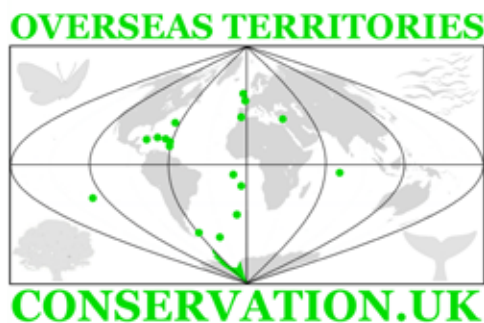


30-year
Special Issue



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FORUM NEWS 46

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• www.ukotcf.org

30 years of the Forum – what have we achieved?

What makes UKOTCF unique? We are the only organisation whose sole focus is nature and heritage conservation, environmental education and sustainable use across all UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) and Crown Dependencies (CDs). Whether or not we have current projects in territory, we maintain the close linkage across all territories, our member and associate organisations there, territory governments, and others in UK or elsewhere with involvement

in the territories. This gives UKOTCF unrivalled continuity of contacts, information resources, and corporate memory, reflected in its website-database, regional working groups, conferences for working conservationists and decision-makers, and links with Parliament. The Forum's huge voluntary network but small core team (a little smaller than we would prefer!) gives UKOTCF the ability to move quickly to address problems.

continued on next page



Male Montserrat oriole: this rare species, one of those found only on this small island, now appears to be stable in numbers. UKOTCF coordinated several organisations in starting emergency conservation work in Montserrat after 1997 serious volcanic impact.

Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski



Dr Rebecca Cairns-Wicks disappears into the growing Millennium gumwood forest (2004) as Ann Pienkowski videos some of the trees. UKOTCF provided help in the 1990s to get Rebecca (then Rowe) to St Helena, and has been supporting work on the island since before then.

Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

What's in a name?

Rather a lot of words in our case! There used to be even more. The original name of the Forum was "NGO Forum for the Dependent Territories." (Note that, at the time, the official name of the territories was "Dependent Territory" or "Crown Colony".) Early on, it became apparent that the name was inappropriate, not least because, from the start, several governmental bodies from both UK and the territories joined in. Various alternatives were canvassed in July 1993. "UK Dependent Territories Conservation Forum" was chosen in 1994, partly because it was "snappy" – norms were different 24 years ago!

By the late 1990s, the territories were becoming increasingly unhappy with the name "Dependent Territories", because many people took this to imply that they were financially dependent on UK (which most are not). It was clear that "Overseas Territories" was more favoured. The Forum anticipated the official change by some years to become "UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum" in 1998. (By the way, it is "UK", not "United Kingdom".)

For some years, Council has been struggling to find a shorter alternative, and has nearly opted on some occasions for alternatives – which, with hindsight, it is clear would not have worked. It has now decided that the legal name of the Forum will remain as it has been since 1998. However, we are adopting additionally, for many purposes, a shorter working name: "Overseas Territories Conservation", with "UK" optionally added after it. We do not plan to use an abbreviation based on this name, as "UKOTCF", which is well known, remains valid in view of our legal name and remains an alternative working name – as does "The Forum". We tried to drop the latter a few years ago, because of the many fora which exist. However, our network clearly likes it and kept using it; so we bow to our network!

As far as the web is concerned, www.OverseasTerritoriesConservation.uk [capitals optional] takes you to the same place as www.ukotcf.org – which we retain for those who like less typing.

You will see the latest evolution of our logo at the top of this page. With the deliberate similarity, we will not be purging instantly the uses of the previous version!

Although this unique focus has been a constant, the ways that UKOTCF has worked have evolved over time to meet changing circumstances, some of which came about because of earlier successes. The Forum has always been a network, bringing together a range of bodies and many experienced individuals to pool efforts on the huge challenges that we face. Initially, the membership consisted of UK bodies which contributed small parts of their resources to conservation work in UKOTs. Over time, and with UKOTCF success in helping in-territory civil society bodies to form and build up capacity, the emphasis in membership has moved predominantly to these territory NGOs (and, in some cases, official conservation bodies). This was done with approval of all. UKOTCF has also tended to start new initiatives and to fill gaps. If one of its member or associate bodies – or, indeed, another appropriate body with which the Forum makes contact – can be persuaded to take a lead in the area, UKOTCF has facilitated this. Thereby, UKOTCF's limited resources can be deployed to other high priorities, whether these be other urgent work in a particular territory or cross-territory issues. One current single-territory project is filling gaps, to make more useable earlier work by others, as well as undertaking complementary new work)

A colleague and I, when presenting alongside some other UK bodies, were struck recently by a presentation by the Director of the Thames Estuary Partnership. This body is remarkably similar to UKOTCF, except that it covers a very restricted area in a well-resourced country. She said: "We make it our business to know everything that is going on in the Thames". This is a mammoth task for them, but even more so for us in the UKOTs and CDs – but we are always listening to what is going on, and for views from the territories on their needs.

It is now 30 years since the Forum was created. The organisation developed as a result of discussions between several UK NGOs, none of which specialised in conservation of the UK Overseas Territories but all of which had recognised their outstanding importance in terms of UK's global responsibilities. Even if they had to compete for resources for work within Great Britain and Northern Ireland (GB&NI), they wished to pool efforts in regard to conservation in the UK's Overseas Territories, including to draw UK Government's attention to this international commitment.

A few words on terminology: UK Overseas Territories have not always been called this – and the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF) has not always been called that (see page 1). However, in this article, we will use these terms except when making direct quotes from earlier times.

So, what difference has been achieved by UKOTCF over these 30 years?

Bringing together partners

As well as being an organisation operating for conservation in the territories, UKOTCF has always worked also by bringing together other interested organisations as members, associates, or partners, to combine effort. The Forum recognised early that too much help at any one time could overwhelm small local organisations in a territory but that, if initiatives were to persist long-term, those local organisations must be fully involved in the planning and implementation of projects. Accordingly, a major role of the Forum over its first two decades was to coordinate activities between linked organisations to avoid duplication or excessive demands on local partners at any one time. This was achieved by several meetings a year as well as through informal communications. At that stage, the various organisations, having come together to form the Forum, were happy to share their plans and intentions and modify these in discussion. In the third decade, a more competitive approach seems to have developed

(possibly as a result of changes in UK Government's financial support mechanisms – see below), so that this function of the Forum is less used by some of the other active bodies. (This could be related to turnover of staff or it could be that, once links had been established with territories, there was less perceived need for a linking body.) As a result, some duplication, waste of funds and even, presumably unintended, interferences have occurred, in some cases between UK Government bodies and NGOs. This has been exacerbated by UK Government tending to cut itself off in later years from its former NGO partners, not necessarily intentionally (see below). Nevertheless, UKOTCF strives to restore a better degree of coordination (between NGOs, UKOT government bodies and, when they wish, UK Government bodies), so as to restore the earlier higher cost effectiveness of conservation actions in the UKOTs, and between these.

As part of its role as a facilitator, as well as a direct operator (always in partnership with local bodies), UKOTCF tries to encourage other conservation bodies, whether members or not, to undertake and, where appropriate, resource conservation actions desired by local partners. Some examples of this, from the 1990s, are UKOTCF's efforts, over several years, to secure funding for the Ascension Island seabird restoration programme. As a result, this was eventually resourced by FCO, with the implementation led by RSPB. Similarly, UKOTCF coordinated emergency discussions after the volcano in Montserrat moved into its seriously damaging phase. This resulted in work by Durrell, RSPB, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Montana State University and others, to try to save the mountain chicken frog, the Montserrat oriole and other threatened species. Moving into the present century, what developed into a Tristan da Cunha's major programme of study and conservation, especially of birds; its initiation was planned jointly by RSPB's then UKOT lead officer and UKOTCF. The successful joint work by RBG Kew and local partners on the saving of the Caicos pine, devastated by an introduced parasite, was triggered by the discovery of the problem by a UKOTCF fieldwork programme in 2005, involving some of these partners. There are many other examples.

Usually, these include also UKOT government partners and, in some of the best examples, UK government bodies. An enthusiastic official in FCO, alert to opportunities, was responsible for an effective doubling of FCO's spend on conservation in the UKOTs one year. This was done by securing money which suddenly became available (for no particular purpose) to initiate the Ascension Island seabird restoration project – one of the major and successful conservation projects in recent decades. Collaboration between UK Government officials, UKOTCF, RSPB and other NGOs was instrumental in preventing the novel,



Caicos pine-stand devastated by the non-native scale insect, introduced probably on Christmas trees imported without proper quarantine checks.

Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski



Masked booby incubating chick in 2002: the first seabird species to recolonise the main Ascension Island as feral cats were removed. UKOTCF had spent some years attempting to secure funding for this, eventually being successful through FCO. This allowed RSPB and what became Ascension Conservation Department to run this successful major project. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski



Spectacled petrel, one of five seabird species which (together with six land-bird species) breed only in the Tristan da Cunha group, this species only on Inaccessible Island. Around the turn of the millennia, UKOTCF worked with RSPB's representative and Tristan da Cunha conservation personnel, to design the first part of the major work by the latter two bodies in Tristan. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

and potentially destructive, proposal to turn the entire island of Sombrero [recently designated as Anguilla's first Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention] into one of the world's major rocket launching bases. This was proposed by a commercial firm with no previous experience of that activity. This may be the only case so far where UK's Outer Space Act has been deployed for conservation purposes!



Sombrero Ramsar Site, with breeding brown boobies, and the Sombrero black lizard (a species found only on this tiny island). Photos: Dr Mike Pienkowski

UKOTCF encourages partner organisations and others to fill needs beyond its own resources. UKOTCF itself tends both to trial new approaches and to fill gaps or undertake work to link work by others to make information and experience available for conservationists in territory, to apply to their conservation needs. The Forum played roles in identifying needs, and initiating and advising on some of the major recent and current projects, for example on dealing with invasive species and on establishing marine protected areas and related conservation measures. In a specific example in 2014, UKOTCF facilitated the US Waitt Initiative to partner with the Government of Montserrat, following a request from Montserrat Government to UKOTCF to find help in this area.

There have been setbacks too. In the first decade of the Forum's existence, WWF-UK was a major player in resourcing conservation work in the UKOTs, and looked to the Forum to guide on its funding programme for these. The loss of this funding source, in 2002, was an unintended effect of a well-intentioned change. The then incoming Chief Executive of WWF-UK was concerned at what appeared to be unfocused effort between the various national WWF organisations. He decided, therefore, to set an example by focusing the efforts of WWF-UK on the international programme agreed by the national WWF partners. Of course, relatively few nations have overseas territories, and so these were not highlighted. Despite interventions by well-informed staff, advisory committee members and WWF Council members, UK Overseas Territories were dropped from WWF-UK's priorities, and not restored.

Helping development of capacity in Territories

UKOTCF has long adopted an approach based on four main components:

1. helping local people to establish a local conservation body;
2. facilitating these bodies (and, in many cases, also the local official conservation body) to raise their capacity;
3. helping these bodies to: identify conservation needs, develop strategies and projects to address them (co-operatively with other territories where appropriate), seek funding, and manage the projects jointly where appropriate;
4. addressing the huge task of raising the awareness in the UK, particularly amongst decision-makers, of the global importance UKOT/CD wildlife and ecosystems, together with UK's shared responsibility for conserving these.

During the Forum's existence: (1) and (2) have been essentially achieved (as summarised below); and (3) is well advanced but with much more to do; while a small start has been made for (4).

As noted above, conservation measures effective in the long-term are impossible in inhabited territories without local "ownership". A key to this is a local civil society conservation body, and helping the establishment of these was one of the UKOTCF's main targets. This has been achieved, in that only two inhabited UKOTs lack a conservation NGO, and these are the two territories where the human population is so small that the entire community effectively acts as the NGO. In small communities, as is the case in most UKOTs, one or a very small number of people tend to have key roles. The loss or diversion of effort in such individuals has occasionally set back conservation work. A few such occasions led to UKOTCF being asked – and responding – to requests for further work on capacity development.

A second leg of UKOTCF's approach has been to help these local bodies to run themselves, by remote advice, visits to help build capacity and other collaborations. Often, this has been extended to helping the local governmental conservation bodies also as, in many cases, they were formerly – and some still are – quite small

in capacity. For several territories, UKOTCF's advice has been sought and given. Slightly to our surprise, this applies also in what is probably the most developed and independent UKOT, Bermuda. When UKOTCF held its conference there in 2003, a senior government official told UKOTCF's Chairman that the conservation departments within the government had just been reorganised, following the structure guided by one of UKOTCF's publications a few years earlier. On a wider scale, our UKOTCF's equivalent bodies in both France and Netherlands (both, at the time, the national IUCN committees) were less developed around the turn of the millennium than UKOTCF. They sought UKOTCF's advice, which was given, by inviting them to UKOTCF-organised conferences, through UKOTCF visiting them, and through many emails and phone calls. Both live in rather more supportive official funding environments than exist in Britain, and now have much more funding than UKOTCF. One example is the support received by the Netherlands body, the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA), which IUCN-NL helped develop. This receives support from the Dutch equivalent of the National Lottery, whereas the latter steadfastly refuses to support UKOT conservation. The irony is great, in that one of the arguments that DCNA used to secure this major support was, mistakenly, that UKOTs already received Lottery support from Britain!

The third leg of UKOTCF's approach has been: to help local partners develop a strategy for conservation in a territory (with potential collaboration between territories); assist in designing projects to address the strategic needs; help find human, financial and other resourcing for these; and jointly manage projects, both to implement these and further to assist building local capacity. Clearly, the last of these requires a great deal of management, with the intention that, over time, the need for outside assistance progressively reduces. Some further examples of these roles are indicated here. In terms of strategic planning, in the early 2000s, UKOTCF, with UK Government support, facilitated government departments, NGOs, local businesses and other stakeholders in the Turks and Caicos

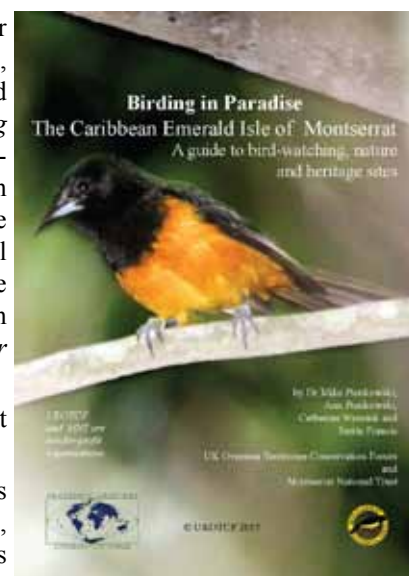
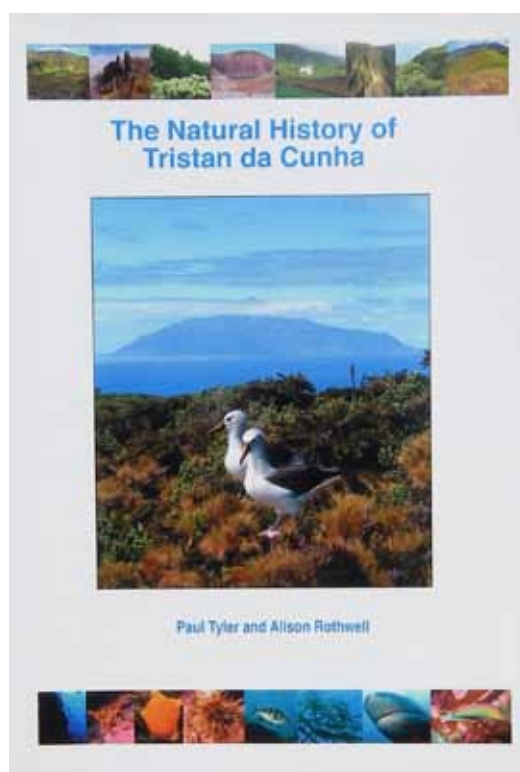


Some of the participants in the UKOTCF's Bermuda Conference 2003. These conferences are found extremely valuable by UKOT/CD conservationists in helping develop and undertake actions urgently needed for conservation. Photo: Government of Bermuda

Island while *en route*. UKOTCF visited also the Falkland Islands to pass on the experience of this approach, to benefit Falklands who were using an alternative form of strategy development. More widely, UKOTCF has given advice, mainly by remote means, to several other territories on strategic planning, both in the context of the Environment Charters and other frameworks.

To address the strategies, UKOTCF has worked at various times with many territories on project design, the seeking of resources and project management. These have included a wide range of projects, from quite small, for example:

- finding resources and publishing a guide (*pictured lower left*), mainly for the local school, to make available recent research information on the wildlife of Tristan da Cunha;
- finding resources for an extension to the museum on St Helena;
- assisting writing a small project proposal for Pitcairn;
- finding funding for the rainwater capture for Montserrat Botanic Gardens (funding coming from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Society);
- providing skilled, specialist volunteers for *e.g.* Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas, St Helena, and the Turks and Caicos Islands;
- finding resources for developing, writing, illustrating and publishing the *Birding in Paradise* guide-book series, which supports sustainable tourism and local awareness in the islands of TCI and in Montserrat (*the latter pictured right*);
- bird trail development in TCI;
- finding resources for and developing, with Turks & Caicos





Ann Pienkowski, UKOTCF's Honorary Environmental Education Co-ordinator (standing left), works with TCI teachers and students in teachers' workshops introducing the water conservation curriculum and course material, *Wonderful Water*, developed by UKOTCF with local teachers and Department of Environment, and requested by TCI Director of Education. Photos: Dr Mike Pienkowski

National Museum, the *Wise Water Use Garden*;

- working with partners to develop a proposal, which was awarded a grant from the British Library's Endangered Archives Project, for Montserrat to digitalise images and historic documents;
- a great deal of *pro bono* advice in response to requests from territory governments and NGOs, as well as UK Government (some of the latter very time-demanding, such as advice on projects and grants to FCO and DFID, and providing DCMS with a member of the Expert Panel on a new Tentative List of UK World Heritage Sites);

to quite large, e.g.

- developing, with local teachers, a curriculum and courses on the importance of water and wetlands in Turks & Caicos Islands (part-funded by UK Government via OTEP);
- coordinating an international team to study, propose, and help implement conservation measures and interpretive facilities in the Turks and Caicos Islands (part-funded by UK Government and other sources);
- developing a joint proposal which secured EU funding for the Cayman Islands, the British Virgin Islands, and the Turks and Caicos Islands for enhancing conservation and interpretation in protected areas;
- reviewing the existing and potential Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention across all UKOTs and CDs, in partnership with local governments and NGOs (part-funded by DEFRA);
- working with local partners in Montserrat and identifying external specialists to fill several gaps in conservation needs, including improving the integration of environment into



National Park visitor centres in BVI, funded through the MPASSE grant: (top) Sage Mountain NP; (below) Copper Mine NP. Photos: National Park Trust of the Virgin Islands. (See also p. 26).



physical planning, development of local volunteer initiatives to conserve local areas, making available in an easy online form important data from previous visiting scientists and establishing this as a continuing process, and facilitating agreement across all parties as to the preferred future for the southern two thirds of the island currently in a volcanic exclusion zone (see pp 20-21 in this issue and also *Forum News* 45);

- building up and maintaining (through continual communications, UKOTCF's regional working groups, and working conferences) the network of unpaid organisations and experts that provide much help and advice to conservation in the territories;
- three reviews of progress in meeting Environment Charter Commitments (and, in 2016, including also Aichi Targets and Sustainable Development Goals (the first review with part-funding from UK Government));
- providing technical and editing advice and additional material to documentary maker Stewart McPherson on his journey to *Britain's Treasure Islands*;

Front cover of review: masked boobies shelter from the sun under bush with noddy, Ducie Island, Pitcairn Group (Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski). The report has been much used for Parliamentary Select Committees and by UKOTs.



- resourcing, planning and implementing 6 conferences for conservation practitioners and decision-makers in the UKOTs (the first 5 with major funding contributions from UK Government).

UKOTCF also, throughout much of its existence, organised volunteer support to help train and build the capacity of local partners, or provide skills which they need only infrequently, so that it would be inefficient to train local personnel. In the early years, these tended to be personnel of UKOTCF or member organisations – and indeed this continues. Increasingly, however, UKOTCF has been able to recruit other volunteers for particular roles. Rather than volume volunteering, which several other organisations have made a success, UKOTCF is focused on tailoring volunteer resources to the particular needs identified in territory. Accordingly, our volunteers have tended to be trained or experienced specialists, although this could be in other supporting needs (in one case building renovation) and not necessarily in ecology or conservation. Our volunteers have been of all ages, but probably peaking in two categories: graduates of first or higher degrees, who want a short career break and/or additional experience; and persons much later in their career or retired, wishing to take a break and make good use of their experience and expertise at that stage. One highlight has been Felix Driver, who spent most of 2015 on St Helena working for the St Helena



UKOTCF Cayman Conference 2009 in session. Photo: UKOTCF

National Trust to the restore the forests, Another has been Duncan, Sally and Fraser Hutt, who have worked on several projects. Duncan is the Head of Land Management at the Northumberland Wildlife Trust. More recently, he has been using his skills in remote sensing and GIS to work with UKOTCF and Montserrat National Trust on some mapping work.

It is important too not to forget local volunteers and community action. One example is the involvement of school students in Grand Turk (TCI), in combination with the efforts of local conservationists and UKOTCF in achieving the first protected areas in parts of the internationally important salt-pans. Other examples are several cases of stopping or diverting proposed roads which would have damaged rare and sensitive ecosystems in Grand Cayman, and the local resistance to damaging built



The prize-winning project team from H.J. Robinson High School, Grand Turk, which studied the salt-pans, under the guidance of their teacher, Miss Cordelia Creese (right). Photo: Student team

development in BVI, which local people consider led to a change of government at a general election.

Aiding cross-territory co-operation

Several of these projects indicate the importance of cross-territory co-operation. This is important as it allows territories to benefit from the experience of others and identify common issues to address more cost-effectively, for example so that these may be addressed to UK Government. At the first of the highly successful conferences for working conservationists and decision-makers in the

UKOTs and CDs, the most senior conservation official in one of the UKOTs told UKOTCF's Chairman that never before had she been encouraged to speak with her opposite numbers from even the adjacent territory, and found the exercise immensely valuable. This has been echoed over the years by colleagues all levels. UKOTCF assisted FCO in organising a conference in London in 1999, and was already by that time organising the first of its own major conservation conferences, which was held in Gibraltar in 2000, followed by Bermuda in

2003, Jersey in 2006, Grand Cayman 2009 and Gibraltar again in 2015. These conferences are highly valued by workers in the territories, who have pointed out, in published feedback, that not only do they make conservation work more practicable and more cost-effective, but that some activities depending on collaboration would simply not happen without them. We recognise the major expense associated with the conferences, but the territory personnel stress that they represent excellent value for money; the conferences use huge amounts of volunteer involvement, but can happen only with an injection of funds.

An innovation at the 2015 Gibraltar conference was the first meeting of environmental ministers or equivalents of UKOT and CD governments. It was very encouraging to see the ministers "taking ownership" of these environmental issues. UKOTCF has been asked to organise the second such meeting, in late April 2017.

In addition to responding to frequent individual queries and requests for advice from the territories, UKOTCF organises regional working groups. These now cover all UKOTs and CDs, in the working groups for the Wider Caribbean, the Southern Oceans, and Europe Territories. These evolved from working groups addressing single or a few territories, as the benefits of interaction became apparent. The availability of free or cheap communications, first by email and then also by facilities such as Skype, has greatly improved the efficiency of these, and has allowed real-time participation for both UK and the territories. Each of the working groups now produces also a bulletin or newsletter, openly available on www.ukotcf.org. These add to the very long established *Forum News* (see pages 34-55), which has a much wider circulation, and is also freely available.

UKOTCF's website (supported by UK Government and other



UKOT/CD environment ministers and equivalents in session, chaired by Hon. Dr John Cortes, at their 1st Meeting, organised in conjunction with the UKOTCF-organised Gibraltar Conference 2015. Photo: HM Government of Gibraltar

funding) was a pioneer in the 1990s, being tailor-made to enable partners in the territories to enter information into the system. This is now a type of facility which is much more widely available via commercial software. UKOTCF has periodically revised its website with new features and updates as resources allow. Although originally designed mainly for partners in the Forum's member and associate organisations, it has become very widely used as one of most frequently accessed websites about UK Overseas Territories. One incoming Administrator, of one of the more remote territories, remarked that he secured more information about his new responsibility from www.ukotcf.org than from anywhere else, including official briefings. We know that the way this information is displayed in some parts of the extensive site needs updating, and are hoping to get to that as soon as resources allow. In addition to the main areas, the database modules provide information on critical sites of biological importance (and common issues across sites), conservation priorities, projects within the UKOTs/CDs, environmental education resources and other information on a wide variety of subjects. The database has been described as 'a valuable resource for conservation practitioners in the Overseas Territories' by the Institute of Zoology.

Raising awareness in the public and decision-makers

The fourth leg of UKOTCF's approach has been to try to raise awareness of the UKOTs/CDs and their huge importance globally for wildlife, as well as UK's shared responsibility for this. One aspect of this flows out of the wider use of the website, as noted above. This aspect has been enhanced by the inclusion of "virtual tours", whose development is in progress. These are effectively slide-shows about each of the territories, with links to videos and other material as well as to other sites. They were initially designed at the request of the territories so that they could get to know each other better. UKOTCF has also a developing presence on social media.

The raising of public awareness generally is a huge task, especially for an organisation with very limited resources. As well as providing articles, presentations and lectures in a range of places (e.g. universities, British Bird Fair, county wildlife groups, national societies), UKOTCF has, over many years, tried to interest television and radio networks in programmes about the fascinating and uniquely important wildlife of UK's Overseas Territories. Although it captured the interest of, for example, senior BBC producers, such people were never able to convince their organisations to embark on such programmes. A young independent producer, Stewart McPherson, aim to overcome this by self-funding a project, later recovering costs by sale to TV networks across the world. So, when he approached UKOTCF for help in a self-funded series of films about the wildlife of the UKOTs, we were pleased to help. This was despite it involving the provision of an enormous amount of unpaid time, by UKOTCF, as well as giving free access to many photographs, videos and information. Stewart's series, *Britain's Treasure Islands*, has now been shown to very large audiences twice on BBC4 in 2016-17 (the first time breaking a record for BBC4 of 700,000 viewers), as well as other networks around the world. UKOTCF helped Stewart also to secure resources to edit video not used in the main series into short documentaries freely accessible by anyone. These, together with other videos by Ann Pienkowski of UKOTCF, can be accessed at www.ukotcf.org. UKOTCF personnel edited not just scripts of videos, but also text and pictures of Stewart's book, providing also a great deal of additional material.

As we have done for many years, UKOTCF continues to put great effort into raising awareness of issues with UK decision-makers. This applies both to Parliament and the Government.



Mr Andrew Rosindell MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Overseas Territories, opens the joint reception with UKOTCF at the offices of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Westminster Hall, Houses of Parliament on 6 February 2013, and introduces Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF. Photo: Sir Richard Ground



UKOTCF personnel (from right: Dr Mike Pienkowski and Dr Chris Tydeman) give evidence to the Committee. (alongside RSPB personnel Clare Stringer and Jonathan Hall). Photos: Parliament TV. See also p 22.

In Parliament, UKOTCF has long tried to brief MPs and peers of any party taking any interest in UKOTs and CDs, and this seems to have raised awareness. For example, only a few years ago, mentioning UK Overseas Territories to a UK Government minister – even, at times, those with responsibilities for these – would often result in a blank look. Nowadays, many ministers have awareness of the territories, even if there is still some way to go in securing their enthusiastic support for the environment, despite this being a hugely important international responsibility of the UK. As part of this exercise, UKOTCF has involved itself with All-Party Parliamentary Groups, both on the territories and, when it is active, on biodiversity. The relationship with select committees has been very productive, and we have enjoyed the cross-party cooperative and positive approach that many of these have adopted in recent years in examining the accountability of UK Government. UKOTCF has frequently given evidence to several, including to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (FCO). Despite its name, FCO, which FAC monitors, has the policy lead in respect of UK Overseas Territories). We have given evidence particularly to the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee (EAC). In 2009, UKOTCF facilitated the involvement of the FAC at the Cayman Conference to provide a critical view of how Select Committees can influence policy. In 2015, UKOTCF hosted an event at Gibraltar House to launch the EAC's second report on *Sustainability in the UKOTs*. While UKOTCF aims to submit responses to inquiries which impact on the UKOTs, it also encourages members and associate organisations to do so, so that a direct voice is heard.



Left: House of Commons EAC Chair (Mrs Joan Walley MP) addresses the UKOTCF-organised workshop, flanked by (on her left) Rt Hon Mrs Caroline Spelman MP and (on her right) Second Clerk (Mr Nick Beech). Across the table from her (right picture) is Dr Matthew Offord MP, Photos: Ann Pienkowski

Relations with UK Government

From the start, the Forum had regular meetings with FCO, which has the policy lead on UKOTs. During the 1990s and into the early 2000s, FCO and UKOTCF (linking with its partner organisations) were the main UK bodies working directly with the territories. They jointly identified project needs and ways to address them. With officials in FCO keen to pursue this, it was not unusual for UKOTCF to receive two phone calls a day from FCO seeking their advice and comments. Those from a particularly keen official, working late in the evening so he could speak to other time zones, were at times slightly less welcome!

By the mid-1990s, the more formal aspects of liaison had evolved into six-monthly meetings, jointly chaired by UKOTCF and FCO. These involved a wide range of NGOs, government departments, and representatives in UK of UKOT governments. This was found to be particularly effective, both in spotting opportunities for combining effort and in removing confusions – even those between Government departments. It was also noted that these well-prepared and well-run meetings prevented the need for a great number of bilateral meetings. The atmosphere was very positive and helpful – and, in 2000, FCO even included the chance to see one of these meetings in session as part of one of its open days for the public. In the following years, FCO and UKOTCF succeeded in interesting also other government departments, including DFID, MOD, DEFRA and its agency JNCC, as well as occasionally other departments, to participate. An unfortunate side-effect, of this increased interest by other departments, was that the Government departments increasingly felt the need for more time to speak with each other, and this began to displace the earlier strong cooperation with UKOTCF and other NGOs. With personnel changes and severe cuts to its small environmental team, down to one junior official, FCO lost interest in these meetings. They first found reasons for them to be cancelled, then made them less effective, and finally ended them unilaterally in 2008. Feedback from UKOTs placed importance on this continual contact with FCO, and so UKOTCF continues to try and build

relationships with it. A few attempts in later years to revive useful wide liaison have not been effective. This was because later UK Government officials (never having experienced the highly effective earlier ones) felt a need to keep control of the agenda, timing, and chairing – rather than adopting the earlier shared approach, which had been effective for some 20 years. This is not to say that some of these later officials have not been keen to collaborate on more specific points.

Some of the ways such reduction in communications lead to inefficiencies and waste of already limited resources can be illustrated by the history of implementation of the Environment Charters, the agreements between UK Government and individual overseas territories (using a fairly standard text across the Charters). At some stages in this exercise, there was superb and effective cooperation between UK Government and NGOs (represented by UKOTCF) – but later failures in UK Government corporate memory led to duplication and other inefficiencies.

In the late 1990s, the then new UK Government had suddenly realised that it had been rather neglecting UK Overseas Territories. This came about from 1997, when Hong Kong transferred from a UK Overseas Territory to a special region of China. At the time, UK national newspapers carried the incorrect headline “UK loses last colony.” Montserrat’s volcanic eruption promptly reminded that there are in fact 16 other overseas territories – the UK press slowly woke up to the fact that this Caribbean island is one of UK’s Caribbean islands.

To its credit, within about a year, UK Government recognised and acknowledged that it had made a mess of handling the Montserrat emergency. As part of this, at a conference in London in 1998, it announced that it was developing a White Paper on the future relationship between UK and its Overseas Territories. This announcement and follow-up made no mention of the environment, and an enquiry from UKOTCF to the then Foreign Secretary, Rt Hon. Robin Cook MP, elicited the reply that the White Paper would not be addressing “peripheral matters”. UKOTCF, in correspondence to the Foreign Secretary, drew attention to the manifesto on which the new Government had been elected the previous year. Following this, the



One of the regular 6-monthly meetings between the UKOTCF network, UK Government Departments, and UK representatives of UKOT governments, jointly chaired (at far end) by UKOTCF Chairman and a senior FCO official. On this occasion, it was in the FCO’s prime room in the Locarno Suite, and viewable through windows as part of an FCO open day. Photo: UKOTCF

Foreign Secretary and the staff admirably and rapidly adjusted their position to include a chapter on the environment. The head of the relevant FCO department rapidly grabbed an available senior official interested in the environment and islands to draft this chapter. UKOTCF and this official soon identified the great value in cooperative working. UKOTCF assisted FCO to organise a conference of UKOTs in London in 1999 to take the ideas forward. UKOTCF recognised that the major challenge to address was that UK Government is the body which entered international agreements but that, in the territories, local administrations are the ones which prepare laws and implement matters. The Forum suggested a checklist approach to square the circle. Over the next two years, this collaboration continued, and many aspects of the resulting Environment Charters reflect recommendations made and published a little earlier by UKOTCF. Similar Charters were signed as agreements between UK Government and most UKOT Governments, mainly in late September 2001. One other UKOT government later committed unilaterally to a very similar agreement.

