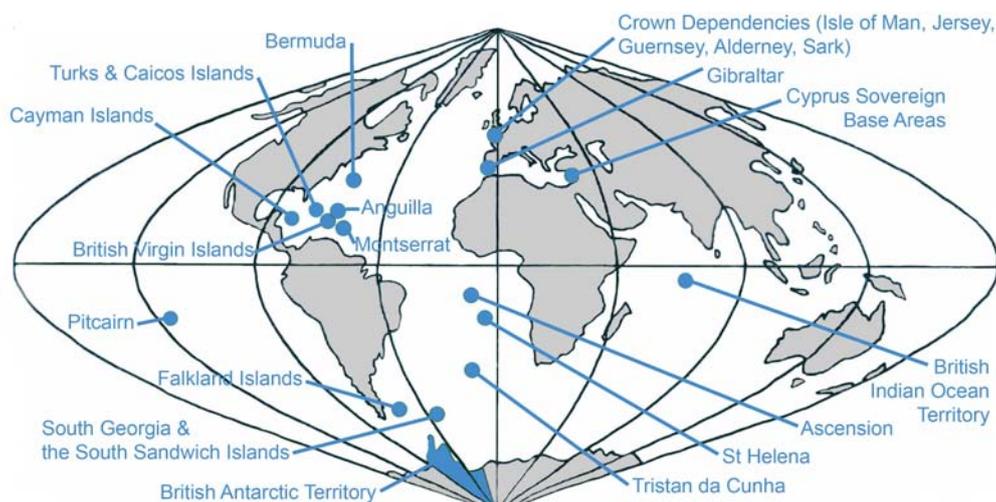


UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum



UKOTCF

- **was created in 1987 and formally constituted as a charitable company in 1996**
- **brings together, as its Members and Associates, conservation and science bodies in the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) & Crown Dependencies (CDs) and supporting ones in the UK, as well as a wider network of specialist volunteers**
- **advises and works with governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the UK, the UKOTs and CDs**
- **provides expert advice on environmental and related issues, and acts as a coordinating link for voluntary organisations, some governmental bodies and individuals with special interests in the UKOTs/CDs**
- **helps to build capacity in local conservation bodies, having worked with local people to establish conservation NGOs where these were viable but lacking**
- **works with NGOs and governmental bodies to assess needs, identify strategies and find funding for conservation activities**
- **manages or co-manages conservation projects in the UKOTs/CDs**
- **maintains an on-line database on the natural history of, and conservation activities in, the UKOTs/CDs**
- **produces the newsletter Forum News**
- **organises specialist volunteer support for UKOTs**
- **as a non-profit organisation drawing largely on the efforts of highly skilled volunteers, operates in a very cost-effective way.**

Activities and Achievements

The Forum's activities have greatly expanded over the years, in response to requests from the UKOTs and CDs for assistance. Some examples of the Forum's work are:

- Establishing and maintaining specialist Working Groups for the **Wider Caribbean, Southern Oceans** and **Europe Territories**, comprising local groups, former governors, scientists and others with an interest and relevant expertise. These Working Groups monitor progress and problems in their respective regions and seek to ensure that, as problems are identified, help is found and directed where needed. In all its actions, UKOTCF is guided by its UKOT Member and Associate bodies and other partners.
- Working with the UK Government to develop **new funding sources** or improve access of the UKOTs to existing funding mechanisms. In doing so, the Forum has:
 - Worked with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to create the Environmental Fund for Overseas Territories (EFOT), and subsequently with FCO and the Department for

International Development (DFID) to create the **Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP)**. The Forum continues to advise on the development of the programme, which funds projects throughout the UKOTs.

- Helped the British Government to direct some funds under the **Darwin Initiative** to the UKOTs, resulting in projects being funded in most Territories, and has been exploring the opening up of UK National Lottery funding to the UKOTs.
- Working with local people to help **establish conservation NGOs** in those Territories previously lacking them.
- Supporting **capacity building** in local NGOs (and some government bodies), through facilitation of strategic planning, deployment of specialist volunteers and other activities. In one case, over four years, UKOTCF support helped to turn one NGO from effective bankruptcy to an internationally regarded body with self-funding programmes, trusted by its government to take on several major national roles.
- Developing with others the concept of **Environment Charters**, setting out the basic principles required for good environmental management and to fulfil international commitments. The Charters, signed in September 2001 between the Governments of the UK and individual UKOTs, record commitments by both parties and provide a framework for developing locally-tailored strategies for action.
- Facilitating the development of pilot **strategies for action** to implement the Environment Charters in the Turks & Caicos Islands (2002/3) and St Helena (2004/5), and continuing to work with several UKOT governments and NGOs to help implement their Charters.
- At the request of UK Government and many UKOT bodies, developing an on-going system for **monitoring progress** in Environment Charter implementation, with a first report published in 2007 and a second in 2009.
- Arranging regular meetings to **resolve issues and develop collaboration** between UK Government departments with responsibilities in the UKOTs/CDs, representatives of those Territories, and conservation NGOs.
- Conducting a **Conservation Review**, through a process of extensive consultation with its UKOT partners. This document outlined the priority needs for implementation of practical conservation measures in each Overseas Territory, for Forum partner organisations and for UKOTCF itself. This has been incorporated into the Forum's on-line database, allowing UKOT partners to update it, and to incorporate the functionally similar aspects of Environment Charter strategies.
- Developing **one of the principal and most widely used sources of information** on UKOTs/CDs - the Forum's website (www.ukotcf.org). An interrogatable database was incorporated in response to requests from the Territories, designed so that information can be added and updated by partner organisations. The database modules help to track critical sites (and common issues across sites), conservation priorities, projects within the UKOTs/CDs, environmental education resources and other information on a wide variety of subjects.
- Providing for **exchange of experience, information and skills** between UK Overseas Territories and others, including by means of:
 - Our newsletter *Forum News*, circulated worldwide in print twice yearly, and to a wider audience on-line; Annual Reports; and newsletters on projects
 - International conferences and training events, including:
 - ~ *A Breath of Fresh Air* (London 1999), organised jointly with the FCO
 - ~ *Linking the Fragments of Paradise* (Gibraltar 2000), with the Gibraltar Government and NGOs
 - ~ *A Sense of Direction* (Bermuda 2003), with the Bermuda Government and NGOs

