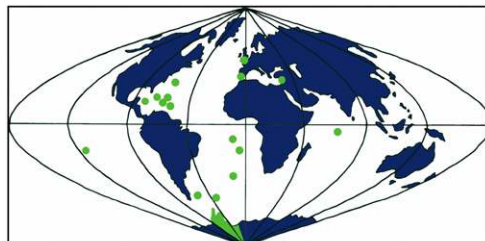


Book for the event on the making of Stewart McPherson's TV series (to be broadcast on BBC TV) on the wildlife of the UKOTs: page 9



New UKOTCF/Montserrat NT guide book on bird-watching and other heritage-sites on Montserrat: page 13

CONSERVATION FORUM

FORUM NEWS 44

JANUARY 2016

• www.ukotcf.org

Sustaining Partnerships: a conference on conservation and sustainability in UK Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and other small island communities, Gibraltar, 11th to 15th July 2015

The *Sustaining Partnerships* conference in Gibraltar in July 2015 broke new ground in several important ways.

For the first time, the sessions were structured so as to enable preparations and discussions to result in detailed conclusions and recommendations. These conclusions and recommendations can be seen in full at www.ukotcf.org/confs/gibraltar2015.htm.

The recommendations cover the following broad topics:

- Environmental Education and Awareness
- Renewable Energy
- International agreements
- Using informed decision making to manage development sustainably, including Environmental Impact Assessments

- Stakeholder and User Stewardship
- Legislative Framework
- Economic and Intrinsic Value of Sustainable Use
- Invasive species
- Biodiversity data
- Other aspects of Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Resources
- Capacity and resource issues
- UKOTCF and its Regional Working Groups

The same [web-page](http://www.ukotcf.org/confs/gibraltar2015.htm) links also to the conclusions and recommendations sorted according to the target audiences: UKOT/CD Governments; UK Government; NGOs; Other funding bodies; and the Private Sector & Utilities.



GIBRALTAR
10TH TO 15TH OF JULY 2015



The conference participants. Photo: Juan Carlos Teuma, Gibraltar Government Press Office

This process and other aspects of the conference were greatly enhanced by another innovation: the participation, alongside that of practical conservationists, of environmental ministers, or their equivalents, from several Territories. Some of these participated in the whole conference; others just the final day which included summaries of the technical sessions, as well as a meeting of the Environment Ministers themselves on the following day.

This consisted of the first meeting of the Environment Ministers' Council, noted in the Communiqué of the Joint Ministerial Council in December 2015 (see page 10-12). The Ministers plan to hold this meeting annually, and have asked UKOTCF to facilitate this.

Much of the content of this issue of *Forum News* is devoted to the conference and issues arising from it or its follow-up. More material on the conference, including short summaries and videos of some of the surrounding events can be accessed at www.ukotcf.org/confs/gibraltar2015.htm.

In December 2015, the Proceedings of the conference were added to the web-site, accessed from the same [web-page](#).

The core of the proceedings, as of the conference itself, are six half-day workshops. Each addresses a topic (and, between them, covering also several other cross-cutting themes, such as invasive species and climate change). In the course of discussions over several years, involving UKOTCF's regional working groups and other fora, many suggestions for conference topics were discussed with partners. The topics selected attempted to cover those most needed as priorities, bearing in mind also other opportunities to discuss various topics. The topics were:

- Implementing Biodiversity Action Plans in the context of Environment Charters, Aichi Targets etc, and including environmental monitoring
- Conservation and Sustainable Use of Terrestrial Resources
- Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Resources
- Renewable energy
- Using informed decision making to manage development sustainably (including physical planning, environmental impact assessments etc)
- Environmental education & awareness

These six main sessions were supported by several other sessions on various topics. The proceedings include not just the talks, but also papers on the posters and reports of specialist workshops, as well as other material.

In addition, each of UKOTCF's regional working groups



Opening of the conference at the Garrison Library, by (from right): Hon. Dr John Cortes, Gibraltar Minister of Health, Environment & Climate Change; Hon. Dr Joseph Garcia, Gibraltar Deputy Chief Minister; and Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF Honorary Executive Director.
Photo: Juan Carlos Teuma, Gibraltar Government Press Office



Gibraltar, from the air, looking southwest to Africa.
Photo: Dr Keith Bensusan & GONHS

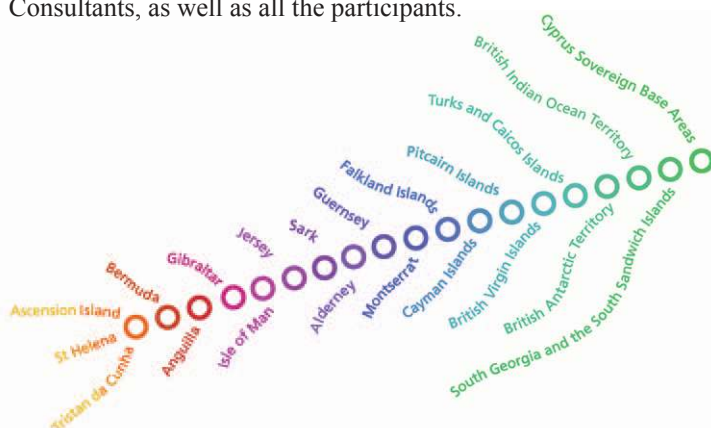
(Wider Caribbean, Southern Oceans, Europe Territories) met, on this occasion attendance at these being open to all conference participants.

On the first morning of the conference, one session was devoted to a field-visit (with a choice between a marine/coastal focus and a visit to the Upper Rock); these visits had the triple purpose of: introducing some local issues to participants; giving the chance to recover after long travel; and allowing participants to get to know each other to make the later sessions highly effective (see pages 7-9).

Judging by the participants' comments (reported in full in the Proceedings), the overall aim of the conference, 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, seems to have been well met. As planned, the conference provided a forum for government environmental bodies, NGOs, commercial organisations – and indeed policy-makers – to discuss key conservation issues, to highlight success stories, exchange ideas, and to forge partnerships.

It was the sixth such conference, following the first held in London in 1999, the second in Gibraltar in 2000, the third in Bermuda in March 2003, the fourth in Jersey in October 2006 and the fifth in the Cayman Islands in 2009. The proceedings of the first Gibraltar, Bermuda, Jersey and Cayman conferences also can be seen at www.ukotcf.org

The conference was resourced and organised by HM Government of Gibraltar and the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, with the support of the Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society. The organisers are grateful for contributions to the funding and other support of the conference from: UK Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs; UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee; and Treweek Environmental Consultants, as well as all the participants.



An overview of the Gibraltar conference by a new participant



Opening of first full session, with (from right) Liz Charter, Minister Dr John Cortés, Dr Mike Pienkowski, and a few of the other participants.

Photo: Juan Carlos Teuma, Gibraltar Government Press Office

When I was asked to attend the UKOTCF conference in Gibraltar as a volunteer, I was delighted. I had been volunteering for the UKOTCF while I was living in Cyprus but had yet to put faces to any of the names I had been corresponding with over the last year and a bit. The conference felt like a great opportunity, not just to meet the core personnel of the Forum but also people from all over the UKOTs.

The conference organisation was excellent, with flights, connections and hotel all exceeding expectation. Even the 'dreaded' room-share with a stranger turned out to be great fun, thanks to being paired with a fun and relaxed room-mate.

The marine excursion proved to be amazing, with incredible displays from resident dolphins in numbers greater than I've seen before and, from the excitement of other attendees, I don't think I was the only one to be impressed! Most conferences I have attended have kept excursions to the end when you are often too jaded to enjoy them. Having the excursion on day one was a great way to relax and get to know people before the proceedings began. The conference sessions were packed and a great way to find out about what was going in all the UKOTs, as my own experiences had been limited to Cyprus and the Isle of Man. I now have a mission to travel to all of the UKOTs, however hard to get there, to see for myself the great things that are going on!

I know from chatting to other attendees that I was not alone in finding it hard to stay focussed for the full length of each of the

days as they were exceptionally long. However, I also believe everyone was aware that, with such a lot of information to share, it was not possible to organise the conference any other way. The working groups and session discussions appeared a great way for identifying new intra- and inter-territorial projects, as well as highlighting outstanding problems in the territories and trying to find realistic and achievable ways to tackle these.

The networking opportunities over the course of the conference were great and, even without an active project running at the time, I made some great connections and came away with lots of new ideas. The free evenings were a good opportunity to network further with people you perhaps hadn't had a chance to connect with over the course of the day and explore the city.

I couldn't end without saying how incredible the conference dinner was. Stepping into St Michael's Cave that evening was a magical experience that I feel very grateful for. The beauty of the cave was matched by great food and excellent entertainment from the Gibraltar Corps of Drums.

I left the conference with great memories of people and projects, and an even bigger respect for the UKOTCF for running such an impressive and obviously essential conference with only a small core staff and a team of volunteers.

Dr Phoebe Carter



Montage of the conference dinner in St Michael's Cave. Photos: Mervin Hastings (BVI); Dr Chris Tydeman

Some of the Ministers' views from the Gibraltar conference

Hon. Dr John Cortés MBE, Minister of Health, Environment & Climate Change, HM Government of Gibraltar

“Despite economic growth, despite almost zero unemployment, we are not negatively impacting the environment in any significant way. As Minister for the Environment, I have not had to lose much sleep over what we are doing in developing and in making the strides that we are making economically.”



“During all this time that we have had this continuing economic growth, we, for example, increased the size of our protected areas. We have expanded the Upper Rock Nature Reserve to include lower areas. What is now the Gibraltar Nature Reserve covers most of non-urban areas of Gibraltar. We have declared a Special Protection Area and a Special Area of Conservation, both under EU law, on the Upper Rock. We have legislated marine protection and introduced marine protection regulations. For the first time, we are monitoring and enforcing these type of laws. Last week, we published a command paper to review the Town Planning Act, which will mean that all Government projects have to go through the independent planning commission before they get approved.”

“All these things we are doing, yet we are thriving as an economy, so the environment and the economy are not necessarily in conflict. They can work together, provided you know how to do it, and I think here in Gibraltar we are learning quite fast.”

“In order to be able to advance the environmental agenda, we need the support of the people. When you do things like change a dirty car park into a brand new grassy public park, people clearly come on your side.”

“This is the type of meeting which is not just a talking shop. We must make sure that we take things away with us and that we make things happen. We have to make sure that we all progress on our way to sustainability and carbon neutrality, which is possible in small territories such as ours; that we develop ways in which we restore and protect natural areas and that increase our knowledge of what our natural environment is. We have to take a message to



Views of Commonwealth Park, in the centre of Gibraltar city and recently created from a former car-park. Many of the participants remarked how wonderful the park is and that there are certainly areas in their own towns where they could do something similar.