In 2002 to 2003, UK Government supported UKOTCF to facilitate the development of a strategy for implementing the Environment Charter (a requirement of the Charters) amongst the stakeholders in an example territory. Turks and Caicos Islands later volunteered to fulfil this role. The resulting strategy was accepted by the TCI Government in early 2004 (although wider and now well-known political actions in TCI later impeded progress). As noted above, UKOTCF then met requests from St Helena, Ascension, the Falkland Islands and others to apply the lessons learnt and facilitate the development of similar or equivalent strategies. FCO then enquired as to whether assistance with strategy development would be required for each UKOT, and was told that, apart from a few which had effectively developed a strategy by other means, that would be desirable. Around this time, restructuring within FCO weakened their environmental staffing, and effectively reduced interest in the Charters and their implementation. Conservationists in the territories were concerned about this, because the Environment Charters reflect in a simple manner the Commitments made by UK Government, with the approval of UKOT governments, under international agreements. They were therefore a clear framework against which conservation actions could be assessed and the need for them stressed.

By 2009, DEFRA and its agency JNCC had assumed some responsibility for supporting environmental conservation in the UKOTs, and several cycles of staff changes had taken place in FCO. The UK Government bodies commenced a programme of “mainstreaming” exercises in several UKOTs to integrate environmental conservation into other sectors. Examination of these exercises (when parts of them later became available to NGOs) revealed that they had remarkable similarities to the UKOTCF-facilitated development of strategies to implement

the Environment Charters. Unfortunately, the leaders of the new programme had not consulted UKOTCF. This was perhaps because DEFRA and JNCC had had virtually no role in UKOT conservation just a few years earlier and therefore had limited awareness of earlier work. They chose also to work and communicate only with UKOT government departments, and not with UKOT NGOs or their linking body, UKOTCF. As UKOTCF had done for the previous 20 years. Thus they were unaware, at first, of the exercises in developing strategies to implement the Environment Charters. In some cases, they seemed unaware even of the Charters themselves. This is despite both the Charters and the strategy exercise being publicly available on the UKOTCF website. This was not a cost-effective way to work. Similarly, the 2012 White Paper on UKOTs made no mention of Environment Charters, despite indicating that it was carrying forward the work of the 1999 White Paper, of which Environment Charters were one of the key products. Fortunately, after reminders from Parliamentary Select Committees, NGOs and UKOTs, UK Government has reaffirmed its commitment to Environment Charters.

It may have been, at times, a UKOTCF failing in that we did not always ensure that equal credit was publicised as having been between NGOs, Government Departments and UKOTCF. This was because it was a founding practice that territory partners should take the highest profile of the credit. However, this means that it was easy to overlook UKOTCF efforts when often they were so crucial in instigating the work and getting it off the ground, as well as co-managing it in many cases. Also, with the passage of time, it becomes easy to say that UKOTCF had no involvement at all – and we have heard that from some partner organisations in UK and the territories, expressed with genuine sincerity, simply because current personnel of those bodies were never told of the full story.

This may be a contributory reason for UKOTCF being ignored at times by some (in a few cases, senior) UK Government officials, especially when handovers are known to be inadequately resourced. We are pleased that, since DEFRA became involved in this area about a decade ago, contacts have been building up. This is despite current overload due to DEFRA bearing one of the largest Brexit loads, while managing simultaneous staff cuts. Over the first two decades of the Forum, we worked closely with FCO. For most of that, we were the only two UK bodies coordinating in this area. Shortly after FCO ended almost all its environmental staffing (see above), and new staff took over (distant) responsibility, FCO tried to side-line UKOTCF (as later confirmed by Freedom of Information releases to another body) – even though it was the body chosen by territory organisations. We have strived to restore good relations, with some successes, and we look forward to moving towards the earlier warm and productive relationship.

As noted above, monitoring the progress on the Environment Charters Commitments is important. This was recognised early on, when both UK Government (FCO and DFID) and the UKOTs asked UKOTCF to collate information from the territories, and report on progress. UKOTCF were well placed to do this as they were not a party to the Charters, but were an organisation well informed about them and very interested in encouraging their use. UK Government provided a contribution to the costs of this, and a Minister referred to this forthcoming report when answering a question from a Parliamentary select committee. UKOTCF consulted widely



St Helena stakeholders develop a strategy to implement their Environment Charter, facilitated by Mike and Ann Pienkowski (UKOTCF) and Isabel Peters (St Helena Government). Photo: Ann Pienkowski

on the scheme for assessing progress, receiving general approval of this. This resulted in the first progress report in 2007. UKOTCF made good use of the Jersey conference in 2006 as part of the consultation process. Although funding from UK Government had by then ended, UKOTCF updated this review in 2009, this time depending partly on consultations at the Cayman Conference 2009. UKOTCF also made use of the Gibraltar conference in 2015, by undertaking a third review of progress in that year. It took advantage of earlier experience to make the collation of information even less taxing on the overworked personnel in territories, and to simplify the presentation of results. Further improvements were to incorporate also progress against the internationally agreed Aichi Targets and, to some extent and at the request of UK Government, the new Sustainable Development Goals. The latter had been agreed only during the collation and consultation exercise. Even though the Crown Dependencies and a couple of UKOTs do not have Environment Charters, they are subject to the same range of international environmental agreements. Therefore, UKOTCF reviews (available at www.ukotcf.org/charters/progress.cfm) include all the UKOTs and CDs. The reviews were soon being used to help direct future effort.

International Conventions

The Environment Charters are, as explained earlier, manifestations of the international commitments of UK and its Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. Indeed, one of the Commitments in the Charters is to help and encourage territories to join in UK's ratifications. UKOTCF has taken a lead in encouraging this, usually in partnership with UK Government. One glitch in this was when, in the first decade of this millennium, UK Government appeared to lose interest in the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. It stopped mentioning it alongside other conventions, for example in relation to its conservation grant programmes. It is not clear why this happened. One possibility is that, as most potential Ramsar Sites within Great Britain and Northern Ireland had by then been designated and UK Government was focusing on EU designations in the *Natura 2000* series, its domestic focus had caused it to overlook the major designation work required for its even more important Overseas Territories. Another possibility is that officials confused not having the resource themselves to pursue matters with (the erroneous) idea that these matters were not important.

In the early years of its existence, the Forum played a key role in encouraging all the UKOTs and CDs which had not yet joined UK's ratification of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands to do so. Continuing through the 1990s and into the new century, UKOTCF also spoke with decision-makers in several territories to explain the Convention to them, resulting in several territories designating

their first, and in some cases additional, Wetlands of International Importance. This is something each country is required to do when joining the Convention. Working partly under contract with DEFRA, UKOTCF in 2005 reviewed, in consultation with the territories, the actual and potential Wetlands of International Importance in the UKOTs and CDs. After this contract, UKOTCF, from its own resources, encouraged and helped individual territories to carry sites through to designation and beyond. During this period, a further 10 Wetlands of International Importance in the UKOTs/CDs were designated under the Ramsar Convention, making the total 25, with more being considered. UKOTCF has also filled in lots of gaps in reporting to the Ramsar Conferences of the Parties (and for those of some other Conventions) when asked by UK Government to do so. This has been done on an unpaid basis or informal arrangement, instead relying on long standing working relationships with some of those working on wetland issues and those in JNCC responsible for gathering information for these reports.

In the late 1990s, UKOTCF and FCO shared a common interest in involving UKOT personnel in the workings of international environment conventions. At the request of FCO, UKOTCF investigated the availabilities and possibilities of UKOT presence at the Ramsar Convention Conference of the Parties in Costa Rica in 1999. As a result, UKOTCF was able to facilitate participation, in both the UK governmental and the UK NGO delegations, from the British Virgin Islands. Following this, UK Government, on several occasions, was able to include one or more UKOT/CD personnel within its official delegation, for meetings of various environmental conventions. It is slightly concerning to see that, after 17 years of such practices, there have been occasions when UK Government has become less enthusiastic at the inclusion of UKOT personnel. It was particularly striking that, in 2016, UK Government refused a request from a UKOT Minister, or his technical staff, to join in the UK's delegation to the conference of the parties to the climate change convention in Marrakech, Morocco. This Minister who happened also to be well qualified in the subject from his prior career.

The efforts of UKOTCF, and others, to encourage territories to join UK's ratification of other environmental conventions mean that currently all eligible territories are included in UK's ratification of the Ramsar Convention. Only two eligible territories are not included in UK's ratification of CITES, and only one is not include in the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species. UKOTCF is also working closely with UK Government to encourage sign up to the Convention on Biological Diversity. As a result, 10 of the 21 entities which make up the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies are now included in UK's ratification, and several others are considering joining. UKOTCF and UK Government jointly provided a workshop on this at the UKOTCF/Gibraltar Government conference for UKOTs in 2015.

However, UK Government has been less than enthusiastic in facilitating implementation of Gibraltar's wish to join regional environmental agreements allowing co-operation with neighbouring countries. These include but are not limited to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution. The need for these will become even greater when the EU membership ends because, at present, the EU membership of both Spain and Gibraltar provides a mechanism to keep the Spanish central government's excesses in check. The ability to use this route will be lost when UK leaves the EU, taking Gibraltar (against the latter's overwhelming wishes) with it. The central Government of Spain maintains a territorial claim to Gibraltar, and pursues this by causing extra inconvenience and difficulties, despite the resistance to this by, and inconvenience



Gannet colony on Les Etacs, in Alderney's Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention, designated during UKOTCF's review and with UKOTCF assistance. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski



Archaeological excavations in Gorham's Cave. Photo: J.C.Finlayson, Gibraltar Museum

caused also to, many of its own citizens. The problems caused in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters (BGTW) are even greater, in that Spain does not recognise these at all. This recently resulted in Gibraltar deleting, from the boundaries of its new World Heritage Site at

Gorham's Cave, a strip of coastal waters which would logically have been included, so as to prevent an objection from Spain blocking the whole designation. In the sea, the incoming Government of Gibraltar wished to address the problems of illegal fishing in its waters, promoted by the national Government in Spain, but wished this to be based on sound study. Accordingly, it commissioned, via UKOTCF, an independent review. This involved Spanish specialists, but met with some resistance from UK Government personnel. HM Government of Gibraltar, despite some external pressures, subsequently enacted the regulations that this review recommended.

Furthermore, much EU conservation legislation is based on the Council of Europe's Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979). UK is party to this but UK Government makes little mention nowadays, indicating it "meets its obligations under the Convention by means of Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds (the Birds Directive) and Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (the Habitats Directive)". UK's ratification includes the Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas, the Isle of Man and Jersey. As long ago as 1996, in *UK Dependent Territories: a Conservation Review* (part-funded by UK Government's Darwin Initiative; *cover below*), UKOTCF (at the request of Gibraltar partners) called on the UK Government to include Gibraltar in its ratification of the Bern

Convention and assist in its implementation. With Brexit, this becomes more urgent, but has not yet been done. However, it was pleasing to see that FCO Minister for the Overseas Territories, Rt Hon. Baroness Anelay, recognised the need to support them in recent oral evidence to the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee. This was following evidence sessions given a little earlier by UKOTCF and by HM Government of Gibraltar.



Local school children help with the clearing of invasive species on Saltus Island, Bermuda, in 2003, supported by an OTEP grant, while UK Government still supported environmental education projects.

Photo: Bermuda National Trust

Corporate memories

A continual problem, alluded to already, has been lack of continuity and corporate memory in government institutions. This results from Government (in contrast to best business practice) usually not allowing handover periods between post-fillers, and even leaving long gaps while posts are vacant. At times, UK Government officials, especially in FCO, have invited UKOTCF to provide *pro bono* sessions to update new personnel, and UKOTCF has always met these requests. This is valued both by the post-holders and by UKOTs, as seen in conference feedback.

At times, relationships have been excellent. This was the case in the late 1990s, while the late Rt Hon. Robin Cook MP was Foreign Secretary and some particularly enthusiastic and committed officials were dealing with UKOTs in FCO. At other times, political leadership has been less inclined to listen and adjust its position in the light of evidence and reasoned argument, while officials have been under-resourced and overworked. This is the case at present, with the current and planned diversion of major effort into Britain's exit from the EU, at the same time as staffing cuts. However, this is not related just to the present time, when clearly dealing with Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies are suffering badly from neglect, through no fault of the officials concerned, who have simply been given too many other tasks to do at a time of declining resources. Other important issues, such as child safeguarding and financial regulations, have also become hot topics. However, environment matters should not take a back seat to other issues, as they underpin fair and just societies as well as economic security. Looking after environment should not be mistaken as a luxury only for when times are good.

We described earlier the success in increasing interest in other government departments and agencies in the Overseas Territories achieved by UKOTCF and FCO. We noted also the following decline in government/NGO collaboration, probably because officials had less time for this, even though it had been shown to increase efficiency (something forgotten because of lack of corporate memory). These are, of course, not criticisms of sometimes excellent officials, but of the poor approach to human resources and lack of resources overall in UK Government Departments. Even when interest in UKOT environmental matters has spread to other departments, there are dangers. For example, in the first years of the 2000s, DFID was taking an increased and valuable interest in sustainability and environmental matters in the UKOTs. Whilst that part of DFID's budget going to Official

Development Assistance (ODA) countries is protected as a proportion of UK's GDP, other parts are not. (ODA countries are essentially the world's poorest; UK and other countries target a proportion of GDP as aid to these countries, but the attempt to reach this target may have a negative effect on those outside the group (including most UKOTs). Although the reasonable aid to UKOTs is, by law, DFID's first priority, the fact that there is no simple international target for these (not surprisingly, as few countries have overseas territories) means that they easily lose out to UK's attempts to meet the high-profile ODA target.)

As a consequence, staff cuts in DFID mean that a smaller number of staff are trying to manage the same amount of funding. With the cuts, in 2009, DFID reduced its previously full-time person concerned with environmental matters in the UKOTs (including the environmental impact of projects it funded) to half a post and, shortly afterwards, abandoned it altogether. This was despite criticism from House of Commons select committees. The situation was exacerbated when, a few years earlier, looking for a DFID department to move out from London to East Kilbride (near Glasgow), DFID chose the Overseas Territories Department. This resulted in a total turnover of staff in that Department. Also, it increased difficulty in liaising between that department and other government departments (particularly FCO and DEFRA), and NGOs. Recently, it has become apparent to investment consultants working for banks that, at least in one particular UKOT where it is heavily involved, DFID is now so removed from consideration of the environment, in contrast to both intergovernmental and commercial development investment banks (and DFID's earlier approach), that the advice it gives is almost guaranteed to result in the territories that it advises failing to secure such investment. This is because by far the majority of governmental and commercial investment institutions require environmental considerations to be integrated fully in proposals from the start. The environment did not feature in DFID's main presentations.

UK Government financial contributions to UKOT conservation

In terms of the funding that UK Government makes available to conservation in the UKOTs, UKOTCF pointed out in August 2005 (*Forum News* 27) that the British Government's spending figures indicated that it valued conservation of globally important biodiversity in UK Overseas Territories 5000 times less important than it valued the equivalent in Great Britain. This was later amplified by other NGOs and even by the UK Government's statutory adviser, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC).

The most fundamental problem in resourcing conservation work in UKOTs is that they cannot benefit from international funding bodies which support conservation in small independent states. These resemble the UKOTs in many respects. Although bodies such as the Global Environment Facility and others received major funding from UK Government, UKOTs are not eligible for funding from these sources. This is because these international bodies classify the UKOTs as what they legally are: parts of the sovereign territory of well-developed UK. The international bodies' rules are based on the concept that the "parent" state will look after the needs of its overseas territories. Whilst this is largely true for the territories of Denmark, France, the Netherlands and the USA, it is not the case for UK.

It was partly as a compensation for this, at least for small projects, that FCO's Environment Fund for Overseas Territories (EFOT) was set up in 1999. This was, as part of the results of the White Paper of that year, and to support the Environment Charters, being negotiated also as a result of the White Paper. The philosophy of EFOT was that FCO, the UKOTCF network and the UKOTs

were a team with a shared responsibility for, or commitment to, conservation in the UKOTs. Thus help was available from FCO and/or UKOTCF to prepare proposals and implement the work. The Charters, signed in September 2001, include UK Government's Commitment 8: "Use the existing Environment Fund for the Overseas Territories, and promote access to other sources of public funding, for projects of lasting benefit to the Territory's environment." Less than a year after this agreement, FCO unilaterally cancelled this fund, having apparently overlooked the signed commitment (which it had itself drafted). The outcry from UKOTs and NGOs, especially at UKOTCF's Bermuda Conference 2003 (at which a strong and senior FCO team were present), was so clear that FCO temporarily restored the fund for that year, albeit with a less appropriate structure. The FCO staff (at Department Head and below) who worked hard to reverse this error, at a higher level, are to be commended.

After a 5-year delay from the original intention, but through the efforts of at least one key officer coming into post with experience and understanding of the subject, DFID joined in with FCO. This created the Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) in 2004. OTEP had a more formal structure, so that UKOTs became applicants and the OTEP departments just a funding body. Rather than sharing the problems and responsibility with them, the attitude was more that the territories were supplicants for UK aid. This put UKOTCF and its British partner organisations into a difficult position, as DFID/FCO would never clarify the rules as to what UKOTCF could do/not do to help applicants. This meant that they usually took varying retrospective positions. With time and changing FCO and DFID personnel (and later DEFRA & JNCC ones as these bodies became involved), this situation steadily became worse, with a decreasing proportion of advisory panels consisting of NGO participants and of those with experience of UKOT issues and project management.

In 2009, following committed preparatory work by the then head of the relevant DEFRA unit, a DEFRA minister at UKOTCF's Cayman conference brought the good news that part of the Darwin Initiative budget would be ear-marked for UKOT projects. However, this was followed, within months, by such a severe cut in DEFRA's overall budget that it had to seek funding from other government departments, particularly DFID. This resulted in a changing of the nature of funding so that most UKOTs were excluded from accessing most of the fund.

In 2012, apparently at the surprise of its funding partner DFID, and with no consultation with NGOs or UKOTs, FCO cancelled OTEP without notice. FCO officials said that this was not due to shortage of funds. (The funds for that year were later allocated by FCO in a closed process with no open call or listing of grants).

With the incorporation of grants into the Darwin Initiative in 2012, there remained very few members of the advisory panel closely familiar with current UKOT issues or involved with most of the on-the-ground work in UKOT conservation. It therefore became very much a them-and-us exercise. This may have been exacerbated in that the Darwin Initiative tends to have quite an academic panel, used to working in highly competitive research council situations, rather than the collaborative conservation attitude which prevailed under EFOT and, to some extent, the earlier stages of OTEP.

With the exception of the limited-term – and very welcome – current major funding, in support of certain marine protected areas, that was announced in 2016, UK Government's basic fund for grants to support conservation in the UKOTs has increased only marginally, if at all, since the Parliamentary Select Committees' comments in 2008, standing at about £2 million pa across all UK Overseas Territories .



The new suite of extensive marine protected areas will help species like the gray reef shark, here patrolling over the coral reef off Ducie Island, Pitcairn. Good shark populations are a good indicator of increasingly rare little-disturbed ecosystems. Photo: Capt. Paul Green

However, this is now spread more thinly, with its remit being stretched much more widely than the earlier remit of biodiversity conservation. An increased emphasis on uninhabited territories (welcome in itself, but without a proportionate increase in resources) means that inhabited territories are looking at a smaller share. Furthermore, in the earlier years of the availability of these funds (from about 1999), there was an expectation that the fund would not normally fund HMG's own departments and agencies. However, this expectation has gradually been eroded, thereby reducing the amount going via NGO umbrella bodies. For example, the average annual UK Government support to conservation in the territories going via UKOTCF was £130,000 in the period 1999 to 2008, £ 30,400 in 2009-2011 (77% less than in the first period), and £20,700 in the period 2012-2016 (84% less than in the first period). The annual figures are shown below.

The figures are without adjustment for inflation, which would increase the real decline. Also, because of ever more elaborate application and reporting requirements (see below), funds are increasingly inaccessible to smaller UKOT government conservation departments and most NGOs based in the Territories with low capacity. The general tendency for decreasing funding via NGOs deploying skilled volunteers has led to reduced ability to deploy this unpaid resource.

It is important that UK Government sets high standards for research work. However, when this is not matched to the needs of the organisations tasked with protecting the environment in territory, or if the chance of success is so low in relation to the time

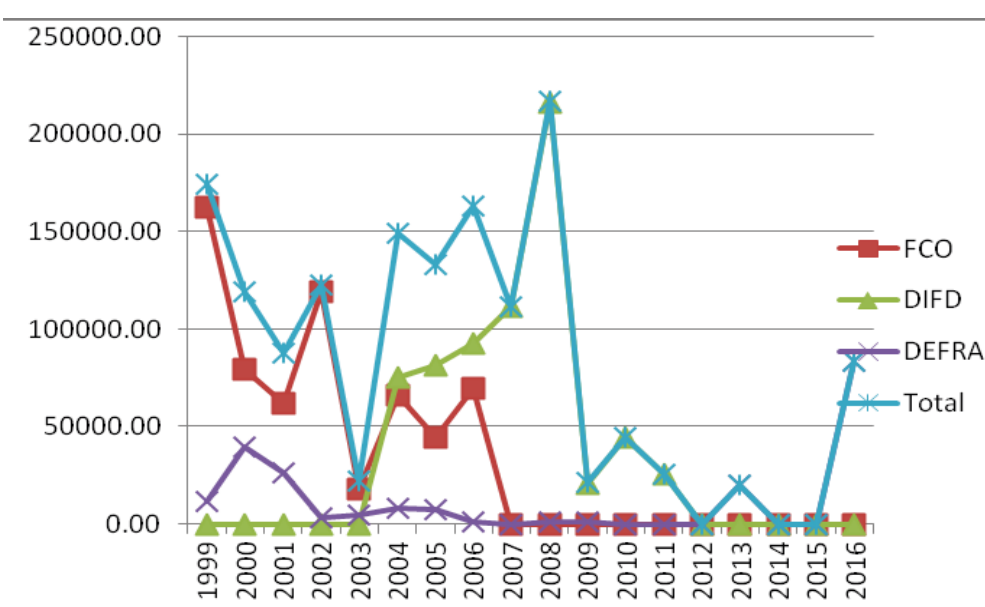
taken to write grant proposals, then the fund moves further away from the actual needs, and towards what the scientific experts with less relevant experience think appropriate to fund. (This is not to say that Darwin Plus is not funding some excellent work and is highly valued by some conservation practitioners in the UKOTs.)

Whilst the Darwin Initiative has provided some excellent approaches for grants for work in foreign countries (where UK Government has no responsibility other than as a good world player), it is not an appropriate model for UKOTs, where UK Government has a shared responsibility. The Darwin Initiative decisions are not strongly linked to strategy and are reactive, rather than living in a framework of shared priorities. JNCC organised a workshop in 2013 to review progress in the UK Government's 2010 "Biodiversity Strategy" but found it difficult to take on board the suggestions of UKOTs and NGOs for more rational priorities. There were some attempts by concerned officers within DEFRA, in 2014, to address UKOT conservation priorities but this met internal difficulties. Also in 2014, JNCC and NGOs explored developing a more strategic approach for deployment of metropolitan UK resources in support of UKOT conservation (taking full account of each UKOT's internal priorities. This ran into difficulties because UK Government Departments found difficulty in engaging.

EFOT and early OTEP were small-project funds. They made possible, usually by combining with voluntary work, a great deal of highly cost-effective progress on small issues or piloting work which could beneficially be applied on a larger scale to address major conservation issues. There is a need too for funding for such medium-sized and/or longer duration projects. These exist in Britain and many parts of the world (but less so for UK Overseas Territories) for species-recovery programmes, ecosystem restoration, organisational capacity development etc. This need was recognised too in HMG's 2009 *UKOTs Biodiversity Strategy*. However, whilst such larger projects (but usually not ones longer than 2 years' duration) are now possible, they are resourced from the same total funding previously limited to small projects. Inevitably, this will mean fewer small projects, despite their excellent track record. Because of the severe competing demands on their own time, officials tend not to like small grants, because of the project handling time. (Some umbrella NGOs are more prepared to devote time to managing small grants, because they know this to be a means to mobilise valuable voluntary effort to achieve conservation aims.) It is true that JNCC, the HMG agency, still handles some small grants for research and training. However, these are not available to NGOs, the very bodies that

made most cost-effective use of them in the past because of the large skilled volunteer complementary contribution that they enabled.

The number of small grants is clearly decreasing. The following tabulation (on the next page) shows the number of grants, in a range of size-classes, awarded for environmental projects from 2004 to 2016. The grants from 2004 to 2011 were by the FCO/DFID Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP). (Data are not available for the 2005 round.) There was no invitation for bids for a round in 2012, and the funds are thought to have been used for fairly large projects decided by a non-bidding and unpublished process. 2013 was the first round of awards by Darwin Plus.



Grants awarded in:	Number of grants awarded in the size ranges (£k)					
	<25	25-75	75-125	125-175	175-225	>225
2004	7	4	6	1	0	1
2006	5	8	1	0	0	0
2007	6	22	4	0	0	0
2008	3	3	5	0	0	0
2009	2	7	6	0	0	0
2010	1	7	3	2	1	0
2011	2	7	2	4	1	1
2012	0	0	0	0	0	0
2013	2	2	4	2	2	2
2014	1	2	4	2	3	2
2015	0	4	3	1	1	3
2016	0	1	6	1	3	3
2017	1	0	1	1	3	10

It is evident that there has been a decline over the years in grants of <£25k & £25k-75k, with very few being made by Darwin Plus. Darwin Plus is clearly helping in several areas, but there may be a missed opportunity to facilitate a raising of capacity across the UKOTs through NGOs. This was evident through the presentations at the recent UKOTs/CDs conference in 2015.

What difference has been made?

So, returning to our original question: what difference has the Forum made over the past 30 years? Although there is inevitably a degree of setbacks as well as progress, we can see clear progress in respect of some areas. Whilst, as mentioned above, it is impossible in most cases to be sure of the causes, there is strong evidence of major contributions from UKOTCF.

A clear case is the increased capacity of most of the territory civil society conservation bodies – and in many cases that of the territory government's conservation body also.

A second area of progress is the further raising of the capacities and overall cost-effectiveness of these bodies, by facilitating a much greater degree of cooperation and collaboration than occurred previously. As noted by a senior UKOT official, before the UKOTCF activity, its working groups and conferences, there had been very little encouragement and assistance to communicate even with nearby UKOTs, in official or NGO capacities, on conservation work. Now, joint projects and exchange of expertise and experience are common.

There is also a much greater understanding of the benefits of international conservation conventions, often explained by UKOTCF after UK government had not provided resources to do this. Accordingly, there was a much increased sign up to UK's ratifications of such treaties, as well as designations, such as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

In Great Britain and Northern Ireland (and, to some extent, elsewhere), UKOTCF has greatly increased the number of conservation bodies that were contributing funds or other resources to conservation issues in the territories. This has been done via bodies joining UKOTCF or partnering in some other way to benefit from its import, or via seeking advice or contacts from a body as long-standing as UKOTCF.

The number of territory organisations that have joined UKOTCF



One of the first Bermuda petrel or cahow chicks to be reared on Nonsuch Island, Bermuda for about 400 years, by parents which had been translocated from the crumbling islets where the species, thought extinct, held on. This was the latest stage, after

50 years of previous work, to aid the recovery of this species found nowhere else in the world. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

has increased greatly. With the agreement of all, including the GB and NI-based bodies, the territory bodies now take a greater lead in advising on UKOTCF priorities.

As a consequence of this increased pool of resources (including major contributions from governments – see below), many more conservation projects have taken place on the ground, some of these very large. With the 30 years of active involvement over which we can assess, several stand out as notable (and we apologise for not listing all examples):



Grand Cayman blue iguana: recovery of such special wildlife requires long programmes of sustained work. While granting bodies fail to address this, the commitment

of dedicated volunteers and supporting NGOs is even more vital to provide the necessary continuity. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

- the recoveries from very low levels (and taking decades of resources) of the Bermuda petrel, the Grand Cayman blue iguana, and Ascension's seabirds, the improving status already becoming apparent of the native wildlife of South Georgia; as well as the apparent stabilisation of numbers of the Montserrat oriole and the St Helena wirebird;
- the establishment of major marine nature reserves at the Isle of Man, Ascension, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, Pitcairn Islands, Tristan da Cunha, St Helena and potentially others (the procedures adopted at some of these have provided lessons to use in the future);
- designation of four World Heritage Sites in the UKOTs, and of an increasing number of Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention, many following the UKOTCF's review of actual and potential such sites, mentioned earlier;
- the restoration of ecosystems by projects including: the Millennium Gumwood Forest of St Helena; a number of the smaller islands of the Falklands;
- the restoration of Akrotiri Marshes, Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas.

There has been, in several territories, an increased awareness



Some of the many species which will benefit from the new marine protected areas: (above) bottlenose dolphin, Ascension; (left) basking shark, Isle of Man. Photos: Dr Mike Pienkowski; Isle of Man Government

of the global importance of the wildlife (which may be seen as everyday to a local inhabitant of the special places in which they live). This is beginning to lead to community support for policies and conservation actions on the ground. These are things long established in UK and the rest of Europe, but are less traditional in many UKOTs. Several recent UKOTCF activities and projects have been directed towards developing this sense of “ownership” of, and shared responsibility for, the natural environment. The latter underpins both the quality of life and, in many cases, present and future ecosystem services and economic development. However, because this is not yet well established, resourcing has proven rather difficult.

In many cases also, the governments of UKOTs/CDs are becoming more sensitised to the need to look after the natural environment in the long-term, for the benefit of their territories. UKOTCF is doing its best to facilitate this further, having long provided information and advice when requested, and now helping organise and service meetings of environment ministers (or equivalents) of UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. It continues to submit responses to consultations, both in territory and in the UK, to ensure voices are heard and considered.

Raising public awareness in Britain of the global importance of wildlife in the UKOTs, their status as sovereign British territory with British citizens, and Britain’s shared responsibility is a very long job. With limited resources, the need will continue for a long time. However, we have seen considerable progress through UKOTCF efforts, including via its website and publications and by its contributions with others, such as the recent *Britain’s Treasure Islands* BBC package and continuing interest from BBC Radio 4’s *Costing the Earth* programme.



The Henderson crane is one of six bird species (and many other species) found only in the Pitcairn Group, five on Henderson Island (protected as a World Heritage Site) – the most natural raised atoll remaining in the Pacific. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

Progress has been made in raising awareness in Parliament and Government over the years – which is not to say more does not need to be done. MPs and peers, including government ministers, are now more likely to recognise the term “overseas territories” and have at least some idea about them. Some now have very considerable interest and knowledge. Parliament is taking an increasing interest in the territories. For example, the number of select committee inquiries addressing UKOTs, at least in part, has been much higher over the past decade or so than earlier. UKOTCF has helped government officials in briefing colleagues on many occasions, to try to offset the problem of rapid turnover of personnel. UKOTCF also routinely briefs UKOT governors-designate before they take up post.

There is a more up-and-down situation in some aspects.

During the 30 years we are reviewing, dedicated funding to UKOTs (but not CDs) funding has increased overall, tending to occasional steps with long plateaus, and occasional dips as well as welcome peaks – although we would like the latter maintained over time. It is widely accepted (including by the government’s statutory adviser), and voiced by Parliamentary select committees, that the UK Government funding to conservation in the territories remains grossly inadequate. In trying to make the most of the limited funding, we (and UKOTs) have identified problems in the distancing of decision-making from reviewed needs. As part of this, we have had to waste effort by periodically having to spend time arguing against absent-minded cuts, all just to regain the previous level of support. We are well aware of the problems here lie not with the dedicated Government officials dealing with territories, but more distantly in the governmental system, rather remote from knowledge of the actual situation.

Working with its equivalent umbrella bodies in France and the Netherlands in the *Bioverseas* grouping, UKOTCF has raised awareness of the territories in European Union institutions. Our *Bioverseas* grouping worked also for many years to secure European Union funding for overseas territories. With the UK’s anticipated departure from the EU, UKOT eligibility for this source will be lost – and we do not yet know whether or how UK Government will fill this gap.

