



## Consultation on United Kingdom Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy Pre-meeting submission from Falklands Conservation

### **i. The scope and purpose of the Strategy**

The “scope and purpose” of the UK strategy still seems to be valid, albeit with some updating where action has been completed (e.g. the combining of OTEP with Darwin), or action still to be completed after its due date (e.g. the web-based search tool for OT funding sources, unless it is the rather thin one on the JNCC website?).

- The Aichi targets can be encompassed within the existing strategic priorities, with the exception of education/awareness raising and capacity building (see Appendix).
- The UK strategic priority ii. (invasive alien species) is welcome as it focuses attention on a key issue relevant to OTs; in the future, it could also be a handle for a specific grant scheme targeted at invasive species.

#### ***Relation of UK strategy to OT strategies***

As stated in the Strategy, this is the UK Government strategy, and “primary responsibility for biodiversity conservation and wider environmental management in the Overseas Territories has been devolved to the Territory governments.” This leads to the issue of territorial independence: i.e. how much latitude is there for divergence of an OT strategy from the strategic priorities in the UK strategy if the OT is still to receive funding from the UK? Having said that, the priorities i-v are high level, so in practice it will probably be a matter of how much emphasis is given to each of the UK strategic priorities; i.e. the strategic priorities are themselves prioritised within each OT (owing to limited resources – see below).

- If the UK strategy is to be used to guide UK biodiversity funding to the OTs, then ideally the funding to an individual territory should relate to the territorial priorities.

Within the Falkland Islands day-to-day action on biodiversity is guided by the FI Biodiversity Strategy 2008-18 rather than the high-level UK strategy. Since the FI strategy was produced in 2008 there was a review of the strategy in 2011, a mainstreaming project in 2012 and a full review planned for 2013/2014 as well as National Ecosystem Assessments.

- Continual reviews, often UK-led, do keep moving the goalposts and additionally, in a country with few individuals actually working in the biodiversity field, do take away from potential time spent actually implementing the original strategy.
- If the UK strategy was to be significantly altered, then thought will have to be given on how to align the FI and other OT strategies with the revised UK one.

#### ***Funding and capacity***

As the UK strategy states, “JNCC advised that the total cost of meeting high priority biodiversity conservation projects was in excess of £48 million over a 5-year period.”

- Lack of money and staff time is still the main issue preventing full implementation of the FI strategy: although as the UK strategy recognises, it is “institutional capacity” that is often lacking. For example, the FI strategy has an action for FIG’s Environmental Planning Department “Prepare an environmental monitoring strategy”, the need for which was reiterated in the recent mainstreaming project; however, there have been no resources as yet to implement this.
- Assistance from organisations in the UK does help, but ultimately the outputs from off-island work still have to be mediated within the islands by the same few individuals on the ground: in other words, there is a risk that this off-island work might just sit on a shelf as one of many priorities to be looked if and when time permits.

### **ii. Priorities for future action to support biodiversity in the OTs**

#### ***Continued and additional funding***

The commitment in the Strategy that the UK Government will “provide project funds for biodiversity conservation and wider environmental management” is welcome, as is the new Darwin Plus grant scheme, access to EU BEST and the JNCC funds.

- The priority for Darwin Plus is to ensure that the amount of money available is commensurate with the biodiversity needs of the OTs; in practice, combining OTEP with Darwin means that now there is only one pot to apply for rather than two, and the number of applications, and hence competition, is likely to increase. There is currently a significant shortfall of money to carry out all the action in the existing FI Biodiversity Strategy, let alone the more recent add-ons.
- The potential for a new grant scheme targeted on the eradication/control of invasive species (as opposed to strategic planning) should be investigated.

### ***Competition for existing funds***

There may also be an increasing number of applications from UK research organisations and institutions to Darwin Plus and EU BEST.

