

DPLR4\1053

Protecting Cloud Forest Expansion on Ascension

Ascension Island's Green Mountain National Park cloud forest supports a community of native and endemic epiphytic bryophytes, provides habitat for two critically endangered endemic ferns, and is important for climate change resilience. Following the successful 3ha habitat expansion of our existing cloud forest (DPLR1_1062 Head in the Clouds), there is now a focus to ensure survival of the new facilitator trees and upkeep of established areas of cloud forest by clearing persistent, encroaching invasive and non-native flora species.

DPLR4\1053

Protecting Cloud Forest Expansion on Ascension

Section 1 - Project Title & Contact Details

Q1. Project Title

Protecting Cloud Forest Expansion on Ascension

Q2. Please select whether you are applying as an organisation or as an individual (Guidance section 3 and Guidance Glossary)

Organisation

PRIMARY APPLICANT DETAILS

Title Dr
Name Tiffany
Surname Simpson
Tel (Work) [REDACTED]
Email (Work) [REDACTED]
Address [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

CONTACT DETAILS

Title Miss
Name Anna
Surname Weir
Tel (Work) [REDACTED]
Email (Work) [REDACTED]
Address [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

GMS ORGANISATION

Type	Organisation
Name	Ascension Island Government Conservation and Fisheries Directorate
Phone (Work)	[REDACTED]
Email (Work)	[REDACTED]
Website (Work)	[REDACTED]
Address	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Section 2 - Overseas Territory(ies)

Q3. Please state whether the same (or similar) project proposal has previously been submitted to the UK Government for funding, including through Darwin Plus Local, Defra's other Darwin Plus grant schemes or other UK Government funding mechanisms. Failure to do so may result in the application being ineligible.

No

Q4. Overseas Territory (Guidance section 1.3):

Which UK Overseas Territory(ies) will your project be working in? Please note that in case of a non-permanent resident population you need to demonstrate a clear, meaningful, long-term link to the territory.

St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha*

*** if you have indicated a territory group with an asterisk, please give detail on which territories you are working on here:**

Ascension

In addition to the UKOT(s) you have indicated, will your project directly benefit any other UK OT(s) or country(ies)?

No





Section 3 - Project Partners

Q5. Project partners (Guidance section 3.2)

In this section, please give details of all the partners involved (including the Lead Organisation) and provide a summary of their roles.

Project Leader name (Guidance section 3.1):	Anna Weir
Lead Organisation name (if applying as an organisation; Guidance section 3.1):	Ascension Island Government Conservation and Fisheries Directorate
Lead Organisation Website (if applicable):	https://www.ascension.gov.ac/
Is the Lead Organisation based in a UKOT where the project is working (Guidance section 3.1)?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes
List other partners involved and where are they based:	n/a
Summary of roles and responsibilities of each partner in the project:	Ascension Island Government Conservation and Fisheries Directorate (AIGCFD) will take responsibility for overall project management, financial management, delivery of the project, monitoring and evaluation.
I confirm that all listed partners are aware of this application and have indicated support:	Checked

Attach a Cover Letter for your application (Guidance section 4.2).

-  [Cover letter Protecting Cloud Forest Expansion on Ascension](#)
-  20/06/2024
-  10:18:25
-  pdf 632.46 KB

Section 4 - Project Summary & Description

Q6. Project Summary (Guidance section 3.8)

Please provide a brief summary of your project. This may be used in communication activities and/or published online, if your application is successful.

Ascension Island's Green Mountain National Park cloud forest supports a community of native and endemic epiphytic bryophytes, provides habitat for two critically endangered endemic ferns, and is important for climate change resilience. Following the successful 3ha habitat expansion of our existing cloud forest (DPLR1_1062 Head in the Clouds), there is now a focus to ensure survival of the new facilitator trees and upkeep of established areas of cloud forest by clearing persistent, encroaching invasive and non-native flora species.

Q7a. Description (Guidance section 2.1 and 6)

Please provide a description of your project, including:

- the overall objective
- the current situation and the problem the project is trying to address
- what success will look like and how you will measure it.

Please be as specific as possible when describing the project, using quantified data and evidence where available. You may wish to consider: what are the specific threats to the environment that the project will attempt to address, and what should we know about these threats? What does your successful project look like? And how will you demonstrate whether and how your project has been successful?

