

# PRESS RELEASE



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## UK-based charity helps lead the way towards a plastic pollution free Galapagos

There is a growing movement in Galapagos, to drastically reduce marine plastic pollution with the aim of having a plastic-free Galapagos Marine Reserve, and experts from the UK are playing a leading role. As part of this ambitious programme, Galapagos Conservation Trust gathered a team of UK marine plastic pollution experts, local Galapagos agencies and the local community to help the authorities develop a plan that will see Galapagos become a model for the world on how to deal with plastic pollution.



Beach survey on San Cristobal island, Galapagos © Andy Donnelly

Plastic pollution is one of the most pressing issues facing marine wildlife around the world. Whilst the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador remain one of the most pristine ecosystems in the world they are under pressure from the growing problem of plastic pollution. At least 18 Galapagos species have been recorded either entangled by plastic, or have been found to have ingested it, including the endangered Galapagos sea lion. With partners including the Galapagos National Park (GNP) and the Galapagos Science Center (GSC), Galapagos Conservation Trust (GCT) are working to combine ground-breaking scientific research with coordinated outreach in order to eliminate plastic pollution from the Galapagos Marine Reserve (GMR).

On May 9 – 12 2018, GCT ran the 'From Science to Solutions' workshop in Galapagos, hosted by GSC and the Charles Darwin Research Station. The workshop was attended by leaders in the field of marine plastic pollution from the UK, including from the Universities of Exeter, York, Plymouth and Surrey, as well as local experts and Galapagos agencies. The workshop explored three main themes: quantifying the impacts of plastics to the Galapagos wildlife; determining where marine plastic pollution is coming from and where it goes to; and identifying solutions such as alternative products and behaviour change.

The findings from the workshop will be used to support local agencies to develop a five-year action plan to address the issues surrounding plastic pollution. This will build on the recent resolution by the Government Council of Galapagos (CGREG) to restrict single-use plastics as well as existing community initiatives, whilst supporting the scientific research needed to answer critical questions and investigate solutions that will actually work to manage plastic pollution in Galapagos.

Sharon Johnson, chief executive of GCT, commented, "*The Galapagos Islands are one of the most unique, scientifically important places on Earth. Galapagos Conservation Trust is proud to be working with experts from the UK and local Galapagos agencies to tackle the issue of marine plastic pollution. There is a real opportunity, and at a relatively small cost, to provide the world with an example of how we tackle plastic pollution in our oceans. We need to act now in order to help protect some of the world's rarest species in one of the world's most iconic archipelagos before it is too late. Everything is in place, bar funding.*"

Galapagos has inspired the world before and it can do it again. Where better to solve the problem of marine plastic pollution than on the Islands which have been so important in our understanding of the natural world and our place in it?

**ENDS**

## Notes to editors:

- The 'Science to Solutions' workshop occurred in Galapagos from May 9 – 12 2018 and was run by Galapagos Conservation Trust and the Galapagos Science Center. It brought together experts from the University San Francisco Quito, the Galapagos National Park, the Government Council of Galapagos (CGREG), the Charles Darwin Foundation, the University of Exeter, the International Marine Litter Research Unit at the University of Plymouth, the University of Surrey, the University of York, Grupo Eco Cultural Organizado, Orcatec, Ecology Project International, the Municipality of Santa Cruz (Galapagos), Conservation International. The workshop was divided into three themes: Modelling the System; Biological and Economic Impact; and Behaviour Change. Each theme assessed the status of knowledge, data and recommended actions required to move to sustainable solutions. The workshop's outcomes will be used to create a five-year collaborative programme of work to meet the needs of the agencies in Galapagos that are dealing with marine plastic pollution. To find out more visit [galapagosconservation.org.uk/projects/plastic-free-galapagos](http://galapagosconservation.org.uk/projects/plastic-free-galapagos).
- **Galapagos Conservation Trust** is the only UK registered charity focused solely on the conservation of one of the most unique and ecologically important, but vulnerable, areas in the world, the Galapagos Islands. We partner with Ecuadorian authorities, NGOs, local communities and leading researchers to deliver breakthroughs in conservation, sustainable living and protection of the environment of Galapagos. As a charity we rely on the generosity of donors in the UK and abroad to raise money to support our work so that we can preserve Galapagos for generations to come.
- Images and quotes from partners available on request

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