

Statement of support for the creation of marine reserves in the UK Overseas Territories of the Pitcairn Islands, Ascension Island, and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands

The UK has the fifth largest area of ocean in the world under its jurisdiction when its Overseas Territories (UKOTs) are taken into account. Over 94% of the UK's unique biodiversity is found in the UKOTs, which support a large number of rare and threatened species and habitats found nowhere else on Earth. It makes good economic and environmental sense for the UK to work with its Territories to establish effective networks of marine protected areas throughout all waters under UK jurisdiction.

We the undersigned are calling on the British government to protect over 1.75 million km² of the world's oceans, by creating large-scale and fully-protected marine reserves in three of the UKOTs – the Pitcairn Islands, Ascension Island, and South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands.

Pitcairn Islands (834,000km²)

With unanimous support from the local community and Pitcairn Island Council, a marine reserve in Pitcairn would offer protection to some of the most pristine waters and coral reefs on earth, providing international recognition and connecting this Territory to global marine science and tourism.

Ascension Island (443,000km²)

A green turtle mecca and one of the last remaining hotspots for Atlantic megafauna such as tuna, marlin and shark. Ascension's waters offer a rare opportunity for large-scale marine protection in the tropical Atlantic.

South Sandwich Islands (530,000 km²)

Uninhabited by humans, the volcanic South Sandwich Islands host huge concentrations of wildlife, including vast penguin colonies and significant whale populations.

The UK Government can fully protect these areas from all extractive and damaging activity today. This would make a globally significant contribution to ocean conservation, leaving a historic legacy for people and wildlife at very little cost.