

DPLR3\1072

Darwin Plus Local - Final Report (1)

Officer: Linzi Ogden

Section 1 - Darwin Plus Local Project Information (Essential)

Project Reference Number

DPL00086

Q1. Project Title

No Response

Overseas Territory(ies)

☒ Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

Lead Organisation or Individual

Department of Environment & Coastal Resources (DECR)

Partner Organisation(s)

n/a

Value of Darwin Plus Local Grant Award

£50,000.00

Project Start Date

01 April 2024

Project End Date

31 March 2025

Project Leader Name

Alexander R. McLeod

Project Website/Twitter/Blog etc.

No Response

Report Author(s)

Report Date

30 April 2025

Project Summary

No Response

Project Outcomes

Checked	Biodiversity: improving and conserving biodiversity, and slowing or reversing biodiversity loss and degradation;
Checked	Climate Change: responding to, mitigating and adapting to climate change and its effects on the natural environment and local communities;
Checked	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





The project was able to produce the three (3) outlined objectives: (1) the project team was able to procure the survey & mapping drone; We brought in our consultant whom was able to provide the basic training on use of the drone; collaboration with the consultant we (2) learned how to use the drone data and GIS to map Acropora palmata and (3) was able to explore techniques to monitor for Unomia stolonifera (now described as invasive Xeniid soft coral) introduction. Exploring the multispectral data we collected with the mapping drone identified opportunities for use as desired, however this also highlighted there remained a need to conduct in-water surveys.

Supporting Evidence - file(s) upload

 [DPL86 SOP Acropora Mapping](#)
 01/05/2025
 05:10:19
 pdf 932.71 KB

 [DPL86 DRAFT SOP Monitoring Invasive Xeniid Introduction](#)
 01/05/2025
 05:10:18
 pdf 832.77 KB

 [DPL86 DRAFT SOP Manta-Tow](#)
 01/05/2025
 05:10:17
 pdf 354.79 KB

 [Gresco Invoice 10226515-00](#)
 01/05/2025
 05:10:17
 pdf 79.61 KB

Supporting Evidence - links to published document/online materials

Supporting evidence is provided with the files uploaded.

Project Challenges

Following receipt of procured Wingtra drone (5/8/2024), we identified damage to one camera mount (Sony RX1 RII). Wingtra distributors provided a replacement part, which also arrived damaged (10/9/2024). A second replacement part was shipped and arrived functional (4/10/2024).

Delays in full equipment receipt delayed some fieldwork (Output 2) and prevented the capacity to trial use of the RX1 RII sensor with our consultant. We have an agreement with our consultant to collaborate further once we are able to provide data to work with. Consultant has also agreed to continue support of developing our drone SOPs.

The 2024-25 winter season was rainier and windier than typical. These unfavorable conditions limited the capacity for drone flights and data collection through October-January. Attempts were made for data collection for Output 2 using the RX1 RII (when available), but found sea conditions insufficiently calm to allow effective data collection. While this restricted the capacity for data collection, this did provide lessons on when to collect field data. Overall, we were unable to collect as much field data within the project timeline as originally anticipated.

While these delays reduced capacity for effective fieldwork and data collection during project lifetime, the project was designed to facilitate the start of wide-scale data collection and continued monitoring. The DECR team remains committed to continued progress of the overall project objectives and we believe this project has resulted in the needed capacity building to protect our local biodiversity.

IT challenges created minor delay in report submission.

Lessons Learned

Procurement of Wingtra was originally completed through a USA-based distributor; this was later flagged as outside their distribution zone. An alternative distributor was used to source replacement parts and will be used in future.

Consultation with Dr. Raber highlighted that planned monitoring for Unomia using drones does not exclude a need for in-water observations. Supplementary techniques were identified. Project underspend was used to procure necessary equipment and training providing an opportunity to increase the quality of our protocols for output 3.

