

UK Overseas Territories Training and Research Programme

Steering Group Paper

An overview and update.

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1 Programme background

1.1 Background: Joint Nature Conservation Committee ([JNCC](#)) undertook a review of the biodiversity research priorities in the UK Overseas Territories (OTs) in 2007 at the request of the [Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee](#) (GBSC) of the Global Environmental Change Committee. The review was based on the top 3 priorities as defined by the UKOTs. A [summary paper](#) was compiled and presented to the GBSC in November 2007. The GBSC worked with the [British Ecological Society](#) to circulate the key research areas to their contacts, and a number of UK academic institutions expressed an interest in working with the OTs to address some of their research needs. [Reading University](#) contacted the JNCC with the idea of a holistic concept which would build capacity in the territories and address research needs in the long term. This [concept](#) was developed into the UKOT Training and Research Programme in consultation with the UKOTs

2 Programme achievements.

2.1 Programme Management Structure: The Programme has developed a management structure that is led by a *Programme Steering Group* which will shape and steer the development of the programme. The group is composed primarily of UKOT government environment officials (Anguilla, Ascension, Bermuda, British Antarctic Territory, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falklands, Montserrat, Pitcairn, St. Helena, South Georgia, Sovereign Base Area Cyprus, Turks and Caicos Islands), a representative of the University of Reading, a representative from the UK Overseas Territories Association¹ (UKOTA) and JNCC. All UKOT governments were invited to nominate a representative to be a [member](#) of this group.

- The *first meeting* took place in January 2009. The main outcomes were an agreed [Terms of Reference](#) and an action for the OTs to undertake an audit of existing skills to be used as a basis for the development of [cross-territory skill share](#).
- The *second meeting* was held in June 2009 in the margins of the [Cayman UKOT Conference](#). There was interesting discussion and support for the programme and the opportunities it offers. Members of the group were keen to address the research priorities identified in consultations for the GECC GBSC paper. It was highlighted that training opportunities need to be flexible and be built around what individuals in each territory need, rather than 'one size fits all'. It was

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

2.3 Programme Communication. All information relevant to the programme is available [on line](#). This is currently being hosted on the JNCC website.

2.4 Programme Funding and Resources: A number of avenues for funding work under this programme have been explored.

2.4.1 JNCC Research contributions: In March 2009 and July 2009 the JNCC offered to contribute £3,000 to a total of three research projects. The Programme Steering Group members were invited to submit requests for contributions to address high priority biodiversity research needs. So far, contributions have been made to the following research projects

- Red-footed Booby monitoring, Little Cayman
- Increasing biodiversity of coral reefs by creating an *Acropora* nursery, Turks and Caicos

A decision will shortly be made on the third successful research project. JNCC will continue to make small contributions to high priority research needs in the UKOTs under this Programme.

2.4.2 NERC knowledge exchange grant application: In 2008 the University of Reading, with support from the Steering Group, applied for a NERC knowledge exchange grant to cover the non-taught components of the programme. Outputs were to include: workshops, refinement of the website and development of an information hub. Unfortunately the grant application was unsuccessful.

2.4.3 Defra International Biodiversity Research Programme: The UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) have an international biodiversity research Programme. They have recently identified the OTs as one of the priority areas for funding over the next 3 years and are working with the JNCC to develop UKOT research projects that meet criteria for allocation of funding.

2.4.4 JNCC funding database: With DFID funding, the JNCC has developed a database of potential donors for OT biodiversity conservation projects. Some of these can potentially fund biodiversity research

3. Actions implemented to deliver the Programme's [4 key objectives](#).

3.1 Objective 1: Training and skills development.

3.1.1 The JNCC contributed £66,000 (GBP) funding to cover a 3-year undergraduate *scholarship* in applied ecology and conservation at the University of Reading to commence in September 2009. The scholarship was open to all OT citizens and is managed by the UK Overseas Territories Association. The first scholarship has been awarded to Helen Larzleer from Bermuda.

3.2 Objective 2: Access to UK-based research and advisory expertise.

3.2.1 *Overviews of biodiversity and geodiversity in the UKOTs:* The JNCC funded a number of cross territory overviews including:

- invasive species in the OTs;
- amphibians and reptiles in the OTs (with Herpetological conservation Trust);
- geodiversity in the OTs.

These documents are currently in draft form and OT personnel are encouraged to co-author the section on their territory.

3.2.2 A [database of UK academics](#) who are interested in carrying out research in the UKOTs has been compiled by JNCC. All researchers who undertake OT projects are encouraged to record information about their project with the Programme to facilitate cross-territory sharing of information and expertise.

3.3 Objective 3: Activities to enhance knowledge transfer between OTs

3.3.1 *Cross-Territory Skill Audit:* Dr Samia Sarkis (Bermuda) is undertaking an audit to establish projects, research activities and the skills available to UKOTs that could potentially be shared across all the territories.

3.3.2 *Cross-Territory Skill share:* Opportunities for cross-territory skill share are being explored. This is an area that still needs to be developed under the programme.

3.4 Objective 4: Collaboration with tertiary education facilities in the OTs

3.4.1 It was highlighted in early consultations around the programme concept, that there should be a focus on collaborating with tertiary education institutions in the UKOTs. This is an area that is still to be developed under the programme.

4 Lessons learnt.

4.1 The programme will be developed based on regular evaluations and refined based on lessons learnt. Some of these were highlighted in the [Steering Group meetings](#). In addition, detailed discussions on the lessons learnt will form an integral part of the September 2009 Steering Group workshop.

5 Next steps.

5.1 September Steering Group workshop: To systemize and formalise actions to deliver the Programmes objectives, a Programme action plan will be developed during a 2-day workshop with members of the Steering group on the 17th and 18th September. The event will be hosted by JNCC