

Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee (GBSC)

Information Paper

**Paper for GECC GBSC on UK Overseas
Territories**

June 2009

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June 2009

Meeting of Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Ecosystems and Biodiversity (IDMGEB)

- IDMGEB met on the 11th May 2009. The main agenda item was to consider a UK government strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the UK Overseas Territories.

OT Training and Research Programme

- UKOTA¹ offered the first studentship under this programme to Helen Larzleer from Bermuda. Helen will start the 3-year BSc in Applied Ecology and Conservation at University of Reading in September 2009. The studentship will be managed by UK Overseas Territories Association. Helen will be encouraged to take a broad view of the OTs and focus project work on some of the other territories with greater capacity issues. Furthermore she will be encouraged to take on a champion-type of role in support of the scholarship programme.

Cayman Conference of OTs

- The Cayman Island UKOT Conference entitled 'Making the Right Connections' was held in Grand Cayman from the 30th May – 5th June 2009. The Conference was **funded** by DFID (from the Overseas Territories Environment Programme OTEP). It was organised by the UKOTCF and the Cayman Islands Government and National Trust. It was the fifth such conference (the first was held in 1999 in London). There was good representation from the UKOT governments and NGOs and from UK government and NGOs. Defra Minister Huw Irranca-Davies was also in attendance.
- There were a number of excellent presentations which highlighted how much great work was happening in nature conservation in the UKOTs.
- At the Conference the Defra Minister made some new announcements about funding under this round of Darwin: £1.5 million is being earmarked for OTs (call out end of June, applications in by c. 15th August). There will also be an OT challenge fund with projects of up to £25,000 which is designed to encourage relationships between OT and UK institutions to develop larger Darwin projects. There will also be Darwin fellowships that OTs can apply for.

Steering group meeting

The OT Steering group met on 2 June in the margins of the Cayman Conference.

- It was great to have our first face to face meeting with representatives from most of the UKOT governments around the table. There was interesting discussion and support around the programme and the opportunities it offers. Members of the group

¹ United Kingdom Overseas Territories Association <http://www.ukota.org/>

were keen to address the research priorities identified in consultations for the GBSC paper.

- It was highlighted that training opportunities need to be flexible and be built around what individuals in each territory need, rather than a 'one size fits all'
- It was emphasised that effort should be put into developing skills on territory and encouraging cross territory skill share. This is being developed by a territory skill audit lead by Dr Samia Sarkis.