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

This project aims to ensure the long-term survival of existing and newly planted facilitator trees within the 3ha cloud forest extension on Green Mountain through routine clearance and suppression of non-native and invasive ground flora. As a result, this will secure future habitat for the native and endemic epiphytic bryophyte community and two critically endangered endemic ferns, and strengthen the cloud forest ecosystem in response to climate change.

CURRENT SITUATION AND PROBLEMS TO ADDRESS

Green Mountain's cloud forest supports two critically endangered endemic ferns; moss fern (*Stenogrammatis ascensionensis*) and purple fern (*Ptisana purpurascens*). Plant census data reveals these plants have become habituated to the man made cloud forest since their natural bank habitat has been heavily out competed by introduced non-native plants. Moss fern has adapted to grow on moist bryophytes, such as *Calymperes* and *Campylopus*, found on the branches of facilitator trees – such trees are a safe haven for these native and endemic epiphytic bryophyte communities. Purple fern favours the damp, shaded conditions below canopy. At present the cloud forest has expanded by 3ha (300%), with 18 facilitator trees planted (species include; *Ficus microcarpa*, Cape Yew (*Afrocarpus falcatus*), White Olive (*Eleodendron croceum*), Screw Pine (*Pandanus utilis*)) through the DPLR1_1062 'Head in the Clouds' project. Unpublished data from DPLUS159 'Growing Hope' suggests these tree species condense more water than other invasive species on the mountain such as Guava (*Psidium guajava*), boosting resilience of the cloud forest against climate change. The expansion connects two existing sites of cloud forest, increasing the surface area of continuous cloud forest ecosystem on Green Mountain.

Despite committed efforts using hand tools, keeping the area free from encroaching non-native flora is proving a constant and time-consuming battle without the use of power tools (see supporting photos attachment). It is critical for spaces surrounding mature facilitator trees to be maintained as these are key sources of bryophyte spore for younger trees. Following the successful planting from the DPLR1_1062 'Head in the Clouds' funding, off-cuts from cleared non-native shell ginger have been placed around the base of the trees to trial suppressing invasive ground flora (photo 3). Whilst this has proved successful in the short term, the longevity of ginger coverage is short lived (photo 4). This is a short-term solution to invasive flora encroachment and very labour intensive with the use of hand tools only.

HOW THIS PROJECT WILL ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS

To build on the success of DPLR1_1062 'Head in the Clouds' and ensure long-term survival of the expanded cloud forest, this project will implement 2 action plans:

1) Develop and follow a work schedule for habitat management of non-native and invasive flora with use of power tools; clear larger areas of non-native and invasive flora allowing planting of additional facilitator tree species and purple fern habitat.

2) Volunteer work days to suppress the spread of non-native flora with wood chippings, using woody invasive species such as guava. This will create a sustainable cycle of cutting and using existing materials for the benefit of the cloud forest. Incorporating this into volunteer work days will be an important continuation of local community engagement.

The success of these actions will be measured through the following targets:

- Maintaining a continuous clear zone (>2m) around each facilitator tree and access to the site.
- Survival of >18 newly planted facilitator tree species, with visual signs of new growth. And monitoring of both newly planted and mature trees during plant census, with evidence of bryophyte transfer.

Q7b. Long-term sustainability (Guidance section 2.1 and 6)


Please describe the long-term benefits of the project and the change it will bring about. How will the outcomes of the project be sustained after the funding is finished?


This project will provide the necessary power tools to reduce quickly encroaching non-native flora within cloud forest areas on Green Mountain. This will benefit long-term survival of newly planted facilitator trees and ensure a clear corridor for bryophyte transfer between young and mature trees. A healthy cloud forest is vital for strengthening the ecosystem in the face of climate change as a larger cloud forest condenses more water and offers further refuge for native and endemic plants.


Integrating power tools allows the team to follow a sustainable schedule, managing the cloud forest in continuous cycles of clearance and suppression of non-native flora. In particular, using non-native woody plants, such as guava, to make chippings is an effective long-term solution as it addresses both invasive encroachment and suppression of new invasive growth using pre-existing material from the local environment.


The habitat management schedule will be continually monitored, and adjusted where required, over the course of the 6-month project. For example, brush cutting frequency may increase or decrease depending on the rate of invasive flora growth. Post March 2025, the schedule will be integrated into the wardens working week and health of the new cloud forest will be closely monitored.