During the first 20 years of this review period, there was generally an increasing and striking tendency to cooperative working between the UKOTCF network and UK Government officials. This was so much so that, on several occasions, colleagues in other sectoral areas wondered how they could copy this approach. In much of the recent decade, however, there has been drifting apart, certainly not at the wish of UKOTCF and its partners. This has been despite the clear interest and commitment of many of the UK governmental officials with whom we have worked. The overall reasons seem difficult to pin down. However, in retrospect, we can see some likely ones. The FCO’s discontinuing of its environmental personnel in the middle of the first decade of this millennium undoubtedly had a major effect, as FCO has the policy lead for UKOTs. Matters were exacerbated by: the fact that it was several years before FCO’s preference that DEFRA take-over the environmental aspects relating to UKOTs actually occurred (and then only partly); the lack of equivalent transfer in resourcing; and the gap in corporate memory. Some unfortunate decisions by DEFRA’s agency also exacerbated the situation. The transfer of DFID’s Overseas Territories Department far out of London, did not help, leading to a total staff turnover and reduction in liaison. A loss of interest by DFID in the environment also followed. Perhaps overall, the most surprising feature was a reduction in routine communications between UK governmental officials and the NGOs. This was particularly surprising at a time of increasing demands but reducing resources. In such a situation,

one would normally look to spreading the load, and sharing the problems. Actually, the reverse route was taken, perhaps because the problems were so heavy that no one had the time to think more strategically. Nevertheless, UKOTCF continued liaising with the remaining contacts, and continues to try to build on these relationships.

It would be remiss to omit one particular example of increased cooperation and success, followed by a decline. This concerns environmental education and awareness. In this area, UKOTCF and its territory partners had several very successful projects in the territories, with UK Government financial support. However, in 2010, information and environmental education work in the UKOTs got swept up in a ban on outside contracts (apparently intended mainly against excessive use of information technology and public relations outside contracts). Thereby, the environmental education and awareness projects, which had been so successful in the past, were no longer eligible for grant-funding from UK Government. This is also despite the Commitments to environmental education in the Environment Charters and the need to report these under the Convention of Biological Diversity, and of the wish by the UKOTs for more of this work. In spite of many requests in the intervening period, it seems that the original reasoning has been lost, and no reversal has been achieved.



UKOTCF Honorary Environmental Education Co-ordinator, Ann Pienkowski, discusses conservation matters with an interested group of school students in St Helena, during the UKOTCF visit, at the request of the Island, to facilitate the development of a cross-sectoral environmental strategy. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

Where do the future challenges lie?

It is always difficult to predict this, especially at a time when government actions have caused enormous setbacks in many regards, due to the unexpected consequences of earlier Prime Ministerial decisions taken without adequate analysis.

However, some points arise obviously from the latter part of the preceding section. These include:

- correcting the perennial shortage of UK Government funding, even in comparison to the equivalent funding within Britain itself;
- encouraging UK Government also to initiate funding to replace the lost EU sources;
- reinstating UK Government resourcing for environmental education in the UKOTs, a priority expressed by most UKOTs;
- restoring the previous, very productive and cost-effective, frequent communication and collaboration between UK Government officials and the UKOTCF network and other NGOs.

Some other likely priorities emerging from the above analysis and current work are:

- Building on the increasing involvement of territory communities in conservation work by facilitating and

empowering local people and businesses to become champions of the ecosystems on which their livelihoods and quality of life depend. UKOTCF and partners have started on this, but it has proven remarkably unattractive to funding bodies.

- Improving the integration of environmental aspects into physical planning in the territories, including (but not limited to) open, transparent and accessible Environmental Impact Assessments and public consultation to best international practice. This is something old-hat in Britain, but less recognised in some territories. Again, this is an area in which UKOTCF and partners have been undertaking work.
- Attempting to get those responsible for advising UKOTs on development and attracting transitional investment to recognise that an increasingly large majority of both official and commercial banks and other investment bodies now require environmental aspects to be built in from the start if investment is to be secured.
- Further development and trial of the use of techniques which could address the lack of resources but enable effective monitoring of the environment, e.g. via remote sensing in meeting various needs for effective conservation in the territories.
- Securing recognition from funding bodies that short-term funding rarely solves any environmental conservation issue.
- Harnessing private sector involvement to address funding gaps, and encouraging more citizen science in the UKOTs.

There seems to be a need to continue!

In undertaking this review, we have tried to give a fair assessment, whether positive or negative, and indicate UKOTCF's recommendations for the ways forward. In doing so, we have probably annoyed some people (including some former and present officials) – but delighted other former officials. Our aim was to do neither. We have a high regard for most of the UK government officials with whom we work, and are concerned at their under-resourcing, as well as ours. Some of us were indeed government officials in the past. If we are to be useful, we need to be honest about matters. We hope that officials, who we consider as our professional colleagues, treat these comments in the constructive light which we intend, as we look to the future.

One of the disadvantages of writing a review like this is that, to be fair, one has to mention the areas where challenges and occasional setbacks have to be overcome. However, the progress achieved over 30 years has been huge – perhaps inspired by the superb wildlife and landscapes of the territories. How can people



Involvement and empowering local people is vital, so that they can take a lead in championing the benefits to them and their children of a healthy natural environment. Local Community members in Middle Caicos, TCI, share their knowledge with a UKOTCF team (including a specialist member of its network from the National Trust for the Cayman Islands).

Photo: UKOTCF



Participants in the UKOTCF Gibraltar Conference 2015 - representing a small proportion of the very wide UKOTCF network. The members of this network give huge amounts of time and other resources, by far the largest component unpaid. It is these we thank for the substantial progress made over the last 30 years. However, others have not missed the chance: there is still much to do to ensure that this heritage is passed on to enrich the quality of life and support sustainable economies of ourselves and future generations. Photo: HM Government of Gibraltar

fail to be inspired by the joy of viewing the ice-scapes, seabirds and whales of the southern oceans or the glorious rain forest of Montserrat's mountains, especially at the sight and sound of the endemic Montserrat oriole suddenly appearing through the dense vegetation? How can anyone fail to be impressed when meeting the dedicated team succeeding after more than 50 years of struggles in achieving a widening of the range of the tiny number of surviving Bermuda petrels, or Fred Burton and his team doing similarly, happily in a slightly shorter time, for the Grand Cayman blue iguana, or Rebecca Cairns-Wicks and her colleagues re-establishing a whole forest of formerly threatened trees in St Helena? The last is one of very few really successful and meaningful Millennium projects anywhere. In recent years, we have witnessed the restoration of seabirds on their main mid-Atlantic nesting-island of Ascension, as well as the restoration of the huge area of South Georgia. Both were previously thought impossible, but are a tribute to the incredible teamwork of individuals and organisations, including governmental. We are currently seeing long-awaited progress in the extension of marine protected areas and sustainable fishing approaches in the wide exclusive economic zones around UKOT oceanic islands. There is a great deal of joy in working with outstanding colleagues to restore and protect these magnificent treasures.

Over its 30 years, the work of the Forum has benefitted from many dedicated people. This has included many UKOTCF member and associate organisations, both in the territories and elsewhere. A large number of skilled and experienced people have served on its Executive Committee (in its first decade as an unincorporated association) and subsequently on its Council (while in its continuing existence as a charitable company). Council tends to include a wide range of people, including senior personnel from territory or UK partners, former Governors or other retired governmental personnel, senior conservationists and scientists from conservation bodies, and others with interest in the territories and a range of complementary skills to offer. The Co-ordinator

has been a key role, the post being first filled by Sara Oldfield, who later handed over to Sarah Cross. The post has been filled most recently by Catherine Wensink, and much of the senior parts of the role have been incorporated into her current role as Executive Director. (Sara Oldfield later served as Chairman, and I think that I have just about forgiven her for persuading me to take over from her for my first term as Chairman!) As well as a very small number of paid personnel, UKOTCF has enjoyed the services of very many skilled volunteers. A recent innovation has been the spreading of the volunteer role from work in territories to supporting the core activities of UKOTCF itself. In some cases, resources have been found to pay modestly for some of this donated time. We are grateful to the first incumbents (see pages 18-19 & 25) for pioneering both the Conservation Assistant and Conservation Officer roles. We still seem to be popular. As this article is being completed, we are suffering from reading through and sifting 337 applications (plus more after deadline) for a replacement Conservation Officer post – and all of a high standard. For a paid post of only about one day per week and of limited duration, this is a staggeringly high level of interest – as thought too by the body running the advert.

Finally, for comments which improved earlier drafts of this review, I would like to thank my UKOTCF colleagues, especially Catherine Wensink, Dace Ground, Sarah Barnsley and Ann Pienkowski.

Mike Pienkowski, Chairman

From the past to the present: Reflections by the Conservation Officers who are coming to the end of 2½ years with UKOTCF

Joining UKOTCF as volunteers in October 2014, Emma Cary and Sarah Barnsley have progressed to become fully fledged Conservation Officers, involved in all areas of the Forum's work. Here they recap their experience over the past two and a half years.

Each and every day working for the Forum is different: from drafting funding applications, to helping with project support and delivery, the role is wide-ranging and busy! Whilst Emma might be working on communications initiatives to increase awareness of the Forum and its work, Sarah has attended various meetings on the Forum's behalf, keeping up to date with current and emerging projects or policies. This is not an easy feat for an organisation which covers such a breadth of work.

Within a couple of months of joining the Forum, Sarah had attended meetings/events held by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Biodiversity and Friends of the British Overseas Territories, in addition to the joint JNCC/NGOs meeting. More recently, we both participated in a meeting hosted by HM Government of Gibraltar, which discussed some of the environmental issues that Gibraltar and UK environmental bodies might face following Brexit. Our time working for UKOTCF has proved extremely insightful, giving us an understanding of UKOT biodiversity, the challenges faced by the overseas territories, and the day-to-day running of a small non-profit organisation.

It is certainly true to say that, in addition to meetings and project implementation, a lot of work goes on behind the scenes. We each contributed to the development of a number of online virtual tours, designed to showcase the diversity of the natural and cultural heritage of each individual territory and crown dependency. While Emma completed the tours for Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas and Alderney, Sarah completed those for Ascension Island and Jersey.

One of the first tasks that we were assigned related to UKOTCF's regional working groups. Emma took on the position of Secretary for the Europe Territories Working Group, which was back up and running in late 2014 after a brief hiatus. Meanwhile, Sarah took

up the position of Secretary for the Southern Oceans Working Group. The meetings gave us both the opportunity to coordinate and facilitate various meetings and initiatives, as well as gain a good grounding in the current projects taking place across these territories.

The major event that we were involved with in 2015 was the UKOTCF conference in Gibraltar. Held over 5 days

and attended by nearly 140 delegates from across the UKOTs and CDs, the conference was a test of our organisational and note-taking skills. From troubleshooting various pieces of AV equipment, to presiding over (very) early Working Group meetings, the conference was a brilliant insight into the scope of work undertaken by both the Forum and its partners. We learnt a great deal about event organisation and delivery, and had the opportunity to meet conservationists from all over the world. Despite our sometimes-frazzled appearances, it wasn't all hard work; we enjoyed fieldtrips led by experts from Gibraltar's Environment Department and Ornithological and Natural History Society, and ended the conference on a high with the conference dinner held in the spectacular St Michael's Cave. A truly fantastic experience, and a definite highlight of our working year!

In October 2015, Emma had the opportunity to attend the Inter Island Environment Meeting (IIEM), hosted by States of Alderney and Alderney Wildlife Trust. With the meeting's focus on developing mechanisms for communication between the islands, Emma gave a presentation on UKOTCF's Europe Territories Working Group and its role in information sharing. It is hoped that the IIEM and ETWG may become more closely aligned, to assist with future resource sharing opportunities. A year later, Sarah too had the chance to attend IIEM, this time hosted by La Société Guernesiaise and the States of Guernsey at the impressive Castle Cornet, St Peter Port. 2016's theme was *Designations* and the conference certainly had some thought-provoking and inspirational presentations!

A major feat for the whole UKOTCF team was the 2016 publication of the review of Environment Charter implementation in the UKOTs and CDs. Publication of this report was the culmination of several months of detailed desk-based research and consultation by both of us. Our research and analysis skills, as well as those concerned with liaison with large numbers of participants in the territories, were put to the test as we brought together large amounts of information to build on the previous reviews (2007, 2009). The final review was well received and has already proved extremely useful as a reference document for subsequent areas of Forum work and, we are assured, by the territories. We are certainly very proud to have our name on such a substantial piece of research, and to have contributed to an assessment of wider progress towards the Aichi Targets on biodiversity and the related Sustainable Development Goals.

Having both completed MSc courses in conservation-related fields, when joining UKOTCF, Emma and Sarah were looking to put into practice the theory that they had learnt. Working with the Forum



Emma Cary undertakes field-work with Project Officer Nicolas Tiraud during project work in Montserrat 2016. Photo: Sarah Barnsley



Sarah Barnsley hunts for tarantulas in Montserrat. Photo: Emma Cary



UKOTCF Conservation Officers, Sarah Barnsley (standing, centre) and Emma Cary (standing, right) facilitate the first of a series of workshops on the future options for the south of the island (Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF).

provided no shortage of opportunities for doing so. Having heard plenty about the Darwin Initiative funding programme, little did Emma and Sarah know that in May 2016, they themselves would be flying to Montserrat as part of a team helping to implement a Darwin Plus-funded project.

Through the *Maximising the long-term survival prospects of Montserrat's endemic species and ecosystem services* project, Emma and Sarah helped design and facilitate workshops, participate in project meetings, write up reports, and even make an appearance on ZJB Radio Montserrat. In between all the hard work, Sarah and Emma had ample time to explore the wonderful island of Montserrat; wander around the botanic gardens, experience the rainforest of the Centre Hills and dive over some incredible reefs!

UKOTCF works hard to support the territories and crown dependencies in every way that they can. One way that they do this is through providing evidence to Environmental Audit Committee inquiries. In 2016, Sarah drafted a submission in response to an inquiry looking at the progression made by UK Government, towards delivering a "Blue Belt" around the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. Both she and Emma also

contributed towards submissions in response to inquiries on the Sustainable Development Goals and the future of the natural environment following the EU referendum.

The Forum also responds directly to requests for support from the territories. This was the case in November 2016, when Sarah drafted a list of recommendations in support of amendments that would address the limited environmental context of the draft Guernsey Policy & Resource Plan. We are pleased to report that the majority of amendments were adopted, and the input gratefully acknowledged by elected Deputies not previously involved with UKOTCF.

The opportunity to be involved in all aspects of running a small charity has enabled us both to build considerably on our skills as well as increase our knowledge of these little-known parts of the world. We have visited some unique places, and gained equally unique experience for our CVs, which will no doubt stand us in good stead for our future careers in conservation. Many thanks to UKOTCF and its partners for all of the fantastic opportunities we have been offered.

See also page 25 on changes at UKOTCF.



Emma and Sarah investigate the sea at Montserrat. Photos: Montserrat Island Dive Centre



Saving Our Special Wildlife of Montserrat



The above title was adopted locally for a group of related projects centred on the one part-funded by UK Government's *Darwin-Plus* programme.

At the end of November 2016, the UKOTCF team flew out to Montserrat for the second project visit, as part of the *Maximising long-term survival prospects of Montserrat's endemic species and ecosystem-services* project, which is partly funded by Darwin Plus. It was great to be back on the Caribbean's Emerald Isle, and after a relaxed first weekend for Sarah and Emma (and a break for Mike, who had been present already for a few days of consultations and preparatory meetings) it was time to get stuck in to project meetings, interviews, workshops and field-visits.

UKOTCF Honorary Executive Director, Mike Pienkowski, and Conservation Officers, Sarah Barnsley and Emma Cary, were joined on this visit by Jo Treweek and Jennifer Hruza, consultants from Treweek Environmental Consultants (TEC). One of the project partners, TEC is a small but renowned consultancy, specialising in ecological aspects of environmental assessment and planning. TEC works with clients in many sectors and countries, and with inter-governmental and private-sector international investment funders, to help them achieve sustainable outcomes for biodiversity and ecosystems affected by their operations, loans and investments.

One element of the current Darwin Plus project focuses on integrating environmental and social aspects with physical planning. The aim Jo's and Jennifer's visit was to build on the results of a previous workshop on environmental impact assessment which was provided, *pro bono* and without grant support, by TEC and UKOTCF in January 2015. Jo and Jennifer used stakeholder meetings and interviews to review scope for tools and guidance that could be used to strengthen the planning and environmental assessment systems to improve outcomes for biodiversity and ecosystems.

Montserrat's planning and environmental management framework has several positive elements, but would benefit from more



Dr Jo Treweek (standing) and Jennifer Hruza give the main presentation, with Project Officer Nicolas Tirard on the right., Minister Hon. Claude Hogan having opened the feedback presentation and discussion session at Montserrat National Trust meeting room.

Photos: Dr Mike Pienkowski

systematic consideration of environmental aspects. This was seen as a fundamental requirement to allow more detailed consideration of biodiversity *per se* and will be especially important if Montserrat is to seek the transformational projects that are currently being discussed, as will improved investment in essential equipment and technology. Following the visit, a report was produced detailing key findings and recommendations. It should be noted that Jennifer and Jo were again acting on a *pro bono* basis and we are grateful for their time and dedication towards this project.

The team's packed schedule included also the second in a series of four workshops looking to explore options for the future of the south of Montserrat. This particular workshop developed further the outcomes of the first workshop held in May 2016, which agreed the need for a shared plan, and sought answers to the question of "why would it be good to carry out work in the South?" It was designed to expand these initial thoughts by identifying further information requirements, *e.g.* resources that would be required

Workshop participants hard at work in groups. Photo: Marisa Sorrell, Coral Cay Conservation





Right and left: Views of a visit to the Roche's area. Photos: James 'Scriber' Daley

and opportunities and challenges that a particular activity would provide.

Following the workshop itself, a report was produced and circulated to participants, summarising the discussions according to the main opportunities presented by potential work in the south. Many socio-economic opportunities were identified and discussions focused on the feasibility of activities, the improvement of existing practices, and the commercialisation of various activities. The overall aim of the workshop series, will be the development of a vision and initial plan for the future use of the south, produced in consultation across a wide range of stakeholders. Whilst other elements will also be included, one main emphasis will be upon the restoration of natural ecosystems.

As regards other aspects of the project, much progress is being made. Through the *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* programme, another project partner, the Montserrat National Trust, leads public-participation sub-projects aiming to conserve and enhance the beauty of Montserrat, preserve the island's fauna and flora, increase public awareness of the island's heritage. The programme allows individuals, organisations, community groups and businesses to agree to maintain and protect a public space for a year at a time, with renewals annually.

We are excited to announce that two sites have been adopted so far! Firstly, Mr Dwayne Hixon, a local real estate agent and contractor, has adopted a site located in Runaway Ghaut. This area is a good and accessible example of the ecosystem of the ghauts in Montserrat, and therefore carries a high educational and conservation value. Unfortunately, a storm in 2012 destroyed one part of the site's path, which is therefore no longer used and has started to become



overgrown. Furthermore, some introduced ornamentals have started spreading into the forest, with the risk that they will become invasive and impact the

Left: Dwayne Hixon: Right: Julian Romeo. Volunteers leading on Adopt a Home for Wildlife sites. Photos: Nicolas Tirard

native wildlife.

The second site is located in Carr's Bay, between the historic site of Carr's Battery and a river – it has a high historical value, and is next to one of the few remaining mangrove ecosystems on the island. However, there is a lack of protection from the sea, and pollution flowing from the river to the sea make the site very vulnerable. Mr

Julian Romeo, a local hardware store owner, has expressed interest in protecting the site from the sea with big boulders, and landscaping it with native plants to help stabilize the beach. We look forward to hearing what these dedicated volunteers achieve!

The UKOTCF team look forward to returning to Montserrat in June-July 2017. During that visit, a team from project partner, Montana State University (MSU), will also be visiting. The MSU team have been designing Montserrat-centred access to the database system and entering previous insect survey work into the database. Their visit will both test and provide training to local Montserratians in the use of the online database. Insect fieldwork will also be continued and people in Montserrat will be welcome to join.

There is more information in the third of the project newsletters, published in March 2017: this and earlier issues of *Saving Our Special Nature of Montserrat* can be viewed at: www.ukotcf.org/WGnewsletterlist/WGNewsletterslinks.pdf.



UKOTCF Environment Charter review provides basis for input into Parliamentary Inquiries into UK's exit from the European Union...

In the wake of the EU referendum, the UK Parliament's House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) launched several inquiries, as well as revisiting subjects that it had covered previously, and which were likely to be impacted by the Government's response to the result.

In September, a submission was made to the Environmental Audit Committee Inquiry into the *Future of the Environment after the EU Referendum*. UKOTCF Members and associate organisations were alerted to these and encouraged to submit their own responses. The report has now been published. Although it concentrates on the impact on GB and NI, there are some references to UKOTs, which are pleasing to see.

The Committee drew on the submission from UKOTCF noting:

"43. The UK Government must also address concerns relating to the natural environment in UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs). The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum explained that support would be needed to help Gibraltar retain existing environmental law in its own legislation, and to ensure it became

a party to international conservation frameworks outside the EU umbrella. The UK government has consistently said that UKOTs meet their obligations to the Bern convention through the EU Birds and Habitats Directives without them needing to be party to it, however these Directives themselves will probably not apply to the UK when it leaves the EU. The domestic legislation transposing them into UK law will be retained through the Great Repeal Bill but this will not apply to Gibraltar. The Forum therefore continued:

UK's ratification includes the Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas, the Isle of Man and Jersey. As long ago as 1996, in UK Dependent Territories: a Conservation Review (part-funded by UK Government's Darwin Initiative), UKOTCF (at the request of Gibraltar partners) called on the UK Government to include Gibraltar in its ratification of the Bern Convention and assist in its implementation.

The Forum also called on the UK Government to increase Defra resources in order to support territories and Crown Dependencies in designating and managing Wetlands of International Importance



Catherine Wensink, UKOTCF Manager and Senior Conservation Officer (now Executive Director), gives evidence to the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee (above and below), while fellow witnesses Charles Clover, Executive Director, BLUE Marine Conservation, and Thomas Hickey, Pew Charitable Trusts, look on. Inquiry into Marine Protected Areas, January 2017. Photos:parliamentlive.tv



under the Ramsar Convention.

Furthermore, linked to their recommendations the EAC noted:

“Membership of the EU has provided a common framework within which the devolved nations have been able to develop their own environmental policies. References to the EU will need to be removed from devolved legislation, and the Government must substitute a new common framework. The Government must ensure that the status of EU environmental legislation in the UK Overseas Territories is understood and action taken to preserve protections where necessary.”

The full report can be seen at: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmenvaud/599/59902.htm.

In October, written evidence was submitted to the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) inquiry on *Marine Protected Areas* (MPAs). The material used to draft a response came largely from the marine session at the Gibraltar conference in July 2015 (see *Forum News* 44) and the *Review of progress in meeting Commitments under the Environment Charter; Aichi Targets and Sustainable Development Goals* (www.ukotcf.org/charters/progress.htm).

A full list of submissions to the inquiry can be seen on the EAC webpage.

The EAC invited UKOTCF to provide oral evidence in its session, held 10 January 2017, alongside the Blue Marine Foundation and the Pew Trusts. The full recording of the session, together with the session held on 26 January, involving Rt Hon Baroness Anelay of St Johns, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Dr Thérèse Coffey, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Environment and Rural Life Opportunities, DEFRA is available to view at www.parliament.uk and <http://parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/ea5de59c-f449-4573-a97f-e8100e06ef23>.

Following this, additional written evidence was submitted, and this has also now been published online.

The third submission was to the EAC inquiry on *Sustainable Development Goals*. Again, all submissions can be seen on the EAC page. The final reports on this and the *Marine Protected Areas* inquiries are expected soon.

In addition to this, a response was submitted to the UK Parliament House of Commons Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Committee inquiry into *Leaving the EU: negotiation priorities for energy and climate change policy*. The details of this can be seen at: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/business-energy-industrial-strategy/inquiries/parliament-2015/brexit-energy-climate-change-inquiry-16-17/>.

Once a report is published, UK Government normally has 2 months to respond.

Island Invasives Conference 2017

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

...and input to Guernsey legislature

Another opportunity to use the information from the Environment Charter Review in a legislature came through the Inter Island and Europe Territories Working Group networks. A request was received from a coalition of environmental groups, including associate organisation La Société Guernesiaise, towards the end of 2016. The draft *Guernsey Policy & Resource Plan* provided little mention of the environment, compared to its predecessor document. They were therefore looking for support for a list of amendments put forward by States of Guernsey Deputy, Barry Brehaut, and his team, and seconded by Deputy Mark Dorey. These amendments would address the limited environmental context. Phase 1 of the draft plan, entitled *Future Guernsey*, was due to be debated on 15 November 2016.

Upon reading the draft *Future Guernsey* plan, UKOTCF was in agreement that provisions for Guernsey's unique natural heritage were inadequate. This was a particularly important consideration, given the fact that Phase 1 of the plan outlines the States of Guernsey's 20 year-vision for the island. Conservation Officer, Sarah Barnsley, therefore set about drafting a list of recommendations for the proposed plan, with input from UKOTCF colleagues.

Using information published in the UKOTCF's Environment Charter Review, and drawing upon examples from the Forum's years of experience and involvement with the UK's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, UKOTCF was able to provide evidence in support of each of the amendments related to the environment: Amendments 7-12. A submission was sent it to the States Deputies.

An example of the type of change/addition proposed for the *Future Guernsey* plan, and relating to the environment, could be seen under Amendment 10. This stipulated that the following should also be included as a bullet point under the part of Appendix 1 entitled *Lifelong learning*: 'Foster individual and community participation in local nature conservation and enhancement to create a sense of ownership of and responsibility for our unique island environment amongst all ages'.

UKOTCF received some very welcome feedback from various Deputies, thanking the Forum for preparing the recommendations and saying that they would be considered when voting on the amendments. 15 November brought some very exciting news, with Amendments 7, 9, 10, 11 and 12 voted through.

Deputy Brehaut himself acknowledged the useful intervention that UKOTCF's submission had been.

UKOTCF was very pleased to have been of help in this instance. We would like to note that this is an exercise that we are happy to carry out for any Territory or Crown Dependency, should it aid in increasing support for the environment. It has been possible to be reactive to these inquiries and consultations (including the UK Parliament ones mentioned in the previous article above), because of the information collected during the *Review of Environment Charters, Aichi Targets and Sustainable Development Goals* and sessions at the conference in Gibraltar. They allow UKOT governments and NGOs to share information on issues which impact on their fragile environments, and which UKOTCF subsequently gathers in its proceedings and reviews.

UKOTCF organises meetings on Brexit for HM Government of Gibraltar

At the request of Dr John Cortes, Minister for Environment and Climate Change, HM Government of Gibraltar, (HMGGoG) UKOTCF organised a meeting on 28 October 2016. This meeting, hosted by Minister Cortes in Gibraltar House in London, had participation by senior representatives of some of the largest and most influential environmental organisations in the UK. The meeting was an initiative of HMGGoG to share information on challenges that Gibraltar and the UK have in common, in order to coordinate work that aims at ensuring that environmental and biodiversity protection do not suffer post-Brexit. The meeting was attended by representatives from: the Royal Society for the

Protection of Birds (RSPB), the UK's largest environmental group; the National Trust, the Wildlife Trust, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation and the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum. The National Trust for Scotland and the Green Alliance were not able to attend but will be involved in the process. The Gibraltar situation was presented by Dr Liesl Mesilio-Torres, CEO and Chief Scientist of Gibraltar's Department of the Environment and Climate Change, and there was wide discussion on challenges and possibilities. Contact between the groups will continue and further meetings are planned.



Meeting in session, chaired by Minister John Cortes (at head of table in left photo). Photos: Emma Cary (left) and Dr Mike Pienkowski (right).

Changes at UKOTCF

New Council Member: Martin Spray CBE



Martin has been Chief Executive of the UK based Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) since 2014. His career has been divided between the government sector and conservation NGOs. Upon graduating from University of Swansea with a degree in Zoology,

he joined the Science Research Council in London as the Secretary to the Solar Systems Committee. Although not reflecting his interests until then, he found the experience extremely stimulating. He then went on to several varied managerial roles with the re-named Science & Engineering Research Council, including a period of secondment to HM Treasury in Whitehall.

Having pursued his childhood interest in the natural world, through voluntary work raising money for Greenpeace and WWF as Chair of their support groups, he joined WWF UK. In his role as Area Manager, he merged successfully the South East England and London regions and oversaw PR and fundraising through 84 volunteer groups and major events, raising over £1 million for conservation in his last year. Three years later, he was approached to become the first Chief Executive of the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT). A very small but respected naturalists' trust at the time, it is now one of the largest Wildlife Trusts in the UK. During his 12 years with BBOWT, Martin took on various other commitments, including Chair of the 48-strong North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Council of Partners, and Chair of the Oxfordshire Conservation Forum. In 2003, he was seconded from BBOWT part-time to oversee the re-structuring and stabilising of the national Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts for a year. This culminated in his involvement in the appointment of a new CEO.

His period with WWT has seen a growth in the organisation to over 200,000 members, an income of £24 million, major refurbishment and improvement of its 9 wetland visitor centres, a shift to a new strategic direction involving wetland creation and management to benefit people, and a growth in the organisation's international

activity.

In 2013, Martin was awarded the CBE by HM The Queen, and an honorary Doctor of Science by the University of Roehampton for services to nature conservation.

Thanks to Emma Cary and Sarah Barnsley, UKOTCF's first-ever general Conservation Officers

UKOTCF has, throughout its 30-year existence, organised skilled volunteers for particular projects or needs identified with territory partners. Of course, the Council members (including then Honorary Executive Director), and several other key officers, are also unpaid volunteers. Therefore, it is a little surprising that it took us 27 years to recruit volunteers to help its general roles in the running of UKOTCF. Catherine Wensink cut through this inertia in 2014, and UKOTCF advertised for volunteers to help the Forum. By doing this, volunteers would benefit from widening their experience, which would hopefully be of use in their future careers.

To our surprise, there were a large number of well qualified applicants, of whom we interviewed a short list. We appointed the two outstanding candidates to the new 6-month posts of unpaid Conservation Assistants, with a mutual expectation of an average of about 1 day's time donated each week. Both Emma and Sarah took to these roles extremely well, and appeared to be enjoying overcoming the many challenges (see pages 18-19). They readily agreed to our suggestion that they stay on for another 6 months or more. The next months included helping to organise the Gibraltar conference and continuing work on UKOTCF's review of progress in implementing the Environment Charters and Aichi Targets (*Forum News* 45:1-2).

With yet more progress during that period and increasing responsibilities, UKOTCF promoted Sarah and Emma to Conservation Officers, and even managed to find some funds to pay them for much of the time they worked (although they continued to add some donated time). Throughout, recognising the limited amount of time that UKOTCF could pay for, we encouraged both Conservation Officers to keep an eye open for other opportunities. We also tried to structure their work so as to develop and even wider range of skills and experience, to aid this.

After filling the 6-month post for 2½ years, Emma recently secured a post with longer and more regular hours. This is with another small conservation NGO. We are most grateful to her for all her outstanding work and for help in managing the transition. In particular, Emma (one of whose jobs elsewhere is in recruitment) has been helping with our recruitment process, and with suggestions on how to fill the role while giving opportunities to recent graduates. She has also been helping in the revision of our volunteer policy.

After a period of consideration, Sarah decided around the same time, to apply for a PhD place, something that her earlier academic supervisors had previously encouraged. We are delighted that



Farewell team working lunch (actually the Christmas lunch, but pressure of UKOTCF work had delayed it by 2 months!) (From left:) Emma Cary, Ann Pienkowski, Catherine Wensink, Sarah Barnsley & Mike Pienkowski

she has received several offers and will be taking up one in the autumn, after a period of travel over the summer.

Sarah is kindly staying with UKOTCF until the end of May – and thereby reaching 2¾ years in this ½-year appointment – and will be invaluable in several roles. These include: completing or taking forward some of her current projects: continuing to run the Southern Oceans Working Group; covering also the Europe Territories Working Group for a round of meetings after Emma's departure; and helping to train and handover to successors, whom we are recruiting. We are similarly enormously grateful to Sarah for all her tremendous efforts and achievements for UKOTCF.

We will miss Emma and Sarah enormously. Of course, we hope to recruit similarly outstanding persons to take on some of their roles – but Sarah and Emma will always remain the trail-blazers of this role.

Other Changes at UKOTCF

Liz Charter has stepped down as Chairman but remains on UKOTCF Council. Council thanked Liz Charter for taking on the Chair at a time which was not greatly convenient for her, but which filled an urgent need of UKOTCF. Council are delighted that she stays among their number, filling other roles.

In December 2016, Council decided to recombine the roles of Chairman and Honorary Executive Director, which it had split some years earlier, and asked Mike Pienkowski to return to this role. Council also supported the new Chairman's plan to redefine the post of Executive Director and to appoint Catherine Wensink to it. This appointment was completed in February 2017.

Catherine (then Quick) Wensink started working for UKOTCF on various projects in March 2007. She took over the Forum Coordinator role in April 2008, rapidly making many innovations. In 2016, her role was expanded to include Manager and Senior Conservation Officer. The Chairman and Council are delighted to retain Catherine's unrivalled experience, commitment and abilities.

