

Press release: Foreign Secretary announces UK strategy to protect world's oceans

The Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has today [22 June] unveiled an ambitious plan to bring together all of the Government's international oceans work under a single strategy for the first time.

The Government will agree and implement a new oceans strategy, under the aegis of the FCO, which will cover work from departments including Defra, BEIS, DfT and DIT. The strategy will be developed over the coming months. Responding to the recommendation from the Government Chief Scientific Adviser to develop a more strategic approach to marine and maritime policy, it will provide a blueprint for international action by HMG towards the oceans that supports the long-term prosperity of the UK and the long-term health of the marine environment.

Speaking on a visit to the National Oceanography Centre (NOC), the Foreign Secretary said:

Britain has a proud and ancient maritime history, but our commitment to the oceans must be enshrined in our future. Today in Southampton I've heard from world-leading UK experts on marine protection, and what more the UK can do to help.

We need to improve and energise international ocean governance to protect the world's seas and their ecosystems, to keep our people and goods safe, and to support sustainable economic growth, as well as to deliver our ambitious environmental commitments. Utilising expertise across government, Britain will stay at the leading edge of international marine excellence.

At the NOC, the Foreign Secretary met scientists working on Foreign and Commonwealth Office-funded marine protection programmes, including the flagship Blue Belt programme, which will protect over four million square kilometres of British waters by 2020.

The Foreign Secretary's visit builds on commitments made during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London in April, where the FCO announced additional funding for the Commonwealth Marine Economies Programme and a number of Government commitments to reduce the amount of plastic waste entering the oceans.

Notes to editors

- The Commonwealth Marine Economies Programme is a £23 million programme

over 4 years (from 2016) to assist Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Caribbean, Pacific and Indian Ocean to develop maritime economy plans for sustainable economic growth and prosperity.

- The Government Office for Science issued a Foresight report on 21 March 2018 entitled 'Future of the Sea', which sets out the important role that the oceans play in the life of the UK and its Overseas Territories. It highlighted an opportunity for the UK to develop a "thriving 21st Century marine and maritime economy and leading the global response to environmental change."
- The Blue Belt programme aims to deliver demonstrable increases in the protection of marine biodiversity across the combined maritime zones of the UK and the UK Overseas Territories, taking into account local views and supporting the development of sustainable economies. The Blue Belt programme is on course to deliver over 4 million square kilometres of protected ocean around the UKOTs by 2020, with funding of up to £20m to support scientific assessment, implementation, management, monitoring and surveillance of these areas.

Further information

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