- OT-based organisations must not lose out as competition for funds increases.
- Experience within the Falklands indicates that outside organisations generally lack detailed knowledge of the locality and hence rely on the help of the likes of Falklands Conservation to prepare a grant application or assist with logistics; this can result in local organisations being considerably over-exploited, often without commensurate recompense, to the extent that their capacity to promote and undertake the priority practical actions already identified is being compromised.
- Reliance on competitive funds such as Darwin Plus to implement the FI strategy makes long-term strategic biodiversity planning difficult – because the outcome of a grant application can be seen as a ‘lottery’.

## **iii. Issues not adequately addressed by the Strategy, and options for remedial action**

### ***Institutional capacity***

In the Falkland Islands Environmental Charter, there is a statement “5. Help the Falkland Islands to ensure it has the legislation, institutional capacity and mechanisms it needs to meet international obligations.” ‘Capacity’ was also a key issue identified in the FI Mainstreaming Workshop (May 2012). The UK Biodiversity Strategy also recognises that ‘institutional capacity’ in the OTs is a limiting factor, even if there were more funding.

- The strategy does not indicate how institutional capacity can be increased.
- One solution would be to introduce grants to pay for core staff within OT organisations; this would also ensure continuity in biodiversity action because the current time-limited project grants mean there is a continual through-flow of project staff. It would be hoped that in time these grant-funded posts would be subsumed into the funding streams of the OTs themselves.

### ***Marine conservation***

The five UK strategic priorities listed in the UK strategy are all currently being implemented within the Falkland Islands to a lesser or greater extent, except for “v. developing ecosystem-based initiatives for the conservation and sustainable use of the marine environment,” although there is currently a Darwin Plus application which, if successful, would begin to take this forward.

- The current approach to marine conservation is through ‘marine spatial planning’ and ‘marine protected areas’ (MPAs) so the UK strategy ‘strategic priority v.’ could be more explicit on these two aspects.

### ***Education and communication***

The UK strategic priorities make no mention of ‘Education and Awareness Raising.’ There is limited point in starting sophisticated projects on, for example, ecosystem services, if the fundamental conservation priorities and environmental needs are not already being communicated to local people and authorities in an effective way. See also Appendix below.

- More resources for education and awareness-raising are needed for most OTs and Darwin Plus cannot be used for these topics.

## Appendix: Brief comparison of Aichi biodiversity targets and the UK OT Biodiversity Strategy's strategic priorities

Aichi Biodiversity Targets – Strategic Goals	OT Biodiversity Strategy strategic priority
<b>A:</b> Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society	i, ii
<b>B:</b> Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use	i, ii, iii, iv, v
<b>C:</b> To improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity	i, v
<b>D:</b> Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services	iv
<b>E:</b> Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building	i, iv, although Aichi Targets 19 & 20 not covered

### UK OT Biodiversity Strategy's strategic priorities

- i. Obtaining data on the location and status of biodiversity interests and the human activities affecting biodiversity to inform the preparation of policies and management plans (including baseline survey and subsequent monitoring);
- ii. Preventing the establishment of invasive alien species, and eradicating or controlling species that have already become established;
- iii. Developing cross-sectoral approaches to climate change adaptation that are consistent with the principles of sustainable development;
- iv. Developing tools to value ecosystem services to inform sustainable development policies and practices;
- v. Developing ecosystem-based initiatives for the conservation and sustainable use of the marine environment.

### Conclusion

The Aichi Strategic Goals and Targets can all be encompassed within the existing UK OT Biodiversity Strategy and hence a revision is not needed to take account of them. The exceptions are Targets 19 and 20:

**Target 19:** By 2020, knowledge, the science base and technologies relating to biodiversity, its values, functioning, status and trends, and the consequences of its loss, are improved, widely shared and transferred, and applied.

- Hence Education/Awareness Raising should be added as a strategic priority to the OT strategy.

**Target 20:** By 2020, at the latest, the mobilization of financial resources for effectively implementing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 from all sources, and in accordance with the consolidated and agreed process in the Strategy for Resource Mobilization, should increase substantially from the current levels. This target will be subject to changes contingent to resource needs assessments to be developed and reported by Parties.

- Hence increasing OT institutional capacity should also be added as a strategic priority (through increased financial resources).

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22 February 2013