

# DPLR3\1048

Darwin Plus Local - Final Report (1)

Officer: Linzi Ogden

## Section 1 - Darwin Plus Local Project Information (Essential)

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### Project Reference Number

DPL00076

### Q1. Project Title

*No Response*

### Overseas Territory(ies)

☒ Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia (on Cyprus)

### Lead Organisation or Individual

BirdLife Cyprus

### Partner Organisation(s)

BirdLife Cyprus

### Value of Darwin Plus Local Grant Award

£43,316.00

### Project Start Date

01 April 2024

### Project End Date

31 March 2025

### Project Leader Name

Melpo Apostolidou

### Project Website/Twitter/Blog etc.

*No Response*

### Report Author(s)

Report Date

30 April 2025

Project Summary

No Response

Project Outcomes

Checked	<b>Biodiversity: improving and conserving biodiversity, and slowing or reversing biodiversity loss and degradation;</b>
Unchecked	<b>Climate Change: responding to, mitigating and adapting to climate change and its effects on the natural environment and local communities;</b>
Unchecked	<b>Environmental quality: improving the condition and protection of the natural environment;</b>
Unchecked	<b>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.</b>

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?

⦿ 2 - Outcome moderately exceeded

Project outcomes and justification for rating above

The project has followed a holistic approach to Griffon Vulture conservation through capacity building, public awareness and on the ground action, with knowledge transfer from an already successful larger scale project. The project has contributed to the conservation of Vultures in Cyprus as it has improved feeding opportunities through the creation of a FFS and it has also improved the nesting and roosting conditions of cliffs through the installation of barriers for controlled access to the beach which is adjacent to the cliffs. In addition, the project has built capacities within the SBAs.

Considering the above, the project has achieved its original objective to effectively protect the key Griffon Vulture nesting colony at Episkopi (Zapalo) Cliffs, raised awareness about the vulture' urgent plight, build effectiveness of anti-poisoning efforts and improve safe feeding conditions for vultures, thus helping prevent the extinction of this majestic bird.

In terms of indicators, the number of participants to the Wildlife Crime Seminar as well as the participants

involvement and positive comments we received, showcase the success of the project in relation to enhancing capacity of enforcement authorities in dealing with responding to wildlife poisoning and investigation of this wildlife crime. The seminar has also achieved networking between different competent authorities as during the trainings, participants were split in multidisciplinary groups and had to work together in crime scene scenarios.

The project activities were completed towards the last months of the project therefore this did not allow much time to record changes. In addition, Griffon Vultures need time to learn and start to use a new area for feeding. However, BirdLife Cyprus monitors and will continue to monitor Griffon Vulture movements through the GPS tags to record use of the new FFS and use of Episkopi Cliffs for roosting while long-term we will monitor for Vulture breeding activity on the cliffs.

There were no incidents of poisoned Griffon Vultures during the project.

There was an evident engagement of Episkopi Community (within the Griffon Vulture range) as they fully supported the organisation of a public event. We also collaborated closely with the Kourion Municipality to extend invitations to all village residents, neighbouring communities and local media. The public engagement to these efforts is evident by the attendance to the events (40-50 participants from Episkopi village and nearby communities).

In addition, the project has a knock-on effect in terms of education through the creation of an educational school program implemented by the Akrotiri Environmental Education Center (AEEC) for middle and high school students to learn about Vultures, impacts of poisoning and other threats and conservation actions.

The program fills a gap in awareness-raising efforts, as there were previously no dedicated programmes focused on Griffon Vultures (GV) at the AEEC, which is located within the home range of the GV. This will help raise awareness about the species among younger generations. Additionally, the participation of local schools from nearby communities and municipalities in visiting the center enhances the program's significance and its potential long-term impact.

