

# FORUM NEWS 51

NOVEMBER 2019

• [www.ukotcf.org.uk](http://www.ukotcf.org.uk)

## The Blue Islands Charter, and the Wilder Islands meeting in Alderney

In *Forum News 50* (June 2019), we mentioned the then forthcoming high-level Blue Islands Environmental Conference in July in Gibraltar. Unfortunately, after a great deal of work by our Gibraltar colleagues, this had to be cancelled at short notice for reasons outside the control of Gibraltar. A key element in the preparations for the conference was the initiative by Gibraltar's Minister for Education, Heritage, Environment, Energy & Climate Change, Professor John Cortés. This is a proposed agreement between islands and near-islands (whether states, territories or parts of countries) in a series of commitments towards protecting terrestrial and marine environments (see box).



*Initial signing in Alderney of the Blue Islands Charter. From left: Assistant Minister (Deputy Gregory Guida) & Minister (Deputy John Young) Jersey, Minister Montserrat (Hon. Claude Hogan), President States of Alderney (Mr William Tate), Representative Tristan da Cunha (Dr Stephanie Martin), Minister Guernsey (Deputy Barry Brehaut), Representative Gibraltar (Dr Liesl Mesillo), Representative Sark (Shakira Christodoulou), Secretariat UKOTCF (Dr Mike Pienkowski). Photo: Lian Camilleri, HM Government of Gibraltar*

Meanwhile, it was Alderney's turn to host the annual Channel Islands Inter-Island Environment Meeting (IIEM). The hosts, UKOTCF Associate Alderney Wildlife Trust, with the support of the States [Government] of Alderney, raised resources to make this a much wider and longer meeting than usual incorporating a *Wilder Islands* day, bringing in also some participants from the UKOTs. UKOTCF was pleased to help with the preparations for this.

Alderney offered to Gibraltar that the extended meeting, in September, could provide a venue for some initial signatures for the *Blue Islands Environment Charter*, and Gibraltar readily

agreed.

At the end of the meeting, the governments represented issued the following agreed statement:

### ***The natural environment knows no boundaries***

*Acknowledging that the natural environment has no boundaries, Ministers and other representatives from the UK family of small islands met during the Wilder Islands conservation conference hosted by Alderney, and agreed the Blue Island Charter. The Charter provides a statement of principle on a number of initiatives*

#### **BLUE ISLANDS ENVIRONMENT CHARTER: GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE PROTECTION OF ISLAND COMMUNITIES**

*The threat to the ocean is intrinsically linked to human activity in Island Nations. This Charter proposes that all Islands commit to the following principles:*

- 1.To control and reduce the negative impacts of the Island's activities on the environment*
- 2.To control the risks associated with activities on the Island*
- 3.To promote a rationale of continuous environmental improvement*
- 4.To factor the environment into every day practices*
- 5.To move towards a complete ban on single-use plastic entering*

*the Island and in particular the marine environment*

- 6.To increase knowledge in order to improve and communicate*
- 7.To contribute to the development of scientific knowledge with regards to Island Marine Environments*
- 8.To support other Islands through open communication and education*
- 9.To protect native terrestrial and marine species and habitats and enhance biodiversity*
- 10.To enhance terrestrial and marine natural environments.*





Above: Blue Islands Charter and initial signatories (except Professor John Cortés, Gibraltar Minister, and Major Christopher Beaumont, Seigneur of Sark) with secretariat and other supporters.

Photo: David Nash



Left: Major Christopher Beaumont, Seigneur of Sark, signs the charter.

Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

previously discussed by the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Environment Ministers Council as well as other islands. These stressed working together on common issues which we all face.

Some key issues which the UK family of territories intend to pursue include moving towards a ban on single-use plastics and, in general, controlling the impact of the Island's activities upon the terrestrial and marine environment. Crucially, this would be facilitated by supporting each other through open communication and education.

The various territories are also actively exploring the possibility of creating a joint biodiversity fund to support inter-island work. This fund would also be open to contributions from other parties, including governmental, corporate and private sources.

This charter demonstrates the will and intent of islands to work together for the benefit of all, to safeguard the environment and promote active collaboration on matters such as climate change. It portrays a level of commitment in promoting environmental governance in a manner rarely seen on a global scale.

The Charter is intended as a living document, and also will remain open for other signatories, and several other UKOTs and others have indicated their interest in joining. This Charter will be an important complement to the existing Environment Charters of UKOTs.

#### A view from Gibraltar

Gibraltar Government produced a summary of the meeting which has appeared in the *Gibraltar Chronicle* and elsewhere:

*An idea that originated in Gibraltar as the brainchild of... minister for environment, Dr John Cortés, has started its journey around small islands around the world at the Channel Island of Alderney.*

*The Government statement said "Islands and other small*

*territories largely surrounded by sea are important for the protection of the oceans, and these are particularly susceptible to sea-level rise due to climate-change. Recognising this importance, the Blue Islands Charter commits the governments of these islands, be they independent states, overseas territories, or parts of larger countries, to protect the seas around them and commit to environmental protection on land and sea."*

*Dr Cortés was due to attend the 'Wilder Islands' conference on environmental protection on small islands in Alderney to launch the Charter, but was unable to do so following the calling of the Gibraltar General Election.*

*He signed the Charter on behalf of Gibraltar in advance and Dr Liesl Mesilio, CEO of the Department of the Environment and Climate Change, took the document over to the Channel Island where it was signed by other islands present at a ceremony on Saturday [28 September 2019].*

*Dr Keith Bensusan of Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society (GONHS) was also present at the Conference, as was long-time friend of Gibraltar, Mike Pienkowski of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum.*

*Gibraltar, Alderney, Guernsey, Jersey, Sark, Montserrat and Tristan da Cunha have signed, and the Charter will make its way to other events and collect signatures, before returning to Gibraltar for a Blue Islands Summit to be held there in the future.*

*"Gibraltar continues to play an important role in environmental protection among the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, with John Cortés being co-Chair of the UK Overseas Territories' Environment Ministers' Council," said the Government statement.*

*Dr Cortés said he was sorry he was not at the conference. "But the important thing is the mission that we are spearheading, that islands and other small territories surrounded by sea become an example to larger states when it comes to protecting our oceans. Closer contact between islands and island communities are valuable, as is exchange of experiences and expertise in all matters, and in this context, on environmental matters," he added.*

#### Wilder Islands meeting

The weather was a little unhelpful before and during the meeting, creating some travel problems, and attempting to move Alderney itself to the category of a wilder island. However, Roland Gauvain and his team from Alderney Wildlife Trust showed their expertise in finding work-arounds and, even those participants delayed somewhat, agreed that the efforts to reach the meeting were well worthwhile.



Island Hall converted to dining room for the conference dinner, following its use as the meeting room. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski





Nearly the season! Not quite serious illustration of New Zealand's enviously effective quarantine regulations to prevent more damaging human-implemented introduction of alien potentially invasive species.

Part of the presentation by invasive-removal expert Biz Bell.

Original image: WMIL

Presentations and discussions on the two “usual” IIEM days of the conference covered a wide range of topics, ranging in the insect world from invasive hornets to conserving pollinators, and culminating with Dr George McGavin’s guest lecture *Where have all the insects gone?* Other topics included biological records, monitoring of bats and seals, reintroductions of choughs and white-tailed sea-eagles, eel-grass, rock-pool demonstrations for schools, reefs, sustainable fisheries, biodiversity mapping, connecting habitats, citizen science, marketing and publicity. A preview of wilder islands included presentation on Important Bird Areas in the British Virgin Islands and Anguilla. There were also workshops and, for the intrepid given the weather, field-trips.

On the final *Wilder Islands* day, presentations and discussions covered:

- Why islands and island biodiversity are so important globally and for the UK (Tony Jupiter);
- How we prioritise our response to the impacts of climate change on island ecosystems (Rob Stoneman, Rewilding Europe; Dr Glyn Young, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust; Dr Louise Soanes, University of Roehampton);
- The role of marine protected areas within islands in securing marine biodiversity (Dr Bryce Beukers-Stewart, University of York; Dr Jean-Luc Solandt, Marine Conservation Society; Farah Mukhida, Anguilla National Trust; Jim Masters, Fishing into the Future)
- Conclusions from the morning sessions, focused on the need for island collaboration (Catherine Wensink, UKOTCF).
- What roles should NGOs and government play in the response to climate change and biodiversity loss across our islands? (Dr Mike Pienkowski, UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, on cross-territory issues and the links with UK Government and other UK bodies; Dr Keith Bensusan, Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society, on an NGO view in a UKOT; Dr John Pinel, States of Jersey, on a view from a CD official; Hon. Claude Hogan, Montserrat’s Minister of Agriculture, Trade, Lands, Housing & Environment, on what politicians can and cannot do to help conservation)
- Conclusion of the *Wilder Islands Conference* and *Blue Islands Summit* (Andrew Muter, CEO, Alderney and Dr Liesl Mesilio, Director of the Environment, Gibraltar).

Overall, the meeting was a great success, UKOTCF’s Dr Mike Pienkowski commenting “*Alderney punching above its weight for the environment again.*”



Andrew Muter, CEO, Alderney, and Dr Liesl Mesilio, Director of the Environment, Gibraltar, present the signed Blue Islands Charter to the meeting. Roland Gauvain, Executive Director of Alderney Wildlife Trust, is in the Chair. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

## Gibraltar General Election

The General Election, referred to in the previous article, was held in October. The existing government (consisting of an alliance between the Gibraltar Socialist Labour Party {GSLP} and the Liberal Party of Gibraltar {LPG}) was re-elected for a third term. UKOTCF offers its congratulations. UKOTCF does not, of course, take a position as between parties in elections. It can, however, pay tribute to environmental progress made by this government over the past 8 years, under the environmental leadership of Gibraltar’s Minister for Education, Heritage, Environment, Energy & Climate Change, Professor John Cortés (*below*).





# Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease poses new severe threat to coral reefs in Turks & Caicos and potentially elsewhere

*Stony coral tissue loss disease is a bacterial infection, first identified in Florida in 2014. 22 species of coral have so far been identified as being susceptible, including reef-building corals. It is spread by fish (and divers). In the Turks & Caicos Islands, it was found in South Caicos in early 2019; by June, it had affected West Caicos and, by July, Providenciales, the main tourist island. It can be treated effectively with antibiotics, and the Turks and Caicos Reef Fund (TCRF) are trying to raise funds to undertake this treatment. It is clearly important to inform other UKOTs and Caribbean countries, so that they can be on the alert for its presence. We reprint TCRF's 7th August press release below.*

## TCRF Request Urgent Assistance for Control of Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease

The Turks and Caicos Reef Fund (TCRF) are requesting urgent assistance from coral-reef users and the general public in controlling the spread of stony coral tissue loss disease (SCTLD). As we have reported in recent press releases, SCTLD has been confirmed at coral reefs off South Caicos and West Caicos. We now have further evidence that SCTLD has spread to reefs on Providenciales.

