

UKHO supports maritime trade and economic growth in Belize

Press release

UKHO conducts seabed mapping surveys in Belize to support management of the marine environment and economic development



The UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) has started surveying the seabed of the southern waters of Belize as part of the UK government's Commonwealth Marine Economies (CME) Programme.

Almost all activity in our oceans, from shipping to monitoring delicate marine environments, depends on accurate seabed mapping data that illustrates the shape and movement of natural underwater features. For coastal nations like Belize, the collection of this data is vital to supporting sustainable economic growth and protecting communities from the effects of climate change.

Following a stakeholder meeting with the Belize Port Authority and wider Belizean government in late 2019 it was agreed that the country's southern waters would be surveyed using Satellite Derived Bathymetry (SDB). SDB uses satellites to capture high resolution imagery which can then be processed to calculate seabed depths down to 40 metres, depending on the clarity of the water. This method captures large areas quickly and has no negative impact on ecosystems and marine life. Data collection and processing is expected to take several weeks and will focus on areas south of Belize City.

Information from the survey will be used to update nautical charts of the region where necessary, reducing navigational risk and improving safety of life at sea. The SDB-generated information can also be used to plan and prioritise more detailed surveys of Belizean waters to support government requirements.

The data from the survey will be supplied to the Belizean government and can underpin a range of environmental and scientific applications, including improved management of coastal protection initiatives and the country's rich

marine environment. This includes the sustainable management of fisheries and other marine resources.

Ian Davies, International Hydrographic Portfolio Manager at UKHO said:

The new data being collected using funding from the Commonwealth Marine Economies Programme will help Belize to develop and manage its coastal waters, unlocking benefits for the nation for many years to come. The data gathered from this SDB survey will not only be utilised to check for dangers to navigation, but will also support other disciplines such as fisheries and coastal zone management, environmental planning, and maritime security. Equally importantly, it will also assist in the continued development of policies that protect the country's marine environment and the sustainable use of Belize's natural resources.

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[Official report criticises former trustees of Kids Company](#)

An official report has found that Kids Company operated a “high risk business model”, characterised by a heavy dependence on grants and donations, reliance on a key individual for fundraising, low reserves, and a demand-led service.

The regulator has made a formal finding of “mismanagement in the administration of the charity” over its repeated failure to pay creditors, including its own workers and HMRC, on time.

The publication of the statutory inquiry into the charity follows the conclusion in 2021 of High Court proceedings, in which the Official Receiver was unsuccessful in its attempt to disqualify the charity's trustees and CEO as company directors. The Commission has had regard to the High Court judgement and agrees with it that there was no dishonesty, bad faith, or inappropriate personal gain in the operation of the charity.

The report finds the charity operated a high-risk business model, having rapidly expanded its operations. The report finds the trustees allowed expenditure to increase without a secure stream of income to cover increased costs or mitigate an unexpected fall in fundraising. Combined with the low level of reserves, this approach, unusual for a charity of its size, made Kids Company vulnerable to external pressures.

The report notes that a higher level of reserves may have allowed the charity

to avoid liquidation, to wind up in a more orderly fashion, or to merge with another charity.

Delayed action to address financial and operational risks

The report concludes that the trustees were aware of the risks arising from the charity's operating model for years and had recognised the need to make changes. But the inquiry concludes that they should have acted sooner during the period of the charity's growth to improve its financial stability, for example by building up reserves, paying off its debts, thereby strengthening its cash flow position, and controlling the rate at which the charity was expanding.

The charity's records and record keeping

The inquiry highlights concerns around Kids Company's records relating to decision-making about direct spending on beneficiaries. Some of the records were destroyed at the time of its collapse. It also appears that other records may not have been created in the first place. The inquiry acknowledges that the trustees were not responsible for, and indeed attempted to stop, the destruction of records when they became aware of it happening during the charity's final days of operation. Nonetheless, the report is clear that the destruction of records fell "below the standards the Commission would expect from a charity".