MPASSE revisited

The National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands (NPTVI) has now opened two visitor centres, developed under the long-running and often frustrating partly EU-funded project *Management of Protected Areas to Support Sustainable Economies* (MPASSE), coordinated by UKOTCF. These are: the Sage Mountain National Park Visitors Centre (Tortola) opened in December; and Copper Mine (Virgin Gorda) opened in February. The third, in Anegada, will be opened in March. Further information about the project can be found in *Forum News* 37, December 2010. (www.ukotcf.org/pdf/fNews/37.pdf) and in the proceedings of the Sustaining Partnerships conference held in Gibraltar in July 2015 (page 47 of Sections 4-8: www.ukotcf.org/pdf/2015conf/SustainingPartnershipsSS4to8.pdf).

Meanwhile, the Blue Iguana Recovery Programme (BIRP), in Cayman, continues after two years, to release young blue iguanas into Colliers Wilderness Reserve. These were reared in Cayman's head-start facility, Colliers Wilderness Reserve is a National Trust for the Cayman Islands protected area, secured through leveraging the MPASSE grant. BIRP reports that: "the Blues have



Corato Agave caymanensis, Cayman Islands endemic, on the Colliers Wilderness Reserve loop Trail. Photo: Ann Stafford CaymanNature



Paul Watler, the National Trust for the Cayman Islands' Environmental Programmes Manager, leads the team carefully releasing each iguana into its own predetermined territory complete with a prebuilt retreat for each one. Photos: BIRP

been released in this way for many years now and the success rate has been remarkable. Population assessments of the wild population indicate a near perfect survival outcome for our head-started Blues, helping to carry this species back from the verge of extinction."

There is now a trail through the reserve where visitors can see many different species of plants and animals unique to Cayman and, on a lucky day, the blue iguanas themselves.

TCI environmental issues facing the new Government

With the election of the new People's Democratic Party (PDM) Government in the TCI, we hope to see an improvement in the environmental awareness/sensitivity of the new Government. In their campaign manifesto during, the Honorable Premier Sharlene Cartwright Robinson and her colleagues pledged to reinstate the Conservation Fund that was abandoned under direct British rule a few years back. During its initial years, the Conservation Fund was used for many important projects. These included construction of the Environmental Centre across from the Bight Children's Park, which also houses the Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR) offices; support for the Turks and Caicos National Trust and Turks and Caicos National Museum; and several environmental research projects. We hope the PDM Government fulfils its pledge to reinstate the Conservation Fund. This would be useful for funding local conservation projects such as coral reef monitoring, expanding coral replenishment projects, such as the Turks & Caicos Reef Fund's new coral nursery project, and protecting the main asset of the country – its relatively pristine environment that attracts visitors to these islands.

Speaking of the environmental assets of the islands, under the previous administration, recommendations to remove critical

habitats from within protected areas were made. It is imperative that the new Government maintains the boundaries of the existing protected areas and continues to assess the addition of further protected areas. The natural resources of TCI are the foundation of a fragile economy and must be maintained, for the economic, environmental and cultural sustainability of future generations. The exploitation of the protected areas for short term economic gain would result in a boom-bust scenario that would have irreversible repercussions for years to come. Developments, such as a proposed trans-shipping centre, mega-yacht marina and cruise terminal on the relatively untouched island of East Caicos, would benefit large foreign investors, but would have little conceivable benefit to local human populations, apart from low-paying jobs. Such projects should be out of bounds and more eco-friendly development, which would promote the development of locally owned businesses should be encouraged. In particular, the development of projects such as nature trails, turtle-watching, kayaking, scuba-diving and snorkelling tours on East Caicos would foster entrepreneurship on nearby South Caicos and Middle Caicos. This would create livelihoods that inject all economic benefits into the local economy, without diminishing the same



Views of the some of the exceptionally diverse and rich ecosystem of East Caicos: (left) the surface mosaic of varied woodlands and wetlands; (right) part of the underground cave system being investigated, as a bat flies through. Photos: Dr Mike Pienkowski

opportunities for future generations.

The TCI has built its brand by focusing on a simple message: “Beautiful by Nature,” and has a reputation as a high end, low density, tourist destination. This branding has made TCI’s tourism industry the envy of the Caribbean region. Everyone wants tourists who pay top-dollar to appreciate an authentic cultural and environmental experience. Certain types of developments, such as 12-storey hotels, are not compatible with TCI’s brand, and should not be allowed. This kind of change will degrade TCI’s successful tourism brand, with irreversible, negative economic, cultural and environmental repercussions. Visitors, as well as a majority of residents, oppose this type of development. In most areas where such buildings have been proposed, the carrying capacity of the beach areas is inadequate for the number of guests who would potentially stay at such resorts. Several surveys conducted by the Tourist Board, and most-recently by KPMG, have determined unequivocally that TCI’s guests go there to enjoy the beautiful, uncrowded beaches (Brough & Sartori 2015). Crowded beaches in TCI would certainly garner negative complaints via outlets, such as *Trip Advisor*. The reputation of the resorts, as well as that of TCI, would therefore be damaged.

Other types of developments are also inconsistent with the “Beautiful by Nature” branding, the proposed dolphinarium for Grand Turk, for example. The unofficial marine animal representative for the TCI is JoJo, a wild Atlantic bottlenose dolphin, who has been entertaining visitors for decades. JoJo and his many marine mammal compatriots, consisting of other

bottlenose dolphins, spotted dolphins, humpback whales, pilot whales and occasionally other species, are frequently seen by the boating public in the wild, as they should be seen. The global tourism market is turning sharply against captive marine mammal exhibitions, where the animals have little room to swim and are forced to perform for their dinner like slaves. There is no benefit to having captive dolphins in the TCI when there are so many wild dolphins to see. In fact, such a facility would actually take business away from local water-sports operators, who currently benefit from a robust “whale-watching” tour market.

Other environmentally impactful activities, such as dredging for new marinas (e.g. North Creek on Grand Turk and South Creek on Grand Turk), may cause more long-term economic harm than benefit. North and South Creek have served as natural safe havens for local boaters for generations. In addition, such projects would undermine critical mangrove, seagrass and coral reef habitats, which protect the island from storms and provide critical juvenile habitat for TCI’s key fisheries species. These include queen conch, lobster, snapper and many others. The dredging of these areas would undoubtedly undermine the fisheries industry in irreversible ways. Dredging elsewhere in the TCI (such as in the Leeward Channel) can do irreparable harm to nearby reefs, especially if appropriate safeguards to contain silt from dredging are not used. The reefs located just off the Leeward Channel are prime snorkelling areas for Provo’s myriad water-sports operators, most of which are small, locally owned businesses.

In spite of the above threats, a wide variety of appropriate development has generated millions of dollars in TCI’s economy and will continue to do so sustainably for years to come. Some of these projects include the following:

- Low-density (not all-inclusive) hotel, condominium and villa developments, in which guests dine at locally owned restaurants, shop for souvenirs at locally owned boutiques and shop for groceries at



TCI is a very good place to see dolphins readily and easily, with the animals in their natural home and themselves choosing to come close to people. Why ruin this advantage by introducing dolphin prisons, previously illegal until the law was changed, without technical advice, under direct UK rule.

Photo: Big Blue Unlimited



North Creek (top, centre) forms part of the complex network of wetlands at Grand Turk, which are crucial to wildlife and ecosystems services provided to the citizens. They mean that normally nervous wild birds are more readily viewable in Grand Turk than almost anywhere in the world. This creates a potentially huge sustainable tourism attraction – the envy of cities around the world.

Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

management, which typically falls on government. Such relationships can also generate public revenue, for example if TCI Government, rather than leasing Crown Lands to investors, becomes a shareholder in associated developments instead. The potential for development in this area is enormous and should be a cornerstone of future development policy in TCI.

UKOTCF is not opposed to development in the TCI.


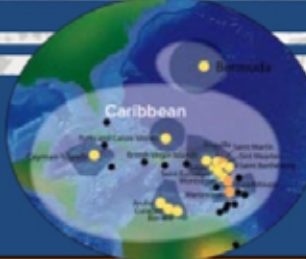
In fact, we feel that appropriate types of development, which would carry far greater economic benefits for the public at large, have tremendous potential for expansion. Such development would not only share benefits equitably among participants, but would preserve the brand that the TCI has nurtured and thrived upon over the last three or so decades. Environmentally sensitive and appropriate developments throughout the islands should be strongly encouraged, and we hope the new Government will take this progressive approach to ensure that all Turks and Caicos Islanders benefit from development, not just today, but into a long and prosperous future.

Source cited:

Brough, G., & Sartori, A. 2015. National Tourism Policy and Strategic Implementation Plan for the Turks and Caicos Islands.

locally owned shops. All income generated by such activities directly improves local livelihoods and remains in the local economy. Scientific research and interest, particularly recently on the island of East Caicos, have distributed tens of thousands of dollars directly to local fishermen on neighbouring Middle and South Caicos over the past couple of years. Scientific research is an often-overlooked economic stimulus for such communities. The potential for development of this kind is huge, but in order for it to remain viable, the ecological systems which attract scientific interests must remain intact.

- Public/private/NGO partnerships, such as the relationships between Turks & Caicos Hospitality & Tourism Association, Turks & Caicos Reef Fund, UKOTCF, SWA Environmental and Department of Environment & Coastal Resources, provide generous capacity-building opportunities for the public sector, in addition to sharing the economic burden of

<div>  <h2>Small Grant Projects Selected by the EC to be Funded - Caribbean</h2>  </div>	
Title	Territory(ies)
Combining local ecological knowledge and ciguatera analysis to rule lionfish toxicity and edibility and catalyze infestation control	St Barthélemy
Enacting a new regional recovery plan for the Lesser Antillean iguana: an Endangered ecological keystone species	Anguilla, St Barthélemy, St Eustatius
Management of invasive lionfish hotspots: conservation of biodiversity on mesophotic coral ecosystems in Bermuda	Bermuda
Understanding the East Caicos KBA's Corals and coast : A key to safeguarding TCI's future	Turks and Caicos
North Saba National Park Phase 1	Saba
Restoration of Key Biodiversity Areas of St. Maarten (plant)	Sint Maarten
Capacity building and increased financing for long term monitoring programmes for coral reefs in the Turks and Caicos Islands	Turks and Caicos
Scaling-up efforts to rehabilitate threatened coral communities using recruits reared from wild-caught gametes	Curaçao
Watershed & biodiversity conservation on Bonaire	Bonaire
Improving the management of the invasive lionfish, <i>Pterois volitans</i> , by determining movement patterns and depth preference	Cayman Islands
Best of Bats!	Aruba, Curaçao, Sint Maarten
A nursery for endemics and key native species	Montserrat

Turks & Caicos Reef Fund awarded grant to study East Caicos coral reefs



East Caicos Coastline. Photo: Kathleen Wood

The Turks & Caicos Reef Fund (TCRF), the only active environmental non-governmental organization in the Turks & Caicos Islands, has been awarded a €50,000 grant to study the coral reefs off the coast of East Caicos. The grant, titled “*Understanding East Caicos KBA’s Corals and Coasts: A Key to Safeguarding TCI’s Future*,” was awarded by the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s (IUCN) BEST 2.0 Programme (Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Overseas Countries and Territories). Funding for the programme comes from the European Union.

“We are very pleased to be the recipient of this grant,” said Don Stark, Chairman of TCRF. “This is the second grant from the BEST 2.0 Programme we are involved in and appreciate the support of the IUCN and the EU Government.”

The project will be spearheaded by Don Stark of TCRF, in association with Kathleen McNary Wood of SWA Environmental and Marsha Pardee of MerAngel Ecological Services.

“The nearshore waters off the coast of East Caicos contain some of the best remaining unspoiled coral reef ecosystems in the Caribbean region,” said Ms. Wood, who also functions as the volunteer Research Director for the TCRF. “With the exception of only a small portion of marine habitat contained within the RAMSAR Nature Reserve, none of the coral reefs surrounding East Caicos have any conservation status, management plan or monitoring plan. East Caicos’ remoteness, the island’s uninhabited status and its limited use have historically protected the island’s marine resources from significant degradation; however, existing development schemes and increasing resource pressures are altering this status quo. Without adequate conservation, management and monitoring protocols in place, East Caicos’ fragile resources are at risk from uncontrolled land-based development, inappropriate and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing pressure and other unregulated and unsustainable pressures, increasing the island’s coral reefs’ vulnerability to global climate change and associated impacts.”

The project aims to address the current limitations of management and monitoring policy and improve long-term conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services within East Caicos’ coral reef ecosystems. This is to be done through the development of conservation zones and management and monitoring protocols. The selection of conservation zone classifications will be based on multi-criteria evaluation, which incorporates 16 ecosystem service and biodiversity values and quantitative and qualitative assessment based on Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) Caribbean methods. Conservation zone classifications and management and monitoring protocols



Critically Endangered Elkhorn Corals off East Caicos.

Photo: Kathleen Wood

will be agreed via workshops with the TCI management authority (DECR) and local stakeholders. After project completion, TCRF, in conjunction with DECR, will establish regular monitoring protocols at two-year intervals. The project methods and results will be shared via multi-media and open-access online media.

“This is a very important project which will help DECR identify new conservation zones around East Caicos based on stakeholder input, create management and monitoring protocols for this important cultural and environmental asset of the TCI, and provide for the ongoing management and monitoring of the gorgeous and unspoiled coral reefs off East Caicos,” said Mr. Stark. “We look forward to working closely with DECR staff to implement this project over the course of 2017.”

“East Caicos is one of the largest remaining, uninhabited islands left in the Caribbean and tropical Atlantic regions,” said Ms. Wood. “It has some of the most pristine stands of critically endangered staghorn *Acropora cervicornis* and elkhorn *Acropora palmate* corals seen anywhere around the TCI, and we have only started to study the all the reefs around East Caicos.”

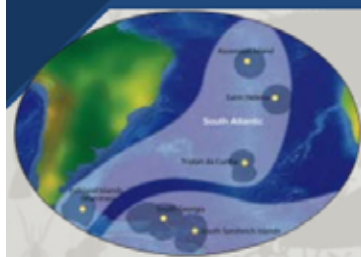
Mr. Stark encourages everyone to become a member of the TCRF to help preserve and protect the environment of the TCI. You can become a member by going to their website – www.tcreef.org/donate.html - or by contacting Mr. Stark by phone (347-8455) or email (donstark@tcreef.org).

About TCRF

Founded in 2010, the Turks & Caicos Reef Fund is the only active environmental advocacy organization in the TCI. It is an all volunteer-run organization that provides funding for education, research and conservation programs to individuals, organizations and agencies that help to preserve and protect the environment of the Turks & Caicos Islands. Their goal is to have at least 85% of all funds raised through voluntary contributions from divers and snorkelers visiting the Turks & Caicos Islands, directed to the Fund’s programmes.

Anyone wishing to donate or assist the TCRF in any way can contact them through their website, www.TCReef.org. Scuba divers visiting the islands are encouraged to make a \$10 donation through the purchase of a dive tag that can be attached to their dive gear to show their support. Snorkelers visiting the islands can show their support through the \$5 purchase of a pink or blue silicone wristband. A complete list of outlets for TCRF merchandise can be found on the organization’s website.

Medium Grant Projects Selected by the EC to be Funded

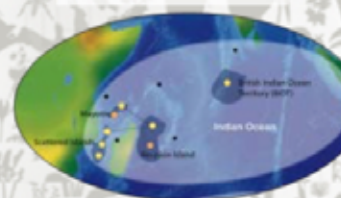


South Atlantic

Title	Territory
An ecological assessment of Ascension Island's shallow-water seamounts as candidate Marine Protected Areas	Ascension Island

Title	Territory
COPRA, Conservation et gestion intégrée des herbiers de phanérogames marines du parc naturel marin des Glorieuses et rôle fonctionnel pour les populations de tortues marines	Scattered Islands

Indian Ocean



Polar/Sub-polar

Title	Territory
Sustainable fishing in the Arctic: Can the harvest of Greenland's biggest export be compatible with the conservation of benthic ecosystems?	Greenland
Where are they now? Right whales in the South Georgia marine ecosystem	South Georgia



Project Update: Sei whales in the Falkland Islands

Falklands Conservation is currently carrying out a research project on the occurrence of endangered sei whales in Berkeley Sound (East Falkland). The project is financed by the BEST 2.0 Programme funded by the European Union, and aims to investigate the spatial distribution and abundance of whales in Berkeley Sound and the potential for interaction with human users of the Sound.

The first sei whales were reported in the study area in late January 2017. By the end of February, the project had completed six boat surveys and had already made some interesting discoveries. First, the sei whales appear to be actively feeding in the area, as evidenced by frequent observations of faecal plumes in the water. We have collected samples from several of these plumes, which

are red in colour and contain hard body parts from undigested krill. It is anticipated that this work will reveal information on sei whale diet, and can also potentially yield information on hormones and pollutants.

Second, we have found that we are able to identify individual sei whales using a research technique called photo-identification. Photographs are taken of the whales' dorsal fins, which are later catalogued according to the presence of nicks along the fin edges. Cookie-cutter shark scars are prevalent on the flanks of many individuals, and those scar patterns also provide a useful recognition feature. Many of the sei whales in Berkeley Sound have subtle distinguishing marks that allow them to be recognised over time, and we have already had re-sightings of several individuals on different dates during February. This information will demonstrate whether the same animals remain in the study area for prolonged periods, or whether there is a constant flux of individuals through the study area. It should also provide information on the number of animals using the area, and reveal whether individual sei whales maintain consistent social associations over time.

One aerial survey was carried out also in February, recording not only sei whales but also minke whales, Peale's dolphins and Commerson's dolphins. We have found that the sei whales can travel considerable distances between surfacings, and also move in unpredictable directions – which makes it challenging to collect, from the boat, standardised information on their spatial distribution and abundance. The aerial surveys offer a more systematic approach, providing a snapshot of distribution across the entire study area and, with the fast survey speed, producing a much reduced likelihood of re-counting the same individuals.



*Collecting a sample of sei whale faecal matter for diet analysis.
Photo: Jared Towers*



The dorsal fins of two of the most distinctive sei whales photographed in Berkeley Sound to date: (left) “Wonky” and (right) “Big Nick”.
Photos: Caroline Weir

The distance to all animals is measured on either side of the aircraft, using inclinometers; this allows us also to use distance sampling methods to produce an abundance estimate. To allow this abundance estimate to be corrected for submerged animals, the final component of the project involves collecting data on the dive intervals and surfacing behaviour of sei whales from the

Cape Pembroke lighthouse. The fieldwork will continue until May 2017, after which the sei whales depart the Falkland Islands for warmer regions.

Dr Caroline Weir, Sei Whale Project Officer, Falklands Conservation

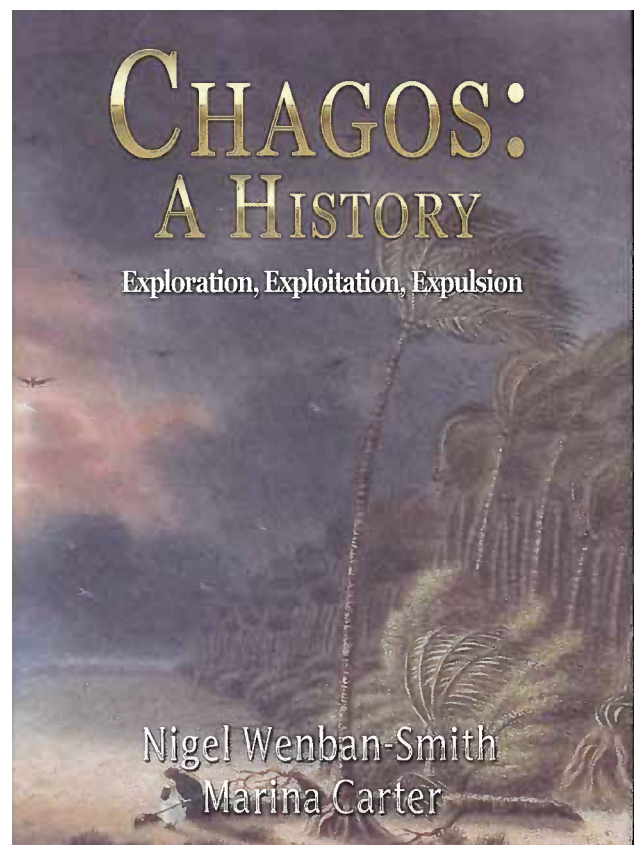
St Helena Airport

Issue 45 of *Forum News* reported on the then state of play of the airport, unable to operate scheduled services with large aircraft (as had been planned) because of the failure to deal with the known problem of wind shear. (When Charles Darwin visited in the 19th Century, he noted St Helena’s “impetuous winds”.) Following a review by the National Audit Office and oral evidence from DFID officials, the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee (PAC) issued a critical report on the airport project on 14 December 2016. Departmental responses to PAC reports are published on-line as *Treasury Minutes* <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/treasury-minutes>. The minute on the airport report was published on 9 March 2017. Priti Patel, DFID’s Secretary of State, told the Commons Select Committee on International Development on 19 December 2016: “I have appointed an external individual expert to undertake a detailed review of the project and programme.” No announcement has so far been made of the identity of the expert or of the terms of reference and timing of this review.

Meanwhile, on 7 December the St Helena Government (SHG) started the process of finding an interim air service provider using smaller aircraft. The bids to provide this service are now in. No details have yet been made public of the number of bidders or their identity. We understand that, once a short list has been agreed, there will be detailed negotiations with the hope that a final contract can be signed with the preferred bidder by the end of May; and that these interim commercial services can start by the end of 2017.

Major book on Chagos published

The long-awaited, deeply researched and thoroughly referenced book on the history of the Chagos Archipelago (British Indian Ocean Territory) has been published. *Chagos: A History - Exploration, Exploitation, Expulsion*, by former UKOTCF Council Member Nigel Wenban-Smith and Marina Carter, is published by Chagos Conservation Trust. Hardback; 550 pages, with many maps and photographs; ISBN: 978-0-9954596-0-1. Available (£40.00, plus shipping) from YPD Books, 64 Hallfield Road, Layerthorpe, York YO31 7ZQ, UK (+44 1904 431213; www.ypdbooks.com).





Successful Darwin Plus Projects, Round 5

Project Reference	Project Title	Project Leader	Lead Organisation	Country	Darwin Funds
DPLUS055	Saving the Iguana Islands of Turks and Caicos	Elizabeth Radford	RSPB	Turks and Caicos Islands	£199,619
DPLUS056	Assessment of current and future Invasive Alien Species in Cyprus	Helen Roy	CEH Wallingford	Cyprus	£217,405
DPLUS057	Where are they now? Right whales in South Georgia waters	Jennifer Jackson	BAS	South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands	£312,738
DPLUS058	FELLOWSHIP - Natasha Stevens	Darren Duncan	Government of St Helena	St Helena	£9,000
DPLUS059	Establishment of the national framework for invasive plant management (in St Helena)	Derek Henry	Government of St Helena	St Helena	£228,175
DPLUS060	Pioneering a New Model of Marine Park Management in Anguilla	Stuart Wynne	Government of Anguilla	Anguilla	£289,431
DPLUS061	Protecting herbivorous fish to conserve Cayman Island coral reef biodiversity	Carrie Manfrino	Central Caribbean Marine Institute	Cayman Islands	£244,686
DPLUS062	Securing the future of the Tristan marine environment	Andy Schofield	RSPB	Tristan da Cunha	£288,490
DPLUS063	The Ascension Island Ocean Sanctuary (ASIOS): (planning for the Atlantic's largest marine reserve)	Sam Weber	Ascension Island Government Conservation Department	Ascension	£279,122
DPLUS064	Characterising Bermuda's baitfish populations to improve management and fishery sustainability	Joanna Pitt	Bermuda Zoological Society	Bermuda	£189,729
DPLUS065	Mapping Falklands and South Georgia coastal margins for Spatial Planning	Paul Brickle	SAERI	Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands	£278,696
DPLUS066	Climate change adaptation in the fisheries of Anguilla and Montserrat	Terrence Phillips	CANARI	Anguilla, Montserrat	£260,925
DPLUS067	Regional collaboration to achieve sustainable Caribbean fisheries management	Ana Leocadio	Cefas	Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands	£228,584
DPLUS068	Building foundations to monitor and conserve Falklands marine forest habitats	Juliet Brodie	Natural History Museum	Falkland Islands	£99,998
DPLUS069	Building data resources for managing the SGSSI Marine Protected Area	Susie M Grant	BAS	South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands	£173,931
DPLUS070	Oceanographic influences on the St Helena pelagic ecosystem	Elizabeth Clingham	Government of St Helena	St Helena	£247,938

UK-Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council 2016

Paragraphs from the Communiqué:

1. The Minister for the Overseas Territories, Baroness Anelay, and elected leaders and representatives of the Overseas Territories met as the Joint Ministerial Council (JMC) at Lancaster House in London on 1 and 2 November. We welcomed the attendance at the JMC of Ministers from the Departments for International Development; Exiting the European Union; International Trade; Health; Work and Pensions; and Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Solicitor General, demonstrating the UK Government's commitment to a whole of government approach to supporting the Territories.

Environment and climate change

13. The UK and the Overseas Territories have a shared ambition to set world standards in stewardship of the Territories' unique natural environments. Acknowledging the need to safeguard the environment and the rich biodiversity of the Territories, we welcomed the continuation of and increased funding for projects under the Overseas Territories Environment and Climate Fund (Darwin Plus). We welcomed the extension of the Convention on Biodiversity to the Falkland Islands.

14. We welcomed the recent announcement of the designation of a no-take Marine Protected Area (MPA) around Pitcairn and a sustainable use MPA around St Helena and the commitment from

Tristan da Cunha to establish a regime for protecting the waters across its entire maritime zone by 2020. This, together with an evidence-based MPA around Ascension by 2019, will more than double the protected ocean around the Overseas Territories to an area of around 4 million square kilometres by 2020, supported by UK funding for surveillance and enforcement. We acknowledged the ongoing work and achievements made in the other Territories to improve the management and protection of their marine environments and welcomed UK support available for this work through the Blue Belt programme.

15. We recognised the impact that climate change has on the economies, infrastructure and ecosystems of the Territories and the important interests of the Overseas Territories in international efforts to combat and mitigate the effects of climate change. The UK committed to consult Territory governments on the issue of application to the Territories of the Paris Global Climate Change Agreement. The UK reiterated its commitment fully to consult the Overseas Territories ahead of its participation at international forums on climate change to ensure their priorities are taken into account and to include them in delegations where appropriate, while welcoming Territories' links with regional and international organisations. We recognised the importance of enhancing the environmental resilience of the Territories to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change and supported the development of UK programme support to reduce the negative economic and health consequences linked to environmental impacts.



UK Overseas Territories ministers, with (centre) FCO Minister for the Overseas Territories, Baroness Anelay, and DFID Minister for the Overseas Territories, Lord Bates, Joint Ministerial Council, FCO, London November 2016. Photo: FCO

30 Years – Viewed through the eyes of *Forum News*

Elsewhere in this *Forum News* (pages 1-17), we review some major developments over the 30 years of the Forum's existence. Inevitably, this covers only a small number of the total range of items addressed by UKOTCF and its partners. To try to balance this (but still not covering all issues, by any means), we summarise below, in note form, the main contents of the previous issues of *Forum News*. Included also are images of a few pages from over the years.

Issue 1: January 1989

NGO Forum for the UK Dependent Territories formed 1987

Sara Oldfield appointed Coordinator in January 1989 or just before UKDTs [UK Dependent Territories] one of current themes of WWF-UK programme

Zoological Society of London expedition to St Helena to find giant earwig *Labidura herculaena* – failed, assumed extinct; endemic flowering plants being conserved; ecology of surviving endemic land-bird, the wirebird *Charadrius sanctaehelenae* being studied; call for need of survey of lower plants, invertebrates & seabirds made

4 potential Ramsar Sites in Bermuda and 1 in Turks & Caicos being considered

Hong Kong – call to designate Mai Po Marshes as Ramsar Wetland; controls introduced in August 1988 on ivory importation Henderson Island, Pitcairn likely to be first World Heritage Site in UK Dependencies; Chagos suggested also

Not all Territories are included in UK's ratification of international conservation agreements, and Forum aims to work on this.

Publications: *Fragments of Paradise* [in many ways the founding document of the Forum] published by several member

organisations

Issue 2: August 1989

Forum meets with UK Government (FCO, ODA [forerunner of DFID] & DoE [forerunner of Defra]; Government makes useful factual comments on *Fragments of Paradise*, but unable to respond to any of specific recommendations in the report, but welcomed formation of Forum. Liaison with UK Government to be primarily through FCO Maritime, Aviation & Environment Dept [later becoming Environment Policy Department and other names, before being abolished about 25 years later, FCO unilaterally cancelling the useful joint meetings shortly after]

Fauna & Flora Preservation Society & World Conservation Monitoring Centre join Forum

International Council for Bird Preservation - British Section starting a part-funded programme for UKDTs [lost in the 1990s, when RSPB took over ICBP to create BirdLife, transferring the funds held in trust for UKOT conservation to general funds]

Anguilla Governments drafts proposal to implement marine parks; Forum helping

Marine Conservation Society proposal for coral education in TCI Slow progress on Ramsar designations in Bermuda, Caymans & TCI (but progress encouraged by Department of Environment/Nature Conservancy Council/NGO Working Group on Ramsar & European Community Special Protection Areas [chaired by a Dr Pienkowski]; Anguilla not yet in Ramsar

Plantlife created and intends to be active in UKDTs

Falkland Islands study completed on fishing impacts on seabirds

Books published on birds of Gibraltar & Falkland Islands (FI), and wild flowers of FI

Issue 3: February 1990

Article on parrots & UKDTs: Cayman; Henderson (Pitcairn)

Hurricane Hugo & Montserrat (17/9/88) – habitat and 98% of houses damaged; 25% of 12000 inhabitants homeless; rock star & music industry support

Forum Chair, Tony Hare, visits Falklands at invitation of FI Tourism – lots of potential [as now well known]

TCI designates 8 new protected areas on 21/9/89, bringing total to 28 and opening way for Ramsar designations

Marine Conservation Society developing reef research programme for Chagos; previous work last carried out by Joint Services Expedition in 1978/79

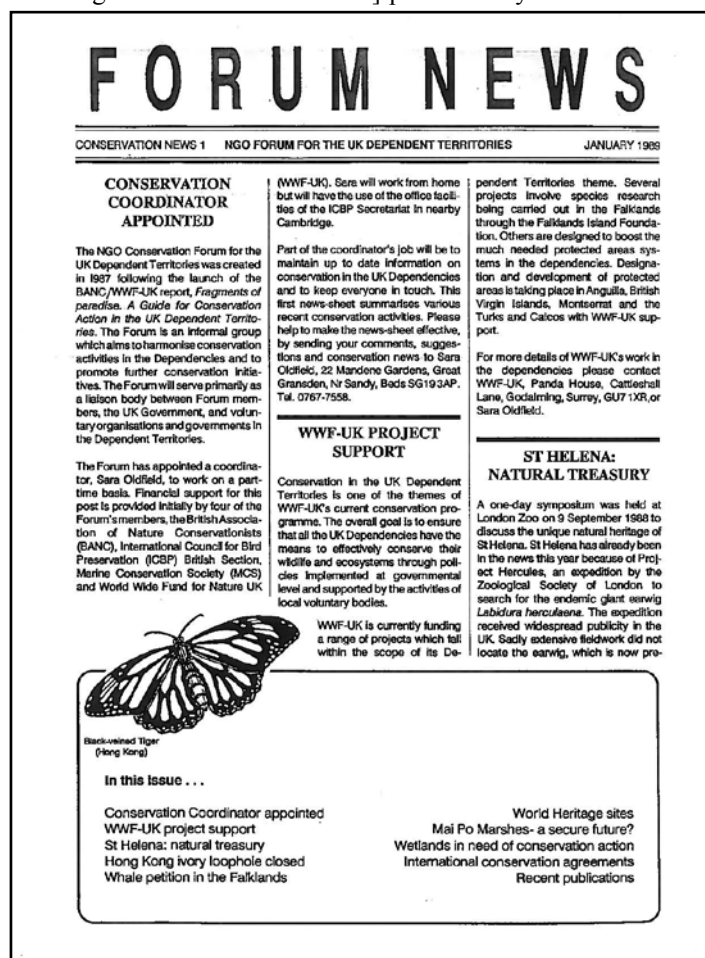
Expedition to Henderson plus the other 3 Pitcairn islands over five 3-month phases planned for January 1991 to April 1992. Coordinated by Mike de L Brooke [later Chairman of UKOTCF Pitcairn Working Group, which became part of Southern Oceans WG]

Issue 4: September 1990

Hong Kong special issue in final years (to 1997) of British rule: *China's Silent Springs*; education; CITES & wildlife trade; Mai Po marshes – urgent call for protection; plans for new airport and land-claim

Issue 5: May 1991

Caribbean conservation: Ramsar extended to Anguilla; need for wetland policy in BVI; TCI Ramsar Site of North, Middle & East



Issue 1: front page

FORUM NEWS

CONSERVATION NEWS 4

NGO FORUM FOR THE UK DEPENDENT TERRITORIES

SEPTEMBER 1990

HONG KONG SPECIAL ISSUE

In the final years of Hong Kong's status as a Crown Colony many questions are being asked about the legacy of British rule. In this special issue of Forum News we focus on the conservation situation in Hong Kong, and the future beyond 1997. The Nature Conservancy Council has sought confirmation that the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration has provided

for international agreements applied in Hong Kong to remain and that existing conservation legislation will continue after 1997. Professor Brian Morton of Hong Kong University provides his personal perspective on the future for nature conservation and we also look at some of the major conservation topics of international concern.

