



UKOTA Annual Report to Political Council

23 March 2020

Prepared by the Chair of UKOTA and the Chairs of the Sub-Committees

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Anguilla) Ascension Island) Bermuda) British Virgin Islands) Cayman Islands) Falkland Islands)
Gibraltar) Montserrat) Pitcairn) St Helena) Tristan da Cunha) Turks & Caicos Islands

1. Introduction

The United Kingdom Overseas Territories Association (UKOTA) was founded in 1994. Its mission is: **to promote the interests of the United Kingdom Overseas Territories and cooperation between them. Specifically, the Association demonstrates the collective and individual partnerships between the Territories and HM Government of the UK. The inhabited Territories are entitled to be Full Members of the Association.**

Mrs Kedell Worboys, MBE, St Helena Government UK Representative, was appointed as Chairperson of the Association. The head of the St Helena Government therefore becomes the President of the Political Council and the President of the Association. Following Mrs Worboys' appointment the St Helena Executive nominated the **Hon Derek Thomas, MLC** to take on the role of the President of the Political Council. The Political Council is the highest body of the Association and comprises the individual leaders of each Member Government. The Political Council sets the policies of the Association and considers and approves decisions submitted for approval. All prerogatives necessary to the achievement of the Association's aims are vested in the Political Council.

Full Members are represented in the bodies of the Association by individuals duly appointed by their Governments to represent their interests in the United Kingdom, referred to as UK Representatives.

This report will cover the period 4 December 2018 – 22 March 2020, an unusually long period as a result of the postponement of the Joint Ministerial Council (JMC) and Political Council meeting in December 2019 due to the UK election.

2. The Annual General Meeting and Secretariat

During this period there have been two Annual General Meetings.

The first was held on Tuesday, 12 February 2019 at the Cayman Islands Government London Office. Officers were elected as follows:

Chair: Kedell Worboys MBE, St Helena Government UK Representative

Honorary Secretary: Sukey Cameron MBE, UK Representative for the Falkland Islands Government

Hon. Treasurer: Chris Carnegie, UK Representative for the Government of Tristan da Cunha

Following the retirement of Sukey Cameron, Tracy Knight, UK Representative for the Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands, was nominated and accepted the role of Honorary Secretary at the UKOTA meeting on 13 November 2019.

The second AGM was held on Tuesday, 18 February 2020 at the St Helena Government UK Office. Officers were elected as follows:

Chair: Kedell Worboys MBE, St Helena Government UK Representative

Honorary Secretary: Tracy Knight, UK Representative for the Turks and Caicos Islands Government

Hon. Treasurer: Chris Carnegie, UK Representative for the Government of Tristan da Cunha

In recognition of the importance of the work and effectiveness of UKOTA to have a dedicated official servicing its meetings and coordinating its work amongst Members, the Political Council agreed an increase in fees by 20% for each Territory to contribute to secretarial support. An allocation of £15,000 to employ the services of a secretary was approved. Karen Mentiply was recruited and started working for UKOTA on a part-time basis in March 2019 on a one-year contract. A one-month extension was approved by UKOTA at the meeting on 13 November to cover the planned JMC in March 2020. Karen has proved to be a valuable resource for the organisation. The Political Council will be asked to approve an increase in subscriptions to continue to cover the cost of the secretariat.

3. Priorities/Strategy

At the UKOTA meeting on 14 March 2019 and taking into account the limited budget available, it was agreed that the priorities for 2019 would be:

Reviewing the Constitution; Brexit; Increasing Parliamentary engagement including reinstating CPA Breakfast meetings; Improving the visibility of UKOTA and therefore the territories through greater use of the website and electronic newsletters; and preparation for the Joint Ministerial Council (JMC). It was also agreed to consider holding another Student Conference, but this would require a financial contribution from those territories who wished to support it.

4. Pre-Joint Ministerial Council

The Pre-JMC took place in the Cayman Islands on Wednesday, 26 June hosted by the Cayman Islands Government. The **Hon Alden McLaughlin MBE, JP, MLA** conveyed the outcome of the discussion to Lord Ahmad in a letter the same day summarised as follows: recommended priorities for inclusion in the JMC 2019 and the need for two full days of plenary meetings; the desire for attendance of senior ministerial representation and for some sessions to be chaired by Territory Leaders; the need for improvement in respect of HMG's consultation process with the Territories and a request for HMG to keep the Territory UK Representatives copied in on relevant correspondence. UKOTA was also mandated to organise a workshop on Mental Health in the margins of the December 2019 JMC.

A decision is still to be made on when and which Territory will host the 2020 pre JMC although, following current practice, it would likely be held in London.