## **Supporting Evidence - file(s) upload**



## Supporting Evidence - links to published document/online materials

- The project created a farm feeding station, the first for Cyprus in an area often used by Griffon Vultures. Please find attached the map with the location of the feeding station and the consent form of the farmer to the Veterinary Services.
- The project organised a two-day training seminar aiming to enhance the investigation procedures of wildlife crime, particularly poisoning, with the aim of reducing the use of poisoned baits in the Cypriot countryside. The seminar took place on March 18-19, 2025, at the Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre (Akrotiri, Limassol).

The seminar enhanced the capacities of participants to respond and manage to a poisoning incident based on the crime scene investigation principles and the "Protocol of Actions for Poisoning Incidents in the Countryside," which was co-signed in June 2023 by the relevant authorities. Please find attached invitation, attendance list and photos from the seminar.

- Please find attached the educational program prepared by BirdLife Cyprus and Akrotiri Environmental Education Center, and photos from the awareness raising event at Episkopi

- Please find attached the map showing the location of all the barriers, boulders and information signs as well as the design of the kissing gate at the track leading to Zapalo beach.

- Following links showcase media coverage and social media posts relating to the events mentioned:



## Project Challenges

The unexpected passing of BirdLife Cyprus' Director in June 2024 significantly impacted the smooth implementation of the project. Beyond the emotional toll on the team, staff responsibilities had to be reorganised to cover this sudden loss. As a result, the person leading the project had to shift duties, causing delays and a build-up of workload in the final months, which further affected the timely completion of activities.

Additionally, unforeseen challenges in February related to securing Public Liability Insurance (PLI) caused further delays. The provider we had worked with in the past was unable to respond, and it took several weeks to find an alternative company to issue the required insurance. This delay directly affected the work plan of external contractors, who had to reschedule the start of their activities. Consequently, works commenced in late April and are expected to be finalised in the coming weeks. However, this does not affect project outcomes or finances, as implementation follows approved designs and payments are aligned with contracts.

A further challenge was locating a suitable contractor to produce a vulture replica for the educational component involving crime scene investigation by students. The replica needed to be realistic, waterproof, lightweight, durable, and cost-effective. It is now nearing completion, based on a 3D model of an actual vulture. These obstacles emerged unexpectedly and largely in the project's final phase. Despite the setbacks, the team responded promptly to ensure all actions are completed, and the project's objectives and impact are fully achieved.

## Lessons Learned

Collaboration with key stakeholders within the home range of the Griffon Vulture (GV) was essential not only for the successful implementation of the project but also for the species' long-term conservation. The Wildlife Crime Seminar was a major success, thanks to the strong participation of competent authorities from both the SBAs and the Republic.

Local partners—including the Kourion Municipality, Episkopi Local Community, the SBAs, the Akrotiri Environmental Education Center, and local educators—played a crucial role in supporting and integrating the project into broader community-based conservation efforts. Their involvement ensured local ownership and relevance.

Equally important was the consultation process with stakeholders regarding access management and disturbance reduction near the vulture colony. This collaborative approach helped achieve consensus on design and location choices.

The operation of the farm feeding station was another key success, made possible through the cooperation of the Veterinary Services and the Game and Fauna Service. The engagement of the local farmer, who plays a central role in this action, was the result of sustained trust-building efforts over time.