We have drawn largely on information provided by WWF-HK. Established in 1981, WWF-HK has become the leading NGO in Hong Kong, working closely with other voluntary conservation groups and government agencies to secure a future for indigenous species and natural habitats.

CHINA'S SILENT SPRINGS

When I first was asked to write an article for Forum News on the future of Hong Kong's nature reserves following hand over of the territory to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, I thought about it for a while and then declined the invitation. The implication in the invitation was that any such reserves would not be protected so fully as under the British administration and as even greater exploitation of the land got under way.

The truth is however rather different. China has established many reserves and some of the more well known ones, such as Poyang Lake, receive much international interest and support. There are five mangrove reserves on the southern coast of China. In contrast Hong Kong has but one official reserve - the small and little known Tai Po Kau forest reserve. Our best known 'reserve' is the Mai Po Marshes (see below), purchased and managed by WWF-HK through public support and based around a mangrove, reed and gei wai (shrimp pond) wetland. Internationally recognised for its bird-life, both resident and migrant, the reserve attracts thousands of visitors each month. But, actually, Mai Po is not an official reserve, it is a highly sensitive border area that the Hong Kong Government controls firmly and is only accorded SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) status which, in truth is no protection at all. Recently one of Hong Kong's more prestigious newspapers, ran an editorial asking why such an internationally recognised habitat was still not accorded full protection.

At present, I am chairman of another WWF-HK committee trying to set up a coral reserve (Hoi Ha Wan) in a tiny bay in Hong

Kong's northeastern waters. Work proceeds, but it will be literally years before the government designates it a reserve - if ever. On a point of interest, there is no protection afforded to any corals or coral areas under Chinese and Hong Kong jurisdiction. So, you see, Hong Kong is not exactly a pioneer in habitat conservation and it is just possible that come 1997, the Chinese Government would act with more alacrity in affording Mai Po and Hoi Ha reserve status.

In that case, why this article? Recently I visited China, notably the delta of the Pearl River, an enormous entity, draining an area of China the size of Great Britain and forming between its tributaries vast wetlands that constitute China's ricebowl. I have been to China before, but usually by plane, or travelling by train through the night, and for the most part, staying in cities. I also know about, indeed have fought against, the illegal importation into Hong Kong from China of wildlife for food. Civet cats, otters, pangolins, owls, eagles, in fact almost any living creature is brought in, is often confiscated by the Customs Service and either destroyed, released locally or returned to China. Hong Kong is on the cutting edge of wildlife conservation in southern China and WWF International and WWF-HK tries to promote conservation in that country - at many levels and in many ways. The need for conservation and environmental education is desperate.

In March I was in Guangzhou (Canton) on a short official visit to the South China Sea Institute of Oceanography and to visit the coastline of the Pearl's delta in order to instigate research on a clam, *Cyrenoida subul-*

cata, little known and, to me, as a coastal ecologist, of great interest biologically. I'm not a bird-watcher, but after working for the protection of Mai Po for many years and participating each year in "Hong Kong's Big Bird Race" to spot as many species as possible within 24 hours and thereby raise funds for the protection of Mai Po, I have acquired a more than passing interest in birds and a little skill in their identification. The team the University of Hong Kong fields each year for this event is called "Bird-brains" - which, I think will illustrate the level of my own and my colleagues' skills. On last year's bird race we saw 117 species out of a grand total of 271 species identified by all grand teams on the day.

I live just outside the city of Victoria, on Hong Kong Island and am sometimes woken up by a cacophony of Black-faced Laughing Thrushes and Magpies arguing about rights. If I wake early, I can recognise the earlier calls of a Violet Whistling Thrush and the Magpie Robins. Sometimes, I even hear a Cuckoo, always doves, in summer Black Drongos and on my way to work (10 minutes) will always see sparrows, Chinese Bulbuls, the occasional Indian Mynah and again, always, Black-headed Monkeys, nesting in the hills and scavenging in the harbour. The birds, indeed, are obvious in this city as anything else - they characterise its skies.

Back, however, to Guangzhou with no thoughts of birds in my head. Stepping out of the hotel for a stroll, I could not fail to miss a man standing on the pavement holding a 2m string tethering, by one leg, an Eastern Grass Owl. It was unharmed, physically, and tried to fly, but against the tether soon re-

Issue 4: front page

Caicos declared in 1990, plus plans for new TCI legislation, with a new Wild Bird Ordinance coming into effect in 1990. Montserrat - conservation education (RARE Center and WWF-UK) centred on oriole, carried out by Rose Willock [now a mainstay of ZJB Radio Montserrat]. RARE now to work on Cayman and parrots. May 1990: James Martin-Jones, WWF-UK and recently appointed Forum Chairman, visited all Caribbean UKOTs. With Forum, WWF-UK worked out specific budget line to support.

Gibraltar: Sara Oldfield visits; Minister for Heritage announces declaration of Upper Rock Nature Reserve, called for by Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society (GONHS) & John Cortés for many years. Legislation passed re CITES & taking EU Birds Directive into law. Other projects include artificial reef and converting building into GONHS field centre.

US scientist concerned at proposed habitat destruction for HK's new airport.

Ascension: ICBP call for protected area for Ascension seabirds. Forum & UK Government agree need for feasibility study on eradication of cats & rats; and look for funding.

Issue 6: February 1992

Forum entering its fifth year. ZSL & RSPB add to support.

Forum St Helena WG [the first Forum working group] set up in 1991

Forum advises WWF-UK on its Conservation Programme theme on DTs.

Funding application to FCO successful at end of 1991 for database project. Working with new Environment, Science & Energy Dept of FCO, hoping to stimulate effective planning

Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Protocol under the

Cartagena Convention signed in 1990 by UK on behalf of BVI, Cayman Is & TCI. Next step to get domestic legislation in line [Cayman volunteered to lead as the first territory to implement, but the legislation required was not passed until 2013.]

Peter Scott Commemorative Expedition to the Pitcairn Islands, led by Dr Mike Brooke, Cambridge - progress report given to Forum in June 1991. Management Plan for Henderson Island being prepared.

Falklands Conservation formed on 1 Aug 1991 by merger of the previously separate UK-based and Falklands-based conservation NGOs.

Issue 7: June 1992

Study on Ramsar implementation, commissioned by DoE: Sites identified in Bermuda, BVI, Caymans, Falklands, Hong Kong & Montserrat - backlog needs to be cleared. Report to DoE by mid-August. David Pritchard, RSPB, trying to speed up Bermuda designations.

Attempt underway to reintroduce Bermuda captive-bred Caribbean flamingos to Anegada (following previous exercise in 1986 to Guana - but too small and the birds all left by a few years later).

Montserrat National Trust (MNT) core-funding from WWF-UK draws to an end. Sarah Cross describes some of the ways MNT trying to become self-funding.

MCS education work in TCI; and moves in progress towards a National Trust. Foundation for the Protection of Reefs and Islands from Degradation and Exploitation (PRIDE) doing education work.

Potential development of ecotourism in UKDTs.

Beauchêne I, Falklands, under threat from oil slick after trawler sinks; also possible rats.

Issue 8: July 1993

Plantlife & Royal Botanic Gardens Kew join Forum, and Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society as first DT member.

Forum undertakes 6-month review of own approach following discussion paper by Sara Cross.

Convention on Biological Diversity: UK one of 153 states to sign in June 1992. UK expected to ratify by end 1993. Needs National Action Plan for Biodiversity - Forum Coordinator editing chapter on Antarctica & Dependencies.

St Helena mission, involving World Conservation Monitoring Centre for the Forum, 6 weeks in St Helena, to develop Sustainable Environment and Development Strategy Options.

Member profile: GONHS

Montserrat: Country Environmental Profile nearing completion - Island Resources Foundation. MNT appoints first Director; Mrs Sarita Weekes Francis elected President.

Turks & Caicos National Trust launched. Duke of Edinburgh presented WWF-UK cheque for £7000 during visit.

Friends of Chagos established.

New snappy name for Forum: suggestions: UK Dependent Territories Conservation Forum; Overseas Territories Conservation Union; The Forum for Conservation in the British Overseas Territories (FCBOT)

Issue 9: March 1994

Heading changed to UK Dependent Territories Conservation Forum

FORUM NEWS

CONSERVATION NEWS 9

UK DEPENDENT TERRITORIES CONSERVATION FORUM

MARCH 1994

THIS FIRST 1994 ISSUE OF FORUM NEWS MARKS ONE OF THE BUSIEST PERIODS OF ACTIVITY FOR THE FORUM, as it embarks on an ambitious series of projects and undertakes a complete review of its objectives, activities and services. Ultimately, we hope that a refreshed, revitalized and more efficient and effective Forum will emerge, better equipped to serve the interests of conservation groups and biodiversity projects in the UK Dependencies.

THE DARWIN INITIATIVE

A major development for the Forum at the end of 1993 was its successful bid for funding from the Darwin Initiative. The funding, to be used over a two and a half year period up to April 1996 will allow the Forum to strengthen its UK base and to develop a more integrated and efficient support network for NGOs in the Dependencies. In general terms, the Initiative's objective is to support the aims of the Biodiversity Convention by deploying Britain's scientific, educational and commercial strengths to assist the conservation and sustainable use of the world's resources of biodiversity and natural habitats. Details of the Forum's programme under this initiative are as follows:

Our main objectives under this Programme:

1. To increase the level of support for existing conservation organisations in the British Dependent Territories, by conducting grass roots research in order to prepare an action plan through which the Forum can act to better serve the needs of Dependent Territory conservation groups and thus, in turn more effectively further biodiversity conservation objectives within the Dependencies.
2. To support the development of new conservation NGOs in those Dependencies which do not have an environmental NGO at present.
3. To strengthen the support provided by experts and scientific institutions in the UK for biodiversity conservation in the Dependencies by expanding and consolidating the Forum's contact network and database.

Timetable for Carrying out the Project:

- December 1993 to March 1994
 - Pilot project to research and determine biodiversity conservation needs in each Dependent Territory and the assistance to be developed by the Forum.
- April 1994 to April 1996
 - Development and implementation of an Action Plan as determined by the Pilot Study to carry out priorities and project objectives.

- The updating and expansion of the Forum's Projects Database, in order to produce a definitive report upon the status of knowledge and expertise in the UK regarding Biodiversity in the Dependencies.

- The analysis of conservation recommendations for each Dependent Territory and the preparation of a strategy for producing priority project proposals for implementation.

- Expansion of the network of Forum Supporting Members and subscribers to Forum News, in order to increase the level of UK based activity and interest for biodiversity conservation in the British Dependencies.

For any further information about this project, please contact the Forum Coordinator.

FORUM MEMBERSHIP

This Spring, we hope to encourage all NGOs in the Dependencies to become full members of the Forum. Details will be sent to each known conservation organisation shortly. Any other organisations who would like to join, but do not have details, please contact the Coordinator.

In this Issue...

Darwin Initiative
Oil in the Falklands
UK Biodiversity Action Plan

Friends of the Chagos Update
Life in the Freezer



Issue 9: front page – a change of name

End 1993: successful bid for funding from Darwin Initiative [for what became the Conservation Review]: potential to strengthen base and develop more integrated support deploying Britain's scientific, educational and commercial strengths to assist the conservation and sustainable use. Over 2.5 years to April 1996:

1. to increase the level of support for existing conservation organisations in the British dependent territories, by conducting grassroots research in order to prepare an action plan through which the Forum can act to better serve the needs of Dependent Territory conservation groups and thus, in turn more effectively, further biodiversity conservation objectives within the Dependencies.
2. How to support the development of new conservation NGOs in those Dependencies which do not have an environmental NGO at present.
3. To strengthen the support provided by experts and scientific institutions in the UK for biodiversity conservation in the dependencies by expanding and consolidating the Forum's contact network and database.

Encouragement to NGOs in the Dependencies to become members of the Forum.

Report of a Dependent Territories conference held in November 1993 in London, sponsored by the Governments of Gibraltar and the Falklands with the theme progress through partnership. It was attended by representatives from most of the European Dependencies. The keynote address was delivered by the UK Foreign Secretary, Rt Hon. Douglas Hurd, and speeches were made also by the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, Hon. Joe Bassano, and Hon. Norma Edwards of the Falklands Islands Legislative Council.

The UK Action Plan for Biodiversity was launched on 25 January 1994. It includes a chapter on UK support to biodiversity overseas

with a summary of the situation in all the UK Dependencies except the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). The Forum played a key role in collating and summarising information for this chapter and provided an agenda for conservation action undertaken in Dependencies, drawn up in full consultation with the conservation bodies in the Dependencies.

In this context also, the SPAW Protocol [Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Protocol of the regional Cartagena Convention] was mentioned in the context Caribbean Dependencies but this important protocol had not yet been ratified. This situation persisted for many years.

The *Life in the Freezer* BBC television series presented by David Attenborough noted that much of the filming was on South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula.

Prospects of oil development in the Falklands Islands waters mentioned.

The first AGM of Friends of the Chagos was held on 13 October 1993, with formal approval given for submission to the Charity Commissioner.

An international discussion meeting on the biography, ecology and prehistory the Pitcairn Islands would be held at the Linnean Society of London on 5-6 May 1994.

In 1994, after 6 years as the Forum's first Coordinator, Sara Oldfield, moved to become the Chairman, and Sarah Cross moved into the Coordinator post.

Issue 11: February 1995

In addition to work on the conservation strategy, the forum held 4 half-day meetings to discuss issues and action projects during 1994. On two occasions, these were linked to half-day meetings with government representatives from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, the Department of Environment, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the Overseas Development Administration [the forerunner of DFID]. The Forum's newly formed Executive Committee [the forerunner of Council] also met four times during the year, and needed to tackle a greater volume of work behind the scenes than previously accomplished with just the Forum meetings.

At the end of November 1994, the Forum Coordinator visited the Cayman Islands, the Turks and Caicos Islands and Anguilla as part of a UK team conducting an environmental review of the Dependent Territories, together with Frances MacLeod of the FCO Environment, Science & Energy Department and Dr Barry Blake recently appointed environmental adviser to the ODA at the British Development Division for the Caribbean, based in Barbados. The team met a wide cross-section of local people involved with working in the environmental field, setting the basis for further work needs identified.

In March 1994, the Island Council of Tristan da Cunha agreed that Inaccessible Island should be declared a nature reserve. Taken together with Gough Island, which was already a nature reserve, some 44% of the land of the Tristan Group was now set aside for conservation. The islands are particularly important for breeding seabirds. In October 1984, UK Government submitted to UNESCO a nomination to include Gough in the World Heritage List. Gough is the largest scarcely modified cool temperate island ecosystem in the South Atlantic Ocean; it is the least disturbed temperate oceanic island of its size in the world. It supports 2 species of endemic land birds and a range of endemic plants and invertebrates; and is one of the most important seabird colonies in the world. The recently introduced *Management Plan for Gough* submitted with the nomination provided a strict management of Gough as a wildlife reserve. A successful nomination would

make Gough the second World Heritage Site in UK Dependent Territories. The first, Henderson Island (Pitcairns) in the Pacific, was declared in 1988.

Little Cayman, the smallest of the three Cayman Islands, hosts the territory's first Ramsar Site, designated in 1994. The booby colony consists of 200 acres of swamp fringed by black and white mangrove which runs into mixed dry green evergreen thicket vegetation. It is home to the important breeding colony of the red-footed booby, estimated at 5000 pairs and possibly the largest in the Western Hemisphere. A range of other birds present include hundreds of pairs of magnificent frigate birds and black-necked stilts. The site is known as the Booby Pond and Rookery. The designation was made possible by a grant of £10,000 from the British Government, money raised by the Governor's Fund for Nature, a charitable trust established in September 1980 by Governor Michael Gore [later a member of UKOTCF Council].

Towards the end of the 1980s, there was concern at the deteriorating state of the abandoned whaling stations at South Georgia. In 1991, a clean-up team dealt with large quantities of fuel oil, asbestos, sulphuric acid and other hazardous materials. Deterioration of the stations was being greatly exacerbated by looting and vandalism, so Nigel Bonner, the advisor to the clean-up team, and who had been Sealing Inspector at South Georgia during the 1950s, suggested that the presence of a museum would help check further depredations. The start was made in 1991 by refurbishing the manager's house at Grytviken, the original whaling station. Artefacts were collected and put on display, and visitors from cruise ships, naval vessels and other ships were shown round the remains of the station. In August 1994, Nigel Bonner died suddenly, leaving the Museum securely established.

The annual Foreign Office assistant undersecretary's project budget (AUSPB) yielded £30,000 for the following projects in August 1994: ecological restoration of Ascension, which was jointly funded by FCO, RSPB and WWF-UK; production and publication of a bird list for the Turks and Caicos Islands by the TCI National Trust; and the mountain chicken and bat survey in Montserrat, funded by FCO and the Fauna & Flora Preservation Society. Towards the end of 1994, FCO was able to allocate further AUSPB funds totalling £60,000 to the following projects: the National Parks Trust, British Virgin Islands, for the production of their endowment fund brochure; to the Forum for the purchase of a computer and upgrading of their Dependent Territories database; to the British Antarctic Survey for a GIS mapping project in South Georgia; and to Falklands Conservation for the production of an advisory document to update environmental legislation in the Falklands and to conduct surveys on plants, invertebrates and selected wetlands. In addition, WWF UK was currently funding projects which were underway in: Anegada (BVI); Montserrat; and the Turks and Caicos Islands; as well as the work in Ascension mentioned above. WWF-UK identifies practice of funding in close association with the Forum and is currently developing an outline programme for its financial year starting in July 1995.

On 6 July 1995, the St Helena Post Office would release a set of four postage stamps and a souvenir sheet featuring the five endemic species of the island's invertebrates. These included the blushing snail, the golden sail spider, the spiky yellow woodlouse, and the St Helena shore crop. This presentation sheet featured also the now extinct giant earwig.

The National Trust for the Turks and Caicos Islands launches *Islands in Time* campaign late in 1994, with the hope to raise US\$600,000 over a two-year period with US\$250,000 to go to in an endowment fund [not achieved]

Montserrat National Trust celebrates its 25th anniversary.

Issue 12: October 1995

UK Dependent Territories: a Conservation Review to be published in early 1996, after two years of work.

Blue iguanas in Grand Cayman hatch 16 babies, twice the number in the previous year.

Cayman Government approved new Ramsar Wetland of International Importance at Central Mangrove Wetland [but this was never implemented].

Montserrat biodiversity project takes place despite Tropical Storm Iris, Hurricane Luis and Hurricane Marilyn, and the start of significant volcanic activity in the southern portion of the island. Work focused on amphibian and reptile species, as well as bats.

Falklands Conservation embarks on a census of gentoo and rockhopper penguins, in the context of recent declines.

Royal Botanic Gardens Kew establish a new course in plant propagation for threatened species, with UK Dependent Territories as priorities.

The restoration of seabird populations on Ascension project starts on the eradication of feral cats, legislation about importation, and sterilisation of pet cats.

A plan for the conservation management of St Helena's endemic plants produced.

The British Dependent Territories of the Caribbean's GIS workshop held in Grand Turk in March 1995. Specialists visit Turks and Caicos Islands to survey more than a hundred cays and islands and census the endemic iguanas.

FCO announces funding from the Assistant Under Secretary's Programme Budget for 1995/96 for 7 projects, with 2 in reserve, in the UKOTs.

The 1996 Chagos expedition planned for six weeks from February 1996.

Issue 13: June 1996

British Ornithologists' Union and the National Trust join UKOTCF.

UKOTCF Pitcairn Working Group formed in late 1995.

Development threats around the Mai Po and Inner Deep Bay (designated as a Ramsar Site in September 1995).

Montserrat national parks legislation passed.

Turks and Caicos Environment Trust Fund initiated by legislation, by the addition of 1% to accommodation tax to be placed in a special fund.

St Helena's first National Park declared on Commonwealth Day, 11th March 1996: Diana's Peak National Park is the island's main water catchment and supports almost all the remaining high altitude tree fern and cabbage tree woodland as well as associated invertebrate species including the rare sail spider, spiky yellow woodlouse and species of endemic weevils.

Issue 14: December 1996

The Forum becomes a registered charity and company limited by guarantee in October 1996. The British Microbial Biodiversity Association and the British Ecological Society join Forum. The Forum met four times in 1996 and twice with UK Government, with UK territory government representatives attending.

Nine environmental projects, totalling £122,000 funded from the AUSPB.

Gibraltar develops studies and conservation programmes for dolphins.

British Indian Ocean Territory expedition involves a six-week visit by nearly 30 scientists and technicians.

Studies on indigenous and alien vascular plants, bryophytes and macro invertebrates, as well as on seabirds, undertaken on Gough Island Wildlife Reserve, and World Heritage Site, since 1995.

Issue 15: December 1997

First AGM under the new structure held on 1 October 1997, with a meeting of the Wider Caribbean Working Group on the previous day and the inaugural meeting of the South Atlantic Working Group in the morning.

Conference on the future of the remaining British Dependent Territories announced for 4 February 1998 at the Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre in London, involving the Foreign Secretary, Rt Hon. Robin Cook MP.

Team from the Montserrat Government, RSPB and Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust visited Montserrat to check the status of the Montserrat oriole in October 1997.

Schoolchildren on Ascension Island produce newsletter on the turtles, resulting from their work.

UKOTCF's first annual report, for 1996/1997, in the new structure published.

Anguilla, in May 1995, passed a 5-year moratorium on the catching of sea turtles as a first step towards their conservation.

UK Government commits to adding the British Indian Ocean Territory to UK's ratification of the Ramsar Convention and to designate Wetlands of International Importance before the end of 1998 [not achieved]

Bird atlas for the Falkland Islands published.

Issue 16: December 1998

Ascension Island management plan progresses.

Three Pitcairn Islands cleared of rats [1 of these proved to be unsuccessful].

Threat to important wetlands identified as: dredging in the Cayman Islands; and proposed major ship port in the largest uninhabited



FORUM NEWS

CONSERVATION NEWS FOR THE OVERSEAS TERRITORIES CONSERVATION FORUM, DECEMBER 1997, ISSN 0950-0804



St. Helena Tern

Editor's Comment

1998 has been a busy year for the Forum and its members. We have maintained a full programme of meetings with members, regional working groups and Government and are finding that our services are in increasing demand. Part of this demand has led to the development of exciting new conservation projects and initiatives. We hope that Ascension Island will soon adopt a management plan which will take steps to protect its important species and habitats, and three of the Pitcairn Islands have been cleared of rats this year.

On a less optimistic note, much of our collective effort this year has been taken up with voicing our concerns about serious threats to the Overseas Territories' valuable natural resources. The natural resources of the Caribbean Overseas Territories, in particular, are constantly being eroded by large scale developments.

The development of protective legislation for important species and habitats is progressing at a slow pace while planning permission is being fought for against and commercial developments. As a result, globally important wetlands in the Cayman Islands and the Turks & Caicos Islands could soon be lost to a marl dredging operation and a cruise ship port, respectively while Southern Island, not long ago proposed for inclusion in Anguilla's marine reserves, may well be a rocket launching base by the end of next year. Ironically, it appears to be the Territories which are heavily dependent on nature tourism that are at the same time allowing foreign developers to destroy their attraction for tourists.

The Forum will continue to raise public awareness of just how high the stakes are.

St Helena Environmental Awareness Year

At the suggestion of local groups and organisations on St. Helena, the Governor has given his full support and approval for an Environmental Awareness Year, from 1st October 1998 to 30th September 1999. The aim of the Awareness Year is to encourage everyone to take a fresh look at what is around them: to become aware of the environment; to take pride in it; to understand how different activities and decisions can impact upon the environment and to be more responsible for its conservation.

The programme of events will involve all age groups. Suggestions made so far include organising guided walks to heritage and conservation sites; competitions to encourage people to go out and discover things on their back doorstep and to create artwork, songs, poetry and short stories for publication. There will be talks on radio and articles in the St. Helena News. Visiting international researchers will be encouraged, as will promotion of publications, school and community projects, displays and exhibitions and marine nature trails. Plans include the introduction of environmental legislation related to the National Park, litter clearance, the Heritage Museum project, the provision of signs and information boards and trips around the island on the RMS St. Helena with talks on the history and geography of the Island.

In this issue...

Wetlands on Sombrovo Island Threatened by Robert Lauer, Facility, **pages 2/3**

UK Government White Paper on Overseas Territories **pages 4/5**

Ascension Island Planning for Change **pages 4/5**

The Forum at the OTA Conference **page 5**

Exceptions to the Rule? **page 6**

Proposed Distribution of Natural Wetlands by East Cocos Port & Holiday

Development, **page 7**

CITES Workshop, **page 8**

Issue 16: above: front page of first 8-page issue; and another name change, as well as (below) news of the White Paper, and UKOTCF's ideas for what became the Environment Charters

UK Government White Paper on Overseas Territories

The UK Foreign Secretary, Rt Hon. Robin Cook MP, outlined his initial review of the relationship between the UK and its Overseas Territories in his speech at the Dependent Territories Association in February (see opposite). Following on from this, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is producing a White Paper. This is a policy document outlining the UK Government's proposals for future arrangements. Although there was concern that the environment was not mentioned in Mr Cook's speech, FCO informed the Forum in June of the intention to include consideration of the environment in the White Paper, and invited Forum participants to attend a meeting to discuss this further. Immediately after the meeting, the Forum had an opportunity to contribute some written submissions. Unfortunately, the whole process was undertaken at such a short notice that wider consultations were not possible. However, the Forum obtained agreement that later additions to the comments could be made, specifically to allow consultation of partners in the Overseas Territories. The Forum has now circulated its partners in the Overseas Territories, and forwarded additional comments to the FCO.



Great Cayman Parrot - the Cayman Islands' national bird

fundamental basis of human economics. The UK's Overseas Territories support a rich biodiversity. Not surprisingly, therefore, the economies of several are particularly dependent on maintaining this biological richness. This applies, for example, to the tourist industry of the Caribbean, as well as the sustainable fisheries, which make the Falkland Islands and Tristan da Cunha financially self-sufficient.

The Forum remains concerned that the lack of clarity of respective roles in the constitutional relationship between UK and Overseas Territories leads to a lack of clear mechanisms for turning international commitments into conservation actions on the ground. Whilst no one would wish the UK Government to interfere frequently in the internal affairs of a Territory, what is needed is some sort of framework within which the Territories' Government would work. Indeed, it is the need for such safeguards, based on the wider pool of expertise and experience not available to Territories with small populations that is the main reason that many Territories remain linked with UK. Interestingly, the Foreign Secretary adopted the checklist approach advocated by the Forum for other aspects of the reformed relationship, notably in financial services, borrowing, and human rights. The Forum suggests that the same would be appropriate for most sectors including the environment and biodiversity conservation. International agreements would obviously provide parts of these frameworks. We suggest that the existence of such explicit guidelines would be helpful to all parties by making clear the division of responsibilities, thereby easing the sometimes awkward

relationship between the Territories' Government would work. Indeed, it is the need for such safeguards, based on the wider pool of expertise and experience not available to Territories with small populations that is the main reason that many Territories remain linked with UK. Interestingly, the Foreign Secretary adopted the checklist approach advocated by the Forum for other aspects of the reformed relationship, notably in financial services, borrowing, and human rights. The Forum suggests that the same would be appropriate for most sectors including the environment and biodiversity conservation. International agreements would obviously provide parts of these frameworks. We suggest that the existence of such explicit guidelines would be helpful to all parties by making clear the division of responsibilities, thereby easing the sometimes awkward

First Draft Checklist for the Environment in UK Overseas Territories

The Forum and its partners have worked closely with the UK and UKOT governments over the years and wish to continue to do so. It is in this spirit that the Forum has offered a first draft of a checklist for conserving the natural environment. The Forum offers forward to the UK government adopting this approach as this will also work together.

- Each UKOT should have in place, and the UK Government should ensure and assist this:
1. The inclusion of the Territory in UK's ratification of appropriate international conservation conventions, including that on Biological Diversity
2. Appropriate legislation, and mechanisms to implement this, which fully meets these international obligations
3. A properly staffed department, headed by a Minister or equivalent, within each UKOT government, with responsibility for ensuring the conservation of biodiversity and the natural heritage
4. An environmental NGO supported/endorsed by government, to provide an independent voice on conservation matters
5. Plans for the conservation of biodiversity throughout the land- and sea-areas of the Territory, and the incorporation of biodiversity conservation in the plans for all sectors of the economy
6. Clear mechanisms to deliver these conservation plans and for the provision of adequate funding
7. A requirement for independent environmental impact assessment, open to public consultation and scrutiny, for any major development in the Territory, with expert evaluation to ensure that the common goals of such assessments are avoided
8. A system of safeguards for the most important sites for biodiversity, with land management plans developed and implemented in consultation with environmental NGOs
9. The development of biodiversity targets, including restoration and recovery of damaged ecosystems and threatened wildlife populations, and action plans to achieve these
10. The development of a time-based plan to compile existing data, to survey biodiversity and to conduct cross sectoral reviews of policies that relate to biodiversity use and conservation
11. Ecological studies necessary to inform plans for sustainable use and conservation
12. A system for monitoring and reporting to policy (including a full review of international commitments) of the state of biodiversity and any impacts upon it
13. Plans for training programmes for key personnel and the integration of biodiversity conservation into education curricula and public awareness programmes

A fuller discussion of these issues is given in the introductory article in the current issue (Vol 16, No 1) of *Ecot* (the journal of the British Association of Nature Conservationists), which is devoted mainly to the Overseas Territories.

The Forum at the OTA Conference

In February, the Dependent Territories Association held its second conference at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in London. All Dependent Territory Governments were represented and the UK Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Rt Hon Robin Cook MP) chose the occasion to outline the results of the British Government's review of the UK's relationship with its Dependencies. Amongst other planned reforms, the Foreign Secretary announced a welcome change in name from 'Overseas Territories' to 'Overseas'. Territories, although the change will be progressive because of the need for legislative amendment.

It was notable that a large proportion of the participants in the conference had some interest in the environment. However, to the disappointment of the many conservationists in the audience, Mr Cook made no mention of the environment.

The Forum raised the matter of the importance of the environment, in its own right and as a basis of the economy, later in the meeting. We were pleased to hear from the Premier of Bermuda that the Bermuda Government views the natural environment as one of its major assets and would ensure its protection. Similarly, the Chief Executive of the Falkland Islands stressed the importance of the natural environment in the economy of those islands.

Ascension Island: Planning for Change

A draft Management Plan for Ascension Island was produced in May 1998 by Tony Pickup of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) with funding from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Command Programme Budget, and is now awaiting consideration by the UK Government before finalisation. The document was written as a result of considerable groundwork and strong encouragement from the island's Administrator Mr Roger Husley, and has incorporated suggestions from a

number of conservation specialists as well as island residents. The Forum is now urging the UK Government to progress the situation, so that management initiatives to protect this internationally important biodiversity site can begin in earnest. An important first step is to assign a Conservation Officer to oversee the implementation of the plan. (See opposite for further information concerning the plan.)

A major stumbling block to conserving Ascension's biodiversity is the delay in

sourcing funding for the eradication of feral cat and rat populations. Although the eradication project has been phased in order to lower costs, financial support has still not been obtained. Until this component of the plan is completed, Ascension's world important populations of seabirds and turtles will continue to be under threat.

For further information, contact: Jim Stevenson at RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL, UK. Tel: UK +44 (0)1767 680 551

- The management plan identifies several features of conservation concern as being of world importance.
- The large breeding populations of seabirds, especially the endemic Ascension Island frigate bird
 - The breeding Green Turtle population
 - The six surviving endemic species of terrestrial plants
 - More than 20 endemic species of terrestrial invertebrates
 - The seven endemic species of coastal fish and 2 endemic littoral shrimp species

The plan also identifies five major threats to conservation:

- Lack of co-ordination of conservation actions
- The lack of continuity or permanence of the management of these features caused by the absence of permanent island conservation expertise
- The rapid invasion of the island by the alien plant Mexican Thistle, *Prosopis juliflora*
- The feral cat and rat population is a major threat to the seabird and turtle colonies
- Lack of resources



Ascension Frigate Bird

Caribbean island, in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Tiny Sombbrero Island, Anguilla, proposed for rocket launching base.

October 1998 to September 1999 declared St Helena environmental awareness year.