5. The Work of UKOTA

Throughout the period UKOTA has held 15 general meetings. The following have been invited to attend meetings:

14 March 2019: Dr Tony Weighell – Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) - to update Members on what JNCC is involved in, the work in the Territories including the UK Government 25 Year Environmental Plan supporting economic security, disaster resilience and biodiversity conservation in the Overseas Territories, and the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) funded Natural Capital Plan.

14 May 2019: Niall Moore from the Animal Plant Health Agency (AHPA) – CSSF Funded Biosecurity Project

11 June 2019: Emma Kouki, Deputy Head Strategy Team and Adam Pile Deputy Director, OTD, FCO – OT Engagement with Whitehall Departments

11 June 2019: Laurence Jones and Andrew Shaw - English FA - to solicit support from the Caribbean Territories in particular, to host a competition.

23 July 2019: Richard Simon-Lewis and Steven Crosley, UK Export Finance (UKEF) – follow up to the presentation at the Trade Summit in Cayman.

12 September 2019: Charlotte Bright, Deputy Director, Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) and Public Health England (PHE) on work in the OTs including Mental Health. Also in attendance – Zoe Stepkowski, DHSC; Edward Sharpe, Policy Advisor, Devolution, EU and International Health DHSC; Dr Autillia Newton, PHE UKOT Programme Lead & IHR Technical Advisor; Dr Ahmed Razavi, PHE IHR Specialist Registrar; Phil Batson, Head of Programming OTs FCO and Rachael Atkins, Justice, Security and Governance Programme Manager CSSF Team FCO.

10 October 2019: Michelle Weiss and Nick Watson - OCO Global – follow up from the Trade Summit in Cayman.

13 November 2019: Sarah-Jayne Bloxham and Gillian Machin - Education Special Project – who were subsequently put in contact with the Education Directors in the Territories to discuss the project.

18 December 2019: Alan Gemmell and Sean Leno, Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council (CWEIC) – Opportunities for OTs at the Commonwealth Business Forum in Kigali 2020

15 January 2020: Sushil Ram and Layne Robinson - Commonwealth Youth Programme Update

15 January 2020: Dr Hugh Wright, JNCC Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Evidence Manager – presentation on the work JNCC has been asked by the UK Government to do - produce statistics on the coverage of protected areas (PAs) across the UK Overseas Territories (OTs) combined. The aim of this work is to deliver a single set of agreed PA extent figures that can be used consistently in the public domain. This work will contribute to several environmental policy areas, including the Defra 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP), reporting on international

commitments (such as the Convention on Biological Diversity Aichi Biodiversity Targets and UN Sustainable Development Goals) and the Blue Belt Programme.

Parliamentary Engagement

UKOTA had a very productive lunch meeting with Lord Ahmad on 2 April during which current issues affecting OTs were openly discussed.

A UKOTA/RSPB Parliamentary event was held in the Jubilee Rooms in Parliament on 4 March 2020. This was in the form of a discussion on how the UK can support the spectacular environments of the Overseas Territories, following the UK Government's Call for Evidence. Rt Hon. Lord Randall of Uxbridge chaired the discussion and Kedell Worboys, as Chair of UKOTA, and Sacha Cleminson, RSPB, made the opening remarks. The Rt Hon. Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park, Minister of State for the Pacific, International Environment, Climate and Forests, and Animal Welfare joined the meeting for the last half hour.

UKOTA organised Breakfast meetings hosted by the CPA (UK Branch) on 20 June 2019 and 21 January 2020, the first discussed key issues affecting the Territories, the second was aimed at the newly elected MPs to provide a greater understanding of the OTs.

A meeting was arranged with the Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP, who had recently been elected Speaker of the House of Commons on 21 January 2020. Mr Speaker confirmed his desire to have greater engagement with the elected Territory Governments and his hope to visit the Territories. A meeting with the Elected Leaders had been scheduled for 23 March, but it is hoped this can now take place later in the year.

UKOTA secured fast track letters to Parliament for UK Representatives at both the Cromwell Green entrance and Portcullis House.

Engagement with HMG

Engagement with the FCO including the Sherpa meetings for the JMC continues to be positive and there is now much more of a "working together" feel to these. The FCO provided UKOTA with the main contacts who deal with the OTs in each Whitehall department, although the list has still to be completed.

There have been several Brexit update meetings organised by the "Exiting the EU" team within the FCO. UKOTA also engaged with the Deputy Director of this team on the possibility of funding for an ongoing association with the Overseas Countries and Territories Association (OCTA) post Brexit.

