

DPLR3\1075

Darwin Plus Local - Final Report (1)

Officer: Erica Berntsen

Section 1 - Darwin Plus Local Project Information (Essential)

Project Reference Number

DPL00087

Project Title

No Response

Overseas Territory(ies)

☒ Falkland Islands (FI)

Lead Organisation or Individual

erica Berntsen, Department of Agriculture, Falkland Islands Government

Partner Organisation(s)

FIG Falkland Islands Fire and Rescue Service – Falkland Islands, FIG Environment Department – Falkland Islands, Forestry Commission Wildfire Advisors & contractor – UK

Value of Darwin Plus Local Grant Award

£49,650.00

Project Start Date

01 April 2024

Project End Date

31 March 2025

Project Leader Name

Erica Berntsen, Assistant Agricultural Advisor, Department of Agriculture, FalklandIslandsGovernment

Project Website/Twitter/Blog etc.

No Response

Report Author(s)

Erica Berntsen, Assistant Agricultural Advisor, Department of Agriculture, FalklandIslandsGovernment

Report Date

05 May 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;
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?

⦿ 1 - Outcome substantially exceeded

Project outcomes and justification for rating above

Wildfire Capacity Building in the Falkland Islands

The project’s overall objective—to build wildfire response capacity among Falkland Islands stakeholders through accredited training delivered by UK Forestry Commission experts—was successfully achieved. In addition to this core aim, the project generated several long-term benefits that will strengthen the Islands’ ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from wildfires.

Capacity Building: Wildfire Training for Landowners

In April 2024, four Lantra-accredited training modules were delivered: Vegetation Fire Foundation (VFF), Vegetation Fire Operator (VFO), Wildfire Management Planning (WMP), and Prescribed Fire Manager (PFM). Attendance figures were: VFF – 24, VFO – 20, WMP – 17, and PFM – 5, with 66 certificates awarded—well exceeding the initial target of 40.

Participants represented a broad cross-section of the community, including landowners, rural workers, Falkland Islands Government (FIG) staff, and reserve responders such as members of the Falkland Islands Defence Force. Training took place in both Fox Bay (West Falkland) and Stanley (East Falkland), ensuring equitable access. These sessions helped address a significant knowledge gap, particularly in remote areas where early response is critical to preventing large-scale damage.

Train-the-Trainer Programme with FIFRS

In partnership, the Forestry Commission and FIG signed a legal agreement transferring intellectual property for vegetation fire training. This allowed for bespoke course development tailored to local conditions and needs.

As a result, the Falkland Islands Fire & Rescue Service (FIFRS) now has five accredited instructors qualified to deliver the VFF and VFO modules locally. This has strengthened the service’s internal wildfire response capability and enabled delivery of structured training to community members and FIG departments.

Training focused on early wildfire response techniques such as safe hand tool use, personal safety, team coordination, and incident management. A total of six training sessions were delivered across two locations, comprising 14 modules in total. This practical approach improved community-level preparedness and enhanced collaboration between government and rural stakeholders.

Additional Outcomes

Island-Wide Wildfire Strategy


A recurring issue raised during training was the lack of a coordinated wildfire strategy. In response, trainer Andy Elliott met with the Director of Emergency Services to advocate for a formal plan. Member of Legislative Assembly Jack Ford—portfolio holder for Emergency Services & Island Planning and a VFF participant—has since endorsed the development of a cross-departmental strategy. Contributions have come from Emergency Services, Environment, and Agriculture. Public consultation is anticipated in June 2025.


Concurrently, the Department of Agriculture has completed a review of legislation on managed burning and plans to update it within 12–18 months. Meanwhile, several landowners who completed the WMP module have begun drafting site-specific plans and are coordinating with FIFRS to support broader planning.


Wildfire Recovery and Research Collaboration


During their visit, trainers assessed wildfire damage on Sea Lion Island following a lightning strike in early 2024. Smouldering peat and burned tussac highlighted lasting ecological impacts. Andy Elliott has since initiated discussions with international researchers to develop guidance for restoring tussac and shallow peat habitats. These efforts aim to reduce erosion, support vegetation recovery, and minimise long-term carbon loss.