Photos: Catherine Wensink, UKOTCF

a wider audience and not keep it within ourselves in our territories. Make our small territories real examples of good environmental governance.”

Hon. Claude Hogan Minister of Agriculture, Trade, Land, Housing and the Environment, Montserrat

“We should tell the British Government: we need enhanced provisions for supporting the adaptation needs of our vulnerable countries, including: provision of adequate, predictable, new and additional finance, technology and capacity link support and the strengthening of institutional arrangements so that we can do the work that we are doing.”



“I also want to encourage you to look where we are coming from. I am sure you have established baselines for the work that you are doing. I want us to do measuring, reporting and have institutional arrangements in place with UKOTCF, which I think will continue to have an indefinite role to play in this exercise, verification of the performance that we are doing against these commitments, and against those commitments we shall agree our main trust in the UK Government will finance. We will put in place a compliance to achieve, not just for us, because we are going to perform against our targets, we are going to make sure there is a compliance regime that they respect, with regards to the work that we are doing in fulfilling international obligations of our entire UK and its Territories. “

“Recently, I was invited by President of Guadeloupe to a meeting of all the Caribbean countries. He has unveiled a number of projects which include the overseas territories, looking at a window for the French OTs to collaborate with other OTs to access the global climate fund. There will be discussion in Paris in December. I invite you all to keep an eye out on this because I honestly believe, that we need to work with all partners in dealing with this environmental issue. It is a really big problem that we facing.”

“In additional to the efforts we are making in our own regions, we need to cross-collaborate with other countries in our regions because some of the challenges are best handled when we work with our neighbours.”

“Pleased at the discussion marine assistance in marine EEZ, we have been trying to find resources for our marine division and environment departments to work together, and it occurred to me that this is thinking that terrestrial and marine should be outsourced to the Montserrat National Trust. All they need from us is facilitation and financing.”

“We have had some lessons learned here on geothermal exploration. When I heard the discussion on the approaches of countries like Gibraltar, I am thinking that for my own country maybe, haste is going to make waste. We are working on two tracks and we don't have the capacity to deliver the policy, legislation and operation arrangements needed that would deal with the environmental consequences from geothermal operations in Montserrat. Everyone is delighted to hear that less carbon is

going to be used, and electricity is going to be cheaper. I am not even sure about that because of the level of investment that has to be made and the capacity that you need to get it operational. We are going to have to go back to the drawing table with the British. It is not just about the plan. It is going to be a weighty issue going forward and I have taken note of that.”

“I want to applaud the BEST programme. They have been doing a wonderful job in invasive and feral animal control in Montserrat.”

“I want to congratulate the work done on Environmental Impact Assessment. Within a short time of discussions with UKOTCF, they were able bring an EIA specialist to the island, facilitate and embed EIA in planning in Montserrat since late 2014.”

“I am putting the entire Forum on notice that the next conference will be held – God willing – in Montserrat in three years’ time, as well as the next Environment Ministers’ meeting in May or July next year.”

Victor Brownlees, Chief Executive, States of Alderney

“We are relatively closed systems, so we can experiment. We can try things out, but we cannot be guinea pigs, we shouldn’t be someone else’s lab rat. We need to understand the risks that come with trying new things out. Why is that important to us? The tidal energy project can make us completely free of fossil fuels. It can hugely reduce the cost of living



Puffins on Burhou © AWT Ltd (Photographer Bill Black) - from Victor Brownlee’s conference poster with Rowland Gauvain on “Living Islands”

on Alderney. Electricity and oil costs roughly 15% of living wage, which I would suggest is unsustainable. So it’s got huge potential, but what about the environmental impact? How can we better protect the environmental resource? So I will take that away. It’s right to take a risk, it’s right to try things but don’t be someone else lab rat.”

“We need to capitalise on our balance sheets, collectively the value of our natural resources and historical heritage. There are things about Alderney that will attract people to come there. That is why we have our *Living Islands* project. That is about recognising those things and then going after tourism. There are two sides to what we want to do. One is to preserve and protect, and the other

is to achieve sustainable economic growth and we are going to do that through niche and targeted tourism.”

Dr Hon. Kedrick D. Pickering, Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Natural Resources & Labour, British Virgin Islands

“In the British Virgin Islands, the environment is not just any old subject; in the British Virgin Islands, the environment IS the subject because, despite the fact that we are involved with international events such as financial services, tourism is our main bread-earner, and our tourism is based largely on the



fact that our environment is so special. We did a study with the University of Amsterdam two years ago. The study showed that about 90% of all the visitors coming to the BVI come because of the environment. In the same study, 90% of visitors said that our beaches are our number one assets and, if we destroyed these, there wouldn’t be anything for anyone to come to the BVI for. You extend that discussion; most is based on our marine environment. 75% of visitors come to sail, so it is a major part of our industry as well as snorkeling, scuba-diving and other water-related activities; these are what our tourism is all about.”

“There were three broad issues that were agreed on: that countries of the Caribbean should work desperately to give a commitment to protect 20% of their national marine areas by 2020. Secondly, all countries should endeavour to work towards renewable energy and should have at least a 50% commitment by 2030; and then the third issue, all countries should work desperately hard to protect sharks and rays.”

“The BVI marine environment and our fisheries are extremely important to us. All the scientific studies have shown that, if you are going to protect coral reefs and ultimately protect and sustain your tourism product and your fisheries, you have to protect the coral reefs. Two things are important in that context, one is the parrot fish and the other is the issue of ghost-traps. Former Governor Boyd McCleary worked diligently with me to get the British Ministry of Defence to send a team to the BVI to help us with the removal of ghost-traps, because the tradition of fishing in our country is ghost-traps and because the material that our fishermen use is non-biodegradable. During storms, these fish-traps are lost and they remain on the ocean floor and continue to kill fish.”

“We have a commitment [as part of the Caribbean Challenge amongst others] to protecting the environment for generations to come.”

“We understand the value of what we have.” In my lifetime I don’t want to see the mistake of seeing the environment in the BVI destroyed because we don’t recognize the value of it. I have a commitment to do what I can, not only locally and regionally, but internationally to be a champion for the environment and to ensure that my children and my children’s children will inherit the environment as we have it, in a better state. We, as a government, have bought back some important real estate and we are going to transfer these to the National Parks Trust.”

“We believe that overseas countries and territories working together can raise the alarm and can raise their voices to ensure unwanted destruction is something of the past.”

Hon. Richard Ronan MHK, Minister of the Department for the Environment, Food & Agriculture, Isle of Man Government

“We value the opportunity to take time out and share perspectives, and learn from each other through this honest and very open Forum. We are all from relatively small jurisdictions and can often be seen as insular by others and, of course, no one of us has big teams. So this is a chance rapidly to gain understanding new ideas, and we will go back to our



homes with a new perspective. The exciting part is that we may be small but we are nimble and we can genuinely make a difference, very quickly. So this provides us with an opportunity to make a real difference to climate issues around the world.”

“One of the special aspects of this event is governments and NGOs working together, and I will work hard to get more Isle of Man NGOs involved as we have seen this week. I know I have already been tasked by the Parliament at home to make this happen more on the Isle of Man.”

“Environmental Impact Assessment is a very current topic for us. We are currently working with a commercial partner to develop an off-shore wind farm, which will contribute to sustainable energy produce but more importantly to our island economy. EIAs always create tension. As we all work together to consider and identify the very fine balance between our environment and the economy, I feel it is important for you to note that we are a Crown Dependency, not part of UK or EU and therefore not bound by their EIA standards, so the tension and debate is a massive challenge for us politically and financially. For that reason I note that the NGOs proposed to lobby the UK regarding their role in supporting the UKOTs to achieve these balances and, from that perspective, we are jealous, I suppose, as we are entirely self-funded with no legitimate right to seek UK support. So against that backdrop, I know the Manx team here, benefitted and enjoyed from the conversations about EIAs and we thank you all for that.”

“I would like to say a few words about climate change, where I have deliberately worked to change perspectives on island to climate challenges. We have made rapid progress recently by focusing on efficiency and policy for future direction. I have just passed two policy statements on mitigation and adaptation through our parliament, Tynwald (which is the longest continual parliament operating in the world today).”

“I know the BVI Minister gave a great plug to the islands before; we all cherish where we live and where we are from and we all live in very special places.”

“We have moved away from trying to bring in legislation and moved to the area of trust and common ground with our evolving population. I note in the summaries today that legislation is important. However, I would like to observe that the use of policies, not just legislation, has allowed us in the Isle of Man to move faster, so that we are making quicker progress this way, which surely is good news. I believe this is a win for everybody, both environmentally and financially – which is critical if we are going to meet our ongoing emission targets and carry the Manx population with us.”

“If I could now discuss our hosts in Gibraltar, having spoken to our team about what they have heard. I look forward to hearing about the exciting progress in Gibraltar. I hope that this will be a platform and look forward to building strong relationships with not just Gibraltar, but the other UKOTs.”

“Finally I would like to give a special mention to Liz Charter, who has given so much to this Forum, chairing working groups and of course bringing back all that she has learned to the Isle of Man. May I say, Liz, that thank you very much. I am glad also that, as part of our team here, Dr Fiona Gell will be our future representative of the Isle of Man.”

“We are delighted to be here this week and we look forward to having conversations with as many delegates as possible. Can I also extend an invitation to UKOTCF that, if you wish, we will only be too happy to accommodate any future conservation forums because, please let me reassure you all, the IoM takes conservation very seriously. In fact, we are hoping to be able to show this to the world as we hope, within the next few weeks, to show an application to UNESCO for Biosphere accreditation. If successful, we hope to be the first island nation in the world, to receive recognition for our country.”

“For 30 plus years, the Isle of Man has enjoyed an excellent economy driven by the outside financial world but, like anywhere in the world, there are financial pressures and the Isle of Man is suffering as many right now. To carry people with you on the environmental argument is about doing what is right and I will finish on this. I am a passionate Liverpool football supporter. Looking at what they have done since the 1990s is remarkable. How they have done this is by unlocking their treasures. We have unbelievable treasures in our islands. If we are going to win the climate-change argument, we have to bring everyone with us and, to do that, we have to recognise what is in our lands. We are very keen to do this on the Isle of Man. To achieve anything like that, we have to work closely with our neighbours and we will achieve so much more as small nations, jurisdictions, by learning from each other and gaining from experiences, good or bad. Forums like this are critical. Sometimes we can be too insular. Those days are gone forever, so it is important we all engage. Thank you again, Minister, and Mike, for the opportunity; you have done a wonderful job here and I congratulate you all.”

