

CONSERVATION FORUM

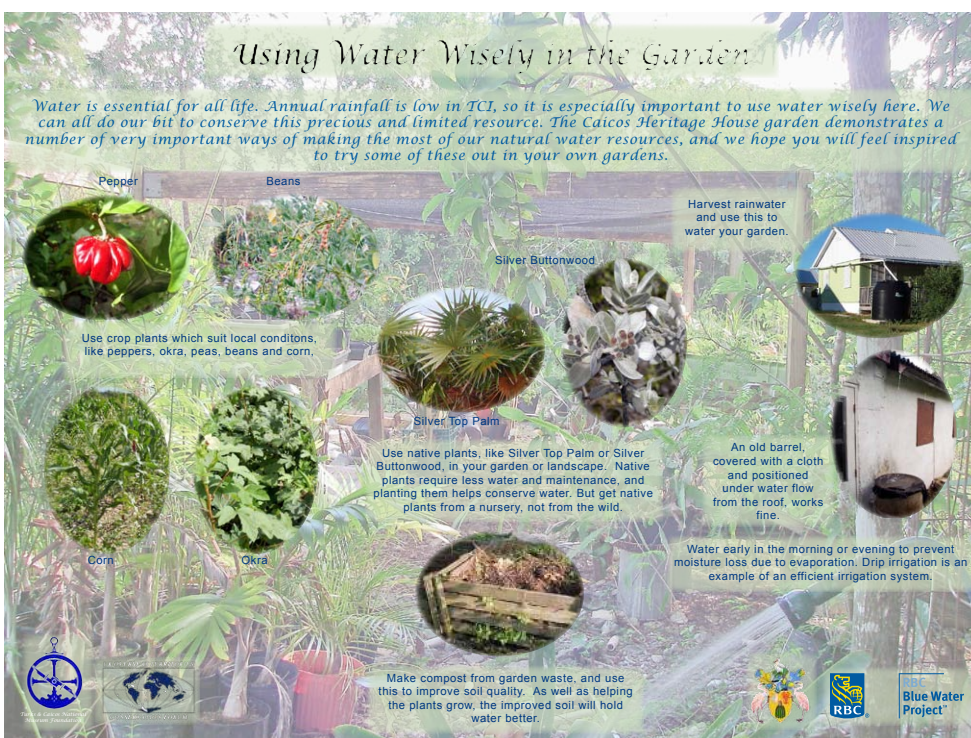
See pages 12 & 14-17 for news of the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee Inquiry into Sustainability in UKOTs, its report and follow-up.

FORUM NEWS 42

FEBRUARY 2014 • www.ukotcf.org

Launch of Wise Water Use for Gardens project in Turks & Caicos Islands

As mentioned briefly in *Forum News* 41, following work on rainwater harvesting for the botanic gardens with Montserrat National Trust, and continuing with its environmental education work in TCI, UKOTCF has worked with its partner, the Turks & Caicos National Museum (TCNM), to design and resource a project to develop a garden displaying traditional crops and native medicinal plants irrigated with rainwater, thus reducing the need for fertilizers and city water produced via desalination powered by imported diesel. The demonstration is combining a model of a traditional garden with aspects illustrating the potential for small-scale food production in this arid region, and other related elements. This project is made possible by a grant from the RBC Foundation under its Blue Water Project. The RBC Royal Bank Blue Water Project is a historic, wide-ranging, 10-year global commitment to help protect the world's most precious natural resource: fresh water.



Preview of one of the display boards being prepared by UKOTCF for both the RBC-supported site at Providenciales and TC National Museum's existing site on Grand Turk. © UKOTCF

This project was launched at a well-attended event (despite a tropical rain-storm providing more immediate water than anticipated) on 5 November 2013 at the Turks and Caicos National Museum's Caicos Heritage House (a reconstructed traditional cottage), the Village at Grace Bay, Providenciales.

In welcoming remarks, Mr David Bowen, TCI Government's Director of Culture, reflected on his personal experiences of Caicos traditional houses, especially in his youth. He then said, on behalf of TCI Government: "The Turks and Caicos Islands Government always welcome projects which bring together partners from



non-profit organisations, commerce and official bodies, as does this project. We welcome also the major contributions from overseas companies and NGOs pooling effort with TCI organisations. Projects that support TCI staying 'Beautiful by Nature' are particularly appreciated. And what could one want more than

a project which learns the best lessons from the hard work of our ancestors and demonstrates the value of some of this

Presenters and some key personnel from linked projects; left to right:

- Bryan Naqqi Manco, TCI Dept of Environment & Maritime Affairs;
- Edgar Howell, Director of Education, TCI;
- Ann Pienkowski, Honorary Environmental Education Coordinator, UKOTCF;
- David Bowen, Director of Culture, TCI;
- Sanfra Foster, Country Manager, RBC TCI;
- Dr Mike Pienkowski, Honorary Executive Director, UKOTCF;
- Patricia Saxton, Director, TCI National Museum Foundation. Photo: RBC Royal Bank



Caicos Heritage House, with the Museum Administrative building in the background to the left. The garden starts to the right of the picture.

Photo: RBC Royal Bank

cultural heritage applied – with less effort, of course! – to our modern environment.

“We commend the contributions of our National Museum. We welcome the involvement of the UK Conservation Forum, which we know is responsive to local guidance as to needs. And we are very pleased that the Government’s Departments of Environment, Agriculture, Education and Culture are all working in support of this.

“I look forward, like us all, to hearing more of the plans in the following short presentations.”

In opening the presentations, Mike Pienkowski said: “The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum is a federation of many organisations, most now based in the UK Overseas Territories, with some supporting from Britain. As many of you know, the Forum and I have had a long involvement with TCI, helping out local partners with various projects over the last 16 years.

“We have run projects in TCI with several local partners. We helped the TC National Trust rebuild itself in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and led the development of a series of nature trails and other facilities on East, Middle and North Caicos and Provo. Unfortunately, it proved impracticable for the Trust to maintain these, and we are working with other partners to investigate possible restoration.

“With TCI Government, we facilitated the development of a strategy to implement the Environmental Charter. This involved partners from government, NGOs and commerce – from a wide range of sectors, not just environment. And it served as a pilot setting the trend for other UK Overseas Territories.

“We arranged for TCI (alongside BVI and Cayman) to receive European Union support for a programme we co-ordinated on Management of Protected Areas to Support Sustainable Economies.

“At the request of the TCI Education Department and others, we have developed environmental education programmes for TCI schools – but I will not say more about this here, as another speaker will address this.

“We have worked with local partners to review both the potential Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Important Bird Areas of TCI. And we have worked with DEMA to help move towards better protection of these.

“We have worked with our partners at the National Museum to

develop bird trails at Grand Turk, which not only provide jobs and business opportunities for local people but, in combination with DEMA, the Environment Ministry and the schools, have also led to enhanced protection of these areas, for the benefit of future generations of Turks and Caicos Islanders.

“We are continuing to develop projects, always led by the wishes of local people. For example, we currently have submitted several proposals jointly with DEMA and other local partners to secure external funding to enhance the management of wetlands, and to reduce threats to the threatened native bush by enhancing cutting of invasive and damaging species.

“In collaboration with local partners, and after many requests from local people, we are preparing a series of guide booklets on bird-watching and other cultural interests to each of the TCI islands. So if anyone would like to support these by sponsorship or advertising, please see me or one of my colleagues after the talks!

“Finally, we are delighted to be partnering with our friends at the National Museum and in TCI Government, and other new friends at RBC Royal Bank to develop this new project on water capture and use for food plants and native species. This is genuinely something from which we can learn from TCI historic culture, combine it with technical knowledge, and make something which is very relevant to the issues of today,”

Patricia Saxton, Director of the Turks & Caicos National Museum Foundation, said: “Isn’t it fitting that it is raining, since we are going to talk about water conservation!

“Almost 22 years ago, the Turks and Caicos National Museum opened its doors in Grand Turk showcasing the Molasses Reef Wreck, the oldest shipwreck ever found in the Western Hemisphere. It is also a repository for the history of the Turks and Caicos Islands. Over the years, we realised we needed a presence in Provo. Through the kind generosity of Mr Frank Coggins and other benefactors who wish to remain anonymous, we are starting to realise this dream.

“The Turks and Caicos National Museum has partnered with the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum on many other projects showcasing conservation. Some of these include the bird trails on Grand Turk and the Botanical and Cultural Garden. In our Grand Turk branch, the Museum, Botanical Garden and Science Building rely only on rainwater harvesting and air conditioning run-off.

“This Wise Water project, through the RBC Royal Bank grant, will help the Turks and Caicos National Museum-Grace Bay demonstrate sustainability through the use of rainwater catchment. The first step in this conservation effort will be to install guttering on this building to collect rainwater into our cistern. This water will then be used to maintain the Caicos Heritage House kitchen and field garden. Thank you RBC Royal Bank.”

Sanfra Foster, RBC Royal Bank’s TCI Manager, said: “On behalf of RBC, I am pleased that we are able to support the ‘Wise Water Use for Gardens’ project. We are confident that this project will enhance the grounds surrounding the Caicos Heritage House – a national treasure – and benefit the local community. We are grateful for the support of the Turks and Caicos National Museum, the Conservation Forum, the Minister of the Environment and all who are involved in this initiative.

“RBC is providing funding for this project as part of our global RBC Blue Water Project. In 2007, RBC made a 10-year, global commitment to help protect the world’s most precious natural



Ann Pienkowski speaks at the project launch in the TC National Museum's administrative building at the Village at Grace Bay, Providenciales.

Photo: Catherine Wensink

resource – fresh water. RBC has a longstanding commitment to environmental sustainability. As a global company, RBC chose to focus on water because we believe that access to water will be one of the most significant environmental and economic issues facing the world in the coming decades. Here in the Caribbean – where natural sources of fresh water are scarce – we innately understand the value of this resource. We all have a stake in ensuring that we preserve and conserve fresh water.