Because of lost opportunity to trial RX1 RII sensor with our consultant; team focused on its testing once

functional. This was prioritized to employ learned theory and identify gaps in our plans for output 2, however, this focus reduced our time to progress further with output 3. If done differently, we may have spent more time working on output 3.

To avoid seasonal challenges and provide greater opportunity to collect field data during the project timeline, this project may have benefited from application through the Darwin Plus Main funding scheme.

Going through this Darwin Local Project, particularly the application and reporting processes as well as communication with NIRAS has provided a highly valuable experience for managing and participating in externally funded projects, particularly Darwin Plus scheme. Through these lessons we anticipate a significantly improved capacity to apply for, conduct and report on future projects.

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 Cost				
Overhead Costs				
Travel and Subsistence				
Operating Costs				

Capital Items

Others

Total	50,000.00	43,830.39	-12.34
-------	-----------	-----------	--------

Please provide a short narrative summary on project finances.

Project expenses were made in United States Dollars. Expenses were converted to Pounds Sterling using the Currency Converter on XE.com (<https://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/>; last accessed on, 25/04/2025, updated 25/04/2025, 13:49 UTC).

Because we were able to secure our primary capital purchase within the planned budget, we had the opportunity to utilize underspend to fund procurement of additional equipment and training for increased quality of output 3. Use of underspend in this way was approved through a change request. Additional purchased equipment is reported within 'Capital items'. The additional training is reported as 'Other costs'.

The Turks and Caicos Islands Government, Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR), internal budget was utilized for facilitating domestic transport and staff-overtime needed for project fieldwork. This was planned at the application stage to maximize available funding for critical consultancy costs and capital purchases.

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

1 National Organization (DECR, TCI Government) with improved capability and capacity as a result of project.

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

2 environmental monitoring plans drafted to meet conservation needs, however these have not yet been endorsed

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

n/a

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

Unchecked **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

n/a

Section 5 - Project Partnerships, Wider Impacts and Contributions

Project Partnerships

The Turks and Caicos Islands Government Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR) was the lead organization for this project. This was to facilitate capacity building and project start-ups for new environmental monitoring and research activities to be implemented by the DECR post-project. Activities initiated through this project will continue into future workplans to meet conservation and research needs of the territory; thus critically improving the territories capacity to manage its biodiversity and promote improved climate resilience.

Wider Impacts and Decision Making

Continued work on these started programs are anticipated to directly feed into decision making activities; mainly those linked to TCIs Coral Reef Management plan and TCIs DRAFT National Marine Invasive Species and Disease Outbreaks Response Plan.

Sustainability and Legacy

This project has improved the capacity of the Turks and Caicos Islands Government, Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR), in how they can study and monitor their coastal marine environment. This project has facilitated the start of two new programs (output 2 and output 3) for the DECR which aim to support the management of their coral reef ecosystems by providing evidence for developing new management strategies and monitor for environmental threats specifically listed in TCIs coral reef management plan. These programs (output 2 and output 3) will continue beyond this project in implementation. The Standard Operating Procedures drafted (output 2 and output 3) will be working documents, amended repeatedly with lessons learned over time. The procurement of the new mapping drone (output 1) is being planned to support future conservation projects. These projects may be realized in future Darwin Plus applications.





Section 6 - Communications & Publicity

Exceptional Outcomes and Achievements

This project did not produce any outreach materials during the project lifetime, however through the legacies of this project, the team will aim to share publications when produced as well as make such references as appropriate on social media.

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.

 DECRT Wingtra 2024.Aug
 01/05/2025
 05:57:08
 png 2.74 MB

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

Procured WingtraONE GENII mapping drone. TCI team with project consultant (Dr. George Raber) launching first test flight of WingtraONE GENII mapping drone. Photo credit, Alexander R. McLeod

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.

Instagram: @DECRTCI

Facebook: DECRTCI
Facebook Group: DECRT Environmental Education & Outreach

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	Alexander R. McLeod
Role within Darwin Plus Project	Project Leader
Email	<div></div>
Phone	
Do you need further sections to provide additional contact details?	
<input checked="" type="radio"/> No	