



Strengthening biosecurity

in the British Overseas Territories



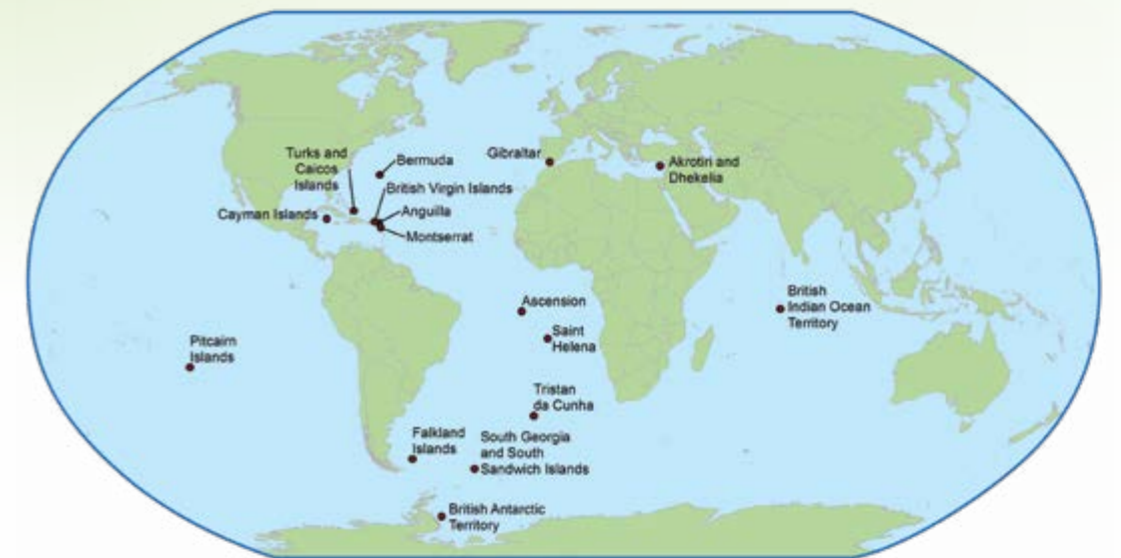
Image 01
Endemic St Helena scrubwood *Commersonia rugosum*
© Jill Key

The British Overseas Territories

The UK has 14 Overseas Territories, most of which are islands.

The Overseas Territories (OTs) encompass some of the greatest biodiversity in the world, accounting for 94% of the UK's unique endemic biodiversity, with species and habitats that are found nowhere else on earth. They make a significant contribution to global biodiversity, and are fundamental to regional and international marine conservation.

Henderson Island in Pitcairn and parts of Tristan da Cunha are UNESCO World Heritage Sites.



Overview:

The Need

The OTs are highly vulnerable to the introduction of invasive species, which are the biggest threat to island biodiversity as well as a risk to food security and sustainable development.

In 2017 prevention and border controls were identified as being weak across the OTs. Biosecurity practices tend to focus on protecting agriculture and production, with limited extension to invasive species of wider environmental concern. The OTs have little specialist capacity to combat invasive species and lack access to the wealth of expertise in the UK.

Biosecurity is acknowledged as the most cost-effective means of addressing invasive species threats for small islands.

Invasive non-native species are defined as species that are introduced to areas outside their natural range either intentionally or unintentionally, where they cause damage to the environment, economy, or human health.

Biosecurity is defined as measures to reduce the risk of introducing or spreading invasive non-native species in the wild.

Image .01

Native pine forest in TC destroyed by introduced pests.

©Eric Salamañca

Image .02

Imported fresh produce in the Falklands.

Image .03

The Mealy, a major pest to fruit

©Jill Key



The Project

A 3.5-year project run by the GB Non-native Species Secretariat (NNSS) and funded by the FCO's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) was carried out between 2016 and 2020 to improve the biosecurity of the OTs against invasive species.

The project was strategic, tackling priority capacity needs identified by the territories themselves. Total project funding was £1.26m which is less than £20,000 per territory per year.

The project helps the UK meet the following targets:

- Convention of Biological Diversity Aichi Target 9
- UN Sustainable Development Goal 15.8
- IUCN's Honolulu Challenge to tackle the threat of invasive species



Image .04

The port in Anguilla.

Image .05

The Green Iguana

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Image .05

Great African Land Snail

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Core activities:

Pathway analysis

The routes and mechanisms of introduction and spread of invasive species were identified for each OT, analysing over **2,600** previous introductions.

Horizon scanning

Over **2,500** terrestrial and marine species were screened for their likelihood to arrive and impact the OTs in the next 10 years. Lists of priority species of concern were developed for all the OTs.

Pathway action planning

Action plans were developed, targeting pathways of entry, to reduce the risk of priority invasive species being introduced to each OT.