BBC Radio 4, an ear to the marine environment

A producer (Alasdair Cross) and presenter (Tom Heap), of the BBC Radio 4 *Costing the Earth* programme, joined participants at the Gibraltar conference (see pages 1-12 of this issue). They recognised the rare opportunity of representatives of the UKOTs in one place, and so were fortunate to do two days of programme-making. Back in 2014, they had addressed some of the challenges for the environment in the Turks and Caicos Islands. This featured Kathleen McNary Wood, the then Director of the Department of Environment & Maritime Affairs, as well as botanist Bryan Naqqi Manco, who fortunately, were both at the conference and were able to provide updates. The *Costing the Earth* team chose to focus on marine issues, given that the newly elected UK Government

had committed, in their manifesto, to create a blue belt of marine protection around the UKOTs. UKOTCF also put the team in touch with the Pew Environment Trust to record a segment on their virtual watch room programme, as unfortunately their representative had to pull out of the conference at the last minute. The programme was broadcast in September but is still available on BBC iPlayer and outside the UK (www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b069rvb8). While at the conference, the BBC team were able to gather information on other aspects, including the extraordinary biodiversity of St Helena, which resulted in an article on the BBC website: <http://www.bbc.com/earth/story/20150722-tiny-british-colony-boasts-hundreds-of-unique-species>.

Conference Field Trips

The conference field-trips on the first morning gave participants a little recovery time in the fresh air after long travel for most people; a chance for participants to chat informally before the main sessions, which has been found to make the latter most effective; and a chance to see something of Gibraltar, its environment and some current issues. The options were: a boat trip to see something of the marine environment, which is very rich in this area, where the Atlantic and the Mediterranean meet in the Straits and Bay of Gibraltar; and a terrestrial tour of the Upper Rock to view some of the re-introduction and restoration work – and an additional trip to the Botanic Gardens on the departure day.

Date with dolphins

The morning weather was a bit worrisome as the grey skies and moisture in the air did not seem like ideal conditions. However, after reassurance from Charlie Perez, Head of the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society, that they were in fact perfect conditions and furthermore recent sightings included a fin whale *Balaenoptera physalus* (the fastest whale and second largest after its close relative, the blue whale), we set off for the marina a few minutes away.



There were plenty of things to see *Field trip participants (above; along the way down to the marina, Photo: Bryan Naqqi Manco) including the newly established Commonwealth Park, so we packed the delegates into small buses to* *await the common dolphins out on the Strait (below; Photo: Katie Medcalf).*



ensure that they didn't wander off and miss the departure of the boat!

Tony and Angie, of Dolphin Adventures, expertly captained our vessel for the morning, a bright yellow boat filled to capacity. Marine biologist, Rebecca was also on hand to answer any



Europa Point lighthouse. Photo: Katie Medcalf

questions. Gibraltar's wildlife obviously knew that an expectant party of conservationists, scientists and general wildlife nuts were there, as pods of common dolphins *Delphinus delphis* were seen almost immediately and in great numbers all around the boat as we continued into the Strait. We also had some great views of a number of bird species including a shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* (great for those large cameras at the front of the boat).



Stephen Warr explaining about water catchment, with Esther Bertram of Falklands Conservation. Photo: Bryan Naqqi Manco

Government of Gibraltar Senior Environment Officer, Stephen Warr, gave an overview of the marine environment and the work which the Government is currently doing to protect it. He told us about the newly installed underwater camera, which was already giving some interesting insights into the underwater world. As we had a little longer on the trip, we were able to visit and



view the entrance of Gorham's Cave from the sea. This is a Tentative World Heritage Site on cultural grounds, with many features of interest to human pre-history, especially in relation to the culture and ecology of Neanderthal Man. Keith Bensusan, Director of the Botanic Gardens and key player in the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society

Gorham's Cave. Photos: Bryan Naqqi Manco



(GONHS), talked about the work which is ongoing, and the former water catchment area which is now being restored using native plants.

In the turquoise water around the caves, we saw juvenile seabass and many jellyfish. Local reports of juvenile Portuguese man o' war being found in abundance off the coast of Gibraltar have led to areas of the shallow waters being sectioned off to protect swimmers from painful stings. Bermudian colleagues told us how the adults are often found in their waters. Perhaps the juveniles leave Gibraltar waters and cross the Atlantic in ocean currents and arrive in Bermuda waters linking two of the UKOTs?

Despite the whales never showing their heads (or tails), the views of the dolphins at the bow of the boat and The Rock wrapped in mist, surrounded by bright blue sky made up for it. All disembarked the boat with huge grins, although our youngest sailor, 18-month old Dylan had dropped his favourite cuddly toy in the middle of the Strait, and so left the boat feeling very upset – even the pink dolphin he was offered just wouldn't do!

Rockin' around the Rock



Liesl guides tour. Photo: Michele Sanchez & Martin Hamilton

Although botanically, July is not the best time to visit Gibraltar, delegates were treated to a personal tour of the Rock with Dr Liesl Mesilio Torres, Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Environment (DoE) in Gibraltar. Liesl has a background in Environmental Science and Geochemistry. She gave an overview of activities which are currently being undertaken as part of the Upper Rock Management Plan.

Gibraltar is the only place on mainland Europe where the barbury partridge *Alectoris barbara* is found and where it is illegal to hunt them. Many consider it to be the National Bird. Threats to the partridge include feral cats, disease transmitted by chickens and loss of habitat. The DoE and GONHS are working together to



Old water catchment. Photo: Bryan Naqqi Manco



Barbury partridge. Photo: Andrew Dobson

help the partridges survive locally by clearing plants and shrubs in areas of the Upper Rock Nature Reserve as well as educating the public.

A presentation by Eric Shaw and Bryan Ritchie at the Apes' Den about the ongoing refurbishment of the feeding and foraging areas for the famous macaques was given. The Barbury macaque population in Gibraltar is the only wild monkey population in Europe. They are descended from North African populations and have become synonymous with Gibraltar. The DoE and local non-government organisation, the Helping Hand Trust, are working hard to ensure that they behave as naturally as possible. Feeding is strictly prohibited and signs can be seen all over Gibraltar warning locals and tourists.



View from the Upper Rock. Photo: Catherine Wensink, UKOTCF

St Michael's Cave was the next stop. Although it was to be the venue for the closing dinner, it is so spectacular that it was definitely worth more than one visit. It is a very large cave with stalactites and stalagmites dating back millions of years. This cave, once a temporary hospital during the Second World War, is now a tourist attraction and a natural auditorium used for many events, including the closing dinner.

The old northern defences of Gibraltar, known as the Upper Galleries were a chance to see the man-made tunnels that defended Gibraltar during the Great Siege 1779-1783. Views of the Moorish Castle and Old Town Calpe are pretty spectacular from this lookout point.

The final stop on the tour was a walk around Europa Point. The natural landscaping using endemic plants such as sea lavender and the spectacular views across the Strait to Morocco allow some relative tranquility compared to the bustling Main Street in Gibraltar.

The lighthouse here was built in the mid 1800s and is now used as a radio transmitter. It is the only lighthouse outside the mainland UK for which Trinity House (a UK authority under Royal Charter which maintains lighthouses) is responsible.

As an example of Gibraltar's religious tolerance and integration,



Sea lavender. Photo: Catherine Wensink, UKOTCF

two large places of worship remain here side-by-side. The Ibrahim-al-Ibrahim Mosque, a gift from King Fahd of Saudi Arabia taking two years to build at a cost of around £5million, contains a school, library and lecture hall. The Shrine of Our Lady of Europe was built after 1462, when the Spanish recaptured Gibraltar from the Moors.

A popular tourist site is the Sikorski Memorial, commemorating the crash site of the B-24 in 1943, which caused the death of General Władysław Sikorski, the commander-in-chief of the Polish Army and Prime Minister of the Polish Government-in-exile. Fifteen other people also died in the crash, with only the pilot Eduard Prchal surviving. Those with a mind for conspiracy theories would be interested in those surrounding the nature of the crash and his death. Since 2008, the Polish Institute of National Remembrance has been investigating the incident.



Polish Air Force Sikorski memorial. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

Tour of Botanic Garden

At the end of a very full conference, delegates were offered the chance to look around the Gibraltar Botanic Gardens, courtesy of Director Dr Keith Bensusan (lower right). Many of the conference participants are involved with their own botanic gardens in the territories and so learning a bit about what they are doing in Gibraltar was an added bonus, especially after being indoors for several days.

The Gardens grow plants from all over the world, including some from some of the UKOTs, for example St Helena, but specialise in species from Mediterranean and arid habitats. Their collections are documented and managed for scientific and conservation purposes. They also keep *ex situ* collections of some of Gibraltar's flora and have reintroduced these to areas around the Rock. The Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society office, which has an interesting collection of invertebrate specimens, is situated here and they work closely with the garden on conservation projects. Recently this included the rediscovery and subsequent propagation of the endemic Gibraltar campion *Silene tomentosa*.



Above: Tour of Botanic Garden. Photos: Bryan Naqqi Manco

Meeting of Environment Ministers of UKOTs and CDs initiated by the Gibraltar/UKOTCF Conference, and reflected at Joint Ministerial Council

UKOTCF was delighted to work with Hon. Dr John Cortés, Minister of Health, Environment & Climate Change, HM Government of Gibraltar, to facilitate the first meeting of Environment Ministers (or equivalents) of UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. This was linked with the *Sustaining Partnerships* Conference in Gibraltar in July 2015 and, indeed, the Ministers attended also all or part of the conference itself. The Ministers found the meeting very valuable, and intend now to meet annually.

UKOTCF has been asked to facilitate this.

