## The UK Overseas Territories Fund: An unparalleled opportunity for environmental philanthropy

Environmental Funders Network in partnership with John Ellerman Foundation

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Environmental Funders Network works to transform environmental philanthropy in the UK: increasing funding levels, improving effectiveness and supporting people and organisations helping to create a thriving planet. We provide tailored support across the funding community to strengthen their work – whether that's within our membership network for funders and advisors, or in our forum for fundraisers. We share knowledge, expertise and research and foster connections. We also work to motivate and inspire those not yet funding environmental causes to give. The need for strategically-deployed environmental philanthropy has never been greater. Our aim is to give the funding community the knowledge, networks and agency they need to address these key challenges of our time.

John Ellerman Foundation is an independent endowed grantmaking charity, set up in 1971. Our strategy for 2022-25 calls on us to deliver our organisational aim to advance the wellbeing of people, society and the natural world with 100% of our assets – namely our grantmaking, our investing, our values and our organisational competencies, capabilities and assets.

UKOTs Fund Review — O3

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## **Foreword**



Those of you reading this report may already be familiar with the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs). The degree to which you are an advocate for supporting environmental work in them will vary. Whatever has brought you to this short report, it is our fervent hope that by the time you have read it you will be a passionate and vocal advocate for, and champion of, environmental work in the UKOTs.

The UKOTs are arguably the UK's most important environmental treasures. They are home to every major habitat type on earth, including rainforest, tundra, desert, coral reef and icefield. They are crucibles of evolution, home to at least 94% of the UK's unique wildlife species, and comprise the fifth largest marine estate on the planet. Nature exists in the UKOTs at an unimaginably vast scale. If you care about our planet and the environment, and are seeking to respond to the nature and climate crises, then the UKOTs matter.

This report shares the inspiring and impactful experiences of the 17 grant-holders supported by the UKOTs Fund - a collaboration involving multiple funders led by John Ellerman Foundation for two rounds in 2021 and 2022.

The core cost grants have supported major conservation and research efforts, as well as ensuring meaningful community engagement activities and helping to shore up these organisations and their committed staff and volunteer teams for the future.

The report shows that there is support for the UKOTs Fund from grant-holders and there is both appetite and urgent need for further funding.

I often wonder, when is the work of independent philanthropic institutions and individuals at its best? I believe it is when we work together to step in and step up. When we come together to shine a light on something not just deserving of our attention but quite frankly demanding of it. Many of you will be hearing the term polycrisis with increasing regularity in your lives. We are in an age of significant disruption and interconnected global threats, and this includes, but is not limited to, the nature and climate crises. If we can come together to support environmental work and help to address climate change in the UKOTs, in a manner that facilitates community leadership, frankly this has to be one of the best ways for us to respond to the polycrisis.

#### Sufina Ahmad MBE

Director, John Ellerman Foundation



# **Executive** summary

The UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) are home to an astonishing 94% of the UK's biodiversity, encompassing a range of ecosystems including coral reefs, rainforests and polar habitats. Despite their critical importance for global conservation, the UKOTs receive a miniscule 0.03% of UK philanthropic funding, a serious funding gap which risks the loss of a great number of unique species on the UK's watch. John Ellerman Foundation has made significant strides in addressing this disparity through their UKOTs Fund, a pooled funding initiative launched in 2021 with the aim of supporting transformative and locally-led environmental work.

The UKOTs Fund has, to date, distributed over £1.8 million across two rounds, supporting a wide range of work in ten of the UKOTs. In partnership with John Ellerman Foundation, EFN undertook a review into its impact, along with the experiences of the grant-holders.

#### Key findings include:

The UKOTs Fund has catalysed urgent conservation activities such as invasive species eradication, habitat restoration and the protection of both marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

Specific achievements include the creation of coral biobanks in the Turks and Caicos Islands, the creation and expansion of national parks in the Falkland Islands and Anguilla, and groundbreaking research on whale sharks in St Helena.



Funding has also bolstered the capacity of local environmental organisations, enabling them to deliver more impactful and sustained conservation efforts, and leverage further funding.



Grant-holders highlighted the ease of interacting with the UKOTs Fund and its flexibility, particularly in providing muchneeded core cost funding, rarely available from other sources.