Supporting Evidence - file(s) upload


 [Figure 8 - Members of the FIDF being trained by a newly trained FIFRS Instructor](#)


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 [Figure 10 - Newly trained FIFRS trainers delivering practical VFO wildfire training to FIDF members](#)


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 [20250505 FIG Wildfire Strategy Proposal - Draft - DES](#)


 05/05/2025


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 [Wildfire training Penguin News article 26042024](#)


 05/05/2025


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 pdf 326.05 KB


 [Figure 7 - FIFRS Wildfire Instructors with Andy Elliott of Wildfire TaC](#)


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 [Figure 6 - FIFRS Instructor using a Darwin Plus Local funded brush cutter](#)


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 [Figure 1 - VFO Training at Fox Bay \(West Falkland\) trainer Andy Elliott \(Wildfire TaC\) explaining equipment items and their use](#)


 05/05/2025


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 [Figure 3 - VFF module being delivered in Stanley.](#)


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 [Figure 4 - Trainers Andy Elliott and Dean Hodges and course participants during the VFO training practical in Stanley.](#)


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 [Apr 24 Feedback ANON](#)

 05/05/2025

 20:11:22

 pdf 1.18 MB

Supporting Evidence - links to published document/online materials

Inserted file [Wildfire training Penguin News article 26042024] – Penguin News (local newspaper) article based on an interview with Wildfire TaC trainer Andy Elliott.

Inserted file [Apr 24 Feedback Anon] – Feedback forms (names redacted) submitted from participants post training sessions.

Inserted file [20250505 FIG Wildfire Strategy Proposal Draft] - Presentation delivered to Members of Legislative Assembly to accompany the Wildfire Strategy Draft proposal

Link – FITV (local television channel) interview with Andy Elliott and Member of Legislative Assembly Jack Ford (portfolio holder for Emergency Services & Islands Security)

Figures 1 – 5 – Photographs captured throughout the delivery of the training – Capacity Building – Wildfire Training for Landowners. (Sourced from Wildfire TaC)

Figures 6- 8 Photographs captured throughout the delivery of Training – Train-the-Trainer Programme with FIFRS (Sources from Wildfire TaC)

Figures 9-10 Photographs captured of the newly trained FIFRS trainers delivering practical wildfire training to FIDF members.

[https://fitv.co.fk/falklands-in-focus/week-687/?](https://fitv.co.fk/falklands-in-focus/week-687/?_gl=1*4p6fcm*_up*MQ..*_ga*MTkyMDM0MjkwNS4xNzE2NDc2MDE0*_ga_CLVTRMVVR8*MTcxNjQ3NjAxMy4xLjAuMTcxNjQ3NjAxMy4wLjAuMA..)

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Project Challenges

Initially the plan was to deliver each suite of courses (VFF, VFO, WMP & PFM) to the East and West Islands, with the PFM course occurring on a farm on the East. However, during the participation of the farm owner on the courses, it became apparent that the farmer was suffering a form of PTSD from an experience with a structure fire. In the light of this, the decision was made for the farmer to not participate in the rest of the courses and the PFM course would no longer be held on their East farm. In discussion with the group on the East, it was also apparent that no land owners planned to carry out any prescribed fires in the future (neither immediate or long-term) therefore this reinforced the decision to withdraw the PFM course for the East group.

This experience of PTSD was not limited to one participant, which additionally brought to light the need for support for those who have had experiences with wildfires and structure fires in the islands. Such support can potentially be provided by linking firefighters with FIGs newly-launches TRiM (Trauma Risk Management) process.

Lessons Learned

i) One of the greatest successes of the project was the high level of engagement from participants. This was largely due to the delivery style and expertise of trainers Andy Elliott and Dean Hodges, whose first-hand experience and ability to contextualise content for the Falklands made the training relevant, relatable, and highly impactful.

ii) The main challenge was the compressed timeframe in which the courses were delivered. Due to logistical constraints, several modules were delivered over consecutive days, which some participants found physically and mentally demanding. While this format was necessary to accommodate the remote location and availability of stakeholders, it limited opportunities for reflection and equipment practice.

iii) If the project were repeated, we would explore delivering the VFF and VFO theory components online ahead of time. This blended learning approach would maximise in-person sessions for hands-on practical training, better supporting participant confidence in using tools and applying techniques. It would also ease the time pressure on information-heavy modules like Prescribed Fire Management and Wildfire Management Planning.

iv) For others delivering similar training in remote or resource-limited contexts, we recommend:

- Prioritising local relevance in content and delivery style.
- Scheduling ample time for practical sessions and reflection.
- Considering participants' mental well-being, particularly if they have experienced past fire events.
- Exploring flexible or hybrid learning models to make the most of limited in-person time.

These adjustments could further strengthen both knowledge retention and training impact.

Section 3 - Project Finance (Essential)

Project Expenditure

Project Spend (indicative)	Total Grant (£)	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	49,650.00	51,067.66	+3	

Please provide a short narrative summary on project finances.

The total project expenditure came to £51,067.66, exceeding the original grant allocation of £49,650.00 by approximately 2.9%, which was covered using internal Department of Agriculture contingency funding.

The most significant variation occurred under Consultancy Costs, where expenditure exceeded the original budget by 32%. This was primarily due to higher-than-anticipated trainer fees and extended on-island time required to deliver the full suite of accredited wildfire modules. These additional costs were approved internally to ensure continuity and completeness of training delivery across both East and West Falkland.