Due to the limited material available, there was "insufficient evidence" for the inquiry to be satisfied that the charity's significant expenditure on a relatively small number of beneficiaries was either justified or in the charity's best interests. Available records show that around 25 beneficiaries had spent on them an average of over £1,700 per month between January and July 2014. The Commission notes that, whilst such decisions were within the discretion of trustees to make, the charity might have been able to help a greater number of children had spending on this 'top 25' been reduced.

The regulator also found that the charity's approach to reporting the scale of individuals who benefited from its work – which it reported amounted to 36,000 – could have been more transparent, and that its methodology for calculating such figures "should have been clearly articulated wherever cited".

Leadership factors

The report notes that the board lacked expertise in the field of psychotherapy and youth work, potentially limiting challenge of executive decisions. However, as the High Court highlighted in its judgement the trustees were skilled professionals and had collectively identified the need for the board to be strengthened and diversified, and that at the time the charity closed, a plan was in place to recruit additional trustees with such skills.

The report highlights that the founder CEO had been in post since 1993, and its chair had served since 2003, noting that “rotation amongst a charity’s trustees allows for an injection of new ideas and approaches and for challenges to the way in which a charity operates”. The report acknowledges that the CEO was due to perform a different role as part of wider changes, when the charity closed.

Background to the inquiry’s findings and conclusions

The Commission’s inquiry opened in 2015. The regulator put aspects of its investigations on hold while the Official Receiver brought proceedings against the former CEO and trustees, a process that ran from 2017 until February 2021, when the High Court found in their favour.

The Official Receiver was unsuccessful in its attempt to disqualify the charity’s trustees and CEO as company directors and the court rejected the claim that the charity’s CEO was a de-facto director. The Commission has had regard to the Court’s findings on the matters under its jurisdiction.

Helen Stephenson, Chief Executive of the Charity Commission, said:

Kids Company’s sudden closure was a significant event, not just for those involved in and supported by the charity, but for wider society. It served as a defining moment in the relationship between charities and the public on whom they ultimately rely, highlighting a sharper scrutiny of those running charities in the media and Parliament.

Following other inquiries and the conclusion of director disqualification proceedings in the courts, our job as regulator has been to calmly assess the evidence available, to scrutinise the charity’s trustees for their compliance with charity law and regulation in how they ran their organisation, and to set out lessons for other charities.

We found that the charity’s operations and finances made the charity – and by extension its beneficiaries – more vulnerable to decisions of individual grant-makers and donors. The charity’s repeated failure to pay creditors, including its own workers and HMRC, on time, was mismanagement.

Issues for the wider sector

Kids Company was unusual, and the particular circumstances of its closure are unlikely to be repeated. However, the Commission highlights that there are lessons for charities, and for the regulator itself, to learn. These include:

Effective board leadership

The High Court judgement states that although the CEO of Kids Company had significant influence, she was accountable to the trustees. The Commission's inquiry report notes that "a single person holding a senior leadership role in a charity for many years can reduce the level of challenge to long established methods of operating and prevent it from identifying and managing risks that flow from longstanding practice".

Founders of charities also need to be mindful that a permanent leadership role is rarely in the best interests of a charity. There are other ways of harnessing the passion and talent of founders or charismatic individuals, without their having executive or strategic power and responsibility.

Asymmetric power or influence can lead to unhealthy board or wider organisation dynamics, and ultimately to poor decision making. No charity should be defined by a single individual.

Managing risks associated with innovative approaches

There is no 'best' way for charities to deliver public benefit. Diverse and innovative operating models can help keep the sector relevant and dynamic. Problems can arise, though, when a charity's innovative approach is not balanced by management of the commensurate risks. For all charities, measuring impact should be part of the process of evaluation of whether the approach is effective – particularly where an innovative approach is being adopted.

Planning reserves

There is no single level of reserves that is right for every charity. But trustees should undertake financial planning and recording including maintaining a reserves policy.

Managing growth

Charities should ensure infrastructure, governance and resources keep pace with growth. They should have sustainable income to support their growth and ensure that policies are scaled up to reflect the needs of any expanded or newly introduced beneficiary groups. They must ensure that their governance is robust, ideally with at least one trustee with experience of managing a charity of similar scale on the Board.

The [full report, with the wider lessons, is available on GOV.UK](#).