Biosecurity legislation

A model biosecurity bill with **13 clauses** and subsidiary legislation was drafted, along with five guidance documents. Support was given to **7 OTs to develop new biosecurity legislation**.

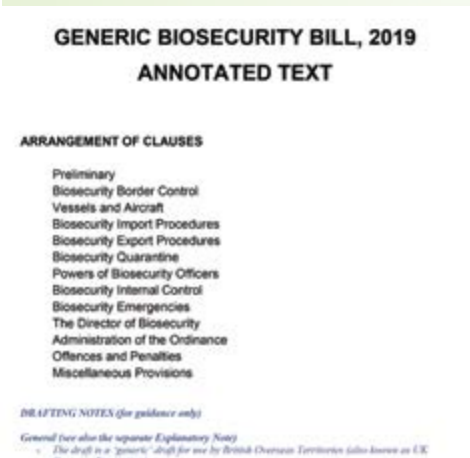


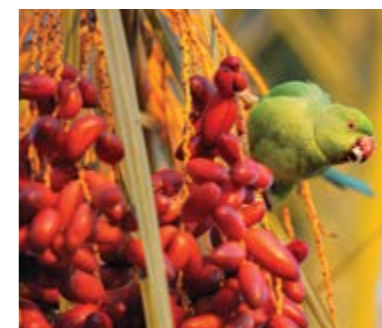
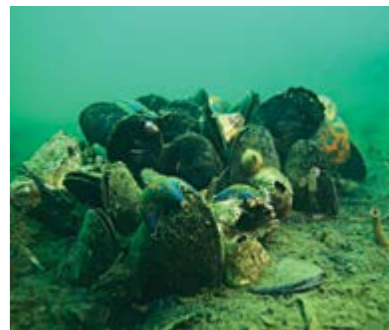
Image 01
Invertebrate survey in Diego Garcia.
© Eric Stannard
Image 02
Horizon scanning in Gibraltar.
© Jill Key
Image 03
Pathway action planning in Bermuda.
© Jill Key
Image 04
Biosecurity bill
© Jill Key
Image 05
Inspecting vehicles in St Helena.
© Norder, Macey



Top 10 threats

Horizon scanning identified these species as the most important threats overall to all three sectors: biodiversity, the economy and human health.

Common name	Scientific name
Little fire ant	<i>Wasmannia auropunctata</i>
Giant African land snail	<i>Lissachatina fulica</i>
Brown rat	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>
Rose-ringed parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
Boa constrictor	<i>Boa constrictor imperator</i>
Mesquite	<i>Prosopis juliflora</i>
Asian green mussel	<i>Perna viridis</i>
Mediterranean mussel	<i>Mytilus galloprovincialis</i>
Pacific oyster	<i>Magallana gigas</i>
Devil firefish / lionfish	<i>Pterois miles / volitans</i>





Guides and manuals

A biosecurity toolkit was developed covering border and post-border control procedures and marine biosecurity. This included a total of **77 guides**, manuals, **posters**, **protocols** and **templates**, with **212 factsheets**.

Prioritisation workshops

Invasive species in Anguilla and TCI were prioritized for eradication through **4 workshops**, with 22 out of 99 established species identified as high priorities for eradication now.

Stakeholder involvement

Many people within the OTs were involved: horizon scanning exercise (71), pathway action planning (142), workshops (67) and training courses (63).

