Buglife - The Invertebrate Conservation Trust

Submission to the UK OTs Biodiversity Strategy Review

14 March 2013

Buglife background

- Actively involved with biodiversity conservation in the UK OTs since 2008 (South Georgia & St Helena),

- Working as a partner with UK and OT NGOs and governments,

- Effort focused on improving the evidence base for invertebrates and capacity building for invertebrate conservation.

1. Scope and Purpose of the OT's Biodiversity Strategy - overview.

- The Strategy was valuable in setting out the roles and responsibilities of the three government departments. However, to be effective, the Strategy needs to lay out a work plan for delivering the goals of the strategy. This needs a clear timescale with milestones, particularly in relation to the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

- The Strategy has usefully provided financial support via the 'Darwin Initiative' main funding round, the 'Challenge Fund' and the newly created 'Darwin Plus' funding stream. However, there remains a large gap between what UK Government and alternative funding sources can provide and what is needed for high priority biodiversity conservation projects (RSPB 2007, JNCC 2008).

- The Strategy usefully formed a cross-departmental OTs Biodiversity Group. However, it would be very desirable for Defra - as the lead coordinator of the Strategy – to resource staff dedicated to, and able to champion, the OTs Biodiversity Strategy and work plan.

2. Nature of work undertaken in relation to original priorities.

- Support for enhancing the biodiversity knowledge base, including 'Cinderella' groups of poorly known taxa, has been valuable. This will help the UK Government to assess its progress in meeting the 2020 Aichi biodiversity targets.

- Eradication programmes of major, non-native, invasive animals (South Georgia, Henderson Island) are very welcome. They potentially offer ecosystem-wide benefits, even in situations where biodiversity information is incomplete.

- Defra's Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera) has supported the Strategy through a non-native species identification service. This is an example of how technical expertise in UK Government-funded institutions can be harnessed to benefit OTs biodiversity. Such assistance needs to be coordinated and sustained, as part of the Strategy's work plan, to be maximally effective.

3. Priorities for future action.

The following priorities should be incorporated in the work plan for the Biodiversity Strategy:

- The results of a Defra project, to prioritise OT islands for invasive, non-native animal eradication;

- The results of an FCO project, to assess levels of threat and extinction risks to biodiversity in the OTs;

- The UK Government should agree a comprehensive programme of biodiversity research with OTs governments, NGOs and research institutions. This would meet the evidence needs of OTs to safeguard biodiversity;

- The UK Government should identify priorities for improving environmental governance in the OTs; plus the means to ensure that appropriate legislation is put in place.