

DPLR1\1062

Darwin Plus Local - Final Report (1)

Officer: Jessica Magnus

Section 1 - Darwin Plus Local Project Information (Essential)

Project Reference Number

DPLR1\1062

Q1. Project Title

No Response

Overseas Territory(ies)

St Helena, Ascension, and Tristan de Cunha

Lead Organisation or Individual

Ascension Island Government

Partner Organisation(s)

None

Value of Darwin Plus Local Grant Award

£8,000.00

Project Start Date

03 April 2023

Project End Date

31 March 2024

Project Leader Name

Sunitha Amos

Project Website/Twitter/Blog etc.

No Response

Report Author(s)

Report Date

16 April 2024

Project Summary

No Response

Project Outcomes

Checked	Biodiversity: improving and conserving biodiversity, and slowing or reversing biodiversity loss and degradation;
Unchecked	Climate Change: responding to, mitigating and adapting to climate change and its effects on the natural environment and local communities;
Unchecked	Environmental quality: improving the condition and protection of the natural environment;
Checked	Capability and capacity building: enhancing the capacity within OTs, including through community engagement and awareness, to support the environment in the short- and long-term.

Section 2 - Project Outcomes (Essential)

On a scale of 1 (high – outcome substantially exceeded) to 5 (low – outcome substantially did not meet expectation), how successful do you think your project has been?

3 - Outcome met expectation

Project outcomes and justification for rating above

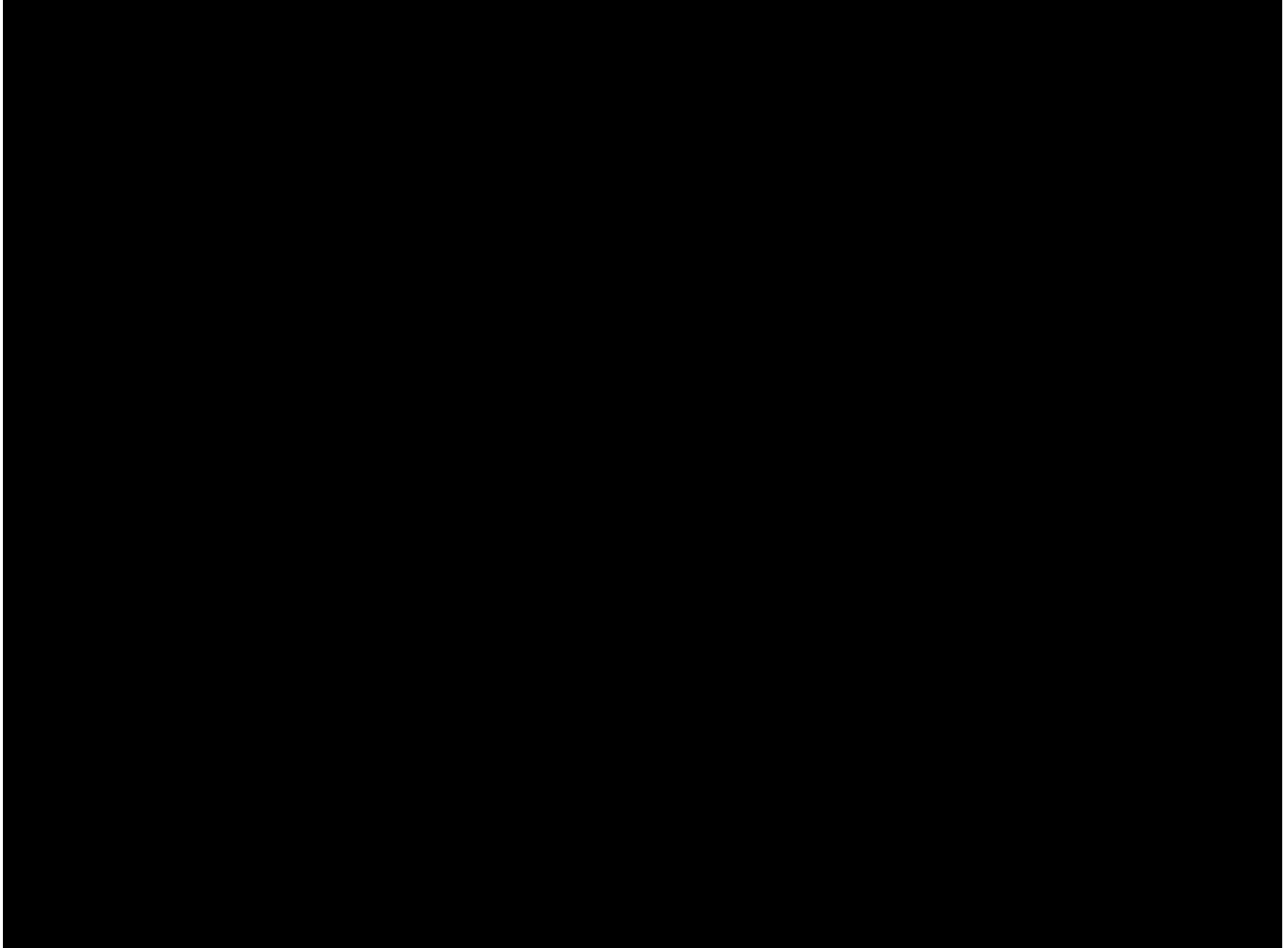
Our 'Head in the Clouds' project delivered 2 objectives of the Darwin Plus Local grant. Through the expansion of our existing cloud forest, we improved and conserved the unique and extremely rare biodiversity found on Ascension Island, and helped in the fight to reverse biodiversity loss by planting out facilitator tree species that will host and protect two of our endemic flora species. By increasing our tool capacity, we enhanced capability and capacity building allowing engagement of larger groups of diverse volunteers from the local community to assist in the habitat management of the cloud forest, supporting the environment in both the short- and long-term.