Another gathering that already meets annually, usually in December, is the Joint Ministerial Council. This consists of political leaders (usually Chief Ministers or their equivalents) and other representatives of the UK Overseas Territories, together with UK Government Ministers and senior officials. These meet in London, to discuss a range of topics. It was pleasing to see that



*Environment Ministers' meeting at the Garrison Library, Gibraltar, July 2015. Front row, from left:
Hon. Richard Ronan MHK, Minister of the Department for the Environment, Food and Agriculture,
Isle of Man Government*

Hon. Dr John Cortés MP, Minister of Health, Environment & Climate Change, HM Government of Gibraltar

Hon. Fabian Picardo QC MP, Chief Minister, HM Government of Gibraltar

Dr Hon. Kedrick D. Pickering, Deputy Premier and Minister for Natural Resources & Labour, British Virgin Islands

Hon. Claude Hogan, Minister of Agriculture & Environment, Government of Montserrat

Back row, from left:

Henry Wilson, Acting Director, Department of Environment & Maritime Affairs, Turks & Caicos Islands, representing Hon. Porsha

Stubbs-Smith, Minister of Tourism, Environment, Heritage & Culture, Turks & Caicos Islands Government

Richard Lole, Chief Executive, Department for the Environment, Food and Agriculture, Isle of Man Government

Jim Kerr, UK Adviser to, and representing, the Government of Tristan da Cunha

*Steve Butler, Head of Environmental Planning, Falkland Islands Government, on behalf of MLA Michael Poole, Portfolio Holder
for the Environment, Falkland Islands Government*

Victor Brownlees, Chief Executive, States of Alderney

Inset (participating via Skype):

Hon Wayne Panton MLA, Minister of Financial Services, Commerce & Environment, Cayman Islands Government

Main photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF; inset: HMGoG



*The Environment Ministers' meeting in session, chaired by Hon. Dr John Cortés.
Photos: HMGoG*



the Environment Ministers meeting was mentioned in the joint statement following the sessions. This noted also the impacts of climate change on the UKOTs and the importance of the marine environment:

Environment

30. We agreed to work together to improve environmental governance and protection as a basis for a healthy community and sustainable economy. We welcomed the creation of an Overseas Territories' Environment Ministers Council to enhance dialogue amongst all Territories in real time and encourage them to meet annually to drive the environmental agenda in the wider context of

small states and islands. We encouraged the sharing of information between environmental scientists and officials, allowing access to expert reports and assessments across Territories and providing a platform for further joint working and partnerships.

31. We acknowledged that the Territories are vulnerable to climate change. Climate change has consequences, including coastal erosion, severe weather events and flooding, which have negative impacts on Territories' ecosystems, public infrastructure, food security, resilience, health and welfare. Consequently we recognised the urgent need to promote and facilitate renewable energy and energy efficiency, and to address the challenges of energy security and climate change mitigation. We supported the



Joint Ministerial Council 2015 in session. Photo (and those on the next page):

UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Overseas Territories Directorate UK Overseas Territories Facebook page

development of innovative sustainable energy solutions adapted to local conditions and an enabling regulatory framework for rapid deployment of such projects. We agreed to work with UK agencies to better understand the risks posed by climate change to our environment, communities and economies and develop long-term adaptation programmes to minimize these risks.

32. We acknowledged the importance of the marine environment, especially to island communities, and the role of marine resources in economic development. We recognised that long term sustainable use of marine resources is a key element of overall marine conservation strategy for the Overseas Territories. Together we will strive to enhance the management of the marine ecosystem alongside local traditions and sustainable marine usage across the Overseas Territories. We affirmed that such enhancements must be based on the best available scientific research, must deliver clear objectives agreed by the elected representatives of the relevant Territory, and must be appropriately resourced to enable effective management and enforcement.

Representatives met also with the UK Parliament's Environment Audit Committee (see page 15) and the Foreign Affairs Committee. The full communiqué can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/481961/Overseas_Territories_Joint_Ministerial_Council_2015_Communique.pdf

It has become a tradition at the FCO Reception for the Joint Ministerial Council that some of the UKOTs bring local fare for snacks at the Reception, this year at the Locarno Suite, FCO.

At the top, FCO Overseas Territories Minister James Duddridge MP samples Salt Cay candies, peppermint sweets traditionally made by hand on the island of Salt Cay, Turks & Caicos Islands.

In the middle is Tristan da Cunha lobster, now served in some of the best fish restaurants in Europe, as well as Japan and elsewhere. The sustainable harvesting of this is the mainstay of Tristan's economy.

At the bottom, from the land natural resources of Tristan comes this special beer produced by Brusy's Brewery, who say "We are extremely proud and excited to have been asked to brew this very unusual beer incorporating rubrum berries grown and picked on the remotest inhabited island in the world: Tristan da Cunha." The beer is brewed on the Isle of Man; so it shows another example of what can be achieved when UKOTs and CDs work together.

Other produce at the Reception included:

kingclip fish, squid and lamb from the Falkland Islands; honey, some of the purest in the world, from the Pitcairn Islands; and liqueurs, fermented in the old-fashioned way from local fruits, in the British Virgin Islands.



Review of progress on implementing the Environment Charters

In association with the most recently preceding two UKOTCF-organised conferences (2006 & 2009), UKOTCF met a request from UKOTs and UK Government to try to collate information from the Territories on progress in implementing the Environment Charters (or their equivalents from those territories without Charters but still linked to international commitments – see www.ukotcf.org/pdf/charters/indicatorsrev0912.pdf and www.ukotcf.org/pdf/charters/INDICATORS0707e.pdf). Many thought that it would be a good idea to try this again, using the chance of the margins of this conference to facilitate the exercise. We wanted also to link in the Aichi Targets, internationally agreed under the Convention on Biological Diversity and other conventions. Overall, we wanted to do this while minimising what we had to ask Territory colleagues to do, knowing something of their work-loading. We compiled as much information as possible from existing sources, so that we did not have to ask again for what has previously been supplied. Then, obviously we needed local

workers to check these.

The idea was to look at how far the Territories had come since the signing of the Charters in 2001, in meeting the commitments of the Charters (including, of course, what had already been done; the Charters were not the starting points for actions). We collated the information found into tables, matching actions taken by individual Territories with each Charter Commitment. The next step was to condense the information into a summary table, which matches actions with both the relevant Charter commitments, in addition to relevant Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Consultations were made throughout the Gibraltar conference, and since, which have strengthened and filled out the information. We are now working on the final checking with local partners and the production of the report, which will be published in early 2016. There has already been considerable interest in the results of this review from UK Government, UKOT governments, non-government partners as well as others.

Birding in Paradise: The Caribbean Emerald Island of Montserrat – A guide to bird-watching, nature and heritage sites on sale in Montserrat and by mail or download from UKOTCF

This guide booklet on bird-watching and other heritage features in Montserrat has been published by UKOTCF in association with its partner, the Montserrat National Trust, in October 2015.

Copies can be purchased from the National Trust and its National Museum in Montserrat. For the rest of the world, it can be purchased from UKOTCF, either as printed versions sent by post, or as downloadable pdf versions, designed to suit tablets but readable on computers and any other device that can read pdf files. (To purchase, see www.ukotcf.org/birding-in-Monserrat/index.htm)

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum has been helping governmental and non-governmental conservation organisations in Montserrat for some 20 years, and the book authors have been involved personally throughout this period. This booklet describes where to go birding on Montserrat and where to view some of the other heritage features. The book has over 90 pages, with full colour maps and photos, and contains:

- Forewords by the Honorable Minister Claude Hogan and the Director of the Montserrat National Trust Mrs Sarita Francis OBE.
- Note about supporting conservation of the natural and cultural heritage.
- Introduction about the purpose and nature of the booklet.
- Practical information about getting there, facilities, other sources of information etc.
- Heritage and wildlife tours around various parts of the island, in total covering most of the accessible parts of the island. Mostly this is a driving route (with some optional bits of walking) linked to the trail map.
- Maps of the island, showing recommended routes and main features.
- Sections on visiting some special features of the island.
- Fully illustrated sections on the woodland birds, open-country birds, other land birds, seabirds and water-birds of the island.
- A section on geography and history.

Also available in the “Birding on Paradise” series are 5 booklets on the Turks & Caicos Islands. (See *Forum News* 43: 5 and www.ukotcf.org/birding-in-Turks-and-Caicos/)

Critically Endangered Montserrat Mountain Chicken (frog) and another insect-hunter

Forum Manager's son, Johan, at the British Birdwatching Fair (www.birdfair.org.uk), which took place from 21 to 23 August 2015. He was wearing his Montserrat National Trust T-shirt, which received a lot of attention from the many birdwatchers there. The photo was taken during an insect hunt in the field surrounding Rutland Water, a nature reserve in the English Midlands, managed by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust. In the photo, he has caught a grasshopper. The invertebrate expert, Roger Key, told the group that, about 20 years ago, it would have been caught only in the South of England. Perhaps this is a sign of global warming? Roger, and his wife, Rosie, have been working with partners on St Helena for many years to identify and catalogue their extensive invertebrate species. Since the Fair, and during his half-term holiday, Johan got to see a Montserrat oriole (and many other species) when his new best friend, Scriber, took him into the Centre Hills of Montserrat.



Council Members: many thanks to Bruce and Pat, and welcome to Kathleen

At the AGM in 2015, the terms of a third of Council members ended. Two of these had decided to stand down, and we thank them for their major efforts over the years.

Bruce Dinwiddy had joined Council 9 years earlier, following a career which had included periods as Commissioner of the British Indian Ocean Territory and, just before retirement, as Governor of the Cayman Islands. In addition to his general Council role, Bruce had served throughout as Chairman of the Wider Caribbean Working Group, attended the Réunion conference, helped with evidence for EAC and other Inquiries, advised on many matters, especially government-related, and ran sessions at the Cayman and Gibraltar conference, as well as other meetings. His help and wise counsel both in dealing with Governments and in many other matters were highly appreciated.

Patricia Saxton served on Council for 3 years, but had been involved in supporting UKOTCF long before – and after – especially on TCI matters, including on the RBC-supported Blue Water project, the pioneering bird-watching guides, other tour development, various publications including *Times of the Island* and various business matters. In recent years, Pat has served as Executive Director of Turks and Caicos National Museum, continuing an earlier period on their Board.

We are delighted that both Bruce and Pat are remaining available to act as Advisers to Council.

Kathleen McNary Wood

We welcomed Kathleen McNary Wood to Council. Long involved with UKOTCF, Kathleen is an environmental scientist, with specific expertise in tropical and sub-tropical ecology and 25 years' experience in environmental impact assessment and related disciplines. Working extensively in Florida, the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands, Kathleen is a native Floridian, who has been working and living in the Caribbean region since 1990. Her life and professional experiences have focused specifically on confronting the resource and capacity limitations of small-island developing states.

Often overseeing groups of consultants from disparate disciplines and cultural backgrounds, Kathleen has conceived, designed, managed and conducted research in all environmental disciplines. Her professional experience includes managing and conducting baseline ecological assessments, classifying and mapping terrestrial, wetland, coastal and marine habitats, preparing comprehensive environmental impact assessments, developing environmental education programmes, advising on environmentally sustainable development and working in association with private and public sector entities to develop environmental partnerships, legislation and policy.