Conversely, Travel and Subsistence costs were 38% lower than budgeted. This reduction was achieved through consolidated training schedules, local accommodation support from landowners, and limited inter-island travel by participants. The project team also made strategic use of shared travel arrangements and venue hosting, which helped to contain these costs significantly.

Operating Costs showed only a minor variance of +3.4%, which reflects slight increases in consumables and printing for training materials.

No co-financing was secured for this project, but substantial in-kind contributions were provided by partner departments and local landowners.

These included venue access, accommodation, catering, and logistical support during the training delivery phase, which added value beyond the

financial scope of the grant.

Overall, financial management remained robust, with strategic savings offsetting higher consultancy costs while still ensuring successful and high-impact project delivery.

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

Falkland Islands Fire & Rescue Service has gained the capability to independently deliver certified wildfire training, with five local instructors now accredited under Lantra modules.

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.
Checked	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

Over 40 landowners and community members completed wildfire training. FIFRS, with support from the Department of Agriculture, will now develop a formal training programme to certify more farmers in VFF and VFO modules, further embedding community-based wildfire preparedness and response capacity across rural areas.

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

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

FIG is developing a Falkland Islands Wildfire Strategy, with input from rural stakeholders and public consultation planned. The strategy, currently in draft, is being developed with support from a dedicated working group including The Head of Agriculture, DoA and aims to guide coordinated wildfire preparedness and response across the Islands.

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.
Checked	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

25 individuals across two islands now have enhanced capacity to respond to vegetation wildfires—a key risk associated with climate variability—through practical and tactical training

Section 5 - Project Partnerships, Wider Impacts and Contributions

Project Partnerships

The project was jointly led by the Department of Agriculture and the Falkland Islands Fire & Rescue Service (FIFRS), in close collaboration with the Department of Environment. Planning and implementation were co-developed across departments, with FIFRS coordinating the "train-the-trainer" pathway and logistics.

Although not formal partners, landowners, farm workers, and the Falkland Islands Defence Force played key roles as trainees and community responders. The trainers' ability to contextualise modules for the local environment ensured relevance and high engagement. A challenge included managing emotional responses from participants with past fire-related trauma—highlighting the need for future psychosocial support in fire preparedness strategies.

Wider Impacts and Decision Making

The project catalysed wider government engagement, notably influencing the early development of an island-wide wildfire strategy endorsed by the MLA responsible for Fire & Rescue. Additionally, several participants have begun drafting farm-level wildfire management plans, demonstrating grassroots uptake. The training also informed public discussions around climate risk and rural resilience.

Sustainability and Legacy

The certification of five FIFRS firefighters as local wildfire trainers ensures that structured training can continue without external support. The groundwork laid for a national wildfire strategy, combined with property-level planning initiated by landowners, reflects a durable shift in approach. Training resources and knowledge products remain with FIG, ensuring legacy impact

Section 6 - Communications & Publicity

Exceptional Outcomes and Achievements

The wildfire training programme delivered under this Darwin Plus Local grant not only improved tactical fire response in the Falkland Islands but also inspired momentum for long-term strategic change.

Delivered by experienced UK trainers Andy Elliott and Dean Hodges, the programme adapted best practice wildfire response to suit the unique environmental, social, and logistical context of the Falklands. Over 60 participants from farms, government, and the community engaged in high-

impact training across two islands. Many had first-hand experience of fire emergencies and welcomed the opportunity to learn from professionals with real-world wildfire credentials.


Coverage in the Penguin News and an interview aired on FITV further expanded public awareness and helped destigmatize discussion around trauma linked to fire events. A powerful moment came during a field assessment of a burn site on Sea Lion Island, where the team observed peat still smouldering months later—a striking reminder of wildfire’s long-term ecological footprint.


The most exceptional outcome, however, was the unplanned but welcomed commitment to a national wildfire strategy, led by government stakeholders trained during the programme. This systemic legacy, combined with FIFRS’s new ability to deliver local training, ensures the project’s benefits will extend far beyond its 12-month duration.


Photos from the training show engaged participants handling tools, tackling real burn scenarios, and collaborating in the field. These, alongside public media and policy momentum, highlight a transformative impact from a small but well-targeted investment.


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.


 [Figure 1 - VFO Training at Fox Bay \(West Falkland\) trainer Andy Elliott \(Wildfire TaC\) explaining equipment items and their use](#)


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

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Figure 10 - Newly trained FIFRS trainers delivering practical VFO wildfire training to FIDF members - Source Matt Davies Department of Agriculture

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.

Facebook: FalklandsGov, Wildfire TaC
LinkedIn: falkland-islands-government
Twitter: FalklandsGov
Instagram: falklands_gov

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	Erica Berntsen
Role within Darwin Plus Project	Assistant Agricultural Advisor, Department of Agriculture, Falkland Islands Government
Email	
Phone	
Do you need further sections to provide additional contact details?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No