DEFRA implemented an HMG OTs Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Working Group in response to a commitment at the 2018 JMC from the DEFRA Minister at the time, Therese Coffey, to improve engagement between her department and the OTs. Three meetings have been held on 6/7 August 2019, 2 December 2019 and 17 February 2020. These meetings provide the opportunity for personnel in the OTs to join but this option is rarely taken up. The meetings are long and not always relevant, more of a tick box exercise rather than meaningful engagement with the Territories. A meeting with officials in the FCO and DEFRA to discuss

these concerns has been requested. The named contact in DEFRA, Piotr Mahey, has significantly improved communications with DEFRA.

There were several meetings with officials from the department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) on the Universal Postal Union (UPU) - a UN agency which facilitates the global postal network - on the Reform of Terminal Dues, which was discussed at the Extraordinary Congress attended by some OTs in September 2019. Engagement continues with BEIS on this issue in preparation for the Congress due to be held in August 2020 to encourage the engagement of the OTs and to come to a unified position.

UKOTA has engaged with the International Climate and Energy Directorate within BEIS both in relation to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP 25, which was moved from Chile to Spain, and the preparations for COP 26 to be held in Glasgow in November 2020. Discussions also included the Extension of the UK's ratification of the Paris Agreement to OTs.

Constitutional Review

The UKOTA constitution builds a framework through which Members of the Association recognise their shared values and collective interests. It expresses our commitment to cooperation and to upholding our principles to work on an equal basis irrespective of our diverse constitutions, population, size and economic status. The constitution was reviewed, and proposed amendments circulated to Leaders on 22 October. The intention was to include this on the Political Council agenda on 23 March but, since this will now be a virtual meeting, it will be discussed at the following meeting.

Brexit

This will be covered under the EU Engagement Sub Committee report.

Mental Health Workshop

UKOTA has worked with PHE and FCO to formulate the Mental Health Workshop as directed by the Leaders at the pre JMC in Cayman last year. UKOTA was fortunate in gaining the services of Poppy Jaman as the moderator and attendance of twelve Mental Health charities/NGOs together with senior officials from Whitehall departments. Due to the cancellation of the JMC in both December and March, this has also been cancelled. UKOTA hopes that this can be rescheduled in November 2020.

The work of UKOTA this year focused on the following areas through Sub-Committees:

Immunities and Privileges and Consular Services – Chaired by the **Janice Panton MBE** UK Representative for the Government of Montserrat.

Consular Affairs

The members of this subcommittee meet on a regular basis to share their experiences and agree on best practices on matters relating to their citizens who visit or reside in the UK. In the past year the issues discussed include access to health and social services, housing, student welfare and nationality. These exchanges have enabled the sub-committee to be a useful resource to those attending.

British Overseas Territory Citizen (BOTC) Discrimination

During the period under review, there has been limited progress on the issue of discrimination against certain BOTCs in respect of fathers whose children born between 1948 and 2006 whilst not married to their children's mothers are not eligible to pass their BOTC status to these children. The same had applied to British Citizens but the law was amended in 2014 to remedy this in their case.

The Home Office consulted Territory Leaders early last year to seek support for the proposals to introduce registration routes 'to correct the historical anomalies in relation to children born before 2006 to unmarried BOTC fathers and before 1983 to BOTC mothers'. Following the consultation, the Home Office in May last year said they were considering the future options for amending the legislation and if a suitable legislation route is identified will notify the Territories so that local arrangements can be put in place.

Both UKOTA and members of the House Lords have been at the forefront in seeking to remedy the discrimination. UKOTA has written to the Home Secretary and last month Baroness Lister of Burtersett asked two written Parliamentary Questions seeking to find out HMG plans to address this issue in any forthcoming immigration bill.

OT Government UK offices and Representatives

Some but not all of the UK OTs are included in the Consular Relations Act 1968. Those offices not included and UKOTA have sought to ensure that all offices are afforded the same privileges and benefits. This matter has been raised with the Foreign Office on several occasions over a number of years and, though UKOTA understands that this matter is now under active review, because of the length of time it has taken for this to be considered there is a need to ensure that the Territories that are affected swiftly achieve parity with the others.



Financial Services - Chaired by the **Kimberly Durrant** UK Representative for the Government of Bermuda

This year UKOTA was instrumental in working across OT Governments to encourage greater transparency by implementing public registers of Beneficial Ownership information. Following the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act almost all Territories have now implemented measures for public registers either through domestic legislation or working alongside the UK Government for increased resources.

Environment & Climate Change – Chaired by **Kedell Worboys MBE** UK Representative for the Government of St Helena

Environment Workshop

A successful workshop entitled “Resourcing Sustainable Environments in the UK Overseas Territories” took place at Church House on Monday, 3 December 2018, all OTs were represented.