The outcome of the project met expectation. 3ha of invasive non-native flora has been cleared (and will be continually monitored and cleared) allowing planting of 18 facilitator tree species. This has meant a change in the habitat within the selected area, favouring that of endemics over non-native species. These facilitator tree species will ensure a future for Ascension's endemic flora.

The addition of a variety of habitat management tools meant we were able to enlist an increased number of volunteers to participate in work days and to do so safely and with more precision. These additions to our

workshop have also ensured we are able to continually clear and monitor the 3ha habitat for years to come. Around 200 individual volunteers from the local community took part in work days. These volunteers were drawn from all sectors of Ascension Islands community and recorded by age, gender and country of origin.

Supporting Evidence - file(s) upload



Supporting Evidence - links to published document/online materials

Evidence uploaded includes photos of volunteers clearing invasive plant species and planting our beneficial tree species using new equipment provided by the funding; volunteer posters on social media; social media posts of successful volunteer days; and aerial footage of the extension habitat linking two cloud forests, showing planted trees marked with an X.

Project Challenges

The project did encounter issues along the way. The weather on Ascension is very variable, with extremely heavy downpours occurring, especially up at Green Mountain. The restoration area for the project is situated on the highest area of the mountain on an off-road track, meaning the project area was sometimes inaccessible as the road was extremely hazardous to both vehicles and pedestrians. This unfortunately resulted in volunteer days at the site having to be cancelled, and limited our overall number of volunteers. Sadly, there were no safe ways to overcome this problem. However, when possible, available volunteers were able to be redeployed to other areas of the National Park to continue clearance work on safer sites.

Lessons Learned

The use of new tools to manage existing invasive flora species and mitigate the spread worked very well. New tools allow for a more efficient and safe working environment. An increase in the number of tools meant more volunteers could work at one time and a large amount of varying vegetation could be tackled in one day.

Volunteers loved planting trees with the idea of leaving a long-lasting conservation legacy.

We had planned to host a community planting day at the end of the project, but unfortunately large rainfall caused significant disruption and we had to cancel. We are still planning on hosting this volunteer day but after the project lead time.

If we had to do it all again, we would add funding for one person to continually oversee the project and arrange more work days and community volunteer days. Utilising the two warden staff we have managing Green Mountain was over stretching our already very small team. We feel we could have achieved a greater number of trees planted with significantly more numbers of volunteers.

We would recommend adding an extra staff member to the funding bid to oversee the project. Given the remoteness and the long recruitment times faced by most of the OTs, hiring a new staff member from overseas would be unsuitable within the one-year time frame. However, hiring a local person already based in the OT to serve as a Volunteer Coordinator may improve local engagement and communication, creating a greater sense of ownership.

Section 3 - Project Finance (Essential)

Project Expenditure

Project Spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2023/24 Grant (£)	2023/24 Total actual Darwin Plus Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff Costs				
Consultancy Costs				
Overhead Costs				
Travel and Subsistence				
Operating Costs				
Capital Items				
Others				
Total	8,000.00	8,165.83	2	

Please provide a short narrative summary on project finances.

Operating costs were 30% lower than anticipated. Calculating shipping costs by weight is always a guess as we have no set figure of the overall weight of all combined tools at the initial proposal stage.

Section 4 - Contribution of Project to Darwin Plus Programme Objectives

Please select up to **one** indicator that applies within **each group/indicator list (A, B, C, D)** and report your results for that indicator in the text box underneath. If you do not have relevant results to report for any of the indicators in a particular group, you can leave them blank.

Please also submit some form of evidence (above) to demonstrate any results you list below, where possible.

Group A: Capability and Capacity - Core Darwin Plus Standard Indicators (select one)

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| Unchecked | DPLUS-A01: Number of people from key national and local stakeholder groups completing structured and relevant training. |
| Unchecked | DPLUS-A02: Number of secondments or placements completed by individuals of key local and national stakeholders. |
| Checked | DPLUS-A03: Number of local/national organisations with improved capability and capacity as a result of project. |
| Unchecked | DPLUS-A04: Number of people reporting that they are applying new capabilities (skills and knowledge) 6 (or more) months after training. |
| Unchecked | DPLUS-A05: Number of trainers trained reporting to have delivered further training by the end of the project. |

Group A Indicator Results

The purchase of new tools has increased the capacity for AIGCFD to safely and effectively manage clearance of invasive species. It has also enabled more volunteers to assist in the legacy of maintaining and restoring important species and habitats. These tools will continue to be used for future projects.