“RBC is a partner in the conservation process – globally and locally. Through the Blue Water Project, RBC has committed to provide \$50 million over 10 years to organisations that protect watersheds and ensure access to clean drinking water. Since launching the project, RBC has pledged over C\$38 million to more than 650 charitable organizations worldwide that protect watersheds and promote access to clean drinking water. We are now at the midway point of our 10-year project. With this milestone, RBC recently shifted the focus of its Blue Water funds to help address a significant issue that’s relevant to many of our clients and communities.

“In 2013 and 2014 RBC will be supporting initiatives that help protect water in our growing towns and cities. Most of the world’s population now lives in towns and cities. This has significantly increased the strain on water resources in these areas. RBC is focused on protecting water in populated areas by funding projects that improve management of storm water, raise awareness about natural systems to control rain water and encourage more efficient use of water.

“The ‘Wise Water Use for Gardens’ project that is being launched today fits squarely into this category. The project will educate our local community members on rainwater harvesting, garden irrigation and how to effectively use native plants in gardens and landscaping. We are proud that RBC’s global initiative will touch the Turks and Caicos community and are pleased that our funds will help spread the word on ways that individual citizens can use water wisely.

“We anticipate the completion of the project in June 2014, which is really just a starting point for us. We look forward to working with our clients, community members and local leaders on ongoing water conservation efforts. Thank you for your commitment to this cause and for allowing us to partner with you on it as we celebrate our 5th year as part of the Turks and Caicos community.”

Mike Pienkowski noted that this project includes a range of activities as well as the facility that we were visiting that day. An important group of activities concerns education. Some aspects of this will be provided by this facility and the interpretation that it

will provide. Other aspects are being incorporated into our joint work with TCI Education Department.

Ann Pienkowski, UKOTCF’s Honorary Environmental Education Co-ordinator, summarised these aspects: “I am delighted to add my welcome to everyone to our Wise Water use in Gardens project launch today. I have been delivering environmental education initiatives, across the UK’s Overseas Territories, for several years, at the request of the territories. These have included a database of teaching resources, and the development of virtual tours of the territories, to raise public awareness of the special nature of the UK’s Overseas Territories, particularly in the UK. The virtual tour of TCI was one of the first to be developed, and this can be viewed online from the UKOTCF website (www.ukotcf.org).

“On my very first visit to TCI in 1997, I was made aware of the importance of the environment for TCI’s tourism and quality of life for residents. As I visited over the years for various projects, I became more aware of water issues, and the increasing reliance of TCI on imported bottled water and water produced by reverse-osmosis/desalination, a very expensive option fuelled by imported diesel. These sources, of course, were not available until relatively recently, and I wondered how people had managed in past times. At that time, being from the UK, I knew nothing about freshwater lenses. (Although I did know something about rainwater harvesting, because our Victorian house in England had a cistern which used to collect rainwater from the roof.) In the mid-2000s, I first met Mr Edgar Howell, now Director of Education (and here today in a personal capacity, as he is on vacation), when he made a visit to Conch Bar Caves on Middle Caicos, where I was volunteering that day, with others, to welcome visitors. We quickly realised our joint interests in water and education (after obtaining my BSc in biology, and working in biological research, I became a qualified primary school teacher.) In subsequent discussions with Mr Howell, he explained his concern that young people in TCI did not know about the freshwater lenses and the cave systems, that the caves (which contained very special species like bats and shrimps – in fact the airport cave contains a species of shrimp found nowhere else in the world) were being damaged by development and pollution, and he wished there could be something in the TCI schools’ environmental curriculum which could address this. We put our heads together, and made an application to the UK Government’s Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) to develop such a curriculum and teaching materials. The funding application was successful, and the Wonderful Water Project started. With teachers’ workshops and consultations with teachers and other stakeholders in TCI, including Department of Environment and Maritime Affairs, and the Turks and Caicos National Museum, we developed the curriculum framework and teaching materials on Wetland Ecosystems in TCI, including Mangroves. All the materials were produced as electronic pdfs, for greater flexibility and economy of use.

“The Wonderful Water project led to us thinking more about the need for public-awareness-raising about water issues in TCI. With our partners, the Turks and Caicos National Museum, we are delighted to have been awarded a grant by the RBC Royal Bank to develop a rainwater-harvesting demonstration, and model garden creation, at the Museum’s Caicos Heritage House site in Provo.

“The next stage of the Wonderful Water environmental education project fits in very well with the Wise Water use in Gardens project. For schools, we are developing materials under the theme of Vital Water, and the first section on the freshwater lenses and caves has just been produced. As well as the Education Department, the Museum and DEMA will have access to these materials for use in outdoor classrooms and in programmes such as DEMA’s Junior



*Bryan Naqqi Manco addresses some of the attendees in front of the new garden site, beside Caicos Heritage House and its outbuilding.
Photo: Catherine Wensink*

Park Wardens programme.

“Appropriate signage here and in Grand Turk will explain key issues to the general public. As a separate project, guide books to all the islands, currently in draft, will explain the importance of the wildlife and the links with natural freshwater systems, raising the profile of the importance of TCI to wildlife in a way that visitors find attractive. We are all very excited about this project, and I thank you for being here at the very start.”

In introducing the final speaker, Mike Pienkowski said: “14 years ago, several TC Islanders and I interviewed a young man for a UK-funded project here in TCI. We suspected that we had found someone rather special – and how right we were! In the time since then, Bryan Naqqi Manco has devoted time and effort well over the call of duty to become the world expert on the plants and animals of TCI and their conservation – and to sharing this knowledge readily with residents and visitors, especially to inspire young people to take an interest. As those of you who have read the latest copy of *Times of the Islands* will know, he is the second-ever individual winner of UK’s prestigious Blue Turtle Award for outstanding contribution to conservation in the UK Overseas Territories. We are extremely grateful to TCI Government and DEMA for partnering in this project and making Bryan Naqqi Manco available.”

Bryan Naqqi Manco, TCI Department of Environment & Maritime Affairs, then outlined the plans for the garden, before leading the participants outside to its location beside the Caicos Heritage House – fortunately during a break in the heavy rain.

The plans involve three zones: one for the growing planting of traditional crops; a second for mainly native medicinal plants; and a third for assisted recovery of native bush vegetation. The plans for developing this were outlined, and continued in informal discussions.

The construction phase of the project is expected to be completed by June 2014.

First impressions of the Turks and Caicos Islands

Although UKOTCF has been closely involved with TCI for over 16 years, Forum Co-ordinator, Catherine Wensink, visited the Islands for the first time in November, in connection with the Wise Water project (pp 1-4) and other initiatives. Fresh views are valuable, and here she gives her first impressions – in a few words and several pictures.

Grand Turk

I found GT (as it is sometime referred) to be utterly charming, with its link to its past clearly visible in the buildings and architecture. Its friendly faces and slow pace enabled me to marvel at the beautiful surroundings. Although, I count myself as more of a general conservationist, I felt honoured to be considered one of ‘the Bird People’. I saw how, as in many other Caribbean islands, when the cruise ships come to town, the island becomes a hive

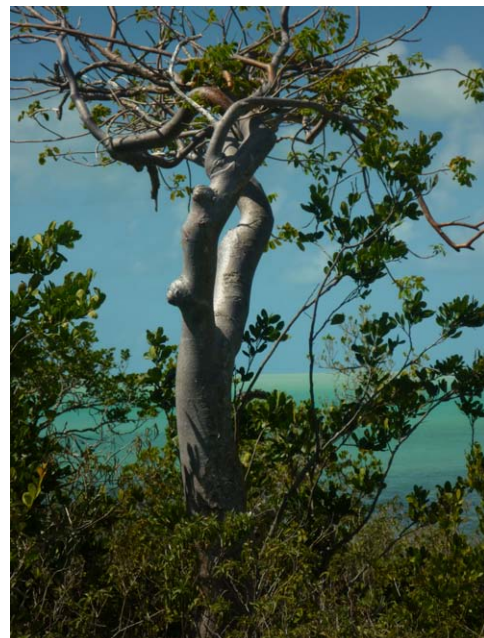


Grand Turk: View from the Turks and Caicos National Museum Guinep House. The background is where the Grand Turk wall drops off to a depth of over 7,000 feet. All photos: Catherine Wensink

of tourist-related activity. Sometimes, when visiting a new place you pick up information that you really should have known. For example, I was fascinated to learn about the landfall here of John Glenn, the first US astronaut to orbit the Earth, and drive down the sea front to discover the buildings with their own unique stories. The salt-pans gave me a really good opportunity to test the knowledge on Caribbean birds, which I gained from being in Bonaire in 2011. A cool sea breeze was kind to me and helped me adjust from early winter in the UK to the TCI climate.

South Caicos

I couldn’t help but feel sad, although optimistic, when visiting South Caicos. It seems to have suffered from neglect or failed attempts in terms of infrastructure and investment. The main



employer on the island is the lobster and conch fishery, which is visible at the small harbour. The town has an array of historic

*South Caicos:
Gum Elemi trees store water in their trunks. Following a particularly wet few months this tree has swollen dramatically. It’s bark can be used as an antidote should you come in to contact with poisonwood, which is also found in this area.*



Left: South Caicos has suffered from the impacts of unfinished developments. However, there are developers that are sensitive to the area's outstanding natural beauty and have developed a long-term plan to support economic recovery on the island. This is the first house to be occupied.

