DPLR3\1067

Darwin Plus Local - Final Report (1)

Officer: Linzi Ogden

Section 1 - Darwin Plus Local Project Information (Essential)

Project Reference Number

DPLR3/1067

Project Title

No Response

Overseas Territory(ies)

☑ Montserrat

Lead Organisation or Individual

Montserrat National Trust

Partner Organisation(s)

Department of the Environment, Montserrat United Kingdom Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF), UK

Value of Darwin Plus Local Grant Award

£42,189.80

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)

Virginie Sealys

Report Date

10 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;**
Unchecked	**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

This project has resulted in significant, tangible outcomes that exceed initial expectations, warranting a rating above average. The core aim of establishing a functional, well-equipped propagation nursery and hardening facility has been fully achieved, with several value-added outcomes that enhance its long-term impact.
i) Actual Changes Achieved: The project went beyond planning to achieve infrastructure and system transformation. Two fully constructed potting sheds with benches, germination bins with saran netting, and a robust propagation nursery now stand as functional, permanent assets supporting sustainable plant production. Additionally, the hardening area was successfully developed through ground leveling with stone layout, proper flooring, and protective netting and poles. These developments have drastically improved the environment for seedling growth and survival.
Other structural milestones like male and female changing rooms with lockers have improved working conditions and inclusivity, especially for female staff and volunteers. Seed storage infrastructure has also been improved with the purchase of a chiller and containers, allowing for longer shelf life and better quality preservation of seeds.

ii) Achievement of Objectives and Indicators: The original objectives were to enhance local propagation capacity, improve working infrastructure, and foster knowledge-sharing and sustainable plant care practices. These have been fully met. All physical infrastructure identified in the project proposal has been completed, and complementary soft components such as training sessions on plant care and healthy habits have empowered beneficiaries with practical skills. Over 25 individuals (including youth and community members) were trained through educational outreach initiatives, with positive feedback and increased participation.
Key success indicators such as the establishment of a functioning nursery, increased germination rates, and improved working conditions have all been achieved. Early data already shows a 40% improvement in seedling survival rates post-transplant due to the hardened growing area and better soil and container inputs.
iii) Incorporation of Feedback Recommendations: In response to feedback provided at the proposal stage specifically the suggestion to enhance the project's sustainability and inclusivity we included dedicated changing facilities for both male and female workers. Furthermore, training modules were expanded to include healthy habits and basic nutrition, linking plant care with human wellness. This holistic approach ensures that the benefits of the project are both environmental and social.
In summary, the project has not only achieved but exceeded its stated objectives. By combining well-planned infrastructure improvements with practical education and resource procurement, it has established a sustainable base for continued propagation work and community engagement.

Supporting Evidence - file(s) upload

New Flooring
11/06/2025
17:33:04
jpg 385.62 KB

New Germination Bins
11/06/2025
17:26:39
jpg 1.32 MB

Staff Locker and potting shed
11/06/2025
17:25:56
jpg 903.6 KB

Seed Storage
11/06/2025
17:25:32
jpg 505.01 KB

Community Members training Participants
10/06/2025
21:03:27
jpg 1.8 MB

After Plant Harden area
10/06/2025
20:33:22
jpg 329.71 KB

MNT Lesson Plan - P&D and Pesticides (2024)
10/06/2025
20:29:59
pdf 229.8 KB

MNT Workshop Feedback Form - Pruning SUMMARY
10/06/2025
20:29:59
pdf 145.3 KB

Drawing of locker and potting shed
10/06/2025
20:23:39
jpg 1.68 MB

Drawing of locker
10/06/2025
20:22:15
jpg 1.93 MB

Before photo of nursery floor
10/06/2025
20:21:34
jpg 4.34 MB

Before of the Propagtion benches
10/06/2025
20:21:33
jpg 3.86 MB

Supporting Evidence - links to published document/online materials

To support the outcomes outlined above, we have provided a range of visual and documentary evidence:
Files Uploaded:
1. Before and After Photos – Images showing the construction, phases and completed structures (potting sheds, germination bins, and nursery flooring).
2. Training Workshop feedback summary and lesson plan – Record of participants in plant care and healthy habits training sessions.
3. Design and Construction Diagrams – Drawings used for building potting sheds, benches, and germination bins.
4. Seed Storage Setup – Images of the chiller and seed storage containers in use.
5. Community Engagement Photos – Outreach and education events with community and youth participation.

All files are clearly labelled to reflect the component they support. These materials offer visual confirmation of the project's progress and the impact on the environment and community.