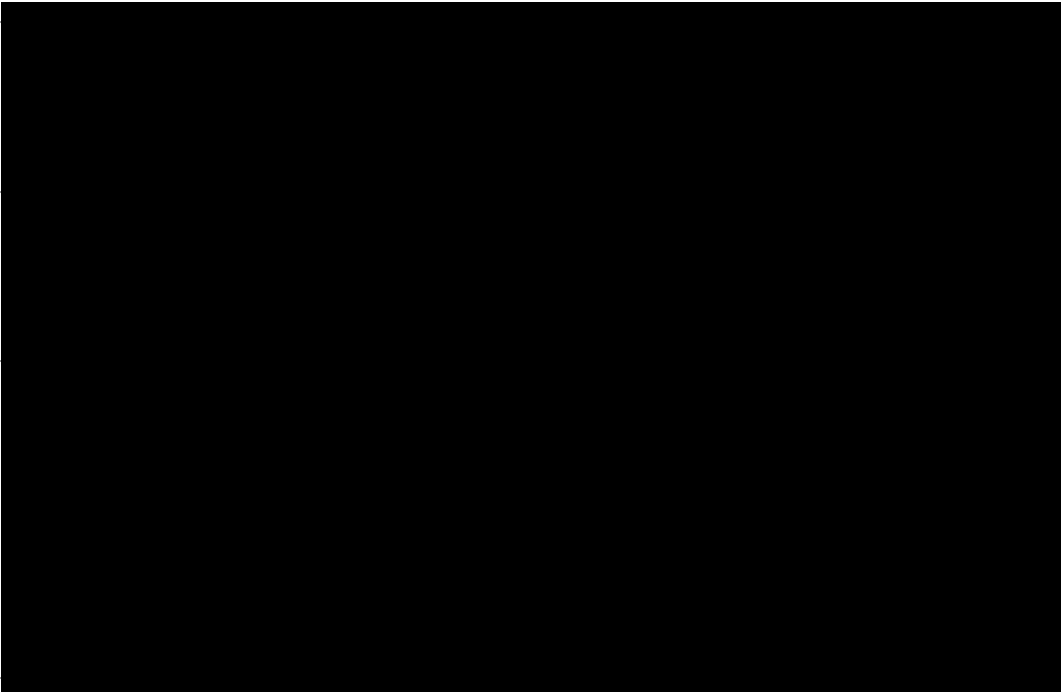
Engaging all these stakeholders has ensured the project aligns with wider environmental and educational goals, while fostering shared responsibility for the protection of the Griffon Vulture.

From an administrative standpoint, one lesson learned is the value of submitting a change request even if it was not clear that there would be delays. However, at that stage, no delays were foreseen, and the obstacles only emerged in the final two months.

### 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			
<b>Total</b>	43,316.00	37,751.08	-12%

### Please provide a short narrative summary on project finances.

Differences between planned and actual expenses derive mainly from the travel which concerns fuel costs. Less travel was needed for the implementation of the project hence there is an underspend in this category.

Also, the workshop costs (operating costs) and the costs for the electric fence (capital) were lower than foreseen in the proposal.

Finally, the actual cost for the educational material was less than foreseen and we also did not spend so much on catering for the events.

## 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)

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

## Group A Indicator Results

- 67 individuals took part in the Wildlife Crime Seminar - 8 local/ national organisations and authority bodies completed the Wildlife Crime Seminar training, including the Cyprus Police, the SBA Police, Akrotiri Environmental Education Center, BirdLife Cyprus, State General Laboratory, Veterinary Services, Game and Fauna Service, SBA Environment Department.

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

Unchecked	<b>DPLUS-B01: Number of new/improved habitat management plans available and endorsed.</b>
Unchecked	<b>DPLUS-B02: Number of new/improved species management plans available and endorsed.</b>
Unchecked	<b>DPLUS-B03: Number of new/improved community management plans available and endorsed.</b>
Unchecked	<b>DPLUS-B04: Number of new/improved sustainable enterprises/ community benefits management plans available and endorsed.</b>
Unchecked	<b>DPLUS-B05: Number of people with increased participation in local communities / local management organisations (i.e., participation in Governance/citizen engagement).</b>
Unchecked	<b>DPLUS-B06: Number of Local Stakeholders and Local Communities (people) with strengthened (recognised/clarified) tenure and/or rights.</b>

## Group B Indicator Results

NA



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

Unchecked	<b>DPLUS-C01: Number of best practice guides and knowledge products published and endorsed.</b>
Unchecked	<b>DPLUS-C02: Number of new conservation or species stock assessments published.</b>
Unchecked	<b>DPLUS-C03: New assessments of habitat conservation action needs published.</b>
Unchecked	<b>DPLUS-C04: New assessments of community use of biodiversity resources published.</b>
Unchecked	<b>DPLUS-C05: Number of projects contributing data, insights, and case studies to national Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) related reporting processes and calls for evidence.</b>