The role of the UKOTs Fund in filling a crucial gap in the environmental funding landscape was made apparent, and the positive feedback received adds to John Ellerman Foundation's reputation as a progressive and responsive funder – the exact approaches most needed for work in the UKOTs.

The achievements of the UKOTs Fund relative to the level of funding provided, highlight the potential for funders to facilitate significant conservation benefits in an extremely costefficient manner in these unique areas.

We therefore strongly recommend the launch of a new round of the UKOTs Fund in 2O25, with the long-term ambition of establishing a permanent, collaborative funding programme. Continuing the UKOTs Fund would not only sustain the momentum of current grant-holders but also enable additional groups to address the increasing pressures on the fragile ecosystems of the UKOTs.

In conclusion, the UKOTs Fund has played a transformative role in helping to conserve biodiversity across the UKOTs in a relatively short amount of time. To build on this success, expanding the Fund's scope and engaging more philanthropic contributors will be critical to addressing the urgent environmental challenges that these areas face. For funders committed to responding to the nature and climate crises, in the UK and beyond, the UKOTs Fund offers an unparalleled opportunity to deliver impact in an effective and progressive manner.



**UKOTs Fund Review** -· 08

#### The UK Overseas Territories

The UKOTs are a diverse group of areas located across the globe, from the Caribbean to the South Atlantic, each with its own unique ecosystem, culture, and governance. They include small islands, large archipelagos, and a section of Antarctica, and are collectively home to approximately 320,000 people. These inhabitants have all chosen to maintain a constitutional relationship with the UK and are supported in areas such as defence, international representation, and economic stability.













#### Anguilla

pop. 19,400 - One of the Caribbean's most important seabird islands with dryland forest and coral reefs.







#### Turks & Caicos Islands

pop. 60,400 - Two groups of islands with vast coral reefs & wetlands, famous for pygmy boas, flamingos & rock iguanas.



#### Montserrat

pop. 5,500 - Soufrière Hills volcano dominates the south of the island; species include unique invertebrates  $\boldsymbol{\epsilon}$  hummingbirds.





#### Pitcairn Islands

pop. 50 - Four volcanic islands, including a World Heritage Site raised coral atoll, large marine reserve & rare birds/marine life.







#### **British Antarctic Territory**

Uninhabited - Seven times the size of the UK with icefields, emperor penguins, leopard seals  $\alpha$  Antarctic blue whales.



#### Falkland Islands

pop. 3,700 - Archipelago of 778 islands with vast peatlands, pristine kelp forests, penguins, albatrosses & whales.





#### South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands

Uninhabited - Remote islands with tundras, glaciers  $\alpha$  active volcanoes, hosting vast penguin, seal, whale  $\alpha$  bird populations.







#### St Helena

pop. 4,100 - Volcanic & tropical island with cloud forest & a third of all endemic British species, including glow-in-the-dark woodlice.



#### **Ascension Island**

pop. 773 - Isolated volcanic island with one of world's largest marine reserves; a key breeding site for green turtles  $\bar{\alpha}$  tropical seabirds.





#### Tristan de Cunha

pop. 236 - Group of volcanic islands with World Heritage Site islands, Atlantic's largest marine reserve  $\alpha$  20 million seabirds.







#### Gibraltar

pop. 29,700 - Famous for Europe's only wild monkeys, and a bottleneck for millions of migrating birds with limestone cliffs  $\alpha$  dynamic marine straits.



#### Akrotiri & Dhekelia Sovereign Base Areas

pop 18,200 - Hosting Cyprus' largest wetlands, turtle-nesting beaches, flamingos, vultures, turtles & monk seals.



The UKOTs encompass an incredible array of diverse ecosystems and host an astonishing 94% of the UK's unique wildlife species, from blue iguanas to giant tree daisies. They encompass every major habitat type on Earth – rainforests, tundra, deserts, coral reefs and icefields – and are home to a quarter of the world's penguins and a third of the world's albatrosses. Collectively, they also form the fifth largest marine estate in the world.

