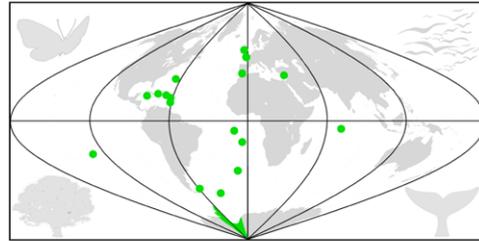


30-year Anniversary

OVERSEAS TERRITORIES



CONSERVATION.UK

www.ukotcf.org

Overseas Territories Conservation UK, UKOTCF, and The Forum are operating names of UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (Registered Charity 1058483 and Company 3216892).

UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum Annual Report April 2016 - March 2017

Report of Council

Overview

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF) promotes awareness and conservation of the rich and unique biodiversity, natural environment and related heritage of the UK's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies (UKOTs and CDs). It works in partnership with a wide network of bodies in the UK and UKOTs/CDs, many of which are Forum member and associate organisations, as well as individuals with relevant expertise. During the year, UKOTCF's small team continued to fulfil a wide variety of roles in support of the tireless work of conservation bodies in the UKOTs. & CDs It seeks to identify new streams of income and further resources, to ensure that this support continues.

Although it did not take place until the first month of the following year, most of the preparations were in the reported year, for the 2nd meeting of environment ministers of UKOTs and CDs. Right: Some of the Ministers visit the important gannet colony off Alderney From left: Hon. Dr John Cortés, Minister for Education, Heritage, Environment, Energy & Climate Change, Gibraltar (Meeting joint chairman); Hon. Kedrick D Pickering MD, Deputy Premier & Minister for Natural Resources & Labour, British Virgin Islands; Hon. Sylvan Richards MP, Minister of Environment, Government of Bermuda; Mr Victor Brownlees, Chief Executive, States of Alderney (Host & meeting joint chairman); Hon. Geoffrey Boot MHK, Minister of Environment, Food & Agriculture, Isle of Man; Hon. Claude Hogan, Minister of Agriculture & Environment, Montserrat; Dr Mike Pienkowski, Chairman, UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (Meeting organiser).

Most activity this year has been focused on delivering on-the-ground projects and providing networking opportunities, to ensure information flow and identify gaps for deploying resources that can be secured. The importance of continuous and trusting relationships with partners in the UKOTs has been highlighted throughout the year. For example, following the result of the EU referendum, UKOTCF was able to organise a meeting, at the request of the Government of Gibraltar, with UK NGOs. It was also able to submit a response to Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) inquiries, drawing heavily on the Environment Charter review published in April 2016.

Together with the Montserrat National Trust, the Government of Montserrat, Montana State University and Treweek Environmental Consultants, UKOTCF was awarded a grant from the UK



Left: The meeting in session. From left: Mrs Michele Christian, Divisional Manager, Environmental, Conservation & Natural Resources, Government of Pitcairn; Dr Richard Axton, Chairman of Council, La Société Sercquoise, on behalf of Sark Agriculture and Environment Committee of the Chief Pleas [Administration] of Sark; Mr Chris Carnegy, UK Representative Tristan da Cunha, on behalf of the Island Council; Hon. Claude Hogan, Montserrat (part hidden); Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF; Dr Liesl Mesilio-Torres, Chief Executive Officer, Gibraltar Department of the Environment, Heritage & Climate-Change; Mr Stephen Warr, Senior Environment Officer, Gibraltar Department of the Environment, Heritage & Climate-Change;

Hon. Dr John Cortés, Gibraltar; Mr John Young, Planning Officer, States of Alderney; Ms Claire Thorpe, People & Wildlife Officer, Alderney Wildlife Trust; Mr Victor Brownlees, Alderney; Mr Paul Veron, Economic Development Officer, States of Alderney; Mr Adrian Lewis, Chief Secretary to the Committee for Environment and Infrastructure, States of Guernsey (and Designate Acting Chief Executive, States of Alderney); Deputy Barry Brehaut, President of the Committee for the Environment & Infrastructure, States of Guernsey; Deputy Steven Luce, Minister for the Environment, Jersey; Hon. Geoffrey Boot MHK, Isle of Man; Hon. Kedrick D Pickering MD, British Virgin Islands; Hon. Sylvan Richards MP, Bermuda; Mr Willie Peggie, Director for Environment / Deputy Chief Officer, States of Jersey (right edge) Photos: Catherine Wensink, UKOTCF

Government's Darwin Initiative. Within a few months of the project starting, the first project meeting was held in May, during the same visit as the first workshop for local stakeholders on the future of the south. The first newsletter entitled *Save Our Special Nature of Montserrat* was published. In late summer, the project officer, based at the Montserrat National Trust, began one of his first tasks. This was to write a second project application to the EU, to complement the Darwin+ project. He was successful in securing this grant, demonstrating how raising capacity can often leverage further support from elsewhere. The second project meeting took place in November, during the same visit as two other project events. The first was the second workshop on the future of the south and the second feedback after an intensive series of meetings of volunteer senior consultants with local stakeholders on ensuring robust and effective incorporation of environmental aspects into physical planning and development projects.

Plans for the second meeting of Environment Ministers, which would have taken place on Montserrat in May (later postponed to November) 2016, were put on hold, due to external factors. It would have taken place one year after the first, which had been held in Gibraltar. As requested by several Ministers, UKOTCF continued to explore alternative venues. With support from the Chief Executive of the States of Alderney, a meeting will now take place there at the end of April 2017. The Forum has provided organisational and secretariat support, bringing with it several advantages: it ensures continuity between meetings and has a clear understanding of some of the issues being discussed, because of its on-going involvement with the UKOTs.

In April, Stewart McPherson's *Britain's Treasure Islands* series aired on BBC4. It was also repeated in the run up to Christmas. The accompanying book was published in July. The impressive book is available to purchase from several stockists including UKOTCF.

UKOTCF networks

Meetings of the regional working groups took place throughout the year via Skype. Summary reports for each of the groups are included from page 6.

In October, a meeting was held at Gibraltar House, London, hosted by HM Government of Gibraltar and organised by the Forum (see *Forum News* 46: 24). It focused on the continuation of effective site-protection measures in Gibraltar and UK following loss of key legislation and related processes following 'Brexit'. The meeting was attended by several large UK land-owning organisations. There was some discussion as to whether local legislation would be enough in the absence of EU legislation, as well as discussion surrounding possible scenarios post-'Brexit' and the adverse consequences to international cooperation in the region.

The Forum is continuing to work towards the creation of a renewable energy and climate change group. This is benefiting from the support of Maya Doolub, who attended and presented at the Gibraltar conference, on opportunities for investment in renewable energy. Her work is helping to establish a network of various stakeholders and she has attended relevant meetings in Brussels and elsewhere this year, with support from



As part of an Energy Tour of Aruba during the 15th EU/OCT forum, St Helena Councillor Lawson Henry and UK Rep Kedell Worboys MBE saw this "Solar Tree" – consisting of solar panels built like the branches of a tree and which lights up at night. Photo: Government of St Helena

UKOTCF. Terms of Reference have been developed throughout the year. As with many other aspects of 'Brexit', the resources in this area which are available to the UK from the EU, which are thus also available to UKOTs, are in doubt.

It was pleasing that many of the UKOTs benefitted from EU funding through its BEST scheme, something which arose from efforts some years ago by UKOTCF and French and Dutch equivalents. Reworking of several bids, which the Forum had helped put together for other funding sources, were successful as stand-alone projects. However, after 10 years of lobbying by the Forum, it is unclear how UKOTs will continue to benefit in the future from this scheme or any UK Government replacement following exit from the EU. *Forum News* highlighted some of the successful projects. Whilst the Forum itself could not benefit from the small project funds, there are several projects which will raise the capacity of UKOTCF's member and associate organisations to carry out on-the-ground conservation actions (and on which UKOTCF has advised). These are therefore welcomed.