## Group C Indicator Results

NA

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

Unchecked	<b>DPLUS-D01 Hectares of habitat under sustainable management practices.</b>
Unchecked	<b>DPLUS-D02: Number of people whose disaster/climate resilience has been improved.</b>
Unchecked	<b>DPLUS-D03: Number of policies with biodiversity provisions that have been enacted or amended.</b>

## Group D Indicator Results

NA

## Section 5 - Project Partnerships, Wider Impacts and Contributions

### Project Partnerships

Collaboration with key stakeholders across the Griffon Vulture's range was vital for both the effective implementation of the project and the species' long-term conservation. The involvement of Kourion Municipality, Episkopi Local Community, the Sovereign British Areas (SBAs), the Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre (AEEC), and local educators provided strong community support and helped align the project with broader conservation and educational goals.

The project was implemented in close cooperation with the SBA Administration and Environment Department, which supported licensing processes and co-led consultations with the Department of Forestry and Kourion Municipality on access management measures to reduce disturbance along the Episkopi cliffs. The AEEC played a

key role in developing educational materials and launching programmes for middle and high school students. Several authorities and institutions—including the SBA Police, Game and Fauna Service (GFS), State General Laboratory (SGL), Veterinary Services, Republic of Cyprus Police, and AEEC—contributed to the Wildlife Crime Seminar, fostering a coordinated response to illegal poisoning and its impact on vultures. Meanwhile, the GFS, Veterinary Services, and local farmers supported the operation of the Farm Feeding Station. Kourion Municipality also co-funded efforts to reduce disturbance and co-organised a community event in Episkopi. A major administrative challenge was the complex and time-consuming process of obtaining Public Liability Insurance (PLI). This was eventually resolved through close coordination with the SBAs. Overall, a key success of the project was the strong collaboration established with local institutions, enforcement bodies, and communities, which greatly enhanced its effectiveness and impact.

## Wider Impacts and Decision Making

Yes, the project has indeed contributed to the wider decision making processes, particularly in embedding environmental considerations into access management and conservation planning. Through close collaboration with the SBA Administration and Environment Department the project informed discussions on reducing human disturbance at key Griffon Vulture nesting sites. As a result, the SBA has moved towards implementing access management actions for the Episkopi cliffs with this project, thus directly influenced by the project's conservation objectives and consultation process. Furthermore, the project's engagement with local authorities individuals, such as Kourion Municipality, Cyprus Police, SBA Police, SGL, Veterinary Services, GFS, the Department of Forestry, and local farmers has strengthened awareness around species protection and the involvement of the local community in conservation efforts. Educational collaborations, including the development and implementation of a targeted program with the AEEC have also contributed to strengthening environmental topics into school-level curriculum.

Through the creation of the farm feeding station—a first for Cyprus—, this initiative has paved the way for the development of a sustainable network of feeding points across the Griffon Vulture's distribution range that will strengthen the effectiveness of ongoing conservation actions.

Relevant stakeholders have been involved in the procedure of moving towards this direction in order to agree on the appropriate administration procedures for the operation of this first pilot farm feeding stations, utilising the EU Regulation (EU) no. 142/2011.

These project outcomes demonstrate how the project has supported more informed and conservation sensitive decision-making at both institutional and community levels.

## Sustainability and Legacy

Several important long-term benefits have resulted from the project. One of the most significant is the strong collaboration established with local stakeholders, including the Kourion Municipality, Episkopi Local Community, the SBAs, and key authorities such as the Game and Fauna Service, Veterinary Services, and Cyprus Police. These relationships, built on trust and shared responsibility, form a solid foundation for ongoing Griffon Vulture conservation.