The UKOTs face unique challenges related to climate change, conservation, and sustainable development, making them a critical focus for environmental protection. Despite this, efforts to protect and restore these remarkable natural environments receive minimal support.

The primary source of funding for environmental projects in the UKOTs is the UK Government's annual <u>Darwin Plus</u> fund. However, this fund is insufficient to meet all the needs of the Territories and is constrained in the topics and approaches it supports.

Consequently, philanthropy plays a crucial role in supporting the UKOTs. Yet in recent years, only O.O3% of total environmental funding from UK trusts and foundations has been directed to these areas. Meanwhile, the small communities of the UKOTs (nine have fewer than 5,000 inhabitants), do not have capacity to fund this work themselves. If this situation continues, we risk losing globally important species and habitats for which the UK bears a profound responsibility.



#### John Ellerman Foundation, EFN and the UKOTs Fund

Since 2012, John Ellerman Foundation has been awarding grants for transformative and locally-led environmental work in the UKOTs. Their 2022-2025 strategy expresses their commitment to the UKOTs as one of their priority areas. Between 2013 and 2020, they issued approximately £1.8 million of grants across seven of the UKOTs, through the main Environment funding category in place at the Foundation.

In 2020 they funded Jonathan Hall from the RSPB to complete a part time secondment to EFN to build the case for supporting environmental work in the UKOTs. His work resulted in a case for support publication The UK Overseas Territories: An unparalleled opportunity for global environmental impact and accompanying video (along with additional resources including a podcast episode) that sought to bring to life the sheer potential for environmental funding in the UKOTs.

The work highlighted important policy and practical conservation work happening across the UKOTs, including invasive species eradication work and creating legislation for marine protected areas (MPAs). One year later, as part of their 50th anniversary celebrations, John Ellerman Foundation launched the UKOTs Fund, with support from EFN. Operating as a pooled fund with John Ellerman Foundation as one of five funders (with a sixth offering practical support), it distributed over £1.8 million across two rounds in 2021 and 2022. In both rounds, the Fund was advertised through their website and associated channels, as well as those of their partners, and timed so as not to coincide with the Darwin Plus fund.



In those two years, 17 grants were made to organisations based across ten of the UKOTs,<sup>2</sup> with funding offered for up to three years. Applicants were invited to apply directly or through UK-based conduits. (For areas with a lower level of charity governance this second option was compulsory.) A range of marine and land-based work was supported, including scientific research; community engagement; building organisational core capacity; policy influencing; and the development of innovative new technologies. A third round of the Fund was not sought in 2023 as some of the projects were still ongoing, and capacity across the UKOTs was deemed insufficient to require another round immediately. Fundraising constraints also impacted the viability of a third round in 2023. Instead the decision was taken to review the Fund, and then seek to bring new funders on board.

To date, the UKOTs Fund has successfully increased environmental philanthropy for the UKOTs from UK-based trusts and foundations while raising broader awareness among environmental funders. The ambition now is to establish a permanent, collaborative funding programme, designed to respond to the needs of these unique areas and their communities.

1. In 2O21, £1.O5 million was distributed, with John Ellerman Foundation contributing £9OOk, alongside the Dulverton Trust (£5Ok) and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (UK Branch; £1OOk). In 2O22, £794k was distributed, with John Ellerman Foundation contributing £15Ok, alongside the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (UK Branch; £84k), the Postcode Planet Trust (£5OOk) and an anonymous funder (£6Ok). The Worshipful Company of Fishmongers cohosted a dinner with John Ellerman Foundation as part of the planning process.

2. All of the inhabitants of the UKOTs have democratically chosen to remain a part of the UK, with the exception of the Chagos archipelago, also referred to as the British Indian Ocean Territory. The Chagossians were forcibly evicted in the 196Os and 7Os and the involvement of the UK and US in the archipelago was ruled as unlawful by the UN. For this reason, Chagos was not considered in the UKOTs Fund. As of October 2O24, sovereignty of Chagos is being handed to Mauritius.

#### 2024 activities

In 2024, John Ellerman Foundation partnered with EFN to create a new <u>UKOTs learning series</u> for funders. Its purpose was to raise the profile of existing and potential environmental projects and initiatives in the UKOTs. This learning series ran across the second half of 2024, bringing funders together to learn more about the UKOTs, meet those working on the ground, learn about innovative environmental practices, and contribute to the development of the next stages of the UKOTs Fund.