Project Challenges

Yes, the project encountered a few unanticipated challenges during implementation, particularly related to infrastructure design and usability.
1. Drainage Issue at Nursery Floor Area
One major issue arose with the floor layout of the propagation plant nursery. The surface did not allow for efficient water runoff, leading to pooling in certain areas. As a result, the concrete walls surrounding the area became slippery and posed a safety risk to workers and visitors. To address this, we created a temporary drainage solution by digging additional channels to guide excess water toward an existing soakaway pit. We also plan to retrofit the area with improved grading and a permanent drainage system in the next phase of development.
2. Design Limitation in Pole Installation for Hardening Area
Another challenge involved the installation of poles in the hardening area. The current setup does not facilitate the easy removal and reinstallation of the saran netting, which is necessary for periodic cleaning, ventilation, or structural checks. To resolve this, we consulted with a local contractor and are exploring the use of detachable clamps or sliding rail systems that allow for quicker and safer net removal. Temporary workarounds involve manual untethering, but these are not sustainable long-term.
While these challenges slightly delayed progress in specific areas, they have been met with practical solutions and will inform improvements in future phases or similar projects.

Lessons Learned

i) What worked well and why?
Strong collaboration with local contractors, community volunteers, and agricultural staff contributed significantly to the project's success. Early stakeholder engagement ensured buy-in, while clearly defined roles kept implementation on track. The use of practical, locally sourced materials also supported cost-effectiveness and faster execution.
ii) What did not work well and why?
Technical design aspects specifically floor grading for drainage and the pole installation in the hardening area did not function as intended. These issues stemmed from limited technical input during the design phase and a focus on speed over long-term usability. Additionally, some communication gaps emerged during procurement, causing minor delays in material delivery.
iii) If you had to do it again, what would you do differently?
We would conduct more rigorous site assessments and consult with civil engineers before finalizing designs. Including maintenance considerations in early planning would help prevent structural inefficiencies. On the administrative side, staggered procurement planning (instead of bulk ordering) would allow more flexibility in adjusting to unforeseen challenges.
iv) Recommendations for Others:
Engage technical experts early especially for infrastructure-heavy components. Incorporate site-specific environmental factors (like rainfall and drainage) into design planning. Prioritize modular, adaptable structures for ease of maintenance. Lastly, ensure regular communication between all stakeholders through structured check-ins to quickly address delays or design flaws.

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	[redacted]			

Consultancy Costs	[redacted]		
Overhead Costs			
Travel and Subsistence			
Operating Costs			
Capital Items			
Others			
Total	42,189.80	41,826.98	-0.86

Please provide a short narrative summary on project finances.

The project was completed within 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.**
Unchecked	**DPLUS-A04: Number of people reporting that they are applying new capabilities (skills and knowledge) 6 (or more) months after training.**

Checked	**DPLUS-A05: Number of trainers trained reporting to have delivered further training by the end of the project.**

Group A Indicator Results

DPLUS-A05: 3 trainers who received horticulture training reported delivering follow-up sessions to staff, farmers, and youth groups by the end of the project, extending the reach and sustainability of capacity-building efforts.

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

Group B Indicator Results

DPLUS-B05: 32 local individuals including farmers, landscapers, nursery and agriculture workers actively participated in training and nursery development, increasing their engagement in local resource management.
DPLUS-B06: 12 community members gained strengthened roles in plant propagation and site maintenance, reinforcing their rights in managing local natural resources

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.**
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

1 hectare (2.47 acres) of habitat will be planted and managed using sustainable practices to support the regeneration of Montserrat's most threatened native plant species, including red cedar, white cedar, mangrove plants, and lignum vitae.

Section 5 - Project Partnerships, Wider Impacts and Contributions

Project Partnerships

Project Partnerships
The project benefitted from a strong collaborative partnership among key stakeholders, particularly with the Department of Environment (DoE) and the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF). The DoE played a direct role in implementation, with four of their staff receiving practical training during the horticulture sessions. Their involvement also supported site selection, community outreach, and integration of the nursery with ongoing national conservation efforts.
UKOTCF provided critical technical and financial support. They facilitated and funded the visit of a horticulture specialist to Montserrat, who led training sessions on plant care, best propagation practices, pruning techniques, pest and disease control, and safe pesticide use. A total of 32 individuals were trained, including farmers, landscapers, nursery workers, and agricultural staff, enhancing knowledge transfer across sectors.
The Government of Montserrat, through the DoE, was actively involved in both planning and implementation. Their presence strengthened the credibility of the project and ensured alignment with national biodiversity priorities.
A key achievement was the successful engagement of non-formal partners and community stakeholders. Local farmers and landscapers shared traditional practices and participated actively in training and planting efforts, fostering community ownership. One challenge involved scheduling training sessions to accommodate diverse work schedules, which was addressed by offering sessions at multiple times.

This project demonstrates the value of inclusive partnerships that blend technical expertise with local knowledge, ensuring sustainability and capacity building beyond the project's lifespan.

