



## International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI)

Member's Report | 37<sup>th</sup> General Meeting

19<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2023 Hawai'i, – United States of America

Reporting Period: 2021 – 2023

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### A. Member Information:

- Name of ICRI member: **United Kingdom**
- Name of person(s) completing member's report: Murray Fyfe
- Email: [murray.fyfe@defra.gov.uk](mailto:murray.fyfe@defra.gov.uk)
- Are you a Focal Point:  Yes  No
  - If no, who are you completing the form on behalf of:
- Which was the last General Meeting you attended: N/A
- Will you be attending the 37<sup>th</sup> ICRI General Meeting:  Yes  No Jack Collier will be attending in my place
- Member social media:
  - Twitter: [@defrauk](https://twitter.com/defrauk)
  - LinkedIn: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

### B. Reporting on the implementation of ICRI Plan of Action 2021-2024: turning the tide for coral reefs. *Your responses will help inform the Secretariat about members' contributions toward the current Plan of Action*

#### Theme 1 - Preparing for the Future: Promoting Resilient Coral Reefs

*1.A - Strengthening policies - Supporting conservation and recovery of coral reefs and associated ecosystems through resilience-based management frameworks.*

- (ICRI) How have you embedded resilience-based management into your policies? (*Tip – refer to the RBM policy brief: <https://icriforum.org/resilience-hub/>*)

*Answer:*

UK Government ambition is to champion and support coral reef conservation and biodiversity in UK and Overseas Territories' (UKOTs) waters and around the world, and their importance is reflected in both the 25 Year Environmental Plan and the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023.

We are working with UKOT Governments and stakeholders on a new OT Biodiversity Strategy that will be of benefit to all 14 OTs, providing a tool to guide and attract future, long-term investment in their biodiversity. We will be considering resilience-based management practises as part of the OT Biodiversity Strategy's development.

*1.B - Promote capacity building for applying resilience-based management approaches to coral conservation Ad Hoc Committee on Resilience-based Management.*

- (ICRI) Please list any examples of leading practices, techniques and strategies for building reef resilience that your organisation/country is involved in. Include their location and extent, methods of implementation, financing, and an assessment of their results (or likely results), with links for more information if possible.

*Answer:*

We are funding coral reef-based work under UK funded programs such as:

[The Blue Belt Programme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). The funding provides ongoing support for the management, enforcement and scientific monitoring of Marine Protected Areas, and allows us to develop our understanding of the effectiveness of the marine protection in place.

The [Blue Planet Fund \(BPF\)](#), to support developing countries to protect and restore marine environments including through access to UK scientific expertise. This includes funding for biodiversity loss, sustainable fisheries, pollution, and climate change

- The Ocean Country Partnership Program - [Ocean Country Partnership Programme \(OCP\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). The Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCP) supports countries to: strengthen marine science expertise, develop science-based policy and management tools and create educational resources for coastal communities with many OCP countries depending on coral reefs for livelihoods and income.
- The Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR): The GFCR is a blended finance instrument integrating public and private finance to mobilise action and resources to protect, restore and safeguard coral reef ecosystems and the communities that depend on them. Through the BPF, the UK has been supporting the GFCR grant fund since 2021, committing a total £33million to the grant fund out to 2025 making the UK the largest donor to date. As of January 2023, the UK, alongside the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) act as co-chair of the GFCR Executive Board.

The UK has also supported the [CORDAP](#) program, sitting on both the Initiative Governing Committee (IGC) and the Science Advisory Committee. CORDAP aims to develop effective, scalable solutions that can be transferred to and scaled up by, coral conservation practitioners.

- (ICRI) Have you developed, or are you aware of, training materials that you can share?

*Answer:*

A recent UK led paper detailing how to achieve Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) remotely, using a combination of freely available online data, remote fieldwork techniques and virtual communication and engagement tools.

[Ecosystem-based management of coral reefs from afar – A guide for remote scientists and remote places - ScienceDirect](#)

### *1.C - Promote and build capacity for the restoration of resilient coral reefs Ad Hoc Committee on Reef Restoration*

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

*Answer:*

As mentioned above through the Blue Planet Fund, the UK contributes to the Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR). The GFCR promotes a ‘protect-transform-restore-recover’ approach in priority locations to save and protect coral reefs in the face of serious decline and extinction. This will be achieved through the creation and management of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and sustainable financing. A key outcome of the GFCR focuses on the promotion of, and funding to, restoration and adaptation technologies. GFCR Programmes are exploring eco-tourism, insurance mechanisms, technologies and credit instruments as mechanisms to make coral restoration financially sustainable. UK funding has supported GFCR projects in Fiji, Kenya, Tanzania, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Indonesia, Honduras, Belize, Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia and Maldives. The GFCR Secretariate can provide more information on details and examples of reef restoration mechanisms in place.