This report complements the learning series by providing a full review of the first two rounds of the UKOTs Fund. Here we explore applications to the Fund, the projects supported, the experiences of the grant-holders and the priorities moving forward. To collate the information required, we conducted a review of the applications received by John Ellerman Foundation in both rounds of the UKOTs Fund. We then used the previous progress reports submitted by those that were successful, along with a survey, to understand their achievements and overall experience of interacting with the Fund.





#### The UKOTs Fund in numbers

The UKOTs Fund received <u>27</u> applications in <u>2021</u> and a further <u>17 in 2022</u>, representing a total of <u>37</u> individual organisations. Twelve organisations were based in the UK and <u>25 in the UKOTs</u> (three of whom applied via a UK-based organisation as a conduit). A total of £3,089,523 was requested in 2021 and £1,879,768 in 2022.

In 2021, nine applications related to seven territories were awarded funding, with a total of £1,050,010 distributed. Only one applicant was awarded a lower amount than they applied for as the reviewers were less confident about one element of their proposal. A further eight applications were successful in 2022, with a total of £743,695 disseminated to work related to six territories. (A ninth applicant focused on work in Gibraltar was also successful, bringing the total offered to £794,000 but they had to be allocated less funding than they originally applied for and later withdrew).





#### **Funded projects**

Information on the 17 successful applications is outlined in in the tables on the following pages. These applications were assessed based on the funding guidelines for the UKOTs Fund by a panel of staff and Trustees from the funding organisations involved, with the input of Jonathan Hall as advisor to the Fund. Those that met the aim of the Fund to support transformative and locally-led environmental work in the UKOTs and met the stated criteria most closely were selected for a grant. For two organisations in each round, a follow up meeting online was requested to clarify different matters before a grant was awarded. Those that were unsuccessful were informed of the decision taken and the reasons for declining.

#### Overview of the 17 projects supported by the UKOTs Fund

Lead organisation		Geographic focus	Grant year	Grant duration	Amount awarded
Anguilla National Trust	Anguilla	Anguilla	2021	3 years	£150,000
Bermuda Zoological Society	Bermuda	Bermuda	2021	2 years	£53,28O
BirdLife Cyprus (via RSPB as conduit)	Cyprus	Cyprus SBAs	2022	2 years	£85,000
Blue Marine Foundation	UK	St Helena	2021	3 years	£149,145
Blue Marine Foundation	UK	Cyprus SBAs	2022	2 years	£99,425
Falklands Conservation	Falkland Islands	Falkland Islands	2021	1 year	£120,000
Falklands Conservation	Falkland Islands	Falkland Islands	2022	16 months	£121,100
Montserrat National Trust (via RSPB as conduit)	Montserrat	Montserrat	2022	3 years	£119,800
National Trust for the Cayman Islands	Cayman Islands	Cayman Islands	2021	2 years	£100,000
Protect Blue (via Blue Marine Foundation as conduit)	UK	Pitcairn Islands	2022	lyear	£37,000
RSPB	UK	Cayman Islands	2021	1 year	£150,000
RSPB	UK	Cayman Islands	2022	1 year	£76,37O
South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute	Falkland Islands	Falkland Islands	2022	2 years	£103,000
St Helena National Trust	St Helena	St Helena	2021	3 years	£91,O37
The Turks and Caicos National Trust (via RSPB as conduit)	Turks and Caicos Island	ls Turks & Caicos Islands	s 2022	2 years	£102,000
Turks & Caicos Reef Fund	Turks & Caicos Islands	Turks & Caicos Islands	s 2021	2 years	£121,837
Zoological Society of London	UK	Ascension Island	2021	1.5 years	£114,711