Ends

Notes to editors:

1. The Charity Commission is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that

people can improve lives and strengthen society.

2. The Commission's inquiry into Kids Company was opened under Section 46 of the Charities Act 2011 on 20 August 2015. The opening of an inquiry gives the Commission access to a range of investigative, protective and remedial legal powers. The scope of this inquiry is set out in [the full report](#).
3. In October 2015, the National Audit Office published the [outcome of its investigation into the government's funding of Kids Company](#).
4. In February 2016, the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee published a [report of its inquiry into the collapse of Kids Company](#)
5. In February 2021, the High Court ruled on proceedings brought against the directors of Kids Company. The judgement is [publicly available](#).
6. In February 2021, following the High Court judgement, the Commission informed the trustees and former CEO that it would not be using its own power to disqualify them as trustees.

[Canada and United Kingdom announce recipient of the 2022 Media Freedom Award](#)

Today, during the third Global Media Freedom Conference in Tallinn, Estonia, the Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth and the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, awarded the 2022 Canada-United Kingdom Media Freedom Award to Vietnamese journalist Pham Doan Trang.

The Canada-United Kingdom Media Freedom award recognises the work of those who have defended journalists, or championed media freedom at a local level, honouring less recognised organisations, campaigns and individuals in their fight against impunity. Established in 2020, it provides recognition to those who advocate for media freedom, whether directly or indirectly.

Ms. Trang is known for her books on democracy and her articles on civil society and dissidents in Vietnam. An advocate for human rights and the rule of law, Ms. Trang has written about the important environmental issues. Reporters Without Borders awarded the Press Freedom Prize to Ms. Trang in 2019, in recognition of this work.

In December 2021, Ms. Trang was sentenced to nine years in prison for "propaganda against the State." She spent 434 days in detention leading up to her sentencing.

Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada said:

Journalists play an essential role in any democracy by shining light on the critical issues of our time. On behalf of all Canadians, I salute Ms. Trang's courage and determination to hold power to account. Canada will continue to stand up for media freedom around the world.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth and the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict said:

Democracy is under attack around the world, and journalists who shine their lights into those dark corners are paying a heavy price.

The truth is always worth pursuing and that's why the UK and Canada established the Media Freedom Award. This award recognises the journalists, individuals and organizations who work tirelessly to promote and protect media freedom.

I am delighted to announce that this year's winner of the Media Freedom Award is Pham Doang Trang. I congratulate Pham Doang Trang as a courageous, award-winning independent journalist and human rights defender from Vietnam.

Quick facts:

- The Canada-United Kingdom Media Freedom Award was started in 2020 at the second Global Conference for Media Freedom, which was hosted by Canada and Botswana.

Businesses urged to apply for £850 million still available in COVID-19 support grants

- New figures show £22 billion in COVID-19 government support grants have now been made to firms through local councils since the beginning of the pandemic with a further £850 million remaining
- hospitality, leisure and accommodation businesses can still apply for one-off cash grants of up to £6,000 through the Omicron Hospitality and

Leisure Grant scheme

- businesses are urged to engage with their council and apply for funding

£850 million worth of COVID-19 support grants are still available and firms in England have been encouraged to apply by Business Minister Paul Scully today (Thursday 10 February).

The funding has been made available by government to councils in England for them to provide to businesses in need in their local area. Businesses are encouraged to apply to their local council for the funding.

The funding is made up of £556 million available through the £635 million Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant (OHLG) scheme, which launched in January 2022, and a further £294 million through the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) scheme which has been paying out funding since November 2020.

The OHLG scheme provides businesses in the hospitality, leisure and accommodation sectors with one-off grants of up to £6,000 per premise, supporting those that had been most impacted by the Omicron variant. To provide further support to other businesses, the ARG scheme provides councils with funding they can allocate at their discretion to businesses most in need, such as personal care businesses and supply firms.

The government encourages councils to provide the funding to businesses as quickly as possible.

Small Business Minister Paul Scully said:

We're working to get our economy running on all cylinders again so we can focus on making the UK the best place in the world to work and do business, creating jobs along the way.