Public engagement and awareness raising will also continue beyond the project's lifespan. The educational programme developed with the Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre (AEEC) has been integrated into the Centre's regular activities. By engaging new student groups each year, the programme ensures sustained awareness of vulture conservation and the risks posed by illegal poison use.

In parallel, access management measures introduced along the Episkopi cliffs—including informative signage and physical barriers—will continue to reduce human disturbance at the breeding colony. These long-term actions are expected to support improved breeding success and habitat protection.

The project staff were permanent employees of BirdLife Cyprus, and their continued involvement ensures continuity in vulture conservation and integration of project results into broader strategic efforts. Additionally, officers from key stakeholder bodies will remain engaged through their institutional roles, including enforcement, monitoring, and technical support.

The project has strengthened cross-agency collaboration, which will facilitate coordinated follow-up actions.

Collectively, these outcomes guarantee that the project's positive impacts will be sustained, ensuring long-term benefits for the Griffon Vulture and its habitat

## Section 6 - Communications & Publicity

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### Exceptional Outcomes and Achievements

We believe that the Wildlife Crime Seminar would be worth showcasing through Darwin Plus.

You can use the below summary and photos included in the evidence section.

A key achievement of this initiative project was the successful organisation of the seminar on wildlife crime investigation in Cyprus, held in March 2025. The event marked a major milestone in efforts to combat the illegal use of poison baits—one of the main threats to the Griffon Vulture, Cyprus' rarest bird of prey.

Organised by BirdLife Cyprus, in collaboration with the Game and Fauna Service and the Sovereign Base Areas, the seminar brought together key national and local authorities, including the Game and Fauna Service, Cyprus Police, Veterinary Services, the State General Laboratory, and the Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs). Enforcement bodies and competent agencies participated in a joint capacity-building exercise focused on combating wildlife crime through effective investigation and prosecution.

Participants took part in both theoretical sessions and field-based simulations, including mock crime scene investigations and evidence-handling exercises.

Investigating wildlife crime is a crucial component in the fight against illegal practices such as poisoning. Without proper investigation and collection of evidence, cases often go unpunished, allowing perpetrators to act with impunity. This seminar provided authorities with the tools and knowledge needed to detect, document, and support successful prosecutions—helping break the cycle of wildlife crime.

Beyond skills and technical know-how, the seminar also fostered stronger collaboration between agencies, laying the foundation for a more coordinated and systematic response to illegal killing and poisoning of wildlife in Cyprus.

This flagship initiative exemplifies the project's broader impact in tackling threats to vultures while building long-term institutional capacity and reinforcing the rule of law in conservation.

The educational program is also a great activity to showcase. We could provide you with photo material at a later stage.

### 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**



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

- WCS\_DPLR\_1 (1):

Caption/Description: Wildlife crime seminar participants conduct a field assessment of the Griffon Vulture,

examining plumage and wing condition, as part of evidence gathering training.

Location: Akrotiri, Cyprus

Photo Credit: Melpo Apostolidou

- WCS\_DPLR\_1 (6):

Caption/Description: Authorities participate in the practical on-site investigation of suspected illegal wildlife poisoning; a dead fox is examined as part of this field component of the wildlife crime seminar.

Location: Akrotiri, Cyprus

Photo Credit: Melpo Apostolidou

- WCS\_DPLR\_1 (8):

Caption/Description: Officers and stakeholders attend a presentation on best practices for combating wildlife crime, including case studies and protocols for poisoning incidents, at the Wildlife Crime Seminar.

Location: Akrotiri, Cyprus

Photo Credit: Melpo Apostolidou

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.

<https://www.facebook.com/BirdLifeCyprus/>

<https://www.instagram.com/birdlifecyprus/>

<https://www.instagram.com/sbapolice/>

## 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	Melpo Apostolidou
Role within Darwin Plus Project	Project Leader
Email	
Phone	
Do you need further sections to provide additional contact details?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No