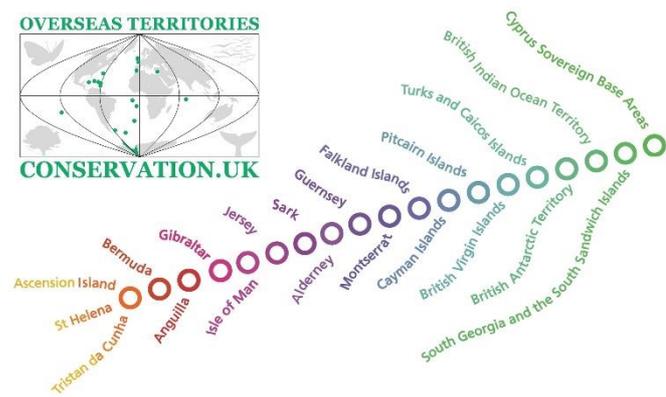
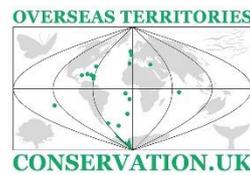


**Council of Environment Ministers  
(or equivalents) of  
UK Overseas Territories  
and Crown Dependencies:  
10<sup>th</sup> meeting,  
Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026**

**Zoom hosting by:  
UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum  
(UKOTCF)**



**Council of Environment Ministers (or equivalents) of UK Overseas Territories and  
Crown Dependencies: 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026, by Zoom  
Statement**

1. We, the portfolio holders for the environment in our respective territories or dependencies, held our tenth Environment Ministers' Council meeting by Zoom on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026. We continue to fulfil the role recognised by the November 2017 Joint Ministerial Council, which emphasised the importance of meetings of environment ministers in work on environmental management and climate-change issues.
2. The UKOTs boast some of the world's most delicate and complex ecosystems and habitats, with at least 3,300 species which occur nowhere else in the world. Collectively, they harbour a truly staggering amount of biodiversity, which in turn provides them with many goods and services (e.g. fishing, tourism, storm-protection, carbon-capture). In terms of endemic species (i.e. those occurring nowhere else), proportions of other species supported, sensitive ecosystems and threatened species, they hold even greater importance than that of the metropolitan UK. In fact, an estimated 94% of the biodiversity for which UK is internationally responsible is in the UKOTs, rather than in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
3. We confirm our commitment to conserve our environmental capital, and, recognising its global importance, some territories have chosen to be included in UK's ratification of international environmental agreements. We share with the UK a partnership approach to integrating environmental considerations in government decision-making, marked in the case of most Overseas Territories by individual Environment Charters as envisaged in the 1999 White Paper *Partnership for Progress and Prosperity*, on which the 2012 White Paper *The Overseas Territories: Security, Success and Sustainability* is explicitly built. The approach is shared by other territories and dependencies through their commitment to the international agreements in which they are included. The Territories are vital to the delivery of UK's global environmental promises.

**4.** We recognise that Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies have materially different relationships with the UK and we further recognise that there are differences between Overseas Territories. These differences are particularly reflected in approaches to funding, which we recognise in our consideration of future aspirations, expectations and obligations. But for all of us, particularly in the light of the major challenges noted above, funding remains the key issue. External funding for initiatives to tackle the priorities we identified in previous meetings, such as unsustainable development, invasive species and the impacts of climate-change, remains a challenge. For some of us, the EU was a source of considerable funds for project work, technical advice and infrastructure development – until Brexit. In this context, we are concerned that the principal UK Government funding mechanism for conservation in the UK Overseas Territories, Darwin Plus, did not make its usually annual call for applications in 2025 and no announcement has yet been made in respect of funding in 2026 or later. Such funding is essential if UK Government's recently published UKOT Bioersity Strategy is to have meaning, and we urge UK Government to reinstate fully this vital fund in the immediate future.