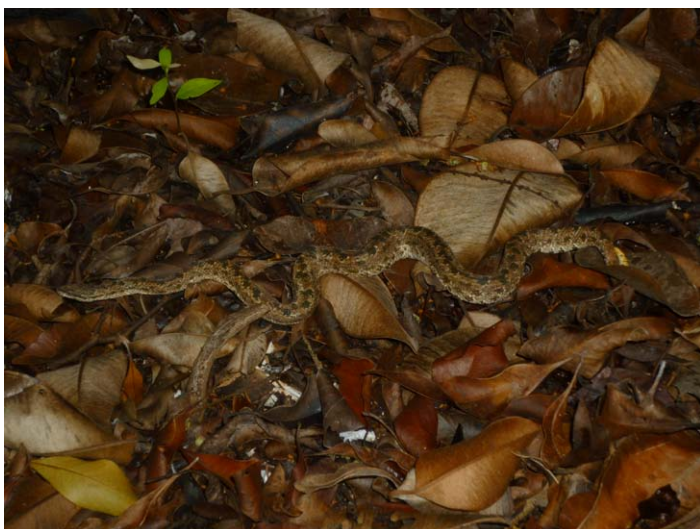
Right: Providenciales: Caicos Heritage House at the launch of the Blue Water project supported by the Royal Bank of Canada (see article on pages 1-4).



buildings including the Commissioner's House, and the old Customs and Excise building. The optimism for the island comes from the 25-year plan of a developer that has purchased much of the land in the north and plans to develop the area sensitively. We had the chance to visit one of the properties by a Canadian couple that invited us in. They even gave us some local 'candy', which were in fact the berries from the head of the native Turks Head cactus. Each plot in the development occupies a small parcel of land, which is landscaped using native vegetation. We were lucky to see several kingfishers around the salt-pans here but getting a photo proved nigh on impossible.

Middle & North Caicos

I jumped at the chance of meeting Bryan Naqqi Manco in his native habitat and he didn't disappoint. We stayed with him in Kew and we were treated to a home-cooked meal of rice 'n' peas and okra, which was delicious. The following day we went to visit the trails, which had been created during a joint project between UKOTCF and the National Trust several years earlier. I have never been so overwhelmed by mosquitos (we are talking about ears and mouth here, folks), but it was worth it to get to the end of the trail and see the magnificent key lime and mango trees. I was assured that I had to try conch here at Daniel's Café, so I did. It felt very strange, given that I had spent sometime in Bonaire where it is prohibited. I am told that their frozen conch would probably have come from TCI! We were so lucky to visit Wades Green, a fascinating plantation with many remarkable buildings and outhouses. We got glimpses of the endemic reptiles the pigmy boa (pictured) and the barking gecko (see our twitter page). I really love to hear the tales behind each plant and tree: having Naqqi there was liked receiving



North Caicos: pigmy boa Tropicodphis greenwayi is one of TCI's endemic reptiles. It is often found in the surroundings of Wade's Green plantation, as is the barking gecko Aristelliger hechti, another endemic.

information from a headset at the Natural History Museum. My particular favourites are the bumbo bush, sandalwood and poisonwood.

Providenciales

The most striking thing about Provo is that there is a business centre but no town. There are so many busy people leading busy lives here that it gives the sense that a lot of the commercial activity for TCI takes place here.

Together with our partner, the TCI National Museum, we were here to organise a launch event for our joint project (see above) at the Caicos Heritage House.

The Turks and Caicos Islands are so special. What strikes me most is the natural beauty and rich heritage. Having the opportunity to see so much in such a short time was truly incredible and unforgettable. Many thanks to the TC Islanders and to Bryan Naqqi Manco, Pat and Neil Saxton, Mike and Ann Pienkowski.

Darwin Initiative announces projects and next call

The successful projects under the second round of the Darwin Plus fund have been announced. Darwin Plus brings together the UK Government funding for UKOT projects formerly separately managed under OTEP and part of the main Darwin Initiative programme. Overall, there are 15 projects funded in this round (out of 44 applications). These range from projects awarded over £250,000: 'British Virgin Islands Marine Protected Area (MPA) and hydrographic survey capacity building', Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) to those awarded less than £25,000 'Darwin Fellowship - MRes Carbon sequestration in community forests, St Helena', Government of St Helena.

The full list of Darwin projects can be found at:

<http://darwin.defra.gov.uk/news/2013-11/2-million-for-environmental-projects-in-our-overseas-territories/>

It is notable that only a quarter of grants were to NGOs, the rest going to governmental bodies. This is a move away from the earlier situation of a majority going to NGOs and benefiting from the high value-for-money from their large voluntary time contributions. Also notable is that 13% of grants were to UK Government bodies. In earlier years such grants were avoided, as they effectively constitute simply moving money between UK Government internal budgets.

Alderney Wildlife Trust volunteers restore Fort Tourgis

In August, over 50 people helped in the first day's work to restore partial public access to Battery No 2 in the Crown Dependency of Alderney, the Channel Island (see pictures below).



**Fort Tourgis:
Battery No 2, plus German works and tunnel
under Victorian wall**

10/8/2013

The Central Caribbean Marine Institute, new Associate Member of UKOTCF



The Central Caribbean Marine Institute (CCMI) is the newest Associate Member of UKOTCF. Founded in 1998, CCMI is a non-profit organization in the Cayman Islands, a registered UK charity, and a 501 c(3) non-profit organization in the United States. CCMI's mission is to sustain marine biodiversity through research, education, and conservation.



A nursery-reared staghorn coral colony at its new home on a Little Cayman reef. Photo: K. Lohr



CCMI Education and Programme Coordinator, Heather Murray, helps to clean excess algae from structures in the coral nursery. Photo: K. Lohr

The organization's main asset, Little Cayman Research Centre (LCRC), has become a premiere research and education facility in the Caribbean since opening in 2006. CCMI is strongly invested in the community and runs an ocean literacy education programme that benefits hundreds of local children and numerous international college students each year. CCMI's unique programmes aim to educate students on their impact on the marine environment and increase their knowledge about coral reef biology, ecology, and conservation. The LCRC has also welcomed over 100 scientists and student researchers, and has hosted a wide variety of scientific workshops, courses, and internships. Little Cayman harbours some of the most biologically diverse Caribbean reef systems, and the island therefore affords rich opportunities to address some of the most pressing issues facing the UKOTs.

CCMI maintains a well-rounded, conservation-oriented research programme, which is relevant on a local and global scale. Current research topics include Climate Change and Coral Reef Resilience, Management of the Invasive Indo-Pacific Lionfish, and Staghorn Coral Population Enhancement. CCMI maintains a Long-Term Monitoring and Assessment Programme, which features archived data on coral and fish assemblages dating from 1999 to present. By the end of the year, a high-tech Coral Reef Early Warning System (CREWS) buoy will be installed to collect oceanographic and meteorological data from the local reefs, replacing the CREWS station, which operated from 2009-2012. CREWS data will be freely available in near real time via the CCMI or the NOAA website.

Last year, the organization was awarded a grant from the U.S. National Science Foundation to enhance the LCRC's capacity for climate change research and education by building a new, state-of-the-art laboratory facility. CCMI also received the Joanna Clarke Excellence in Education Award in 2012, and is featured in the "Creatures of Light" exhibition, which is currently in residence at Chicago's Field Museum.

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An invasive lionfish lingers at a reef on Little Cayman. Photo: K. Lohr

Management of Protected Areas to Support Sustainable Economies in three UKOTs, Cayman and Blue Iguana progress

As reported in earlier issues of *Forum News*, in 2003, UKOTCF co-ordinated a proposal to the European Commission for funding to support conservation and interpretation in protected areas in the Cayman Islands, the British Virgin Islands and the Turks & Caicos Islands in support of their sustainable economies (see, for example, *Forum News* 37: 1-5; 41: 16). It took seven years before the bureaucracy allowed the funding to flow and the project to start. UKOTCF's contracted role in advising and monitoring progress has finished but it continues to give scientific and environmental advice on all aspects of the project as appropriate.

The three territory partners, the National Trust for the Cayman Islands, the National Parks Trust of the [British] Virgin Islands, and the Turks & Caicos National Trust, now have just a year to finish this project - and will need to face a variety of challenges if they are to achieve this. The extent to which each planned the forward work in the earlier stages and were responsive to advice will be critical.

As part of its role, UKOTCF collated the experience of the partners (both successes and difficulties) in implementing developments in protected areas - which are, by definition, sensitive even when intended to support conservation. As conservation bodies ought to set a standard for this, the Project Steering Committee has made this initial version of the collation available for wider use. This is available at http://www.ukotcf.org/pdf/Database/GeneralInformationModule/42_EnvGuidelines_MPASSE_PSC_rev.pdf

