

DPLR3\1065

Darwin Plus Local - Final Report (1)

Officer: Linzi Ogden

Section 1 - Darwin Plus Local Project Information (Essential)

Project Reference Number

DPLR3\1065

Project Title

No Response

Overseas Territory(ies)

☒ Montserrat

Lead Organisation or Individual

Montserrat National Trust

Partner Organisation(s)

UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, Department of the Agriculture Department of Environment

Value of Darwin Plus Local Grant Award

£48,907.00

Project Start Date

01 April 2024

Project End Date

31 March 2025

Project Leader Name

Sarita Francis

Project Website/Twitter/Blog etc.

No Response

Report Author(s)

Report Date

13 June 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?

⦿ 1 - Outcome substantially exceeded

Project outcomes and justification for rating above

The project “Fostering Youth Engagement in Biodiversity and Conservation in Montserrat” has successfully delivered measurable, impactful, and sustainable outcomes, fully justifying a high rating.

i) Changes Achieved

The most significant change resulting from the project was the increased and more inclusive participation of Montserrat’s youth in biodiversity and conservation activities. The purchase of a 16-seater van directly addressed a major transportation barrier that had previously excluded children from remote and economically disadvantaged communities. This investment ensured equitable access to Montserrat National Trust (MNT) programmes and facilitated island-wide youth involvement.

Equally transformative was the recruitment of a dedicated Youth Coordinator. This role was essential in ensuring continuity, coordination, and expansion of youth programming. The coordinator led activities for the Monty Messengers (primary school) and Monty Ambassadors (secondary school) groups, fostering structured learning, leadership, and stronger youth–nature connections.

ii) Achievement of Objectives and Outcomes

The project achieved all of its original objectives and met or exceeded the success indicators:

- A Youth Coordinator was hired and fully integrated into the MNT team.
- The van was successfully procured, licensed, insured, and branded.
- New youth-led environmental clubs were launched, attracting over 100 participants across age groups.
- A full calendar of events was developed and implemented, ensuring regular engagement.

Youth participation increased by more than 50%, and young people gained hands-on skills through biodiversity tools like iNaturalist. These experiences enhanced their awareness, engagement, and contribution to local environmental data collection.

iii) Consideration of Feedback and Recommendations

Feedback focused on improving inclusivity and sustainability. The previous transport cost of \$300 per session was eliminated with the vehicle purchase, making participation more accessible and reliable. MNT has committed to covering future vehicle maintenance through its general budget.

iv) Alignment with National Goals

The project directly contributed to Montserrat's Policy Agenda (2021–2024) by advancing youth development, improving educational outcomes, and promoting sustainable livelihoods. It also aligns with the National Youth Policy's emphasis on active participation and skill development.


Conclusion

In summary, the project delivered meaningful, tangible change; met its objectives; responded effectively to feedback; and established a solid foundation for continued youth engagement in biodiversity conservation. The results reflect a well-executed initiative with long-term benefits for both young people and Montserrat's natural environment.

Supporting Evidence - file(s) upload


 [Bus with Montys Messenegers](#)

 18/06/2025


 17:17:02


 jpg 425.48 KB


 [Montys Van](#)

 13/06/2025


 20:07:47


 jpg 317.04 KB


 [Panel discussion Social Media Affecting the Mental Health of Montserrat's Youth and How Can Engagement with Biodiversity Mitigate These Effects](#)


 13/06/2025


 20:07:11


 jpg 89.67 KB


 [Montys Messeneger displaying herbal tea bag made they them from MNT garden uses Lemon grass, mints, rosemary and lemon verbena](#)

 13/06/2025


 20:07:10


 jpg 353.54 KB

 [Primary school field trip on the importance of the island's Biodiversity, History and Culture](#)


 13/06/2025

 20:07:10


 jpg 160.35 KB

 [Art Session with Liizzie Harper botanical illustration or teaching children arts work in Montserrat.](#)


 18/06/2025


 16:35:10


 jpg 444.77 KB


 [Montys Messeneger and Ambassadors nature session in observation on Biodiversity Day.](#)

 13/06/2025


 20:07:12

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 [Monty's Ambassador Panel Discussion Youth Panel on the topic 'A Call to Action Youth and the Future of Conservation of Montserrat's Environment and Culture.](#)

 13/06/2025


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 jpg 299.99 KB


 [Montys Messeneger flyer for summer event](#)

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 20:07:10

 jpg 245.18 KB

 [Higher education Public event showcasing the diverse career choices in the field of Environment.](#)