Recently, she completed a two-year contract as the Turks and Caicos Islands' Director of the Department of Environment and Maritime Affairs (DEMA), the country's agency charged with oversight of protected areas, fisheries, coastal and wetland

management, management of all natural resources and maritime affairs. During her tenure as the Director of DEMA, she managed a team of 25 enforcement, scientific, education and administrative professionals, with an annual operating budget of approximately US\$3 million. She also independently raised approximately US\$1.5 million in funding for conservation initiatives. In addition to her scientific and management proficiencies, she is an accomplished author and editor, with numerous publications on the natural history of the Bahamas, Ambergris Cay, Turks and Caicos and Snake River, Wyoming.

In association with Harvard University, Kathleen developed and is now implementing a multi-criteria environmental evaluation model, which combines remote sensing, rapid ecological assessment, GIS mapping and data analysis. The model is being field tested on East Caicos, the largest uninhabited island in the Caribbean. Methods are standardised, inexpensive, easy to implement and specifically suited to the limitations of small-island developing states (SIDS).

Kathleen is currently working as an environmental consultant, focusing on promoting understanding of the relationships between human culture and the environment and fostering the momentum for paradigm shifts that will be required to ensure resilience in a climactically challenged world.



International National Trusts Organisation (INTO)

The International National Trusts Organisation (INTO) held its biennial conference in Cambridge, UK, from 7-11 September 2015, co-hosted by the National Trust of England, Wales and Northern Ireland. With the theme *Common threads; Different patterns* the 16th International Conference of National Trusts (ICNT) set out to explore the question: "What is the role and purpose of the National Trust movement in the 21st Century?"

The INTO Chairman had attended the UKOTCF/Gibraltar conference *Sustaining Partnerships*, and UKOTCF's Honorary Executive Director attended part of the Cambridge meeting, in which several organisations which are members of both networks participated. UKOTCF and INTO continue to explore common interests. (INTO conference programme at <http://www.internationaltrusts.org/programmes/2015-conference-in-england>)

UK Parliament House of Commons Environment Audit Committee

UKOTCF has worked closely and constructively in the past with the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee (e.g. *Forum News* 14: 13). The former Chair of the Committee, Joan Walley MP, had decided to stand down at the UK General Election in May 2015. After each General Election, elected Members of Parliament elect, from their number, new chairpersons and members of Select Committees.

The EAC Chair was elected on Thursday 18 June 2015, and the other members on Monday 20 July 2015. These are:

Huw Irranca-Davies (Chair) Labour
Peter Aldous Conservative
Caroline Ansell Conservative
Jo Churchill Conservative
Mary Creagh Labour
Geraint Davies Labour (Co-op)
Zac Goldsmith Conservative
Margaret Greenwood Labour
Luke Hall Conservative
Carolyn Harris Labour
Peter Heaton-Jones Conservative
Mr Peter Lilley Conservative
Caroline Lucas Green Party
John McNally Scottish National Party
Rebecca Pow Conservative
Rory Stewart Conservative.

The new Chair, Huw Irancca-Davies MP, was Defra Minister responsible for biodiversity up to 2010. He had attended the Cayman conference in 2009. Sadly he was unable to attend the Gibraltar conference in his new capacity, but he did send a message beforehand, which was read out at the conference opening reception:

Dear Mike

It was an honour to address the last UKOT environmental conference in 2009 and it was with regret that I had to decline the invitation to the upcoming conference. I appreciate your understanding of the requirements on my time at this important early stage of re-establishment of the committee.

I do hope that you will convey to the conference audience that I look forward to building the relationship with UKOTCF and helping the committee play its part in ensuring the overseas territories continue to be recognised as a crucial part of the UK's approach to biodiversity, environmental protection and sustainable development.

Great progress has been made, including the designation of a marine protected area around the Pitcairn Islands and the committee will be keen to keep an eye on progress here and towards a Blue Belt around the overseas territories, as well as other matters related to the conservation of UKOTs. On that basis I would be grateful if you could notify the committee team of topics arising from the conference which you believe will be of interest to the EAC, it will be most useful in developing the committee's future programme.

Kind regards,

Huw

UKOTCF looks forward to a continuing constructive involvement with EAC.

IUCN Director-General at House of Lords

UKOTCF sits on the Executive Committee of IUCN's UK National Committee and was present and spoke about the forthcoming Gibraltar conference when IUCN's new Director-General, Inger Andersen (far left) addressed IUCN members in June in the House of Lords, hosted by Baroness Parminter (left) and chaired by Stuart Brooks (below). Ms Anderson stressed the importance of the UKOTs, mentioned her recent meeting with Gibraltar Minister Cortés, and commended the approach of Gibraltar, which had joined IUCN. *Photos: Chris Mahon*



Caribbean Renewable Energy Forum 2015: An opportunity to raise the profile of the UKOTs

At the request of HM Government of Gibraltar, there was – at the *Sustaining Partnerships* Conference for the first time in UKOTCF-organised conferences – a session on renewable energy (in the context of climate-change, which has figured in previous conferences).

A body of experience is already being created, with many UKOTs leading the way in harnessing natural resources in order to meet energy demands but also in reducing dependence on fossil fuels. Gibraltar led the charge in showing its Government's ambitious, yet achievable programme. The Falklands with wind, Montserrat with geothermal, and Alderney with tidal power, all gave very interesting overviews of what their Territory or Crown Dependency is doing.

The Conference recognised that the needs of UK Overseas Territories in the Caribbean are sometimes overlooked in regional discussions around energy diversification, and the importance of renewable energy to long-term energy security. Accordingly, identifying initiatives which might raise the profile of these territories, and that might enhance meaningful dialogue to support progress across these jurisdictions, was seen as an important next step in the conference conclusions and recommendations (see www.ukotcf.org/confs/gibraltar2015.htm). The Gibraltar Conference delivered further outcomes and recommendations to support territories with energy transition.

The key conclusions and recommendations that came out of the Gibraltar Forum included:

1. Identifying and providing support to assist:
 - Policy
 - Planning
 - Technical capacity
 - Commercial strategy
 - Development of renewable roadmaps and pathways
2. Promoting and supporting the development of partnerships that support these needs, including partnerships with NGOs and other organisations (e.g. multi-laterals) already active in

the region and part of the “donor community”

3. Establishing a working group across UKOTs, possibly on a regional basis to support knowledge sharing, best practice, planning and resource requirements – similar to other working groups established for Eastern Caribbean States
4. Engage the private sector so that territories develop a framework, which encourages investment in a manner that supports local infrastructure, supporting capacity building and the development of the job market
5. Open and maintain clear and productive dialogue with utilities at the earliest opportunity

The Caribbean Renewable Energy Forum (CREF) 2015 was held in October 2015. It provided an excellent opportunity to progress some of the outcomes and recommendations. The largest renewable energy event in the region, CREF brought together governments, utilities, NGOs, government agencies, multi-laterals and the private sector.

The event is known for understanding the issues that drive the renewable energy market, elevating the quality of dialogue and supporting progress for governments and development of new business streams for the private sector.

Maya Doolub of Elms Consulting, facilitator of Carbon 10 Challenge with Sir Richard Branson and involving several UKOTs, had attended the Gibraltar conference and helped run the Renewable Energy session.

With the support of UKOTCF and FCO, she arranged to convene a UKOT stakeholder meeting session during the CREF event that could kick-start the establishing of a peer-network/working group. Given that a number of relevant stakeholders present, it was an excellent opportunity to convene critical players in the same place at the same time to take part in meaningful and productive discussion. UKOTCF is exploring the best way to take this new group forward.



The UKOT session at CREF in progress, chaired by Maya Doolub and Dr Hon. Kedrick D. Pickering, Deputy Premier and Minister for Natural Resources & Labour, British Virgin Islands

Alderney hosts the InterIsland meeting

The States of Alderney, and the Alderney Wildlife Trust, hosted the annual InterIsland meeting of the Channel Islands over two days in October. UKOTCF was represented by Emma Cary, Conservation Officer and Secretary of the Europe Territories Working Group. Dr Tom Appleby, UKOTCF Council Member and Blue Marine Foundation Trustee, also gave a presentation (below) on governance in the marine environment. The meeting



saw 2 days of high quality presentations on marine, terrestrial and ornithological topics, with discussions emphasising the importance of information sharing between small islands. Emma was able to hold several discussions with colleagues in order to explore joint ways of working and sharing information in the future.

Mr Victor Brownlees, Chief Executive of the States of Alderney, said: "I feel the meeting was not only strongly attended but managed to achieve some real results. Not only did it allow us to gain valuable new insights from the work of others around the Islands, UK and the UKOTCF, but it also helped to make what we hope will be strong new connections between the governments, organisations and individuals attending. We were especially delighted to see such strong representation from the Isle of Man, as well as delegates from the Isles of Scilly and Isle of Wight."

The AWT team have already published the IEM2015 proceedings, available online at www.alderneywildlife.org/node/5138.

Roland Gauvain, Manager of AWT, together with his team, are looking at the actions and thoughts list developed from points made in the discussion sessions and how to make these available on the web in order to continue discussions and exchange of information.

Mr Brownless added: "I sincerely hope that the frank and open debates we saw take place about resources sharing and mutual learning will continue to flourish within the form of the IEM over the coming years and I once again emphasise my willingness to offer assistance where possible to help with the continuing exchange of information and ideas between the islands. This is something I understand our Jersey friends are also willing to support."

UKOTCF will explore with Alderney and other Channel Islands colleagues how best UKOTCF and its Europe Territories Working Group can help continue to facilitate this process.