We want all coral reef users and the general public to know that:

1. SCTLD is believed to be caused by a bacterial pathogen; therefore, it can be spread by direct contact from divers and fishers if precautions are not taken.
2. It has come to our attention that some dive operators have been attempting to help the situation by clearing away diseased tissue from infected coral heads. Because SCTLD is a bacterial pathogen, these activities are probably spreading the disease.
3. TCRF is hoping to work together with DECR [TCI's Department of Environment & Coastal Resources] to implement a plan to combat and monitor the disease, but we need reef users and the public to be aware of best practices to help control the disease.

Here is what you can do:

1. Report any suspected sightings of SCTLD immediately to DECR ([environment@gov.tc](mailto:environment@gov.tc)) and TCRF ([donstark@tcreef.org](mailto:donstark@tcreef.org)).
2. Avoid any contact with infected corals (they can easily be mistaken as bleached corals). Touching and removing diseased tissue will only spread the disease.
3. If you do observe SCTLD while diving or fishing (even if you do not touch it), please disinfect your dive and/or fishing gear before using it again. TCRF has acquired disinfection tablets and will provide them to you free of charge. Alternatively, a bleach solution can be used.

4. Avoid fishing and diving at known infected sites, if possible, to avoid spreading the disease, until treatment is underway.
5. If you have observed SCTLD while diving or fishing, do not get in the water again until your gear has been disinfected.

SCTLD is a highly infectious disease that affects more than 20 coral species in TCI. The disease has a known mortality rate of 80% in affected corals. TCRF has applied for a Darwin Plus grant [*since unsuccessful, sadly and surprisingly*] to initiate a comprehensive management plan to deal with SCTLD. When funding becomes available, we will be training all stakeholders in best practices regarding how to control the disease. Until this funding kicks in, we have reached out to private donors, who are providing funding for emergency treatment and monitoring.

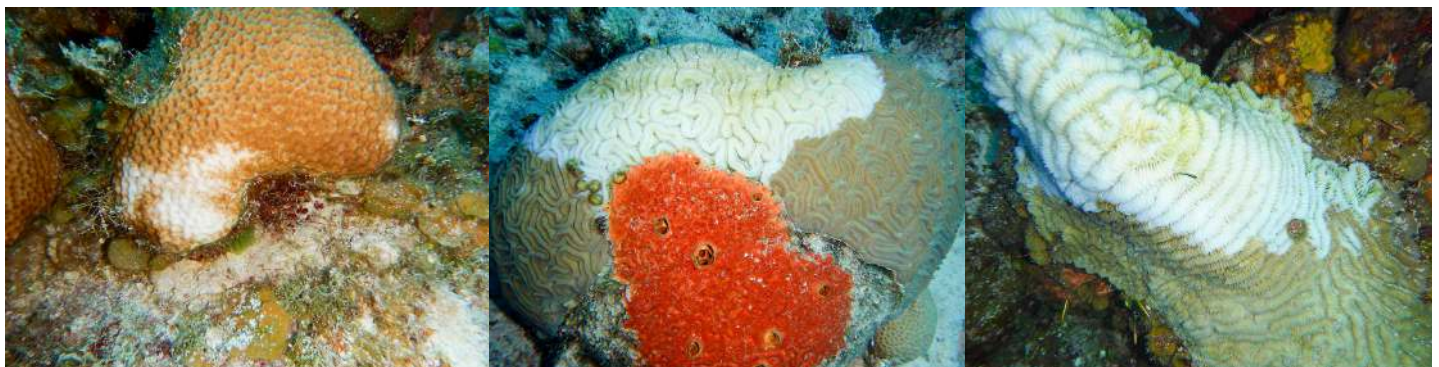
Alizee Zimmerman (TCRF) and Roddy McLeod (DECR) attended a training workshop in Florida on August 1 and 2 to learn about the latest treatment techniques for SCTLD. TCRF already has treatment materials in TCI and will begin antibiotic treatment protocols as soon as Alizee, Roddy and other volunteer divers complete a more detailed assessment of the situation. We are asking the public to report on locations of infections only. Please do not attempt to control the disease yourself without adequate training and information. We will continue to provide the public with updates as this situation develops.

We appreciate your cooperation in this matter, and please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or if we can provide you with any additional information regarding SCTLD in TCI.

Founded in 2010, the Turks & Caicos Reef Fund is the only active environmental advocacy organization in the TCI. It is an all volunteer-run organization that provides funding for education, research and conservation programs to individuals, organizations and agencies that help to preserve and protect the environment of the Turks & Caicos Islands. 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 programs.

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

*As Forum News goes to press in late November, we hear that TCRF still awaits TCI Government approval to help manage the situation, rather than just monitor it.*



Examples of infected corals. Photos: TCRF

# UKOTCF and partners at BirdsCaribbean conference in Guadeloupe

Mike and Ann Pienkowski visited nearby Guadeloupe, immediately following their visit to Montserrat in July (see pages 6-8). There, Mike (on behalf of Ann, Sarita Francis, James “Scriber” Daley and Catherine Wensink) gave a presentation on this programme (*photo to right*). This was very well received, with questions particularly on *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* and the *Montserrat Virtual Museum of Natural History*. It was obvious to participants from across the region that the experience gained by Montserrat could be very useful elsewhere.

In addition, there was much local interest amongst the hosts from Guadeloupe in the well-being of their neighbouring island of Montserrat, as well as the conservation activities that the presentation exemplified. Even the local simultaneous translator sought Mike after the session to say that he kept an eye on Montserrat from his home on the side of Guadeloupe facing that way, and his enthusiasm for what is happening in conservation.

The BirdsCaribbean conference also gave the opportunity for a rare physical meeting (as opposed to the normal Skype one) of UKOTCF’s Wider Caribbean Working Group. There was representation in person from four of the six UKOTs in the region, as well as UK, Canada and St Lucia.

Topics included the current review by UK Government of its funding for conservation in the UKOTs, and the importance of UK Parliamentary Inquiries. For both, appreciation was expressed for UKOTCF’s role in making these opportunities known to UKOT bodies and incorporating in its own evidence information from them - especially important as many territory bodies do not have



the time or resources to make their own submissions. Participants identified the need for a web-based facility to help identify synergies between projects, active and proposed. The existence of a module on UKOTCF’s existing website that had been designed for this sort of role was noted, and UKOTCF agreed to explore this further.

The need for identification aids for native and invasive plants for volunteer participants in conservation was noted, and several possible lines to follow up identified. Great concern was expressed when Kathleen Wood from the Turks & Caicos Islands described stony coral tissue loss disease. This is a bacterial infection, first identified in Florida in 2014. 22 species of coral had been identified as being susceptible, including reef-building corals. It was spread by fish (and divers). It had been found in South Caicos in early 2019; by June, it had affected West Caicos, and had now spread to Providenciales, the main tourist island. It could be treated effectively with antibiotics, and the Turks and Caicos Reef Fund (TCRF) were trying to raise funds to undertake this treatment. It was agreed that it is really important to get this message out to other UKOTs and Caribbean countries, so that they could be on the alert for its presence (see page 4).

Also discussed, at the request of the participant from the Canadian Wildlife Service, was the very different traditions in different islands concerning hunting of shorebirds, most of which breed in Canada before migrating to or through the Caribbean.

UKOTCF and RSPB noted the potential overlap of sites in Montserrat between the existing UKOTCF/MNT *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* initiative and a proposed new project managed by RSPB.

Also in the conference, UKOTCF’s Chairman accepted the invitation to provide a short summary in BirdsCaribbean’s Business Meeting of the highlights of UKOTCF’s work in the Caribbean in the four years since the previous such summary.



*Wider Caribbean Working Group Secretary, Ann Pienkowski, in front of a welcome rainbow at the BirdsCaribbean conference in Guadeloupe, July 2019. Work continued despite several torrential storms which flooded parts of the meeting rooms and a “wake-up” 4.7 earthquake one morning. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*

## New books on Caribbean biodiversity

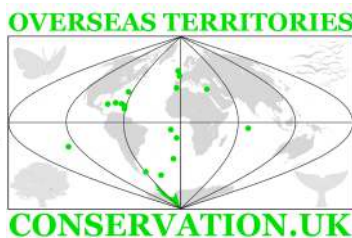
### Tropical Important Plant Areas (TIPAs)

The National Parks Trust for the Virgin Islands, in partnership with the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, has continued with the designation of Tropical Important Plant Areas (TIPAs) in the Virgin Islands. They had presented their work in April, and a guide book resulting from this work, *Retaining Nature’s Little Secrets*, was launched in BVI in the summer. An article about this can be found at <https://www.bvibeacon.com/20649-2/>

### Caribbean Biodiversity Report

A summary article by David Jessop (following the publication of the 2019 *Global Assessment Study*) on *The state of biodiversity in the Caribbean – A review of progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity targets* had recently been published see: <https://www.barbadosadvocate.com/columns/view-europe-more-integrated-approach-environment-required>. (For the 2016 review of progress in all UKOTs & CDs, see <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/implementation>)





UK Overseas Territories  
Conservation Forum



TREWEEK  
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

## ***Saving Our Special Nature of Montserrat: update***

As noted in *Forum News 50* (pages 4-9), the first two years of this current programme (see *Forum News 45-49*) of Montserrat National Trust, UKOTCF and the Government of Montserrat were supported in part by a grant from UK Government's Darwin Plus fund, under the title *Maximising long-term survival prospects of Montserrat's endemic species and ecosystem-services*. At present, the programme is not in receipt of outside funding but applications are being made to various potential sources. Meanwhile, UKOTCF and MNT are keeping the programme going at a maintenance level using just their own limited resources – because it is important to maintain the excellent momentum built up and support the committed and effective efforts of local partners, especially in the *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* component of the work. Dr Mike and Ann Pienkowski arranged again to spend a few days in Montserrat in July, to help with this.



*Dwayne Hixon discusses with Dr Mike Pienkowski the further work planned to restore wetlands at his Adopt a Home for Wildlife site in the lower Belham Valley. Photo: Ann Pienkowski*

As usual, time was spent with *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* partners, and one of these, Tim Orton, joined Ann and Mike on Rose Willock's Saturday Morning Show on Radio ZJB to describe the progress in conserving and restoring his area of globally threatened tropical dry forest.