Eligible businesses should apply as soon as possible for the grants available to help them put the pandemic behind them and get on a sounder footing to achieve success.

The government has provided support for businesses throughout the pandemic, including VAT cuts, business rates holidays and government-backed loans all collectively worth around £400 billion.

The £22 billion of grant support to businesses during the pandemic is made up of several support schemes including for small businesses and local restrictions support.

The Business Secretary, Kwasi Kwarteng, has written to those local authorities who have more than 5% left over from previous ARG funding rounds, instructing them to disburse any remaining funding. Business Minister Paul Scully has also urged local councils to get the grants to business as soon as possible.

Regional breakdown of Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant (OHLG) grants:

Region	Allocation	Value of grants paid (as reported on 30 January 2022)	% spent	Amount left
Yorkshire and the Humber	£64,685,016	£13,472,842	21%	£51,212,174
West Midlands	£50,709,294	£8,977,859	18%	£41,731,435
North West	£78,209,397	£12,990,940	17%	£65,218,457
South East	£93,251,799	£14,090,012	15%	£79,161,787
East Midlands	£46,413,423	£7,007,762	15%	£39,405,661
North East	£30,176,406	£3,721,624	12%	£26,454,782
East of England	£70,421,346	£8,555,913	12%	£61,865,433
London	£77,521,455	£5,886,788	8%	£71,634,667
South West	£123,887,322	£4,648,989	4%	£119,238,333
Total	£635,275,458	£79,352,729	12%	£555,922,729

The [full data is available on gov.uk](#).

The one-off grants of up to £6,000 for eligible businesses in the hospitality and leisure sectors, depend on rateable value:

- businesses with a rateable value of £51,000 or above: £6,000
- businesses with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000: £4,000
- businesses with a rateable value of £15,000 or below: £2,667

National recognition for Sellafield Ltd at the Project Management Awards

News story

Two of our employees have won top awards in the National Project Management Awards this week.



Charlotte Bethell (left) and Erika Graham-Jones (right) both picked up national awards in project management education and research.

Today is a double celebration as we congratulate Charlotte Bethell and Erika Graham-Jones who have won Association of Project Management (APM) Apprentice and Graduate of the Year awards.

The awards were announced at the APM's Festival of Education and Research – an educational conference and celebratory awards ceremony for the project community rewarding the best in project management education and research.

Charlotte works as project support on the Pile Fuel Cladding Silo after completing a Level 4 Trailblazer apprenticeship and a BSc in project management.

Charlotte said:

One of the highlights during my time on the scheme was being presented with the University of Cumbria's Ede and Ravenscroft award, recognising me as one of the highest achieving students whilst studying for my foundation degree.

I've been able to act as an ambassador for Sellafield Ltd by attending events for the Nuclear Institute's Young Generation Network.

One of the most rewarding parts of my apprenticeship was being able to mentor other apprentices and support them during COVID-19 – it was a challenging time for everyone, especially people who have just joined the company or started a new placement.

I can't think of many other programmes that give apprentices the range of experience that this one does. I'm really excited to see what the rest of my career will be like if this is just the start.

Erika joined Sellafield Ltd in 2017, since then she has completed the Level 4 Trailblazer apprenticeship and a BSc in project management.

Reflecting on her time at school, she often had trouble studying but didn't know the reason why.

Erika said:

I received my dyslexia diagnosis at the age of 19, almost halfway through the scheme. During my time in education, I achieved average exam results and always suspected that I had dyslexia but didn't do anything about it. When I found out that 1 in 10 people have dyslexia, I consulted with the university and my line manager to organise an assessment.

With the support of the University of Cumbria I was able to access support and assistive technology which completely transformed how I studied and produced assignments. I have recently been part of the testing process for the roll out of assistive tech at Sellafield Ltd, so I now have the support I need at work.

I'm now working in projects, supporting asset care projects which contribute to the maintenance of waste management facilities that will be required to support operations until the site has been decommissioned.

I think my story shows that it's never too late to achieve something, if you have the passion and interest in an area, you can really excel in it. If employees are given the correct tools and support, we really can succeed.

You can read more about the awards [here](#).

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