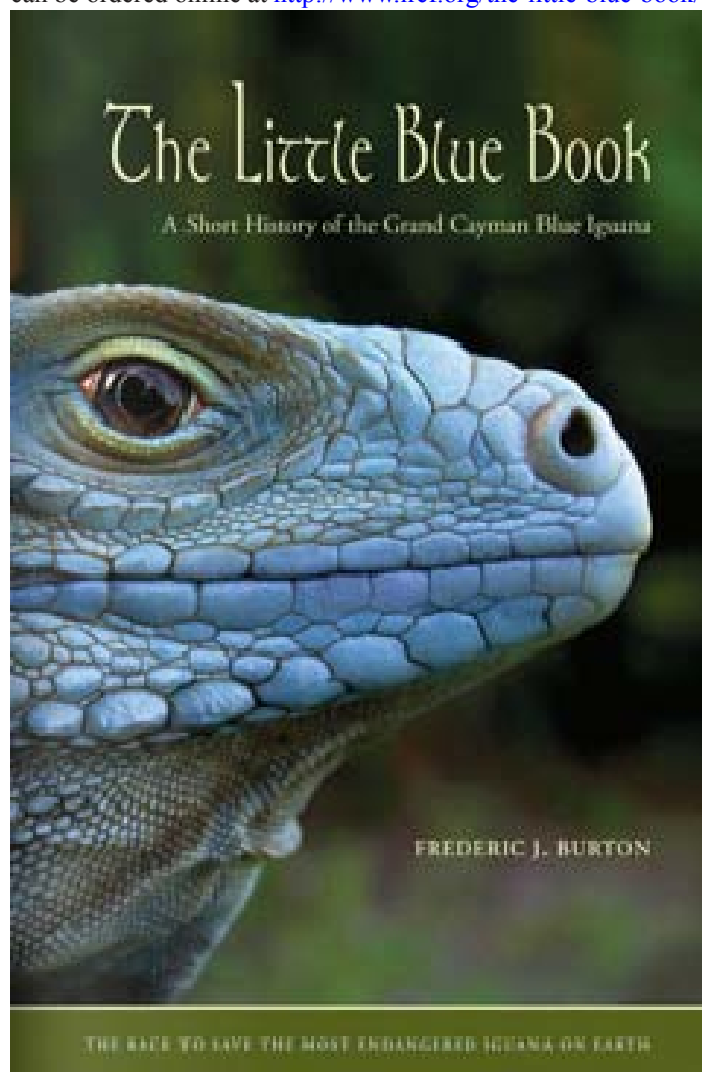
A central focus of this project has been the conservation of tropical dry forest, one of the most threatened ecosystems in the world. The Cayman partners have used the Grand Cayman blue iguana as a flag-ship species for this. Both spectacular and highly threatened, this species is ideal in this role. The efforts of Cayman conservationists over many years to help this species recover from the tiny number of individuals to which it had been reduced are a classic case of conservation, maintained over the many years necessary for such things (something badly recognised by many funding bodies). These efforts, involving many projects including MPASSE and others, are paying off. In 2012, the IUCN Species Survival Commission changed the status of the blue iguana from Critically Endangered to Endangered. (Curiously, several authors refer to this as "downgrading"; it looks like upgrading to us.)

The Red List entry says: "Due to ongoing conservation actions, the Grand Cayman Blue Iguana population is currently increasing and expected to continue to increase. However, the small extent of occurrence (15.6 km²) reflects the fact that the species is now effectively restricted to managed protected areas. The surrounding and intervening land, once also occupied by iguanas, is inexorably declining in quality as roads, housing, and other human infrastructure expands bringing associated invasive alien predators (dogs, cats, and rats). The loss of recolonization options may eventually impact the population, hence this is treated as a continuing decline.

"Within the three protected areas suitable habitat is quite restricted. The estimated current area of occupancy is 0.5 km² based on the summation of monitored iguana locations. This area may increase slightly in the next decade, but is currently not predicted to reach one km² (using the recommended grid size of 2x2 km for estimating AOO increases the area to 12 km², a figure which is well within the Endangered threshold and very close to the Critically Endangered threshold). The species does not qualify as Critically Endangered under criterion B2 because it is known from more than one location, and is not severely fragmented.

"The three protected areas (QE II Botanic Park, Salina Reserve, and Colliers Wilderness Reserve) support the entire three subpopulations, the largest of which is approximately 319 adults in the Salina Reserve. The subpopulation structure is predicted to remain stable, and the number of breeding age iguanas within the Salina Reserve and Colliers Wilderness Reserve is expected to increase. Future population growth is not likely to be possible beyond a total of approximately 1,000 adults, unless additional protected habitat is secured."

Award-winning conservation biologist Fred Burton's book about saving one of the most endangered reptiles on earth has just been reprinted. *The Little Blue Book: A Short History of the Grand Cayman Blue Iguana* is a true story about the race to rescue the most endangered iguana on earth. The book is richly illustrated in full colour with 180 pages including maps and rare photos and details of the iguana's actual and natural history. Extra features include a blue cloth hardcover, blue silk bookmark and dust jacket. Published by the International Reptile Conservation Foundation, it can be ordered online at <http://www.ircf.org/the-little-blue-book/>



Chagos Conservation Trust

The Chagos 20/20 was held at the Zoological Society of London in November. The presentations included a new film (available on their YouTube channel). The aim of the meeting was to bring together scientists, researchers and experts to continue building new knowledge, expertise and relationships in order to help protect a globally important part of the Indian Ocean.

St Helena developments

In August, courtesy of the Gibraltar Government, UKOTCF was able to organise and host a meeting at the request of St Helena partners to discuss topical issues, taking advantage of the presence in London of Greg and Dr Rebecca Cairns-Wicks. A major part of the talks concerned the new airport and how to get environmental aspects better built in, and also that NGO expertise be more fully enlisted. These discussions have been followed up, with some positive progress including support to the National Trust by the airport contractor, Basil Reed, for the continuation of a programme of predator control (cats, rats, mice and geckoes) to enable them to meet their objectives under the Environmental Management Plan.

Several key documents, including a survey to measure the impacts on invertebrates and lichens and mitigation and the Dry Gut addendum to the Environmental Impact Assessment, are available online as is the revised design for the development of Rupert's Wharf. This is under public consultation. This is a very positive step and ensures much greater transparency in the EIA and planning process. The planning statement as well as other documents are available on line at: <http://www.sainthelenaaccess.com/application/documents>.

The Access Office has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the St Helena National Trust (SHNT) for work in support of the implementation of the Landscape and Ecology Mitigation Programme (LEMP), which seeks to rehabilitate and enhance the quality of the landscape in those areas adversely affected by airport construction activities. This is an encouraging step forward in seeing those responsible for delivering the airport and minimizing its impact on St Helena's breathtaking environment working with those that have the knowledge and expertise to assist them in this. The Air Access Office reports that:

"The MoU sets out how the Access Office and SHNT will support each other in delivering the LEMP and discussions for a formal Service Level Agreement with the Terrestrial Conservation Section of the Environmental Management Division are underway.

St Helena Elections and Freedom of Information

In July, 12 new councillors were elected, including several individuals who have supported strongly demands to make St Helena Government more transparent, and in particular leading calls for a Freedom of Information Act. Several politicians from Westminster were invited to the island to give the new councillors guidance on how to fulfill their duties.



Rebecca Cairns-Wicks (on right) chairs a session of informal discussions.
Photo: Ann Pienkowski

"Thousands of native plants will be required for the LEMP and it is envisaged that SHNT will input into the programme of seed collection, plant propagation, nursery production, planting, maintenance, and control of invasive species in accordance with LEMP objectives.

"The Access Office and SHNT will collaborate through such activities as sympathetic and high quality landscape design, the planting of native species to enhance biodiversity and ecological value of the areas treated and the creation of new habitats to compensate for the loss of habitat required for the airport construction. Both parties will meet regularly to review progress to ensure achievement of the MoU and LEMP objectives."

Officials from UK Government have visited St Helena several times throughout the year, which local partners have said has enabled them to develop an understanding of stakeholder issues and to find ways of helping to address them.

Channel Islands Inter-island Environmental Meeting 2013

This year's inter-island environmental meeting was held in October on Guernsey and hosted by the Société Guernesiate. The theme of this year's meeting was engaging the community to promote biodiversity and cooperation for action. Presentations on Day 1 included: a review of the UK State of Nature Report May 2013, its impact and a future role for the Channel Islands; Chough reintroduction in Jersey and how the local community were involved; wildlife surveys on Guernsey; seabird tagging on Alderney; shore gathering in Guernsey; and renewable energies in the Channel Islands. Day 2 included: Engaging communities in monitoring the impact of climate change; Living Islands project; biodiversity indicators and ecosystem services; Jersey's Wildlife Law and implementing mitigation in the planning process; conservation measures in Guernsey; the Plant Health Law;

Ramsar strategic plan; impact of invasive species; and introducing a Biodiversity Strategy in the Isle of Man.



UK All-Party Parliamentary Group for Biodiversity's Policy Groups

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Biodiversity has established seven sub-Groups to help it advance debate and understanding in Parliament of key issues related to the protection and conservation of biodiversity in the UK and abroad. The sub-Groups will work alongside the All-Party Group's on-going programme of high-level meetings and events and will work on a range of key issues throughout the year. They will provide a focused forum for Parliamentarians and All-Party Group members to discuss and promote policy, legislation and understanding on key issues related to biodiversity protection and conservation. UKOTCF and RSPB are jointly chairing the Overseas Territories group. UKOTCF is also represented on several of the other groups where discussions might impinge on UKOTs.

The APPG secretariat has prepared this note about the sub-Groups: The All Party Parliamentary Group for Biodiversity has established seven sub-Groups to help it advance debate and understanding in Parliament of key issues related to the protection and conservation of biodiversity in the UK and abroad. The sub-Groups will work alongside the All Party Group's on-going programme of high-level meetings and events and will enable us to work on a range of key issues throughout the year, rather than exclusively at the meetings we host in Parliament.

Each sub-Group will provide a focused forum for Parliamentarians and All Party Group members to discuss and promote policy, legislation and understanding on key issues related to biodiversity protection and conservation. Each sub-Group will be supported by a Parliamentary Officer, who will provide advice and support to members.

Sub-Groups have been established in the following areas (the Parliamentary Officer that has agreed to support the Group is provided in brackets):

- Natural Capital Accounting (Barry Gardiner MP)
- Invasive Non-Native Species (Huw Irranca-Davies MP)
- Biodiversity in UK Overseas Territories (Andrew Stunell MP)
- Forestry (Barry Gardiner MP)
- Marine Biodiversity (Matthew Offord MP and Katy Clark MP)
- Planning and Biodiversity (Mary Glendon MP)
- Food and Farming (Nic Dakin MP)

The priorities of each group will be set by Members who will work together (facilitated by the Secretariat) to offer briefing materials for Parliamentarians and other interested parties, as well as organising meetings on topics of interest and helping to advance Parliamentary discussion on these issues. Each sub-Group will work with Parliamentarians to:

- Improve communication between Parliamentarians and expert stakeholders on policy and legislative matters that affect biodiversity;
- Develop cross party support for policies that will protect and enhance biodiversity in the UK and its overseas territories;
- Recommend to Government and Parliament solutions to protect and enhance biodiversity;
- Promote the co-benefits of policies to protect and enhance biodiversity, including climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- Promote the public policy benefits of protecting and enhancing biodiversity; and

- Promote the importance of protecting and enhancing biodiversity as a driver of long term sustainable economic growth.