**5.** Whilst funding from other sources will not cover needs without Darwin Plus or a comparable successor UK Government fund, we welcome and encourage other initiatives, notably UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum's EcoMatch, which seeks to match non-governmental conservation bodies in the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies with funding needs with corporate firms and foundations who wish to help in this respect. We encourage all parties to use this platform. It was noted that the Crown Dependency of Guernsey has already, since the announcement of EcoMatch, partnered with its local Nature Commission to deliver the Nature Opportunities for Businesses, which mirrors the spirit and aims of EcoMatch, and welcomes the international roll-out of the initiative. We welcomed also a presentation from Lloyds Bank on the involvement, with others in the financial sector, in a long-term initiative started in the Isle of Man to restore the globally threatened ecosystem of temperate rain-forest, and welcomed potential support for conservation by Lloyds Bank and others in the Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories. We welcomed the presentation from Sustainable Futures at Atkins Réalis on climate-finance routes open to Overseas Territories and requested that information be made available to Crown Dependencies, while noting that the UK governmental systems on this would not be available to these.

**6.** We again recall our governments' commitments to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development by choosing to be included in various international environmental agreements. We recognise with thanks the key role that local conservation leaders play in maintaining community motivation throughout the planning and implementation of long-term conservation projects. Their importance cannot be overstated if we are to ensure that community support for conservation projects does not fade over generations, and that future conservation projects will be embraced as readily as those currently being undertaken. In this connection, we welcomed that increased involvement of local communities has become the norm in conservation projects, as evidenced by

the Marine Conservation Society's presentation on their Community Voice Method, Environment System Ltd's on informing conservation priorities through Earth observation, and that by the Isle of Man Government on the Manx Blue Carbon Project.

7. Similarly, we are pleased to see the strong authorship across the Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and UK of the chapters of UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum's well illustrated book *The Nature of Britain's Fragments of Paradise: wildlife and its conservation in UK's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies*, to be published in autumn 2026. We welcomed this as an important way to widen awareness of the global importance of our wildlife, and encourage those organisations who can sponsor this publication to do so.

8. We know well that effective conservation depends on good science, and we appreciate that in the presentations brought to our meeting from the conference of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, as well as the others at the conference (the proceedings of which are available at <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/our-conferences/>).

#### **Appendix: List of Ministers and other lead representatives participating**

**Anguilla:** Hon. Kyle Hodge, Minister of Sustainability, Innovation and the Environment

**Ascension:** Ms Tiffany Simpson, Director of Conservation and Fisheries (on behalf of Councillor Laura Shearer)

**Cayman Islands:** Mr Wayne Panton, former Premier of the Cayman Islands (on behalf of Hon. Katherine Ebanks-Wilks, Minister for Health, Environment and Sustainability)

**Falkland Islands:** Apologies from MLA Michael Goss, portfolio holder for Natural Resources

**Gibraltar:** Hon. Prof. John Cortés, Minister for Education, the Environment, Sustainability, Climate, Heritage, Technical Services and Transport

**Guernsey:** Deputy Adrian Gabriel, President of the Committee for the Environment & Infrastructure

**Isle of Man:** Hon. Clare Barber MHK, Minister for the Department of Environment, Food & Agriculture

**Jersey:** Mr Willie Peggie, Group Director of Natural Environment (on behalf of Deputy Steve Luce, Minister for the Environment)

**Montserrat:** Mr Barry Mahabir, Principal Environmental Officer, Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Housing & Environment (on behalf of Hon. John P. Osborne, Minister of Agriculture, Lands, Housing, Environment, Youth Affairs & Sports)

**St Helena:** Mr Darren Duncan, (on behalf of Hon. Karl Thrower, Minister of Environment, Natural Resources and Planning & Economic Development)

**Tristan da Cunha:** Mr Andy Schofield, Environmental Policy Officer (on behalf of Cllr Ian Lavarello, Chief Islander)

**Turks and Caicos Islands:** Ms Tracy Knight, UK Representative & Head of London Office (on behalf of Hon. Zhavargo Jolly, Minister of Tourism, Environment, Heritage, Maritime & Gaming)