Group B: Policies, Practices and Management- Core Darwin Plus Standard Indicators (select one)

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| Unchecked | DPLUS-B01: Number of new/improved habitat management plans available and endorsed. |
| Unchecked | DPLUS-B02: Number of new/improved species management plans available and endorsed. |

Unchecked **DPLUS-B03: Number of new/improved community management plans available and endorsed.**

Unchecked **DPLUS-B04: Number of new/improved sustainable enterprises/ community benefits management plans available and endorsed.**

Unchecked **DPLUS-B05: Number of people with increased participation in local communities / local management organisations (i.e., participation in Governance/citizen engagement).**

Unchecked **DPLUS-B06: Number of Local Stakeholders and Local Communities (people) with strengthened (recognised/clarified) tenure and/or rights.**

Group B Indicator Results

None

Group C: Evidence and Best Practices - Core Darwin Plus Standard Indicators (select one)

Unchecked **DPLUS-C01: Number of best practice guides and knowledge products published and endorsed.**

Unchecked **DPLUS-C02: Number of new conservation or species stock assessments published.**

Unchecked **DPLUS-C03: New assessments of habitat conservation action needs published.**

Unchecked **DPLUS-C04: New assessments of community use of biodiversity resources published.**

Unchecked **DPLUS-C05: Number of projects contributing data, insights, and case studies to national Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) related reporting processes and calls for evidence.**

Group C Indicator Results

None

Group D: Sustainable Benefits to People, Biodiversity and Climate - Core Darwin Plus Standard Indicators (select one)

Checked **DPLUS-D01 Hectares of habitat under sustainable management practices.**

Unchecked **DPLUS-D02: Number of people whose disaster/climate resilience has been improved.**

Unchecked **DPLUS-D03: Number of policies with biodiversity provisions that have been enacted or amended.**

Group D Indicator Results

3ha of additional beneficial habitat is now under sustainable management.

Section 5 - Project Partnerships, Wider Impacts and Contributions

Project Partnerships

This project did not require engagement with formal partners.

AIGCFD was the project lead and was responsible for the overall project management.

However, Ascension has a variety of residents working on the island, all of which are key stakeholders involved in Green Mountain and its environmental and recreational uses. The island has a UK MOD (RAF) settlement, a US Spaceforce settlement and workers from UK, South Africa, St. Helena, Tristan De Cuna, Philippines, Australia, Czech Republic and Brazil, all of which have been involved in the project. In total the project had 188 volunteers contributing 60 hours of work time over the year. Volunteers were involved in clearing vegetation and planting new trees, giving them opportunities to learn new skills, learn about the unique endemic species and take an active role in the expansion of the cloud forest habitat.

Wider Impacts and Decision Making

No

Sustainability and Legacy

There are a number of continuing benefits resulting from the project. Three additional hectares of beneficial tree species have been planted increasing habitat for two of Ascension Island's critically endangered endemic ferns. A number of practical conservation skills have been taught to our volunteers including safe tree felling and the identification and species knowledge of our endemic ferns. Tools have been purchased to ensure future volunteering sessions can be held once a month and to allow large numbers of volunteers to attend each event. These tools will also be used for continued habitat management of the project site and for any further expansion planned over the coming years.


Section 6 - Communications & Publicity


Exceptional Outcomes and Achievements


No

Photo, video or graphic to be used for publicity and communications.

Please upload at least one relevant and engaging image, video or graphic that you consent to be used alongside the above text in Defra, JNCC or NIRAS communications material.

 [DPLR11062 Volunteers planting trees FB post Ascension Island](#)

 25/04/2024

 09:26:17

 jpg 432.25 KB

Photo, video, and/or graphic captions and credits.

You are welcome to use any of the photos we have uploaded for publicity. I have attached one of our social media Facebook posts showing volunteers clearing and planting Cape Yew trees.

I agree for the Biodiversity Challenge Funds Secretariat, Administrator, and/or JNCC to publish the content of this section.

Yes, I agree for the BCFs Secretariat and/or JNCC to publish the content of this section.

Please list any accounts that you would like tagged in online posts here. This can include project pages, partners' pages or individuals' accounts for any of the following platforms: LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram.



@AscensionIslandConservation (FB) and @AIGConservation (Twitter)

Section 7 - Darwin Plus Contacts

Please tick here to confirm that you have read and acknowledge the BCF's Privacy Notice on how contact details will be used and stored and that you have sought agreement from anyone that you are sharing personal details with us on their behalf.

I confirm I have read the Privacy Notice and have consent to share the following contact details

Project Contact Details

Project Contact Name	Sunitha Amos
Role within Darwin Plus Project	Lead
Email	
Phone	
Do you need further sections to provide additional contact details?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