They will achieve this by *inter alia*:

- Suggesting written and oral Parliamentary questions that Parliamentary members may wish to table;
- Preparing written and oral briefings for Members of both Houses in advance of Parliamentary debates, key stages of policy and legislative development, Select Committee meetings etc;
- Writing to Ministers to raise key issues and concerns.

The APPG Secretariat will coordinate the work of each sub-Group with the guidance of members. The Secretariat will provide regular updates to members, including deadlines for tabling oral questions, dates of key debates, policy developments and opportunities to raise issues in Parliament. Each Group will appoint a Chair – a member of the Group who chairs conference calls and acts as a main point of contact for the Secretariat.

The Groups will coordinate the majority of their work over email, helping to keep to a minimum the time commitment required from members. A conference call will be organised every 8–10 weeks to give each Group the opportunity to discuss actions and priorities. Additional meetings can be organised, if necessary, alongside existing All Party Group events in the House of Commons.

Joint Ministerial Council

The Joint Ministerial Council (Ministers from the UKOTs and from the UK Government) was held in late November. A communiqué was issued (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/261234/131126JMC_2013_communiqueFINAL.pdf). This mentions green energy (a problem in several UKOTs, because power companies have contractual monopolies and are reluctant to move into alternative sources, or allow their customers to do so, because this might reduce their profits). The communiqué, however, says little on other aspects of the environment but this may be because it was issued part way through the meetings, on the day before the environment session.

Pitcairn

Colleagues from Pitcairn were in Britain for several weeks, to attend JMC and hold other meetings, on the proposed marine protected area and other matters. They took the opportunity also to refresh connections with UKOTCF, particularly an extended meeting involving Deputy Mayor, Simon Young (who has a strong interest in conservation and sustainable development).

South Georgia annual stakeholder meeting

At the annual stakeholders meeting in September, reports were given on activities limiting the rate of decay of old whaling stations, as well as South Georgia Heritage Trust's rodent eradication and the Government of SGSSI's reindeer eradication programmes. The second year of reindeer work would be starting in January 2014 with the final rodent work in 2015. Despite more reindeer found than expected, work was ahead of schedule. The rat programme was also on or ahead of schedule, despite a very testing season.

Protests in TCI about possible dolphinarium

Following the controversial decision by the former Governor of Turks & Caicos Islands, while in direct control, to make the keeping of marine mammals in captivity legal, there have been numerous protests at this opening up of the possibility of dolphinarium. This move was in contrast to much of the rest of the world which is moving away from such inhumane and environmentally dubious practices. For example, India recently banned the keeping of dolphins in captivity, as it was deemed inhumane.

As a consequence, there are current proposals for dolphinarium on the islands of both Providenciales and Grand Turk. There have been many local protests throughout TCI, but some limited local support in Grand Turk, especially from taxi-drivers who have been told by the developers that much business for them will result. However, the developers planning proposal (submitted since the item below was written) makes clear that transport will be largely by chartered buses, rather than taxis.

The planning application is remarkable too for its poor quality, there being no location map and the site plan being merely a sketch of the back-of-the-envelope variety. It is to be hoped that the TCI authorities reject this clearly inadequate application.

UKOTCF Associate, Turks and Caicos Reef Fund issued a press-release in advance of their public walk and this is reproduced below (with minor amendments) because of the useful ongoing information that it provides.

Later, TC Reef Fund and other TCI NGOs lost their case for judicial review of the decision by Governor Todd to change the law to allow keeping of captive marine mammals in TCI, thus opening the door for dolphinarium. There were also concerns about the building and management of the proposed dolphinarium facility, as there were no regulations governing such building and management in TCI at present. The autumn 2013 edition of Times of the Islands contains an article by Don Stark (Chair of TCRF) setting out why keeping captive Dolphins was wrong. The article, titled "Free by Nature" can be read online at www.timespub.tc (search for Free by Nature).

JOIN THE WALK TO KEEP DOLPHINS FREE IN THE "BEAUTIFUL BY NATURE" TCI

September 1 is "Japan Dolphin Day" which marks the beginning of the capture and slaughter of hundreds of dolphins in Taiji, Japan. Dolphin rights protectors in over 100 locations around the world are organizing concurrent events to support the efforts to stop the killing and capture of these highly intelligent marine mammals for food and display.

The Turks & Caicos Dolphin Day will also be held on September 1, 2013. The supporters of free dolphins will walk on the beach from Ocean Club to Coral Gardens. This event is being held in part to support the efforts to stop the killing and capture of dolphins in Japan, but also to protest the proposed development of captive dolphin facilities on Grand Turk and Providenciales.

According to event organizer, Alex Skye, "We are encouraging as many people as possible to join us for this peaceful demonstration. We want everyone to wear red as a sign of unity. We will meet at 2 pm on September 1 on the beach in front of Ocean Club East and quietly march down the beach to the Coral Gardens Resort."

Dolphin Cove, a Jamaican company, has proposed building a captive dolphin facility on Grand Turk at the mouth of North Creek and on Providenciales on a canal off Cooper Jack. Although planning documents have been submitted for the Providenciales site, no planning documents have yet been submitted for the Grand Turk location as the change in the Fisheries Protection Ordinance made by the TCI Governor in October 2012 is under a legal challenge by four local non-profit groups (Turks & Caicos Reef Fund, Turks & Caicos SPCA, PRIDE and the Provo Chamber of Commerce). The trial date for the Judicial Review brought by these groups is scheduled for September 16 and 17, 2013.

"Dolphins are highly intelligent, social animals who live in family groups, communicate with each other," said Don Stark, Chairman of the Turks & Caicos Reef Fund. "Placing these animals in sea pens is cruel and unusual punishment. It stresses the animals, causing health issues such as ulcers, much as stress induces ulcers in humans. They have more gray matter in their brains than humans and this is the part of the brain

responsible for language, thought, memory, and consciousness. And nearly all captive dolphins come from the wild and are not from captive breeding programs."

Susan Blehr, Executive Director of the TCSPCA added, "Wild capture of dolphins is a very cruel activity. The animals are essentially chased until they are nearly exhausted and then swimmers dive into the water to grab them and wrestle them to the capture boat. It is very stressful for both the captured and uncaptured animals. In fact, the mortality rate for a newly captured dolphin is six times normal in the first five days after capture and this mortality risk increase happens every time they are transported, such as from Jamaica to the TCI."

Anyone interested in additional information about the walk which took place on 1 September can contact Alex Skye at Making Waves Studio in the Regent Grand Plaza on Grace Bay Road or Don Stark at the TCRF (cell phone 347 8455 or email donstark@tcreef.org)

Donations are needed to continue to fund the legal challenge in the TCI. Cash or cheques & credit cards can be accepted at the TCSPCA office located in Suzie Turn Plaza or at Making Waves Studio. PayPal donations can also be accepted at www.tcreef.org/donate.html.

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

TCRF's The Case Against Captive Dolphins

1. Dolphins are highly intelligent creatures

- o Dolphins have more brain gray matter than humans – this is the part of the brain responsible for memory, thought, consciousness and language
- o The size of a dolphin's brain relative to its body size is only slightly smaller than that of a human – unlike that of the great apes which is much smaller
- o Dolphins can understand combinations of complex instructions
- o They are self-aware, an ability that doesn't develop in humans until age 2
- o They have highly developed communication skills, including having unique signature whistles to identify themselves to others (like our names)
- o Dolphins experience emotions

2. Nearly all captive dolphins are caught in the wild and do not come from captive breeding programmes

- o Captive breeding programs have had limited success and cannot sustain the demand for captive dolphins
- o Dolphinarium create demand for more wild captures and wild capture methods are cruel and inhumane – they traumatize the animals, separate family groups and lead to high mortality rates among both captured and those not captured
- o If the TCI believes in protecting marine mammals in our waters (see discussion of Regulation 18 below), we should not support the unregulated and inhumane capture of them in other countries
- o Many countries, such as the US, Mexico, Brazil and many others have banned the capture of wild dolphins in their waters – Japan and Cuba are the most common locations for wild capture today
- o There is a six-fold increase in mortality of a dolphin that is captured during the first five days after capture – and this mortality risk increase occurs every time a dolphin is transported (for example, from Jamaica to Grand Turk)

3. Public opinion is growing in opposition to captive dolphin programmes

- o A 2007 survey of US citizens found only 30% believed there was a scientific benefit to keeping dolphins in captivity
- o A 2003 survey of Canadian citizens found that only 14% believed that viewing dolphins in captivity was educational; 74% thought the best way to learn about them was to view them in the wild

o Many countries, the latest being India and including the new target for tourism to the TCI, Brazil, have banned captive dolphin facilities

o Regulation 18 of the TCI Fisheries Protection Ordinance was enacted to protect JoJo and other marine mammals from the activities promoted by swim with the dolphin programs

4. Keeping dolphins in sea pens, as proposed here has the following adverse effects:

o Significantly reduced physical activity – wild dolphins swim as much as 100 miles/day

o Dolphins are not scavengers – they must be taught to eat dead, imported fish which lacks adequate nutritional value requiring them to be also given vitamins and other nutritional supplements

o Unlike other animals kept in captivity, there is no increase in life expectancy for captive dolphins despite the purported benefits of reduced predation, abundance of food and good medical care

o Monitoring the health of captive dolphins is challenging which often means that by the time a problem is observed, it is frequently too late for successful treatment.