## Theme 2 – Coral Reef Science and Oceanography: Advancing and Utilizing the Latest Science and Technology

### 2.A – Coral monitoring capacity building

- (ICRI) Do you have information / case studies that could contribute to the update of the “Methods for ecological monitoring of coral reefs” (<https://portals.iucn.org/library/efiles/documents/2004-023.pdf>) , especially related to the use of new technologies.

*Answer:*

[Ecosystem-based management of coral reefs from afar – A guide for remote scientists and remote places - ScienceDirect](#)

Additionally, UK scientists are involved in the IUCN redlist for corals to identify species, specific threats and 10 risk ‘traits’, including bleaching sensitivity, depth range and popularity in coral trade with a poster presented at the recent [REEF CONSERVATION UK - Home](#) conference

The Global Fund for Coral Reefs, with support from the United Nations Environment Programme, have been developing the GFCR Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. This framework identifies indicators and methodology for monitoring the progress of its programmes. Additionally, the GFCR REEF+ Accelerator is a bespoke global coral reef finance platform that, when finalised, will rapidly scale the knowledge, collaboration, and finance required to deploy revenue-generating reef-positive enterprises and financial instruments.

- (ICRI) Are you aware, developing, or involved with, any capacity building activities related to the use of coral reef monitoring mechanisms, especially regarding the advancement of monitoring practices (noting technology)?

*Answer:*

Yes, capacity building is a core component of UK international programs under official development assistance (ODA) as part of the UK's £500 million Blue Planet Fund, including Ocean Country Partnership Program and the Global Fund for Coral Reefs. The OCPP also makes funding contributions to the Global Ocean Accounts Partnership (GOAP) and Friends of Ocean Action (FOA). GOAP partners with ODA-eligible countries to calculate and account for the value that a healthy ocean brings to their economies, by supporting them to develop ocean natural capital accounts.

GFCR programmes focus on interventions that develop or strengthen capacity and sustainable financing for those managing marine protected areas, in addition to offering support and solutions in aquaculture and waste management, blue carbon and reef insurance initiatives, and incubators to develop reef-positive businesses.

## 2.B – The Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN)

The GCRMN would like to receive feedback on the [Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2020 report](#) to improve the production of future regional and global reports. As such, please kindly respond accordingly to the questions below:

- (ICRI) In reference to the Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2020 report:
  - Have you read the report?
  - Did you utilise the report and/or use the results and contents?
  - How could the next report be improved (considering the entire process from data acquisition to reporting)?

*Answer:*

Yes, we have read and used the information within the report. The next report could be improved by more accessible online short summaries of each of the regions, and the ability to quickly search for individual countries.

- (ICRI) The GCRMN intends to establish time-bound task forces to address specific priority issues and to build capability and capacity across the network. As a first priority, a Data Task Force was established. The Task Force brings together subject matter experts to increase the transparency, reproducibility, and robustness of future GCRMN reports alongside capacity in monitoring, data collection, analysis, management and sharing of coral reefs and associated ecosystems. The Task Force will focus on:
  - Improving data integration and analyses to facilitate the production of GCRMN regional and global reports; and
  - Promoting good data management practices based on FAIR data principles for the coral reef scientific community.

Tell us if you will be interested in joining the Data Task Force, or upcoming task forces. More so, please inform us if you have data to contribute to upcoming regional, or global, reports and if you will be organising and/or partaking in any capacity building activities regarding data monitoring:

*Answer:*

1. *Taskforces: yes*
2. *Data to contribute (GCRMN Region Country, Data description): yes*
3. *Upcoming capacity building activities:*

### Theme 3 - Local Threat Reduction: Integrating Response Planning Frameworks

*Please tick the most appropriate box/boxes:*

- (ICRI) Do you have (or in the process of developing) a coral reef response plan(s) on, for example, but not limited to:
  - coral disease
  - vessel groundings
  - bleaching
  - invasive species outbreaks (lionfish and COTS)
  - large storm events
  - other:

If yes, please provide us with more information.

*Answer:*

In 2019 the UK hosted a UKOT workshop focussing on coral reef management and conservation. The workshop brought together experts from across the Caribbean region to articulate OT priorities both nationally and also regionally for future work both within their own organisation and in collaboration with partners. Caribbean OTs priorities which were identified both nationally and also regionally were then drafted into Action Plans. The workshop is part of the wider UKOT Coral Reef Initiative to deliver on a stronger collaboration between OTs for coral reef management and conservation.

