

# Britannia Protects the Waves: £7m extra funding to protect UK marine life

Millions of square kilometres of ocean around the world will be cleaner and more sustainable thanks to the UK's commitment to extend its Blue Belt scheme, [announced by Prime Minister Boris Johnson at the G7 today](#).

The additional £7 million will mean our world-leading protection of Marine Protected Areas can continue and expand, supporting the protection of key species such as turtles, whales, fish, seabirds and wider marine life.

Addressing world leaders at the G7 the Prime Minister said the next year would be vital for the future of our planet, and called for the Aichi targets to be replaced with new, more ambitious ones at the Biodiversity COP in China next year.

Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, said:

The UK is the first major economy to legislate for net zero CO2 emissions and we are leading the way on protecting the world's ocean for future generations.

As we leave the EU and become an independent coastal nation, the UK will continue to show global leadership on issues of common interest.

Charles Clover, Executive Director at Blue Marine Foundation, said:

These Blue Belt sites are like the rainforests of the ocean – where rare sharks, turtles, corals and large fish are still abundant.

We are therefore delighted to hear that, in addition to fully implementing and continuing to fund the Blue Belt commitments made in 2016, the Prime Minister has committed to offering this world leading programme to the other UK Overseas Territories.

Jonathan Hall, Head of UK Overseas Territories at the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, said:

We're delighted that new funding will be made available to complete the world-leading Blue Belt programme and offer it to other Territories which wish to participate.

This can mean more much-needed protection for rare turtles and

globally important seabirds, fragile coral reefs and mysterious deep-sea habitats, and will benefit the many Territory communities which depend so heavily on a healthy marine environment.

It comes the same week as the Ascension Island Council has committed to making their waters an Atlantic 'Galapagos' by designating all 445,000 km<sup>2</sup> of their waters a large-scale Marine Protected Area. This will support the protection of key species such as green turtles, endemic fish species, important seabirds and marine life.

This Government will also continue to build on the Spring Statement commitment to ensure on-going support to Territories within the Blue Belt programme to have relevant protection, monitoring and enforcement strategies in place

The extension of the Blue Belt scheme follows a series of UK Government initiatives on ocean management, such as Maritime 2050, the Clean Maritime Plan and wider 25 year Environment Plan.

## **Notes to Editors**

- Since its launch in 2016, the Government's Blue Belt initiative has enabled the UK and the UK Overseas Territories to protect over half of British waters within designated Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). This is set to rise to almost two-thirds by next year, making a significant contribution to the health of the global ocean.
- Earlier in the year, the Blue Belt programme collaborated with the Pew Trust, the Zoological Society of London and others to send a team of researchers to Henderson Island, a remote island in the Pacific, to study the island's troubling plastic pollution and its impact on the marine environment.
- Through the £26.5 million Commonwealth Marine Economies (CME) programme the Government is supporting 17 Small Island Developing States (SIDS) across the Caribbean and Pacific to develop and grow sustainable marine economies which create jobs, drive national economic growth and reduce poverty while safeguarding healthy seas and ecosystems. In partnership with the SIDS' governments, the programme will help to develop and implement national Maritime Economy Plans to ensure the programme leaves a lasting legacy.
- On the global stage, the UK is also pushing for the conclusion of an ambitious new high seas biodiversity agreement by 2020 to improve the conservation and sustainable use of the high seas and support the designation of Marine Protected Areas across 30% of the ocean.

## **Further information**