*Ann Pienkowski and Tim Orton join Mike Pienkowski and Rose Willock at ZJB's new studios in Montserrat for Rose's Saturday programme, to update listeners on progress, especially at Tim's Adopt a Home for Wildlife site in globally threatened dry forest at Garibaldi Hill. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*

### **Montserrat Environment Stakeholders Group**

Governor Andy Pearce again took the opportunity of UKOTCF's visit in July 2019 to host a gathering of the Environment Stakeholders Group. After informal discussions, he introduced a session of short presentations and shared discussion.



*Governor's reception for Montserrat's Environment Stakeholders Group, July 2019.*

*All photos in this section: Annesta Fergus, Governor's Office*

Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF, first outlined current and planned activities in Montserrat involving UKOTCF. He stressed the long-term approach that UKOTCF adopts with UKOTs, to work out with personnel in each territory what they want, rather than starting with some plan devised elsewhere. The series of stakeholder workshops on the future of the South, and the agreed vision which resulted, were a good example. These local priorities then need to be integrated with the constraints of funding bodies. There are several proposals currently under consideration in this continuous effort. Between periods of grant funding, UKOTCF is trying to continue to give support to the strong local involvement in the *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* initiative. However, he stressed the need to secure funds to get a project officer in place again, also



*Hon. Claude Hogan, Minister of Agriculture, Trade, Lands, Housing & Environment, on his arrival, greets Sarita Francis, Executive Director of Montserrat National Trust, and Ann Pienkowski, UKOTCF*





UKOTCF Chairman, Dr Mike Pienkowski, (second from right) gives a short presentation to lead into a discussion. He is flanked by (from right) Adopt a Home for Wildlife partners, Dwayne Hixon and Tim Orton, James 'Scriber' Daley and (far left) Ann Pienkowski.

to relieve the pressure on management on Montserrat National Trust. Our current main proposal would expand *Adopt* to stress native pollinators; and would include more insect work by the Montana State University team, including on the Montserrat Virtual Museum of Natural History.

Later, UKOTCF, MNT and partners hoped to find resources to get back to the feasibility study to take forward the necessary studies requested by local stakeholder workshops which developed a vision for the south.

Mike then turned to the consultation, which would close that week, by UK Government on its funding for conservation in UKOTs. As UKOTCF has called for on several occasions, Defra (the UK Government Environment Ministry) has opened a consultation on the future of UKOT environmental funding. UKOTCF has encouraged partners to submit their evidence or send UKOTCF material to incorporate in UKOTCF's. The latter is based on the recommendations to UK Government of the 2015 conference, the conclusions of the meetings of the UKOT/CD Environment Ministers Council, UKOTCF's previous evidence to UK Parliament Select Committees, and other information supplied by territory partners, individually or through regional working groups.

Because UK Government called for evidence, rather than a wish-list, UKOTCF's submission is quite lengthy. However, some common themes are:

- to take more account of the priorities worked out with territory personnel, rather than favouring projects dreamt up remotely by bodies in UK, and thereby also reduce duplication of work already done;
- to be aware that projects which restore ecosystems or threatened species, and those which address building local capacity, require continuity of funding over several years, and therefore to remove the bias against grants which build on previous or current work;
- prevent the current favouring of marine projects from squeezing funding on terrestrial projects (where most endemic species occur);
- to be aware of the long-term relationships of NGOs like UKOTCF in helping UKOT bodies with limited capacity to develop appropriate proposals and to provide support, which (unlike those from external research bodies) include resourcing for extra capacity in UKOT bodies, such as MNT;
- to recognise that experienced NGOs provide, through skilled volunteer effort, extremely high value-for-money to the grants, but that grants are needed for this to be deployed;

- to reverse the recent tendency to fund UK Government's own agencies through granting programmes previously intended for NGOs and UKOT bodies;
- There is a clearly urgent and important need for UK Government to increase drastically financial support for the excellent work by NGOs and UKOT bodies which have achieved so much over the years, but which struggle to survive with the current dearth of funds, and the reduction of UK Government funding to one scheme (increasingly being diverted to funding other bodies). This contrasts with the many conservation needs, widely agreed – and necessary also to meet UK's international commitments.

These comments generated encouragement and support.

Finally, Mike mentioned the new small coffee firm (Halo) which had approached UKOTCF about its new product: coffee capsules with the entire packaging biodegradable domestically – unlike most packaging labelled “biodegradable” which generally requires industrial equipment for the degrading, or else applies to only parts of the packaging. This firm thought that this product might be particularly interesting for UKOTs because of these being at the ends of supply lines, limited disposal facilities, and high costs to export. The firm is looking for partners in territories to develop as suppliers.

Then, Luke Jones, Montserrat Mountain Chicken Recovery Project local officer, updated on the project and showed a short film on encouraging progress with the mountain chicken frog restoration progress (see below).

More informal discussion followed.

### Experimental release of Mountain Chicken frogs

UKOTCF and MNT are delighted that, following Tim Orton's joining as one of the first participants in their *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* initiative and with his continuing strong involvement in that, he has also hosted the *Mountain Chicken Recovery Project's* experimental reintroduction work on his *Adopt a Home* site. The early stages of this experimental work are described in a video now available in our series about the *Adopt a Home* initiative (<https://youtu.be/7KH6kqG6Vhk>). UKOTCF has been pleased to facilitate this project and its predecessors in several ways over the past 20+ years.



Mountain chicken in the wild, in the Centre Hills, before the accidental introduction to Montserrat of the deadly chytrid fungus. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

During their visit in July, Mike and Ann Pienkowski were pleased to be shown around the *Project's* insect-breeding facility, run jointly with Montserrat's Department of Environment, which provides supplementary food for the frogs during the establishment phases. Later Mike and Ann joined the Governor and his wife, to be shown around the frog release site by Tim Orton and Luke Jones, the *Project's* local officer. They heard the frogs giving mating calls in the evening – an excellent sign.

The experimental release was announced locally in July and the *Mountain Chicken Project* made a wider public announcement in September. The *Project* is a collaboration between Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust (Durrell), the Zoological Society of





A semi-wild enclosure for the frogs at Tim Orton's Adopt a Home for Wildlife site. © Durrell/ZSL

London (ZSL), Chester Zoo, Bristol Zoo Gardens, Nordens Ark and the Government of Montserrat. The team has released 27 mountain chicken frogs into a safe area created by environmental manipulation techniques.

Mountain chicken frogs are a species which is listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List. Native to the islands of Montserrat and Dominica, these frogs have survived hurricanes, volcanic eruptions and being hunted for centuries but were driven to the brink of extinction by the deadly chytrid fungus. Chytridiomycosis is a microscopic fungus *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* (Bd.), more commonly known as chytrid, and is believed to have caused the extinction and decline of over 500 amphibian species around the world. Chytrid reached Dominica in

2002 and Montserrat in 2009, and nearly wiped out the mountain chicken frog.

The semi-wild enclosure on Montserrat includes artificially heated pools that are uninhabitable for the chytrid fungus, which cannot survive in temperatures above 30°C. The pools are partly solar powered and regulate their own temperatures to ensure they remain hot enough to maintain a chytrid-free environment.

“Currently, there is no known method for eradicating chytrid from the wild. We have had to think outside the box and come up with a mechanism for enabling frogs to survive alongside the fungus in their natural environment,” says Dr Mike Hudson, who leads the project for Durrell and ZSL. “In this world-first attempt at using environmental manipulation

to mitigate the disease in the wild, we are hoping to not only make steps towards saving the incredibly threatened mountain chicken frog, but also to provide a model system that can inspire conservation action for hundreds of other species affected by the disease globally.”

As the project continues, the frogs will be monitored and tested regularly for signs of infection. It is hoped that this environmental manipulation technique will be successful and can be expanded to create a network of safe refuges for mountain chicken frogs.

There is more on the items in this article in the project newsletter: [SOS Nature of Montserrat 9](#).

## Montserrat booklet for children about litter and marine impacts

Montserrat's Minister of Environment Claude Hogan, on 14 October 2019, delivered copies of a new children's book on ocean care to students at Lookout Primary School. The Minister, who is one of the founding members of the *Blue Halo Montserrat* project, said the book is an initiative developed through the Commonwealth Secretariat's Ocean Alliance and the *In-Deep Project* in an effort to educate all about the need to reduce plastic pollution in the ocean. UKOTCF is pleased to have been one of the facilitators of the overall marine programme, in that several years ago it responded to a request from the Government of Montserrat to find help in marine conservation, after UK Government had been unable to assist, by introducing the Waitt Institute to Montserrat.

The Minister has now been immortalised as Claude the Crab in the new book called *Message in a Bottle*, a new illustrated book, which seeks to educate children about litter and its impacts on the marine environment. Deep-sea litter is a world-wide problem endangering marine life.

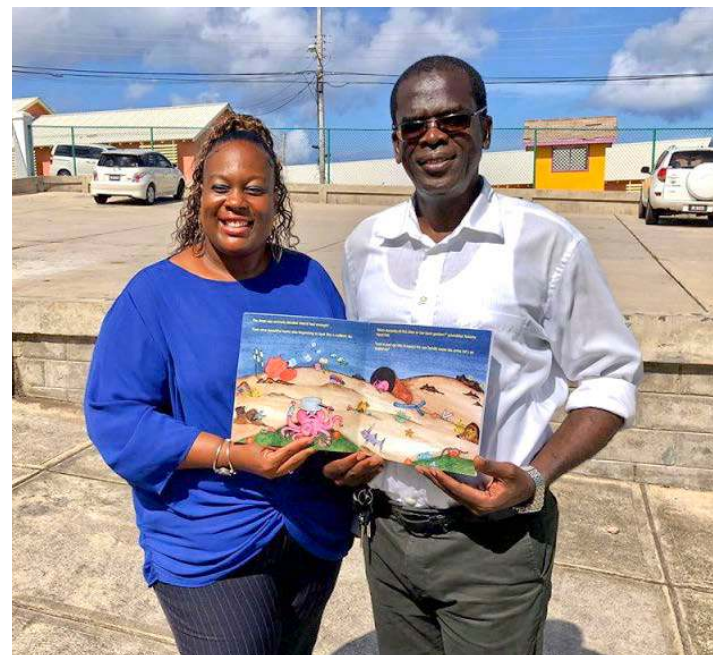
The harm caused by plastic pollution is wide-ranging. It chokes wildlife above and below the waterline. An estimated one million seabirds and an unknown number of sea-turtles die each year as a result of plastic debris obstructing their digestive tracts, and marine animals of all sorts can become tangled and incapacitated by discarded fishing lines and plastic bags. The effects of plastics carrying toxicity throughout the marine food chain is still being researched, with the implications for human health yet to be understood.

