation-reminder program to install on your computer. Once installed, this recognises most suppliers (except a couple of the largest) which are part of the scheme when you reach their web-site through another route. (This can be useful if you are connecting from an email link or the result of a search for a product before you have chosen a supplier.) A pop-up appears inviting you to Activate Donation. Clicking this does just that for the purchase that you may be about to make. A side-effect is that this action sometimes knocks you from the page that you were on. However, it seems that (provided that you do not close the browser) the system notes that you have activated for this purchase – so, going back to the site the way you went in before Activating will take you onward without having to activate again in that session. (It is easier than it sounds!)
- 3) Download the app for either Apple or Android devices, to your mobile phone or tablet, and shop via the easyfundraising app. You may get used to shopping through the app, but the downside of this is that you will not get reminders as you do on your PC, if you have installed Donation-reminder.

It is all easy once you have had a try. In case of questions, Catherine Wensink (cwensink@ukotcf.org) would be delighted to advise.

Gibraltar Balloon Release

Gibraltar has been celebrating its National Day since 10th September 1992 and a mass balloon release has been the highlight of the National Day celebrations for many years. In April 2016, it was announced that the release of tens of thousands of red and white balloons would no longer be a part of the celebrations, and would be replaced by more environmentally sustainable practices. The decision comes after nearly a decade of campaigning by the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society and other local organisations to end the polluting practice. UKOTCF also lent its support to the campaign.

National Day balloon release in 2013. The release of 30,000 balloons will no longer be a part of National Day celebrations in Gibraltar. Photo: InfoGibraltar



Friends of the UK Overseas Territories

You can also subscribe online at www.ukotcf.org

Four good reasons to become a Friend:

1. You know how valuable and vulnerable are the environmental treasures held in the UK Overseas Territories.
2. You understand that the only way to guarantee their protection is to build local institutions and create environmental awareness in the countries where they are found.
3. You care about what is happening in the UK Overseas Territories and want to be kept up to date by regular copies of *Forum News* and the Forum's *Annual Report*.
4. You understand that the UK Overseas Territories are part of Britain, and therefore are not eligible for most international grant sources - but neither are they eligible for most domestic British ones, so help with fundraising is essential.

EITHER: I wish to become a Friend of the UK Overseas Territories at the annual support level: ☐ £15 ☐ £50 ☐ £100 ☐ £.....

OR: I wish my company to be a Corporate Friend of the UK Overseas Territories at annual level: ☐ £150 ☐ £500 ☐ £1,000 ☐ £.....

Name of individual Friend or contact person for Corporate Friend:

Company name of Corporate Friend (if relevant) :

Address:

Telephone: Fax: Email:

Please complete one of options 1 to 4 below. UK taxpayers are requested to complete section 5 also; this will allow UKOTCF to benefit from the tax you have paid, at no additional cost to you.

1. **UK cheque:** ☐ I enclose my UK cheque made out to UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum for this amount.

2. **Standing Order form:** To: The Manager, Bank Name: Branch Sort-code:

Bank address: Bank postcode:

Please pay: UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum at NatWest Bank, 9 Bank Court, Hemel Hempstead HP1 1FB Sort-code: 60-10-33
Account number 48226858 the sum of £..... now and a similar sum thereafter on this date annually.

My account number: Name:

Address: Postcode:

Signature: Date:

3. **Standing Order instructions sent:** I confirm that I have sent instructions directly to my bank for a standing order as per option 2 above. ☐

4. **Credit or charge card:** Please charge the amount indicated above to my card now *and thereafter on this date annually. [Delete the words after * if you wish to make only a single payment] (If you are based in another country, your card company will handle the exchange and include the equivalent in your own currency in your regular statement.)

☐ American Express, ☐ Delta, ☐ JCB, ☐ MasterCard, ☐ Solo, ☐ Switch/Maestro, ☐ Visa Expiry date: / (month/year)

Card number: Security number (3 digits, or 4 for Amex)

If used: Start date: / If used: Issue number: Signature: Date:

5. **UK taxpayers** are requested to sign the following section to allow UKOTCF to recover tax paid:

I want this charity to treat all donations that I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise as Gift Aid donations.

Signature: Date:

**Send to UKOTCF, Icknield Court, Back Street, Wendover, Bucks. HP22 6EB, UK;
if using options 3 or 4, you can fax to +44 2080 207217**

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum is a non-profit organisation registered as a limited company in England & Wales No 3216892 and a Registered Charity No 1058483. Registered Office: Icknield Court, Back Street, Wendover, Bucks. HP22 6EB *This blank form may be copied for others to use.*

Information and advice given on behalf of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum are given on the basis that no liability attaches to the Forum, its directors, officers or representatives in respect thereof. Views reported are not necessarily those of UKOTCF.