UK Government produces White Paper on Overseas Territories [including a strong chapter on the environment after UKOTCF had corresponded with the Foreign Secretary about the lack of mention of the environment in the conference earlier that year, except for one question raised by UKOTCF's Chairman – and later supported by senior decision-makers from some territories]. UKOTCF publishes a draft checklist for the environment in the UK Overseas Territories. [Much of this was later incorporated into the Environment Charters.]

Draft management plan for Ascension Island produced in May 1998.

The first three of UKOTCF's much used display boards produced. CITES training workshop for Caribbean UK Overseas Territories held in Grand Cayman in June 1998. British Ornithologists' Union publishes academic analysis book of the Birds of St Helena.

Overlooking Britain's greatest diversity? The Convention on Biological Diversity and the Overseas Territories, commissioned from UKOTCF by WWF UK, published. [Shortly afterwards, the Head of FCO's Environment, Science and Energy Department noted that that should effectively determine his Department's work programme for UKOTs.]

Issue 17: September 1999

Threats remain with regard to Sombbrero Island (Anguilla), the Central Mangrove Wetlands in Grand Cayman; and the natural wetlands of Turks & Caicos. UK announces several new Ramsar Convention Wetlands of International Importance at the

Conference of the Parties.

UKOTCF launches its new database website, with the then novel capacity for remote input by partners.

Sara Cross moves from Coordinator to Director for Development. Francis Marks takes over as Coordinator.

The Darwin Initiative makes grants for project in the UKOTs, including work led by the Forum and CABI Bioscience, on the biodiversity management capacity around the North, Middle and East Caicos Ramsar Site in Turks and Caicos.

St Helena National Trust launches their Millennium Gumwood Forest project [which turned out to be one of the most successful millennium projects anywhere].

Report of the *A Breath of Fresh Air* conference, held at the Zoological Society of London on 29-30 June 1999, jointly organised by FCO and UKOTCF.

FCO Environment Fund for Overseas Territories (EFOT), at £500,000 a year, announced as a result of the White Paper. [A parallel fund from DFID, envisaged at the same time, was not initiated until 2014.]

The need for a study on seabirds and the threat by longline fishing in UKOT waters stressed.

CAB International joins UKOTCF.

UKOTCF worked with UK Government to arrange for the first participation of both government and NGO representatives from a territory to join in the UK delegations to a Conference of the Parties (in this case of the Ramsar Convention), in this case, personnel from BVI.

A contribution of work from the children of Tristan da Cunha completed the first 8-page issue of *Forum News*.

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

London Zoo

29 - 30 June 1999

A conference on the environment jointly organised by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum.

The conference provided a much needed opportunity for people, who are normally remote from each other to come together. It generated much talk and positive discussion and many realised, in spite of individual circumstances, just how many things they have in common and how many ideas and problems they share.



Sara Cross and Bertrand Lecomte giving final presentation

Throughout the meeting, a small team kept track of the main issues and recommendations emerging (Iain Orr, FCO; Mike Pienkowski and Sara Cross, UKOTCF Forum; and Bertrand Lecomte, Chief Conservation and Fisheries Officer, Government of the British Virgin Islands). Sara and Bertrand gave the final presentation.

The Forum has circulated a summary of conclusions from the London conference to its NGO network, while FCO sent it to UK and OT government contacts. The document is also on the Forum's website (www.ukotcf.org) or you may obtain a copy from the Forum Co-ordinator.

It was agreed that it is important not to lose the momentum that the conference started. One of the issues under discussion was the ENVIRONMENTAL CHARTER. From the workshops, it is clear that the Territories want their ideas collated and turned into a text which can be introduced to their respective Ministers as a basis for opening discussions. As was made clear by many participants, the document is not meant to have the force of law. The process should be consultative; and one owned by the OTs. It was suggested that FCO would work on a model of the

Environment Charter that would be circulated to participants by the end of July. This should then be returned with comments and a revised model prepared by the end of September and available to UK ministers and Overseas Territories governments before the first meeting (in October, in London) of the Overseas Territories Consultative Council.

Workshops took place during the conference on a number of topics including drawing up an Environmental Charter, Conducting Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Environmental Legislation and Invasive Species. Details can be found in the full report. It became clear that it is vital that a database be set up to help disseminate reliable and up-to-date information amongst the Overseas Territories.

Discussion on funding, both formal and informal formed a major part of the conference. Funding bodies need to simplify forms and should provide funding for development of project proposals, with help-lines. Clear information from funding bodies on available funds with criteria should be made available and should be put on the Forum's proposed database. HMFG was urged to see whether major funding opportunities (Lottery, Millennium, Landfill, etc.) could be open to the OTs. There was widespread support for looking at the possibility of an OT-wide environmental trust fund.

The natural environment provides a major source of economic livelihood for many people in the OTs. Environmental taxes were seen as potentially valuable but not a solution for all environmental problems. There was recognition that the carrying capacity of valuable habitats (e.g. coral reefs and intensity of diving activity) set limits to the growth of taxable exploitation of the environment.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION and public awareness were seen as critical components for the environment being properly valued in the OTs. This was a theme in all the presentations by the OTs and came up in most discussions. It is

fundamental to linking the economy and politics to the environment. Everyone – the general public, administrators, technical experts, NGOs and politicians – must understand that care of the environment is a key element of successful policies for poverty alleviation, sustainable fisheries and tourism, protecting bio-diversity; and of personal and social freedom and the general quality of life. We cannot just educate children; we have to educate everyone. Public support is essential to accomplishing our goals.

How do we check that we do not lose the momentum started at the conference? It is possible to monitor progress in late November when the Forum and Government have their regular half-yearly meeting. Overseas Territories governments and NGOs are welcome to attend. Comments, concerns, and ideas for discussion at this meeting should be passed by mid-November to the Forum or the FCO.



General Workshop Discussions

In September 2000 a major environmental conference in Gibraltar is planned. Many of the participants at the June conference will have an opportunity to meet again, and this will provide another opportunity to record and encourage progress.

In the meantime, we look forward to the Forum's new database/web-site being established (with the FCO support indicated by the Minister). This will enable much work which A Breath of Fresh Air has identified as being essential, to develop with greater openness and consultation and to be shared far more effectively than has been the case up to now.

Delegates from a Breath of Fresh Air Conference



Nick Bass - Geoff Hoon MP - Mark O'Connor - Mike Pienkowski



Iain Orr - Mike Pienkowski - Nick Bass - Geoff Hoon MP - Mark O'Connor



Sara Cross - Principal Naturalist, Turks and Caicos National Trust



David Smith, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Natural Resources, TCI



David Smith, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Natural Resources, TCI



David Smith, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Natural Resources, TCI

New FCO Funding for Environmental Issues in the UK's Overseas Territories

Note from Iain Orr, Environment, Science & Energy Department (ESED), FCO

When the Foreign Secretary presented the White Paper 'Partnership for Progress and Prosperity', Britain and the Overseas Territories to Parliament on 17 March 1999, he also announced that new funding was being provided by the FCO to support work on environmental issues in the Overseas Territories. This funding will be £1.5 million to be spent over the three financial years 1999/2000 to 2001/2002. This is a very significant change. Previously projects in the Overseas Territories had to compete with the huge range of proposals from around the world for the FCO's Environment Programme Budget: on average about £150,000 has been spent on OTs projects each year. The new fund, the FCO's Environment Fund for the Overseas Territories, aims to spend £500,000 each year on suitable projects. It is administered by Environment, Science and Energy Department (ESED). Key contacts: Iain Orr (fund manager: Tel 0171 270 2942, email: iain.orr@fco.gov.uk); Steve Durrant (budget co-ordinator: Tel 0171 270 3917, email: stephen.durrant@fco.gov.uk).

We plan to operate the fund transparently and flexibly, consistent with speed of response when a quick decision is needed. The types of projects the fund can support are very varied. For example, see the list of environmental projects in the OTs supported by HMFG since May 1997 which was included in the *Breath of Fresh Air* conference pack (ESED will send a copy on request). The key is that the results should be of lasting benefit to the environment. Areas we consider important include: supporting the application in the OTs of appropriate Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) – including projects which may make it easier for the UK's ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity to be extended to more territories than at present; building up the strength and expertise of local environmental NGOs; projects which spread best practice of sustainable development; environmental education; improving local skills, e.g. training in environmental management; projects to control or eradicate invasive species and to regenerate indigenous species. We see that the costs of projects are shared: both in the OTs and with other external sponsors, including the private sector. A wide range of stakeholders can often contribute to a project's success; and projects which are a low priority for others may not be the best use of limited FCO resources. That said, for some environmental problems being flexible and deciding quickly is just what is needed.

New project proposal forms are being designed. One area still being discussed is the extent to which projects might be suitable for other sources, such as existing DFID programmes in some OTs: the new funding DFID is making available – in part recognising that OTs are not eligible for funding through the Global Environmental Facility (GEF); the DETRO Darwin Initiative; and, also in the FCO, good governance funds which Overseas Territories Departments might be able to draw on for some projects. Meanwhile, ESED is ready to consider proposals using the old (or new) global environmental project fund forms. It will often help if ESED are consulted before a detailed proposal is worked up, and it also helps if proposals have good support (e.g. from the OT government, from members of the UKOTCF and from experts who can vouch for the value of the project and the quality of management it is likely to have). There is, however, no requirement for proposals to come only by certain channels. Individuals in the OTs and elsewhere, NGOs, government officials, companies and research bodies can all put project proposals to ESED in any time. If we find there are more worthwhile projects than can be funded during the current financial year, we will also be ready to give firm commitments about using the fund in the following two years. We hope funding will continue after the three-year period. To a large extent that will depend on the quality of project proposals this year and the evaluation of how well each meets its objectives. Make them good and send them in!

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Issue 18: May 2000

Preparations for the Gibraltar/UKOTCF conference *Linking the Fragments of Paradise* to be held 28 September to 1 October in Gibraltar.

In November 1999, the 6th Conference of the Parties of the Bonn Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, held in South Africa, progressed towards what later became the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels in respect of the serious current threats to the species current.

A visit by HRH Prince Edward to Bermuda highlighted work to stop the decline of the bluebirds.

In November 1999, a meeting was held between FCO several NGOs and the CITES Secretariat to address problems identified by the CITES secretariat draft report on the Overseas Territories and the *Conched Out* report by WWF-UK.

Chairman of UKOTCF Wider Caribbean Working Group and former Governor of the Cayman Islands, Michael Gore, releases the first young captive-bred Grand Cayman blue iguanas in a ceremony at Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park in December 1999; this brought the wild population to about 150, including the 10 bred by the Cayman Islands National Trust

Work on conserving the biodiversity in the Turks and Caicos Islands, led by UKOTCF in conjunction with the Turks and Caicos National Trust, got underway and included local community meetings.

Major concern was expressed in the Cayman Islands in that the Environment Fund set up in 1997 was not being used for the purpose publicly declared at that time.

The Sombbrero Island proposed rocket launching base discussed, both in its own right and in the context of the excessively frequent inappropriate development proposals in the Caribbean.

Falklands Conservation studies tourism impact project.

Darwin Initiative marine turtle research project takes place on Ascension Island by Swansea-based researchers.

Coral mortality on BIOT reported.

String of Pearls millennium initiative involves UKOTCF in the FCO June and July open days in 2000.

The first 12-page issue of *Forum News* completed with a report of schools activity on the environment in St Helena.

Issue 19: February 2001

Report on *Calpe 2000: Linking the Fragments of Paradise* conference in Gibraltar.

Progress report on the UKOTCF/CABI/Turks and Caicos National Trust project developing biodiversity management capacity around the Ramsar Site in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

“Threat from space averted”: in October 2000, Texas multimillionaire Andy Beal announced the winding up of the attempt to break the US and French (for EU) Governments’ dominance of space-launching, and consequently the end of the threat to Sombbrero Island, Anguilla.

WWF/Darwin Initiative fund project on capacity building for biodiversity conservation in Anguilla.

Bat houses on long poles in the Cayman Islands address habitat shortage.

Botanical work on Anegada identify species of global significance.

Research confirms that concerns remain about the status of the Montserrat oriole.

Bermuda project addresses education, to save sea turtles.

In January 2001, a meeting in Cape Town is planned to finalise the Albatross and Petrol Conservation Agreement

CALPE 2000: Linking the Fragments of Paradise

An environmental conference, sponsored by the Government of Gibraltar, organised by the Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society, with the support of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum

Throughout the meeting, a small team kept track of the proceedings. Sara Cross (Director for Development, UKOTCF) led the team with Sheila Brown Braithwaite (Permanent Secretary, British Virgin Islands Ministry of Natural Resources & Labour), with support from John Cortes (General Secretary, GONHS), and Mike Pienkowski (Chairman, UKOTCF). Additional contributions were sought from others.

The contributions from the conference are being gathered together, for publication on the web site and in print. The Conclusions are available on the Forum web site www.ukotcf.org. A précis of the conclusions presented by Sara and Sheila is published below.

TAKING THINGS FORWARD

For many of the OT delegates who were at the meeting in London *A Breath of Fresh Air* just over a year ago, one of the major issues was how conservation action could be taken forward. At that meeting much was spoken of what was referred to as the Environmental Charter for the Overseas Territories (and, for the benefit of those people, we will briefly outline the progress made at a governmental level on the Charter process, shortly). However, the essence of what we are talking about can be encapsulated in the term Strategic Environmental Action Planning, and this is applicable to all small territories, and has been a major theme of the conference in Gibraltar.

The 1998 London conference was extremely valuable in drawing together so many enthusiastic, committed and normally widely dispersed people. We already knew that *Calpe 2000*, was in the early planning stages, and were extremely glad of that. This was because we believed that it would provide an excellent opportunity for all participants to report on progress they had made in developing those ideas for action which generated so much enthusiasm 15 months previously. We hoped also that it would encourage further exchange of ideas and networking with the additional participants from small territories who indeed have made such a valuable contribution to the knowledge we have all gained during our time in Gibraltar.



Delegates from Turks & Caicos Islands
Royal Robinson, Eithyn Gibbs-Williams, Dace McCoy-Grund, Delton Jones
and Bryana Manco



John Cortes, Sara Cross, Sheila Brown Braithwaite and
Mike Pienkowski

As mentioned, we will now turn briefly to the Environment Charter process, in response to questions from many OT delegates. In October 1999, the Environment Policy Department of the Foreign Office, after an extensive period of wide consultation, generated a statement of draft key principles, which were aspirational statements, related to various existing international agreements and written in deliberately accessible language. The draft key principles were sent to all OT Governments for comment, in time for the first Consultative Council meeting of Ministers. Feedback from the Territories to date has been slow, with only a few comments having been received by the FCO. However, government officers and NGOs in several of the OTs have flagged up the need to take forward in parallel some work to illustrate how these key principles would translate into real actions. This process would also help clarify the principles themselves. Consultations with several OTs have made clear that more facilitation is needed to assist people in the Territories to kick-start the process of developing their own action plans, up to now on hold due to the lack of time and human resources. Several OTs are discussing with the Forum the ways in which this facilitation might most usefully be provided, and FCO has indicated that it is supportive of this approach.

During the *Calpe 2000* conference, it was apparent that environmental education and public awareness are vital tools for the realisation of the value of environmental resources both in protected areas and in small islands as a whole. The conference illustrated many arenas and methods which participants are employing to get the message across, from island-wide campaigns and focused public meetings, to developing materials with which teachers can be trained to integrate environmental messages into the school curriculum. One of the pertinent messages was that all Territories must instil in their own people a sense of pride in their unique flora and fauna. Schemes such as the National Trust (for England, Wales, & Northern Ireland) school guardianship programme, which involves children learning hands-on ecological skills directly from professionals in the field, should be encouraged and developed wherever possible. BVI has a similar programme involving the Department of Agriculture, where children are taught how to grow vegetables using small plots of land, whilst developing a

sense of responsibility and awareness for the environment. These experiences can make a significant impression on young minds, and thus are important to the long-term sustainability of the Territory's landscape. The performance by the Gibraltar school children was excellent. They obviously were not put off by the short period of time given to prepare. (See Ijalanya Christian's comment) The calypso was very catchy and taught us about the iguana in a simple but very interesting way. Their inclusion added a very welcome flavour to the proceedings as a whole, and again we would like to thank all those involved, including the children, for their efforts.

The immense value of information networking cannot be stressed enough. The advent of electronic communications in the form of email and the Internet has brought us all much closer together, simply by allowing us to share our experiences with ease and at low expense. The development of a database for environmental information in the Overseas Territories has the potential to draw us together even further, and will empower us to work together and pool our efforts to make things happen constructively. The database has the potential to be a marvellous mechanism for enhancing over-stretched capacity, and we strongly encourage everyone to use it, give us feedback on it, and to encourage its future development, in line with your most pressing information needs. The more pertinent information we can include, the more powerful a tool the database will be. We see it being useful to conservationists, business, government, politicians or potential developers, as a means of finding out just how important the territories are for their biodiversity interest.

The wide range of presentations of the Saturday morning session showed how different islands try to ensure that their protected areas remain just that — protected. The St. Helena Millennium forest project showed us an inspirational idea, again fostering national pride for an endemic species could generate a huge commitment from local people to participate in setting up a long-term environmental project.

The power of largely volunteer effort with limited financial resources was evident throughout the conference. In the form of GONHS, their achievements were particularly clear during the field trips as well as the presentations and discussions. They have a mature relationship with Gibraltar Government which seeks their advice, contracts work to them, respects their views and often follows their advice. Even when it values the input of ideas and arguments. Many conference participants indicated how they admire — and even envy — the immense commitment of time which constitutes the strong volunteer team and

effectiveness of GONHS. We are sure that many will try to take up many of the ideas.

A frequently repeated message in several sessions was the importance of owning land in order to ensure long-term conservation. In some situations, this is not an option. For example, GONHS cannot do this but are able to perform miracles as managers; however, we think that they would be the first to admit that ownership would make many things easier. Those territories with National Trust type legislation have a particularly

helpful mechanism available for governments to enlist the resources of NGOs. Land given by governments to National Trusts can be declared inalienable, so that the NT cannot treat this land as an ordinary disposable asset, but must safeguard it in trust for the people. Such transfers of land by government tend to attract further contributions by private individuals and organisations, making this a very cost-effective investment by government. It is also important to ensure an income stream for site-management. Sunday morning's discussion presented one strong route. Conservation Funds can be one of the few popular taxes. At least

part of these can be earmarked for the organisations managing protected areas. Again, there are extra benefits in that NGOs managing such protected areas can often draw in matching

funding from both domestic and international sources, as well as major volunteer effort.

Something of a consensus evolved in discussion of the management of dedicated environmental funds in several OTs. The most successful examples involve an environmental tax being placed in a statutory fund separate from general government funds, managed by a Board with representation from government, NGO and private sector interests. Openness and accountability, strong and unambiguous legislation, and a constructive relationship between environmental NGOs and local governments are seen as key elements. Relative access between government and NGO agencies to grants from such funds is an ongoing concern needing resolution in several OTs.



Rebecca Ingham and Debbie Summers from Falklands
Conservation



Stedson Stroud from
St. Helena Island



Isabel Peters talking about the
St. Helena Millennium Forest
Project

Darwin Initiative funds Falkland Islands flora project.

Complications of British Indian Ocean Territory status and conservation needs addressing.

Jersey site is designated Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention – the first in a Crown Dependency.

Issue 20: June 2001

Funding achieved at last for the start of ecological restoration work on Ascension, from FCO – achieved by long, hard work by officials.

UK Government abandons its 1997 commitment to designate Ramsar Sites in BIOT by the end of 1998 [and postponed since then].

Major development proposals made for the Pitcairn Islands at serious risk to environmental interest.

Wildlife smugglers (stealing wild lizards) arrested in Grand Cayman.

Report on projects funded for 2000 to 2001, by FCO's Environment Fund for the Overseas Territories, together with a note about the failure of DFID to implement the similar fund which was announced in the White Paper.

Further report from TCI on the major project there being co-ordinated by UKOTCF and note of support from the British Airways Assisting Conservation programme.

Forum Director of Development, Sara Cross, and Royal Botanic Gardens Kew's Colin Clubbe, visit Montserrat in January 2001, looking towards longer term strategic planning for the Montserrat National Trust, whose Natural History Centre was opened.

In May 2001, Tristan da Cunha suffered 120 mph winds, destroying communications, electricity, roofs of houses, and a quarter of the hospital, including the theatre and the x-ray machine.

Biodiversity survey for terrestrial invertebrates starts on Gough Island

Falklands Conservation reports severe decline in the black-browed albatross population.

In February 2001, the text of the international *Agreement on the Conservation of Albatross and Petrels* was confirmed in Cape Town.

Sustainable farming in Guernsey.

Friends of the UK Overseas Territories (for individual supporters of the work of UKOTCF) initiated.

Issue 21: February 2002

Threatened species flower in British Virgin Islands.

Environment Charters for the UK Overseas Territories signed in September 2001.

In October 2001, Colin Clubbe from RBG Kew and Sarah Cross of UKOTCF, visited Montserrat to collaborate with Montserrat National Trust in the development of a proposal to Darwin Initiative [not successful] on forest conservation, sustainable management and education: building Montserrat's capacity.

New Zealand expert on invasive eradication visits the Falkland Islands to initiate work restoring the tussac islands.

World Heritage Convention highlighted in relation to the Overseas Territories, where there are 2 designated natural sites: Henderson Island, Pitcairn, and Gough island, Tristan da Cunha; together with one cultural site, at St George, Bermuda. Other sites being considered for nomination are Fountain Cavern, Anguilla, and Gibraltar Fortress. A number of experts had suggested that UK should nominate South Georgia and the Chagos Archipelago

as World Heritage Sites, but UK Government appeared to be reluctant, on political grounds.

Management Plan for Inaccessible Island produced.

Gibraltar hosts BirdLife International conference.

Ascension Island seabird restoration programme continues with the arrival, in January 2002, of Wildlife Management International Ltd, invasive species removal experts from New Zealand, to be based on Ascension for a year.

UKOTCF-led multi-partner project in Turks and Caicos continues with a field team of international experts working with local partners, and joined in the field by all the science A-level students in TCI. It involved work on satellite-based mapping, development of trials and the preparation of a draft management plan. The UKOTCF personnel also collaborated in the production of the *Birds of the Turks and Caicos Islands*, written and photographed by Richard Ground, the Chief Justice of TCI, and produced by his wife, Dace.

A Visitors Guide to the Falkland Islands published.

A biodiversity strategy and action plan for Bermuda launched, with strong involvement across the community.

The white-shouldered or fig-eating bats rediscovered in a patch of virgin forest in Grand Cayman, not having been seen in the Cayman Islands since 1906.

The plight of Grand Cayman blue iguanas underlined by meeting of the international Iguana Specialist Group, stressing the need for conservation initiatives.

Proceedings from the UKOTCF's/Gibraltar's *Calpe 2000* conference published.

RSPB produces research report on bird conservation priorities in the UK Overseas Territories.

Martin Drury, recently retired Director-General of the National Trust and now a member of the Forum's Council, visited St Helena to facilitate the creation of a St Helena National Trust, bringing together several existing groups.

New project, part-funded by DEFRA, announced to investigate the status of marine turtles in the Caribbean Overseas Territories.

UKOTCF's tailor-made database allowing participation across its network and inputting of data goes live with its first modules.

UKOTCF's conference 22 to 27 March 2003 in Bermuda announced.

Issue 22: December 2002

Full details of UKOTCF's Bermuda conference: *A Sense of Direction*.

A Birdwatching Guide to Bermuda by Andrew Dobson published.

St Helena National Trust launched in May 2002.

Grass Island, South Georgia, declared free of rats after a two-year research programme, to investigate the feasibility of rat eradication at South Georgia.

FCO repeats its 2000 open day, *Pearls of the Seven Seas*, with UKOTCF contributing to displays and lectures.

At the request of some of the Overseas Territories member organisations of the Forum, five of them transfer to full membership, so that their growing organisations can contribute financially to UKOTCF.

Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society continues its work, including close collaboration with groups in Spain on a wide range of environmental issues.

In a time of financial stress, Sarah Cross steps down as Director for Development of the Forum, having previously served since 1993

as the Coordinator and having played a key role in strengthening the organisation.

Fred Burton, Director of the Blue Iguana Conservation project, analyses the range occupied in the last nine years, identifying a decline which could lead to extinction in 5 years. Further conservation measures identified to try to reverse this.

Cayman Brown booby management plan published.

Issue 23: June 2003

Report on the UKOTCF *A Sense of Direction* conference in Bermuda, March 2003.

Dr John Cortés receives MBE for services to ecology and conservation in Gibraltar in the New Year's Honours list 2003.

In visits and consultations in October/November 2002, January/February 2003, and through a workshop in April 2003, UKOTCF facilitates a pilot project to develop a strategy for action to implement the Environment Charter, at the invitation of Turks and Caicos organisations and government (which offered to be the pilot territory) and with support of FCO.

Dolphins and porpoises in the Channel Islands under threat from giant nets used by high-seas trawlers hunting spawning seabass aggregations in the English Channel.

Review of collections and research at Royal Botanic Gardens Kew UKOT species.

Eden project features displays on St Helena.

Nature tourism in the smaller islands of Cayman developed in response to a study by US Fish and Wildlife Service, which revealed that, in terms of expenditure by US citizens on wildlife-related recreation in 1996, more than 77 million people spend over US\$ 100m per annum. Of these 62 million are wildlife-watchers and 17m travel from home to bird-watch.

UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES
CONSERVATION FORUM

FORUM NEWS 23

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A Sense of Direction

A conference on conservation in UK Overseas Territories and other small island communities

Delegates representing 12 UK Overseas Territories, the 3 UK Crown Dependencies and other small island territories gathered together at the Elbow Beach Hotel in Bermuda from 22 to 27 March 2003 to attend *A Sense of Direction*, a conference on conservation.

On the first day delegates were treated to a very useful introduction to the island and conservation issues on a tour of Bermuda, which included Nonsuch Island. Plenary sessions included presentations related to Environmental Charters and strategic planning; the Foreign and Commonwealth Office element to this section was particularly useful, even if some aspects were not encouraging. Delegates found presentations on managing conservation organisation and climate change challenging. The conference broke into smaller groups to visit actual sites to discuss implementing management plans.

A participatory session dealing with invasive species drew much discussion from the floor. The full summary of the conference is published on pages 2-7 and the proceedings of the conference will be available on the Forum website shortly: www.ukotcf.org.

News from Bermuda continuing after the conference has been very positive. TV, radio and newspaper items included Joseph Smith-Abbot, Executive Director of the BVI National Trust, commenting on the importance of Hungry Bay mangroves and the need for protection, Colin Cluthe from Royal Botanic Gardens Kew speaking on invasive plants and the need for local nurseries to promote native and

endemic species, and Brendan Godley of Marine Turtle Conservation research group, amongst many others.

The Royal Gazette published several articles including *Government unveils biodiversity plan*, with comment from Bermuda Government's Dennis Lister, Annie Glasspool and Jack Ward from the Bermuda Zoological Society. A second article *Along way from Pitcairn* mentioned where some of the delegates had travelled from as well as a photo of the cheque presentation from Dennis Lister, Bermuda Minister of Environment, and Valerie Caton, UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Andrew Dobson on behalf of conference organisers,

and there was much further coverage.

Avon Carty, President of the Anguilla National Trust, told *Forum News* that, despite the cancellation of her scheduled flight from Anguilla to San Juan, Puerto Rico, the resulting confusion, delay and decision to try any possible route and mode to get to Bermuda, via various ferries and flight connections, she eventually got to Bermuda in the originally scheduled time frame.

She said "And it has been worth every hurried and frenetic moment of the journey. From the overcast breaking of Sunday morning perfect for a day island-tour to a rather sunnier Wednesday, the last day of *A Sense of Direction*, the conference



Bermuda Minister of Environment, Dennis Lister, Andrew Dobson (Bermuda Audubon Society for the conference organisers) and Valerie Caton (FCO)

Issue 23: A Sense of Direction conference, Bermuda 2003

Flower bat expert visits Cayman Islands.

In January 2003, the Sea Mammal Research Unit from St Andrews University conducted the second census of southern sea lions in the Falkland Islands.

Red-listing workshop lists seven threatened plant species for BVI.

Issue 24: February 2004

The UKOTCF-facilitated strategy for action to implement the Environment Charter in TCI, a pilot, for all territories, completed and adopted by TCI Government.

UK Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) reinstated by FCO, as part of a new joint programme with DFID [as had originally been envisaged in 1999]. This followed protests at the Bermuda conference by NGOs and UKOTs at FCO's cancelling of EFOT the previous year. This was in conflict with UK Government's commitments in the Environment Charters (drafted by FCO), signed in September 2001.

Implementation of the plan for biodiversity management and sustainable development around Turks and Caicos Ramsar Site, following the UKOTCF led study, commences.

In September 2003, Bermuda was hit by Hurricane Fabian causing much damage, including to the artificial burrows needed by the Bermuda petrel (or cahow). Fortunately, the birds were not on the nesting grounds at the time. Conservation workers rapidly reconstructed the artificial burrows.

Work continues on the turtles in the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories project with socio-economic questionnaire and training of conservation and fisheries officers.

UKOTCF starts review of actual and potential Ramsar sites in the UK Overseas Territories, for DEFRA and the territories.

Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) indicates that it hopes to propose for designation as World Heritage Sites, in the near future, Fountain Cavern, Anguilla, and the Fortress of Gibraltar. [Later UK Government dropped these from its Tentative List.] DCMS encouraged UKOTs to start thinking about sites which meet the criteria, particularly in under-represented regions, such as the Caribbean and Pacific and some types of natural sites [although the DCMS became less enthusiastic a few years afterwards].

Plans are announced to extend the World Heritage Site of Gough Island to Inaccessible Island, both parts of Tristan da Cunha. [This, and the approach, was advised partly by UKOTCF.]

Personnel from TCI, Falkland Islands and BVI participate in RBG Kew's course on herbarium techniques in 2003.

Extinction and rarity in the South Atlantic islands highlighted by the IUCN South Atlantic Island Plant Specialist Group, chaired by UKOTCF Council member, Dr Rebecca Cairns-Wicks.

Entomologists, including Paul Pearce-Kelly of the Zoological Society of London, study St Helena, nearly 40 years after the exhaustive study by the Belgian Museum.

South Georgia Association hold conference in Cambridge, where UKOTCF's Chairman outlines the implications in respect of Environment Charters.

Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels comes into force. UK expected to ratify soon.

Akrotiri Salt Lake (Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas) becomes the first Ramsar Site in the island of Cyprus.

John Topp, founder of Friends of the Chagos, awarded OBE for environmental conservation.

Cayman celebrates 500 years since its discovery.

Issue 25: July 2004

No feral cats reported on Ascension since February 2004 and, to date, 77 pairs of breeding seabirds from five species have returned to the main island.

First insect guide to the Falkland Islands published.

Falkland Islands Government adopts a national plan of action for seabirds drafted by Falklands Conservation.

Illegal fishing activities of Ascension Island reported.

UK ratifies the *Agreement on Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels*, on behalf of British Antarctic Territory, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, and the Falkland Islands, with plans for Tristan da Cunha to be added.

Tristan da Cunha, in April 2003, sells 73 pairs of rockhopper penguins to help fund restoration work needed after the hurricane in 2002, lacking other sources of funding. Conservation bodies protest.

Herpetological Conservation Trust [later Amphibian and Reptile Conservation] joins UKOTCF.

By agreement with DFID and FCO, *Forum News* includes a 6-page section on the Overseas Territories Environment Programme, to be a feature in each issue.

Plant species endemic to the Puerto Rican Bank found to be less rare due to survey work on Anegada in BVI, increasing the known world population by approximately 61% of individuals. The total is still only 148 individuals. Warning also on new introduced invasive alien plants discovered.

UKOTCF publishes guidelines for other UK Overseas Territories, based on its pilot work in TCI, on territories developing strategies to implement their Environment Charter (as required under the Agreement), and visits Falkland Islands to advise, as well as other territories more remotely.

Eagle owl returns to Gibraltar.

UKOTCF and the Turks and Caicos National Trust open the first set of "field roads" (nature trails, re-using a local term for footpaths) as part of the implementation of the plan for biodiversity management and sustainable development around the Turks and Caicos Ramsar Site.

UKOTCF works with IUCN France and the Netherlands, as well as the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance, to raise awareness in European Union institutions of the importance of Europe's overseas territories and regions in terms of biodiversity.

Issue 26: February 2005

Announcement of the UKOTCF forthcoming conference on 7-12 October 2006 in Jersey: *Biodiversity that Matters*.

Flowering Plants of Ascension Island, by Wendy Fairhurst, published.

Biodiversity action plan for Tristan da Cunha being developed as a collaboration between the islanders and the RSPB, with support from the Darwin Initiative.

UKOTCF's report on the review of existing and potential Ramsar Convention Wetlands of International Importance in UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies submitted to Defra and accepted by them.

Bermuda National Trust and Bermuda Audubon Society launch their joint *Buy Back Bermuda* programme.

Report on status of Cayman Island bats after Hurricane Ivan.

Issue 27: August 2005

Green Mountain announced as Ascension Island's first National

Park.

