



## ICRI Member’s Report

### UNITED KINGDOM (UK)

#### Reporting period December 2017 – November 2018

1. **Reporting on the ICRI Plan of Action 2016-2018.** *Your responses will help inform the Secretariat about members’ contributions toward the previous Plan of Action.*
  - a. **Please list any relevant examples from your organisation/country of investment/projects to protect and restore the natural infrastructure of reefs and mangroves.** (See Goal (1) 2 [ICRI Recommendation for supporting investments in the natural infrastructure of reefs and mangroves to increase climate resilience](#)).

#### UK cold water corals

Protection is afforded to UK cold-water coral reefs through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. These Regulations provide for the designation, protection and management of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). National legislation has also been adopted to protect cold-water coral reefs under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, and the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013. Cold water coral reefs are a habitat feature protected within Marine Conservation Zones (in England) and Nature Conservation Marine Protected Areas (in Scotland).

The UK is also a Contracting Party to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (the ‘OSPAR Convention’) which identifies *Lophelia pertusa* reefs as threatened and/or declining habitats in need of protection. As such the UK has designated examples of these habitats in MPAs, through the national legal framework outlined above. There are nine Marine Protected Areas that have been designated to conserve cold-water corals as a protected feature (see Table 10.1).

Table 10.1: Marine Protected Areas in the UK with cold water corals as a protected feature

Site name	Site status	Coral feature protected
Darwin Mounds	SAC	Reefs: Biogenic ( <i>Lophelia</i> )
North West Rockall Bank	SAC/SCI	Reefs: Biogenic ( <i>Lophelia</i> )
East Rockall Bank	SAC/SCI	Reefs: Biogenic ( <i>Lophelia</i> )
Hatton Bank	cSAC	Reefs: Biogenic ( <i>Lophelia</i> )
Anton Dohrn	SAC/SCI	Reefs: Biogenic ( <i>Lophelia</i> )
East Mingulay	SAC	Reefs: Biogenic ( <i>Lophelia</i> )
The Canyons	MCZ	Cold-water coral reefs
Rosemary Bank Seamount	NCMPA	Seamount communities
Barra Fan Hebrides Terrace seamount	NCMPA	Seamount communities

- b. **Has your organisation/country made any progress in the following areas to target anthropogenic pressures?** Please give detail below. Note: If no change since your last ICRI member report, please write 'no change'.

**Encourage ban of plastic microbeads in cosmetic products.** (See Goal (3) 2 & [See ICRI Recommendation to reduce plastic microbeads pollution in marine environment](#)):

#### **UK cold water corals**

Microbead bans have now been introduced in England, Scotland and Wales. In England we have now implemented a legislative ban on the manufacture and sale of rinse-off personal care products containing microbeads. The regulations were made on 19 December 2017. The ban on manufacture was introduced on January 9th 2018, and the ban on sale was introduced on 19th June 2018. The ban in Wales is on the sale and manufacture of products containing microbeads and has been in force since 30 June 2018.

In addition to action at a domestic level, we are encouraging members of the Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance (the UK- and Vanuatu-led Commonwealth Blue Charter Action Group tackling plastic pollution in the oceans) to implement a ban on microbeads in cosmetic and personal care products as part of one of three key commitments.

**Improve regulation and enforcement to reduce direct anthropogenic damage due to dredging and physical alteration of reef structures.** (See Goal (3) 3 & [ICRI Recommendation to reduce damage due to dredging and dumping on coral reefs](#)):

#### **UK cold water corals**

As most of the UK's cold-water coral reefs occur in the deep-sea they are not typically exposed to dredging activity. However, the UK has a marine licensing system to ensure that dredging (and other regulated industry activities) do not adversely affect priority habitats and species, including coral reefs. The licensing process identifies potential adverse impacts of activities and developments and where appropriate will refuse consent, or impose license conditions to monitor or mitigate impacts. If a project is likely to have a significant effect on the environment an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) must be carried out before a license can be granted; most aggregate dredging applications require an EIA. There is also a strict set of rules concerning adverse effects on the designated habitats of SACs, such as cold-water coral reefs and seagrasses. This 'Habitats Regulations Assessment' process requires developers (e.g. dredging companies) to demonstrate no impact of the activity on the protected habitats, or to put in place mitigation measures if an impact is anticipated.

