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**Paper JNCC 25 48P: JNCC's implementation programmes and
projects to support the Overseas Territories and Crown
Dependencies and other countries beyond the UK**

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Joint Nature Conservation Committee

JNCC's implementation programmes and projects to support the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies and other countries beyond the UK

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1. Overview

This paper outlines JNCC's international implementation programmes that support Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies, and countries beyond the UK, in alignment with JNCC's strategy and International Roadmap. It highlights how our work contributes to integrating nature's value into decision-making to improve biodiversity outcomes within the broader context of climate change, poverty alleviation, and pollution. Through the paper and accompanying presentation, we seek Joint Committee's views on the strategic direction of JNCC's international engagement, specifically the role we should play in shaping UK priorities abroad, how our work can align with UK foreign policy and JNCC's strategic objectives, and how we can remain resilient amid an evolving funding landscape.

2. Key work areas in Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies

JNCC plays a pivotal role in supporting the UK Overseas Territories (OTs) and Crown Dependencies, which host globally significant biodiversity. JNCC has been working with the OTs and Crown Dependencies on implementation projects for many years and provided advice directly to UK Government on OT issues, notably Multilateral Environmental Agreements and a new UK OT Biodiversity Strategy. Our 'ridge-to-reef' implementation work integrates nature-based solutions, capacity building, and interdisciplinary collaboration. By providing technical expertise and strategic guidance directly to OTs, we have strengthened the ability of local governments and environmental organisations to integrate biodiversity values into decision-making (e.g. Darwin Plus Caribbean Natural Capital Accounts, Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan indicators). Through fostering regional collaboration, for example via the Coral Conservation in the Overseas Territory partnership, and innovative approaches to ecosystem management, JNCC has empowered local stakeholders, enhanced socio-economic resilience, and facilitated lasting improvements in environmental stewardship and governance across the OTs.

Initiatives led by JNCC, such as: comprehensive storm surge and flood modelling to inform planning (e.g. in Cayman Islands South Sounds); capacity building through training (e.g. Montserrat Government training in environmental monitoring); community resilience and sustainable livelihoods programmes (e.g. Resembid Sustainable Investment in the Future of the Turks and Caicos Islands' People and Environment project); and tailored biodiversity monitoring workshops (e.g. for Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease monitoring and treatment), have collectively advanced the OTs capacity to address complex environmental challenges. By aligning cutting-edge science with local needs, JNCC enhances global biodiversity governance and advances international environmental goals. These efforts support biodiversity, climate resilience, and sustainable development, while highlighting UK leadership in tackling biodiversity loss, pollution, and climate change

3. Key work areas in other countries beyond the UK

3.1 Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCP)

The [OCP](#) is a 5 year UK-led programme funded through the UK's £500 million [Blue Planet Fund](#) and financed with the UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget. The programme's aim is to ensure partner countries are better able to address challenges to their marine environments and biodiversity, enhance marine dependent livelihoods, and improve the wellbeing of those that depend on them, sustainably, equitably and inclusively. Bilateral partnerships under the OCP are primarily delivered by JNCC, the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture (Cefas) and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) on behalf of Defra. JNCC provides demand-led technical assistance in marine science to partner countries, supporting them to overcome challenges that threaten marine environments and the livelihoods that depend on them. The programme works across three themes: marine pollution, sustainable seafood and marine biodiversity. JNCC leads the work on marine pollution emergency response and marine biodiversity. Through this programme JNCC has deployed approximately £9 million in UK Development Assistance, delivering transformative, outcome-level change across 11 partner countries through a robust theory of change and targeted, impactful interventions.

Marine Biodiversity

Through the OCP, partnerships have been formed with countries to develop and enhance MPAs, building capacity for effective, sustainable management. This has increased understanding of the value of MPAs in supporting sustainable livelihoods, food security, health, and well-being, as well as understanding of MPA theory and practice. It has also led to increased stakeholder support and compliance, enhancing the capability and drive within countries to sustainably manage, monitor, and assess conservation activities into the future.

A key example is our work with the Maldives, where marine ecosystems are vital but face management challenges across their 96 designated MPAs. Over the last four years, JNCC has collaborated with the Maldivian government to deliver capacity building and technical support. Achievements include undertaking Protected Area Management Effectiveness assessments in various MPAs and

establishing a process for this work to continue in the Maldives. The programme also provided training to over 100 individuals, supported the adoption of a national MPA framework, developed 11 management plans, and launched a centralised MPA website and permit portal. The first national Protected and Conserved Area Forum in 2024 reported a 25% increase in stakeholder knowledge. The programme also advanced Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) through workshops and tailored guidance. These efforts demonstrate how targeted support can drive inclusive, effective marine governance whilst strengthening biodiversity protection, and empower local institutions to manage their natural assets effectively, inclusively and collaboratively.

Marine Pollution Emergency Response

We work with countries to ensure they are equipped with the relevant tools, facilities and knowledge to both prevent and be better prepared to respond to an emergency pollution incident. Our approach has evolved to focus on regional collaboration, enabling joint capacity building, cross-border exercises, and knowledge sharing. This fosters partnerships and mutual aid between nations, enhancing preparedness and response capabilities for large-scale pollution incidents. Regional cooperation is especially vital where individual countries may lack sufficient resources to manage major spills alone.