Defra investigates EU funds for UKOTs

The European Union has recently approved a budget of over €3 billion for the next LIFE+ programme for the next 6 years (2014-2020). The LIFE+ programme is the EU's funding instrument for the environment, principally within the EU itself. It is still unclear how the programme will now apply to the UKOTs, the types of projects that are likely to be successful and the rules – except that these will all be complex.

The Commission produces the draft scheme rules in early 2014. The first call is likely to be issued in summer 2014 with an application submission deadline sometime in the autumn. However, the time taken to coordinate and prepare the proposal means that, realistically, if UKOT bids are submitted, this might be in the following year.

Defra are planning to organise workshops for potential applicants, one of which will focus on the UKOTs. Assuming that there are no delays in the process at EU level, the workshop is tentatively scheduled to take place towards the end of March 2014, probably 24th or 25th March. The European Commission has agreed in principle to attend the workshop to answer questions and discuss the issues that are raised.

The LIFE web site: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/index.htm> outlines some of the requirements for the current LIFE programme – as well as projects that have previously been supported. The UK's national contact point is run by Beta Technology www.betatechnology.co.uk. For more information on this, contact Tara.Pelembe@jncc.gov.uk.

Environment Audit Committee makes progress

A great deal of UKOTCF's work over the past year has been in support of the UK Parliament's Environmental Audit Committee's inquiry into Sustainability in the UKOTs. UKOTCF was pleased that a group from the Committee took up the recommendation to see a Territory at first hand, and visited Cayman in the summer, between other evidence sessions.

The report of the Committee is expected in early 2014. UKOTCF is working with the Committee to organise a workshop bringing together stakeholders to help build consensus on moving forward constructively in support of conservation and sustainability in the UK Overseas Territories. (See following pages for reports on both of these.)



A swap in normal habitats and garbs?

Above: UKOTCF personnel (from right: Dr Mike Pienkowski and Dr Chris Tydeman) give evidence to the Committee. (alongside RSPB personnel Clare Stringer and Jonathan Hall).

Right: (from left) National Trust field officer Stuart Mailer, member of the Committee Matthew Offord MP, Chair of the Committee Joan Walley MP and Clerk to the Committee Nick Beech as they visited the Mastic Trail, Grand Cayman, which was an opportunity to see first hand some of the extraordinary biodiversity of the UKOTs.

Photos: Parliament TV;

<https://www.facebook.com/CaymANNature/posts/677890395570105>



UK strategies for helping conservation in the UKOTs/CDs and relations between JNCC and NGOs

Government's "UK Overseas Territories Conservation Strategy" was drafted by JNCC, adopted by FCO, DFID and Defra, and published by UK Government in 2009. Since shortly after its publication, UKOTCF and others have been pointing out that, however valuable this is as a memorandum of agreement between these three UK Government Departments, it is not a strategy in the usual sense. In a series of UKOTCF workshops in 2010, 2011 & 2012, and in evidence to the current House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee Inquiry on UKOTs, various stakeholders have stressed the need for the HMG "Strategy" to be complemented by a framework of priorities so that resources in Britain can be best directed in support of conservation in UKOTs. The same need was made very clear by UKOT official bodies and NGOs, including UKOTCF and others at the JNCC-organised workshop on the HMG "Strategy" in March 2013.

A second area which has concerned UKOTCF and others in recent years has been the tendency for JNCC (and some other HMG bodies) to communicate only with government bodies, and indeed provide funding only to them, rather than the more balanced approach before JNCC became strongly involved in UKOT/CD matters about seven years ago. In the preceding decade, FCO had happily used the UKOTCF networks which include both NGO and official bodies.

Under the current British Government, all its agencies are subject to a 3-yearly review of need, effectiveness, cost-effectiveness etc. JNCC's first Triennial Review was late in 2013. UKOTCF submitted some comments to the sponsor department, Defra, conducting this review. Generally, JNCC came out of the review well, but one of the criticisms it received was that it needed to improve its relations with NGOs, especially in the context of UKOTs, and to work with them more.

To start to meet this recommendation, JNCC invited a number of NGOs to meet with it on 8th January. Mike Pienkowski and Chris Tydeman attended for UKOTCF and representatives of some of UKOTCF's British-

based member organisations also participated. The discussions here were frank but constructive, focussing on how to move forward, rather than holding inquests over past problems. The meeting agreed that it would be valuable to continue these meetings in order to develop an agreed framework of priorities to complement UK Government's "UK Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy" or any revision of it. UKOTCF stressed that this would not, of course, replace the strategy of any UKOT or Crown Dependency (or seek to impose such a strategy) but would be informed by any of these that are available. Rather, its purpose would be to help UK Government agencies and NGOs to determine how to deploy their limited resources to help conserve the biodiversity heritage of the territories, and to aid acquiring further such resources.

Because of timing constraints within JNCC, it was agreed that the next meeting would be in April or May. JNCC agreed to prepare before this its first ideas for a framework of priorities, so that discussing these would be the main purpose of the next meeting.

It was agreed that, to stress the joint nature of the meetings, chairing would alternate between JNCC and the NGOs. (This would be a similar arrangement to that being used by the new JNCC/NGO meeting for Britain and Northern Ireland, and that used by the UKOTCF/UK Government joint meetings which operated for about 20 years until 2008.) The NGOs agreed to decide between themselves who would chair the next joint meeting and to advise JNCC as soon as possible, so that this Chairperson could liaise with JNCC over preparations for this meeting.

UKOTCF indicated that it would keep its network of member and associate organisations informed of progress and would also feed in any ideas from them.

We should, of course, note that neither the meeting nor UKOTCF can commit any other organisation, but we do hope that we can start moving towards a framework of priorities that can draw wide support.

Dhekelia TurtleWatch, Cyprus SBA

Following many years of trying to resource a volunteer programme for the UKOTs, UKOTCF continues to facilitate volunteer assignments on an ad hoc basis. In this case, UKOTCF was able to link the SBAs with Dr Phoebe Carter who has proved an exceptional resource for them.

Dhekelia, in the Eastern Sovereign Base in Cyprus, has been running a turtle conservation programme since 1997. Both green turtles *Chelonia mydas* and loggerhead turtles *Caretta caretta* nest on the beaches in Cyprus and have been legally protected here since 1971.

The project is run by trained and licensed volunteers, and is overseen by the Sovereign Base Areas Environment Team. From May to mid-August, volunteers walk the two beaches early each morning looking for turtle nests. Once a nest has been located, it is protected with a simple cage that is designed to keep predators out but allow the hatchlings to escape when they emerge. In Cyprus, incubation time of turtle eggs is estimated to be 44-60 days. When they are expected to hatch, the nests are monitored each morning for signs of tracks left behind by hatchlings emerging the previous evening. Although hatchlings may suffer some predation on their way to the sea from ghost crabs *Ocypode cursor* and foxes, it is considered best practice to let them hatch unaided so that their navigation and imprinting mechanisms are not compromised. The methods for dealing with hatchlings may vary from project to project. This is essential

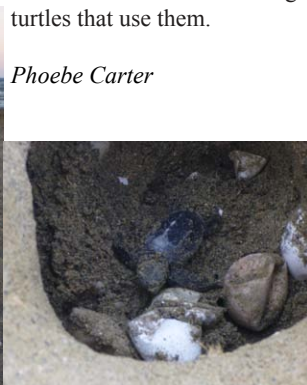
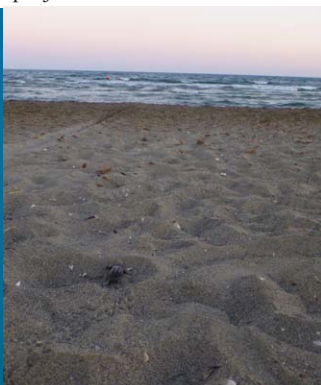
if females are to return to their natal beaches to nest in the future. Ten days following the first emergence, the egg chamber is excavated and the number of eggs that hatched and the number that failed to hatch are recorded.

All the data collected during the project are used to inform conservation policy decisions regarding sea turtles in the SBAs. Since the start of the project, the beaches at Dhekelia have seen an increase in the number of loggerhead nests; green turtle nests are uncommon. These beaches are relatively quiet and, due to their location on a military base, access can be better controlled than elsewhere on the island, making them of great value to nesting turtles.

As well as monitoring nesting on the SBA beaches, the number of dead turtles that wash up on the beaches is recorded and each such turtle is identified, measured, and sexed, and the obvious causes of mortality are noted. Despite their legal protection, turtles that have been killed deliberately are encountered, and educating the public and the fisheries about sea turtles is ongoing in the SBAs.

The turtle watch at Dhekelia relies entirely on volunteers and does suffer from lack of continuity as volunteer turnover is high with most people on two-year postings. The project would benefit greatly from a coordinator permanently based at Dhekelia garrison as this would ensure the consistent and sensitive management of the nesting beaches and the turtles that use them.

Phoebe Carter



Left: loggerhead turtle in sea off Dhekelia (Photo: Mick Smith/ Dragon Divers). Centre: nesting beach at Dhekelia, showing mounds resulting from turtle nesting. Right: hatched turtle eggs in nest on beach (Photos: Dr Phoebe Carter).

House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee Inquiry into Sustainability in UKOTs report, and its launch at UKOTCF workshop

Introduction

In June 2012, the UK Government (UKG) issued a White Paper *The Overseas Territories Security, Success and Sustainability*. The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF) and others welcomed the strong statements of the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary in respect of the importance of conserving the globally important biodiversity in UK's Overseas Territories and UK Government's shared responsibility for this. However, there were **concerns** about whether the content of the White Paper provided a route to achieve these laudable aspirations. To help promote constructive discussion on the report, UKOTCF organised a widely drawn **workshop** on 2 October 2012. UKOTCF was delighted that Mrs Joan Walley MP, Chair of the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee (EAC), sent the Committee's Second Clerk to attend that workshop.