Minister Hogan said he was delighted to share the books with the students and the schools and he hopes the books help to bring further understanding of the environment and will encourage the

children to become future ambassadors of the ocean.

450 years is the length of time a plastic bottle can last in the marine environment.

The book can be downloaded at <http://discovermni.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Message-in-a-Bottle.pdf>.



Environment Minister Claude Hogan and Principal of the Lookout Primary School Denelta Weekes pose with a copy of *Message in a Bottle*, produced by the Waitt Institute. Photo: DS Media



# Proposed Cruise Berthing Facility, Grand Cayman – history and public engagement

Proposals for cruise-liner berthing facilities have been raised many times for years, and discussed, at the request of local conservationists, by UKOTCF, and especially by members of its Wider Caribbean Working Group. As UK citizens prepare for a general election generated by impasse over Brexit, citizens of the Cayman Islands are preparing for an historic referendum on the planned cruise berth facility in George Town, Grand Cayman, in December.

The proposal has generated concerns regarding social, economic and environmental issues. As a non-party-political environmental NGO, UKOTCF in this article concentrates on the issues which potentially affect the environment. For those readers interested in learning more, there is a great deal of information online, and <https://cnslibrary.com/grand-cayman-cruise-dock-facility/> is a good starting point.

## Background

Grand Cayman is one of the few islands in the Caribbean where cruise ships must still transfer their passengers ashore by tenders (small boats). Cayman had been gradually losing cruise-ship market share in the Caribbean region, and it was concluded in the *Strategic Outline Case* produced in April 2013 that this declining trend was likely to continue unless a berthing facility was constructed. Government took the decision to go ahead. An outline business plan in October 2013 recommended the construction of two piers in George Town Harbour. Government also stated that an EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) would be done.

The completed environmental impact assessment published in June 2015 stated that key ecological impacts would include coral destruction, habitat fragmentation and reduced biodiversity. There would be direct destruction of approximately 15 acres of coral reef, and indirect impact on an additional about 15 acres. Species impacted included two listed by the IUCN *Red List* as Critically Endangered (*Acropora cervicornis* and *Acropora palmata*) and four other species listed as Threatened (*Orbicella annularis*, *Orbicella faveolata*, *Orbicella franksi* and *Mycetophyllia ferox*).

Additionally, as well as during dredging and land reclamation resulting in increased sediment suspension, sediment re-suspension would be caused by ships' propellers and thrusters. It is well documented that corals are negatively impacted by extended exposure to suspended sediment concentrations.

As mitigation, the EIA report recommended that a significant coral relocation programme be designed and implemented, and that the famous tourist destination of Seven Mile Beach would be unaffected.

Huge public outcry has been generated by the government's determination to go ahead with the cruise berthing facility (which incorporates a small and arguably more easily justified



*Designer's impression of proposed dock*

improvement of the port's cargo handling capacity).

Scientific research on coral reef restoration has demonstrated that a coral relocation programme is unlikely to be successful. The Central Caribbean Marine Institute, amongst others, have expressed their concerns, and also noted a possible effect on Seven Mile Beach, which the EIA said would not be affected. The Department of Environment and the National Trust for the Cayman Islands have expressed similar concerns. Their statements and letters can be accessed from <https://cnslibrary.com/grand-cayman-cruise-dock-facility/>.

## Public Engagement

On 27 August 2018, a petition to trigger a people-initiated referendum (PIR) on the proposed cruise-ship berthing facility was launched, by Cruise Port Referendum Cayman (<https://cprcayman.com/>), an NGO created for this purpose. Nine months later, the petition was submitted to the Government after gaining the constitutionally-required 25% (5,292) of registered voters in support. The Elections Office completed the verification process, and Cabinet were obliged to set the referendum date. The referendum will be held on 19 December. The referendum question will be "Should the Cayman Islands continue to move forward with building the cruise berthing and enhanced cargo port facility?", requiring a 'Yes' or 'No' answer. The date, 19 December, is not only very close to Christmas, presenting a battle for voter turnout, but will also disenfranchise all those who registered to vote over the last three months expecting a New Year vote.

It is to be hoped that the importance of the electorate having their say on this important question will not be adversely affected by timing.

As this issue went to press, concern has been expressed that much of the information about the environmental impact and even the final business case justifying the controversial proposal will not be available until next year, after the referendum on it, and that the developers were trying to avoid a full environmental assessment. Conservation bodies are taking legal action to postpone the referendum until environmental work is complete.

## More than 10 years of work and consultation leads to new Cayman Marine Protected Areas... and terrestrial ones too

Earlier in the year, *Cayman News Service* reported that, more than ten years after the Cayman Department of Environment (DoE) began a scientific survey that helped outline what expansion to the existing marine parks would be needed to protect Cayman's

resources into the future, Cabinet has finally given approval for the necessary regulations to make it a reality. The DoE submitted its final recommendations to the inner government circle for the marine parks enhancement plan three years ago, after five years of



consultations, discussions and revisions to ensure all stakeholders could get behind the new plan. It has been waiting for it to be approved ever since. Now, with Cabinet approval, the work needed to implement the desperately needed protections can begin.

The announcement that Cabinet had approved the proposals and that regulations would be drafted was made by Environment Minister Dwayne Seymour during the royal visit in late March when Prince Charles was at the Botanic Park to open the Children's Garden. It is the first significant policy decision Seymour has made in regard to the environment since taking responsibility for it almost two years ago.

DoE Director Gina Ebanks-Petrie said she was really pleased about the announcement as she and her team have been working on the project for a decade, from when the DoE received a Darwin grant and partnered with Bangor University to start the local survey of the reefs. (This, in turn, was a result of the 2009 UKOTCF conference, hosted by Cayman, attended by John Turner of Bangor to talk about BIOT.)

The results underscored the pressing need for the expansion plan, given the growing threats to Cayman's marine habitat and the limitations on the original marine protections implemented in 1986, when the population was just 25,000 people and the tourism industry was much smaller.

The most obvious change that the new marine park protections will bring is the expansion of no-take zones from around 14% to 48% of the marine habitat around all three islands. The new rules will significantly enhance the protection afforded to marine life between the shore and the drop off, with no-take areas for marine life now called 'marine reserves'.

"We have increased no-take protections significantly on all three islands," Ebanks-Petrie told the press. She explained that, based on scientific research, the Department has done its best to mitigate the threats that it can control, such as over-fishing and diving, especially as threats they cannot control, such as climate-change and coastal development, are increasing. She noted also that expanding the no-take zones will make enforcement easier for the Department as the catalogue of different 'can's and cannot's' relating to seasonal size, species and other specific controls have been removed. This means that DoE officers will know immediately if someone is breaking the law if they are fishing in a zone without having to see their catch. But the DoE plans to increase the monitoring and enforcement, as it has recently hired four new officers across all the islands.

The announcement by the minister that the regulations would be drawn up to support the enhancement of the parks came just before the Prince of Wales himself spoke about the importance of protecting the marine environment, which he said was absolutely vital for our shared survival.

Ebanks-Petrie explained that this plan, which was lauded by Prince Charles, came about after years of research by the Department of Environment and its Darwin Initiative partners, Bangor University. It included discussions between successive governments, the DoE, the National Conservation Council (NCC), non-governmental organisations, other local stakeholders – including fishermen – and the general public. "We've been working toward these changes for going on ten years. I'm so happy the government was able to make this a reality for our people," she added.

DoE Marine Research Officer Dr Croy McCoy, who has conducted much of the work, said it was a modern science-based marine conservation plan developed by Caymanians, for Caymanians, local residents and visitors. "Should these proposals for enhanced marine reserves not have been implemented, we ran the risk of further coral reef degradation and, eventually, ecosystem collapse,"

he said. "With the increasing demands of our rising population on coral reefs, the quality of local marine resource management is pivotal to our economic success. This new network of marine reserves puts our country in a position to continue the high living standards we all enjoy."

The marine parks expansion will also increase 'no diving' areas, particularly on Little Cayman and Cayman Brac. "It was agreed that some increase in the no-dive zones was needed to continue to safeguard our dive tourism and the marine life that tourism product depends on," said DoE Deputy Director Tim Austin.

The specific areas governed under the enhanced marine parks system, once legally established, will be clearly marked with signs and range markers on land, as well as marker buoys in the water and displayed on the DoE phone app, SiREN. This technology allows boaters with a mobile device to check their location to see if they are within a marine reserve, line-fishing-only zone or other zone.

Once the DoE has made its recommendations for the regulations, expected to happen shortly as much of the work had been done, it will then be passed to the government's legal drafters. When the regulations are finished, they will be made public in the Government Gazette, turning Cabinet's approved plans into legally enforceable regulations.



*Sandy Point, at the east end of Little Cayman, showing the fringing reef and the seas breaking at the reef edge. and one of the ponds - both ecosystem types of great importance and needing effective conservation.*

*Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*

### **... and more protected area on the land on Grand Cayman**

Longer-term readers may recall the 7-year long epic of UKOTCF coordinating a proposal (*Management of Protected Areas to Support Sustainable Economies, MPASSE*) and eventually extracting from the European Commission (before the BEST programme) a major grant promised at the start of this period for Cayman, BVI and TCI. UKOTCF was delighted, as well as the direct benefits from this, Cayman partners were able to leverage a major new protected area, Colliers Reserve, in eastern Grand Cayman, for the Critically Endangered blue iguana and other species in globally threatened tropical dry forest. This seems to have set a ball rolling, and National Trust for the Cayman Islands (NTCI) has just been able to extend its nearby 647-acre Salina Reserve by 10 acres, purchased by funding from the RSPB, the Rainforest Trust, the Conservation Action Fund, the SAVES Challenge, NTCI members and the general public.

The land is home also to several endemic trees, such as the Endangered ironwood and the national tree, the silver thatch, and unique plants, such as the Critically Endangered Grand Cayman false foxglove.



# Major storm hits Tristan da Cunha again



*From Calshot Harbour, showing the roof-damaged Fisheries Department boathouse on the quay and, on the clifftop the Conservation Department Boathouse also with its roof largely removed.*

*Photo: Chief Islander James Glass*

Tristan da Cunha was impacted by a major storm on 18 July. There were no casualties but almost all communications were cut and many public buildings were badly damaged.