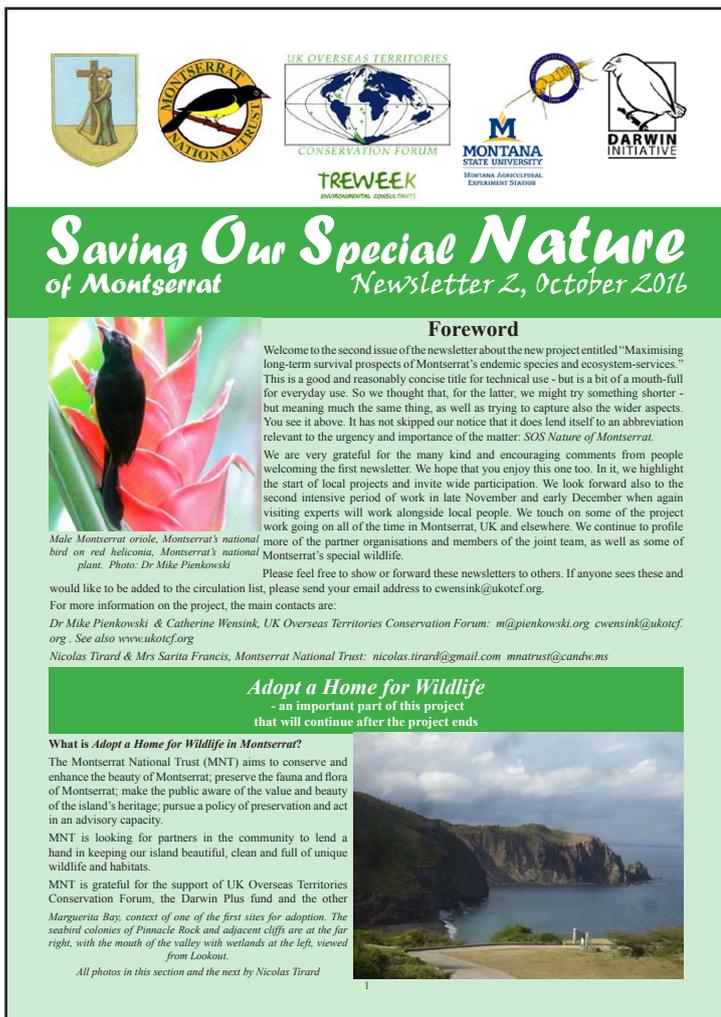
The Forum continues to attend the EU Overseas Roundtable meetings coordinated by IUCN-Europe. In June 2016, days before the EU referendum, the Forum presented the findings of its published review in meeting the Environment Charters, Aichi Targets and Sustainable Development Goals. There were also presentations on the work being conducted on environmental economics through Wolfs Company. In February 2017, the Forum attended the 9th Roundtable meeting. There were several presentations covering: the results of the latest call for proposals; an update on the ecosystem profiles and investment strategies for each region; as well as several lengthy discussions on the future of BEST beyond the end of 2018, when the contract ends (the last year is for monitoring and evaluation). A final call has recently been announced. There were no indications of what would happen to UKOTs' involvement as a result of the UK Government's response to the EU referendum. An EU-OCT forum (of the European Commission and territory and state governments) took place in February in Aruba. The Commission, in particular, saw this gathering as an opportunity to raise awareness of BEST and to look to gain high-level political support for its continuation. (UKOTCF, UK Government and others have severe doubts about seeking external funding for this, as it would potentially be in competition with territory organisations.)

Discussions on the next UKOTCF conference have continued throughout the year, both with several UKOT governments and with UK Government. This is never an easy exercise, as conferences are expensive to organise and can be seen as 'jollies' for those that attend them. This is not so for Forum conferences. In Gibraltar, 7am starts and 8pm finishes were common, with very short breaks in-between! Although this model was not ideal, as there were certainly a lot of tired conservation workers at the end, compressing the working week into fewer days reduced costs. More importantly, the conferences have been shown to be effective in driving forward conservation. The budget for each conference aims to provide for at least one government and one non-government person to attend. A period of 3 years between conferences is thought to be satisfactory to allow for continuity and for plenty of work to have progressed. Although practitioners and politicians were keen on a conference in 2018 and there were some provisional funding offers, this looks unlikely, given the time it takes to organise effective conferences. However, discussion is ongoing, so that the next conference can happen then or as shortly after 2018 as possible.

Projects and other in-territory help to our partners

The Forum aims to be reactive to the needs of its members and associates, and to fill in important gaps. With a small team and low income, it does not have the capacity to do this as much as it would like. However, jointly running on-the-ground projects with its partners means that it is consistent in its understanding of the pressures and limitations of those working to protect biodiversity and fragile environments in the UKOTs and CDs.

The Forum, partnering with the Montserrat National Trust, led a successful application to the Darwin Initiative titled: "*Maximising long-term survival prospects of Montserrat's endemic species and ecosystem-services*". The two-year project, which commenced formally at the start of the financial year in April 2016, involves several other partners: the Government of Montserrat, Montana State University and Treweek Environmental Consultants (working *pro bono*). The rationale of the project is to enhance



Front cover of the 2nd project newsletter; SOS Nature of Montserrat. Image: UKOTCF

the prospects of survival of Montserrat's endemic and other rare wildlife, by the most ecologically sound method of maximising habitat range. It looks also to strengthen management capacity in conservation bodies. To do this, it has several more specific aims, including: to introduce effective planning and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA), and to build local capacity on this; to increase conservation efforts, especially by the local community; to enhance the availability, for local use, of biological data already collected, as well as to stimulate interest by residents and visitors in collecting more; and to work with all stakeholders to examine the opportunities and challenges of making more use of the two-thirds of the island with access restrictions due to volcanic activity.

The idea of the last aim, is to develop a plan which has the support of all stakeholders, such as former land-users, land-owners, farmers, Montserrat Volcano Observatory, Royal Montserrat Police Service *etc.*, as well as conservationists. Potential outcomes could include the maintenance and recovery of the remaining forests in the Exclusion Zone, as well as other activities sustaining livelihoods – but this will be decided by agreement during the project. This, and the other aspects of the project, are intended



Left & right: Stills from one of the UKOTCF videos, an introduction to Montserrat and its wildlife (view at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkJydGp_Ydw). This is one of a series being produced by Ann Pienkowski, UKOTCF's Honorary Environmental Education Officer. The periodically updated list of available videos is at: www.ukotcf.org/videos/index.htm.



to facilitate sustainable tourism, increase perception of the value the environment, and involve more local people in using it sustainably for livelihoods, without compromising its role in biodiversity conservation.

Campaigns continue to provide information and links on the global movement against keeping mammals in captivity, to support the efforts of those in the Turks and Caicos Islands, who are fighting the development of a dolphinarium on Grand Turk or elsewhere.

Various other project proposals are at various stages of development, e.g.: the creation of a database on the interactions of physical development proposals and environmental considerations, and sharing of best practice; and the use of drones for conservation, and using crowd-sourcing to help process these data and website development.

Environment Charters and conservation concerns

As reported in the previous annual report, the major exercise to review the Environment Charters was published in April 2016. This was the third of its kind, but the first to include Aichi Targets and Sustainable Development Goals. Since then, the results from this have been used for a variety of purposes.

The Forum received, through the Inter-Island and Europe Territories Working Group networks, a request from a coalition of environmental groups, which included associate organisation La Société Guernesaise. Phase 1 of the States of Guernsey's Policy and Resource Plan *Future Guernsey*, was to be debated in November 2016. Local partners were concerned, upon reading the *Future Guernsey* plan, that it contained inadequate provisions for Guernsey's unique natural heritage and environment. Those interested in Guernsey's environment were requested to make recommendations for changes, and to offer support for amendments put forward by Deputy Barry Brehaut and his colleagues. Using information published in the UKOTCF Environment Charter Review, a submission was put together and sent to the States Deputies. This was acknowledged favourably by Deputy Brehaut himself and others. It was pleasing to see that almost all amendments had been successful and that the Environment Charter exercise continues to have multiple uses.

Awareness raising and information management

A Wikipedia page was developed to showcase the work that UKOTCF does, as well to provide links to the work of partners in the UKOTs/CDs. Wikipedia is a bit of a 'go-to' site when one web-searches for information, so having a Wikipedia presence in addition to the Forum website, is an easy way to present UKOTCF's work to a wider audience. Some guidelines were produced to try and help members and associates, without pages, navigate the process and to give a realistic view of how long a page takes to complete. The page has now been converted to an audio page for those with visual impairments.

Forum News 45 was published in October. *Forum News* 46, published at the end of March 2017, was a special edition containing a 30-year review since the Forum was created.