Analysis shows that the British Government's spending figures indicate that it values conservation of globally important biodiversity in UK Overseas Territories 5000 times less important than that of Great Britain.

Stedson Stroud made MBE for services to St Helena in the 2005 New Year's Honours list.

Alderney Wildlife Trust, with many volunteers, embarks on an epic restoration project to reopen an ancient cart track.

Decision to build an airport on St Helena announced after many years of consideration.

Weed control project, St Helena, started.

At the request of St Helena, UKOTCF facilitated the development of a strategy for action to implement its Environment Charter. This was produced after two visits by Mike and Ann Pienkowski.

Recovery programme produced for one of world's rarest plants, on Pitcairn Islands.

Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society initiates new scientific journal, *Iberis*.

Royal Zoological Society of Scotland joins UKOTCF.

Issue 28: February 2006

UK Government's proposed unilateral U-turn over Ascension's constitutional status worries islanders and conservationists.

Non-native species and other threats to Ascension sooty terns.

In August 2005, Alderney's West Coast named as Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention, with Jersey having added also three new sites the previous year and Guernsey, Isle of Man and Sark all close to designating sites identified in UKOTCF's review.

UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES



CONSERVATION FORUM

FORUM NEWS 28

FEBRUARY 2006 • www.ukotcf.org

UK Government's proposed U-turn over Ascension worries Islanders and conservationists

Much concern has recently been expressed by Islanders, conservationists and others over a sudden reversal in UK Government's policy for Ascension. The Island has had a curious history. For most of its first hundred years of occupation from 1815, it was legally a ship of the Royal Navy. For most of the next hundred years, it was effectively a company town (albeit of several companies). For the second half of that latter period, since World War 2 (and continuing), large parts of the island have been leased to the United States for military purposes. (The facts that the US military control the airport, and are unpredictable in behaviour, were reasons why the options for air access to St Helena could not assume that the airport on Ascension would be available as part of this.)

In the late 1990s, the companies indicated to UK Government (HMG) that, with changing needs, they would no longer run the island. HMG commissioned a study of options. The excellent and clearly written report of this study was produced in March 2000 by the University of Portsmouth: *Report on Ascension* by John Christensen, Dr Mark Hampton & Dr Stephen Royle. The consultants identified two options for the future of Ascension. One model "modified status quo" would lead to further population decline and social decay, and would also give extra problems to St Helena. The other "public finance" option involved a move to a more normal system of government and economy, with an elected council, the introduction of property rights, right of abode, opportunities for self-employment and investment in new business, and the opening of the airport to more civilian traffic.

HMG accepted the report and, to widespread approval of their announcement in 2001, decided on the "public finance" option. A first Council was elected, some businesses were sold to local inhabitants, UK and local conservation bodies invested heavily in conservation projects, and other means of developing the economy (often related to the environment) are being explored. Late in 2005, there were signs of uncertainty over the crucial "right-of-residence" point. Then, at the end of November, HMG personnel visited Ascension and announced to Ascension's new elected Council (the term of the first having just ended) a planned reversal of HMG policy, without any prior consultation. As expressed in a published letter from one of the Councilors reproduced below, this is an amazing blow to the Islanders, their future and the investments of many – made on the basis of HMG's previous invitation. Conservationists are also very concerned that the major – and so far highly successful –

programme of work based on the earlier plan for the future would be seriously undermined, as this depends heavily on a stable and long-term population.

We reproduce also a statement by HMG. This does not appear to answer the question as to why HMG considers that the



Masked Boobies. One of the most major UKOT conservation successes, the re-establishment of globally important seabird populations on Ascension, is among the projects threatened by UK Government's proposed U-turn

situation has changed so drastically in the last 5 years that it should reverse its position. Clarification on this point remains lacking as we go to press. The only view offered by some parties was that this was a further case of HMG following the wishes of the current US Government, rather than of its own citizens; however, we do not have the information to be able to confirm or contradict this.

At the regular HMG/UKOTCF meeting in January 2006, senior FCO officials in the Overseas Territories Department were unaware of the decision and junior officials made clear that the wider implications had not been considered. Therefore, conservationists and Islanders hope that senior officials and Ministers will ensure that this regressive reversal of policy will not be confirmed. In the meantime, *Forum News* can simply reproduce the two main positions, and we do so below.

Stop press: FCO have now indicated that their proposed U-turn is based on saving money. However, their analysis appears to be inadequate and has certainly not included environmental aspects and their costs. UKOTCF has written to the Minister.

Issue 28: front page

UKOTCF take stand in the British Bird Fair at Rutland Water in August 2005.

Darwin Initiative projects support work by UKOTCF partners, RSPB, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, on Global Strategy for Plant Conservation in Montserrat and the Cayman Islands.

Forum News section with reports on OTEP projects continue in each issue since it was initiated.

At the request of UK Government and the territories governments, UKOTCF consults stakeholders in start of work on assessing implementation success of the Environment Charters, by now publishing its draft collation for comment.

Issue 29: September 2006

Tristan da Cunha celebrates 500 years since its discovery, with a new Conservation Ordinance and joining UK's ratification of the *Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels*.

UKOTCF's and others' concern at the future of Ascension and conservation there remains.

UKOTCF expresses concern at the loss of the environmental department from FCO and FCO's suggestion that responsibility for conservation support in UKOTs was being transferred to Defra, although Defra did not acknowledge this.

Guernsey designates Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention.

Workshop on wetlands held for schools on Montserrat.

Invertebrate survey finds many endemic species surviving in the relict forest of St Helena.

Biodiversity mapping continues in Cayman jointly with the University of Exeter.

UKOTCF and its equivalent umbrella bodies for overseas territories from France and the Netherlands form an alliance for biodiversity in Europe's Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries & Territories, to interact with European Union institutions.

The Army Ornithological Society joins UKOTCF.

UKOTCF secures support from the Brian Guinness Charitable Trust for small projects, to assist the extension to the museum in St Helena to accommodate historic flax mill machinery, and to publish a book on natural history of Tristan da Cunha, particularly to make recent discoveries available for local schoolchildren.

Issue 30: February 2007

Turks and Caicos National Trust opens Middle Caicos Conservation Centre as part of the UKOTCF-led implementation of the plan for biodiversity management and sustainable development around the Turks and Caicos Ramsar Site.

Alliance in relation to European Union matters between UKOTCF and its French and Dutch partners named Bioverseas.

South Atlantic Invasive Species Project, led by RSPB and the territories concerned, and funded by the European Union, starts

In November 2006, Ascension Island declared feral cat free, as a result of the work coordinated by RSPB following many years of lobbying by UKOTCF to resource the exercise.

The Governor Michael Gore Bird Sanctuary in Cayman reopened after renovation.

UK Overseas Territories Important Bird Areas directory launched at UKOTCF conference in Jersey. UKOTCF personnel amongst the chapter authors.

Isle of Man designates its first Ramsar Wetland.

Two large areas of Gibraltar, one terrestrial the other marine,

Gouliot Caves and Headland - Sark's first Ramsar site.

Designated on 9th April 2007, Sark's first Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention consists of the Gouliot Headland and La Mole de Gouliot, a large sea stack connected to the headland at low water. On the west coast of Sark, in the Channel Islands, it includes the famous Gouliot Caves that cross the headland three times from north to south with other openings to the west. These caves have long been noted for the amazing variety of invertebrate life, especially sponges, hydroids, sea-anemones



The Seigneur of Sark, Michael Beaumont, speaks at the opening of Sark's first Ramsar site

and sea squirts that can be found on their walls at low spring tide; many of the species cannot be found elsewhere in Western Europe. This virtually unique assemblage of marine life is a consequence of Sark's cliffs and geology interacting with a huge tidal range of 10m at spring tides. The caves extend from above high water mark to below low-water, with a very rich fauna. Much of this fauna occurs only sub-tidally in other places. It is the largest such cave system in Europe that can be visited on foot. Before the invention of the aqualang, this was one of the few places where sub-marine life could be examined *in situ*. Because of this, these caves are the site where many of these animals were first described and studied in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Sue Dale, underwater



Mike Freeman, Jersey Government, and Rosanne Guille, a Sark wildlife watercolour artist, lead the way up the headland above the caves

photographer and diver, who helped with the BBC *Coast* series, said, "In Victorian times many visitors took specimens rather than photographs but, from the dives I have done, the caves have recovered their wildlife. We must not let this happen again; from now on the only things to take from the caves are photographs."

The site includes also the headland above the caves, which contains many typical coastal ecosystems including coastal grassland and hard rock. These habitats support many rare and endangered species of plants, lichens and a remarkable diversity of the invertebrates.

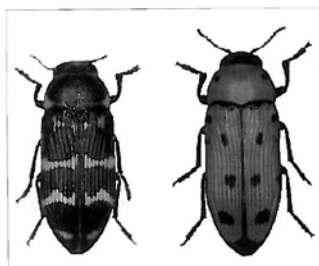
To commemorate the designation, La Société Sercquoise held a celebration on Saturday 14th April. The Seigneur of Sark, Michael Beaumont, attended the celebration as well as a number of off-island celebrities, including the environment ministers from Jersey and Guernsey, and many environmentalists from both islands, including Charles David, botanist from the Société Guernesaise and Richard Hoot, its President.

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New Beetle Described from Gibraltar

A beetle species has been rediscovered on the Rock of Gibraltar. The last record for this species was a 100 years ago. The species is a jewel beetle named *Buprestis (Yanina) sanguinea*, an attractive and rare insect that is found in North Africa and Iberia. A paper on the beetle species, authored by Charlie Perez and Keith Benasoun of the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society (GONHS), appeared in a recent issue of the journal of the Andalusian Entomological Society 'Boletín de la Sociedad Andaluza de Entomología' (2006). Such is the importance of the find that images included in the paper were used as the journal's cover design. The paper commented on the find and speculated on future areas of research in the species, including its taxonomy. An extensive review of the species has been published by the authors, together with Antonio Verdugo, in the prestigious journal of the 'Sociedad Entomológica Aragonesa'. Mr Verdugo is an Andalusian entomologist who is an authority on buprestid beetles and a friend of his co-authors. The article reviews the taxonomic status of *Buprestis sanguinea* and divides it into four sub-species. The beetles from Gibraltar are ascribed to the newly described *Buprestis (Yanina) sanguinea calpeana*. It is named after the Rock's latin name (Calpe) and has so far only been recorded from Gibraltar.

For further details contact Charlie Perez; email: cperez@gonhs.org



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Successful Project proposals 2007

The Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) is a joint programme of the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to support implementation of the Environment Charters and environmental management more generally in all the UK's Overseas Territories. The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum continues to provide a Communication Strategy for OTEP. This is the seventh of a series of supplements to *Forum News* as part of this initiative. Although *Forum News* itself is under the editorial control of the Forum, the content of this supplement is as agreed by the Forum with FCO and DFID.

The fourth round of bidding remained extremely competitive in relation to the funds available. This issue of the OTEP supplement to *Forum News* includes those projects that were successful as well as a number of reports from projects funded in earlier rounds. OTEP welcomes jointly funded projects, so that some articles could equally occur in the OTEP supplement or the main section of *Forum News*, as indeed in this issue.

Anguilla: An assessment of the potential for rat eradication on Dog Island (ANG401)

Dog Island is globally important for its populations of seabirds and nesting turtles. Anecdotal evidence suggests that introduced rats

are a problem for nesting seabirds, turtles, other reptiles and native vegetation, and this warrants further investigation. Acting on a request from the Anguilla National Trust, the project will assess the impacts of rats on the native flora and fauna of Dog Island and explore the feasibility of eradicating them.

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Anguilla: Enhancing marine protected areas management in Anguilla - Phase I (ANG402)

In 1993, five marine parks (MPs) were established in Anguilla. The Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Government of Anguilla (DFMR, GOA) is currently responsible for enforcing Park regulations.

Although the Department is not technically responsible for their management, the DFMR has adopted the role informally - but management is minimal.

In an effort to improve the Marine Park system through better management and information (and as a first phase in a two-phase project), the Anguilla National Trust (ANT) and the DFMR have collaboratively developed a project that will assess the status of the ecological integrity of the marine Parks and other key nearshore sites. Furthermore, the project will assess socio-economic conditions and stressors affecting the Parks. Increasing public awareness to raise the profile of the important coastal environment within Anguillian society is integrated throughout.

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Surveying on Dog Island, Anguilla

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added to the formal list of European Sites of Community Interest (SCIs). Gibraltar also declares 2007 as Gibraltar Year of the Tree. Recommendations published from the workshop *Biodiversity and impact assessment in small island states*, held on 6-7 October 2006, and linked with the immediately following UKOTCF conference in Jersey.

Dr Rebecca Cairns-Wicks awarded MBE in the New Year's Honours 2007, for services to environmental conservation in St Helena.

Issue 31: October 2007

Conference of the Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds identifies tourism development as a major threat to the region's endangered species.

UKOTCF publishes the first review of progress on implementing the Environment Charters.

UKOTCF works with partners in the French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Netherlands overseas territories and outermost regions to secure support for the coordination of biodiversity research in tropical and subtropical areas from the European Commission, in the NET-Biome project.

MBE is awarded to Fred Burton for services to conservation of endangered species in the Cayman Islands and Cathy Hopkins for public services and service of the community of St Helena.

Further major decline in South Georgia's wandering albatross population.

In April 2007, the Channel Island of Sark designates Gouliot Caves and Headland as its first Ramsar Site.

A new species of jewel beetle has been rediscovered on the Rock of Gibraltar, the last record being a hundred years ago.

First announcement that the next conference of UKOTCF will be held in the Cayman Islands, 13 May to 5 June 2009.

JNCC holds workshop on invasive species in the UKOTs, this developing from the series of meetings organised by JNCC, FCO and UKOTCF following the workshop at UKOTCF's Bermuda conference 2003.

Francis Marks departs as the Forum Coordinator, having found a full-time post.

Only two specimens of the bastard gumwood remain in existence on St Helena. UKOTCF expresses concern that the second St Helena species which occurs nowhere else in the world could go extinct within a decade, following the St Helena olive.

Cayman Islands National Trust purchases additional land adjacent to the Ramsar Site, to help safeguard Little Cayman's red-footed booby colony.

Birdwatching guide for Anguilla published May 2007.

First 20-page edition of *Forum News*.

Issue 32: July 2008

Details of the UKOTCF Cayman conference *Making the Right Connections* published.

TCI Government hosts international conference *Fostering a green culture* in November 2007, including a speech by US former Vice-President and Nobel laureate, Al Gore. TCI's then Premier, Dr Mike Misick, said that he recognised the importance of preserving nature and environment and the economic benefits of this to the country because of the quality of tourism experience, and announced that there would be a halt to new developments. However, at the same time, 18 major threats to the environment from built development were identified by TCI conservationists.

Report from UKOTCF specialist volunteers donating four weeks' time to improving the restoration of the building forming the new Middle Caicos Conservation Centre.

Threats to Sark from the millionaire Barclay brothers.

In Bermuda, three endangered cahow petrels, translocated to Nonsuch Island (a potentially much safer nesting location than the low rocks currently used) before fledging in 2005, returned to the island and were observed entering nesting burrows. Nearby Cooper's Island declared a National Park, the island having been the subject of a site management field study during the 2003 UKOTCF-organised conference in Bermuda.

The *Sandwatch Project* involves teachers and students in the study and conservation of beaches in several places around the world, including British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands, and Montserrat.

Research on toads in Jersey.

Conference on the future conservation of the British Indian Ocean Territory (Chagos Archipelago) held in November 2007.

Obituary of David Taylor CBE (1933-2007), who had been the Chief Executive of the Falkland Islands 1983-1987 (following the 1982 war with Argentina), and then the Governor of Montserrat 1990-93, overseeing the reconstruction of the island and its economy following Hurricane Hugo – work later reversed by the volcano in 1997. He served on UKOTCF Council 1999-2006.

First 24-page edition of *Forum News*.

Issue 33: November 2008

Gough and Inaccessible Islands designated as Tristan da Cunha's first two Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention, following UKOTCF's 2005 review.

BVI National Parks Trust's protected areas systems plan approved

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JULY 2008 • www.ukotcf.org

Making the Right Connections: a conference on conservation in UK Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and other small island communities

Grand Cayman, 30th May to 5th June 2009

The conference (announced in *Forum News* 31) is being organized by UKOTCF in consultation with the Cayman Islands Department of the Environment and the National Trust for the Cayman Islands. It is supported also by the Overseas Territories Environment Programme of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development. It will be the fifth such conference following the first held in London in 1999, the second in Gibraltar in 2000, the third in Bermuda in March 2003 and the fourth in Jersey in October 2006. The proceedings of the Gibraltar, Bermuda and Jersey conferences can be seen on the Forum's web-site (www.ukotcf.org).

The conference will provide a forum for government environmental bodies and NGOs to discuss key conservation issues, to highlight success stories, exchange ideas, and to forge partnerships. The overall aim is to draw on similarities and differences in experience across the territories, to provide insights into common challenges, leaving participants better equipped to address local needs.

The main topics have been determined after wide consultations amongst conservationists working in the Overseas Territories. Main sessions are likely to be:

- Opening and introduction to Cayman experience – including field visits in Grand Cayman
- Maintaining momentum – setting the scene and reporting progress since the Jersey conference
- Scene setting/objectives for the Cayman conference

- Progress on Environment Charter implementation
- Environmental education
- Invasive species
- Raising our profile – engaging policy-makers and the public
- Joined-up thinking – institutional arrangements for environmental management
- Joined-up government
- Broader joined-up approaches
- Enhancing capacity – how on earth are we going to cope with the workload?
- Spatial planning, protected areas and international standards – assets or liabilities?
- Climate change – impacts, adaptation and mitigation
- Regional Working Group sessions
 - Wider Caribbean WG
 - Southern Oceans WG
 - Europe Territories WG
- Compilation and presentation of conference conclusions

This outline programme is provisional and may change up to the last minute. It will be amplified and updated periodically on the web-site (www.ukotcf.org). Participants should plan to arrive in Grand Cayman on Saturday 30th May 2009 and leave on Friday 5th June. (It may be possible for those wishing to stay longer to book rooms via the conference at the conference rate. If you wish to do so, please contact UKOTCF as soon as possible.)

Further details and a booking form are available on the UKOTCF web-site (www.ukotcf.org). It is recommended that bookings be made as early as possible, to secure places. You will be advised as soon as possible whether a place is available. In order to secure your booking, a non-refundable deposit is required at the time of booking. The balance will be due by 31st January 2009. Soon after, rooms have to be released to the hotel and so may not remain available. Even if rooms are available later, the concessionary price may not be available. Because the conference will be liable for costs after this time, refunds cannot be made. Participants are advised to take out appropriate travel insurance. Accommodation,

Grand Cayman's endemic subspecies of parrot, on the Mistle Thrill, one of the field-visit options during the conference.
Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

Parliamentary Group on Overseas Territories, with UKOTCF, a reception in Parliament to raise the profile of the critical importance to conservation of UKOTs and CDs.

In February 2009, UKOTCF's Chairman attended by invitation a "high-level roundtable" hosted in Brussels by the European Parliament Intergroup on Biodiversity and Climate Change. Although the organising bodies included those that had organised the recent Réunion conference, Overseas Countries and Territories and Outermost Regions were not mentioned until UKOTCF raised them during questions, drawing attention to their importance and the need to include them in the European Union biodiversity action plan.

In May, the South Atlantic Invasive Species project organised a 5-day regional workshop on Ascension Island.

Member of the Royal Naval Bird-Watching Society reports on a 6-month tour in the Falkland Islands.

In March 2009, Chagos Conservation Trust launched publication *The Chagos Archipelago: its Nature and the Future*.

The chytrid fungus that has been spreading around the world for a number of years, devastating populations of frogs species and driving some to extinction, reaches Montserrat, having previously reached Dominica. These two islands form the only remaining home of the mountain chicken frog. [This was the start of a major decline in the species, which was only beginning to recover from the effects of the volcanic eruption.]

Years of conservation effort and ecological restoration work on Nonsuch Island, Bermuda, rewarded by the first Bermuda petrel (cahow) chick to hatch and fledge there for 400 years. This opened the door for major recovery for the species – which had been nursed, almost on life support, since its re-discovery in 1951, after 400 years of presumed extinction.

Cayman Islands Government establishes a new nature reserve in the east of Grand Cayman, for the Cayman's critically endangered blue iguana and xerophytic shrubland. This was a result of work by the Cayman Islands National Trust in partnership with the European Union grant, led by UKOTCF, on management of protected areas to support sustainable economies.

Issue 35: December 2009

First *Forum News* with colour covers for the printed version.

FCO goes out to public consultation on the establishment of a marine protected area across the Chagos Archipelago.

In September 2009, UKOTCF convened a meeting of its member organisations, representatives of UKOT governments, and officials from four UK Government departments, to discuss *Environment Charters – the way forward*. Feedback indicated that the Forum's review of progress was widely accepted as useful in maintaining momentum. In December 2008, UKOTCF had started information collating for the second review, with gathered information supplemented at the conference in May/June 2009.

UK Government publishes *United Kingdom Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy*. At the request of UK Government, UKOTCF circulated this document with *Forum News* although, as expressed to Government and more widely, the Forum had considerable reservations about this document which appeared to be a step backwards from earlier commitments by UK Government and not really constituting a strategy, as opposed to an agreement between three ministries.

UK Government holds meeting on the 1999 White Paper on Overseas Territories, 10 years on. While welcoming the progress made, UKOTCF and other NGOs underlined the lack of secure funding to develop capacity and undertake major conservation

initiatives, funding that would be available for similar work within Great Britain and Northern Ireland itself.

Further reports from the Cayman conference.

Fred Burton, a former UKOTCF Council member, awarded the first of JNCC's new Turtle Awards for his work on the endemic and endangered Grand Cayman blue iguana.

Review article on *biosphere reserves – a useful tool for UKOTs/CDs?*

Turtle deaths in Western Sovereign Base Area of Cyprus.

UKOTCF splits Chairman post, with Mike Pienkowski proposing that Chris Tydeman take the chair, while he undertake the other part, as Honorary Executive Director.

Alderney hosts 2009 Channel Islands Interisland meeting.

The Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds met in July 2009, in Antigua and Barbuda, with a keynote speech by Ted Eubanks on "the business of nature – sustainable birding, outdoor recreation and tourism."

Illegal bird trapping in the Eastern Sovereign Base Area, Cyprus.

British Birdwatching Fair 2009.

Progress report on the Net-BIOME project, in which UKOTCF links UKOTs with their equivalents linked to other EU member states (France, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain).

Environmental campaigners in BVI, and other local residents, reverse approval for major resort developments on Beef Island, via judicial review.

In January 2009, there was near 100% gentoo penguin chick mortality along part of South Georgia's coast – probably due to changes in sea surface temperature affecting the availability of their krill food.

Mohammed Bin Zayed Conservation Fund awards Botanic

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DECEMBER 2009 • A colour version of Forum News is available online at www.ukotcf.org

Chagos Archipelago Marine Protected Area – your chance to influence policy

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has announced a public consultation that could lead to the establishment of a Marine Protected Area (MPA) across the Chagos Archipelago. The consultation closes on 12 February 2010. Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF's Chairman, said "UKOTCF urges organisations and individuals to respond to this unique opportunity by engaging with the consultation and supporting the declaration of a full no-take marine reserve for the largest area possible. This is vitally important, both directly for the conservation of this whole ecosystem and to protect the marine resources on which people's livelihoods depend in a wide surrounding area of the Indian Ocean." If the entire proposed area were to be declared a no-take zone, this would establish the world's largest site with that status, more than doubling the global area with full protection. Many readers will be aware of the controversy over over-fishing rights of the Chagossians, and it should be noted that the current consultation over environmental protection is being undertaken without prejudice to the outcome of current, pending proceedings before the European Court of Human Rights.

Because it is so remote and relatively undisturbed, BROT has some of the cleanest and healthiest reef systems in the world, including more than 50% of the healthy reefs remaining in the Indian Ocean. In their natural state, these are exceptionally resilient, and exhibit the highest densities of reproducing corals seen anywhere – 10 or 100 times higher than in most other, polluted locations. In addition, the surrounding waters of the Chagos include the 200 mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) include an exceptional diversity of deepwater habitat types. Although these have not been mapped or investigated in detail, work elsewhere has shown that a physically diverse seafloor is a strong indicator of an equally high diversity of associated marine species, many unknown to science.

The Chagos Archipelago (or British Indian Ocean Territory, BROT) contains the world's largest coral reef and is the site of the greatest marine biodiversity in the UK and its territories by far. The islands are amongst the most important breeding grounds for seabirds and turtles in the Indian Ocean. Their reefs support corals, fish and other species found nowhere else in the world, and provide a stepping-stone that links the reefs of the eastern and western Indian Ocean.

Announcing the FCO consultation, British Foreign Secretary David Miliband explained, "In March 2009, the Chagos Environment Network presented their vision of The Chagos Archipelago: its Nature and the Future which advocates the creation of one of the world's greatest natural conservation areas. This is a remarkable opportunity for the UK to create one of the world's largest marine protected areas and double the global coverage of the world's oceans benefiting from full protection."

The consultation presents three broad options for an MPA. The first involves the declaration of a full no-take marine reserve for the largest area possible. The other options offer more limited protection, or relate to a smaller area.

Instrumental in persuading the UK Government to consult on these proposals was a workshop on marine conservation in BROT, organised by the National Oceanography Centre (NOC) in

Photo: Chagos Conservation Trust

Photo: Chagos Conservation Trust

Issue 35: colour comes to cover pages of printed version; the online version was already all-colour.

Gardens Dublin for botanic species recovery work on Pitcairn. Pitcairn signs an overview to protect whales and dolphins in the Pacific region.

Issue 36: June 2010

UKOTCF personnel visit Pitcairn to consult and advise on various conservation issues.

In April 2010, the outgoing UK Government announced the creation of a marine protected area in the Chagos Archipelago, in the British Indian Ocean Territory.

RSPB starts fundraising for restoration in Henderson Island site, in relation to invasive Pacific rats.

Pitcairn Natural Resources Division and Akrotiri Environmental Education & Information Centre join Forum.

UKOTCF sets out some points for the new UK Coalition Government.

EU-funded South Atlantic Invasive Species project ends.

South Georgia Heritage Trust set to initiate its plans to restore South Georgia by eradicating rodents.

UKOTCF submitted views in 2009 to the Department of Culture, Media & Sports on the consultation in relation to World Heritage Sites. Their report was published in January 2010, and indicated that DCMS would undertake a further consultation to replace the Tentative List of potential World Heritage Sites in 2011. UKOTCF advised those territories thought to have an interest in this matter.

Concerns continue for Jersey's first Ramsar Site.

Colleagues in Pitcairn and Bermuda have requested UKOTCF help in advancing designations of some of the proposed sites identified in the 2005 Ramsar review that Defra commissioned from UKOTCF.

The Darwin Initiative supports more UKOT projects, following the Government announcement at the UKOTCF-organised Cayman conference in July 2009, of earmarking part of the fund for UKOTs.

British Birdwatching Fair 2010.

UKOTCF gives one of the main talks at the IUCN-UK's international conference *Nature – what's in it for me?* in Edinburgh, in April 2010, on "*Ecosystem management for human well-being in the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies.*" The topic is introduced to an audience of leading conservationists and others from Britain and across the global IUCN network.

Work continues on biodiversity-related projects involving TCI's Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR). This includes work to save the national tree of the Turks and Caicos Islands, the Caicos pine, from extinction (the local partner had become DECR, following problems within the previous local partner).

Issue 37: December 2010

After seven years of bureaucratic procrastination by the European Commission since the original application in 2003, contracts were at last in place [though flawed by errors by the European Commission] to implement the project on management of protected areas to support sustainable economies. The first project steering meeting was held on 28-29 October 2010, in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Quizzes and Caribbean cocktails at the British Birdwatching Fair 2010.

St Helena National Trust strategy.

UKOTCF member organisation, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, publishes, as part of its contribution to the 2010

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JUNE 2010 • A full colour version of Forum News is available online at www.ukotcf.org

Progress on Pitcairn

The sight of the Pitcairn lighthouse appearing around the northern end of the island and testing its way through the waves towards us was one of those incredible events which encapsulates a truly memorable experience.

We have worked, at a distance, with Pitcairn colleagues for many years, so the opportunity actually to visit Pitcairn in February 2010 was not to be missed. For two landlubbers like us, the three-day sail from French Polynesia to Pitcairn in a 20m ketch was another unique adventure. The *SP Southern Cross* served us well and, despite our lack of experience in such vessels and some rather wild seas, we had a memorable and exhilarating trip. The unreasonable weather conditions made the whole trip somewhat more challenging than anticipated – northerly winds (they are usually from the east or south-east, with huge swells (usually at a right angle to the wind). These conditions plagued our visit, especially as the landing sites on all islands are on the northerly sheltered – but now exposed – northern sides. Our departure from Mangarua (the southeastern-most settlement in French Polynesia) was delayed while we ascertained that the major cyclone, which had flooded and closed Tahiti's international airport hours after we had left there for Mangarua, was not actually heading for us.

A day and a half out of Mangarua, we anchored for a day off Oeno, the low coral atoll which is the westernmost of the Pitcairn group. The swells and winds made a landing impossible, so we began to be concerned about getting on to Pitcairn itself.

After an overnight journey, our first sight of Pitcairn was at dawn, about 20 miles out. As we watched it get closer, we could appreciate what an excellent location Fletcher Christian had chosen for the Bounty mutineers and their companions to settle, and remain unseen for decades. It rises solidly out of the ocean, with sheer cliffs and pounding waves. The swells and unfavourable winds prevented us from anchoring in Hoary Bay and we sailed around to the southeastern side. So the lighthouse came to us, and our concerns that we would not be able to land were unfounded – at least after a series of interminable transfers from yacht to rubber dinghy to longboat. This was our first experience of the fantastic hospitality and friendliness which is typical of Pitcairn.

Carol and Jay Warren, our hosts, immediately made us feel like part of their family. Through their guided tours and discussions with themselves and other conservation staff and island officers, including Simon Young and Leslie Jacques, we discovered more

Red-tailed Tropicbird at the breeding colony on Pitcairn Island. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

Adamawa and Hoary Bay come into view, as the longboat rounds the necks. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

One of the smaller waves crashes on to the reef surrounding Oeno Island. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

Continued from page 2

Henderson Fruit Dove (left) and flightless Henderson Rail, two of the island's endemic bird species. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

Despite a tricky and extremely wet landing, as heavy swells, Mike managed to get ashore on Henderson. In 2½ hours (rather than the 2-3 days originally planned), with the help of Pitcairner Paul Warren, he was able to land and photograph three of the four endemic land birds. The seas around Henderson are rich in corals and fish, and are visited by Humpback Whales. About 6-8 individuals were resident off Henderson Island for a period of six weeks in August – September 2009, generating 91 sightings.

Oward then another 1½ days' motor, to Ducie – so far east that it is Easter Island's nearest neighbour. This low coral atoll is incredibly important for breeding seabirds. At Oeno and Henderson Island, the petrels and shearwaters roost on the

encouraged actively, and new developments such as the East-tail provide enhanced visitor experiences. The conservation of endemic species is given a high priority, as exemplified by the plant *Abutilon poliochense*, found only on Pitcairn Island. This species was considered extinct for many years, and was re-found as recently as 2003 by islander Carol Warren, see *Forum News* 23-24 for news of further work on this species.

Local enterprises are flourishing, and much use is made of the internet for marketing and communication. Pitcairn is also looking to the future with considerations of alternative energy sources. It is extremely important that the UK Government continues to give the Pitcairn Islanders the support they identify as being necessary, to help their initiative and enterprise to flourish, and to enable them to safeguard their unique and incredibly important environment. It is perhaps worth mentioning here that although the UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport have provided over £268 million to World Heritage Sites in the UK since 1994, none has been allocated to Sites in the UKOTs (see p. 9).

Pitcairn now has a buzz and dynamic atmosphere. The islands produce some of the best honey in the world (which can be purchased online or from Fetzman and Mison's), and have thriving arts and crafts industries, selling on cruise ships and through their websites. We look forward to continuing to work with them on helping to conserve their unique wildlife which, together with their cultural heritage, is the basis of the future economy and well-being.

Humpback Whales close to Henderson Island. Photo: Steve Darnock

Ann & Mike Pienkowski, apienkowski@ukotcf.org, mikipienkowski.org

ground rather than in burrows, as there are no predators. Therefore, it is incredibly important that the island is kept free from invasive rodents, following the successful removal of introduced Pacific rats from here and Oeno in 1997. This island is relatively frequently visited by cruise ships or made from Easter Island to Pitcairn and Tahiti, so some recognition in support of protection, e.g. through Ramsar designation, is important.

Some impressions

Back on Pitcairn after our visit to the remote, unadorned islands, we were able to follow up the earlier discussions. It is very encouraging to be able to report so many positive developments and initiatives for the Pitcairn Islands. Ways of implementing the environmental Management Plans are being pursued actively. Designations of further sites as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention are underway. Sensitive tourism is being

Grey Reef Shark patrols over the coral reef and below the Southern Cross. Photo: Capt Paul Green

International Year of Biodiversity, report *Amphibians and Reptiles of UK Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and Sovereign Base Areas*.