On 22 July 2019, the Administrator, Sean Burns, (who was off-island at the time) reported that the island had now forwarded the list of materials needed to start emergency repairs and the process has started. The company holding the fishing contract, Ovenstone, mobilised *MFV Edinburgh* to depart at the end of July, as soon as the necessary materials were delivered to it (but see below). The company had sustained damage to the factory on the Island and needed also to bring out their own equipment. Contractors for both government and the company would be on board, as well as the Administrator. Measures were put in place to convey messages, due to internet being down and the satellite link being damaged and very slow. The Acting Administrator, Lorraine Repetto, was interviewed on 5 August 2019 for BBC Radio 5 Live's "Up all night" programme, with the interview being broadcast at about 1:20am and repeated at about 4:20am.

By a month after the storm, on 15 August, it was reported that life on Tristan was slowly getting back to some order as work continued as normal for those who had no storm damage, while others were coping in their temporary workplaces. Phones were now in working order and contact could be made with family and friends away. Internet was up and running in the workplace, but the community had access only via the Internet Café. The television was not yet on, so people were still missing the news



*An upturned container, wall collapse (these black boulders are black lava blocks from the 1961 volcanic eruption, used widely for wall-making in the village) and the damaged Government Guest House behind.*

*Photo: Lorraine Repetto*

and other programmes. The children were into their second week back at school in new premises and were catching up on lessons they missed out on during the storm. The workers in the Administrator's Office had set up office in the Rectory, but internet access was set up only on 9 August.

However, weather had delayed the arrival of *MFV Edinburgh*, then expected on 17 August, so that team onboard coming to assess the damage and all the materials for repairs could get offloaded.

Chief Islander, James Glass, updated a previous report which mentioned that only one island house was damaged. In addition, another had part of its roof taken off as well, and other islanders had broken windows, water into their houses, and damage to their roofs, sheds and huts. James noted also that, as the electrical project a few years ago ran power cables underground, the island only suffered a short loss of electric power. After the 2001 storm, when the wires were run on poles around the village, island homes were without power for six days.

By 29 August 2019, the Administrator (now back on-island) reported that a survey had been carried out by a structural engineer, establishing that there were no major structural issues with the Administration, Post Office/Tourism, Police Station, School and Residency buildings. Rebuilding any or all of these would have been a logistical and financial challenge. That said, they were all in a very poor state, following the wind and water damage. Some will require a complete rewire and all need a total or partial refurbishment. This will take some months and, given the pressure on the government workforce, external contractors will be needed to lend a hand. The Administrator's Office was in the process of identifying and recruiting these. There were already quite a few materials on the island but more would be needed. In the meantime, islanders continue to clear these buildings of debris to enable work to start as soon as possible. Two teams of pensioners were giving invaluable help with this.

On 16 October, the Administrator reported that a Vodafone / Foreign and Commonwealth Office engineer had visited to check, repair and update the satellite communications equipment. The phones continued to work well and all government departments now had an internet connection. They were rolling out the internet to the community that week via a new wifi system. The small bandwidth was challenging, but they hoped that people would be able to get some connectivity. The TV and radio were now working again.



*Only the main girders remain of the 'Disaster Building' – designed to provide shelter on the Patches Plain in the event of the village being threatened by landslides induced by an earthquake or a volcanic eruption.*

*Obviously not storm-proof. Photo: Robin Repetto*

## Postscript

As this issue of *Forum News* goes to press, we have heard that, at the start of November, another major storm hit Tristan, with some of the recent repairs, including 2 roofs, again being damaged. The indomitable Islanders are restoring everything.



## *A Breath of Fresh Air* still in use 20 years on

One of the first two of our series of conferences for conservation practitioners was the *Breath of Fresh Air* in London in 1999. (“One of” because the first to be organised was the following year’s UKOTCF/Gibraltar conference *Fragments of Paradise*, but *Breath of Fresh Air* was organised by FCO, with UKOTCF help, at shorter notice - we have to get that right to avoid upsetting anyone!)

As part of the London conference, FCO’s organiser Iain Orr (now retired from FCO and on UKOTCF’s Council) arranged for the conference to be recorded by professional film-makers Judy Caine and Paul Balmer. With no budget for travel, so that they had to use stock film, Judy and Paul produced a video for schools, particularly in the territories, to encourage local discussions about some of the themes of the conference.

As well as a few shots from the conference supplemented by interviews with UKOT conservation personnel, they managed to include a small drama on illegal wildlife trade, an introduction by Sir David Attenborough and a re-recording by the Montserratian-led London Community Gospel Choir of Joni Mitchell’s pioneering environmental song *Big Yellow Taxi*. The video consists of 12 segments to stimulate discussion on the various topics, the total length being about 40 minutes.

This proved very popular, and we heard a repeat broadcast only a few years ago in one UKOT. Now, another use of the video has evolved.

Paul and Judy are still active in film-making, and do a lot of training work, especially with young people, via their company [HDMEDIACIC](#). They also run the 2-yearly *Big Film Week* at the English town of Corby, where Judy is an elected Councillor and, for a period, was Mayor.

So, in October, 20 years after the conference, Iain Orr and Mike & Ann Pienkowski found themselves in Corby, meeting up again with Judy and Paul after many years. The occasion was a workshop at the Corby Big Film Week to enthuse and introduce local people to plan their own short films on an environmental topic. After the showing of *Breath of Fresh Air*, small teams developed their own ideas for such short films.

It was really encouraging to see the interest of people, young and old, in the UKOT issues (despite film styles which must have looked a trifle old-fashioned to the youngsters) and the enthusiasm in which they went into developing creative environmental messages. It was also great that something developed for the UKOTs is serving a role also encouraging local action in Britain.



*Some of the teams developing environmental film ideas under the guidance of Judy Caine and Paul Balmer (standing) with a bit of help from Iain Orr and the Pienkowskis (in the teams). Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*

---

## Bermuda cahow spotted near Cape Cod, Massachusetts

The Bermuda *Royal Gazette* reported in October a cahow making an unexpected appearance off the coast of Massachusetts. Cahows, also known as Bermuda petrels, are indigenous to the island, but spend most of their lives at sea. The sighting was made during an offshore pelagic birdwatching trip to the continental shelf around 140 miles SW of Hyannis, organised by the Brookline Bird Club.

Jeremy Madeiros, principle conservation officer of the Department of Environment & Natural Resources, said “It is of great interest to me as it provides confirmation of data we are getting from advanced GPS tags fitted on adult cahows nesting on Nonsuch Island. This project was carried out earlier this year by two overseas groups of researchers, in partnership with the *Cahow Recovery Project* managed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. One of the first tags which was recovered this spring from a male Cahow nesting on Nonsuch recorded a 6-day feeding visit to Massachusetts waters, not far from this sighting.”

Jeremy said the tag had shown the bird had flown to Georges Bank, about 100 miles SE of Boston, over the course of two days. “After spending two days on the bank catching squid and fish, it then returned to Bermuda, hitting speeds of nearly 50 mph and covering a total of 1,600 to 1,800 miles. Being photographed and confirmed by groups such as this provide ground-proofing and

further important confirmation that this is an important feeding ground for our far-travelling national bird.”

Jean-Pierre Rouja, team leader at Nonsuch Expeditions which collaborated on the GPS-tracking project (see [www.nonsuchisland.com](http://www.nonsuchisland.com)), said: “We filmed the ground-breaking GPS-tracking efforts this past spring to be included in an upcoming film. The tracking results will be incorporated in the curriculum that we are developing with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.”

Once common in Bermuda, the cahow was believed to have been wiped out after British settlement. But the species was rediscovered in 1951 and has since been the subject of a long-term management and recovery programme (see [WCWG eBulletin 24](#)). As a result, the population has risen from just 17 or 18 nesting pairs to 131 nesting pairs, and the number of chicks raised every year has risen from seven or eight in 1962 to 73 this year.

Mr Madeiros said: “I think that, as the cahow population has slowly increased, and interest in oceanic seabird watching has also increased, we have been seeing more of these sightings. In fact, several years ago, photographs were taken of a cahow in Irish territorial waters over 3,000 miles to the NE. Despite this, the cahow remains one of the rarest seabirds on Earth, with a tiny overall population.”



# Assessment of current and future Invasive Alien Species in Cyprus SBAs and other UKOTs

This article is by Jodey Peyton, Oli Pescott, Kelly Martinou, Sophie Kamenou and Helen Roy

## Background

In 2017, the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH), with their project partners, the Joint Services Health Unit (JSHU) and the University of Cyprus, and with excellent support from the Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre (AEEC), were awarded two years of Darwin Plus funding for the project: *DPLUS056: Assessment of current and future Invasive Alien Species in Cyprus. Researching Invasive Species Kýpros* ([www.ris-ky.eu](http://www.ris-ky.eu)) was designed to increase knowledge on both native and invasive non-native species (INNS) within the UK Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs) of Akrotiri and Dhekelia in Cyprus.

Non-native species are species moved by humans from one region of the world to another, to areas where they did not previously occur. A relatively small proportion of non-native species can establish in the new region where they have been introduced, and some of these go on to spread and can have a negative impact on biodiversity, economy and society within the new area. These species are termed INNS.

INNS were listed as one of the top five global threats to nature in the recent Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services report. The estimated total

annual cost of INNS species to the British economy in 2010 was estimated at approximately £1.7 billion (Williams *et al.* 2010). During the last 400 years, INNS have contributed globally to 40% of the animal extinctions that have occurred (CBD 2006). Human health impacts of INNS species range from discomfort, nuisance and phobias through to skin irritations, allergies, poisoning, disease and even death. A common and concerning threat to human health is the increasing spread of vectors (*e.g.* INNS mosquito species such as the tiger mosquito *Aedes albopictus*) that carry potentially fatal diseases such as dengue fever.

INNS are moved around the world in many different ways and, by understanding these so-called pathways through which INNS are introduced, it is possible to implement action to reduce or mitigate the chances of these species arriving or establishing.

*Aedes albopictus*, a vector of chikungunya, dengue and dirofilariasis, spread into Europe and the US from Asia through the used tyre trade. Female tiger mosquitoes lay eggs in water in tyres (and other artificial containers), the eggs, which can tolerate drying out, remain alive. If the tyres are transported to new locations, and it rains, these eggs can then hatch. The adult mosquitoes can subsequently establish in the new location if the climate is suitable for them. Marine INNS, such as the predatory lion-fish *Pterois*, are spreading from the Red Sea into the Mediterranean via the recently widened Suez Canal – as well as having spread across the Caribbean, thought to be the result of a release from an aquarium



Participants in the horizon scanning workshop in Akrotiri in April 2017. In the background is part of the Akrotiri Salt Lake Wetland of International Importance designated under the Ramsar Convention. Photo: CEH



in Florida.

