

# An update on the UK Overseas Territories Fund, launched as part of our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations

(6 minute read)

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We launched the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) Fund on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 as the centrepiece of our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations – with an agreement from the Board in March 2021 to commit £800,000 to the Fund. You can find out more about the UKOTs Fund [here](#) on our website. I also wrote an article about the Fund back in June 2021 that is available to read [here](#).

We designed the UKOTs Fund based on our experience of funding land and marine based environmental work in a few different UKOTs since 2013, and our ardent belief that these are nationally and internationally significant places that require more support from environmental philanthropists.

We took a very consultative approach to this work that involved expert advice and support from Jonathan Hall, who was seconded to the Environmental Funders Networks as their Strategy Advisor on the UK Overseas Territories, countless group and one-to-one discussions with our Trustees and various other funders, and pro-bono consultancy in the form of a student on the Bayes Business School Philanthropy, Grantmaking and Social Investment Masters programme. There have been numerous meetings, emails, and we were even treated to a wonderful dinner to explore some of our ideas and thinking by Andrew Wallace at the Fishmongers' Company.

The UKOTs Fund was eventually launched as a collaborative fund that we led. The UKOTs Fund received direct contributions of funding from two UK-based funders. Several other funders were part of this initiative as aligned funders, which means that in January 2022 we shared applications we were unable to fund with them to review and decide if they wanted to invite the applicant to apply to them directly.

We received 27 applications with a total request of £3,089,523 by the deadline of 29<sup>th</sup> November 2021. The applications related to work based across nearly all of the UK Overseas Territories, and for a really exciting range of marine and land-based work including:

- scientific research
- community engagement
- building organisational core capacity, including in some cases for fundraising and business development related activities
- land acquisition, restoration and/or management
- policy influencing work directed at the relevant legislative structures and frameworks
- support of existing teams and work so that great work can continue
- innovative new work relating to new technologies and ideas being implemented in pursuit of ambitious climate and biodiversity mitigation goals

Much of the work shared is rooted in community and builds on expertise and insights that have already been gathered through the applicant and relevant partners. A lot of the work also speaks to the ambition held across the UKOTs to deliver work that responds to the climate and biodiversity crises and mitigates against the worst impacts of these crises for the benefit of not just their own Territory but the wider planet.

We know that there were a fair number of organisations that were interested in applying to us, but that they were unable to as the eight week application window wasn't long enough for them. That said we were thrilled with the quality of the applications received, and the overall interest in this Fund from across the

UKOTs. We were particularly pleased to receive a mix of applications from UK-registered charities and Territory-based NGOs. This is the first time we have been open to applications from Territory-based NGOs. We decided to accept applications from NGOs in Territories that model their charity governance on the Charity Commission and/or those that have been through the due diligence procedures undertaken by Darwin Funding and EU-based funding. We felt it was important to accept applications from some Territory-based NGOs from an equity point of view too. This approach has worked so well that it has now been written into our main funding guidelines, available [here](#), as well.

Instead of our usual two stage application process, for the UKOTs Fund we designed a one-stage application process that was three pages long (as well as asking applicants to submit annual reports, an outcomes document and basic organisational information). We also built in an option of a follow up call with applicants where more information was required. On 15<sup>th</sup> December, we met with funders from the organisations contributing funds directly, as well as some of our aligned funders, to review and make decisions on the applications received. We took a new and what we hope was a simplified but robust approach to our grantmaking for the following reasons:

- We received ideas from some external advisers supporting this work who encouraged us to think differently and use the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as an opportunity to experiment and explore new ways of working.
- Charities and organisations working in the UKOTs have limited fundraising capacity and capability, and we were also launching the Fund around the same time that they were applying for project funding through the UK Government's Darwin Fund.
- We needed to consider how to ensure that our fellow pooled funders were fully involved in the decision-making and that decisions taken by them were balanced with decisions taken by us.
- We wanted to ensure that decisions were made during our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year – as we were only able to launch on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 this made it difficult to find a way of fitting this in alongside other activities, including the launch of our current round of the Foundation's Museums and Galleries Fund in mid-October.
- We did not have capacity within the Grants Team to run a full and lengthier two-stage process alongside our normal grantmaking and the Museums and Galleries Fund.

We had £950k available to spend and this has been allocated to the following nine organisations listed below in alphabetical order:

1. *Anguilla National Trust*

Funding towards a three-year project relating to the purchase of a 0.56ha parcel of land that will help to expand and further develop the Fountain National Park (FNP), Anguilla's largest terrestrial protected area.

2. *Bermuda Zoological Society*

Funding to support the work of the Hungry Bay Restoration Committee, specifically the cost of breach repair and a Government permit, which will stabilise the mangrove, allowing more food security and Blue Carbon storage for Bermuda.

3. *Blue Marine Foundation*

Funding to support the marine team based within St Helena National Trust.

4. *Falklands Conservation*

Funding to support the purchase of two threatened offshore islands in the Pebble Island Group.

5. *National Trust for the Cayman Islands*

Funding for the role of Environmental Policy and Impact Officer, who will support the Environmental Programmes Manager and increase the organisation's capacity to create, implement and effectively monitor management plans for their eight Protected Areas.

6. *Royal Society for the Protection of Birds*

Funding to support the purchase of land at the Salina Reserve Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA).

7. *St Helena National Trust*

Funding to support fundraising and business development work that will support the Trust to become more sustainable.

8. *Turks & Caicos Reef Fund*

Funding for a feasibility and pilot study to explore and trial a land-based coral nursery, in order to establish a coral species survival programme for corals affected by Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (a new highly fatal coral disease).

9. *Zoological Society of London*

Funding to support the delivery of a partnership project between ZSL and the Ascension Island Government that will systematically analyse and monitor the impact of plastic on wildlife, in order to then mitigate against the risks identified.

However, these nine grants represent a total ask of £1,150,010, rather than the available budget of £950,000. The quality of applications was high, and so at Ellerman we took the decision to increase our total spend on the UKOTs Fund to £900,010 (rather than the original £800,000 amount allocated).

This Fund was an important part of our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, and we are proud to have delivered it as a funder collaboration that we led. A heartfelt congratulations to the organisations that received funding, and a heartfelt thanks to everyone who supported us with the development of the UKOTs Fund. In the coming months we will be exploring further how we ensure the legacy of this work. We will also continue to support other funders that are considering supporting environmental work in the UKOTs to make this part of their grantmaking.