



Leigh Morris
is CEO
at MWT



Our Global Islands Network

As an island nation, Crown Dependency, member of the World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves (www.islandbiosphere.org) and the only whole nation UNESCO Biosphere in the world, the Isle of Man is an important part of the global islands network. This offers MWT great opportunities to share knowledge with other islands, showcase the Isle of Man, and build beneficial collaborations and relationships.



The **Inter Island Environment Meeting (IIEM)** is an annual coming together of conservationists from governments and non-governmental organisations across the Crown Dependencies (Isle of Man and Channel Islands) and other British Islands (e.g. Isle of Wight). I joined an online conference during the COVID pandemic in 2021, then attended in person on Alderney in 2022, where I presented about MWT's work towards a Nature Recovery Network. Attending in person was an excellent experience, I made

several connections and had a good insight into the Alderney Wildlife Trust (the only other wildlife trust that is not part of the UK). I realised at IIEM just how useful and relevant this meeting is for MWT and the opportunities it could provide us.



I was determined to engage the wider MWT team with IIEM and so secured funding to enable myself, Dr Lara Howe, and Graham Makepeace-Warne to represent MWT at IIEM 2023 on Sark. We each presented on different topics (our presentations are available to watch on MWT's YouTube channel), assisted the local conservation volunteers, and made some great connections with other delegates,

including Alderney, and the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trusts.

IIEM has been held on 23 occasions, rotating around different Channel Islands. However, we are delighted that after discussions at IIEM 2023, the agreement is that for the first time IIEM 2025 will be held in the Isle of Man - a fantastic opportunity for us to showcase our Island Biosphere.

The **UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF)** (www.ukotcf.org.uk) is a membership organisation for those involved in conservation work across the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) and Crown Dependencies.



Immediately prior to joining MWT I lived on the UKOT of St Helena in the South Atlantic, and remaining part of this network was a part

of the attraction to me when I accepted the role of CEO at MWT.

MWT became a member of UKOTCF in 2020 soon after I started in post at MWT, and I joined their European group (meeting virtually every quarter), which includes the Channel Islands, Cyprus, Gibraltar, and the Isle of Man. In 2022 I was delighted to be invited to join the UKOTCF Council, giving MWT a key place in being able to drive and facilitate cross-islands working.

In May 2023 UKOTCF funded me to visit the UKOT of Montserrat in the Caribbean (on annual leave from MWT) to deliver horticultural capacity building for a UKOTCF led conservation project. I delivered workshops for the Montserrat National Trust, Farmers Association and Government, helped revamp the MNT plant nursery and made a connection with the Montserrat Secondary School. My visit was well received and both myself and MWT Education Officer, Beth Penhallurick, have been invited to go to Montserrat in 2024 to deliver further horticultural upskilling and education outputs, fully funded by UKOTCF. This will include facilitating a school twinning project with Ballakermeen High School in Douglas, in conjunction with the One World Centre Isle of Man, which we hope to expand in future to include schools across the UKOTCF network.



Corporate connections: The increased ambition of businesses in the Isle of Man to deliver Environmental Social Governance (ESG) and operate more sustainably is a great opportunity for MWT and the entire environmental sector. Several corporates have offices across the Crown Dependencies

and the UKOTs (e.g. KPMG and Deloitte both have offices in eight of them) with many IOM based businesses also having offices in Guernsey and Jersey. Increasingly these businesses are looking to support local pan-island initiatives. A great example being Lloyds Bank International who have a Crown Dependencies team and through them have funded Hannah Phillips our MWT Community Ranger.

Many companies have offices in both the IOM and the UKOT Gibraltar, including the Bet Victor Group, who invited me to Gibraltar in November 2023. The main aim was to facilitate collaboration with their digital marketing team to develop MWT's website. I also met with other businesses, delivered a talk for the MSc students at the Gibraltar University, engaged with conservation organisations, and met John Cortes, the Gibraltar Minister of the Environment. I'm delighted that following my visit one of the MSc Marine Science students I met has decided to do her research dissertation on reviewing our IOM small shark research.



MWT remain focused first and foremost on the Isle of Man. Nonetheless, we must be outward looking as well, and I believe we can learn from other islands and contribute much to their development too. Since I took up my role as MWT CEO in January 2020 MWT has positively engaged with our wider island community, which has brought us new knowledge, partnerships, and funding. My ambition is to further develop this and the opportunities to enhance our collective island impact for wildlife and our environment.



A Royal Reception

We were delighted that MWT was one of around 30 organisations to be introduced to Her Majesty Queen Camilla when she visited the Isle of Man on Wednesday 20th March 2024. Our CEO Leigh represented us at a reception for Her Majesty at Government House and was introduced to the Queen Consort alongside representatives from the Isle of Man environment and heritage sector, including our friend Bill Dale from Beach Buddies who is in the photo alongside Leigh and Queen Camilla. Leigh said: "Our connection to the Royal Family is extremely important for the Isle of Man, and all the UK Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories, it was therefore a great honour for me to be invited to represent MWT at this important event. I was delighted to be asked and to inform Her Majesty about some of our special wildlife, including our British Isles significant populations of Chough and Hen Harriers".