**Deployment of mooring devices limiting the mechanical destruction of coral reefs and seagrasses.** (See Goal (3) 4).

#### **UK seagrass**

Eco-mooring projects are being piloted at a number of seagrass bed sites in the UK. The Porthdinllaen Seagrass Project in North Wales is trialling ways to reduce impacts on seagrass

while allowing people to continue recreational and economic activities. Since last year, the following activities have been undertaken:

- Helical anchors purchased which will be installed in the Spring;
- Completed study on vehicle impact on inertial seagrass and work with fishermen and the National Trust to implement the recommendations;
- Use of computer modelling to determine the viability of different mooring designs
- Improvement of the inner harbour moorings

For copies of reports and information we have produced please visit [http://www.pennlynarsarnau.co.uk/sac\\_publications.aspx](http://www.pennlynarsarnau.co.uk/sac_publications.aspx).

- c. **Did your organisation/country celebrate International Year of the Reef?** Please give details below. (See Goal (5) 1 & [ICRI Recommendation designating 2018 as the third International Year of the Reef](#)):

At the beginning of the year, the Government published its 25 Year Environment Plan. This committed the UK to increase engagement with ICRI and to work with the UK's Overseas Territories to encourage the adoption of best sustainable management practice of coral reefs and their ecosystems.

Defra also promoted IYOR in April at the Commonwealth Marine Science Event hosted by the National Oceanography Centre (NOC), where Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey announced UK's commitment to the Coral Reef Life Declaration and committed to safeguarding coral reefs and bolstering scientific research into the threats they face.

- 2. Contribution to the ICRI Plan of Action 2018-2020 and upcoming ICRI general meetings.** *Your responses to the following questions will assist the Secretariat in assessing contributions towards the major themes of the draft ICRI Plan of Action 2018-2020.*

**Theme 1 - Promote effective and adaptable solutions to improve the protection of coral reefs**

- a. **Which of the below topics do you consider to be the three top challenges that your organisation faces in managing coral reefs?** Please select from the options below:

**UK cold water corals**

- Climate change impacts
- Inadequate planning, zoning and management
- Unsustainable resource extraction
- Tourism and recreation
- Shipping
- Coastal development
- Dredging
- Illegal and destructive fishing

- Fish and coral trade
- Marine debris
- Other. Please specify: localised disturbances associated with hydrocarbon exploitation and scientific sampling

### **Supporting information.**

#### **UK cold water corals**

The OSPAR background document for *Lophelia pertusa* reefs (Hall-Spencer and Stehfest, 2009) states that fishing is the only threat that has led to a documented decline in *L. pertusa* reefs to date in the North-east Atlantic region, but other threats include mining of deep-sea mineral resources and the more localised disturbances associated with hydrocarbon exploitation and carbon capture and storage, dumping and scientific sampling.

The Extent of Physical Damage Indicator used in the OSPAR Intermediate Assessment assessed potential disturbance of special habitats from bottom contact fisheries. Results showed that <5% of the known area of *Lophelia pertusa* reefs were in high disturbance categories; however, distribution of the mostly small habitat areas is often unknown, and so confidence in these results is low.

The section of the 2013 report card from the Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership regarding deep-sea habitats (Hughes and Narayanaswamy, 2013) stated that ocean acidification poses a major long-term threat to deep-sea corals and other calcifying organisms in the UK. However, at present we have very few data on which to base predictions of future impacts.”

- b. **Please list any examples of innovative management practices that your organisation/country is involved in, such as use of VMS, drones & ecological mooring devices.** Include their limits, conditions of implementation, financing and an assessment of their results and links for more information if possible.

#### **UK cold water corals**

The UK has used the BH3 Extent of Physical Damage Indicator to estimate the disturbance of benthic habitats, including coral reefs, from fisheries. This uses VMS data to predict levels of fishing. Results at a North-east Atlantic scale have been reported in the OSPAR Intermediate Assessment.