The risk of arrival and establishment of INNS species can be reduced through pathway action planning, increased biosecurity and monitoring. JSHU run a specialised surveillance programme at points of entry (e.g. the port and airport) in the SBAs, in order to be able to detect the arrival, establishment and spread of the tiger and other invasive mosquito species.

### The RIS-Ký project

We undertook a horizon-scanning exercise, with international and regional experts, for invasive non-native plant and animal species that could arrive on the SBAs of Cyprus and detrimentally impact biodiversity and human health within the next ten years (Peyton *et al.* 2019). Horizon-scanning is an exercise when experts in a field look ahead to try and predict possible threats or opportunities (Sutherland & Woodroof 2009, Roy *et al.* 2014). Over 300 species were reviewed, with 225 non-native species assigned scores. One hundred species were listed as very high, high or medium biodiversity risk and 125 species identified as low risk. Potential impacts on human health were documented for all 225 species. The Open Access paper can be found here: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10530-019-01961-7>.

In addition to the horizon-scanning exercise, the project team also undertook surveys in marine, freshwater/saline and terrestrial environments, to record both native and invasive non-native species in the SBAs. The project was very keen to share data and methods, and use collaborative approaches during the project. As such, habitat-maps, plant species occurrence-data and fish ([freshwater](#) and [marine](#)) information collected throughout the project are, and will continue to be, published on the Environmental Information Data Centre (<http://eidc.ceh.ac.uk/>).

A core aspect of the project involved capacity-building, particularly to enhance wildlife-recording and education. Throughout the project, we ran workshops on biological recording and monitoring needs and vector-management (with a *Code of Practice for Wetland Management* currently in review), with the support and expertise of the AEEC (<http://www.ris-ky.eu/resources>). We are also working with AEEC education staff to develop lesson plans around pollinators and invasive non-native species. Biological recording is vital for the conservation of plants, animals, and other wildlife, and involves (mostly) volunteers reporting ‘what, where, when’ in relation to the wildlife they find. Through a “bioblitz”, co-led with the EU COST Action CA17122 Alien Citizen Science Investigates (Alien CSI), we collected 1906 records of 495 taxa (by June 2019). (A bioblitz is an intense period of biological surveying, by groups of scientists, naturalists and volunteers, in an attempt to record as many as possible of the living species within a designated area within a limited period of time, usually several hours.) This was the first ever bioblitz on Cyprus and both created new records for a range of previously under-recorded taxon groups, and also introduced a new type of citizen-science to the island.

### Further work

Following on from the success of including an approach to assess human health impacts within the horizon scanning process, the CEH team, in 2018, undertook a UK Government funded project in collaboration with the Non-Native Species Secretariat to run horizon-scanning and biosecurity workshops across all the other UKOTs. This project provided an excellent opportunity to extend methods developed through our Darwin Plus project, to all the UKOTs. Our project team, with collaborators from around the world, worked with biodiversity experts from all the UKOTs to

develop priority lists and pathway action plans in collaboration with the regional experts and guided by the biosecurity teams.

CEH, JSHU and AEEC have a new Defra Darwin Initiative Plus Project: *DPLUS088 Addressing drivers of ecological change in Lake Akrotiri SBA, Cyprus*. The team will be leading a workshop in November where, amongst other activities, pathway action plans will be designed to help reduce the risk of arrival of species into and out of the SBA.

The authors are grateful to the whole project team and wider stakeholder group for help in the running of this project, and the UK Defra Darwin Initiative Plus for funding this study. This work was supported also by *National Capability* funding from the Natural Environment Research Council. The authors would like to thank also the SBAA Environmental Department, Major Glen Bullivant and Staff Sergeant Kevin Shawcross for their support in delivery of this project and the staff of the AEEC for their support throughout the duration of this and the current project. The authors would like to thank also Davy Reynolds (Environmental Adviser, DIO, Episkopi, Cyprus), for his input to the project.

If you would like to know more about this or any of CEH’s work on the UKOTs, please contact Jodey Peyton [joyt@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:joyt@ceh.ac.uk)

### References

- CBD. 2006. *Global biodiversity outlook 2*. Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- Peyton, J., A. F. Martinou, O. L. Pescott, M. Demetriou, T. Adriaens, M. Arianoutsou, I. Bazos, C. W. Bean, O. Booy, M. Botham, J. R. Britton, J. L. Cervia, P. Charilaou, N. Chartosia, H. J. Dean, P. Delipetrou, A. C. Dimitriou, G. Dörflinger, J. Fawcett, G. Fytis, A. Galanidis, B. Galil, T. Hadjikyriakou, M. Hadjistyli, C. Ieronymidou, C. Jimenez, P. Karachle, N. Kassinis, G. Kerametsidis, A. N. G. Kirschel, P. Kleitou, D. Kleitou, P. Manolaki, N. Michailidis, J. O. Mountford, C. Nikolaou, A. Papatheodoulou, G. Payiatis, F. Ribeiro, S. L. Rorke, Y. Samuel, P. Savvides, S. M. Schafer, A. S. Tarkan, I. Silva-Rocha, N. Top, E. Tricarico, K. Turvey, I. Tziortzis, E. Tzirkalli, H. Verreycken, I. J. Winfield, A. Zenetos, & H. E. Roy. 2019. *Horizon scanning for invasive alien species with the potential to threaten biodiversity and human health on a Mediterranean island. Biological Invasions*.
- Roy, H. E., J. Peyton, D. C. Aldridge, T. Bantock, T. M. Blackburn, R. Britton, P. Clark, E. Cook, K. Dehnen-Schmutz, T. Dines, M. Dobson, F. Edwards, C. Harrower, M. C. Harvey, D. Minchin, D. G. Noble, D. Parrott, M. J. O. Pocock, C. D. Preston, S. Roy, A. Salisbury, K. Schonrogge, J. Sewell, R. H. Shaw, P. Stebbing, A. J. A. Stewart, & K. J. Walker. 2014. Horizon scanning for invasive alien species with the potential to threaten biodiversity in Great Britain. *Global Change Biology* 20:3859-3871.
- Sutherland, W. J., & H. J. Woodroof. 2009. The need for environmental horizon scanning. *Trends in Ecology & Evolution* 24:523-527.
- Williams, F., R. Eschen, A. Harris, D. Djeddour, C. Pratt, R. Shaw, S. Varia, J. Lamontagne-Godwin, S. Thomas, & S. Murphy. 2010. The economic cost of invasive non-native species on Great Britain. *CABI Proj No VM10066*:1-99.

---

## JMC cancelled

The annual Joint Ministerial Council meeting between UK ministers and those from the UKOTs, due to be held in the last week of November, was cancelled at the start of November. This is a result of the UK General Election to be held on 12th December. This was not expected, as this is the first time that a British general election has been held in December for nearly 100 years, since 1923. It is hoped to reschedule JMC a few months later.

The calling of the General Election has also delayed publication of the summary of evidence received in response to UK Government’s Call for Evidence on its future funding for UKOT conservation.



# St Helena Research Institute

12th November saw the simultaneous St Helena and London launches of the St Helena Research Institute, by the Education & Employment Directorate of the St Helena Government. This was stimulated by the facts that St Helena is a unique and fascinating place and offers research opportunities that can be found nowhere else in the world, and a research institute can support, promote and manage research and researchers for the benefit of St Helena.

The Vision is:

A collaborative organization founded in St Helena, promoting and conducting high quality, ethical and responsible research that advances understanding, supports excellence in education and respects and protects people, heritage and environment:

The Institute's core functions are to support, promote and conduct research on St Helena, manage research data, communicate outcomes and ensure that research benefits the island, protect the resources being studied and manage the research licencing process for the St Helena Research Council.

The Institute has already put in place:

- The policy framework;
- The new licensing system (All new research now comes under the research policy and management framework, and researchers require a license to conduct research approved by the St. Helena Research Council);
- Set up its website (not populated at the time of writing but it will be at [www.sthelenaresearch.edu.sh](http://www.sthelenaresearch.edu.sh));



*The launch in St Helena. Photo: St Helena Government Press Office*

- Produced a business plan;
- Identified resource needs;
- Collaborating & developing partnerships.

St Helena's long-time leading botanist and conservationist (and former UKOTCF Council Member), Dr Rebecca Cairns-Wicks MBE, is the Coordinator for the Institute. UKOTCF wishes the venture well, both looking back over many collaborations over the last 30 years and forward to current and future ones.

For further information, contact [enquiries@sthelenaresearch.edu.sh](mailto:enquiries@sthelenaresearch.edu.sh)

---

## Some possible developments for St Helena air services

*Readers will be well aware of the many links, in various directions, between air access to St Helena and the unique and remarkable natural environment of that island. October issues The St Helena Independent newspaper (<https://www.independent.sh/>) carried various interesting information on the first two years of flights and potential developments, from which the following is drawn.*

Scheduled flights to St Helena Airport started on 14 October 2017. St Helena Government (SHG) figures show that, in the second year there were a total of 104 flights, making an average of two per week. There were 70 scheduled flights from Johannesburg, 14 charter flights to Ascension, 13 private flights, 5 medevac flights and 2 calibration flights. There were two flight cancellations in the 2nd year of operation, which caused passengers to be 6 and 4 days late arriving, respectively. In the first year of scheduled flights, 3,337 passengers arrived by air, and 4,188 passengers in the 2nd year.

*The St Helena Independent* reports that bits of government information are bubbling up to the surface about plans for another St Helena air-service. This would link existing routes between European destinations and Cape Verde with a new service between Cape Verde and St Helena. The Cape Verde national airline, Cabo Verde Airlines, which would operate the air service, has scheduled flights to Paris, Milan, Rome, Lisbon, Boston (US) and Fortaleza, Recife and Salvador da Bahia in Brazil. In Africa the current destination is Dakar (Senegal). In December, further destinations will be added, including Washington DC (US), Port Alegre (Brazil), Luanda (Angola) and Lagos (Nigeria). Then next year it is planned to add London Gatwick to the Cabo Verde network.