COP 25

There were several meetings with BEIS, mostly around COP 25, branded the “Blue COP”. Due to unrest in Chile the venue was changed at short notice. Professor John Cortes MP, Minister for **the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change, Heritage and Culture** (Gibraltar) replaced MLA Leona Roberts (Falklands) as part of the UK delegation due to the change in venue, which was facilitated by UKOTA.

A leaflet highlighting the progress and success stories of the OTs was produced by the Working Group along with PowerPoint slides which were shown at the UK Pavilion during the COP and were well received.

Darwin Plus

The Chair attended the Strategy day on 30 January 2019. Feedback was sought from the Territories to feed into the process. It was disappointing that the views from the Territories were not taken into account. The Chair has raised this with both the Darwin Plus Advisory Group and officials in DEFRA and HMG. The priorities of Darwin Plus must be more closely aligned with the Territories’ priorities.

A two-stage approach was implemented for the 2019 call. The Chair attended the stage one sift on 10 September 2019; 53 eligible applications were received with 32 going through to stage two. The sift for stage two took place on 6 February; the recommendations have been submitted to the Minister for approval with an announcement expected soon.

State of Nature Report

The text covering the OTs was circulated to all Territories to check the accuracy which resulted in some amendments.

Call for Evidence – Biodiversity funding for OTs

UKOTA submitted evidence in response to this call. Territories were also encouraged to submit evidence. A total of 48 submissions were received, and a summary of responses is expected to be published. UKOTA has raised concerns at the length of time this is taking.

Blue Belt Symposium

The Chair attended the Blue Belt Symposium the University of Exeter Penryn Campus 29-31 July which focussed specifically on the topic of ‘big ocean’ management at. This was jointly hosted by the Ascension Island Government, the University of Exeter, Great British Oceans coalition and the UK Government’s Blue Belt Programme.

The UKOTA Chair, was invited to the *David Attenborough: A Life On Our Planet Preview and Launch of COP 26 Finance Agenda* with Governor Mark Carney. The Chair was unable to attend so Tracy Knight attended in her place and noted that the event was well attended with attendees from financial and technical sectors. The Chair successfully requested invitations for Territory Representatives to attend the “Global Britain, Global Oceans: Leading Blue Planet Protections” event sponsored by Great British Oceans which was due to be held in Parliament on 18 March 2020.

As a result of an intervention from UKOTA, UK Representatives were invited to the JNCC Workshop on 13 February 2020 on determining the overall coverage of Protected Areas in the UK Overseas Territories.

Public Relations – Chaired by Sukey Cameron MBE until 31 October 2019, replaced by **Richard Hislop** at the UKOTA meeting on 13 November 2019, both UK Representatives for the Falkland Islands Government.

Newsletter

One newsletter was issued. The September 2019 edition highlighted the Pre-Joint Ministerial Council and the first Overseas Territories Trade Summit in the Cayman Islands in June, the UKOTA Environment Workshop, the Student Conference and Territory news.

Website

UKOTA continues to maintain an informative website. The value of the website is to enhance the profile of the Association and work carried out between Governments of the OTs. Representatives have been encouraged to provide news articles for inclusion on the website with 15 articles uploaded to the website during 2019 compared with 4 articles in 2018.

Social Media

Efforts have been made to increase the profile of UKOTA on Twitter. Further improvements could be made with a social media plan managed by this Sub Committee.

Marketing Materials for Events

A ‘Blue’ based leaflet and slides were collated and produced by the Environmental Sub Committee this year for distribution at COP25. This was a cost- effective mechanism of

increasing awareness of UKOTA with the slides given a great deal of prominence and the leaflet, as reported by Professor Cortes, was most useful.

CPA Breakfast Meeting

A slide presentation was put together by the Environment Sub Committee for a Breakfast Meeting which was hosted by the CPA on 21 January 2020. The objective was to target new MPs and increase awareness of the OTs and how Territory Governments engage with and contribute to the UK and international agenda on issues such as biodiversity, climate change and oceans.

EU Engagement – Chaired by **Tracy Knight** UK Representative for the Government of Turks & Caicos.

The work of the EU Engagement Sub Committee since the last Political Council Meeting has been dominated by Brexit. The Sub Committee met on numerous occasions throughout the year to coordinate the position of the UK OTs prior to OCTA Executive Committee Meetings and Tripartite meetings in Brussels, the OCTA Ministerial Conference in Tahiti in particular vis a vis Brexit, as well as meetings with UK Government Departments.

