



New funding stream for the UKOTs



A new funding stream for the UK's Overseas Territories (UKOTs) has been launched – *Darwin Plus Local* is a new scheme within the existing UK government's [Darwin Plus fund](#), which funds projects to protect the unique biodiversity and improve resilience to climate change within the UKOTs.

The UKOTs are globally significant nature hotspots. Made up of thousands of small islands, vast ocean and dense rainforests, these areas thrive with unique wildlife. *Darwin Plus Local* has been introduced to support small scale environmental projects exclusively in the 14 UKOTs, with the aim of building capacity in-territory and contributing to local economies and communities. The scheme provides funds to organisations and individuals based in the UKOTs, further empowering the UKOTs to conserve their globally significant biodiversity and improve resilience to climate change. JNCC has been instrumental in setting up this new funding stream and we have worked incredibly hard over the last six months together with colleagues from Defra, NIRAS and the UKOTs to make this fund available and meaningful for people and biodiversity in the Territories.

Covid-19 resilient recovery project in TCI



JNCC is delighted to support the Turks and Caicos Islands' Government Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR), working together with other key project partners, to assess [the impact of Covid-19 on the islands](#). Local communities and businesses are invited to share their experiences of the pandemic through surveys launched to shape the islands' economic and environmental recovery from the pandemic. The process includes [two surveys](#), a community survey and a business survey. The community survey seeks to understand how people's livelihoods and the environment have been affected by the pandemic. It will help inform the development of training programmes across the islands through a locally led Community Hub established during the project. The experiences of businesses in the islands will be collected through the business survey, to help understand how different sectors have been affected by the pandemic and to collect ideas for building a more resilient economy. This survey will inform the development of a Natural Capital Investment Plan to signpost opportunities for sustainable investment in the islands.

The project – *Resilient Community Recovery from Covid-19 in the Turks and Caicos Islands* – receives funding from the Caribbean Overseas Countries and Territories Resilience, Sustainable Energy and Marine Biodiversity Programme (RESEMBID), a €40 million programme financed by the European Union and implemented by Expertise France, the development cooperation agency of France.

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JNCC – Turning science into action for nature, people and the planet

Enhancing environmental resilience



The UK's Overseas Territories (UKOTs) have long been acknowledged as being rich in biodiversity and geodiversity. They host a diverse range of terrestrial and marine environments that together make a significant contribution to global biodiversity, including a large number of rare and threatened species and a vast array of tropical and cold-water coral reefs. JNCC has been working with the UKOTs for over 20 years, providing technical assistance to support their biodiversity and wider environmental management strategies.

We recently attended a week of meetings in Anguilla discussing progress on UK Conflict, Stability and Security Fund coral and disaster resilience projects which focus on reef resilience and nature-based solutions.

While on island JNCC staff were able to support local partners to implement the coral reef monitoring training and coral disease management tasks as well as visiting the Sargassum Nature-based Solutions pilot sites.

We are delighted to support this work with partners from the Governor's Office and the Government of Anguilla, highlighting the vital role of stakeholders in enhancing environmental resilience.

The Big Picture III workshop

The Big Picture Group is composed of benthic imagery experts from government, academia and private consultancies. The third Big Picture Workshop focused on reviewing the groups progress and future direction. Attendees really enjoyed building new connections and felt the group had made real progress with the [Benthic Imagery Action Plan](#). The workshop revitalised the groups collaboration on exciting work areas such as image annotation software, artificial intelligence, and development of standards to promote data archiving, sharing and reuse. The workshop report will be available in due course. To join the Big Picture Group please email TheBigPicture@jncc.gov.uk.



Overseas Territory Biodiversity Strategy



JNCC and Defra held a two-day workshop in Gibraltar on the development of a new biodiversity strategy for the UK's Overseas Territories (UKOTs). The workshop was opened by the Minister for the Environment, Prof. John Cortes, and the Deputy Governor, Marc Holland.

Technical officers from the Government of Gibraltar's Department of the Environment, representatives from the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society, University of Gibraltar, Gibraltar National Museum and the Environmental Safety Group attended. The workshop provided insight on the high-level priorities for protecting Gibraltar's biodiversity and how the UKOTs Biodiversity Strategy can help meet the islands' biodiversity management plans, policies and programmes.

To complement the ongoing engagement, a [Call for Evidence](#) has been opened, inviting the public to have their say on the priorities for protecting biodiversity in the UKOTs including Gibraltar. The Call for Evidence runs until 24 March 2023.

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