



UKOTA statement: respect for local democracy in the UKOTs

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All the inhabited UK Overseas Territories are democracies, with elections run to high standards and often impassioned campaigning by candidates for public office.

While the UK retains responsibility for defence and most international matters, the level of devolved domestic power varies widely between Territories, broadly in relation to their populations. The smallest, such as Pitcairn and Tristan da Cunha, have Councils that advise a UK-appointed Governor on the making of local laws. The largest, such as Bermuda and the Cayman Islands, have Parliaments with wide-ranging legislative authority.

A common feature is that the UK Government holds a reserve power to over-rule the local democratic body. The Territories strongly believe that such a power should only be used in the most extreme circumstances, and not for the imposition of legal changes that happen to be in fashion in Westminster.

A UKOTA spokesperson said "The men and women who stand for election in small communities display real personal commitment. They are very close to their electors and are instantly held to account for their decisions. Respect for their mandate is essential if we want to encourage democratic participation".

Most Territories are members of the Small Branches section of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.