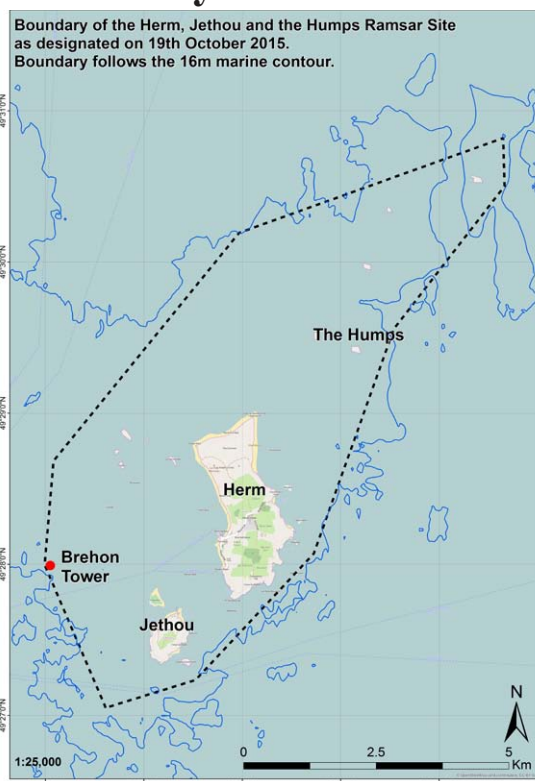
An early morning tour of Alderney's Ramsar site with AWT's Ramsar Ecologist Jenni Godber. Alderney West coast and Burhou Islands was the first Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention in the Bailiwick of Guernsey. Since 2006, the site has been managed under a 5-year strategy by AWT on behalf of the States of Alderney. Alderney Wildlife Trust continue to carry out marine, seabird and terrestrial monitoring as part of the strategy, alongside public awareness activities. The second day of the meeting started with an early morning walk of the island's Ramsar Site, which gave an opportunity to view the final stage of breeding of Alderney's large population of Northern Gannets. The island supports over 2% of the world population of this species. The site consists of more than 16 km² of offshore islet, rocky shoreline, boulder, pebble and shingle beach and tidal wetland. Photos: Emma Cary

and another Ramsar Site for Guernsey

On 19 October 2015, another Ramsar Wetland of International Importance was declared. This site, although islands, is administratively part Guernsey itself (Alderney and Sark being more independent but still within the Bailiwick). 'Herm, Jethou and The Humps' lies 5 km east of the main island of Guernsey, Channel Islands, English Channel, and consists of two small islands (Herm and Jethou), nine rocky islets (Grande Fauconniere, Crevichon, and Brehon Tower, the Humps (six)) and surrounding shallow tidal waters.

The convergence of cold (boreal) and warm (Lusitanian) currents from different biogeographic regions support an array of species. These include rich plankton currents, which flow eastward from the Atlantic to the North Sea. The site has an exceptionally large tidal range – at up to 10 metres, among the largest in the world, and the intertidal zone is particularly large and biodiverse. Several important habitats are present, including eelgrass *Zostera* beds, maerl beds, shallow reef systems and sunken shipwreck reefs (7), which provide spawning grounds for fish such as sea bass and Black Sea bream, with significant tidal races. The Ramsar Site is contiguous with benthic and pelagic habitats, respectively supporting flatfish, shellfish, seabirds, basking shark, sunfish, Atlantic grey seal and four species of cetacean. The coastlines provide breeding sites for nine species of seabird and Atlantic grey seals.

The Ramsar Site is located within the Normand-Breton Gulf, which is a large marine area in the west part of the English Channel, including French marine waters (Bay of Saint Malo) and British (Channel islands) marine waters. This area of over 11,000 km² comprises numerous marine protected areas, of both the Channel Islands and France.





*Above: The Humps
Right: Aerial view of Herm*



In terms of human geography, fishing (both commercial and recreational) within the site is of high cultural, economic and traditional importance to the population of Guernsey. There are significant archaeological and historical features and the site is, in part, a tourist destination.

Island Invasives conference 2017

This will be the third in a series of international conferences focussed on invasive alien species (IAS) on islands, their impact and management. It follows those held in Auckland, New Zealand, in 2001 and 2010. The Dundee conference will therefore be the first such meeting for seven years, and the first to be held in the northern hemisphere. In the context of this meeting, the definition of 'island' is broader than just a piece of land surrounded by water. Much the same problems and solutions apply to land surrounded by predator-proof fences, and to unfenced but isolated patches of habitat such as coral reefs.

Awareness of the damaging impact of invasive species is growing rapidly, just as the problem itself is growing. Island flora and fauna tend to be particularly vulnerable to IAS, and many insular endemics have been driven to extinction by these invaders. But, by their very nature, islands may also offer the possibility of long-term refuge and security if alien species can be eradicated or effectively controlled.

Over recent decades, the management and even eradication of island invasives has developed from a concept born of desperation to small-scale experimentation, to medium-scale trials, to large-scale operations where success is almost expected. The scale of response is increasing, to meet the escalating challenge. Progress is made largely by learning from the lessons and experience of earlier operations, good and bad. For this, there is no substitute for face-to-face discussion, the discovery of new approaches from posters and spoken presentations, and access to the best people in the business, all gathered in one place.

This conference, hosted by the University of Dundee and the South Georgia Heritage Trust, will be a long-overdue gathering of the island invasives clan. It will build on the great success of the Auckland meetings, allow greater participation of people from Europe and North America, and bring together experts and those thirsty for knowledge in diverse fields covering the invaders and invaded. Since the last meeting in 2010, much has been learned about the damage caused by, and how to control or eradicate, an increasingly diverse range of invasive species. This will be an opportunity to share that knowledge, and to be inspired by what has been achieved by passionate and dedicated conservationists around the world.

When and Where: Monday July 10 – Friday July 14, 2017

Dalhousie Building, University of Dundee, Dundee DD1 5EN, Scotland

Registration Fees: Early-bird registration (up to April 30, 2017): salaried professionals £330, students and unsalaried £220.

From May 1 until July 9, 2017: salaried £400, students and



unsalaried £300

During the conference: £100 per day

PLEASE NOTE: Conference attendance must be capped at 350, due to space constraints. Places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. Book early to avoid disappointment!

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Conference dinner: £48 inc VAT

Field excursions on Wednesday, July 12th: details to follow.

Details & bookings: www.islandinvasives2017.com

South Georgia Stakeholders Meeting

The Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands held its annual South Georgia UK and Norway Stakeholder meetings at FCO in London in the week of 21st September 2015. The presentations are available at: www.gov.uk/docsarchive/gsgssi/#tab-5.

Britain's Treasure Islands – London event on evening of 24th March: book now!

Wildlife of the UK Overseas Territories: Britain's remotest outposts scattered across all Seven Seas

Thursday March 24th 6:45pm-9:00pm (with time after for mingling)

Royal Geographical Society, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR, United Kingdom

Ondaatje Theatre (Exhibition Road doors open at 6:00pm presentations start at 6:45pm)

This event is organised in association with the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum. All ticket proceeds will go towards protecting and promoting the territories.

Tickets are £10. £8 concessions (RGS members/Friends of the UK Overseas Territories/Seniors & Students). Booking is online at:

<https://ukotcf.yapsody.com/event/index/28633/britains-treasure-islands>

Enquiries to cwensink@ukotcf.org

Seats will not be allocated in advance.

A cash bar will be open from 9-10pm where refreshments can be purchased.

Programme:

6.00pm: doors open.

6:45-6:55: Speaker from UK Overseas Territory [TBC]: Introduction

6:55-7:05: Video of wildlife of the UK Overseas Territories

7:05-8:25: Stewart McPherson's lecture

8.25-8.30: 5 minute video preview of TV series

8.30-8:40: Dr Mike Pienkowski, UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum: overview and conservation

8:40-9:00: Q & A in lecture theatre

9:00pm onwards: Mingle in lecture theatre and map room (bar available in latter)

Background:

For many years, UKOTCF has encouraged film-makers to address the remarkable wildlife of UK Overseas Territories, so that these would become better known more widely. Therefore, we were delighted that, since 2011, Stewart McPherson and a team of cameramen and editors have been working on a series of TV programmes on this subject. UKOTCF personnel have given lots of advice, contacts, provided still pictures and video material to fill gaps, and commented on draft video story boards and book chapters.

The main series has now been bought for broadcast by several networks around the world, including the BBC in UK. A separate series of 5- to 10-minute mini-documentaries for release online (including one for each territory, showcasing its wildlife and beauty) will also be freely available, and a book produced.

For this evening event, Stewart will describe the making of the series and outline something of the wildlife in the UKOTs.

Below is the overview, written for potential audiences with little or no existing knowledge of UKOTs or their wildlife.

Overview:

The UK Overseas Territories are Britain's most remote outposts.

Scattered across all Seven Seas, they cover an area seven times the size of the British Isles. They are home to 350,000 British subjects, thousands of unique species and many of the greatest wildlife spectacles on earth...

...yet few know that the territories even exist or remain part of the United Kingdom today... even fewer appreciate these islands' natural and cultural treasures.

Join explorer and filmmaker Stewart McPherson for an evening's intrepid journey across all of Britain's overseas lands. Travel with him from the equator to the South Pole, from lush tropical atolls in coral seas, to active volcanoes and windswept Antarctic islands.

Stewart will recount stories and highlights from filming a 4-part documentary series (broadcast on the BBC and across the world).

He will reveal the territories' most amazing wildlife spectacles; from some of the biggest penguin, turtle and seal colonies to the most pristine coral reefs on the planet.

And their fascinating human history; from the world's most remote settlements, to the mutiny on the Bounty to the imprisonment of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Along the way, Stewart will share some of the trials of his three year, 70,000 km journey on RAF military flights, one of the last working Royal Mail ship, trawlers, freighters, ice breakers and private charter yachts.



Sustainable Development Goals

On 25 September 2015, the UN adopt a set of goals to "end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda." The 17 proposed Sustainable Development Goals have specific targets to be achieved over the next 15 years. Those relating to the environment include:

13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (taking note of agreements made by the UNFCCC forum)

14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss.

Read more at www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/

Montserrat becomes an associate member of UNESCO

Montserrat became an Associate Member of UNESCO on 3 November 2015, at UNESCO's General Conference in Paris. This followed an application by the Government of Montserrat, supported by UK Government. As an Associate Member, Montserrat is eligible to participate in the UNESCO Participation Programme from which funds can be accessed for educational projects. Montserrat was represented at the General Conference by Mrs Janice Panton MBE, the Montserrat Government's UK Representative, who gave the acceptance speech on behalf of the Government. This speech is given below:

I express sincere thanks on behalf of the Government and people of Montserrat and especially convey the gratitude of the Honourable Premier, Mr Donaldson Romeo, and His Deputy and Honourable Minister of Education, Mrs Delmaude Ryan, (who regrettably could not be here) for embracing the vision last year, in becoming an Associate Member of UNESCO, and today that vision has come to life.

The activities of UNESCO, now age 70, are woven into the fabric of national governments as the organization is seen as an essential resource bank, providing policy guidance on education and science and promoting cultural diversity. The longevity and the status of the organization says much for its relevance in an ever-changing world.

The objectives of UNESCO, peace and equitable sustainable development, are the objectives of both large and small countries and the method of implementation has the potential to impact on every child in the universe.

Its inclusive mandate provides small Territories like Montserrat the opportunity to share policy guidelines and good practices first-hand.