See <https://oap.ospar.org/en/ospar-assessments/intermediate-assessment-2017/biodiversity-status/habitats/extent-physical-damage-predominant-and-special-habitats/>

- c. **Please list any examples of innovative funding for management that your organisation/country is involved in.** Include their limits, conditions of implementation, financing and an assessment of their results and links for more information if possible.

#### **UKOT warm water corals**

**Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)** has been leading on a suite of projects in the UK Overseas Territories in the Caribbean. One key area of work has been assessing how the natural capital of 3 UK Caribbean OTs enhances their resilience to extreme weather

events. The work completed in early 2017; however, the scale of the 2017 hurricane damage to the UK OTs was unprecedented. The project demonstrated the economic role of the natural environment including its capacity to mitigate hurricane impacts and the scope to maximise this natural mitigation capacity through appropriate interventions. The work is continuing with additional economic studies in Anguilla, British Virgin Islands and Turks and Caicos Islands to provide more detailed analysis of local benefits of reef systems for spatial and disaster planning.

**The Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Sciences (Cefas)**, often in partnership with other UK Government bodies, has been involved in a number of seabed mapping programmes to describe the nature and extent of key natural resources in the marine environment, including coral reefs and seagrass beds, in Caribbean Commonwealth States and UK Overseas Territories. The marine resource assessments in previously poorly studied areas revealed in some cases up to 800% more seagrass beds than previously known. The increased knowledge of seagrass resource illustrates potential ecosystem service resilience against extreme weather events such as hurricanes. In a particular case study, the value of sequestration and storage of organic carbon in seagrass meadows has been demonstrated to be between £49,428 and £664,785 in the baseline year, increasing to over £4 million under the most conservative scenario over 50 years. The discovery of a vast amount of seagrass also demonstrated the existence of large coral heads situated in the same area where many leisure and commercial tourist vessels moored. As a result, the Government moved the mooring area to a sandy location to avoid further damage to the coral. This study illustrates that following relatively modest investment, the projected benefit of seabed mapping and the ability to manage and protect marine resources such as seagrass meadows and coral, is substantial and can constitute large economic benefits, especially when related to a country's GDP.

1. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/718427/CME\\_Grenada\\_Case\\_Study.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/718427/CME_Grenada_Case_Study.pdf)
2. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/604869/St\\_Vincent\\_and\\_the\\_Grenadines\\_CME\\_Case\\_Study.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/604869/St_Vincent_and_the_Grenadines_CME_Case_Study.pdf)

- d. **Please list any examples of leading practices, techniques and strategies for building reef resilience that your organisation/country is involved in.** Include their limits, conditions of implementation, financing and an assessment of their results and links for more information if possible.

### **Associated Ecosystems**

Through International Climate Finance (ICF) Defra has committed £10.1 million the protection and restoration of mangrove habitats through the creation and promotion of sustainable and climate resilient livelihoods.

This programme is currently delivering in partnership with Blue Ventures in Madagascar and has ambitions to introduce the programme in other countries over seven years. The total impact is intended to be 20 years under the expectation of leveraging additional funding from the private sector for the remaining time. This *Blue Forests* programme is projected to protect 20,000 hectares of mangrove forests; deliver 13.9 million tonnes of carbon dioxide savings and benefit over 100,000 people.

The programme received its first annual review at the end of 2017 and scored an A. It can be viewed online [here](#).

We have recently announced £12.75 million of new funding through our International Climate Finance, which will help to restore or protect up to 6000 hectares of mangroves - equivalent to 10,000 football pitches. The project will be implemented across countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, including Small Island developing states like Jamaica, and those with high rates of deforestation like Colombia. Over an investment period of six years the project will help to prevent the degradation of mangrove habitats, helping us to reduce carbon emissions and improve our resilience to climate impacts.

- e. **Please list any examples of leading practice reef restoration mechanisms that your organisation/country is involved in.** Include their limits, conditions of implementation, financing and an assessment of their results and links for more information if possible.