 13/06/2025

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Supporting Evidence - links to published document/online materials

The following materials provide evidence of the tangible outcomes and impact of the project "Fostering Youth Engagement in Biodiversity and Conservation in Montserrat":

1. Photographic Evidence: Images show youth actively participating in environmental clubs (e.g., Monty Messengers, Monty Ambassadors), school outreach sessions, and biodiversity fieldwork using tools like iNaturalist. Before-and-after photos also highlight the impact of transportation access on programme reach.
2. Vehicle Documentation: Photos of the branded 16-seater van in operation, supporting safe and inclusive transport to programme sites. Included are images of the logo installation.
3. Programme Calendar & Flyers: Digital copies of the official Youth Programme calendar and promotional materials for biodiversity-focused youth events and clubs. These demonstrate structured, ongoing engagement.
4. Participation Logs & Club Reports: Attendance logs and activity reports showing increased youth participation and the establishment of new clubs, with supporting data showing a more than 50% increase in engagement.

Project Challenges

The project encountered several challenges, both anticipated and unexpected, but these were effectively managed through timely interventions and adaptive strategies.

One major challenge was the delay in delivery of the 16-seater van, due to shipping and customs clearance setbacks. This impacted early transport plans for youth participation. To mitigate the issue, staff and volunteers used personal vehicles temporarily to continue select programme activities until the van was fully operational also bus fee for transporting Monty's during activities.

Another challenge involved the recruitment of a qualified Youth Coordinator. Despite initial advertising, finding a candidate with both youth engagement and environmental experience was difficult. The recruitment period was extended and the job re-advertised, which eventually led to a successful hire which positively influenced programme delivery.

Scheduling also posed difficulties. After-school club meetings conflicted with students' academic and extracurricular schedules, affecting attendance. To resolve this, the MNT collaborated with school leadership to adjust meeting times and rotate club sessions, which improved flexibility and participation.

Lastly, maintaining consistent youth engagement required creativity. The novelty of the programme began to wear off for some participants. In response, the Trust introduced interactive field-based activities, biodiversity games, and recognition awards in the form of environmental badges to renew interest and encourage continued involvement.

Despite these setbacks, the project remained on track and achieved its intended outcomes by staying flexible, responsive, and focused on youth needs.

Lessons Learned

i) What worked well and why:

Appointing a dedicated Youth Coordinator significantly enhanced programme delivery. Having a focal point for planning, communication, and facilitation ensured consistent engagement and built stronger relationships with both youth and schools. Additionally, purchasing the project van was a key success it addressed long-standing access issues and allowed wider and more inclusive participation.

ii) What did not work well and why:

Initial coordination with schools proved difficult due to overlapping schedules and limited availability of students. This was due to underestimating the complexity of integrating extracurricular activities into academic calendars. Additionally, the recruitment process for the Youth Coordinator took longer than expected due to feedback from donor and receiving funds and more targeted advertising.

iii) If done again, what would be done differently:

More time would be allocated to stakeholder engagement during the project planning phase, particularly with schools and parents. Early dialogue would help anticipate scheduling issues and foster deeper collaboration. Recruitment timelines would also start earlier, with broader outreach to secure a suitable candidate without delay.

iv) Recommendations to others:

Engage key stakeholders including schools, parents, and youth early and consistently to align expectations and schedules. Plan for potential delays in procurement, particularly in island contexts. Invest in a strong communications strategy using youth-friendly channels (e.g., social media) to sustain momentum. Finally, ensure youth programming is flexible, interactive, and responsive to changing interests to maintain long-term engagement and 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	48,907.00	47,306.69	-3	

Please provide a short narrative summary on project finances.

There was a small variance between planned and actual project expenses, specifically in the staff cost category. The project budget allocated funds for a full-time Youth Coordinator over a 12-month period. However, the Coordinator was hired approximately two months after the project's start date and was engaged at 80% of full-time hours due to existing part-time employment. As a result, actual staff costs were lower than budgeted.

This reduction in staffing expenses did not impact the delivery of project outputs. The Youth Coordinator, supported by the Montserrat National Trust (MNT) team and volunteers, effectively managed the planning and execution of club sessions, outreach events, and youth engagement activities. Programme objectives were met. All other expenditure lines, including the procurement, branding, insurance, and licensing of the 16-seater van, were delivered within the allocated budget. Operational costs such as materials, equipment, and administrative overheads were also in line with original projections.

Overall, the financial management of the project was sound, with cost savings in one area rebalanced through efficient delivery and strong institutional support. No overspending occurred, and the project remained within its total approved budget.