Montserrat is a United Kingdom Territory, a small island situated in the Eastern Caribbean. The Montserrat flag reflects its status as a British Territory but the observant will notice that the flag includes an emblem showing a lady with a harp. The lady is Erin, from Ireland; the Irish were first to settle on Montserrat under British rule in the late 17th century. The names of persons and places in Montserrat reflect this Irish heritage. Africans became the major ethnic group a few decades later providing a rich cultural heritage, reflected in music song and dance - Montserrat gave the world the Soca anthem, Hot Hot Hot, composed and sung by Arrow (Alphonso Cassell). The development of culture falls under the now fully functional Montserrat Arts Council.

Historically Montserrat's population fluctuated between 10,000 to 14,000. Today it is approximately 5,000 and, that includes a high percentage of recent migrants from within the region including those from Spanish speaking countries. This reduction in population is a result of volcanic eruption which started in 1995, and which made two thirds of this 40 sq. miles island uninhabitable and caused mass off-island evacuation.

The impact of this crisis has been huge. Montserrat lost its core middle and senior management workers and their offsprings. Previous boast of being in the top educational league in the region is no longer true as standards have dropped due to inability to recruit and retain qualified teachers, and there is now a need to look afresh at our education system.

Over the last twenty years, sustained volcanic activity has had, and continues to have, a devastating effect on the island's economy, which had just barely recovered following damaging effects of category 5 Hurricane Hugo in 1989, even though activity is now at a very low level. Today Montserrat is in receipt of budgetary aid.

The volcanic eruption had other effects. Montserrat now has a volcano observatory, which continues to bring world-class volcanologists and geologists to our shores. The recent winner of one of the most prestigious awards in science, the Vetlesen Prize, considered to be the earth sciences equivalent of the Nobel Prize, is the British volcanologist, Professor Stephen Sparks, once a household name on the island, as were the names of other scientists, as lives depended on this. His work and that of others has been an inspiration to budding scientists and Montserrat now has at least two homegrown earth scientists.

Another effect of the volcanic eruption is the opportunity it has given Montserrat to turn from fossil fuel to geothermal energy. With aid from the UK Department for International Development we have commenced drilling and discovered enough geothermal energy resource to meet current needs. This energy resource will provide cleaner and cheaper energy and should boost the economy. Its implementation will call for an educated workforce and skills not currently employed or available on the island.

Montserrat does not want to be a bystander as technology develops around us. The U.N. Sustainable Development Goals or global Goals require that each individual have a responsibility to contribute towards fulfilling these. As an Associate Member of UNESCO, our mandate would be to facilitate this where possible.

In Montserrat we have also seen the negative effect of the volcano in sustaining terrestrial and marine life. During the last twenty years there has been a lack of homegrown fruits and vegetable and our reefs have been affected by volcanic material deposited in the sea during the eruption. More, importantly however, there has been a lack of capacity building due to the small workforce, around 2000.

In small communities it is taken as given that education is a driver for individual upward mobility and more often than not, the success of an educated son or daughter trickles down to other members of the family. In Montserrat, we are looking, as an Associate Member of UNESCO, for benefits to include the tools to build an educated community - not just an educated individual, but a whole community of educated individuals who, working together can learn and act on the experiences and policies of UNESCO and its members. We benefit from the UK in this respect, and we can only imagine the effect of learning from over 190 other UNESCO members would have on our development.

About ten years ago, a review was undertaken to find out what are the factors that would encourage Montserratians who settled in the UK to return to safe northern part of Montserrat; not surprising education was a major factor together then with available housing and jobs. Unfortunately, we have not yet reached that level of development and this is still be a major consideration for the second generation living in the UK and elsewhere.

The Government of Montserrat has recently reviewed its policy and agenda, and has prioritized three of the Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 4, 7 and 8.

In Montserrat, Goal 4 (SDG 4) – to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all - can act as a motor for sustainable development through the provision of qualified teachers and a curriculum that would equip our children to aim for a bright and sustainable future.

In Montserrat, we will in the near future play a part in the world carbon reduction whilst at the same time provide to our energy consumers cheaper energy, using geothermal and fulfilling Goal 7 of the SPD: to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable energy for all.

In Montserrat our economic policy is based on Sustainable Development Goal 8: to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

We are committed to UNESCO's mandate, which we see as vital for the betterment of our people.

In closing, the Government of Montserrat would like to thank the United Kingdom Government for its support in its application and also for the support given with the process. In this regard we would also to thank UNESCO for affording Montserrat the opportunity to participate in this august Organisation. This is a landmark occasion for the people of Montserrat and we look forward to playing our part as Associate Member of UNESCO.

More on this at: www.mnialive.com/articles/caribbean-island-of-montserrat-is-now-an-associate-member-of-unesco



Janice Panton welcomed as representative of new associate member of UNESCO by General Secretary Mrs Irina Bokova.

St Helena Environmental Exposure

Visit and Conference Attendance

In June 2015, Isabel Peters, Environmental Assessment and Advocacy Division Manager for St Helena's Environment & Natural Resources Directorate, set off to attend exposure placements in Jersey and the UK. Alongside these placements, Isabel also attended the International Conservation and Sustainability Conference, held in Gibraltar from 11-15 July 2015, which focused on *Sustaining Partnerships*.

Before the conference, Isabel submitted discussion ideas that were included in the final programme and she was also invited to present a paper on St Helena's Airport – focusing on the environmental impacts of the project and the environmental lessons learnt. Other sessions covered biodiversity, conservation, renewable energy, environmental impact assessments and multilateral environmental agreements.

Isabel said of the conference: "It was really interesting to see how different islands approached issues, even though we were of different populations, sizes and had different species. But environmental departments and organisations tackled their issues similarly – so approaches they take can directly apply on St Helena."

After the conference, Isabel opted to attend a workshop around Environmental Impact Assessment, directly relating to her role on St Helena. She remarked: "I was pleasantly surprised that St Helena compared well with other Overseas Territories. We are ahead in terms of our planning and environmental impact assessments, our policies and our procedures. Although there is still more work to be done, this is very positive."

During her time away, Isabel undertook also various exposure visits, the first in Jersey's Environmental & Planning Department – where she looked at managing protected areas and the impact of ecologies in planning and waste management. In doing this, she saw much of Jersey's landscape.

Isabel spoke of the benefits of her visit: "I was interested in the close working relationship with Ministers and the policy Department. They support each other, and Ministers are very aware of the section's issues, successes and progress. Senior Management held weekly meetings with their Minister and this is something replicated here with our Island's Councillors."

Isabel travelled throughout the UK to attend her various placements with consultancy firm WYG. She visited Leeds Bradford Airport, meeting with its environmental manager and discussing similarities between Leeds Airport's environmental risks, translocation and air pollution issues, as compared with St Helena Airport.

WYG is located around the UK, so Isabel spent time in Cumbria's Lake District meeting with its Ecologist, in the Leicester Office working with its Environmental Impact Assessment Team, ending her placement in Southampton.

Isabel would like to thank all those who took the time to make her placements so worthwhile. She would also like to thank the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the Jubilee Fund – for making her trip possible.



Isabel

Ascension Marine Protected Area

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. The reserve, which is 234,291 square kilometres, comes as a result of lengthy negotiations between BLUE, the Ascension Island Government and the UK Government, and has been made possible thanks to a grant from the Bacon Foundation.

The £300,000 grant will be used to close an area of 52.6% of Ascension's waters to fishing, to monitor and enforce the closed area with a combination of satellite and patrol boats, to police a tuna-fishery in line with the best international standards in the other 47.4%, and to carry out scientific research to scope the final boundaries of a marine reserve which could be declared, subject to local agreement, as soon as 2017.

Ascension's waters contain some of the largest marlin in the world, one of the largest populations of green turtles, significant colonies of tropical seabirds, the island's own unique frigate-bird and several endemic species of fish found nowhere else in the world, including the intriguingly named bastard cunningfish.

BLUE has expressed delight that the Bacon Foundation's donation will not only ensure that over half of Ascension's waters remain closed to fishing, but that the UK Government will then step in to ensure that these waters remain protected in perpetuity.

The closed area will comprise everything within 50 nautical miles of the island and everything within the EEZ south of 8 degrees south. The area has been selected to create a buffer around the important inshore areas and includes seamounts which attract aggregations of vulnerable species, such as sharks.

Clare Brook, BLUE's CEO, said, "In the coming year we will ensure not only that the newly declared closed area is effectively monitored, and that the fishing zone is managed to best practice, but that the UK Government recognises Ascension's significance as a territory. We want to help Ascension benefit from its extraordinary marine life by encouraging more scientific expeditions and eco-tourism."

Charles Clover, Executive Chairman of the Blue Marine Foundation, said: "We would like to thank the Bacon Foundation for its generosity and vision in enabling the eventual creation of a marine reserve nearly the size of the UK. Ascension has been at the frontier of science since Charles Darwin went there in the 19th century, so it is entirely appropriate that it is now at the centre of a great scientific effort to design the Atlantic's largest marine reserve."

"With the creation of a marine reserve, Ascension will be performing a significant service for the biodiversity of the whole Atlantic. We implore US and UK leaders to recognise the global significance of this proposed reserve and to free up civilian and freight access by air – agreement on which is currently stalled – and to allow the Ascension economy to develop in other ways to benefit from the island's new role as protector of a vast and less-exploited part of the ocean."

UNESCO Underwater Heritage

The UK National Commission for UNESCO has recently published a policy brief on the *UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage: Next steps for the UK Government*. It can be accessed via:

www.unesco.org.uk/uploads/UKNC%20Policy%20Brief%2017_Underwater%20Cultural%20Heritage_March%202015_REVISED.pdf

BEST 2.0 & Darwin Round 4

Two significant funding calls were launched in the second half of the year, which saw potential support from both the UK and the European Union. As UKOTCF is at pains to say, these funding sources are vital to UKOTs, which fall in to a funding gap. While the time to write funding applications means less time spend on conservation activities, they are so important to enable future actions to be undertaken.

Darwin Plus launched their guidelines for Round 4 in August with a deadline in September, rather shorter than usual, giving some difficulties in coordinating potential collaborative projects especially at the holiday season. Successful projects will be announced in December [since delayed to an unknown date, as the available budget is still unconfirmed by UK Government at the time of writing in late January]. The conference heard of the many successes of EFOT and OTEP projects, and their recent replacement Darwin projects, and they urged UK Government to continue supporting a financial lifeline for environment work in the UKOTs.

Over many years, UKOTCF (together with many partners) has urged the EU to develop a sustainable funding source for the EU overseas territories and, although there will inevitably be bureaucracy, there seems to be a good level of interest from within the European Commission and European Parliament in the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs). As reported previously, IUCN was awarded 2 million euros in a tender for round BEST III, which saw them develop a consortium of partners in each region of the EU territories, and then a single-tender award of between 10% and 20% of the funds available to BEST 2.0, to manage that.