Council member, Iain Orr, appears as an albatross to raise the profile of the importance of conservation in UK's Overseas Territories, at Earthwatch UK's annual debate in October 2010.

In September 2010, UKOTCF organised a seminar for representatives of UK Government departments and agencies, UK representatives of UKOTs, conservation bodies and other partners, to discuss how to fill the gaps in UK Government's *UK Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy* of 2009. Particularly identified were the need to identify objectives, targets, timetable and resources to complement the "strategy", which is essentially an agreement between three UK Government departments.

Turks and Caicos National Museum and Jost van Dykes Preservation Society joined the Forum.

Guernsey host third Interisland meeting for the Channel Islands.

Net-BIOME issues first joint research call; lack of UK Government contribution limits openings for UKOTs.

Darwin Initiative supports project, led by Bangor University and the Cayman Islands Department of Environment, on assessment and enhancement of marine protected areas system in the Cayman Islands.

UK Secretary of the State for the Environment announced, at the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Japan, that UK Government increases its contribution to the fund being raised by RSPB to complete the Henderson Island Heritage Site work on rat eradication, but did not mention that this is a UK Overseas Territory.

Article on Oceanwide Expedition (a corporate partner of UKOTCF) expedition vessel visits to the southern oceans.

Report from 4th Global Botanic Gardens Congress, Dublin, June 2010.

Wide consultation, to which UKOTCF and others contributed, shows 80% of responses in favour of the elimination of the introduced reindeer herds on South Georgia. Such elimination would also remove an impediment to the success of the current rat eradication project, as well as its direct benefits to conservation.

Implementation of the Chagos Marine Protected Area initiated with an end to issuing fishing licences in April 2010 and the ending from November 2010, of existing licences.

DFID moved its Overseas Territories Department from London to East Kilbride, Scotland, resulting in almost total staff turnover [and difficulties in liaison with other government departments and NGOs concerned with UKOTs].

Aerial photographic survey of the Falkland Islands albatrosses, undertaken September/October 2010.

Issue 38: October 2011

UKOTCF works: with Turks and Caicos National Museum to develop bird-watching trails on Grand Turk, opened in July 2011; and with teachers and students at the local high school to encourage protection being given to the internationally important salt-ponds used by wetland birds. UKOTCF works also with Turks and Caicos Department of Education to develop a curriculum and courses as the *Wonderful Water* project, to draw out the importance of water and wetlands.

The Caicos pine recovery programme nursery in North Caicos expanded, as part of the project that Turks and Caicos Department of Environment and Coastal Resources runs jointly with the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, following UKOTCF work in 2005,

during which the devastating effect of this introduced pest was discovered.

In June 2011, UKOTCF organised a workshop with wide participation from UKOT and UK bodies, to agree objectives to complement the *UKOTs Biodiversity Strategy* published by UK Government in 2009. The workshop agreed that the objectives should be based upon the Commitments in the Environment Charters, bringing in also the Aichi Biodiversity Targets recently agreed by the Conference of Parties in Japan in late 2010. (Despite being a party to that exercise, UK Government representatives indicated in the workshop that they did not see the need to apply the Aichi Targets to UKOTs, although subsequently they agreed that this would be desirable and necessary.)

FCO consults in late 2011 on a new UKOT White Paper. UKOTCF had commented on a more general UK Government White Paper some months earlier, noting that it did not mention UK Overseas Territories. UKOTCF was pleased to see the revision included a mention of the priority to be given to the UK Overseas Territories biodiversity, but found it strange that it referred to coordination being by the National Security Council. [Despite many efforts, UKOTCF was never subsequently able to get clarification of the National Security Council involvement in this matter.]

British Bird Fair 2011.

Despite every previous change in UK Government's financial support for conservation in the Overseas Territories for more than a decade having been the subject of consultation with NGO partners and the territories, in late September 2011, FCO (apparently without even consulting their fund partner, DFID) suspended the OTEP small grants programme. [Subsequently, although the funding was available for the following year, it was deployed without an open process, before new arrangements, jointly with other departments, started after a year's gap.]

UKOTCF confirmed that, after two years of consultations 2009-2011 with UK Government officials, who had appeared to be negotiating about contributing to the next of the three-yearly conferences organised by UKOTCF, the Government had indicated that funds would not be provided, accordingly ending the possibility of holding a conference in 2012.

Following several years of lobbying by UKOTCF and its colleagues in Bioverseas, the European Commission announced a pilot scheme, called BEST, worth €2 million for biodiversity projects in the overseas territories of European Union member states.

The Department of Culture, Media & Sport, following a two-year exercise by an Expert Advisory Group, announced a new UK Tentative List of World Heritage Sites. These included one cultural and two natural sites in UK Overseas Territories. UKOTCF's Honorary Executive Director had served on the Expert Group.

Major concern in Bermuda about the use of a Special Development Order to authorise built development, apparently without proper environmental assessment. Positively, Bermuda Government is leading the Sargasso Sea Alliance in an attempt to establish a mechanism for the establishment of a marine protected area on this important area of high seas, outside economic zones.

Funding has been secured for a rat eradication programme on Dog Island, Anguilla, involving Fauna and Flora International, Anguilla National Trust, Anguilla Department of Environment and RSPB.

UKOTCF holds informal meeting of its Wider Caribbean Working Group at the conference of the Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds in the Bahamas, July 2011.

UK Government is consulting on new positive actions for the Big Lottery Fund, and UKOTCF will comment on this, encouraging

others also to do so.

MS Oliva, a 75,300-ton bulk carrier *en route* from Brazil to Singapore, runs aground in March 2011 on Nightingale Island, Tristan da Cunha, subsequently breaking up and severely impacting both the natural environment and the lobster fishery crucial to Tristan's economy. [Subsequent investigations revealed that the ship was using inappropriate charts and the officers interpreted the radar images of the Tristan islands as clouds!]

Turks and Caicos Reef Fund established in 2010.

The end of available funding meant that the role of Dr Oliver Cheesman, as UKOTCF's Development Officer came to an end. Oliver had served previously as a representative of a member organisation, as a Council member, and as the Secretary of the Wider Caribbean Working Group.

Development of a community-led marine management action plan for the Pitcairn Islands, facilitated by Dundee University.

Early in 2011, UK Government discontinued funding external dissemination work, even where, as UKOTCF's case, it was a very cost-effective technique when carried out with a cooperating non-profit NGO. Accordingly, the OTEP section in *Forum News* 38 had been the last supported by FCO & DFID. A section (without support from DFID or FCO) is included in this issue. [Subsequently, although UKOTCF was prepared to continue this on an unpaid basis, the flow of information became inadequate.]

Rock Hopper Copper by Tristan's police officer, Conrad Glass, gets into best-seller lists.

South Georgia survey reveals richest marine environment in the southern ocean.



Issue 37: front page of first 28-page issue

Obituaries of Commander John Topp OBE, the founder of the Chagos Conservation Trust, who died in March 2011; and Professor Tony Atkinson, Chairman of the British Microbial Biodiversity Association, a UKOTCF member organisation.

House of Lords debate in March 2011, to draw attention to the biodiversity in the UKOTs.

Isle of Man describes some of the many stages involved in joining UK's ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Isle of Man designates first Marine Nature Reserve in October 2011.

Issue 39: December 2011

The main points of UKOTCF's submission to UK Government in its UKOT White Paper summarised.

History of the Heritage Lottery Fund's (and those of other funds using the resources raised by the National Lottery) failure to include work in the UK Overseas Territories, and the many erroneous statements made to justify, reviewed.

Review of some of the recent cases of inappropriate built development and lack of adequate environmental assessment in Caribbean UKOTs.

Report on conservation in Bonaire, a Dutch Caribbean Overseas Territory.

UKOTCF volunteers programme.

Bioverseas – revising and reviewing an agreement between UKOTCF and its French and Dutch equivalents.

UKOTCF Council member, and former General Secretary of the Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society and Director of the Gibraltar Botanical Gardens, Dr John Cortés, elected to Gibraltar's Parliament and takes up the post of Gibraltar's Minister for Health and Environment.

Net-BIOME announces first round of successful research projects. Unfortunately, UKOT/UK bodies could not apply directly for these, because UK Government had opted not to fund the exercise, unlike the Governments of France, Portugal and Spain, as well as many of their territory governments.

The National Trust of Cayman Islands purchase land to acquire the "missing piece" of Salina Reserve.

The European Commission's BEST programme announced its first round of successful applications, two going to international organisations with no or little involvement on the ground with overseas territories, and the other six going to French-led consortia, with none going to the 19 consortia led by other Member States. [Some years later, the Commission reluctantly admitted that the funding decisions had been made in-house – even though the staff there had very little knowledge of overseas territories and their conservation issues.]

Royal Botanic Gardens Kew launches its UKOTs online herbarium.

Jersey hosts the 2011 Channel Islands interisland biodiversity meeting.

Camera traps in Jersey give insight into the avian world within Jersey's wetlands.

Climate change policy progresses in UKOTs – but will UK Government provide financial support?

UK Antarctic Heritage Trust joins the Forum.

Issue 40: August 2012

UKOTCF comments on UK Government's 2012 White Paper *The Overseas Territories: Security, Success and Sustainability* (CM 8374), noting serious setbacks from the 1999 White Paper. For

example, whilst claiming to follow that White Paper, the 2012 one fails completely to mention Environment Charters, in many ways the major outcome of the first White Paper.

European Commission hosts meeting in Brussels in April to discuss the future of BEST. This discussed the extreme bias of awarded grants (as noted above) in the first round, as well as the news that there were no plans to continue BEST after the three years of the pilot.

UKOTCF complains on a DEFRA questionnaire which referred to “reducing the burden of UKOTs on UK” and other biased questions. Following UKOTCF’s submission, Defra writes to UKOTCF for other help, as they knew of only three conservation NGOs in UKOTs!

Gibraltar’s new Government (which includes a former member of UKOTCF Council as Environment Minister) starts implementing a number of important environmental commitments, made in its manifesto. Amongst these, it requires scientific review of the situation with regard to marine resources, and commissions this, via UKOTCF, from independent consultants.

Article on the importance and vulnerability of woody species and habitats in UK Overseas Territories.

Bermuda Ombudsman underlines that Environment Charters are binding, confirming that Bermuda Government acted unlawfully in its process of approving environmentally damaging development.

Bermuda, the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, British Indian Ocean Territory and the Isle of Man, join UK’s signature in June 2012 to the Memorandum of Understanding on Shark Conservation under the Convention on Migratory Species.

UKOTCF/TCI *Wonderful Water* curriculum and courses, in place in Turks and Caicos schools

Isle of Man team of volunteer nature reserve workers receive this year’s Blue Turtle, following last year’s award to St Helena for the Millennium Forest.

Netherlands sets up a marine mammal sanctuary for whales and dolphins in Dutch Caribbean waters.

UKOTCF Chairman attends the World Water Forum in Marseilles in March 2012, including a session on water management in the Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories of the EU, with him being the only UK presence out of 200 participants.

In August 2012, the Convention on Biological Diversity was extended to the Isle of Man, the first territory to be added to UK’s ratification since the original tranche in 1994, marking a major achievement by conservation officers in the Isle, despite many difficulties with UK Government.

Isle of Man organises Crown Dependencies environmental legislation meeting in March 2012.

UKOTCF Council holds reception for UKOT government London-based representatives in January 2011.

Montserrat’s Deputy Governor, Sarita Francis, awarded OBE in Queen’s New Year’s Honours list for public service to the Government and people of Montserrat; UKOTCF had worked closely with her during the periods in which she served as Director and President of Montserrat National Trust.

In February 2012, the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI) announce the establishment of a large sustainable-use marine protected area, covering 1,000,000 km² of the SGSSI’s maritime zone.

In January to February, related to the Net-BIOME project as well as the MPASSE project, UKOTCF’s Chairman and Honorary Executive Director held useful meetings and site visits, on a range of topics, in the British Virgin Islands and Montserrat.

UKOTCF officers held workshops on the *Wonderful Water* project in March-April, addressing also other projects in TCI.

Anguilla Archaeological and Historical Society join the Forum.

Sir Richard Ground received his knighthood in the Queen’s Birthday Honours June 2012 in respect of his distinguished legal career as Chief Justice in Bermuda and TCI and earlier, as Attorney General in Cayman; he is also an outstanding wildlife photographer, and has published books and articles in the Caribbean Overseas Territories wildlife, laid out largely by his wife Dace, a Council member of UKOTCF.

Pitcairn suffers highest monthly rainfall ever, in just two days.

UKOTCF expert volunteers undertake further work on Turks and Caicos, for the National Trust and the National Museum.

The first of the UKOTCF virtual tours now online.

Issue 41: July 2013

First online only edition of *Forum News*.

The Government of Gibraltar publishes the report *The management of marine living resources in the waters around Gibraltar*, commissioned via UKOTCF, and announces that it will act to implement its recommendations. UKOTCF calls on UK Government to support the Government of Gibraltar against negative actions by the Government of Spain.

Following work on rainwater harvesting for Montserrat’s Botanic Gardens with Montserrat National Trust, and continuing with its environmental education work in TCI, UKOTCF has worked with its associate, the Turks and Caicos National Museum, to design and resource a project. This involved the development of a garden displaying gtraditional crops and native plants and irrigated with rainwater, thus reducing the need for fertilisers and city water desalination, powered by imported diesel. The demonstration, combining model traditional gardens with an illustration of the



Issue 41: front page – the first web-only issue

potential of small-scale food production, were made possible by a grant from the Royal Bank of Canada Foundation under its *Blue Water* project.

Following early work by UKOTCF and a major project led by RSPB, the Ascension frigatebird breeds again on the main island of Ascension in December 2012, after an absence of 180 years.

Fieldwork on Anegada, as part of BVI's environmental profile programme, has discovered a new plant species for BVI, raising questions about the biogeography of the West Indies.

More threats to biodiversity and the community on Sark by big land-owners.

Following the UK Government's White Paper and UKOTCF's comments upon it, as well as those of others, the UK House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) launched a new inquiry on *Sustainability in the UK Overseas Territories*. UKOTCF submitted written evidence in November 2012 and oral evidence in April 2013, followed by further written evidence in June. Around the same time that the EAC inquiry was launched, UKOTCF organised a workshop at Gibraltar House in London, which was attended by a wide range of participants from UK and the UKOTs (including the clerk to the EAC), to discuss aspects of the White Paper which affect the environment and how to move forward. The workshop followed on from those previous ones organised by UKOTCF in 2010 and 2011 on biodiversity strategies, thereby trying to complement UK Government's biodiversity "strategy" for UKOTs. It attempted also to relate this to other commitments such as the Environment Charters and CBD's Aichi Targets. Unfortunately, at a late stage, FCO and Defra withdrew from participation in the workshop, so that JNCC also decided to withdraw.

At the invitation of Andrew Rosindell MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Overseas Territories, UKOTCF give a presentation to Parliament in February 2013, to raise the profile of conservation needs in the territories. Around 30 people attended, of whom about 15 were MPs or peers, including the Minister and the Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee.

The Bermuda Ombudsman, Arlene Brock, awarded honorary life membership of the International Ombudsman Institute, for exceptional commitment and outstanding services. She issued a further report to the Bermuda Parliament in May 2013, confirming and extending earlier conclusions, that the Environment Charters are legally binding agreements.

NGO and UKOTCF associate, Turks and Caicos Reef Fund, and the Turks and Caicos Department of Environment and Maritime Affairs, sign a Memorandum of Understanding relating to the rehabilitation, enhancement and maintenance of dive-boat and other moorings in the marine parks. UKOTCF helped secure additional funding for this work from commercial interests in UK. In late March and April, the 220-foot super-yacht *MY White Cloud* illegally anchors in the National Park of Northwest Point, Providenciales, Turks and Caicos Islands. Despite warnings that it should not be there and could cause damage to the reef, it does not move. On 1 April, its anchor is dragged through the reef, resulting in significant damage to an area of reef 100 m x 150 m. The captain is prosecuted.

The 2012 winner of the Blue Turtle Award for nature conservation in the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies is Bryan Naqqi Manco, from the Turks and Caicos Islands. As the latest of his many achievements, in November 2012, he rediscovered a TCI endemic plant thought extinct for nearly 40 years.

Alderney hosted the 2012 Channel Islands Interisland environmental meeting. The death of Dr Charles David, the leading Guernsey entomologist, occurred unexpectedly during a

visit to Sark in November 2012. David pioneered the Guernsey Biological Records Centre, and it is pleasing to note that its work is now being spread to other Channel Islands.

St Helena Nature Conservation Group published three new guides on the plants of St Helena.

The first-ever Ascension Island flag flew for the first time on Ascension Day, 11 May 2013, celebrating the discovery of the island in 1503.

Birdlife Cyprus joins the Forum.

Introduced reindeer removed from South Georgia in January 2013, about a hundred years after their introduction as a food source for the whaling industry. 2013 also saw a second major phase of rat eradication in a very large part of South Georgia.

The wreck of the *Oliva* at Tristan da Cunha: some questions answered but have lessons been learnt by UK Government?

South Atlantic protected areas workshop to be held in Ascension Island in 2014.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Biodiversity plans a meeting for September, to discuss bio-security in UKOTS, with UKOTCF collating views from several partners in the UKOTs to feed into this meeting.

In August 2011, RSPB and the Pitcairn Islands Government undertook a rat eradication operation in Henderson Island World Heritage Site, home to over 55 endemic species. Probably due to an unexpected change in the weather, seven months later, rats were seen at Henderson Island. To learn as much as possible from this attempt and plan a future attempt, RSPB commissioned three independent reviews.

UKOTCF's contracted involvement in the *Management of Protected Areas to Support Sustainable Economies* project ended and the final physical international project steering committee meeting was held in June, in the Turks and Caicos Islands. However, UKOTCF volunteered to continue giving further guidance advice [and it turned out chairing Skype meetings of the steering committee] on a voluntary basis, for several further years until project ended.

In March 2013, JNCC and Defra organised the long-awaited consultation meeting on progress in implementation of UK Government's 2009 "UKOT biodiversity strategy". However, it was unclear as to whether UK Government planned to amend its approach in the light of recent comments from UKOTs and the NGOs.

Island Resources Foundation published its Virgin Gorda environmental profile.

Student conservationist spends summer as a UKOTCF volunteer in Akrotiri, Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas.

Following her retirement as Deputy Governor, Sarita Francis returns to Montserrat National Trust as Executive Director. UKOTCF is working with MNT in securing funding for rain-harvesting project and other work.

Successful projects are announced under the first round of Darwin Plus funding, bringing together UK Government funding for UKOT projects, formerly separately managed by DEFRA and FCO/DFID.

Rather than invite a third call for proposals, the BEST initiative decided instead to tender for two large pieces of contract work, although leading conservation bodies, with experience of overseas territories, considered the tenders impracticable.

Concerns over beach-hut development in Anguilla.

The Shallow Marine Survey Group of the Falklands brought together, in August 2012, an international team to survey and catalogue the marine life found on Ascension Island.

Issue 42: February 2014

Launch of the *Wise Water Use for Gardens* project in Turks and Caicos Islands.

Successful applications under the second round of the Darwin Plus fund announced, and third call made.

At the request of St Helena partners, UKOTCF organised and hosted in August in London, a meeting to discuss topical issues, taking advantage of the presence of key visitors from St Helena, and focusing particularly on encouraging Governments to make better use of the expertise available in St Helena NGOs. In July, 12 new St Helena Councillors were elected, including several individuals calling strongly for St Helena Government to be more transparent.

Guernsey hosts 2013 Channel Islands Interisland environment meeting.

UK All-Party Parliamentary Group for Biodiversity established seven subgroups to help advance debate and understanding in Parliament of key issues. UKOTCF and RSPB jointly chair the Overseas Territories sub-group, and UKOTCF is represented also on several of the other groups whose discussions might impinge on UKOTs.

Colleagues from Pitcairn, in Britain for several weeks to attend the Joint Ministerial Council, took the opportunity to refresh connections with UKOTCF, which is providing advice on a range of issues.

Protests in TCI about possible dolphinaria, made legally possible by law changes, made by the Governor under direct UK rule.

Despite doubts by NGOs about continued ineligibility, Defra organised workshops for UKOTs potentially applying to the LIFE fund of the EU. Unfortunately, during the workshops it became apparent, from the detailed text, that ineligibility continued, despite section headings implying the contrary.

UKOTCF continued to work, over much of the year, in support of

UK Parliament's Environmental Audit Committee's Inquiry into *Sustainability in the UKOTs*. Members and one of the Committee Secretariat visit the Cayman Islands.

Following UKOTCF and others again expressing concern about the tendency of some key UK Government departments and agencies no longer dealing appropriately with NGOs, UK Government's review of JNCC picks up this issue. Accordingly a group set up between JNCC and NGOs, tests its efficacy by exploring the development of joint objectives in relation to the UK contribution to conservation in the UKOTs.

Article on Dhekelia Turtle Watch, Cyprus SBA.

At the request of the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, UKOTCF organised a workshop on the day of publication of the Committee's report on *Sustainability in UKOTs*, kindly hosted at Gibraltar House. The Chair and two other members of EAC attended, together with the Committee clerk, and a range of interested parties.

Issue 43: March 2015

Announcement of the UKOTCF/Gibraltar conference: *Sustaining Partnerships*.

At the request of FCO (but unfortunately the funding they indicated failed to materialise) and Montserrat bodies, UKOTCF organised a *pro bono* senior expert on environmental impact assessment to run consultations and a workshop on Montserrat, especially because of the requirement for a new capital and the environmental sensitivity of the whole island.

UKOTCF and the Turks and Caicos National Museum open the *Wise Water Use Garden*; the demonstration provides a model for local citizens and small businesses.

UKOTCF publishes five *Birding in Paradise* guidebooks, to support conservation and local businesses. These cover bird-watching and other heritage sites across each of the inhabited islands in the Turks and Caicos.

With help from UKOTCF, Montserrat National Trust receives a grant from the British Library to safeguard, scan and curate its endangered archives.

After more than 10 years of effort by Cayman Department of Environment and NGOs, the National Conservation Law was enacted in December 2013.

The National Trust for the Cayman Islands purchases 4 ha of wetlands in Cayman Brac, to protect some of the last remaining wetlands on the island.

About 15 years after the idea was last raised, the Turks and Caicos Government proposes developing a trans-shipment port and cruise centre in East Caicos, the largest uninhabited island in the Caribbean and a place of enormous biodiversity value.

UKOTCF, via its Wider Caribbean Working Group, facilitates collaboration between UKOTs and other islands in the Caribbean, relating to coral reef conservation. This is in respect of the threats from, for example, climate-change, over-exploitation, invasive species and pollution.

40 years after its last sighting in the wild, an endemic snail, thought extinct, found in Bermuda.

In December 2014, *Management of Protected Areas to Support Sustainable Economies* project in three Caribbean UKOTs, initiated by UKOTCF to secure EU financial support, draws to a close – after seven years waiting for the European Commission to process the application and four years of actual work.

Problems regarding the organisation of the second conference by IUCN and the European Commission, in Guadeloupe in October 2014, meant that a number of invited delegates from several



Issue 42: front page

UKOTs and elsewhere, were unable to attend. This gave rise to some imbalance in the participants agreeing the final conclusions, which were subject additionally to censorship by the organisers.

UKOTCF member organisation Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society and a team of specialists from UK, with support from the Gibraltar Ministry of the Environment, discover species of bat new to Gibraltar.

The Bermuda Supreme Court uphold the conclusion of the Bermuda Ombudsman of the binding nature of the Environment Charters and the need for Environmental Impact Assessments.

The success of the South Georgia Heritage Trust's rat eradication exercise, and the rapid recovery of several species suppressed by the rats was noted at the annual South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands stakeholder meeting in London.

Following a request from the Government of Montserrat, UKOTCF worked with the Fisheries Department to raise their capacity and introduced them to the Waitt Institute, which has since been working in Montserrat under an MOU with the Government.

Gibraltar announces new fishery regulations in line with the recommendations of the study commissioned by the Government of Gibraltar through UKOTCF.

Concern is expressed by NGOs that an opening up of physical development in the Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas lacks adequate environmental safeguards and consultation mechanisms, especially in the absence of citizenship of residents in the SBAs.

The Administrator of the Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas and the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Cyprus open a new Environmental Education Centre in Akrotiri, Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas.

The second JNCC/NGOs meeting, chaired by UKOTCF's Honorary Executive Director and attended by JNCC's new Chair, Prof Chris Gilligan, considers the views, objectives and approaches from the NGOs, collated by UKOTCF, and awaits equivalent input from UK Government [which was never received despite JNCC's best efforts].

UK Government's response to the Environmental Audit Committee's report on *Sustainability in the UKOTs* is considered disappointing by most of those who participated in the inquiry.

The Joint Ministerial Council, of ministers from the UKOTs and UK, met in December 2014 at their annual gathering. The communiqué indicated that territory governments are committed to implementing robust environmental protection legislation where not yet in place.

UKOTCF hosts event in London where film-maker Stuart McPherson reports, to UKOT personnel, progress on his new TV series, short videos and books about the wildlife of UKOTs, to which UKOTCF has made major contributions of expertise, time, images, videos, advice and fundraising.

Obituary of Sir Richard Ground (1949-2014): distinguished judge and good friend of UKOTCF.

UKOTCF introduces two MSc-qualified volunteers to help in many roles. Another UKOTCF volunteer embarks for six months work in St Helena, and a second student volunteer spends the summer in the Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas.

Issue 44: January 2016

Report of *Sustaining Partnerships: a conference of conservation and sustainability in the UK Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and other small island communities, Gibraltar 11-15 July 2015*.

BBC Radio 4 broadcasts, in its *Costing the Earth* series, a

programme on the marine environment in UKOTs, based on their attendance at the Gibraltar conference.

Meeting of environment ministers of UKOTs and CDs, initiated by the Gibraltar/UKOTCF conference, reflected at Joint Ministerial Council.

Following its two previous reviews of progress implementing the Environment Charters, UKOTCF throughout 2015 and using the conference also, has been collating views and comments from the territories, and will be producing the third review of progress in the Charter Commitments, bringing in also the relevant Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

UKOTCF and the Montserrat National Trust published in October 2015: *Birding in Paradise: the Caribbean Emerald Island of Montserrat – a guide to bird-watching, nature and heritage sites*.

International National Trust Organisation (INTO) attends UKOTCF Gibraltar conference, and UKOTCF Honorary Executive Director attends part of INTO's Cambridge conference shortly afterwards.

Chairman of House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee sends greetings and an invitation to raise issues with the Committee, to UKOTCF, for the Gibraltar conference.

IUCN Director-General, Inger Andersen, addresses IUCN-UK members in June in the House of Lords, with UKOTCF representative present. Following UKOTCF's mention of the forthcoming Gibraltar conference, the DG stressed the importance of UKOTs and mentioned her recent meeting with Gibraltar Minister Cortés, and commended the approach of Gibraltar.

Profile of UKOTs raised at the Caribbean Renewable Energy Forum 2015, with the support of UKOTCF and FCO at a UKOT stakeholder meeting session.

Alderney host the 2015 Channel Islands Interisland meeting in October, with representation from UKOTCF.

In October 2015, Guernsey declares Herm, Jethou and The Humps



Issue 44: front page – Gibraltar conference 2015

as a new Wetland of International Importance.

UKOTCF and Stuart MacPherson announce an event, to be held in March at the Royal Geographical Society, to introduce the new *Britain's Treasure Islands* TV series, free mini-documentary videos, and book.

In September 2015, the UN adopts a set of Sustainable Development Goals.

Montserrat becomes an associate member of UNESCO in November 2015.

UKOTCF helps St Helena Environmental Assessment and Advocacy Division Manager, organise a programme of working visits to increase capacity, making the best use of the travel from St Helena to Europe for the Gibraltar conference.

The forthcoming creation, was announced in early January 2016 of a marine reserve, almost the size of the United Kingdom, around Ascension Island in the Atlantic Ocean.

Calls for Darwin Plus grants, and BEST 2.0 announced.

UKOTCF attends EU Overseas Entities Roundtable and European Parliamentary meetings in September Brussels.

South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute introduced in ann article.

Issue 45: October 2016

UKOTCF completes collation of information from territories, to review progress in implementing the Environment Charters and towards the Aichi Targets and related Sustainable Development Goals, with publication in April 2016.

Partnership led by UKOTCF, and including Montserrat National Trust, Montserrat Government, Montana State University, and Treweek Environmental Consultants, awarded Darwin Plus project funding on *Maximising long-term survival prospects of Montserrat's endemic species and ecosystem services*, the first session of visits and meetings taking place in May 2016.

Petroglyphs discovered in Montserrat.

UKOTCF releases online the first of its own videos on the wildlife of UKOTs, as well as links to those in the *Britain's Treasure Islands* series. Two new territories are also being prepared for the virtual tours series.

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

Anguilla designates its first Ramsar Site, Sombrero Island [which escaped being turned into a rocket launch pad about 20 years earlier].

UK's 30th World Heritage Site, Gorham's Cave complex, Gibraltar, designated.

St Helena proposes marine protected area.

UK Government announces, in September 2016, its *Blue Belt* commitment to marine protection round UK Overseas Territories.

The Isle of Man becomes the first country in the world to be recognised in its entirety by UNESCO as a World Biosphere Reserve, in March 2016.

Continued results on legacy of Gibraltar/UKOTCF conference 2015.

UKOTCF holds constructive meetings with the Governors-Designate for TCI and Bermuda.

The saga of St Helena's airport continues.

Local employees of the Royal Bank of Canada join the Turks and Caicos National Museum and TCI Departments of Environment and Maritime Affairs and of Agriculture, to work as volunteers on the model garden, which uses water-harvesting, established by

UKOTCF and the Museum.

Inadequate Environmental Impact Assessment for the proposed dolphinarium development programme in TCI.

UKOTCF attends Overseas Entities Roundtable meeting in Brussels, in June 2016.

Prof Tony Martin, Project Director at the South Georgia Heritage Trust, named Conservationist of the Year by the Zoological Society of London.

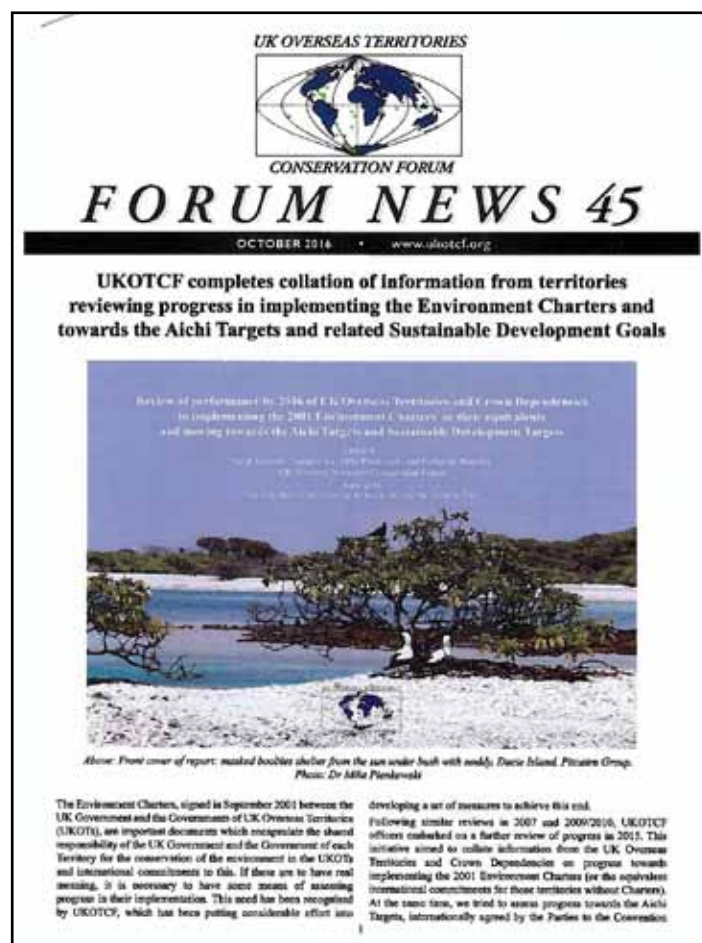
Guernsey hosts the Channel Islands interisland meeting 2016.

All UK ministers dealing with UKOTs change following the EU referendum.

UKOTCF's Catherine Wensink gives presentation and joins panel on UK Overseas Territories in Parliament for the Young Fabian Society.

UKOTCF makes submissions to the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee on: the Future of the Environment following the EU referendum; Sustainable Development Goals; and Marine Protected Areas.

The parties involved in the celebration of Gibraltar's national day in September agree that they will no longer release large numbers of balloons, because of the pollution caused.



Issue 45: front page of the issue before this

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1. You know how valuable and vulnerable are the environmental treasures held in the UK Overseas Territories.
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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.

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