This year, the UK worked with UKOTs at Coral Conservation in the Overseas Territories (C-COT) workshop, which drafted a reef resilience framework that will underpin the upcoming Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) Adaptive Management plan to support the long-term management of coral reefs in the OTs. The C-COT workshop provided the opportunity for the group to meet face to face, to network with local coral reef scientists and to reinforce the relationships that have been formed since the group started meeting online in late 2019.

Last year through the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)'s Climate Stability and Security Fund (CSSF), the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) worked with OTs to implement bespoke coral reef monitoring and SCTLD treatment programmes embedded into their workflow, which has been complemented by a suite of tools such as disease and bleaching response plans in Turks and Caicos Islands, Montserrat and the Cayman Islands, and for all OTs- a set of priority actions for reef health and a start to identify priority areas for future reef restoration activity.

## Theme 4 - Diversity and Inclusion: Expanding the Coral Reef Community

### 4.A – Connect with youth audiences:

- (ICRI) Are you developing (or planning to develop) any communication campaigns or outreach materials? What will your primary target audiences be and what would your key messages include?

*Answer:*

Funded by the CSSF, we worked with UKOTs to implement Coral Reef Action Plans for the UK Overseas Territories Coral Reef Initiative. Part of this work was to increase understanding of public perceptions of coral reefs and conservation and address potential barriers to behaviour change through the implementation of communication action plans. Communications plans were agreed and delivered, including video, infographic, billboard and ID guide outputs with the campaign theme of ‘nurtured by nature’ piloted in 21/22 and aimed to raise awareness of the value of a healthy environment to society. The outputs focussed on promoting the ecosystem services provided by natural systems to generate buy-in for environmental management action and encourage environmentally conscious behaviour within the community. Valuations of reef systems have been used to raise the profile of coral reefs amongst government officials and island communities. Social science studies fed into outreach activities to address barriers and effectively communicate OT-specific conservation messages. Sustainability for this work was achieved through community engagement to ensure local communities, businesses and educational establishments have a heightened understanding of the importance of protecting coral reefs for economic and cultural sustainability as well as disaster resilience will help long-term positive changes that benefit coral reefs.

We have most recently published the “[Identification of CITES-listed live stony corals in the aquarium trade](#)” guide. It provides an identification resource for commonly seen growth forms of live stony corals in the aquatic trade. It is designed to support customs inspectors of live coral in the aquarium trade- it should not be used as a definitive source of taxonomic reference.

*4.B - Collaborate with Indigenous people and seek to incorporate indigenous and local knowledge into policies and management plans:*

- (ICRI) How do you incorporate indigenous and local knowledge into policies and management frameworks. Please provide us with some examples. Do you have any plans or strategies to further promote this incorporation?



*Answer:*

*Working closely with UKOTs*

UK Government ambition is to champion and support coral reef conservation and biodiversity in UK and Overseas Territories' waters and around the world, and their importance is reflected in both the 25 Year Environmental Plan and the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023. The UK is working closely with OT Governments and stakeholders on a new OT Biodiversity Strategy that will be of benefit to all 14 OTs, providing a tool to guide and attract future, long-term investment in their biodiversity.

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- (ICRI) Do you have any, or know of, best practices to solicit Indigenous and local community knowledge?

*Answer:*

Identify and find solutions where capacity for engagement might be limited.

Partners should be included throughout the project to ensure awareness of needs throughout processes, facilitating engagement.

Allow for limited engagement and communication- having regular face to face presence had a strong positive impact on engagement.

The importance of conserving traditional knowledge within interventions and ensuring cohesive collaboration with local communities and indigenous peoples is vital in not only supporting these communities but also in future proofing and enabling sustainable development. There is a growing body of literature on ocean justice that can support in identifying how to mainstream traditional knowledge and IPLCs perceptions into future strategies.

Mechanisms and frameworks that support sustainable development and financing should be demand led with clear, long-term ownership from developing countries. For the greatest impact, and to reach the most vulnerable communities, programming must be designed to respond to local needs and realities from the very outset, but also need to match the risk appetite of recipient country governments. Effective and meaningful dialogue and engagement with local development partners and beneficiaries is therefore crucial for ensuring developing country, including LDC and SIDS perspectives, are well represented within conservation plans.

### C. Kunming-Montreal Global biodiversity framework

- (ICRI) Do your current National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAP) incorporate coral reefs? If not, what kind of material will be useful for your Country/organisation to ensure coral reefs are integrated in the revision of NBSAPs?

*Answer:*

The UK has publicly committed to protect coral reefs, both in the 25 Year Environment Plan, which pledged to “*champion and support coral reef conservation and biodiversity in UK and Overseas Territories’ waters*” and as part of international commitments such as the Convention on Biological Diversity.

We are working with OT governments and stakeholders on a new OT Biodiversity Strategy that will be of benefit to all 14 OTs, providing a tool to guide and attract future, long-term investment in their biodiversity. The OT biodiversity Strategy will give consideration to coral reefs.