To accompany the publication of Stewart McPherson's *Britain's Treasure Islands* book and completion of the mini-documentaries, the Forum has been working through its vast collection of images and videos, to add to the online resources. The Forum's honorary Environmental Education Co-ordinator has used her wide collection of videos from the UKOTs to

produce a number of short films. These include “*Grand Turk – Birds on Your Doorstep*” and “*Montserrat – Birding in Paradise*”. These are now available on the website. Further videos are in preparation.

Newsletters for each of the working groups have been produced for some while, as a way of providing information between meetings. These are also now available online.

There have been several additions to the virtual tours, with further tours under development.

The Caribbean Birding Trail (CBT), developed by BirdsCaribbean in collaboration with many partners throughout the Caribbean, aims to help residents and travellers “connect to the rich cultural and natural history of the Caribbean islands through birds”. The Forum put a lot of effort in to supplying information for both Montserrat and Turks and Caicos. This information was incorporated in to the CBT website, which is now live.

Sales of the *Birding in Paradise* guides for Turks and Caicos and Montserrat have remained constant. Ways of marketing these continue to be explored. A review has now been included on the BirdsCaribbean blog, which links to the Trail work.

Consultations

The Forum has, over many years, contributed to UK Parliamentary Committee inquiries and encouraged its members and associates to do so as well.

This year, and using the Environment Charter report (as well as Gibraltar conference proceedings and other material from the territories), responses were submitted to the Environmental Audit Committee’s (EAC) inquiries on (1) the *Future of the Natural Environment after the EU Referendum*, (2) the *Sustainable Development Goals in the UK*, and (3) *Marine Protected Areas Revisited*. An additional response was submitted to the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee inquiry on *Leaving the EU: negotiation priorities for energy and climate change policy*.

In addition to this, the Forum provided oral evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee inquiry *Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) Revisited*, alongside Charles Clover of Blue Marine Foundation and Thomas Hickey of Pew Charitable Trusts (see *Forum News* 46: 22-23). Shortly afterwards, oral evidence was given by Thérèse Coffey, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for DEFRA, and Rt Hon Baroness Anelay of St Johns, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), who were accompanied by two officials (Jane Rumble (FCO Polar Regions) and Dr Harper (DEFRA)).

The EAC report on the environmental consequences of the EU Referendum, which was published in early January 2017, directly references UKOTCF’s submission. Inquiry reports on MPAs, Sustainable Development Goals and Energy & Climate Change are awaited.

UKOTCF supplied information to the regional hubs involved in the consortium with IUCN-Europe, to develop ecosystem profiles and subsequent regional investment strategies, funded by the EU BEST scheme. The purpose of these was to identify key biodiversity areas and areas of investment for future European Union funds. As well as extracting information from the Forum’s website, a key resource on the UKOTs, the BEST hubs asked the Forum to comment on and review the profiles for all Caribbean UKOTs, as well as the Pacific (Pitcairn) and Polar/Sub polar regions (British Antarctica and South Georgia), which it endeavoured to do.

Influencing policy

The Forum made a submission to the consultation by the Turks & Caicos Islands Government Department of Environment and Maritime Affairs, on the proposed amendments to TCI National Parks Ordinance. In common with local partners, it welcomed strongly the proposed extensions to the protected areas, which are well justified, but expressed some concern at some proposed deletions. The latter appear to relate to earlier erroneous actions by some, rather than to scientific evidence.

UKOTCF supplied information to JNCC’s triennial review. Key points noted were for JNCC to include NGOs in consultations and engage with

Atlantic yellow-nosed albatrosses (locally ‘Mollies, which breed only in the Tristan da Cunha group) and other albatrosses and petrels forage near one of the world’s most important seabird colonies, Gough Island.

Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

a wider network of stakeholders on their work, so that efforts are not duplicated. The review is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-nature-conservation-committee-review-jncc-2016>.

Relations with UK Government and Government Agencies

UKOTCF personnel ensured that UKOTs and CDs were not overlooked in other quarters, using various means. They met regularly with the FCO Director for Overseas Territories, Dr Peter Hayes, and are exploring ways of continuing this dialogue with the new Director. The Forum is continuing to explore ways in which it can assist FCO with good governance, on environmental aspects in the UKOTs.

In line with feedback from UKOT environment personnel following the Gibraltar conference, the Forum continues to explore with FCO means of continuing to provide presentations, to FCO desk officers and section heads, on biodiversity in the UKOTs, the role of the UKOTCF network and related matters.

Regular meetings continued to be held with DEFRA officials on various matters.

The Forum took part in a one-day workshop in March, organised by JNCC for the new *Natural Capital* project. This aims to strengthen coordination of research in the South Atlantic Territories and South America.

Forum personnel met with both the Bermuda Governor-designate and the Turks and Caicos Governor-designate. Whenever possible, UKOTCF continues to meet with Governors before they take up office, to brief them on environment issues.

UKOTCF personnel attended the annual reception for participants in the Joint Ministerial Council (of UKOT premiers, chief ministers or other ministers, or equivalents with UK ministers), in November.

Coordinating with others

The Forum aims, where possible, to link with organisations with potentially complementary remits, to try to explore ways of collaborating. Examples of organisations include: the Executive Committee of IUCN’s National Committee for UK (where the Chairman continues to serve, providing regular updates on UKOT/CD activities); and the International National Trusts Organisation, a similar body to the Forum, in that it brings together members of the National Trusts from around the world at 3-yearly conferences.

There are many receptions and events during the year which involve the UKOTs in some way. The Forum tries to attend as many of these as it can, within its resources. These include, but are not limited to: the Great British Oceans Blue Belt reception, the latest having taken place in May at the House of Commons. Ministers from DEFRA and FCO attended, as well as many other MPs, UKOTA, etc. UKOTCF attended also the reception for the opening of the Pew Foundation’s new offices in London, and the annual South Georgia Stakeholder meeting.

Advice and input was provided by UKOTCF, when requested. Some examples include: commenting on the RSPB-commissioned study by the Institute of European Environmental Policy (IEEP) on the feasibility of Gough safeguarding of threatened birds through a rodent-eradication exercise; briefing material for Blue Marine Foundation and partners,



in preparation for a visit to Bermuda, exploring the establishment of marine protected areas; and the provision of information regarding Dutch Caribbean MPAs to the Blue Marine Foundation prior to its meeting with the Dutch Ambassador to the UK.

UKOTCF also facilitated new connections, for example: between Blue Marine Foundation and St Helena Councillors, re potential commercial support for sustainable fisheries, in line with new protection measures; and between the Waitt Institute and contacts in the UK, as well as the *Caribbean & North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems (CLME+)* project, funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and UK Government.

As part of UCL's London NERC Doctoral Training Partnership, a presentation was given to students embarking on their chosen study. In addition, an 'Environment Hackathon' was held during their Innovation Week. Students were split into groups to develop innovative solutions to pressing issues in Environmental Science. UKOTCF provided some information, so that issues facing the UKOTs could be incorporated into the exercise, e.g. invasive species, lack of baseline scientific data and few resources.

Organisational development

The Forum has been extremely fortunate to have the continued support of Sarah Barnsley and Emma Cary. They have both driven forward several initiatives as our part-time, largely unpaid Conservation Officers. These initiatives include: the Environment Charter review; acting as Secretaries of the Southern Oceans Working Group and Europe Territories Working Group respectively; providing assistance at the Gibraltar conference; facilitating workshops in Montserrat; communications; as well as many other tasks. In early 2017, both Emma and Sarah decided that it was time to move on. Emma, not surprisingly, has found work with a similar organisation to the Forum and will be working with UK songbirds. Sarah will begin a PhD at University of East Anglia in September, after doing some travelling in Nepal.

In Emma's previous guise, she worked at environmentjobs.co.uk, one of the UK's premier environmental job search sites. With her help, UKOTCF advertised for new recruits. Over 7000 views of the advert were recorded and over 340 applications submitted. Two candidates stood out in the interview for what they could offer the Forum and were invited to join the team. Nicola Weber has embarked on the Conservation Officer role and Wylie Horn takes on the role of Conservation and Information Officer. Profiles of both are on the [website](#).

Recognising that opportunities for recent graduates to gain experience in conservation are in short supply, roles for voluntary Conservation Assistants were also advertised. One role was taken on by El[eonor] Comley, based near Sheffield, who is currently leading scout expeditions in the Peak District. She is a BSc graduate hoping to get an MSc place for September. Susie Phillips has also taken on a similar role. She is based in Chester and is currently working on the entomology collection at the World Museum Liverpool. She is a BSc graduate. Avishka Sendanayake, based in Uxbridge, has embarked on the role of Environmental Assistant. She was born in Sri Lanka and is currently studying in the UK. She will complete an MSc in Climate Change and Sustainability at Brunel University in September.