No reef restoration work is undertaken for cold water corals.

### **Theme 3 – Support communities reliant on coral reefs**

- f. **Is sustainable tourism development a significant challenge for your organisation?** If so please include detail below of the kinds of challenges faced and your strategies to deal with them.

Sustainable tourism is not a challenge for cold water corals in the UK.

- g. **Is your organisation involved in activities to raise awareness and encourage action to support communities reliant on coral reefs?** Please include details below.

JNCC has been raising awareness of the habitats found in Marine Protected Areas, including those protecting cold water corals such as Anton Dohrn Seamount, through sharing videos on the website and social media (e.g. <https://vimeo.com/275803959> ).

### **Theme 4 – Help to reduce anthropogenic threats to coral reefs, particularly those that occur at a global or regional scale**

- h. **What activities is your organisation involved in to elevate awareness of the global nature of the threat of climate change to coral reefs?** Please include details below

#### **UK cold water corals**

The Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership (MCCIP) is a partnership between marine scientists and sponsors from the UK and devolved governments, their agencies, NGOs, and industry. It aims to provide a co-ordinating framework for the UK, so as to be able to transfer high quality evidence on marine climate change impacts, and guidance on adaptation, to policy advisors and decision-makers. <http://www.mccip.org.uk>

- i. **Has your organisation made any progress in dealing with destructive fishing and trade?** Please include details below.

#### **UK cold water corals**

MPA management measures have been introduced to prevent damage being caused to cold-water coral reefs by anthropogenic activities, such as fishing. Currently fishing gear prohibitions have been introduced to Darwin Mounds MPA and North West Rockall Bank MPA. Joint Recommendations for fisheries management in other MPAs have been developed by Scottish Government and Defra in collaboration with JNCC, Marine Scotland and Cefas. Proposed measures include the restriction of certain fishing gears in all or part of the sites. These recommendations have undergone consultation but have not yet been implemented.

The UK is a Contracting Party to the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC). NEAFC has established fisheries closures in parts of UK waters (such as Hatton Bank and Rockall Bank west of Scotland) which prohibit bottom trawling and fishing with static gear, thereby also protecting the cold-water coral reefs found in these areas.

An EU-wide Deep-Sea Fisheries Regulation came into force in 2017 which prohibits trawling in waters greater than 800m. This will protect deeper areas of cold-water corals in the UK.

- j. **Has your organisation made any progress in dealing with marine debris?**  
Please include details below.

### **UK cold water corals**

Tackling plastic pollution is a priority of the UK Government and we are taking a range of actions to tackle both land-based and sea-based sources of marine litter.

The Clean Growth Strategy and 25 Year Environment Plan include a set of ambitious policies towards our ambition to zero avoidable waste by 2050, including tackling the scourge of waste plastic so we can make our oceans cleaner and healthier. Better waste management on land will prevent waste reaching the sea and increasing recycling return more plastic waste back into production processes, reducing waste and the need for virgin materials.

The UK is set to launch a Resources and Waste Strategy - the Government's ambition to become a world leader in using resources efficiently and cutting the amount of waste we create as a society. We are also going to be consulting on the development of producer responsibility schemes; introducing a deposit return scheme for beverage containers, and banning or restricting the distribution and/or sale of plastic stemmed cotton buds, plastic stirrers and plastic straws.

We have introduced one of the world's toughest bans on the manufacture and sale of rinse-off personal care products containing microbeads. Our plastic bag charge continues to reduce consumption - data shows that since the introduction of the charge, the seven key retailers had distributed around 15.6 billion fewer bags since the charge was introduced. In August the Prime Minister announced plans to consult on a mandatory extension and on possibly increasing the charge to 10p.

Internationally, the UK has committed to the G7 Ocean Plastics Charter and the Commonwealth Blue Charter. At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in April, the Prime Minister announced the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance (CCOA), the Blue Charter action group led by the UK and Vanuatu to tackle plastic pollution in the ocean.