Atlantic Star Airlines are also involved; they are working with Cabo Verde Airlines on the proposed extension of the service from Gatwick to Cape Verde to fly onward to St Helena. It is also planned Atlantic Star will be the route manager for the Cape Verde to St Helena service. In an email sent last August

to the *Independent*, Richard Brown, Atlantic Star Principal, mentioned he knew Paul O'Sullivan of St Helena Corporation and Trade Winds, St Helena Island, very well. Also in August, the *Independent* quoted extensively from an exchange of emails with Paul O'Sullivan about his plans for St Helena. He said, "This latest acquisition (Horse Pasture) is intended to consolidate our position on the island, in advance of a capital-raising to commence the developments we have lined up. Together with our ambition to establish direct flights from Europe, we believe the island has a very bright future in terms of attracting tourism and investment." Pressed further on this O'Sullivan added, "We ... are serious about seeing such flights, which are still in the planning and feasibility stage. It would need a capital raising of about \$5million (£4.15 million)." It appears O'Sullivan is leading this project. Cabo Verde Airlines and Atlantic Star are also closely involved. What has been made clear is that negotiations between this new airline consortium and SHG have reached a crucial stage and much depends on important decisions being made expeditiously.

The schedule being worked on at present is an afternoon departure from London Gatwick which would arrive in Cape Verde late in the evening; a flight time of just less than six hours. After refuelling and taking on passengers from other originating airports, the air service would continue to St Helena as a night flight, arriving early the following morning, after a flight of about five hours. The return flight would be on the same route with the same call at Cape Verde.

The Cape Verde government have plans to restructure and sell the state-owned national airline. First, Loftleidir Icelandic, which has previously worked with Atlantic Star, entered into a one-year management contract to run Cabo Verde Airlines. More recently, the Icelandic airline took a 51% ownership of Cabo Verde Airlines, with plans to take advantage of the geographical position of Cape Verde and develop a hub and spoke operation with Cabo Verde Airlines, making Sal Airport an interchange point for flights to and





*Boeing 757 in Cabo Verde Airlines colours*

from North and South America, Europe, West Africa and maybe soon, St Helena.

At present, Cabo Verde Airlines use Boeing 757s; performance studies show the B757 can operate on the Cape Verde to St Helena route with more than 100 passengers and 1,000 kg of cargo. The wind problem at St Helena airport is manageable, the main cause of delays and cancellations is low cloud (the runway is 1,000 feet above sea-level). The 757 was first in service in 1981 and the last 757 was manufactured in 2004. There are still 664 in service with many airlines of the 1,049 Boeing 757s that were built; Loftleidir Icelandic has 29 of them. Being an older aircraft it likely the cost of leasing/operating the 757 will be less than for newer aircraft and this should be reflected in a ticket price which is better value for money than St Helena air passengers get at the moment.

At first sight, the proposed schedule and possible connections using Cape Verde as the hub appears to be a vast improvement on the Johannesburg set-up where the promised Cape Town connection never worked and all other links into the Jo-burg hub require an overnight stay in a hotel.

The afternoon departure from Gatwick would give time for people in most parts of Britain to make a same-day connection by car, train or domestic flight. The late evening departure from Sal Airport, Cape Verde would give the opportunity for people wanting to connect with the St Helena flight to leave airports in Brazil, United States, France, Italy and Portugal on a direct flight

to Sal Airport. Arriving at St Helena in time for breakfast adds half a day to any visitor's holiday compared with the present afternoon arrivals.

The idea of a two centre holiday which has often been mentioned (where people visiting South Africa add a week in St Helena) could make more sense if St Helena is paired with Cape Verde. People who choose to visit one Atlantic Island (Cape Verde) are more likely to consider visiting another (St Helena) than people who would rather visit Johannesburg or Cape Town and there are several similarities in the histories of St Helena and Cape Verde.

In the first three months of this year, 233,721 people chose Cape Verde as their tourist destination. The UK heads the list of countries Cape Verde tourist come from; France is in second place. The visitor country of origin pattern is very similar to St Helena's. Piggy-backing on Cape Verde's expanding tourism sector is more likely to bring faster and larger benefits compared with South Africa.

Another report from *the St Helena Independent* mentions a Government invitation to tender for an air services consultancy, with the aim of considering alternative or additional flight options on the lines indicated above. This follows persistent long-term allegations accusing DFID of deciding at an early stage to make the St Helena air service a feeder route into Jo-burg and not moving from that position despite other routes being vigorously promoted as more commercially viable and customer-focussed. The *Independent* comments that it now appears SHG, with the support of DFID, have at last moved away from that previously intransigent position and are prepared to consider alternatives. An air specialist with previous experience of working with the Airlink St Helena air-service has told the *Independent* the clear advice offered to SHG had been to encourage other airlines to operate flights to St Helena under the open-skies policy so that dependable information from practical experience could be used to provide answers to some of the questions now being asked of an air services consultancy.

## Some marine updates

### Britain's Blue Belt Programme – further funding

The *Blue Belt Programme* is currently a 4-year programme funded by UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office and implemented by two Defra government agencies, the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture (Cefas) and Marine Management Organisation (MMO): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-blue-belt-programme>. In July it was announced that £7m funding would continue the programme post-2020. It is probably important to note also that, while welcoming this, concerns have been expressed in some territories that an inadvertent consequence of the focus on marine conservation is effectively squeezing the already very low funding for conservation of the terrestrial environment, on which most endemic species depend. There are concerns also that the *Blue Belt* funding is effectively open only to UK government agencies, and not to the badly stretched NGOs and territory bodies which have done most of the existing conservation work in UKOTs. Sources within government agencies indicate that the restriction to spend within the agencies is because the *Blue Belt* funding is not new money but redeployed effort within the agencies' existing budgets. UKOTCF is not able to confirm this.

### Blue Belt Symposium and Ascension Islands MPA

The *Blue Belt Symposium*, hosted at the University of Exeter Falmouth campus, took place 29th-31st July. This formed part of a *Darwin Plus* project to gain evidence on the impact of marine protected areas around Ascension Island. A few weeks following the conference, the Ascension Island Government announced

a marine protected area (MPA) in the waters around Ascension Island. The MPA will cover 100% of Ascension's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), an area of over 440,000 square km, making it one of the largest in the world. Within the MPA, it is proposed that commercial fishing and mineral extraction will be prohibited.

### Human Dimension of the Blue Belt

In May, a one-day seminar on *Human Dimension of the Blue Belt* took place at Nottingham Trent University. St Helena National Trust staff attended, as well as several academics with a wide range of interests including social sciences, maritime law etc. Several links have been made between those working on MPA management and social scientists. UKOTCF was able to make some useful links here and facilitate others.

## Atlantic blue fin tuna and fishing

Local NGOs in Gibraltar have recently issued a press release on the taking of Atlantic blue fin tuna by recreational fishermen. The Atlantic tuna is an endangered species according to the *IUCN Red List*, on a par with the tiger. In Gibraltar, tuna fishermen are not regulated by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) because the UK is not party to it. HM Government of Gibraltar has not set sustainable quotas in order to lead by example in conserving the species. Local NGOs will continue to monitor this situation.

Several Crown Dependencies report that tuna have been showing up in their waters.



# BIOT Update: combatting illegal fishing, building resilience and boosting biodiversity

Helen Pitman, Director, Chagos Conservation Trust ([www.chagos-trust.org](http://www.chagos-trust.org)) reports:

## Illegal fishing in the MPA

The British Indian Ocean Territory Marine Protected Area (MPA) is a no-take MPA. Therefore, within its boundary, no fishing is allowed. In August this year, [BIOT Administration](#), supported by the [Blue Belt programme](#), MRAG and European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), led a [multi-agency response to intercept, detain and prosecute a Sri Lankan fishing vessel](#) that was fishing illegally within the MPA. Four tonnes of shark (silky, hammerhead and mako) and yellowfin tuna were found on board. Using intelligence provided, the vessel was apprehended by the BIOT Patrol Vessel, detained and, following a full police investigation, the vessel's master was fined £22,500.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) can cause severe damage to vulnerable habitats and species. BIOT Administration is continuing to increase its surveillance of the MPA and trial new technologies to help tackle the challenge of enforcing large MPAs.



Beach Clean June 2019. Photo: BIOT Administration

## Healthy Islands, Healthy Reefs

The Chagos Conservation Trust has set itself an ambitious and high-impact goal of eradicating invasive rats from all of the outer islands of the Chagos Archipelago, in partnership with the BIOT Administration. To do this, following international best practice procedures, CCT first aims to produce clear recommendations by early-2020 of the most appropriate and cost-effective method for achieving rat eradication.

A successful multi-island rat eradication programme will provide



Red Footed Boobies roost at Barton Point, Diego Garcia, 2016.

Photo: Jon Slayer

95% more invasive predator-free habitat for seabirds to repopulate which, in time, could result in an increase in nutrient flow to the reefs giving them the best possible chance for recovery and building their resilience in the face of climate change.

CCT's paper on the Darwin-Plus-funded *Ile Vache Marine pilot eradication project* has been published in the IUCN's proceedings of the international conference on island invasives 2017. The paper, with lead author Dr Grant Harper of Biodiversity Restoration Specialists, details the project that resulted in the first successful rat eradication in the Chagos Archipelago, representing a significant breakthrough for achieving a rat-free archipelago in the future (<https://chagosinformationportal.org/portal/publications/eradicating-black-rats-from-the-chagos-working-towards-the-whole-archipelago>).

## BIOT Biodiversity

Bangor University is preparing four species and four habitat Biodiversity Action Plans that will be completed by the year end. They will help inform BIOT Administration's conservation management and will also be made available as leaflets.



Short-fin bannerfish swimming over Blenheim Reef, March 2014. Photo: Jon Slayer

## Climate emergencies

In the last few years, there has been a groundswell of public protests around the world calling on governments to take action on climate-change. As of October 2019, according to [climateemergencydeclaration.org](http://climateemergencydeclaration.org), 1,143 jurisdictions and local governments have declared a climate-change emergency. Whilst this declaration is a first step, some UKOTs environmental groups, including those in Gibraltar, are looking towards how to take things forward, while several Crown Dependencies, including the Isle of Man and Jersey, are already moving forward with action plans and legislation.

Following a public consultation, the Isle of Man's Chief Minister announced that a Climate Change Bill will be introduced in the next legislative year. This commits the government and future administrations to reach net-zero carbon emissions. The results of the public consultations will be used by the newly established

Emergency Consultative Transformation Team to develop a climate-change action plan, which will go to Tynwald (IoM's Parliament) in January 2020. If approved, this will be used to draft the Climate Change Bill.

In May, Jersey's politicians voted to declare a 'climate change emergency' and commit to developing an action plan before the end of the year, in order to make the island carbon-neutral by 2030.

Gibraltar recently declared a climate emergency, with full parliamentary support. Schools have been involved in climate strikes. Since then, several NGOs in Gibraltar, including UKOTCF member organisation Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society (GONHS), the Heritage Trust and the Environment Safety Group, have formed a coalition for climate-change action. The core demand from the group are the setting up of an independent climate body to establish commitments and a watch-dog to make sure the commitments are met. The core aims are for action on pollution and waste planning etc.



