



UKOTCF's 7th conference on conservation and sustainability in UK Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and other small island entities

By Zoom

13th to 16th October 2025

Recommendations to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Introduction

Throughout our series of conservation conferences for UKOT and CD practitioners, the UKOTCF network members have been keen to reach conclusions and recommendations to progress conservation, rather than just learn from an interesting series of talks, posters and discussions. At each UKOTCF conference (from 1999) participants have been encouraged to contribute towards conclusions and recommendations. Some of the uses of these include, but are not limited to:

- Advising on UK reports to CoPs of international conventions etc
- UK Parliamentary inquiries and spending reviews relating to the UKOTs and CDs
- UK calls for evidence on matters relating to UKOTs & CDs
- Provision of briefings on UKOT/CD matters including to UK MPs, Ministers, officials etc
- Funding bids requiring background and scene-setting
- Encouraging funding from other sources
- Communications material based on conference (e.g. newsletters, blogs, websites etc)
- Informing UKOTCF's own actions and those of other organisations/institutions

Starting from a blank page at the conference would not make the best use of time. Instead, the conference is used as an opportunity to share work, discuss ideas and provide a critical mass of persons coming together to highlight progress and opportunities while at the same time providing a clear summary of achievements, future needs etc. Over the past 20 years, our conferences have evolved to meet these and other needs.

Through its own work, including working groups, meetings, projects, preparing publications etc, UKOTCF maintains contact with those working on environmental matters in the UKOTs and CDs between conferences.

For our last couple of conferences, UKOTCF recruited

voluntary teams, one for each topic, to draft conclusions for that topic. Copies of an evolving series of these drafts were widely circulated in the months before the conference and the comments used to refine the drafts. As a consequence, the final draft could be approved rapidly at the conference.

This year's topics were developed via consultations within the UKOTCF network over the last couple of years. The recommendations are grouped under the topics, in the order that we expect the topics to be addressed in the conference.

This year, we have streamlined further this process of developing recommendations, by having one team to develop recommendations across all topics. The drafting team includes UKOTCF Council members and other senior officers, together with others invited to bring in a full range of territories and wider expertise.

This year, we aimed to limit the total number of recommendations to about 20, and rather fewer addressed to any one category of organisations.

In June 2025, we circulated this draft to everyone registered for the conference since registrations had opened in April 2025, for comment. A second draft, taking account of all comments, was circulated for comment in early August to all by-then registered. A third draft, taking account of the few further comments affecting only small points in two draft recommendations, was circulated for comment in early September to all by then registered, and again in late September to all who had registered since the first circulation of this draft. The fourth draft, dealing with these comments, was circulated to all by-then registered in the conference booklet, in early October, over a week before the conference. No comments were received on this.

Confirmation of the acceptance of the recommendations was confirmed in the relevant sessions of the conference.

We thank the drafting team and all those who commented in any of the rounds of consultations.

The recommendations sought to draw consensus from

the conference participants involved in conservation in the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, but it should be noted that not all points apply to all Territories, such is the diversity among the Territories and the unique challenges they face, in addition to those shared. In all cases, the recommendations are just that, from a gathering of experienced, informed and concerned persons and organisations. We try to indicate to whom each recommendation is directed, whether this be UK Government, territory governments, NGOs, funding bodies or others. Clearly, they are not binding on any of these bodies, even where the body concerned has personnel participating in the conference.

In this document, 'UKOTs' means UK Overseas Territories, 'CDs' means Crown Dependencies, and 'territories' means UKOTs & CDs. The main target-type of each recommendation is in bold italics.

Recommendations to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Below are just those 11 recommendations which are directed, at least partly, to NGOs.

Main topic 1: Sharing Experiences across territories

A. Territories are advised to learn lessons from each other in techniques for conservation, and to develop closer conservation-based relationships with neighbouring countries – to encourage shared learning and technical exchanges. [*Conservation workers and authorities in Territories*]

Topic 3: Achieving Biodiversity & Sustainability targets

E. Any project should have a range of targets, including those which are specific to project outcomes, but which also prompt the organisation to ensure that delivery is being achieved, funding is sufficient, that policies are appropriate and that senior management has a stake in the outcome. Targets should be ambitious, but achievable without overly relying on factors outside of the control of the practitioner. Where partnerships exist, targets should assign clear responsibility to the person(s) or organisation(s) who are responsible for delivery. Appropriate budgets (where applicable) should be set, over a multi-year time-scale (when long-term targets are set) to ensure delivery over an extended period of time. Funding for staff must be sufficient to ensure longevity and continuity of staff through the duration of the targets. This ensures that projects do not fail due to poor planning and resource-provision. [Project-managers and their senior colleagues]

J. Island and ecosystem restoration programmes should be highlighted as currently one of the most important conservation measures. It should also be highlighted that effective restoration can be extremely complex and requires a long-term commitment of funding, staff-capacity, resources and monitoring. [*Conservation-managers, NGOs and governments*]

Topic 5: Using technology and data to guide conservation

K. Conference notes some Territories' success in using technology to overcome some challenges in conservation, including: remote sensing, satellite-imagery and drones, particularly with the addition of multispectral image-processing to help management of protected areas, including identification of land-clearance monitoring and ecosystem-health (e.g. spread of invasive species or plant-disease); and DNA to identify unknown plant-species. Environmental DNA (eDNA) and bioacoustic surveys have the potential to be useful in conducting more routine biodiversity-monitoring or biosecurity-surveillance. [*Territory governments and NGO land-managers*]

L. Conference notes successes in the deployment of conservation detection dogs across the UKOTs, expanding on work started in South Georgia. Uses include avoiding arrival of invasive species, and finding nest-sites of critically endangered species, such as rock iguana and sea turtles (in Cayman) so that hatchlings can be placed in protected facilities until mature enough to resist predation. Thermal drones are also a new technology that can assist with tracking animals, particularly those that form colonies – but in hot countries there are challenges with the heat-signals and the ground temperature, so more work in this area is needed.

[*Conservation-managers*]

M. Use of combined approaches gets the most out of available data, showing the value of sharing data and technical expertise to add value to analyses and give long-term benefits. Technological advancements make more accessible novel approaches, such as genomic tools and spatial modelling. Care should be taken when introducing novel techniques as they may be complementary to traditional monitoring rather than a replacement methodology. Side-by-side validation can help determine whether new technology provides consistent results in long-term monitoring. [*Conservation-managers*]

Topic 6: Identifying and preparing for future challenges and opportunities

N. Horizon-scanning for potential known and novel threats has been undertaken and may continue to be useful for governments and NGOs [*Territory governments and NGOs*]

O. Knowledge-sharing of current problems, future risks and support opportunities between governments and with NGOs and neighbouring countries is essential to learn from experience and best practice. [*Territory governments and NGOs*]

Topic 7: Resourcing Conservation

V. Corporate businesses and conservation NGOs are encouraged to use tools for example, EcoMatch, so that environmental, social, and governance (ESG) commitments can be met by effective conservation

actions in support of the most internationally important biodiversity for which UK and its Territories are responsible. *[Corporate businesses and conservation NGOs]*

W. Generating revenue from services has potential - park rentals for events, filming and photography, and a range of products and merchandise, including clothing, water-bags, stuffed toys etc. Branding items also market the organisation's image and unique species and habitats.

[Territory NGOs]

X. Conference advises all to remain alert to the pressures on ministers and officials in those several territories whose main source of government income is from taxes accruing from the built development of land; and that this can be a perverse incentive against implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and environmental conservation, despite the natural environment being a key asset supporting the economies. *[UK and Territory Governments and NGOs]*

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