On 26 September 2012, EAC announced its inquiry Sustainability in the UK Overseas Territories, which would centre on the new White Paper. In the months since then, EAC has undertaken a thorough investigation, taking evidence (both written and in session) from many bodies. This evidence is included in its report, published on 16 January 2014. The Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations are reproduced on page 15, opposite. The **full report** of 35 pages, plus the main evidence on which it draws are available online, as is a **second volume** with the other evidence.

Both the EAC and UKOTCF (as well as other bodies) are keen that the Committee's report serves as a starting point to improve support for conservation in the UKOTs. Accordingly, they agreed that UKOTCF would organise another workshop on the day of the publication of the Committee's report.

This would let a varied group of those who had submitted evidence or had a strong interest in the report to discuss it informally and to seek clarification about the committee's conclusions and recommendations. The hope was that this would identify positive ways to help conservation and sustainable use of the natural environment in the UK Overseas Territories and to provide constructive feedback to UKG while it prepares its response to the report. In common with witnesses and the press, workshop participants were provided with embargoed copies of the report two days before the workshop, to allow preparation for the discussions. The workshop was designed as a contribution to the process whereby aspects of UKG's policies and their implementation are the subject of inquiries by cross-party select committees of backbench MPs. The standard procedure is that a formal response from UKG to the report of each inquiry is submitted to the committee within 60 calendar days after publication and is then published by the committee, sometimes with further comments by the committee.

UKOTCF is grateful to the Government of Gibraltar for again making its London offices available to host the workshop. The Hon Dr John Cortés, Minister for Health and the Environment, HM Government of Gibraltar, supplied a welcoming message, which is included on page 16.



The workshop was chaired by Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF's Honorary Executive Director, and Bruce Dinwiddy, UKOTCF Council Member, Chairman of its Wider Caribbean Working Group and former Governor of the Cayman Islands (below picture on wall, above).

UKOTCF was particularly honoured that the EAC Chair (Mrs Joan Walley MP), members (Dr Matthew Offord MP and Rt Hon Mrs Caroline Spelman MP), Second Clerk (Mr Nick Beech) and Media Officer (Mr Nick Davies) participated in the workshop. Mrs Walley and her colleagues started the programme by presenting aspects of their Report and its context, before answering questions and participating in further discussions.

During recent months, UKOTCF has enjoyed constructive discussions with new officials in several government departments. Workshop participants welcomed the presence of Mr Siôn Griffiths (Desk Officer for Environment & Climate Change Issues, Overseas Directorate, Foreign and Commonwealth Office) on behalf of Dr Peter Hayes, Director UK Overseas Directorate, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Mrs Clare Hamilton (Head of International Biodiversity Policy, UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) had planned to participate but was prevented by illness. Mr Razi Latif (Climate & Environment Adviser to Overseas Territories Department, Department for International Development) was unable to attend because of a prior overseas commitment. However, both sent their best wishes for the workshop and requested copies of the outputs.

Government officials present were not, of course, expected to respond to the report as there had not been time to consult their Ministers and develop a collective Government response – which comes later. However, all participants believed that a constructive discussion would be helpful to all parties, including Government, in planning their future policies and activities to build on the Report. To help such constructive discussion,



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

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations of the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee: Sustainability in the UK Overseas Territories

Summary

The Overseas Territories: Security, Success and Sustainability was the first White Paper to address the UK's relationship with the Overseas Territories since 1999. That 13-year gap between White Papers is indicative of policy drift by successive Governments.

During our inquiry, the UK Government expressed general but unspecified aspirations to 'cherish' the environment in the Overseas Territories, but it was unwilling to acknowledge or to address its responsibilities under United Nations treaties. This was disappointing, because the environment in the Overseas Territories is globally significant and comprises 90% of the biodiversity for which the UK Government has responsibility.

We found that the Government has failed to negotiate the extension of the Convention on Biological Diversity—the flagship United Nations policy on biodiversity protection—to the Overseas Territories. In addition, the Government has not ensured the accurate monitoring of biodiversity in the Overseas Territories. Taken together, the Government is unclear on what it is responsible for and why it is responsible for it. In environmental terms, the 2012 Overseas Territories White Paper was a missed opportunity.

Conclusions

1. Considering the environment alone—defence, development, communities and governance are also important—the international significance of the biodiversity in the UKOTs means that 13 years is too long a gap between Overseas Territories White Papers and indicates policy drift by successive UK Governments. We therefore welcome the publication of the 2012 White Paper. (Paragraph 4)
2. The UK Government is prepared to exercise hard and soft power in relation to financial matters in the UKOTs, but it is apparently not prepared to exercise those powers to protect biodiversity and to promote environmental sustainability. (Paragraph 12)
3. The four UKOTs to which the [Convention on Biological Diversity] has been extended have not been effectively included in UK biodiversity reporting. Compliance with the stipulations of the CBD is ultimately a UK responsibility. (Paragraph 21)
4. Without enhanced monitoring, Defra cannot accurately report to the CBD on the full extent of biodiversity in the UKOTs and therefore measure progress towards the UN 2020 target to halt biodiversity loss. (Paragraph 31)
5. The FCO cannot abnegate its constitutional responsibility to ensure that good governance arrangements are introduced in the UKOTs. Sustainable development in the UKOTs is contingent on their Governments implementing effective development controls, such as statutory environmental impact assessments for major developments and strategic infrastructure plans. (Paragraph 38)
6. Investing to prevent biodiversity loss in the UKOTs is a direct and cost-effective contribution to meeting the UK's international commitments under the CBD. (Paragraph 39)
7. The UK could make a significant contribution to achieving Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 by declaring new Marine Protected Areas around Pitcairn Islands, Tristan da Cunha and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. (Paragraph 43)

Recommendations

8. Defra must empower its staff to visit the UKOTs to meet elected representatives and civil servants and to examine environmental issues in person in order effectively to discharge their responsibilities. (Paragraph 9)
9. The FCO must prioritise greater involvement by representatives from the UKOTs in setting the agenda at future [Joint Ministerial Councils]. (Paragraph 10)

10. The UK must fulfil its core environmental obligations to the UN under the CBD in order to maintain its international reputation as an environmentally responsible nation state. The FCO must agree a timetable to extend ratification of the CBD with all inhabited UKOTs where this has not yet taken place. That may entail preparations in the UKOTs, which must be clearly timetabled. The FCO must immediately extend ratification of the CBD to all uninhabited UKOTs. (Paragraph 19)

11. The UK Fifth National Report to the CBD, which must be submitted by 31 May 2014, must include comprehensive entries on biodiversity protection in those UKOTs to which the CBD has been extended—British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Gibraltar and St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. (Paragraph 21)

12. The FCO must immediately contact the UNECE to ascertain whether the UNECE believes that the UK has extended ratification of the Aarhus Convention to all the UKOTs. We recommend that the FCO reviews its standard procedure for excluding the UKOTs from the stipulations of international treaties under Article 29 of the Vienna Convention and consider introducing a more transparent procedure. (Paragraph 25)

13. In light of the FCO Minister's commitment to enhanced transparency and the inadequacy of the planning regimes in many UKOTs, the FCO must agree with UKOTs Governments a timetable to extend ratification of the Aarhus Convention. (Paragraph 25)

14. Defra must restate its commitment to Environment Charters and use them to deliver its CBD commitments in the UKOTs. Darwin Plus funding should be linked to compliance with the terms of Environment Charters. (Paragraph 27)

15. In addition to agreeing a timetable with all UKOTs Governments to ratify the CBD, Defra must draw together UKOTs Governments, NGOs such as the RSPB, civil society and research institutions to agree a comprehensive research programme to catalogue the full extent of biodiversity in the UKOTs. (Paragraph 31)

16. Defra must work with UKOTs Governments on developing planning regimes which value and protect natural capital and which promote sustainable tourism industries and economies. Accordingly, the FCO must direct its Governors strongly to advocate the introduction of effective development controls. In particular, the Governors in Anguilla and Montserrat must prioritise the passage of stalled environmental legislation which, if enacted, would at least provide baseline standards on development control. (Paragraph 38)

17. Defra has increased spending on protecting biodiversity in the UKOTs since 2007-08, but a further step change in Darwin Plus funding is required adequately to address the scale of the UK's international responsibilities to protect biodiversity. (Paragraph 39)

18. The FCO must advance the proposition in negotiations in the European Council that LIFE+ funding should be extended to schemes that protect biodiversity in the UKOTs. (Paragraph 40)

19. The FCO must press the European Commission to build on the pilot and implement a permanent BEST scheme. (Paragraph 41)

20. We recommend that DCMS extends the right to play the National Lottery to UKOTs residents using terminals and via the internet. When this is achieved, DCMS should direct the Heritage Lottery Fund to accord applications for projects in the UKOTs equal priority with applications for projects in the UK. (Paragraph 42)

21. Defra and the FCO must complete the legal protections for the marine environment in BIOT by prohibiting all extractive activities. (Paragraph 47)

22. Defra and the FCO must respond positively to the Pitcairn Islanders' request to establish a fully protected MPA in line with UN Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 to protect 10% of the world's oceans by 2020. (Paragraph 48)

Welcoming remarks by Hon Dr John Cortés, Minister for Health and the Environment, HM Government of Gibraltar

On behalf of the Government of Gibraltar, welcome to Gibraltar House. I am very sorry not to be able to join you in person today, due to prior engagements elsewhere in the United Kingdom. The absolute commitment of Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar to the protection and sustainable use of the environment makes me particularly pleased that we can assist this process by making this venue available. You are all very welcome at Gibraltar House.