#### Descriptions and progress of the supported projects

Lead organisation / grant year	Original objective	Status (as of Sept. 2024)	Progress, achievements and barriers (as of Sept. 2024)
Anguilla National Trust (2021)	Purchase of O.56 ha to expand Fountain National Park, Anguilla's largest terrestrial protected area.	Ongoing	Planned achievement: Fountain National Park expanded through land purchase; securement of the area as pest-proof and hurricane-resistant, with the ambition for it to become a conservation sanctuary.  Further progress: Target invasive species removed; reintroduction of native and endangered species begun; a tourism strategy and public awareness strategy being designed; further funding leveraged for endangered species reintroduction, biosecurity and biodiversity monitoring, and an additional field officer.
Bermuda Zoological Society (2021)	Support for the Hungry Bay Restoration Committee, specifically to stabilise the mangrove, increasing food security and Blue Carbon storage.	Completed in 2023	Planned achievement: Seawall constructed, substantially reducing storm wave impacts on the Hungry Bay mangrove forest which was then able to withstand a hurricane in 2O24.  Further progress: More people, including volunteers, brought onboard; further funding leveraged to sustain mangrove replanting work over the next decade.  Challenges: Substantial additional funding had to be raised for a new engineering solution for the seawall, which cost more than anticipated.
BirdLife Cyprus (2022)	Core funding for science and advocacy work related to habitat management and illegal bird-killing, and an expert hydrological and wetland management study.	Ongoing due to complete end of 2024	Planned achievement: Draft wetland management report and comprehensive hydrological assessments completed; advocacy efforts undertaken to address habitat threats and illegal bird-killing, which has secured a continued reduction in illegal trapping; wetland management recommendations being drawn up to support local wildlife.
Blue Marine Foundation (2021)	Support of St Helena National Trust marine team.	Ongoing due to complete end of 2024	Planned achievement: Whale shark research conducted, identifying over 3O previously unrecorded sharks, taking the total island population to 323; Marine Management Plan revised and submitted to ministers for approval; local staff trained, strengthening the effectiveness and longevity of the MPA by increasing staff capacity and skills.  Challenges: A delay in recruiting the Marine Conservation Manager position slowed programme development.
Blue Marine Foundation (2022)	The establishment of a MPA off Akrotiri.	Ongoing	Planned achievement: Awareness and local support raised for the MPA, particularly among fishers; literature review conducted to inform MPA design, aimed to be effective, scientifically robust and community-driven; MPA committee formed; vulnerability of key habitats to fishing and climate change mapped.
Falklands Conservation (2021)	Purchase of two threatened offshore islands in the Pebble Island Group.	Ongoing	Planned achievement: Land purchase of Pebble Islet and Government Islet; preparations for restoration work involving volunteers.  Challenges: Weather- and logistics-related difficulties in building volunteer accommodation on the islet.
Falklands Conservation (2022)	Creation of the Falklands' first national park which will protect two peatland mountain ranges.	Ongoing	Planned achievement: Local government approval of the legislative framework, and resource-allocation, for the first National Park; public consultation, legislative preparations and drafting of the management plan all underway.  Further progress: The grant has encouraged the real potential for the Government to start its own land set aside scheme (or similar).
Montserrat National Trust (2022)	Core funding for a Conservation Officer role to deliver the Trust's new strategic plan.	Ongoing until March 2026	Planned achievement: Conservation Officer recruited, enabling herbarium development, biodiversity survey, leverage of further funding to upgrade the botanic garden, staff training in propagation techniques, increased awareness and outreach among the public and young people, pest and disease control.  Further progress: A youth group has been established with links to other international youth organisations.

