



# 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 UK Government

### 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 UK Government**

*Below are just those 11 recommendations which are directed, at least partly, to UK Government*

### **Main topic 1: Sharing Experiences across territories**

B. NGOs and their networks are important to UK Government because they help deliver its international commitments, through expert help with some issues that UK Government may lack the capacity to address alone. FCDO is advised to re-strengthen its relationship with NGOs and partners working with the UKOTs, including UKOTCF which, for example, it used to invite, alongside other territory and umbrella bodies, to brief Governors-designate and FCDO’s own personnel, and to networking events such as linked to the annual Joint Ministerial Council. **[UK Government]**

### **Topic 3: Achieving Biodiversity & Sustainability targets**

C. Conference asks UK Government: to ensure that it consults official and NGO bodies in the UKOTs and CDs at the start in planning conservation policies, rather than at the end when positions are already firm and time short; and to invite and support UKOT and CD representation as part of UK delegations to COPs. **[UK Government]**

D. Policy mechanisms that recognise formally, and incorporate, local expertise and community-generated data into environmental governance frameworks, ensuring that conservation actions are contextually appropriate and socially inclusive, should be supported. Biodiversity and sustainability targets should be clear, concise, meaningful, tailored to the situation, but be mindful of broader, international targets. When governments develop new policy, whether Multilateral Environmental Agreements or Local Biodiversity Action Plans, accurate targets can help to ensure that the policy delivers what it is intended to do, and fit-for-purpose monitoring protocols are needed also. Policy development should consider also the reporting

requirements as most territories have little capacity for lengthy and time-consuming reporting. **[UK & Territory Governments]**

G. UK and Territory governments should provide the financial resources and other support necessary to acquire good data and maintain good records of species, habitats, threats and applied conservation work in the Territories. **[UK and Territory governments]**

I. Our Territories are so small that blue-carbon has been seen to be a better option than some others, but quantifying suitable areas through mapping projects is required first and then there is the need for ongoing monitoring to assure that these sites are still performing as suitable blue-carbon sites – so resources must be allocated to this. **[UK & Territory Governments]**

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 6: Identifying and preparing for future challenges and opportunities**

P. Emergency funding for active responses to critical threats, whether from invasive non-native species, natural disasters and or human or animal pathogens should be identified and provided ahead of any real-time issues or in the immediate aftermath. Known challenges, e.g. resilience to sea-level rise, and adaptation to extreme heat-events, such as the impacts of climate-change, must be addressed before they reach problematic levels. **[UK & territory governments]**

### **Topic 7: Resourcing Conservation**

S. As agreed in the Environment Charters, the UK Government must support the UKOTs in: joining UK’s ratification of international environmental agreements protecting species and ecosystems; reaching international targets for biodiversity including the Global Biodiversity Framework Targets (GBF) and the Sustainable Development Goals in UKOTs and CDs; the designation and management of Ramsar Convention Wetlands of International Importance and World Heritage Sites; and in shared high ambitions in combating and adapting to climate-change. Attention is drawn to the inability of CDs to benefit from UK-sourced funding. **[UK Government]**

T. Conference asks that both the Darwin Plus and Blue Belt funding programmes be maintained (the latter with increased open access by non-government organisations that provide so much technical and practical support) as, without these, nature conservation in the UKOTs would be extremely restricted. Even with the maintenance of these schemes, sources of conservation funding for the UKOTs remain limited compared to the UK. Therefore, Conference also strongly recommends: the establishment of an equivalent “Green-Dot” funding scheme for the

conservation of terrestrial wildlife (which includes most UKOT endemics); open access to Lottery funding for UKOT conservation projects; and exploring opportunities to support research through UK Research Institute (UKRI) funding. **[UK Government]**

U. UK Government is asked to reduce bureaucracy in the environmental project application process and make some criteria less rigid to take account of the very different situations of the UKOTs. UK Government is also asked to extend support for building on projects that are proving successful, rather than requiring funded projects to be totally innovative. Also, territories have pointed out that the time-limit of one year, or less, of Darwin Local grants does not allow for the time-scales needed for decisions in UKOTs (many of which follow UK slow practices of former decades). A restoration is needed of support for umbrella and networking bodies of which UKOT and CD bodies are members/associates, e.g. by funding conferences organised by umbrella bodies as well as crucial networking (on par with EU COST actions and to which UKOTs now have limited access). **[UK Government]**

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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