

Blue Belt Programme launches Training Programme for UK Overseas Territories

The UK Government's Blue Belt Programme has launched a comprehensive training package to strengthen UK Overseas Territories (UKOT) capability in protecting and managing their marine protected areas.

The training modules have been designed specifically for and are currently only available to the UKOTs within the Blue Belt Programme – St Helena, Ascension Island, and Tristan da Cunha, British Antarctic Territory, British Indian Ocean Territory, Pitcairn Islands and South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands – however the subject areas are suitable for countries worldwide. They include:

- Five eLearning modules with associated games providing a high-level overview of: Marine Protected Area (MPA) Management, Marine Biosecurity, Surveillance Tools & Technology, Enforcement Processes and Compliance & Enforcement in the UKOTs.
- Complemented by three interactive games to test learners' understanding covering: MPA Management, Marine Biosecurity and Compliance & Enforcement.
- Seven comprehensive training units, which are in turn further broken down into subject-specific modules that cover everything in the eLearning modules, but in much more detail. The material comprises narrated presentations, videos and a raft of supplementary material to support the content of the presentations. From a Compliance & Enforcement perspective there is also, for example, a specialist module for air crews undertaking aerial patrols in British Antarctic Territory and South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands.

UK Minister for the Environment, Lord Goldsmith, said:

"Building capacity within the Overseas Territories is a key priority of the Blue Belt initiative. This platform provides a one-stop shop for comprehensive marine management training in the Territories, ensuring long-term, on island expertise remains at the forefront of marine policy development"

The training modules are easy to access through the Marine Management Organisation's Learning Management System, and are both educational and engaging to complete. The package, which has been in production for 2 years, include effective learning approaches such as animations and interactive games. It also includes dramatised scenarios of the surveillance and monitoring of suspected Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing to enhance understanding and best practice for anyone involved in the protection and sustainable management of the marine environment.

The training package is just one of the many benefits on offer to UKOTs who join the Blue Belt Programme. Created by knowledge experts, produced by

training specialists they are easy to access and navigate and – free of charge to anyone within the Blue Belt Programme.

Stephanie Martin, Tristan Da Cunha's Environmental and Conservation Policy Officer, and UKOT Representative on Blue Belt's Steering Group commented:

Whilst the UKOTs are hugely diverse, all share the ambition and commitment to safeguard their precious ecosystems and marine environments for future generations. These training modules will both strengthen their knowledge of how the challenges they face are best tackled and provide the skills and knowledge required to support the successful management of their MPAs.

Not only that, but the training is available to them at a time of their choosing and through the MMO's tried and tested Learning Management System which already supports the development of hundreds of MMO staff.

The training package has been created for the Programme by Virtual College, with support from the Marine Management Organisation's training team, along with key partners on specific modules. These include: award-winning production company Three Wise Monkeys, the British Indian Ocean Territory Administration and the GB Non-Native Species Secretariat.

The Blue Belt Programme is grateful to all those involved in the creation and production of the modules.

Notes to editors

- The Blue Belt Programme is a UK Government initiative to enhance marine protection across over 4 million square kilometres of marine environment in the UK Overseas Territories.
- The UK Overseas Territories are some of the most biologically interesting, and remote, places on Earth. From the vast penguin colonies of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands to the marine turtles of Ascension Island, the UK Overseas Territories are home to globally significant biodiversity.
- This flagship Programme has been central to the UK Government's ambition of leading action to tackle the serious global problems of overfishing, species extinction and climate change. Driven by the 25 Year Action Plan and UN Sustainable Development Goals, and more recently by the UK's commitment to ensure 30% of the world's oceans are protected by the end of the decade in 2030.
- The Blue Belt Programme utilises the skills and expertise of the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) on behalf of the UK Government. They provide the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) with the best support available in applied marine science, management, technology, and enforcement.

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