We are extremely grateful to Sarah Barnsley for giving us 3 months' notice of her future plans, and fitting in extra work to train her and Emma's successors, as well as providing valued continuity.



Sarah Barnsley and Emma Cary on Montserrat: Emma's image underwater (left) was taken by Montserrat Dive Centre (www.islanddivecentre.com) Sarah's image, (right) working with Montserrat National Trust project officer, Nicolas Tirard, was taken by Emma.

Dr Tom Appleby resigned from Council in July 2016. His responsibilities in his teaching role at the University of West England had increased, and the consequences of the 'Brexit' vote threw into disarray many of the marine conservation projects with which he was involved. He stressed that he had enjoyed thoroughly his time with the Forum. His contributions to the Gibraltar conference were insightful and very valuable. UKOTCF will continue to keep in touch with Tom, including through links with the Blue Marine Foundation. Joseph Smith Abbott's term of office on Council ended in September 2016 and, with a change of employment role, he did not seek re-election. Council expressed their gratitude to Joseph for long service in a variety of roles, and looked forward to future constructive contacts. Council thanked Liz Charter for taking on the Chairing role at a time which had not been totally convenient to her. She had decided to stand down from that role, but Council members are delighted that she stays on Council.

In March 2017, Martin Spray CBE attended his first meeting as a UKOTCF Council member. He has been Chief Executive of the UK-based Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) since 2014. His career has been divided between the government sector and conservation NGOs. Upon graduating from University of Swansea with a degree in Zoology, he joined the Science Research Council in London as the Secretary to the Solar Systems Committee. Although not reflecting his interests until then, he found the experience extremely stimulating. He then went on to several varied managerial roles with the re-named Science & Engineering Research Council, including a period of secondment to HM Treasury in Whitehall.

Having pursued his childhood interest in the natural world through voluntary work, raising money for Greenpeace and WWF as Chair of their support groups, he joined WWF UK. Three years later, he was approached to become the first Chief Executive of the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT). More recently, his period with WWT has seen a growth in the organisation to over 200,000 members, an income of £24 million, major refurbishment and improvement of its 9 wetland visitor centres, a shift to a new strategic direction involving wetland creation and management to benefit people, and a growth in the organisation's international activity.

Other changes include the change in roles for Catherine Wensink, who was appointed Executive Director in February 2017, and Mike Pienkowski, who became Chairman once again in December 2016.

As part of best practice for UK charities, a review of adherence to the Charity Commission *Good Practice for Charities* document was conducted.

Acknowledgements

UKOTCF Council would like to thank the individuals and representatives of member and associate organisations who have given numerous hours of voluntary time to the Forum, both in the UK and the Territories. These include: Sarah Barnsley, Keith Bensusan, Faye Burfoot, Emma Cary, Eleanor Comley, Maya Doolub, Duncan Hutt, Katie Medcalf, Ray Nolan (Sheffield Hallam University), Susie Phillips, Caroline Prentice, Avishka Sendanayake, Robin Ward, Lau and Catherine Wensink, Admiral Lord West and John Wheeler. Although all Council members donate time to UKOTCF, Council would like to acknowledge the very large quantities donated by Mike and Ann Pienkowski, on which UKOTCF depends. The Forum would like to thank also existing *Friends of the UK*



Overseas Territories, and encourage those who have an interest in the UKOTs/CDs to join. The Forum is very grateful for financial assistance as project grants and donations, from Lady Ground, HM Government of Gibraltar, HM Government of the United Kingdom, Anthony Leask, and those supporting through *EVE_NT* and EasyFundRaising, as well as anonymous donors. The Forum is grateful also to member organisations

and others, for allowing meetings to take place at their offices during the year, particularly HM Government of Gibraltar. Council members and officers would like also to thank Tom Appleby and Joseph Smith Abbott for all that they have contributed, and to say that they will miss working with them, but hope that links will remain active.

UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum

Summary Statement of Financial Activities (including Income and Expenditure Account) for the year ended 31 March 2017

	2017	2017	2017	2016
	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds	Total Funds
Incoming Resources				
Voluntary Income	188,711	145,387	334,098	328,911
Investment Income	28	-	28	49
Incoming Resources from Charitable Activities				
Project Income	329	85,097	85,426	42,195
Total Incoming Resources	189,068	230,484	419,552	371,155
Resources Expended				
Charitable Activities	171,287	232,180	403,467	419,164
Governance Costs and Other Resources Expended	6,594	-	6,594	7,011
Total Resources Expended	177,881	232,180	410,061	426,175
Net incoming/outgoing resources	11,187	(1,696)	(9,491)	(55,020)
Balance brought forward at 1st April 2016	52,686	4,955	57,641	112,661
Balance carried forward at 31st March 2017	63,873	3,259	67,132	57,641

Note: Incoming and outgoing resources include donated time and expenses of £292,918 (2016: £311,215).

Report of the UKOTCF Wider Caribbean Working Group

Four WCWG meetings were held this year via Skype and six *eBulletins* were produced. The first meeting of the year, in June, was also the first meeting to be chaired by new Chairman Dace McCoy Ground, who was warmly welcomed. This year also saw a change in structure for the WCWG meetings, with the adoption of topical thematic discussions, as well as shorter and more frequent meetings. These changes were accompanied by the adaptation of the *eNewsletter* structure into an *eBulletin* format, which is shorter and distributed more frequently.

A selection of topics addressed by WCWG is given below. Much more information about the work of WCWG is available in the *eNewsletters* and *eBulletins*, available online at www.ukotcf.org.

Cross-territory thematic discussions

The following topics were all discussed as themes under the new structure of the WCWG.

Developments which have a negative environmental impact

Various cases of development were discussed, as were the tools available for fighting those negative ones. Meeting participants shared individual experiences. For example, Anguilla has been exploring the development of a National Ecosystem Assessment plan which would be agreed at a high level. In Turks and Caicos, development proposals appear to have started shifting towards Middle Caicos including East Bay Cays, areas important in environmental and cultural terms. Examples of tools identified as important for environmental conservation include protected areas and *Environment Charters*.

The WCWG commenced the compilation of a case-study database, with examples of development issues and actions. The process of announcing development proposals, which could have an environmental impact, in the *WCWG eBulletin* also commenced.

Funding

EU funds and Brexit were discussed, e.g. the fact that “UK organisations that bid directly to the European Commission on a competitive basis for EU LIFE funds will have the payment of such awards underwritten by Treasury,” as stated in the *LIFE eNews* for October 2016.

Other funding sources were discussed also, and it was recognised that, with external funding sources becoming ever more reduced and difficult, it was important to share experiences of locally based fundraising possibilities. WCWG meeting participants therefore shared examples/experiences, e.g. regarding visitor taxes, marine park tags and dive tags. In particular, WCWG and UKOTCF continued to explore and pursue the potential of tourist taxes for environmental work.



Some of the protected area interpretative facilities and conservation works part-funded in BVI by the EU-supported MPASSE project. This involved 3 UKOTs, including also the Cayman Islands and TCI. It was led in BVI by the National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands and co-ordinated overall by UKOTCF. Photos: NPTVI & UKOTCF

Catherine Wensink met with Patrick Debels, regional co-ordinator of a 5-year UNDP/GEF project (2015 – 2020). This involves the implementation of a 10-year strategic Action Programme “for the sustainable management of shared living marine resources in the Caribbean and the north Brazil shelf large marine ecosystem.” He had been trying to contact relevant staff in DEFRA, and Catherine made introductions. He wished to explore with DEFRA whether there were mechanisms for UKOTs to join in, despite them not normally being eligible for GEF funding.

Other cross-territory issues

WCWG continued to follow the problem caused in many territories by the invasive green iguana. In Cayman as a whole, the Department of Environment has been putting a lot of effort into dealing with the green iguana. In Little Cayman, a team of dedicated volunteers has been working hard to keep the situation under control. The situation regarding ‘Brexit’ was discussed in meetings. In June 2016, six Eastern Caribbean countries launched coral reef report cards. These combine over 250 reef surveys to create a concise, visual tool that allows diverse audiences quickly to access and assess the health of their country’s reefs.