UKOTs are currently delivering actions on their respective Coral Action Plans.

- (ICRI) How are you planning to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global biodiversity framework. For you, which targets are the most relevant for coral reefs?

*Answer:*

The four countries of the UK are committed to working together to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). Each of the four countries is developing or revising its national strategies and plans in response to the GBF and other domestic priorities. The UK’s NBSAP will bring together the biodiversity strategies and plans of the four countries of the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland) and relevant Overseas Territories (OTs) and Crown Dependencies (CDs).

We are working towards an ambitious timetable of actions to meet this commitment in advance of COP16. By May 2024, we intend to have published the UK’s NBSAP, as well as an account of the UK’s national targets, which will enable them to be factored into the global analysis of information in NBSAPs to be considered by COP16.

*Relevant targets for coral reefs:*

1, 2, 3

### D. Upcoming events

*Please tick the most appropriate box/boxes:*

- September 19<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> 2023: 37<sup>th</sup> ICRI GM, USA, Hawaii

- 30<sup>th</sup> November – 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023: 28<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
- 26<sup>th</sup> February – 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024: 6<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Environment Assembly
- 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> April 2024: 2024 UN Ocean Decade Conference, Barcelona, Spain.
- 2024: United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP16) of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Turkey.

Other

Please list any upcoming regional / international events relevant to ICRI that your organisation plans to attend:

*Answer:*

To note that CBD COP16 will not be taking place in Turkiye

**E. Publications.** Please list relevant publications / reports you have released recently (+ add a link if possible)

Publication	URL
Devlin, Michelle J., Caroline Petus, and Kadija Oubelkheir. "Special Issue Overview: Advances in Remote Sensing and Mapping for Integrated Studies of Reef Ecosystems in Oceania (Great Barrier Reef and Beyond)." <i>Remote Sensing</i> 15, no. 10 (2023): 2505.	<a href="#">Remote Sensing   Free Full-Text   Special Issue Overview: Advances in Remote Sensing and Mapping for Integrated Studies of Reef Ecosystems in Oceania (Great Barrier Reef and Beyond) (mdpi.com)</a>
Cowburn, Benjamin, Khatija Alliji, Joanna K. Bluemel, Elena Couce, Emma Lawrance, Edmund McManus, Nanne van Hoytema, and Michelle Devlin. "Ecosystem-based management of coral reefs from afar—A guide for remote scientists and remote places." <i>Environmental Science &amp; Policy</i> 139 (2023): 29-38.	<a href="#">Ecosystem-based management of coral reefs from afar – A guide for remote scientists and remote places - ScienceDirect</a>
Couce, Elena, Benjamin Cowburn, David Clare, and Joanna K. Bluemel. "Paris Agreement could prevent regional mass extinctions of coral species." <i>Global Change Biology</i> (2023).	<a href="#">Global Change Biology   Environmental Change Journal   Wiley Online Library</a>

**F. ICRI Member Feedback.** What do you find most valuable about being a member of ICRI as well as completing the ICRI member reports? If you have any ideas to improve the Member Reports, please list below:

Answer:
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**G. Contact information & member information.** (Note that this information will be posted on the ICRI website on your member page: <https://icriforum.org/members/>).

*Please use the table below to provide us updates to your member’s focal points as well as the blank cells to indicate changes to information (please add more rows, as needed):*

<b>Focal Point 1:</b>	
Name:	Murray Fyfe
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<b>Focal Point 2:</b>	
Name:	Dr Jane Hawkrigde
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<b>Focal Point 3:</b>	
Name:	Please add: Jack Collier Team Leader: Marine Species Conservation team, Defra- UK Government <a href="mailto:Jack.collier@defra.gov.uk">Jack.collier@defra.gov.uk</a>
Title/Organisation:	
Email:	
<b>Member page updates:</b>	
Section	Update
<b>Do you have new resources (reports, guidelines etc.) that you would like to display?</b>	
Resource description	URL
An ID guide for identification of CITES listed stony corals in the aquarium trade	<a href="https://sciencesearch.defra.gov.uk/ProjectDetails?ProjectId=21071">https://sciencesearch.defra.gov.uk/ProjectDetails?ProjectId=21071</a> <a href="https://www.cefas.co.uk/news-and-resources/news/new-visual-guide-launched-to-help-support-sustainable-coral-trade/">https://www.cefas.co.uk/news-and-resources/news/new-visual-guide-launched-to-help-support-sustainable-coral-trade/</a>

Thank you very much for sharing your valuable experiences and information with ICRI. Members reports, meeting outputs and resources will be uploaded to: <https://icriforum.org/events/37th-icri-general-meeting/>