

Coral Conservation in the Overseas Territories (C-COT)

Project: Collaborative approach to managing impacts of coral disease

Project timeline: 2021 to 2024

Overview: The project establishes the Coral Conservation in the Overseas Territories (C-COT) working group, formerly known as the Collaborative Coral Reef Working Group (CCRWG), as a collaborative mechanism between government representatives, NGOs, and wider stakeholders. Initially developed in response to stony coral tissue loss disease, the project partners with governments of the British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands and Turks and Caicos Islands, and shares knowledge and resources across the UKOTs, including Anguilla, Bermuda, Montserrat and the British Indian Ocean Territory. C-COT will facilitate join up with other projects that are considering resilience of the reefs.

Funders: 147 Darwin Plus

Project Partners: The project was developed with project partners British Virgin Islands' Government, Cayman Islands' Government, Turks and Caicos Islands' Government, Kalli De Meyer (Nature2), and Dr Greta Aeby.

Summary: Stony coral tissue loss disease (SCTLD) is spreading rapidly across coral reefs in the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs), threatening biodiversity, tourism, food security, livelihoods, and environmental resilience. Identified as an urgent priority, this project will develop a strong collaborative approach to manage the disease where it has been detected in the Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands, and British Virgin Islands. Due to the cross-boundary nature of the disease, knowledge, skills, and resources will be extended to all Caribbean OTs to foster long-term partnership to support regional coral reef resilience.

C-COT, piloted in 2020 with Defra funding, has proved effective in facilitating collaboration and knowledge exchange, particularly of the latest scientific evidence and expertise, to inform the delivery of shared actions for the protection, restoration, and management of coral reefs.

Key Objectives:

- Share knowledge, skills, resources, and tools that support evidence-based decision making to address SCTLD in three Caribbean OTs and minimise its wider spread.
- Develop an adaptive SCTLD treatment and management strategy, including SCTLD handbook, status report, and annual treatment monitoring and evaluation reports.
- Develop a Conceptual Reef Resilience Model Framework and a strategy for lasting collaborative partnership to address the multiple threats facing coral reefs long-term.

History: This project continues the work begun by the Defra-funded pilot project 'Development of a Coral Reef Collaborative Working Group' 2020–2021 and builds on the priority actions identified in the 2019 UKOTs Coral Reef Initiative Workshop.