The CCOA calls on other countries to pledge action on plastics, be this by a ban on microbeads, a commitment to cutting down on single use plastic bags, or other steps to eliminate avoidable plastic waste. These ambitions are supported by up to £66.4 million funding package to boost



global research and help countries across the Commonwealth stop plastic waste from entering the oceans in the first place.

We are committed to addressing the issue of abandoned, lost and otherwise discarded fishing gear and are supporting the Global Ghost Gear Initiative. The initiative is an alliance of the fishing industry, NGOs and government agencies working to solve the problem. We have made membership of the GGGI one of the three second tier commitments of the CCOA.

In Wales, under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), the Welsh Government has a commitment to reduce marine litter. This is a specific target under Descriptor 10 of the MSFD.

The targets and measures which are agreed within the UK marine strategy under MSFD are reviewed on a 6 yearly cycle and the Welsh Government is currently reviewing those targets associated with Descriptor 10 (marine litter). The Welsh Government is working with Defra to finalise a UK assessment on marine litter, which will soon go to consultation.

The marine litter action plan was adopted by the Welsh Government in 2017 and contains a number of actions over different phases to address marine litter in Wales. The Wales Clean Seas Partnership was formed to deliver the marine litter action plan and works collaboratively with the Wales Marine Action Advisory Group (WMAAG).

**3. Would you like to report on your activities during the ICRI GM? Please give details below.**

The UK will not be reporting on its activities during the ICRI GM.

**4. International events.** Please list any upcoming international events relevant to ICRI which someone from your organisation plans to attend in 2018-2019.

ICRI GM, Monaco, 5-7 Dec 2018

Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 3-14 Dec 2018

Reef Futures 2018: A Coral Restoration and Intervention-Science Symposium, Florida, 10-14 Dec 2018

Global World Heritage Marine Managers meeting, Alaska, US, 26-31 May 2019

Other:

**5. Publications.** Please list relevant publications and reports you have released during this reporting period.

Eggett, A., Johnson, G., Johnston, C., Chaniotis, P. & Robertson, M. 2018. MRV Scotia 15/12S Cruise Report: Survey of Wyville Thomson Ridge cSAC/SCI and Faroe-Shetland Sponge Belt Proposed NCMPA. JNCC Report No. 610, JNCC, Peterborough.  
[http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/Report\\_610\\_web.pdf](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/Report_610_web.pdf)

Doggett, M., Baldock, B. & Goudge, H. (2018). A review of the distribution and ecological importance of seabed communities in the deep waters surrounding Scotland. JNCC Report No. 625, JNCC, Peterborough, ISSN 0963-8091.  
[http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/Report\\_625\\_FINAL\\_web.pdf](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/Report_625_FINAL_web.pdf)



Hall-Spencer JM, Stehfest KM. 2009. Background Document for Lophelia pertusa reefs. ISBN 978-1-906840-63-1. Publication Number: 423/2009.  
<https://www.ospar.org/documents?d=7182>

Hughes, D.J. and B. E. Narayanaswamy (2013) Impacts of climate change on deep-sea habitats, MCCIP Science Review 2013, 204-210, doi:10.14465/2013.arc21.204-210

Noble-James, T., Jesus, A. & McBreen, F. 2018. Monitoring guidance for marine benthic habitats (Revised 2018). JNCC Report No. 598. JNCC, Peterborough.  
[http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/Report\\_598\\_Revised-2018\\_WEB.pdf](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/Report_598_Revised-2018_WEB.pdf)

<http://www.mccip.org.uk/impacts-report-cards/full-report-cards/2017-10-year-report-card/>

OSPAR 2017 Intermediate Assessment <https://oap.ospar.org/en/ospar-assessments/intermediate-assessment-2017>

**6. ICRI Member Feedback.** What do you find most valuable about the ICRI member reports? If you have any ideas for improvement please list below:

**7. General Information.** (Note that this information will be posted on the ICRI website on your member page: <http://www.icriforum.org/about-icri/members-networks>.)

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*Thank you very much for sharing your valuable experiences and information with ICRI.*