- ~ *Biodiversity that Matters* (Jersey 2006), with the Jersey Government and NGOs
- ~ *Making the Right Connections* (Grand Cayman 2009) with the Cayman Islands Government and NGOs

The Gibraltar, Bermuda, Jersey and Cayman conference proceedings are available on our website (www.ukotcf.org).

- **Raising awareness of the UKOTs/CDs and their biodiversity.** including by use of a series of display boards *Promoting Biodiversity Conservation in the UK's Overseas Territories* supported by FCO and NGOs. These have been exhibited at various locations in the UK and UKOTs, as well as at international meetings and events, resulting in viewing by several thousand people. A booklet version is circulated widely and can also be downloaded from the Forum's website (www.ukotcf.org).
- Facilitating **environmental educational initiatives:**
 - Supporting our NGO partner, Turks & Caicos National Trust, to produce, and later update an environmental education curriculum programme: *Our Land, Our Sea, Our People*, acknowledged by the TCI Departments of Education and for Environment & Coastal Resources to be a valuable contribution to the primary school curriculum.
 - Helping produce an educational video/DVD and support pack aimed at teenage school students in UKOTs, an output of the *Breath of Fresh Air* meeting, which has been widely distributed.
 - Establishing a set of environmental education modules on the Forum's website to meet the request of member organisations and students at the Jersey conference.
 - Working with the TCI Department of Education to develop curriculum resources on the theme of fresh water.
- **Reminding the UK Government of its responsibilities** to the UKOTs/CDs under Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs, including International Conventions), through formal consultations, Select Committee inquiries and other forms of Parliamentary liaison. Several years of lobbying and, more recently, evidence from UKOTCF to UK Parliamentary Select Committees have resulted in the UK Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) taking greater responsibility for conserving the globally important biodiversity of the UKOTs. DEFRA has earmarked part of its Darwin Initiative funding specifically for UKOTs and, in the short term, has provided extra resources to its agency, JNCC, to spend on UKOT environmental matters.
- UKOTCF is neutral in respect of political parties, and so briefs all. It appears that briefing (while the parties were in opposition) has had some benefits in bringing wider recognition in the present UK Coalition Government as to the nature of UKOTs.
- **Facilitating participation** of UKOT representatives as part of the national delegations (or as observers) at Conferences of Parties to MEAs such as the Ramsar Convention, and promotes the interests of partners in the UKOTs/CDs at other international meetings.
- At the request of UK Government, completing in 2005 a comprehensive review of existing and potential **Ramsar sites** (wetlands of international importance) in the UKOTs/CDs.
- Reviewing the implementation of the **Convention on Biological Diversity** in UKOTs/CDs, to note achievements and draw attention to areas needing further work.
- **Helping coordinate the resources** of its UK member organisations and others to work with UKOT partners, in a similar role to the Forum's own personnel. The UK member organisations devote small and varying proportions of their resources to support the UKOTs, often involving specialist staff volunteers, and these are much valued.

It has been noted by both NGO and government personnel from UKOTs that the Forum has been very effective in promoting previously rare links between UKOTs/CDs. One example is expertise

developed with the National Trust for the Cayman Islands in habitat mapping being put to use in the Turks & Caicos Islands.

Also, both Netherlands and French OT personnel have explored with UKOTCF the applicability of similar models. UKOTCF and its partners for French and Netherlands territories are now collaborating via *Bioverseas* and other initiatives. This partnership originally suggested to the European Commission's Environment Directorate-General the idea that has become *BEST*. This is the proposal that, if Overseas Countries & Territories voluntarily adopt protected area approaches inspired by the European Union's *Natura 2000* scheme, the EU might be able to give financial support. In addition, the *Net-BIOME* project, funded by the European Commission's Research Directorate-General brought together the tropical and sub-tropical Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries & Territories of France, Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands, with UKOTCF providing a link to the UKOTs. This addresses biodiversity research and has broken new ground in getting such a diverse group of countries working together.

<p>UKOTCF's Member and Associate organisations not linked to a single Territory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amphibian and Reptile Conservation • British Ecological Society • British Microbial Biodiversity Association • Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew • Royal Zoological Society of Scotland • Zoological Society of London • Army Ornithological Society • Royal Air Force Ornithological Society • Royal Naval Birdwatching Society <p>UKOTCF's Member and Associate organisations linked to a particular UK Overseas Territory or Crown Dependency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Akrotiri Environmental Education & Information Centre, Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas • Alderney Wildlife Trust • Anguilla National Trust • Ascension Conservation Centre • Ascension Heritage Society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bermuda Audubon Society • Bermuda National Trust • Bermuda Zoological Society • Chagos Conservation Trust • National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands, BVI • Jost van Dykes Preservation Society, BVI • National Trust for the Cayman Islands • Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society • La Société Guernesiaise • Société Jersiaise • National Trust of Jersey • Isle of Man Wildlife & Conservation Division • Montserrat National Trust • Pitcairn Natural Resources Division • St Helena National Trust • La Société Sercquaise, Sark • South Georgia Association • Turks & Caicos National Trust • Turks & Caicos National Museum
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