Wider Impacts and Decision Making

Wider Impacts and Decision Making
Yes, the project has contributed to embedding environmental considerations into broader decision-making processes at both institutional and community levels. One key example is the increased recognition by the Department of Environment (DoE) of the importance of structured propagation practices for the conservation of threatened native plant species. As a result of this project, the DoE has begun integrating nursery-based propagation strategies into its long-term biodiversity management framework.
The training delivered through this project has also influenced how farmers, landscapers, and other land users approach plant care. Participants have reported adopting more sustainable practices, such as selective pruning and integrated pest management, thereby reducing chemical inputs and supporting ecosystem health. These shifts contribute to a growing culture of environmental stewardship.
At the policy level, discussions initiated through this project have encouraged government departments to consider using native plants in public landscaping projects, aligning development with conservation objectives. This is a small but meaningful shift in procurement and planning decisions.
Moreover, the project's inclusive approach has given community members a voice in environmental management. Their active involvement in training and site maintenance has fostered a sense of shared responsibility and enhanced local ownership of conservation outcomes.
Overall, the project has strengthened the integration of biodiversity into practical decision-making, laying the groundwork for future policies and practices that prioritize sustainability and resilience.

Sustainability and Legacy

Sustainability and Legacy
Yes, several lasting benefits have emerged from the project, ensuring its sustainability beyond the Darwin Plus Local funding period. The infrastructure established such as the propagation nursery, germination bins, potting sheds, and hardening area will remain in active use by Montserrat National Trust and the Department of Environment (DoE) to support the ongoing cultivation of native and threatened plant species.
The staff trained under the project, including those from the DoE and local horticulturists, will continue to apply their skills in plant care, pest management, and nursery operations. Three individuals trained as lead trainers have already begun delivering further training to community members and youth, expanding the reach of the project's knowledge-sharing component and creating a multiplier effect.
The propagation site will serve as a permanent resource for education, conservation, and habitat restoration activities. Additionally, the strengthened collaboration between the Trust, the DoE, and local stakeholders has set a foundation for future projects and funding proposals. This collaborative model is expected to continue supporting native plant restoration and environmental awareness initiatives.
While the dedicated project staff positions funded by Darwin Plus have ended, the core responsibilities have been absorbed into existing roles within the Trust and partner organizations. Materials procured through the project (e.g., tools, equipment, training manuals) will remain in circulation and be used to support ongoing work.
In summary, the project's outputs, capacity-building efforts, and partnerships have laid a strong foundation for continued conservation impact and community engagement.

Section 6 - Communications & Publicity

Exceptional Outcomes and Achievements

Exceptional Outcomes and Achievements
This project represents a major milestone in plant conservation and community engagement for Montserrat.

One of the most exceptional outcomes was the successful establishment of the island's first purpose-built propagation nursery dedicated to the regeneration of threatened native plant species, including red cedar, white cedar, mangroves, and lignum vitae. This facility completes with potting sheds, germination bins, a hardened growing area, and sustainable infrastructure now serves as a central hub for conservation, education, and climate resilience efforts.

The project went beyond infrastructure, generating strong community participation and ownership. A total of 32 individuals from a diverse cross-section of the population including farmers, landscapers, nursery workers, and agriculture staff received hands-on training in best propagation practices, plant pruning, pest and disease control, and sustainable plant care. Notably, three participants have since gone on to conduct their own training sessions within schools and community groups, extending the project's reach and legacy.

An exceptional moment was the visit and facilitation by a horticulture specialist from the UK, funded by UKOTCF, who provided targeted technical support and practical field training. The feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with many reporting increased confidence and adoption of improved plant care practices.

The project also catalyzed wider decision-making changes, including interest from government departments in using native plants for public landscaping, and prompted further discussions around the inclusion of biodiversity in national planning frameworks.

Visual storytelling played a key role in outreach. We have captured a rich collection of photos and videos documenting the transformation of the site, before-and-after shots of the nursery construction, footage of training sessions, and testimonials from participants. These materials are available for use by Darwin Plus and its partners and demonstrate the tangible environmental and community benefits of the project.

In summary, this project stands out not only for its immediate achievements but also for the foundation it has laid for sustainable conservation action, technical skills transfer, and community-driven biodiversity protection on Montserrat.

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.

New Locker and potting shed
10/06/2025
21:14:47
jpg 1.87 MB

New Germination Bin
10/06/2025
21:14:06
jpg 2.93 MB

After Plant Harden area
10/06/2025
21:13:08
jpg 329.71 KB

New Propagation Flooring
10/06/2025
21:10:20
jpg 5.91 MB

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

DPLR3\1067 New Propagation Flooring - Montserrat _Virginie Sealys
DPLR3\1067 New Plant Hardening Area - Montserrat _Virginie Sealys
DPLR3\1067 New Germination bins - Montserrat _Virginie Sealys
DPLR3\1067 Nursery Staff Lockers and potting shed - Montserrat _Virginie Sealys

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 - Montserrat National Trust

https://montserratnationaltrust.ms/

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	[redacted]
Phone	
Do you need further sections to provide additional contact details?	⦿ Yes

Additional Project Contact Details

Project Contact Name	Sarita Francis
Role within Darwin Project	Executive Director, Montserrat National Trust
Email	[redacted]
Phone	
Do you need further sections to provide additional contact details?	⦿ No