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.
Unchecked	DPLUS-A03: Number of local/national organisations with improved capability and capacity as a result of project.
Checked	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

30 youth participants reported applying new skills in biodiversity monitoring, species identification, and environmental advocacy at school and in community activities, months after completing training through Montserrat National Trust-led programmes.

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

31 secondary school students and 12 primary school parents actively participated in environmental clubs and Montserrat National Trust-led conservation events, contributing to local biodiversity monitoring, community clean-ups, and nature-based decision-making activities.

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

Not applicable

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

Not Applicable

Section 5 - Project Partnerships, Wider Impacts and Contributions

Project Partnerships

The project was led by the Montserrat National Trust (MNT), which served as the primary implementer, responsible for financial and administrative management, recruitment of the Youth Coordinator, and the overall design and delivery of youth engagement activities.
Formal partners included:

- Department of Environment (DOE): Provided technical support, biodiversity monitoring equipment, and assisted in designing youth-led environmental activities.
- UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF): Offered strategic guidance and helped connect the project to broader regional conservation initiatives and learning networks.

Government involvement:

The Government of Montserrat, through the Ministry of Youth, actively supported the project. The Ministry committed to the long-term integration of youth engagement activities into the national youth development agenda.

Achievements and lessons:

The multi-agency collaboration enabled an interdisciplinary learning environment, enriching the experience for youth participants. Early challenges included coordinating schedules and aligning partner expectations. These were resolved through ongoing dialogue, inter-agency planning meetings, and adjustments to the project calendar to enhance synergy.

Wider engagement:

Key local stakeholders including schools, teachers, parents, and volunteers were instrumental in mobilizing youth and supporting club activities. Additionally, both local and international biodiversity researchers and environmental professionals engaged youth through educational evening sessions and two panel discussions, deepening the scientific and cultural impact of the programme.

Wider Impacts and Decision Making

The project has influenced wider decision-making and helped raise the profile of environmental issues within community and institutional contexts in Montserrat.

While no formal Memorandum of Understanding was signed, the project fostered strong informal collaboration with the Ministry of Youth, which expressed interest in supporting the continuation of youth-led environmental initiatives. The project's visibility has increased awareness among public officials of the value of integrating environmental engagement into youth development planning.

Importantly, the project engaged a diverse group of young people, including secondary school students, college students, recent university graduates, and early-career professionals. This cross-generational involvement has broadened the project's impact and ensured that environmental themes are now being discussed in school clubs, tertiary classrooms, and even in emerging professional networks.

The project has also influenced community-level decisions. Schools and civic organisations have expressed interest in hosting similar programmes, and parents and teachers have become active supporters. The involvement of older youth and early-career professionals has added credibility and continuity to the programme, helping to embed environmental awareness into wider social dialogue and decision-making. In this way, the project has contributed to building a generation of informed and engaged environmental stewards in Montserrat.

Sustainability and Legacy

The project has delivered several lasting benefits that will continue well beyond the end of Darwin Plus Local funding. Most significantly, the structured youth engagement framework established through the creation of an environmental club the Monty Messengers, and continuing the Monty Ambassadors primary school age group has been fully integrated into the Montserrat National Trust's (MNT) annual programming. These clubs remain active with ongoing support from local schools, community volunteers, and MNT staff.

The 16-seater van acquired through the project has become a critical asset, enabling equitable transportation for youth across the island to participate in activities and events. This increased access supports broader outreach and inclusivity. The vehicle's maintenance and operational costs have been incorporated into the Trust's general budget, ensuring its continued use.

Institutionally, the project significantly strengthened MNT's visibility, partnerships, and capacity. Collaborative relationships with the Department of Environment, UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF), and

educational institutions have positioned MNT as a central figure in youth-focused environmental education and community engagement.

The project's most profound legacy lies in the mindset shift it has inspired among Montserrat's youth. Many participants have developed a deepened awareness of biodiversity issues and a strong sense of environmental responsibility. Several students have expressed interest in pursuing careers in conservation or volunteering with MNT as youth leaders, ensuring that the impact of the project endures through the next generation of environmental stewards.

Section 6 - Communications & Publicity

Exceptional Outcomes and Achievements

The project "Fostering Youth Engagement in Biodiversity and Conservation in Montserrat" has delivered transformational and widely celebrated outcomes that serve as a model for engaging youth in small island environmental stewardship.