# UKOT view of some consequences on conservation funding if UK leaves the European Union

*UKOTCF bases its submissions to UK Parliament and Government on the views that we receive from UKOTs and CDs, including to the Parliamentary Committee Inquiry whose report is quoted below. At several points in time, UK Government officials, meeting with UKOTCF, have made it clear that views expressed by UKOTCF, even though acting as a conduit for information, are perhaps less valuable as they have not come directly from UKOTs. So, we were rather struck by the an article on “Brexit could impact environmental funding for Cayman” by James Whittaker in Cayman Compass, 31 August 2019, from which the following is abstracted.*

Grant funding for important environmental projects in the Cayman Islands and other British Overseas Territories may be impacted by Britain’s exit from the European Union. With the prospect of a no-deal Brexit looming, Britain’s territories are readying themselves for the ripple effect. One potential consequence is the loss of a vital source of funding for environmental protection and research. The EU Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories initiative, known as BEST grants, currently provides around \$1 million annually in funding to Britain’s Overseas Territories.

The Cayman Islands National Trust and the Central Caribbean Marine Institute on Little Cayman have received BEST grants in recent years. A 100,000 Euro grant from that source helped CCMI fund a study to determine the movement patterns of lionfish on Little Cayman’s reefs in an effort to better manage the invasive species. Carrie Manfrino, founder of CCMI, said any loss of funding would be a major blow to the centre’s important research, including ground-breaking work on coral reef health and climate change. “We have urgent issues to address related to coral reefs, and a window of opportunity to address them. We have an incredible opportunity to do the work here in Little Cayman at the

research centre that many locations in the Caribbean do not have. It would be a major loss if we cannot compete for funding from the EU, which has enormous resources to [help] solve these big problems.”

She said CCMI was currently working to grow a population of corals that are more resistant to high temperature stress events – a development that could prove important to the survival of coral reefs in the region. “Losing EU funding for projects that will impact the whole region is a major loss for all of us, especially in the marine realm,” she added.

Nadia Hardie, director of the National Trust, said the organisation sought grants independently and in combination with other groups, such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. “We are greatly concerned by the potential effects of Brexit on our levels of funding and access to EU and UK grants on offer,” she said. “The Trust relies heavily on these grants to deliver key environmental programmes and conservation efforts. Without these we would find it very difficult, such is the need for funding, to have any real chance for success.”

Hardie said she was working on a submission to the UK government, which has put out a “call for evidence” from non-profits and other environmental groups in the territories as it assesses how best to manage any funding shortfall post Brexit.

The issue was first highlighted in a UK parliamentary committee report, “Global Britain and the British Overseas Territories: Resetting the relationship” [see *Forum News* 49: 10-12, 50: 11]. It states, “Some of the evidence we received suggests that the OTs’ ability to manage their environments and mitigate the impact of climate change may be hampered by the loss of EU funding, particularly the roughly £1 million a year the OTs receive from the EU’s BEST Initiative.”

---

## UKOTCF needs your help

UKOTCF’s only focus is on helping achieve effective conservation, environmental education and sustainability in UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. This has a great advantage in that we always follow the priorities of the territories for conservation, rather than having to decide whether their priorities or those from other places, such as domestic Britain, need our attention.

It also has disadvantages, too. Organisations with wider involvement have income streams relating to those activities, potentially giving some buffering at times when funding for UKOT conservation is limited. As well as focussing on particular projects requested by territories, much of UKOTCF’s work is coordinating across territories and pushing for their interests in with UK Government. Indeed, the UK Government funds for UKOT conservation (Environment Fund for Overseas Territories, Overseas Territories Environment Programme, and the Darwin Initiative’s earmarking some funding for UKOTs) all resulted in part from UKOTCF working with UK Government and Parliament. The same applies in relation to European Union institutions in the setting up of BEST, following years of lobbying by UKOTCF and its equivalent French and Netherlands equivalent umbrella bodies for their territories. All this coordinating work is not amenable to fund-raising, as most funders like to focus on local issues and particular projects.

This increased current difficulty in raising funds for non-profit organisations providing wide support for others was brought

home to us early this year. We were shocked when *Arkive* closed down due to lack of funding. This made available still and moving images of wildlife provided by photographers, and was much used by many organisations, including IUCN’s Red-List (which now lacks images). This loss of funding was despite the high profile of *Arkive* and its support by names such as Sir David Attenborough.

UKOTCF tries to keep its costs very low. Personnel work from home, absorbing office costs (thanks to understanding spouses!). Council members and advisers are unpaid. The Chairman works full-time for UKOTCF but is unpaid for this core work, and his wife donates almost as much. Currently, four others routinely donate large amounts of time to UKOTCF core roles, and many others donate time to projects. In addition, our small paid personnel donate extra unpaid time.

However, some things still need paying for. This was well recognised by UK Government officials in the early part of this millennium, when they recognised that UKOTCF provided support for UKOT conservation that UK Government might be expected to provide (and is done be some other states with overseas territories) but which it could not and still cannot, despite some increase by its agencies in work in the UKOTs.

However, at the time of the financial crisis, in 2009, UK Government’s average annual funding support for UKOT conservation paid via UKOTCF fell by 76%., and never recovered Although it is said that this financial crisis is now over, this funding has not been restored – and, in fact fell further, so that the decline



in UK Government support via UKOTCF for UKOT conservation has now declined by an average of 100%: zero in current years.

Of course, UKOTCF has looked, and continues to look, for other sources of funding – but there are limited opportunities in respect of funding for conservation in UKOTs and CDs. We are grateful for a very generous annual donation from a Council member which helped hugely in four recent years before that had to end.

### How you can help

Clearly, if you have links with funding institutions, an introduction would be welcome! Please contact Catherine Wensink ([cwensink@ukotcf.org](mailto:cwensink@ukotcf.org)) or Mike Pienkowski ([m@pienkowski.org](mailto:m@pienkowski.org)). However, even if you do not, there are several ways in which you could help:

### Friends of the UK Overseas Territories

Friends was initiated some 20 years ago, at the request of individuals who wished to contribute to UKOTCF's work. If you would like to join, there is a form on the back of this issue of *Forum News* – but most people will find it easier to do this online at <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/Appeal/subscriptions>. The minimum annual contribution has remained unchanged at £15 for some 20 years, but larger contributions are welcome, and existing Friends may like to consider an increase. Please note that, if you are a UK tax-payer, UKOTCF can increase the value of your contribution by 25% by reclaiming the tax you have already paid as Gift Aid; the forms include an option for this. There is also a version for corporate supporters.

### Other donations

Other donations are probably most easily made via our website (<https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/Appeal/subscriptions>) or contact Catherine (see above).

## What else do UKOTCF folk do?

As most readers know, most UKOTCF work is done by unpaid volunteers, with a little by part-time paid staff (who also tend to donate further time in addition). Our Executive Director, Catherine Wensink, currently works an average of 2 days a week and donates a further day. So, how does she pay her bills and support her two children? Catherine and her husband, Lau (who has management experience of the hospitality industry), have opened a New-York-City-inspired bar/restaurant in central Nottingham, Catherine's city of birth.

31K is named after an original stained-glass window, proudly displaying "31 KAYES", which they uncovered in the building, formerly occupied by TS Kaye and Sons, Toolmakers and Merchants at 31 Goose Gate in Nottingham City Centre from the 19th century until 1960.

Within the first year of opening, they won Nottingham Restaurant & Bar Awards 2019 "Best New Pub/Bar" and, in October, won Nottinghamshire Live Food and Drink Awards 2019 for "Best Drinks Venue".

In September, they opened a second venue called Yolk, a 'build your own' breakfast and coffee shop, next door.

Catherine says: "It would be true to say that the last 12 years working with the Forum has influenced a lot of decisions made within the business, although it's not easy! For example, our ways of dealing with waste generated: from oil recycling to an initiative called 'Too Good to Go', our commitment to using packaging which uses the latest innovation, and support for charity events such as Beat the Streets."

### Donate while you shop - at no cost to yourself

UKOTCF is a charity registered with [easyfundraising.com](https://www.easyfundraising.com). This means that, if you buy from a wide range of traders, a small contribution (at no cost to you) is made to UKOTCF. All you need to do is to register UKOTCF as your chosen charity at [easyfundraising.org.uk/ukotcf](https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/ukotcf). Then, when you are shopping, start at [easyfundraising.com](https://www.easyfundraising.com) and select your trader through that site, rather than going directly to the trader's site. There are various settings that you can adjust as to whether or not you want to receive emails from [easyfundraising.com](https://www.easyfundraising.com)

Amazon is no longer in that scheme, but has its own, *Amazon Smile*. On your first visit to [smile.amazon.co.uk](https://smile.amazon.co.uk) you need to select UKOTCF to receive donations from eligible purchases. Then, when Amazon recognises you, it will offer to transfer you to Amazon Smile when you enter their site. The same choices and prices are on Amazon Smile.

## Expedition to Henderson

Henderson Island, part of the Pitcairn Islands Group, is one of the most remote World Heritage Sites in the world. It is said to be one of the places most impacted by plastic pollution. Several bodies, as part of an expedition, visited in June to study this issue and clean-up for now (although, of course, the plastic will soon be replaced unless the causes elsewhere are addressed). Many media outlets picked up on the story as reported originally in highly readable style here: <https://interactives.stuff.co.nz/2019/07/henderson-island-rubbish-plastic-ocean-waste/chapter1/>. UKOTCF is interested to see that the unfortunate tradition of landing boats over-turning while crossing the reef – that its Chairman also experienced in 2010 – was maintained (fortunately again without permanent losses).

So congratulations to Catherine and Lau (and their partners) – and many thanks to both for help to UKOTCF well over the call of Catherine's duty.

31K, 31 Goose Gate, Nottingham NG1 1FE

<https://bar31k.com/>





# Friends of the UK Overseas Territories

You can also subscribe online at <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/Appeal/subscriptions>

## Four good reasons to become a Friend:

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

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

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

Name of individual Friend or contact person for Corporate Friend: .....

Company name of Corporate Friend (if relevant) : .....

Address: .....

Telephone: ..... Fax: ..... Email: .....

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

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

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

Bank address: ..... Bank postcode: .....

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

My account number: ..... Name: .....

Address: ..... Postcode: .....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Signature: ..... Date: .....

**Send to UKOTCF, Icknield Court, Back Street, Wendover, Bucks. HP22 6EB, UK;**

**if using options 3 or 4, you can fax to +44 2080 207217**

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

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