UKOTA members continued to engage with the FCO and in particular the Overseas Territories Directorate EU Exit Team, now renamed the 'Future Relationship Team', on the UK's negotiations to leave the EU to ensure that the concerns of the Territories are taken into consideration during negotiations.

UKOTA members also engaged with a number of UK Government Departments, in particular the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Department for International Trade in relation to legislation and treaties post Brexit, EU Future Relationship and negotiations on a UK EU free trade agreement.

In spring 2019 UKOTA commissioned Pierre Berthelot, the previous Team Leader for the Technical Assistance to OCTA, to prepare a Brexit Brief 'UK Overseas Territories: The need for a post-Brexit strategy.' The Brief was produced to inform the debate on what the Overseas Territories, covered under the current Overseas Association Decision, will lose as a result of Brexit. The Brief was successfully used as a lobbying tool and sent to relevant HMG Departments, Parliamentarians and OCTA Members.

At the JMC OT EN in the Cayman Islands on 28 June Lord Ahmad advised that, provided there was agreement among all the UK OTs, HM Treasury agreed in principle to provide the necessary funding for the UK OTs to continue their relationship with OCTA for up to 2 years. The UK OTs confirmed their desire to continue cooperation with OCTA post Brexit provided agreement on the nature of the relationship could be reached within OCTA.

Following the JMC OT EN, and given that the OCTA Executive Committee was mandated at the Ministerial Conference in February 2019 to explore future cooperation between the UK

OTs and OCTA post Brexit, discussions on possible mechanisms for a continued relationship between the UKOTs and OCTA post Brexit commenced. In September 2019, at the end of these discussions the recommendations to ExCo were that:

- The UK OTs remain full members of OCTA with all rights and obligations during any transition period, as they are entitled;
- The Articles of Association of OCTA be amended to create a new category of membership, 'Associated Membership', so that post Brexit, either at the end of the transition period or on 31 October 2019 in the event of a 'no deal', those UK OTs that wish to remain members of OCTA are able to do so;
- As well as Associated Membership the UK OTs should also form an Advisory Board to OCTA to ensure a voice within the Association in particular with respect to the use of funds provided by the UK.
- An Extraordinary Ministerial Conference be called in October, to ensure that all the necessary legal formalities are in place in the case of a 'no deal' Brexit on 31 October.

ExCo however, due to the continued uncertainty surrounding Brexit at this time, voted not to call an Extraordinary Ministerial Conference to move the matter forward in autumn 2019.

On the UK's departure from the EU on 31 January 2020 the President of the Executive Committee of OCTA wrote to all OCTA Members with respect to 'OCTA and Brexit: a new path.' The letter requested members to indicate their support for an amendment to the organisation's Articles of Association to create a new category of 'associate members' for former members who are no longer OCTs associated to the EU. The UK OTs of Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Montserrat, Pitcairn, St Helena and the Turks and Caicos Islands agreed a joint response to this letter requesting further information on the benefits of associated membership, the proposed composition and the rules of procedure of the advisory board, as well as a proposal for the cost of associate membership.

UKOTA has discussed in depth the responses received from OCTA Members on the question of Associated Membership, the additional information provided by the President of the Executive Committee, the proposed grant to OCTA from HMG to support the UK OTs' continued participation in OCTA and the position of the European Commission on the co-financing of OCTA by the UK Government; a summary of possible options for a continued relationship between the UK OTs and OCTA has been prepared for discussion by the Political Council.

Student Conference – chaired by **Kimberly Durrant** UK Representative for the Government of Bermuda

UKOTA acknowledges the need to encourage collaboration amongst students from the Overseas Territories. Our intention is to host a conference in the beginning of 2021.

6. UKOTA Financial Statement

In accordance with the UKOTA Constitution, financial resources are at the disposal of the Association for the execution of its activities and attainment of its objectives. Financial resources arise from membership fees and other contributions from Members.

Membership fees are payable each year with effect from the Annual General Meeting. Any Member whose membership fees remain unpaid for one year (from the date of the AGM) automatically loses its membership.

Twelve Member Territories contributed funding to UKOTA by way of annual subscription, of £1200 or £2400 depending on population. (One member had a credit balance and so paid less within the year). The Association now funds its own secretariat. The year also saw specific costs related to (i) participation in the UK delegation to the 24th climate-change COP in Poland, and (ii) a report commissioned on the implications of Brexit for the UKOTs.

The financial year ended on November 30th, 2019 with a balance of £10,476.10.

Acknowledgment

The Chair wishes to acknowledge the support of all Members actively engaged in the organisation for their positive working together during this sometimes quite difficult period.

NOTES: