

29 June 2020

Mr Tom Tugendhat MP
Chair, Foreign Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Secretary of State

Dear Tom,

Thank you for your letter of 2 June that asked for an update on the Government's actions to address the Foreign Affairs Committee's recommendations in its 2019 report *'Global Britain and the British Overseas Territories: Resetting the relationship'*. As your letter acknowledges, a significant programme of work has been undertaken to support the Overseas Territories (OTs) in their response to COVID-19, which was detailed to the Committee in a letter from Baroness Sugg on 29 April. I am pleased to further update the Committee on Governor appointments, beneficial ownership, the Blue Belt programme and future funding.

Governor Appointments

The FCO continues to use Civil Service recruitment principles to recruit for Governors and other positions in the Overseas Territories. As explained in the report response, the Minister for the Overseas Territories writes to the elected leader(s) of the Territory, seeking views on the particular skills and expertise required of the next Governor. Typically, Governor roles are advertised to all Diplomatic and Home Civil Servants. The UK Government has also undertaken two external recruitment campaigns for Governor positions (in Gibraltar and Anguilla). This has opened up these roles to the widest possible field of candidates with desired skills and expertise. The Anguilla recruitment process is still ongoing, and the new Governor of Gibraltar, Vice Admiral Sir David Steel KBE, DL, was recruited as an external candidate.

Beneficial Ownership

In line with the requirements of the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act (2018), the Government has been assisting the OTs to help them to introduce publicly accessible registers of company beneficial ownership. In summer 2019, the Government hosted a two-day technical workshop in London for representatives of OT Governments, utilising expertise from a range of departments and executive agencies including Companies House, the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, and the Home Office. The sessions gave advice on the necessary steps for introducing registers. In the autumn, the Government and Open Ownership, an organisation that supports countries to introduce registers of company beneficial ownership, conducted targeted webinars for OT Government officials covering the legislative and technological requirements associated with registers. The UK Government continues to work with Open Ownership to provide further targeted assistance to OT Governments.

Overall, we have seen good progress. To date, seven OTs (Anguilla, Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands, Pitcairn Island, Falkland Islands, St Helena, Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha, and Montserrat) have made statements announcing their intentions to introduce publicly accessible registers of company beneficial ownership, an important step forward. Gibraltar has already introduced a publicly accessible register in line with the EU 5th Money Laundering Directive. The Government will continue to work with the other three permanently inhabited OTs to encourage them to make similar statements. In line with the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018, the Government will prepare a draft Order in Council before the end of 2020. We hope all OTs will have themselves committed to introduce publicly accessible registers of company beneficial ownership by the end of 2023. It is the Government's position that we work consensually with the OTs on this issue, this has proven crucial to securing commitments from the seven OTs mentioned, an outcome that was previously thought unattainable.

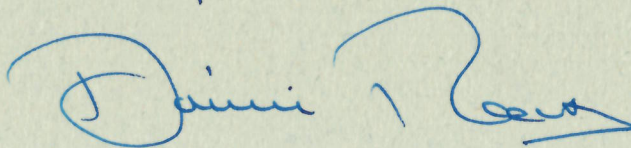
Blue Belt Programme

The Blue Belt programme is on track to deliver four million square kilometres of protected waters around the OTs by the end of 2020; with over three million square kilometres already protected. The programme has supported the OTs to identify and designate large-scale areas of protection, but also to develop longer-term future management, monitoring and enforcement strategies. In August 2019, the UK Government announced an expansion and extension to the Blue Belt programme for 2020/21. Whilst the global COVID-19 pandemic has inevitably had an impact, the programme continues to support core activities to protect and manage OTs' maritime areas. This includes training and increased capacity within the OTs, support for the development of legislation to underpin protected area designations, implementation of comprehensive fisheries measures to ensure activities are sustainable and ongoing satellite surveillance to deter illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities. Future funding of the Blue Belt will be considered as part of the forthcoming Spending Review.

Future Funding

At the 2020 budget, the Chancellor announced a tripling of the Darwin Plus programme to £10 million a year to help protect the OTs' precious natural environments. Funding to support other areas will be considered as part of the forthcoming Spending Review. This work will take into consideration any losses in EU funding the OTs will experience.

I hope this letter has addressed the Committee's questions and demonstrates the Governments continued commitment to supporting the British Overseas Territories.

Yours sincerely,


THE RT HON DOMINIC RAAB MP



Foreign Affairs Committee

House of Commons · London · SW1A 0AA
+44 20 7219 6106 · fac@parliament.uk
www.parliament.uk · @CommonsForeign

From the Chair
Tom Tugendhat MP

Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP
Secretary of State
Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
King Charles St, Whitehall
London SW1A 2AH

02 June 2020

Dear Foreign Secretary

In February 2019, the Foreign Affairs Committee published its report, *Global Britain and the British Overseas Territories: Resetting the relationship*. The Government accepted, in part or in full, a number of recommendations made by the report. I was particularly pleased that the Government accepted the Committee's recommendation to invite representations from the Overseas Territories (OTs) to lay wreaths on Remembrance Sunday 2019, in recognition of the sacrifices made by the people of the OTs.

Although the Government is rightly prioritising time and resources to its response to the Covid-19 pandemic, it is important that its other commitments are honoured too. With this in mind, I would be grateful if you could provide the Committee with an update on the following areas:

- How has the approach to appointing Governors for Overseas Territories been updated since the report, and what is the overall approach to appointments?
- What work has been done since the report to ensure all OTs publish public registers of beneficial ownership, in compliance with the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018?
- Whether the Government intends to "prepare a draft Order in Council requiring the government of any British Overseas Territory that has not introduced a publicly accessible register of the beneficial ownership of companies within its jurisdiction to do so" by the end of 2020, as required by the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018.
- What progress has been made on legacy arrangements for the Blue Belt project?
- What are the Government's plans for post-Brexit funding for the Overseas Territories?

It would be helpful to have a response to this letter by 22 June. I intend to place your response in the public domain.

Best wishes,

TOM TUGENDHAT