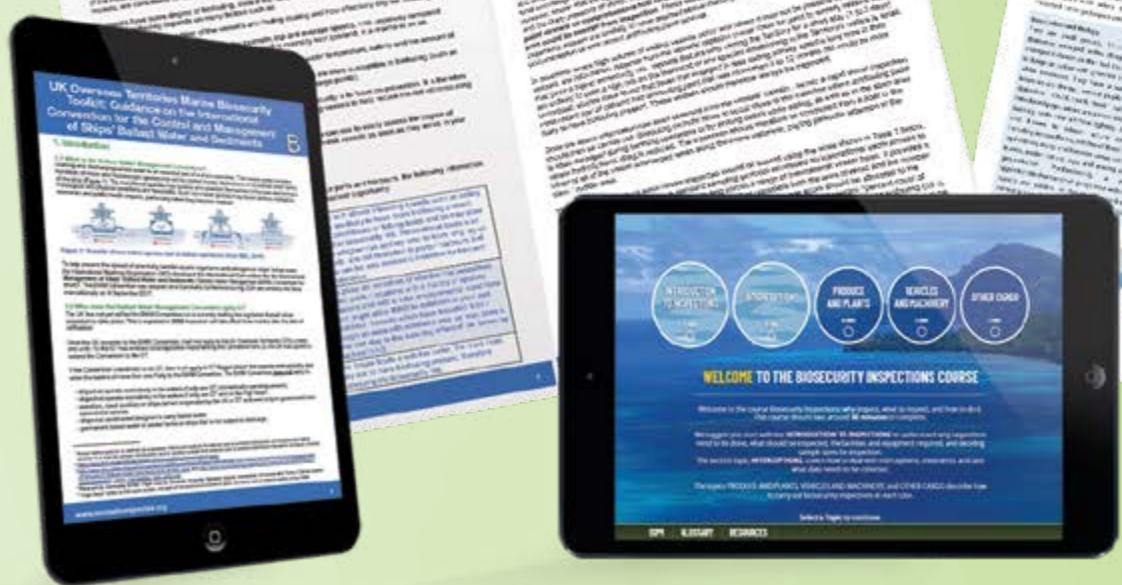
Training and elearning

2 e-learning modules were developed for front-line biosecurity staff, as well **3 education packs** for schools and pre-school children. Training was carried out in basic entomology, rodent biology and control, biosecurity, pest risk assessment, and contingency planning for wildlife diseases.

Image 03
Invertebrate survey in St Helena.
© Jill Key

Image 02
Entomology training in the UK.
© Jill Key

Image 01
Entomology training in Montserrat.
© Jill Key



Technical assistance

Technical assistance on reducing biosecurity risk was provided to three OTs:

British Virgin Islands

Supporting recovery following hurricanes Maria and Irma

- A visit was made in February 2018
- Initial and report-back meetings were held with 22 key stakeholders
- Visits were made to 2 ports of entry for cargo, 3 plant nurseries and the Botanic Gardens, and pest surveys made
- Overall, there was a lack of biosecurity facilities, equipment, detailed protocols and procedures
- 19 recommendations were made for immediate action to strengthen the biosecurity system

Image-01
Inspecting native agave plants for pests.
© JH Kuy

Image-02
Inspected ornamental palms.
© JH Kuy

Image-03
Touring entry port facilities.
© JH Kuy

Image-04
Sourcing for new pests.
© JH Kuy



South Georgia

Protecting the £12m investment of the South Georgia Heritage Trust on rat eradication

- A visit was made in April 2018, traveling to King Edward Point in South Georgia in the supply vessel MV Pharos SG
- Biosecurity risks and procedures were assessed, from the ports of departure in the Falkland Islands to South Georgia
- Overall, biosecurity was found to be good
- 27 recommendations were made to further strengthen existing practices, particularly to reduce the risk of introducing invasive invertebrate or plant species.



Image .01
Receiving rodent monitoring stations in South Georgia.
© Jill Key

Image .02
Loading rat bait in South Georgia.
© Jill Key

Image .03
Boat cleaning station at South Georgia.
© Jill Key

Image .04
Description MV Pharos SG the South Georgia supply vessel.
© Jill Key

Image .05
Training in inspection techniques for South Georgia.
© Jill Key

Image .06
Rodent detector dogs.
© Jill Key

Image .07
Invasive catfish in the Falklands.
© Jill Key

The Falkland Islands

Supporting implementation of the new biosecurity framework

- A visit was made in April 2018
- Field visits were made to ports of entry, importers of fresh produce, and a weed control site
- Discussions were held with key stakeholders, and a public meeting held
- 17 recommendations were made for short-term technical improvements, and 10 for longer-term strengthening of the biosecurity system



Key outcomes

Costing just £20k per year per territory, the project helped to improve protection to over 90% of the UKs endemic biodiversity. Cost-effective capacity building was tailored to the limited resources and needs of individual territories.

- Over **£1m was mobilised** in co-finance, almost doubling the project budget and providing access to global biosecurity expertise.
- Progress was assessed by repeating the gap analysis in 2020. Biosecurity capacity had **improved 25%** from 2017 scores. Components scored as “good” rose from 12 to 41, more than double the target of 18.
- The project involved **343 people** within the OTs, 9 UK government and part-government bodies, and more than 150 external experts from 54 entities in the UK, Europe and USA.

“One of the UK Government’s most impactful and collaborative Overseas Territories environment capacity-building projects of the past decade. A real exemplar”

RSPB

“Through this project the GB NNSS have successfully mobilised UK Government expertise to substantially improve the capacity of UKOTs to prevent the introduction of invasive species”

IUCN

“Close collaboration with key personnel in the territories was critical to the projects success”

BSEBTA

Image .01
Landing boat in Pictou, St. Helena.
Image .02
Checking native trees for pests in St. Helena.
Image .03
The main port in Providenciales, TCI.



Access to resources

For more information on the project achievements and resources go to <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/home/index.cfm>

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the invaluable input and participation of everyone in the OTs, the Steering Group and all the visiting experts to the projects achievements.



Find out more about invasive plants and animals
and how you can help to stop the spread at:

www.nonnativespecies.org/home/index.cfm