Most relevant to the UKOTs in the Caribbean, the IUCN “hub” there is led by the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW-RAC). For the South Atlantic, the South Atlantic Research Institute (SAERI) runs the hub. For the Indian and Pacific, including BIOT and Pitcairn, UICN (the French Committee of IUCN) takes the lead.

As part of the IUCN consortium’s efforts to prepare for the call, environment profiles have been prepared for most OTs. These were developed largely remotely, using some of the existing sources, and followed up with workshops (where applicable). UKOTCF has taken the time to comment (although it has limited resources to do so) on most of the profiles relevant to UKOTs, recognising the importance of comprehensive and detailed information, mostly because they will be used to assess projects’ capacity to ensure critical habitats are protected and preserved. The profiles have drawn information from UKOTCF’s website also.

Applications for small grants > €10,000-<€100,000 were accepted in late 2015 for the South Atlantic, and for medium grants for >€100,000-<€400,000 for the Caribbean and Pacific. In 2016, another call is anticipated which will enable Caribbean and Pacific territories to apply for small grants and the South Atlantic and Polar apply for medium sized grants. The first announcements of awards were expected in January but have been delayed until February.

First UKOT student meeting in London

Many students from the UKOTs come to the UK to study. For the first time, a conference has been organised to bring them together. It was held on Sunday 29 November at University College London, and was organised together with JNCC, UKOTA and the University of Exeter. The theme was Sustainable Development. The aim was to “evaluate issues surrounding sustainable development, helping students to gain experiences, learn new ideas and make contacts that will be valuable for their future career.”

Speaking at the JMC reception the following week, one student from the Turks and Caicos said that he had enjoyed the conference immensely, as he had found it quite hard to make friends in the UK.

Overseas Entities Roundtable and European Parliament meetings in September in Brussels

UKOTCF attended the EU Overseas Roundtable informal group meeting in Brussels on 8 September 2015. This follows on from a long involvement by UKOTCF to raise the profile of the UKOTs in Europe, which has resulted in the current BEST scheme.

The purpose of the morning meeting was to discuss the proposed Message from Guadeloupe (see *Forum News* 43: 8) monitoring and assessment system put forward by IUCN-Europe. Several EU officials were at the meeting and were interested to hear about the Gibraltar conference, the Environment Ministers meeting and the Environment Charter Review, being conducted by UKOTCF, which would have overlap with such a system, given that the Messages from Guadeloupe and the conclusions and recommendations of the Gibraltar conference had some similar themes.

The afternoon session discussed the possibility of setting up a formal group bringing together representatives of Member States, Outermost Regions (ORs), Overseas Territories (OCTs) and civil society.

Since then, on 19 October, the preliminary results of the BEST III regional ecosystem profiles (which UKOTCF was asked to comment on for the Caribbean, Sub-polar and Pacific regional profiles) were presented during a full-day event hosted at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels. More information and the presentations can be seen at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/best/news/news7_en.htm

The following day, Maurice Ponga MEP (an early supporter of BEST) gathered politicians, experts and stakeholders “to take stock of on-going efforts and initiatives in the Outermost Regions (ORs) and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) and discuss the importance of promoting partnerships.”

IUCN-Europe reports that: “The value of nature and the importance of investing in nature as our life insurance were highlighted by several representatives from the European Commission. Daniel Calleja Crespo, Director-General for the Environment, pointed out that “investing in nature provides the highest return” and he stressed the fact that biodiversity and climate-change are intrinsically linked. He highlighted the importance of the BEST initiative evolving into a sustainable partnership. The group called for in the Message from Guadeloupe shall be convened in the beginning of next year.”

“Hence, the meeting called for synergies and complementary actions for biodiversity loss and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Bernard Whiteman, Chair of the Overseas Countries and Territories Association (OCTA) stressed that the European Overseas Entities are “linked to the EU through their political and historical relationships” and emphasised the need for “good partnerships and the inclusion of these areas if the EU is to meet its sustainability goals”, IUCN continued.

Further information on this event is available at: <http://ebcd.org/event/message-from-guadeloupe/>

Further to these high profile events, the outcome of the EU Council meeting held on 16 December 2015 included the following:

15. NOTES the results of the preparatory action on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of European Overseas (BEST), the funding available under the Commission’s BEST 2.0 programme, and URGES the Commission and the Member States to move forward on sustainable partnerships dedicated to mobilising resources to protect the unique ecosystems and the services they provide in the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories.

The January 2016 newsletter from IUCN’s EU Overseas Group gave the following update: “In accordance with the Message from Guadeloupe and the conclusion of the EU Council in December 2015, a BEST Group will also be convened at the political level in order to discuss how to move forward on sustainable partnerships, dedicated to mobilising resources to protect the unique ecosystems and the services they provide in the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories”

UKOTCF will continue to provide input where possible as the BEST scheme continues to evolve in 2016.



South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute

Following the conference for conservation practitioners in Gibraltar in 2015, UKOTCF

offered to showcase more of the research taking place in the South Atlantic by reproducing material published by the South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI) to promote this work more widely. This *Forum News* includes some background on the organisation, activities and current research projects.

SAERI is a regional research institute that has been in existence since 2012. Its vision is to 'advance environmental understanding in the South Atlantic through research excellence and innovative scientific leadership'.

Based in Stanley, the Falklands, SAERI is an academic organisation conducting research in the South Atlantic. SAERI's remit includes the natural and physical sciences. It aims to conduct world-class research, teach students, and build capacity within and between the South Atlantic Overseas Territories.

SAERI has a core staff of researchers. In addition, it offers opportunities for PhD students, associate fellows and visiting researchers to contribute to its overall mission. Some examples of recent work include:

EU BEST III and BEST 2.0

BEST III is a regional project co-ordinated by the IUCN via regional hubs (see *Forum News* 44: 22). SAERI is the regional hub for the South Atlantic, covering Ascension, St. Helena, Tristan da Cunha and the Falkland Islands. The BEST III project is focused on creating ecosystem profiles for territories in each region. SAERI is co-ordinating the Ecosystem Profile for the South Atlantic.

Marine Spatial Planning

The MSP project is a 2-year Darwin Initiative project. One of the highlights of the project so far is that, for the first time, a full-year of shipping data around the Falklands is now available as of June 2015. This represents a critical new dataset for managing the marine environment. It is being used for Marine Spatial Planning to analyse shipping patterns and density, conduct analyses on marine biosecurity and propose shipping exclusion zones to protect vulnerable sites.



First shipping dataset for the Falkland Islands (over one year of full hourly AIS locations of all boats and ships), SAERI – Marine Spatial Planning Project



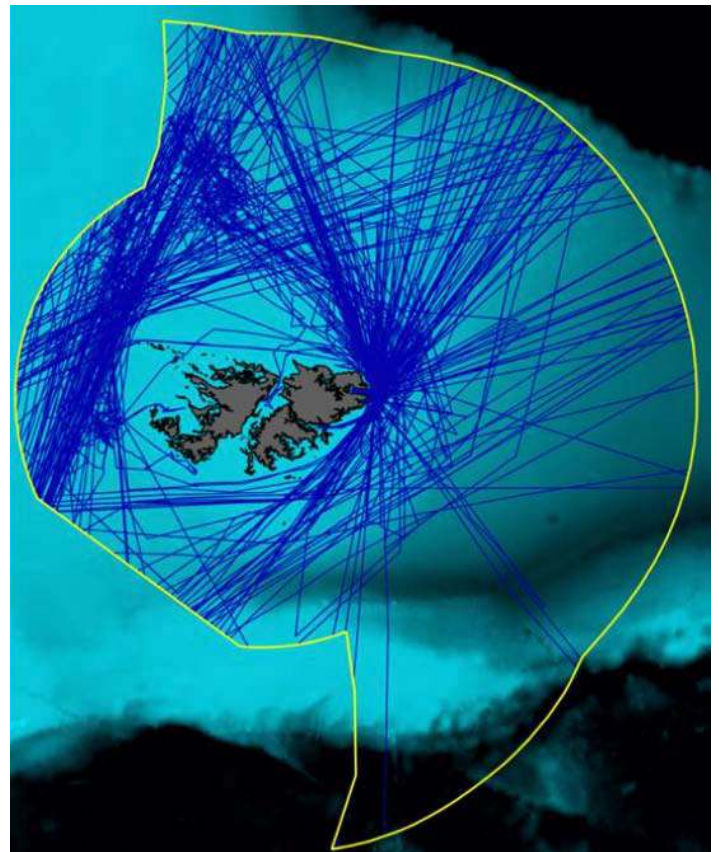
As part of fisheries and data curation, the project team with liaison with the oil industry, and FIG-Fisheries to identify the spawning sites of the squid Doryteuthis gahi and conduct egg and larval surveys to determine fate of egg and larval survival (and recruitment). (Image copyright SMSG – Shallow Marine Survey Group)

Addressing priority gaps in understanding ecosystem functioning for the developing Falkland Islands offshore hydrocarbon industry is the 'Gap Project'

With the discovery of rich oil fields around the Falkland Islands, there is the potential for a substantial offshore hydrocarbon industry to develop. The *Gap Project* will collate, create and analyse data needed to underpin strategies to inform better and monitor potential impacts of the hydrocarbon industry on the marine environment. Priority actions identified include the need to make use of existing data through an expert-led assessment process, and simultaneously to fill the highest priority data-gaps. Priority gaps identified include those related to marine higher predators (in particular penguins and seals, which are considered to be amongst the most susceptible of these groups to oil spill contamination), the benthic environment, pelagic fisheries and prevailing oceanographic conditions.

Further information on all of the above visit the SAERI website at www.south-atlantic-research.org.

SAERI was represented at the recent UKOTCF-organised conference and some of their contributions can be seen in the Proceedings (www.ukotcf.org/confs/gibraltar2015.htm)



Mapping of shipping patterns (such as paths of cargo all around the Islands, using data as shown in image to left), SAERI – Marine Spatial Planning Project

Friends of the UK Overseas Territories

You can also subscribe online at www.ukotcf.org

Four good reasons to become a Friend:

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

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

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

Name of individual Friend or contact person for Corporate Friend:

Company name of Corporate Friend (if relevant) :

Address:

Telephone: Fax: Email:

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

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

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

Bank address: Bank postcode:

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

My account number: Name:

Address: Postcode:

Signature: Date:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Signature: Date:

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

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