I have had a long association with the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, both previously in my then role with the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society and more recently in Government. I greatly admire its work in helping both governmental and non-governmental bodies in territories conserve their heritage, and its support of this including by facilitating links between them. This has been done by its series of workshop-conferences for conservation practitioners and several other means. I am delighted that UKOTCF has been able to provide help to us recently by independent research and other assistance.

We are proud of Gibraltar's environmental record in recent years. Our full compliance with international legislation, including European Union Directives, advances in energy and sustainability policies, full transparency and public participation in planning, and improvements in nature reserve management, all reflected in part in increased resources to our Environment Ministry, are a testament to the importance this overseas territory Government places in the environment. In achieving this, we value partnerships between Government, local civil society bodies and the links with others, which is one of the strengths

of the Forum.

I would like to pay tribute to the Environmental Audit Committee's keen interest in UK Overseas Territories. I enjoyed, and greatly valued the meeting that I and colleagues from other UK Overseas Territories had with EAC in November. I have followed also the interest the Committee has had in Gibraltar. We in Gibraltar are very pleased to be able to address successfully many of the conservation issues that we face. However, some have a particular international element, where constitutionally we look to UK Government for support. A particular example concerns our work in conserving the rich marine environment in Gibraltar's territorial waters. In this context, we welcome particularly the assurances of support in this regard made by UK Government Ministers in speeches at the Reception for the Joint Ministerial Council a few weeks ago.

I am very pleased that UKOTCF has worked with EAC to set up this workshop. This is very timely just after the publication of the Committee's report, and as UK Government starts to consider its response. There are real opportunities here and I encourage my colleagues in UK Government to make good use of the ideas of the Parliamentary Committee, and the ideas of NGOs and others brought together here. The last few years show that we all do best in conservation and sustainable uses of resources if we pool our expertise.

I wish you a good meeting, and look forward to seeing the report of it.

it was agreed that this report of the workshop would include ideas emerging from the workshop but would not attribute points made during the discussion to individuals or organisations (unless it was evident that the individual or organisation wished the comments to be attributed) – an approach generally referred to as Chatham House Rules.

UKOTCF was particularly pleased to have been able to arrange for several key environmental workers (both official and NGO) in the UKOTs to participate in the workshop. This was achieved using real-time sound and text transmissions via Skype. The other participants greatly appreciated these personnel making their time available and, in the case of the Caribbean participants, being at their desks at 04:30am local! In addition, UKOTCF welcomed in the room three of the UKOT Government representatives in the UK, also representing the UK Overseas Territories Association.

UKOTCF thanks all participants and others who prepared material, the Environmental Audit Committee Chair and Members for their report and the participation of such a strong team in the workshop, their Second Clerk for liaison and help throughout, the Government of Gibraltar for its hospitality, and UKOTCF's personnel for their efforts, almost entirely on a voluntary basis.

There are huge differences of scale, geographical location, constitutional responsibilities and human resources between Britain and its Overseas Territories. The population of all the overseas territories is 0.4% of that of the UK. Over 90% of the terrestrial and marine biodiversity over which UKG exercises sovereignty is found in the Overseas Territories. Although much further from Britain than the Crown Dependencies and the devolved administrations, all of these participate in international treaties and agreements only as parts of the UK. When issues concerning the Overseas Territories hit the headlines – individually (UK Government suspending the constitution of the Turks and Caicos Islands, the Air Access project in St Helena, incursions into Gibraltar's waters by Spanish vessels), or collectively, as with this report – it is not easy for UK ministers and officials, parliamentarians, civil society and the UK media

to take on board or to convey to others the significant special features of each Territory and its people. Nor is it easy for those in the UKOTs to deal with the lack of awareness and the misunderstandings that they often encounter when dealing with government departments, civil society and the news media in the UK. These comments are in part an attempt to minimize the danger of confusion that may occur when Parliament, Government and NGOs in the UK engage with each other over Overseas Territories issues.

UKOTCF suggested that the overall framework in which all concerned are working should be one of ministers, officials, parliamentarians, civil society and commercial interests, in Britain and in the overseas territories, co-operating to make the select committee system work to mutual and collective benefit. The outcome should ideally be improved policies and implementation enjoying widespread support.



Report of the workshop

The full report of the workshop is available at <http://www.ukotcf.org/pdf/News/UKOTCFworkshopreport140116.pdf>.

Below we reproduce the key points from the workshop for UK Government action

Environment and the UKOTs as a shared responsibility

(i) The environment is an area of shared responsibility precisely because only UKG has the authority to negotiate, sign and ratify international treaties and conventions. These are where authoritative expression is given to UKG's vision of "natural environments protected and managed to the highest international standards (White Paper 2012)."

(ii) Under inhabited territories' constitutions, it is for their elected governments to draft and implement local environmental legislation, as it is for legislation governing local financial institutions, taxation etc. It is precisely because of shared responsibilities that the 2001 Environment Charters express common principles and global values (e.g. the Rio Declaration) but differentiated commitments by UKG and each UKOT government. Without clarity over responsibilities, there will be confusion and neglect. It is not for UKG to impose environmental policies; but it has the responsibility to make sure that structures of good governance are in place in all the territories so that economic, environmental and social decisions are reached through fair, open and accountable processes. For projects with significant environmental impacts that means proper access to information, objective EIAs, safeguards and mitigation, in line with international standards and the Environment Charters.

(iii) No territory has expressed antipathy to the principles of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). There is every reason for UKG actively to help territories to which the UK's ratification has not yet been extended to complete these procedures (and to offer drafting support where needed). Extensions to uninhabited territories, which are directly run by UKG ministers and officials, could and should be completed within a few months. That would be timely evidence to the EAC that UKG recognizes the importance of the territories' biodiversity.

(iv) UKG has greater responsibilities towards territories with very small populations, those where it has been necessary to suspend the local constitution, and those where there have been major projects directly funded by UKG. We hope that the Government will reflect on the evidence submitted to the EAC of cases where UKG's focus has been on immediate investment and development, with long-term environmental sustainability treated as an option to be put on one side or delayed.

(v) UKG still needs to develop a coherent sustainability strategy in relation to the territories; and staffing levels (especially in Defra) and UK departmental policy documents need to reflect the global importance of their biodiversity.

The Marine Environment

(vi) UKG is already aware in the EU context of the importance of responsible management of the marine environment. The marine environment is widely recognized to be a huge resource for biodiversity and global ecosystem services; but also to be under huge pressures, from coastal developments, pollution, invasive species, IUU fishing and climate change. Encompassing coastal and oceanic areas ten times greater than that around the UK, the overseas territories' marine environment is rightly recognized as being of global significance and fully deserves the attention given to it by the EAC. UKG should make a positive early response to the proposed marine reserve around Pitcairn, even if this is initially without financial commitments. The designation itself would assist securing contributions from elsewhere. In several other territories, UKG needs to assist (in some cases using Royal Navy capacity) with enforcement of marine protection especially where foreign vessels are involved.

Environmental Co-operation between UKG and Civil Society

(vii) The civil society networks with the territories maintained by UKOTCF, RSPB, the Pew Foundation and other NGOs bring together people with considerable experience of working with government departments in both London and the territories. They would function all the more effectively with the resumption of the cross-territories three-yearly conferences which have been crucial to developing conservation projects and improved environmental policies in several territories. If UKG can give early support to another such conference in 2015, that will make it far easier to secure other funding (and enable UKG all the better to meet some key commitments under the Environment Charters).

UKG and Fundraising for Environmental Projects in the UKOTs

(viii) The EAC report points to a long-term solution on the National Lottery by opening both ticket-purchase and grant-funding to the Overseas Territories. This might take a long time, and there are shorter term partial solutions which Ministers should use in the interim to meet some of the most urgent needs without legislative changes. These include directing the Lottery bodies to give equal priority as for applications for work in Britain to projects involving UK-based bodies which support projects in the UKOTs.

(ix) UK Ministers and officials need to be as prepared as those of other Member States to lobby EU institutions in order to secure EU funding for UKOT projects, including the new opportunities discussed. Work is needed also to overcome at least two obstacles to securing opportunities for UKOT projects in LIFE+: an apparent requirement that projects assist the implementation of EU environmental legislation (which does not apply to UKOTs, except Gibraltar); and the possibility that the large amounts of time contributed by NGOs may not count towards the proportions of matching funds required for successful applications.

Blue Turtle Award 2013 – call for nominations for outstanding overseas conservationists

There are many examples of incredible work being done to conserve biodiversity in the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies by the people who live there. Most of this work is carried out without any blaze of publicity to show others what is possible. Government nature conservation advisers the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) recognise this invaluable work with the Blue Turtle Award.

The call for nominations for this year's award for nature conservation work undertaken by an individual, or group of individuals from an Overseas Territory and Crown Dependency is now live. The work or project should have been in place for a year, demonstrate innovation and have made a real difference. Nominations are invited from governments, non-governmental organisations, the voluntary sector, the private sector and individuals. The deadline for nominations is 28 February 2014.

The winner of last year's Blue Turtle Award was Brian Naqqi Manco, from the Turks & Caicos Islands (TCI). Working in nature conservation on the islands for the last 13 years in the private, public and voluntary sectors, Naqqi is deeply committed to his work. He has made a real difference to

local neighbourhoods, increasing people's knowledge about the islands' rich biodiversity, and educating communities and future generations.

The awards will be presented based on the following criteria:

- Nature conservation benefit/added value;
- Innovation;
- Community involvement;
- Linked to a specific project OR demonstrating long-term commitment and dedication.

Any individual, or group of individuals (including governments) from and working on an Overseas Territory or Crown Dependency, can be nominated.

All emailed nomination forms (<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/docs/OT%20and%20CD%20Award%20Nomination%20form%202013a.doc>) should be submitted to the JNCC Communications Team no later than Friday 28 February 2014.

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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