f Is	National Trust or the Cayman slands 2021)	Core funding for an Environmental Policy and Impact Officer, to enhance protected area management.	Completed in October 2024	Planned achievement: Officer recruited in late 2022, leading to improved management of protected areas, design and implementation of an invasive species strategy which includes growing local support to protect native species; support secured from Cayman's two largest hotels to market a carbon offset programme to purchase local mangrove habitat; interns from local schools hosted and trained in conservation work.  Further progress: Ongoing advocacy for environmental protection in the face of increasing development threatening the Central Wetland Mangroves.
	Protect Blue 2022)	Branding and communications strategy for the Pitcairn MPA.	Completed in 2024	Planned achievement: Capacity-building within the small Pitcairn community, particularly to understand people's connection to the MPA. This social impact work is being valued for its ability to help local people feel heard and represented.  Challenges: Had to adjust a plan for building an open source toolkit for the MPA brand due to conflict between government departments.
	RSPB 2021)	Purchase of land at the Cayman Salina Reserve Important Bird and Biodiversity Area.	Completed in 2023	Planned achievement: The land - richly bio-diverse tropical dry forest - was successfully purchased for the protection of birds and other species.  Further progress: The purchase helped to raise the ambition of the National Trust of the Cayman Islands to protect habitats and species through additional land acquisitions. The process also helped the RSPB to develop organisationally so it is equipped to facilitate international land parcels.
	RSPB 2022)	Core funding for a Sustainable Cayman Campaign Officer to aid protection of Cayman's Central Mangrove Wetland.	Completed in August 2024	Planned achievement: Campaign Officer recruited who continues to work for the campaign post funding; advocacy to re-route a road planned to go through the central mangrove wetland resulted in the National Roads Authority moving a section of the road out of a mangrove area owned by the local National Trust.  Further progress: Improved financial practices are enabling the organisation to receive and manage two further project grants.
E	South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute 2022)	Core costs for a PA and Communications Officer and an Office Manager.	Completed in October 2024	Planned achievement: Positions filled, resulting in refreshed marketing material, ongoing activities such as Masters and PhD information sessions, and growth and enhancement of general outreach and communications.  Further progress: The funding has contributed extensively to the growth and development of the organisation.
١	St Helena National Trust 2021)	Core funding for fundraising and business development work.	Ongoing	Planned achievement: New staff recruited; fundraising strategy being finalised and new fundraising activities being introduced; two Darwin Local projects awarded to monitor seabirds and predator interventions; marine team continue work to combat plastic pollution in the South Atlantic.  Challenges: Recruitment for a Fundraising and Business Development Officer failed as no applications were received. The plan now is to amend the post to a Project Manager to support the Head of Conservation.
3	The Turks & Caicos National Trust (2022)	Core funding for a Heritage Sites Operation Manager and a Fundraising Officer.	Ongoing	Planned achievement: Both posts recruited; new website launched which will support further fundraising.  Challenges: Major difficulties filling the Heritage Sites Operations Manager post due to limited candidate options on island, inexperience of the recruiting team and heavy competition from the tourism sector. The two posts have now been recruited and are on island.
R	Turks & Caicos Reef Fund 2021)	Trial of a land-based coral nursery, to combat the fatal Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease.	Completed in 2023	Planned achievement: Employment of a full time aquarist; creation of the UKOTs first land-based coral biobank / gene bank prototype, to allow future restoration efforts as the disease continues to devastate local reefs.  Further progress: Work started with other countries in the region to share knowledge on land-based closed-system coral rescue; connections established with conservation teams on other UKOTs, facilitating collaboration on the coral disease issue; further funding secured to acquire lab equipment and build research capabilities in-house.
S	Zoological Society of Jondon	A partnership project with the Ascension Island Government to monitor and mitigate the impact	Completed in March 2024	Planned achievement: Creation of a new plastics system map with local recommendations, based on detailed field work which included investigating bird carcasses and nests, and surveys of beach waste; strong collaboration developed between ZSL, Ascension Island Government, and St Helena National Trust: learnings shared via the UKOTs Plastic Pollution

Network.

Helena National Trust; learnings shared via the UKOTs Plastic Pollution

of plastic on wildlife.

(2021)

#### Summary of achievement

The UKOTs Fund has supported a wide range of crucial conservation work, along with the development and capacity-building of local environmental organisations, and the leverage of significant additional funding.

Some of the key achievements by theme include:

Land conservation and habitat protection

This includes expanding a national park through land purchases in Anguilla to restore native wildlife, purchasing land to create the first national park in the Falkland Islands, the purchase of richly biodiverse tropical dry forest in the Cayman Islands, and building a seawall to protect mangroves from hurricanes in Bermuda.