In South Asia, we've supported Sri Lanka in responding to two major vessel-related pollution disasters, which severely impacted its coastline. Our regional approach in the South Asian Seas has proven effective, given the area's ecological importance and economic reliance on coastal resources. We've facilitated cooperation among South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme ([SACEP](#)) member countries (India, Pakistan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh) through technical support, symposiums, and a 'train the trainer' model. Our interventions have directly enhanced the ability of partner countries to respond to oil spills and other marine pollution events, safeguarding marine biodiversity, coastal economies and food security. These efforts have improved regional response capacity, protected biodiversity, and supported UK strategic interests in maritime conservation, security and trade resilience.

3.2 Environmental Pollution Programme (EPP)

EPP was a UK ODA programme funded by Defra through International Climate Finance. It focused on sharing expertise and best practice to reduce the adverse effects of pollution, particularly for low to middle income countries. The EPP recognised the interconnectedness of pollution, human health and biodiversity and has explored how to effectively assess pollution levels and develop an evidence base, whilst building capacity and sharing best practice on how to manage and mitigate pollution in terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems to benefit climate, biodiversity, and people. The 4-year programme of work delivered a series of co-developed community led projects providing nature-based solutions for the mitigation of pollution into rivers in three remote rural communities in the Mkhomazi catchment area of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. One of these projects resulted in the launch of a mobile laboratory to bring pollution testing to remote communities.

JNCC's work under EPP took steps to address the global challenge of pollution, climate change and its impact on both human well-being, the environment and biodiversity. It is essential to take a nexus approach to the management of environmental pollution, biodiversity and climate change, considering the role of poverty and gender within this nexus, to realise future integration into policy design, implementation and impact.

3.3 Sustainable Blue Economies (SBE)

This programme aims to support ODA-eligible Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to develop climate resilient, sustainable blue economies through strengthened ocean management, improved livelihoods and greater use of nature-based solutions. The programme builds on the continued commitment of the UK Government to support developing countries to protect at least 30% of the global ocean by 2030. Technical assistance will be provided through the SBE Technical Assistance Platform that will run until 2028 (pending decisions on ODA funding). This would be technical advice, capacity development, tools, data, research and evidence. JNCC is one of the delivery partners on the technical assistance delivery platform working closely with Cefas, MMO, the National Oceanography Centre, the Met Office and the UK Hydrographic Office.

JNCC is supporting the SBE partners and SIDS, in particular Comoros, Grenada, the Solomon Islands, the Maldives, and the UNEP Cartagena Convention, through the evaluation of projects on Illegal Unreported and Unregulated fishing, water quality, pollution, and climate resilience. JNCC is leading regional work on seagrass restoration guidelines with the UNEP Cartagena Regional Seas Convention and supporting ecosystem services and community-led mangrove management in the Maldives. By contributing our technical expertise, capacity building, and nature-based solutions, JNCC is not only supporting biodiversity and ocean health but also promoting community livelihoods, reducing inequality, and strengthening resilience. This work reflects the UK's global commitment to ocean protection and sustainable development.

4. Changing funding landscape

The funding landscape for international biodiversity work is shifting, particularly with reductions in UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) spending from 0.5% of Gross National Income to 0.3% by 2027 and the next tranche of International Climate Finance starting in 2026. With increased emphasis on impact, value for money, and alignment with development goals, JNCC must adapt to more competitive and outcomes-driven funding models. Future programmes will need to be agile, strategically aligned with UK foreign policy and development objectives, and capable of leveraging co-financing and multi-partner delivery models. This includes expanding engagement with philanthropic organisations, multilateral donors, and regional development banks to diversify funding sources. As funding mechanisms evolve, JNCC will continue to identify opportunities to build equitable partnerships to deliver long-term, inclusive, and resilient environmental outcomes across under-resourced global regions.

5. Future look

The programmes highlighted within this paper align with JNCC International Strategy Impact Statement 1: “We will help governments and administrations beyond metropolitan UK to integrate nature’s value into decisions and investments to improve the protection and recovery of biodiversity through understanding of the wider nexus of climate change, poverty alleviation, pollution and biodiversity.”

JNCC plays a pivotal role in global marine conservation, supporting countries with Marine Protected Area (MPA) management, biodiversity strategies, pollution response and evaluation, disaster resilience, ecological assessments and data management, sustainable finance, and natural capital assessment. Sharing this expertise internationally strengthens UK leadership in environmental diplomacy, advancing biodiversity goals, climate resilience, and sustainable development through strategic global partnerships and innovation.

Future programmes must explicitly seek to understand the relationship between environmental pollution and biodiversity and by default the consideration of the impacts of income inequality, gender and indigenous communities. Future innovations include applying extinction probability models to assess biodiversity risks from chemical pollutants, enabling more precise conservation planning.

Strategic work will continue to enhance global governance, support UK climate and biodiversity commitments, and strengthen resilience in regions vital to trade and geopolitical interests. Funded through UK and international mechanisms, JNCC will foster equitable collaborations and knowledge exchange to catalyse nature recovery in under-resourced regions.

Our work builds soft power, fosters international collaboration, and demonstrates the UK’s commitment to nature-based solutions. The impact of our programmes is evident in the adoption of policies, improved management of ecosystems, and increased capacity of partner nations to protect biodiversity and respond to environmental emergencies.