UNEP’s Caribbean Regional Coordinating Unit (UNEP-CAR/RCU) produced a report on marine litter in the Caribbean, which included information on Anguilla, BVI and the Cayman Islands.

Anguilla

A series of papers on fisheries and marine resources were made available on the Anguilla Government website. Television programmes on Anguilla were broadcast by BBC, as part of the *Island Parish* series. These were also available (in UK) on the BBC *iPlayer*. The series provided a variety of views of life on Anguilla, in addition to featuring positively the work of the Anguilla National Trust and the Fisheries Department.

Two representatives from Anguilla took part in this year’s Bermuda Turtle Project, allowing them to build their sea-turtle conservation skills. Their participation was funded by the EU BEST initiative as part of a wider project. A Darwin Plus grant was awarded for a project entitled *Pioneering a new model of Marine Park management in Anguilla*. With funding from EU BEST, the Anguilla National Trust is partnering with the St Barths Territorial Environmental Agency, and the St Eustatius National Parks, for research and conservation action on the native Lesser Antillean iguana.

Bermuda

Re-organisation of Government departments resulted in the creation of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The *Bermuda Cahow Recovery Programme* goes from strength to strength. Live streaming of nesting cahows can be viewed via CahowCam.

Regarding the *Governor Laffan’s Fern* project, ferns continued this year to grow well in cultivation and the wild. Establishment of fern gardens in nature reserves, to raise the profile of ferns to the public, progressed. A Cahow monitoring programme commenced.

There were various development concerns, e.g. those associated with new hotel developments and one associated with *Americas Cup* yacht race. The *Americas Cup* team has established environmental standards.



Female Bermuda cahow lays egg in underground burrow. From CahowCam (see main text).

Green iguana hatchling (top) and one of the possible hybrid hatchlings (below). Photo: Cayman Department of Environment



Bermuda’s new minister has been keen to get the Parks Act amendments enacted. Following Hurricane Nicole in October, much clearing up of Bermuda National Trust properties and nature reserves was needed.

The UKOTCF then Honorary Executive Director, then Manager & Senior Conservation Officer, and WCWG Chairman met with the new Governor of Bermuda, John Rankin. The Bermuda National Trust appointed Bill Zuill as its new Executive Director. Mr Zuill succeeded Jennifer Gray, who stepped down in July.

British Virgin Islands

Work on the buildings, which had commenced as part of the part-EU-funded *Management of Protected Areas to Support Sustainable Economies (MPASSE)* project, continued. The National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands (NPTVI) worked with the Tourist Board to develop plans for interpretation and fitting out in the buildings. Two of the visitor centres opened – Sage Mountain in December and Copper Mine in February. The third, in Anegada, was due to be opened in March.

NPTVI has continued involvement in a variety of projects and actions. For example, work has continued on seabed mapping, *Tropical Important Plant Areas*, vegetation monitoring and island restoration. There was a final visit from a team from RBG Kew, for the last field work under a Darwin Plus-funded project centred on *Tropical Important Plant Areas*.

In terms of invasives, goat and rat control work continued, under the NPTVI and Jost Van Dykes Preservation Society Darwin+ project. Further initiatives to combat invasive alien species of plants and animals is ongoing with European Union BEST 2.0 funding.

Cayman Islands

Work continued to implement the National Conservation Law. The first twelve sites have been proposed for protection under this Law.

The invasive green iguana problem is at epidemic proportions on Grand Cayman, and there are concerns also for the situation in Cayman Brac and Little Cayman. Focussed and directed measures are taking place, but resourcing is an issue.

Central Caribbean Marine Institute (CCMI) was awarded 100,000 euros from the BEST small projects grant for work on lionfish. It was awarded also a Darwin Plus grant on *Protecting herbivorous fish to conserve Cayman Island coral reef biodiversity*. CCMI was partnering with the Cayman Department of Environment on this project. In terms of environmental education, a group of Year 6 students undertook a 3-day course on marine ecology, conservation and sustainability at CCMI.

The proposed cruise ship dock development in Grand Cayman has generated strong opinions on both sides of the argument. The outcome is still currently uncertain.

Montserrat

May 2016 saw UKOTCF personnel visit Montserrat to launch the new Darwin Plus project. This has several elements, centring on various approaches to maximising the chances of survival of sensitive species by keeping their potential ranges as large as possible, as well as further local capacity development. Montserrat National Trust and the Department of Environment are partners in the project, as are Montana State University and Treweek Environmental Consultants. The second visit of UKOTCF personnel was in November/December 2016. One focus of the visit



Montserrat/UKOTCF workshop participants hard at work in groups.
Photo: UKOTCF

was planning to incorporate environmental considerations into physical planning, an aspect of the project carried out by *pro bono* consultants Dr Jo Treweek and Jennifer Hruza.

Montserrat National Trust was successful in obtaining a small BEST grant, to establish a plant nursery for endemics and key native species. This fits in well with many aspects of the aforementioned Darwin Plus project, and UKOTCF had advised on the bid. UKOTCF had also found resources to provide Montserrat National Trust with a second-hand 4x4 truck, to replace their often unusable current vehicle.

The first of UKOTCF's new in-house short videos by Ann Pienkowski was uploaded onto YouTube. This focused on Montserrat.

Ancient petroglyphs, thought to be 1,000 to 1,500 years old, were found this year on Montserrat.

Turks and Caicos Islands

Development issues in TCI as a whole remained very complex. For example, many planning applications were made, but many did not match with the current *Grand Turk Master Plan* (in final draft). Among other developments, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was produced for the dolphinarium proposal for Grand Turk (a project opposed by many local and international environmental bodies). This EIA was deemed inadequate by many experts in this field, and critical

Adelaide Oemler Primary School, Bottle Creek, North Caicos grades 3 & 4 visit the Caicos Pine Yard Trail National Tree Ramble, 29 April 2016.

Photo: Bryan Naqqi Manco

reports were submitted to the Planning Department. There is some optimism that this development will not go ahead.

A consultation was held on proposed changes to TCI Protected Areas – UKOTCF made a submission to this. Dr John Claydon, the Director of the Department of Environment and Coastal Resources of the Turks and Caicos Islands (DECR), identified financial needs and potential revenue streams to secure a sustainable finance stream for the management of TCI protected areas, with the assistance of Wolfs Company. The newly elected TCI Government pledged to re-instate the Conservation Fund in their election manifesto – we look forward to seeing this pledge carried through.

Turks & Caicos Reef Fund (TCRF) was successful in obtaining an EU small BEST award to continue survey work in East Caicos, concentrating in particular on the reefs. Work also continued on the BEST medium grant application led by colleagues in St Maarten, for which TCRF were co-applicants. TCRF has already installed and populated a coral nursery in the sea at North West Point Marine National Park, together with signage. UKOTCF then Honorary Executive Director and then Manager & Senior Conservation Officer met and briefed Dr John Freeman, Governor of Turks and Caicos Islands, and his wife, before he took up post.

Work continued on the Turks & Caicos National Museum *National Archives Digitisation* project, which is looking to digitise thousands of rare and vulnerable documents in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Mrs Lormeka Williams, the Director of the Turks and Caicos Islands Red Cross, was awarded a Chevening Scholarship for the 2016/2017 academic year to study a Masters degree in Conservation Biology at the University of Kent, UK. The first annual *Caicos Pine Awareness week* was held in December.



Report of the UKOTCF Southern Oceans Working Group

Three Southern Oceans Working Group (SOWG) meetings were held via Skype: in June and September 2016, and in February 2017. The SOWG meetings were interspersed with three *Newsletters*. Thanks go to everyone who participated in the meetings, or who provided reports and updates if unable to attend. Thanks go also to everyone who supplied articles, or information generally for the *Newsletters*.

In terms of cross-territory activities/events, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) hosted an event in May, looking at the UK's role in marine conservation in the UK Overseas Territories.

The Southern Ocean Territories all featured in Stewart McPherson's *Britain's Treasure Islands* series, which was first broadcast on BBC4 TV in April 2016, and shown again in December. The documentary series was also aired around the world.

On 25th April 2016, Ms Lisa Phillips (near left, at the *St Helena NT Millennium Forest*) was sworn in as the 68th Governor of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. She is also the first female Governor of these territories.

In the last few months of 2016, construction began on *Sir David Attenborough*, the new polar research vessel that will replace current research ships. The BEST *Ecosystem Profile for the South Atlantic Region* has also now been completed.

