



PRESS RELEASE

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Gibraltar leading at Alderney conference of UK's Biodiversity hotspots.

Minister for the Environment and Climate Change, Dr John Cortes, will this week be in the Channel Island of Alderney to attend a conference on the environment. In total, representatives from 11 UK Overseas Territories (UKOT) and Crown Dependencies (CDs) from as far afield as Bermuda, Pitcairn and the British Virgin Islands will be travelling to Alderney to discuss the future of the environment in their jurisdictions. The meeting will tackle a diverse range of issues including the potential impacts of Brexit and the subsequent changes to UK laws, through to climate change and the need to share the limited resources available to these often isolated states. The event is being hosted by the Government of Alderney, one of the smallest of the UK's Crown Dependencies and has been co-ordinated by the non-governmental organisation the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF). The delegates will be formally greeted by the Island's president Stuart Trought.

The UKOTs and Crown Dependencies all have their own identity and governing structure, with no representation in the UK Parliament. The exact relationship between the Overseas Territories and the UK differs for each, though, as in the case of Gibraltar, the UK is generally responsible for defence and international relations including international conventions. Combined, the UKOTs and Crown Dependencies are home to a far greater concentration of endemic (found nowhere else) and endangered species than any other part of the UK, with a 2016 paper estimating they might contain as many as 100,000 native species, of which 300 might be endemic species restricted to a single location.

This is only the second meeting of its kind, the first having been hosted by the Government of Gibraltar in 2015. The aim of the meeting is to develop the benefits of joint and collaborative working, and discuss common priorities and approaches to discussions with the UK Government.

The meeting will be jointly chaired by Victor Brownlees, Alderney's Chief Executive, the host, and John Cortes, Gibraltar's Minister for the Environment of Gibraltar. The meeting has been made possible by the work of the UKOTCF, a UK-based NGO dedicated to ensuring conservation across these far-flung jurisdictions.



Alderney, a community of just 1900 residents, offered to host the meeting in recognition of the need to improve communication between the UK's remote outlying communities. The island will play host to the ministers and their staff at its 'Island Hall' and will be laying on an informal dinner in the grounds of a Roman Fort known as the Nunnery which sits on the Island's South Eastern coast, looking out towards France just eight miles away. The event is being co-ordinated on island by the Alderney Wildlife Trust, the 47th member of the British Wildlife Trust partnership. Minister Cortes will be accompanied by Dr Liesl Torres, CEO of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Climate Change and Senior Environment Officer Stephen Warr.

Dr John Cortes said, *"We are continuing the process we began at the Gibraltar conference in 2015, to ensure that the UK's small territories have the voice that their biodiversity and their commitment to the environment deserve. These are challenging times for the global environment, particularly so for small territories, and we will continue to share experience and expertise to ensure environmental resilience and good governance."*

Victor Brownlees (Alderney's CEO) said of the importance of the meeting *"We are delighted to welcome our friends and colleagues from the UK Overseas Territories and fellow Crown Dependencies. That Alderney is the host of such a high level meeting is a measure of the importance we as a community attach to preserving our distinct and special island home. I look forward to sharing experiences and learning how we can work even more closely together across the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies in preserving and celebrating our distinct environmental heritages."*

Dr Mike Pienkowski, Chair UKOTCF commented *'UKOTCF is the only body solely concerned with conservation and environmentally sustainable use across all UK's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. Especially in our 30th anniversary year, we are honoured to have been asked by Territory governments to organise the meeting, as a result of these years of bringing conservation practitioners together to pool resources and share experiences. We congratulate Alderney for hosting it in a fantastic setting for holding 2 days of discussions. UK and its family of territories should be proud of striving to fulfil their world responsibilities for protecting this uniquely important heritage.'*

Ends

Notes to Editors:

List of Ministers Attending

Dr Richard Axton, Chairman of Council, La Société Sercquaise, on behalf of Sark Agriculture and Environment Committee of the Chief Pleas [Administration] of Sark

Hon. Geoffrey Boot MHK, Minister of Environment, Food & Agriculture, Isle of Man

Deputy Barry Brehaut, President of the Committee for the Environment & Infrastructure, States of Guernsey

Mr Victor Brownlees, Chief Executive, States of Alderney

Mr Chris Carnegy, UK Representative Tristan da Cunha, on behalf of the Island Council



Mrs Michele Christian, Divisional Manager, Environmental, Conservation & Natural Resources,
Government of Pitcairn

Hon. Dr John Cortes, Minister for Education, Heritage, Environment, Energy & Climate Change,
Gibraltar

Hon. Claude Hogan, Minister of Agriculture & Environment, Montserrat

Deputy Steven Luce, Minister for the Environment, Jersey

Hon. Kedrick D Pickering MD, Deputy Premier & Minister for Natural Resources & Labour, British
Virgin Islands

MLA Michael Poole, Portfolio Holder for the Environment, Falkland Islands (remotely)

Hon. Sylvan Richards MP, Minister of Environment, Government of Bermuda