Credit Red Long Unicipals

Species reintroduction and biodiversity research and monitoring

Marine conservation and research

Whale shark research in St Helena has led to the identification of over 30 previously unrecorded sharks. In Turks and Caicos, a ground-breaking coral biobank prototype has been created to preserve genetic diversity for future restoration efforts in the face of devastating loss of coral from disease and ocean heating. In the Falkland Islands, Akrotiri (Cyprus), St Helena and the Pitcairn Islands, organisations have led work to develop, expand and manage MPAs. On Ascension Island, fieldwork was used to create a plastic systems map with detailed recommendations on actions to address plastic pollution.

The funding has been used to implement and expand critical biosecurity and biodiversity monitoring. Endangered and native plant species have been reintroduced in Anguilla, after the removal of invasive species (rats, mice and iguanas) and additional field officers have been recruited to support these efforts.

Preparation for the restoration of native plant species in the Falkland Islands is underway.





## 4

## Environmental advocacy and legislation

Several organisations have undertaken significant advocacy work to protect habitats and biodiversity. This includes action to re-route a planned road out of the Central Mangrove Wetland in the Cayman Islands, with partial but significant success so far, and the reduction of illegal bird trapping in Cyprus. In the Falkland Islands, core funding is enabling long term relationship building with local government and landowners on environmental issues.

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### Capacity building and community engagement

Many projects have had a strong element of local engagement and capacity building, enabling conservation work to be locally owned and sustained over time. This has included creating youth conservation groups in Montserrat and involving local volunteers in restoration work in the Falkland Islands. Building partnerships with local hotels has enabled the purchase and protection of mangroves in the Cayman Islands, and engagement with communities in the Pitcairn Islands and Cyprus has supported the creation and expansion of MPAs.





## Organisational growth and development



In several instances, the funding has been used to cover core costs, resulting in greater financial sustainability for local environmental organisations. Key roles such as an Environmental Policy and Impact Officer in the Cayman Islands and a Conservation Officer in Montserrat have enabled organisations to deliver their strategic plans, increase their fundraising capacity, undertake more effective environmental advocacy, and build stronger links with local communities in support of conservation. Furthermore, additional funding was leveraged beyond the initial UKOTs fund grants for mangrove protection in Bermuda, endangered species reintroduction in Anguilla, and coral reef restoration in Turks and Caicos.

## Experiences of the grant-holders

All of the grant-holders who responded to the survey reported incredibly positive experiences with the UKOTs Fund and were largely unable to think of anything that could have improved the process. Several respondents made it very clear that the funding they had received had led to tangible, on-the-ground biodiversity benefits that otherwise would have been very unlikely. Having money earmarked for UKOTs support was greatly appreciated and was felt to be filling a key gap in the funding landscape. Funding for the UKOTs is extremely scarce, with the only other bespoke fund being the Governmentrun Darwin Plus. While this is a very impactful programme, engaging with it is reported to be much more onerous than the UKOTs Fund.

The F

Survey respondents also commented on the breadth of activities eligible for support from the UKOTs Fund and the (unusual) opportunity to apply for core cost support and land purchases. Many grant-holders highlighted the benefit of being able to grow and develop their teams, rather than having to implement a specific project with limited capacity. Given the small and isolated nature of many of these organisations, and the unwillingness of many other funders to provide staffing costs, the opportunity to apply for core costs was greatly valued. In addition, John Ellerman Foundation offered local organisations the option of applying with a larger organisation acting as an intermediary, which provided support and capacity-building.

'Funding for the UKOTs is so scarce that having a fund focused on us is excellent.

John Ellerman Foundation is also great to work with in so many ways. The fact that they actively encourage applications that support core/organisational support including staff salaries and actual running of the organisation is invaluable.'

'The Fund seems to be very much UKOTneed driven, recognising that sometimes our organisations - especially smaller ones - just need additional capacity to be even more impactful.'

The application and reporting processes for the UKOTs Fund received high praise from grant holders, especially compared to other funders. The application process was described as clear, straightforward and efficient, with many appreciating the streamlined approach and the opportunity to discuss projects with staff beforehand. The opportunity for collaborative revision of a proposal, rather than immediate rejection, was also appreciated. The reporting process was similarly commended for being clear and 'lighttouch', enabling grant-holders to focus on delivery.

'John Ellerman Foundation makes both applications and reporting as streamlined as possible. The application process was also one in which we were given the opportunity to address concerns or questions. That two-way communication during the project application was incredibly helpful in establishing a good relationship with the Foundation

and enabled us to really hone project delivery.