This year has been hugely successful in terms of Marine Protected Area (MPA) designations for the

Southern Oceans Territories. In September, Foreign Office Minister Sir Alan Duncan announced protected areas around St Helena and Pitcairn, as well as a commitment towards the designation of marine protection zones around Ascension by 2019 and Tristan da Cunha by 2020. As stated on the Government website, £20 million is to be provided to facilitate the 'implementation, management, surveillance and crucially the enforcement of these new Marine Protected Areas'.

Ascension Island

Invertebrate specialist David Pryce visited Ascension and provided the Conservation Department team with training in collection and identification methodology, in addition to expanding the invertebrate reference collection.

Other projects/activities included the commencement of shark-tagging as



Ascension Island view. Photo: BBC Costing the Earth
"Ascension Mars of the mid Atlantic"

part of a Darwin Initiative funded project, as well as the opening of a hydroponics site in June.

The BBC Radio 4's *Costing the Earth* series aired an episode, in April 2016, on Ascension Island. The episode was entitled *The Mars of the Mid-Atlantic*.

Also in April, a scientific workshop was held in collaboration with the FCO which involved discussion surrounding Ascension's proposed MPA. This resulted in a prioritised list of research required for informing effective management and identifying the location of the final MPA, in addition to evaluating effectiveness in the long-term. Other marine management advances included the establishment of a large closed area and strengthening of the fisheries legislative framework. At the *Our Ocean* Conference, the UK pledged to protect at least 220,000 km² of Ascension's ocean.

September 2016 saw a cycle ride from London to Monaco, organised by Blue Marine Foundation in collaboration with Winch Design, raise £138,000 for Ascension's ocean conservation.

British Antarctic Territory

2016 was the 25th anniversary of the *Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty*. In May, Consultative Parties issued a declaration which outlined their ongoing commitment to the comprehensive protection of the Antarctic environment.

Much research by the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) and other organisations continues in this region. For example, the *South Orkneys – State of the Antarctic Ecosystem* project ended this year. The expedition involved researching the biodiversity both within and outside the South Orkney Islands Southern Shelf MPA.

The journal *Biological Conservation* published, in September, a review of threats and conservation actions required for the 29 albatross and large petrel species that are covered by the *Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)*. Another paper published this year looked at the disturbance of seafloors by an increasing number of icebergs. This potentially prevents the sequestration of carbon in seafloor ecosystems, and is an issue around the Antarctic Peninsula.

The moveable *Halley VI Research Station* was relocated by BAS, to a new location on the Brunt Ice Shelf, 23 km upstream of a previously dormant ice chasm. This is for the protection of personnel should a fracture occur.

British Indian Ocean Territory

Work continues on the Darwin Initiative-funded project entitled *Creating a Terrestrial Action Plan for the Chagos Archipelago*. Data from various information sources are being incorporated into a species list for the terrestrial invertebrates of the Chagos Archipelago. This has been developed by ZSL in preparation for the aforementioned Darwin Plus-funded project.

Unfortunately, this year witnessed a widespread coral mortality event on the reefs of the Chagos Archipelago. This is the second time that an event of this type has been recorded, the first having been in 1998. Recovery did happen the first time. More positively, work continued on the *Corals of Chagos* project, whereby the team have been producing a consolidated list of coral species found in the Chagos Archipelago. The Bertarelli Foundation has also continued research in the Chagos, e.g. a DPhil student from University of Oxford, on a Bertarelli Foundation expedition, researched twilight zone reefs.

In other news, Nigel Wenban-Smith's *Chagos: A History* has been published by the Chagos Conservation Trust. In January 2017, the Chagos Conservation Trust's annual event was held at ZSL, entitled *Sand, sea and sky - the natural history of the Chagos Archipelago*.

Falkland Islands

One hugely positive outcome for the territory this year was the extension of the *Convention on Biological Diversity* to the Falkland Islands in June. Much work this year has concerned the oil exploration round. The territory is looking to improve the environmental protection framework. Environmental Impact Assessment has been a focus ahead of the potential development round.

The South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute's (SAERI) *Marine*



(c) Baldur Thorvaldsson

Sei whale. Photo: Baldur Thorvaldsson

Spatial Planning (MSP) for the Falkland Islands project, came to an end in June. The aim of the 2-year Darwin Plus-funded project was to prepare data, tools and analyses in order to start the MSP process, and work towards an MSP framework for the Falkland Islands. A Marine Spatial Planning workshop was held also in April, bringing together marine stakeholders of the Falkland Islands.

SAERI had various other projects in the Falkland Islands for which work continued this year. These included the *Gap project* - addressing priority gaps in understanding ecosystem functioning for the developing Falkland Islands offshore hydrocarbon industry. A new project entitled *Dolphins of the kelp: Data priorities for Falkland's inshore cetaceans* also began this year.

In October 2016, Falklands Conservation began a project financed by the BEST 2.0 Programme of the European Union. This is looking at the occurrence of the sei whale in the Berkeley Sound region of East Falkland.

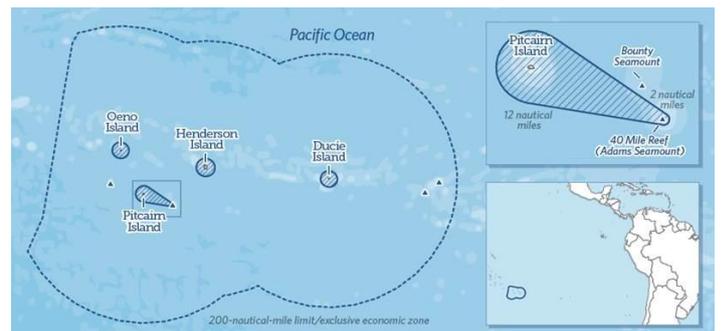
SOWG Chairman Nigel Haywood has been studying butterflies on the Falkland Islands – it is the Shackleton Scholarship Fund that has allowed him to carry out this work.

Further development of the Falklands Biodiversity Strategy has continued, commencing with invasives – the territory is looking at strengthening biosecurity and the invasive strategy. Work has continued in terms of improving wildlife legislation. A public consultation began in March on the *Assessment of Fishing Closure Areas as sites for Marine Management Areas in Falkland Islands Waters (AFCAS)*.

Pitcairn

In May, SOWG secretary Sarah Barnsley participated, by phone, in the 8th meeting of the Pitcairn Environment Group (PEG). Participants in the meeting heard general updates from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) and from the Pitcairn Islands, as well as reports relating to specific projects such as, the Darwin Initiative three-year project looking to develop a sustainable marine and fisheries management plan for Pitcairn. An update was provided also on the RSPB's ongoing terrestrial conservation work.

The group heard also about the Pitcairn Islands Marine Reserve and the trial monitoring of fishing vessel activity. The trial concluded that the technology works well and that the proposed marine reserve is a high compliance area. Since the legal designation of the Pitcairn MPA, Pew and Satellite Applications Catapult have begun delivering a long-term surveillance plan for the MPA, for the FCO.



Pitcairn Marine Protected Area, delimited by 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (dashed line). Small triangles are submarine volcanos (sea-mounts). Shaded areas around islands are non-commercial sustainable fishing zones.

Summary Conservation Action Plan for Wandering, Black-browed and Grey-headed Albatrosses Breeding at South Georgia (2016-2020)



Front cover of the Summary Conservation Action Plan for ... Albatrosses Breeding at South Georgia. *Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands*

South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands

There was much good news for South Georgia this year. The South Georgia Heritage Trust (SGHT) was awarded a Darwin Plus grant of £87,000 over two years

for the post-baiting phase of the *Habitat Restoration Project*. Professor Tony Martin, project director at the SGHT, was named *Conservationist of the Year* by the Zoological Society of London for his work on this project. So far, there have been no signs of rats or mice reported since the completion of the baiting phase.

The South Georgia Icfish Pelagic Trawl Fishery was re-certified by the Marine Stewardship Council for another 5 years.

In September, SOWG Secretary Sarah Barnsley attended the annual South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI) Stakeholder meeting. This included an update on the progress made over approximately a year since the launch of the SGSSI's *Strategy 2016-2020*. Participants heard of the impressive environmental progress being made, including the extension to SGSSI of UK's ratification of the *Convention on Biological Diversity*, and the development of a new delivery plan and action plans for *ACAP*. New *Conservation Action Plans* have since been launched for the black-browed, grey-headed and wandering albatrosses. Data-gaps, and how these had started to be addressed, were also reported.