At the heart of the project's success was the establishment of structured and inclusive youth programming through the Monty Messengers (primary level), Monty Ambassadors (secondary level), and specialized after-school environmental skills. These platforms provided young people with hands-on experience in biodiversity conservation, citizen science (e.g., iNaturalist), and local environmental monitoring. Through these clubs, students developed skills in species identification, habitat care, and climate awareness, fostering a new generation of nature stewards.

A key enabler of this success was the acquisition of a 16-seater van, funded through Darwin Plus Local. The van significantly reduced access barriers, allowing children from across the island including those in remote and economically disadvantaged areas to regularly attend club activities and excursions. It directly led to a more than 50% increase in participation and allowed for consistent engagement, outreach, and safer transport for all involved.

The project's visibility extended beyond the clubs. Youth participants took part in radio features, public exhibitions, and panel discussions. Parents, teachers, and government officials have all noted a cultural shift in youth awareness and environmental responsibility. Several students have expressed interest in environmental careers, while others have already stepped into peer leadership and mentoring roles within the clubs.





Materials available for publicity:





- High-resolution photos from club sessions, field trips, and outreach events
- A short promotional video featuring youth testimonials and behind-the-scenes footage
- Graphics including event flyers, club badges, and van branding
- Media features and excerpts from youth-led activities





This project stands as a compelling case study in using targeted support to unlock long-term community impact, and we welcome the opportunity to showcase it across Darwin Plus platforms.





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.





 [Tree Planting activity with College students and Education officer for the Isle of Man](#)
 13/06/2025
 20:03:43
 jpg 556.77 KB





 [Montys Messenger flyer for summer event](#)
 13/06/2025
 20:01:33
 jpg 245.18 KB





 [Panel discussion Social Media Affecting the Mental Health of Montserrat's Youth and How Can Engagement with Biodiversity Mitigate These Effects](#)
 13/06/2025
 19:58:43
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 [Monty's Ambassador Panel Discussion Youth Panel on the topic 'A Call to Action Youth and the Future of Conservation of Montserrat's Environment and Culture.](#)
 13/06/2025
 19:57:08
 jpg 299.99 KB

 [Higher education Public event showcasing the diverse career choices in the field of Environment.](#)
 13/06/2025
 19:56:26
 jpg 189.86 KB

 [Montys Messenger and Ambassadors nature session in observation on Biodiversity Day.](#)
 13/06/2025
 19:51:09
 jpg 1.37 MB

 [Montys Van](#)
 13/06/2025
 19:49:25
 jpg 317.04 KB

 [Montys Messenger Club Meeting](#)
 13/06/2025
 19:32:34
 jpg 263.51 KB

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

DPLR3_1065_MontysMessengerClubMeeting.jpg – Students from Monty Messengers engaged in a biodiversity scavenger hunt during a Saturday club session – Montserrat – Photo credit: Montserrat National Trust (MNT)

DPLR3_1065_VanCommissioning.jpg – Commissioning of the new 16-seater van used to transport youth to environmental events across the island – Montserrat – Photo credit: MNT

DPLR3_1065_FieldTrip.jpg – Monty Ambassadors on a field visit learning about birds – Montserrat – Photo credit: MNT

DPLR3_1065_PanelDiscussion- Highlights from an intergenerational panel discussion where youth shared conservation ideas with local experts and elders topic 'A Call to Action Youth and the Future of Conservation of Montserrat's Environment and Culture..jpg – Montserrat – photo credit: MNT Team

DPLR3_1065_PanelDiscussion Social Media Affecting the Mental Health of Montserrat's Youth and How Can Engagement with Biodiversity Mitigate These Effects.jpg– Montserrat – Photo credit: MNT
<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/163UQEcxx1/>

DPLR3_1065_EventFlyer Monty's Messenger.jpg flyer for summer event.jpg– Montserrat – Graphic design by: MNT Youth Engagement Team.

DPLR3_1065_Tree Planting activity with College students and Education officer for the Isle of Man.jpg – Montserrat – Photo credit: MNT

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.

Please tag the following accounts in any promotional content:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MontserratNationalTrust>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/montserratnationaltrust/?hl=en>,
https://www.instagram.com/montys_messengers_ambassadors/?hl=en

Partner Tag: @UKOTCF (UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum)

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	Virginie Sealys
Role within Darwin Plus Project	Project Lead
Email	
Phone	
Do you need further sections to provide additional contact details?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes

Additional Project Contact Details

Project Contact Name	Sarita Francis
Role within Darwin Project	Director
Email	
Phone	

Do you need further sections to provide additional contact details?

- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
-