The low burden of financial reporting was particularly highlighted, as was having one clear point of contact throughout the process.

Communications in general were praised, with John Ellerman Foundation's team described as supportive and responsive throughout, as well as being understanding of necessary plan or timeline changes. The knowledge and experience of the Foundation was apparent as well as their understanding of the limited capacity of the grant-holders.



In general, John Ellerman Foundation was highlighted for its willingness to accept an element of risk in conservation projects, recognising the unpredictability of nature and people. Survey respondents also complimented the Foundation for supporting long-term change without requiring immediate proof of impact, understanding that impactful conservation takes time. Additionally, it was commended for not seeking public recognition and for their efforts in encouraging other funders to adopt flexible funding approaches and to support the UKOTs.

'Without John Ellerman
Foundation and the UKOT funding
they have brought in I honestly
think our organisation would
have faltered. Our level of
delivery for conservation is now
significant. We could not have
made this transition without
ongoing core and project support
from John Ellerman Foundation. I
hope the organisation is aware of
the significance their approach to
funding is having here.'



'I just want to say thank you. We have been able to save a little part of our coral reef species thanks to this grant and in the face of the most virulent coral disease ever recorded (stony coral tissue loss disease) this means so much more than words can say.'

Should there be another round of the UKOTs Fund, it was suggested that John Ellerman Foundation could offer to share the contact details of the grant-holders and support networking between them. One survey respondent noted that they only learnt about the Fund through another organisation, and so exploring additional methods of advertising at a local level would be helpful. Finally, while the opportunity to receive funding over a three-year period was greatly appreciated, a longer term grant would be beneficial for some organisations and projects.



# Conclusions and next steps

The UKOTs Fund, led by John Ellerman Foundation, has had a significant and tangible impact on environmental conservation in the UKOTs by addressing a critical gap in funding. It has supported endangered species conservation, land purchases to protect key habitats, and the development and management of several marine and terrestrial protected areas. Importantly, it has also supported local organisations to grow and build capacity, boosting their abilities to address some of the myriad challenges they face.

The UKOTs hold 94% of the UK's biodiversity yet receive only 0.03% of the UK's philanthropic funding – a vastly disproportionate figure. Their status and geography mean they fall through the gaps between UK- and internationally-focused funders. Their small communities (where they exist) simply cannot fund the work necessary and existing funding from the UK government, while extremely impactful, is not sufficient either. The UKOTs and their unique habitats and species require urgent support and environmental philanthropists can play a critical role in providing this.



Pooled funds like the UKOTs Fund can significantly enhance the efficiency of environmental groups by <u>streamlining their interactions with multiple funders</u> into a single application and reporting process. This is particularly important in the case of the UKOTs, where fundraising and overall organisational capacity is very limited. The finance available through the UKOTs Fund has been made even more accessible and impactful by the flexible, risk-tolerant and supportive approach of John Ellerman Foundation, praised in the grant-holder feedback and in recent <u>EFN research</u>.



Given the success of past rounds, launching a new funding round in 2O25 is strongly recommended. The Fund has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to deliver significant environmental results in the UKOTs and enabled grant-holders to create lasting impacts that otherwise might not have been achieved. A new funding round would not only sustain the momentum of current projects, and allow scaling of efforts, but would also provide opportunities for other initiatives across the UKOTs. Going beyond 2O25, if the UKOTs Fund was able to develop into a longer-term, permanent initiative, the impact it could have is unparalleled.

The cost-to-impact ratio shown by the UKOTs Fund has also demonstrated the potential for relatively modest investments to yield substantial conservation benefits in these biodiversity-rich regions. As such, it provides a unique opportunity for funders at all scales to make a meaningful difference. The due diligence work undertaken by John Ellerman Foundation also means little research time is needed on behalf of contributing funders. For any funder looking to help protect globally significant ecosystems and at-risk species, joining the contributor base for the UKOTs Fund is therefore an obvious, strategic and efficient choice. Email Sufina Ahmad to get started: sufina@ellerman.org.uk

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#### John Ellerman Foundation

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