Participants heard about improvements being made in terms of Environmental Impact Assessment, as well as the many research projects taking place in SGSSI, e.g. one initiated by a PhD student looking at fungal biodiversity and the impact of herbicides.

Reviewing biosecurity options continues to be a focus for SGSSI. The Government of SGSSI is committed also to responding to any links identified between vessels licensed to fish in the territory's waters, and Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing.

The Commissioner for SGSSI visited the territory, along with stakeholder representatives with particular interest in the environmental management of the territory. The two-yearly British Antarctic Survey scientific research survey of fish resources was carried out. Research re methane gas emissions from the seafloor was carried out.

St Helena

Governor Lisa Phillips visited the St Helena National Trust (SHNT) in September. She met SHNT staff, and viewed some of the Trust's projects. During the Governor's visit, it was announced that the SHNT and the *Landscape & Ecology Mitigation Programme (LEMP)* had been licensed to provide endemic plants for a District Clean-up.

Work continued on various projects this year, such as the St Helena Nature Conservation Group restoration work at Peak Dale and the SHNT's Darwin Plus-funded invertebrate project. Two BEST grants were awarded – the first on establishing new trails and interpretation at Peak National Park, and the second a project for restoring gumwood forest. The territory is working also on another two projects, one element being environmental monitoring. St Helena marine section personnel were trained on Ascension at the Fisheries Laboratory in ageing and reproduction techniques.

Positive news was the change in the conservation status of the St Helena wirebird from Critically Endangered to Vulnerable.



Peak Dale restoration work by St Helena Nature Conservation Group. Photo: St Helena Nature Conservation Group

Work towards the implementation of the *Environmental Protection Ordinance (EPO)* continued this year. A draft *Energy Strategy* was also developed for the territory. Work towards addressing the issue of wind-shear at St Helena's new airport continues. Along with the announcements of other UKOT MPA designations, a sustainable-use MPA has been legally designated throughout St Helena's waters.

Efforts were made to reduce water use on St Helena. This included a poster competition in island schools on the theme of *How do you Save Water?*

Tristan da Cunha

At the *Our Ocean* conference, UK Government announced a commitment to enhance marine protection in the 750,000 km² EEZ of Tristan da Cunha by 2020. In the first few months of 2017, a 5-week expedition to Tristan da Cunha was carried out as part of the National Geographic's *Pristine Seas* project, in collaboration with the Tristan Government and RSPB. The expedition aimed to survey the Tristan archipelago's marine environment. Work continued also on the Darwin Plus-funded project *Sustainable management of the marine environment and resources of Tristan da Cunha*.

Work has continued, through the RSPB, towards the development of a plan for restoring Gough Island. UK Government has allocated £1.75 million of funding towards a mouse eradication programme on Gough Island.

A new study assessing the benefits of receiving UNESCO designation commenced earlier in the year. This is applicable to the *Gough and Inaccessible Islands World Heritage Site*.

SAERI's IMS-GIS data centre continues to support South Atlantic UKOT communities in the development of skills and knowledge in GIS and data management. Training was provided in Tristan da Cunha between August and October 2016.

Research opportunities look set to continue, as Tristan was awarded a small BEST grant for a project on restoration and increased biosecurity for Nightingale Island.

Refurbishments were carried out on Tristan's Calshot Harbour, although concerns remain about the interim nature of these. Students from Saint Mary's School were involved in a tree planting with the Conservation Department.



Tristan da Cunha Pristine Seas Expedition, including several Islanders and a collaboration between the Tristan da Cunha Government, RSPB and National Geographic Pristine Seas. Photo: Roger Horrocks

Report of UKOTCF Europe Territories Working Group

The Europe Territories Working Group has tried to meet on a bi-monthly basis this year, favouring shorter, more frequent Skype meetings. Alongside updates from the territories, meetings have concentrated on four key themes: funding, invasive species, conventions and charters, and transboundary issues. The June meeting concentrated solely on the discussion of a set of funding case studies, submitted by members as a means of sharing experiences and expertise. Brexit has also been discussed during meetings, and continues to be an unknown in terms of environmental impacts.

Meetings continue to have a good level of representation from the Channel Islands, Isle of Man and Gibraltar, although they lack regular input from Cyprus SBAs. It is hoped that new contacts in the SBA Administration and BirdLife Cyprus, will be able to participate in meetings in the coming months.

Guernsey

This year's Inter-Island Environment Meeting (IIEM) was held on Guernsey at the impressive Castle Cornet, St Peter Port. Organised by La Société Guernesiaise and the States of Guernsey, the general theme of this year's meeting was 'designations'. There were 65 delegates, including UKOTCF Conservation Officer Sarah Barnsley, who had the chance to hear about the diverse conservation projects of the Channel Islands. The IIEM included a trip to Herm, the newly designated Ramsar Site, which proved to be a very instructive and informative field visit. The learning points from the meeting included the need to continue to cooperate between islands and the need to focus limited resources, especially in the areas of education and data collection.

In 2016, Guernsey published its *Biodiversity Strategy*, with the intention of moving towards joining UK's ratification of the *Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)*. In November, UKOTCF was asked to respond to Guernsey's Policy & Resource Plan, *Future Guernsey*, supporting amendments better to enable the inclusion of environmental considerations. UKOTCF Conservation Officer Sarah Barnsley drafted the response. This was well received and, alongside other campaigning, contributed to a number of the proposed amendments being agreed by the States of Guernsey. The fully funded *Biodiversity Strategy* aims to tackle threats to biodiversity locally and halt species decline in Guernsey. An 'agenda for action' will be delivered through the formation of a biodiversity partnership group. This will cover various aspects such as conservation, policy and legislation, education and community participation.

Alderney

The Alderney Bird Observatory was established on 1st March 2016, as part of The Alderney Wildlife Trust (AWT). Following the *Living Islands* project, there was a recognition that more needed to be done to deliver biodiversity data-handling and recording aspects on island. Following the establishment of the Observatory, the Trust has increased knowledge of



The Nunnery on Alderney, where Bird Observatory volunteers are housed. The building is a historically important structure, with fortifications from Roman, Tudor, Victorian and World War2 periods. (The marquee is for an evening event.) Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski



Castle Cornet at St Peter Port in Guernsey, the venue of the 2016 Inter-Island Meeting. Photo: Sarah Barnsley

birds hugely, in a relatively short period of time. In fact, records of birds trebled in 3 months. The British Bird Observatory Council has said it would be beneficial to have an observatory in the Channel Islands, and AWT is pushing forward with the two-year application process to achieve accreditation.

Two new species of bat have been found in Alderney over the last year. Jersey Bat Group discovered a Natterer's bat *Myotis nattereri* hibernating in a cave on the island, during a visit in February 2017. This follows the discovery of another new species, a whiskered bat, in November last year. Although Natterer's bats are present on Jersey and Guernsey, they are woodland specialists, so their discovery in Alderney – an island with few trees - is unexpected.

Alderney Wildlife Trust's collaborative *Track A Gannet (TAG)* project had a record-breaking development in June, when one bird undertook an epic journey of 2,700km from Alderney to Scandinavian waters and back in less than a week – the longest foraging trip ever recorded for an adult of this species. Normally, gannets fly 300-500km on a fishing expedition. The project uses miniature GPS tracking devices to follow the movements of individual birds from the island's northern gannet colonies. The devices use mobile phone data to transmit the positions of the birds, allowing researchers to build a picture of the birds' life cycles, feeding habits and interactions. This information is crucial to our understanding of the potential impacts of offshore developments on seabirds.

Sark

In June, La Société Sercquaise approached ETWG seeking advice regarding funding for a monograph of Sark's archaeology. Archaeological research has been carried out on Sark for many years, and production of this monograph would bring the research to a close. The work has been carried out by the Oxford Institute of Archaeology, supported by La Société Sercquaise, and has led to some very interesting finds, including artefacts dating from before 5000BC.

Sark has offered to host next year's Inter-Island Environment Meeting, as it will be the 10-year anniversary of Sark's Ramsar Site designation, facilitated at that time by UKOTCF.

Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas

The 2-year Darwin Initiative-funded project to restore a flagship wetland in the Cyprus Sovereign Base Area of Akrotiri entered its final few months. Akrotiri Marsh, which covers an area of around 150 hectares, had been unmanaged for the last 20 years, resulting in the over-expansion of reeds and the consequent loss of bird and plant diversity. Through the implementation of on-site conservation actions, as well as awareness-raising actions and the creation of visitor facilities, the project aimed to increase economic activities for local people and act as an example for the future management of other wetlands. The project had been working to revive the traditional practice of soft basketry weaving, in collaboration with project partner Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre. Basket weaving used to provide income for residents of Akrotiri village, although it had been replaced with other contemporary roles in recent times. The practice contributes to the conservation of the wetland, through sustainable harvesting of natural materials. Through the conservation

of basketry-plant habitats, running training lessons and the collection of basketry materials, the project transferred valuable knowledge to a new generation in order to prevent the loss of this traditional craft and help restore valuable wetland habitat.

A major milestone was reached in November when management works were finally completed. After weeks of detailed work, creation of suitable habitat for target bird species was successfully completed. The works included the creation of seven pools to attract breeding ferruginous ducks, as well as creation of a scrape, ditch dredging and the installation of water control structures. The project made significant improvements to infrastructure, including the erection of cattle fencing and sheds, creation of walkways, and car-park resurfacing.

Since November 2014, more than 54 acres of acacia have been removed by the SBA authorities as part of efforts to curb bird-poaching in Cyprus SBAs. Plans are in place to remove the remaining 90 acres over the next few years. *Acacia saligna* is a fast-growing invasive species which is difficult to control; saplings are planted by illegal bird poachers to conceal mist-nets. The Environment Department has tested various methodologies for its removal, including working with the Ministry of Defence's forestry department and carrying out chemical control of stumps. In October, it was announced that SBA authorities were doubling the number of officers involved in the targeting of illegal bird-trapping activities, to tackle the problem of songbird poaching in the SBAs.

World Wetlands Day is celebrated on 2 February every year. In collaboration with various other organisations, Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre organized various events to highlight the importance of wetlands, particularly the local Akrotiri wetlands.

Isle of Man

Following its designation as a Biosphere Reserve, the Isle of Man hosted a Biosphere meeting for British Biosphere reserves in June. The Island joins North Devon, Brighton and Lewes Downs, Dyfi in Wales, Galloway & South Ayrshire and Wester Ross in Scotland, and Dublin Bay, as Biosphere Reserves in the British Isles. The meeting was an opportunity for Isle of Man representatives to share, with more established sites, how the Island could make the most of the UNESCO recognition. The reserve is a positive development on the Isle and there is already a much more positive attitude to the natural environment following the designation. It is hoped that many different objectives of the Isle of Man *Biodiversity Strategy* are going to be met through the Biosphere Reserve.

A five-year *Future Fisheries Strategy 2016-2021* has been published in the Isle of Man, and is helping the island move towards sustainable fisheries. The *Strategy* identifies ways of securing sustainable, thriving and well-managed fisheries, providing high quality products whilst continuing to protect and respect the marine environment. In November 2016, fisheries management measures within the 3-mile zone were announced by the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture, including Conservation Zones and Fisheries Management Areas. The latter will be governed by groups of fishermen, which is a significant move for the Department. There are also new regulations for seismic surveys, which offer new protection for cetaceans and the ability to protect herring grounds. Marine biosecurity efforts are also being increased.

Gibraltar

The 23rd June referendum result, in which Britain voted narrowly to leave the EU, was a key discussion topic for ETWG. For Gibraltar in particular, leaving the EU has huge implications, both politically and environmentally. Gibraltar Government has constituted a 'Brexit' Conservation Action Group. With UKOTCF's help, in October 2016, Dr John Cortés, HM Government of Gibraltar's Minister for the Environment, hosted a meeting of representatives of some of the largest environmental organisations in the UK. Part of an initiative to exchange information on challenges shared by Gibraltar and the UK, the meeting focused on means of ensuring that environmental protection and biodiversity are not affected post-Brexit. Dr Liesl Mesilio Torres, Chief Executive of Gibraltar's Department of the Environment, provided representatives from UKOTCF, National Trust, the Wildlife Trusts, Amphibian & Reptile Conservation, and others, with a comprehensive overview of Gibraltar's current situation, which was followed by helpful discussions. It is anticipated that further meetings will follow.



Meeting of Gibraltar Government and UK NGOs on 'Brexit', chaired by Dr John Cortés (at head of table), Minister for the Environment, and organised by UKOTCF. Photo: Emma Cary

In July 2016, Gibraltar's Gorham Cave complex was inscribed on to UNESCO's World Heritage list. The steep limestone cliffs on the eastern side of the Rock contain four caves. These have archaeological and palaeontological deposits that provide evidence of Neanderthal occupation over a span of more than 100,000 years. The Government of Gibraltar had its proposal for the cave complex to be included in the UK World Heritage Tentative List accepted in 2011, and intense research and preparatory activity has been undertaken, both before and since then, to make the bid a success. The site provides exceptional evidence of Neanderthal cultural traditions, including the hunting of birds and marine animals for food, the use of feathers for ornamentation and the presence of abstract rock engravings. Scientific research on these sites has already contributed substantially to debates about Neanderthal and modern human evolution.



Excavations at Gorham's Cave, now a World Heritage Site. Photo: J.C.Finlayson; courtesy of The Gibraltar Museum

Jersey

In May 2016, the Jersey National Park was launched officially through a series of events carried out in conjunction with the *Jersey Heritage Festival*. The launch comes after 7 years of work and collaboration on the island to reach this final stage of designation, through public consultation, stakeholder workshops and the establishment of a Working Group. Jersey National Park extends over an area of approximately 30 miles (48km) of Jersey's coastline and islets, including Les Ecréhous, Les Minquiers and Pierres De Lecq or Paternosters. National Park status recognises the intrinsic value of the island's environment, and provides residents and visitors with a unique opportunity to enjoy, preserve and take pride in a coastal environment steeped in history, and rich in agricultural and natural diversity. It is hoped that National Park status will boost interest

North coast path in Jersey
National Park.
Photo: States of Jersey



in the island and allow Jersey further to realise its tourism potential through public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of natural surroundings.

Jersey's *Birds on the Edge* project has continued its work to restore habitat along the island's coastal heathland and grassland over the last year. The project works closely with the farming community to establish sacrificial crops and supplementary feeding over the winter. The project's *Winter Bird Crop Report for 2015-2016* shows just how important these crops are for threatened local and migrant species, with an increase in bird numbers (birds/hectare) at the crops of almost 40%. The majority of birds feeding at the crops were the targeted species: farmland birds such as chaffinch, linnet, reed bunting, meadow pipit, goldfinch and starling. The planting of winter crops in Jersey has been funded by local charity *Action For Wildlife*, and the States of Jersey's *Countryside Enhancement Scheme*, as well as private donations.

A new recycling centre opened in January 2017 in Jersey. The *Household Reuse & Recycling* facility at La Collette replaces the centre at Bellozanne, with improved facilities, including the ability to up-cycle unwanted household goods. The centre is being managed by a local charity which is taking out the valuable items and selling them as second-hand goods in a shop. Currently, Jersey recycles 30% of its waste, but the States wants that to rise to 36% by 2018.

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Membership

UKOTCF's current Member and Associate organisations linked to a particular UK Overseas Territory or Crown Dependency: Alderney Wildlife Trust; Anguilla Archaeological & Historical Society; Anguilla National Trust; Ascension Conservation Centre; Ascension Heritage Society; Bermuda Audubon Society; Bermuda National Trust; UK Antarctic Heritage Trust; Chagos Conservation Trust; National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands, BVI; Jost van Dykes Preservation Society, BVI; National Trust for the Cayman Islands; Central Caribbean Marine Institute; Akrotiri Environmental Education and Information Centre, Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas; BirdLife Cyprus; Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society; La Société Guernesaise; Société Jersiaise; National Trust for Jersey; Isle of Man Department of Environment, Food & Agriculture; Montserrat National Trust; Pitcairn Natural Resources Division; St Helena National Trust; La Société Sercquaise; National Trust of the Turks & Caicos Islands; Turks & Caicos National Museum; Turks & Caicos Reef Fund.

UKOTCF's current Member and Associate organisations not linked to a single Territory: Amphibian & Reptile Conservation; Army Ornithological Society; Royal Air Force Ornithological Society and Royal Naval Birdwatching Society.

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.