(Optional) Please upload any additional and supporting materials or files (such as maps of project sites, etc) below. Maximum of 5 sides of A4, and is combined as a single PDF:

 [Supporting photos Protecting Cloud Forest Expansion on Ascension](#)

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 pdf 1.62 MB

Section 5 - Project Outcome(s)

Q8. Project Outcome(s) (Guidance section 1.2)

Successful Darwin Plus Local projects must demonstrate measurable outcomes in at least one of the themes of Darwin Plus with a clear focus on biodiversity and the natural environment, either by the end of the project or soon after through a credible plan.

Please note: Any proposals including research or monitoring are required to demonstrate a clear link to tangible outcomes for conservation of biodiversity and the natural environment. Please explain how any new research will be applied to drive environmental outcomes on the ground.

Please confirm that your project has a clear focus on biodiversity and the natural environment.

Checked **Biodiversity: improving and conserving biodiversity, and slowing or reversing biodiversity loss and degradation;**

Please tick which additional theme(s) of Darwin Plus your project contributes to (if relevant):

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**

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.**

Please justify your selection. Please use quantitative information where possible here.

This project will conserve and improve biodiversity by supporting the existing epiphytic bryophyte community, as an important spore bank, and protecting future cloud forest habitat for endemic moss fern (*Stenogrammatis ascensionensis*) and purple fern (*Ptisana purpurascens*).

Preventing invasive, non-native species from encroaching back into the 3ha of cleared space for cloud forest extension will limit competition with young facilitator trees and prevent degradation of the expansion and existing cloud forest.

A healthy cloud forest expansion will also secure long-term climate resilience as a larger surface area of Green Mountain develops as cloud forest, offering refuge for natives and endemic species.

Section 6 - Workplan





Q9. Workplan (Guidance section 2.2)

Please provide anticipated dates for the start and end of your planned project here. Please use the Darwin Plus Local Project Workplan (available at: <https://darwinplus.org.uk/apply/local-applications/>) to provide a list of the individual activities you have planned for this project, a brief description of what each activity entails, and the months in which the activities will be carried out. If the project involves only one activity (e.g. a purchase), please still provide project start and end dates (noting estimated times for procurement). Please note that your project must start after 1 October 2024 and be completed by 31 March 2025.

Start date:	End date:	Duration (e.g. 3 months):
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01 October 2024	31 March 2025	6 months
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Please upload the completed Darwin Plus Local Project Workplan with your proposed project activities here

 [Project Workplan Protecting Cloud Forest Expansion on Ascension](#)
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 pdf 561.37 KB

Section 7 - Costs

Q10. Costs (Guidance section 2.2 and please read the Finance Guidance)

Please provide a breakdown of costs to be funded through Darwin Plus Local (in GBP).

Are you seeking any matched funding for this project?

Yes

How much matched funding are you seeking and where from?

AIG in-kind matched contribution of:
£3000 for staff time of 2 employees
£600 for fuel costs (£300 diesel for transport & £300 petrol for power tools)

Budget line	Explanation	Cost in GBP
Staff costs:	Staff costs will be covered in-kind, as the majority of the work will be incorporated into ongoing AIGCFD workflow.	£0.00
Consultancy costs:	none	£0.00
Overhead costs:	none	£0.00
Travel & subsistence costs:	Covered in-kind by AIG	£0.00
Operating costs:	Shipping costs	£ [REDACTED]
Capital equipment:	Power tools & PPE	£ [REDACTED]
Other Costs	none	£0.00
Total:		9,600.00

This section provides more information on the budget to help evaluators understand how you will use the funds you are requesting. You do not need to list all costs, but please list and detail costs of more than £1,000 per item below, under the appropriate budget line.

Details of staff costs over £1,000 (if relevant)

No Response

Details of overhead costs over £1,000 (if relevant):

No Response

Details of travel and subsistence costs over £1,000 (if relevant):

No Response

Details of operating costs over £1,000 (if relevant):

Shipping costs from individual companies to Richard James International (RJI) and from RJI to Ascension Island - £ [REDACTED]

Details of capital equipment costs over £1,000 (if relevant):

- 2 brush cutters - £ [REDACTED]
 - chainsaw - £ [REDACTED]
 - chipper - £ [REDACTED]
 - power tool spares & maintenance equipment - £ [REDACTED]
 - PPE - £ [REDACTED]
-

Details of consultancy costs over £1,000 (if relevant):

No Response

Details of other costs over £1,000 (if relevant)

No Response

If your project budget was prepared in another currency and converted to GBP, please provide the exchange rate, its source, and the date it was accessed:

Other currency:	Exchange rate:	Source of this exchange rate:	Date exchange rate accessed:
No Response	No Response	No Response	No Response

Darwin Plus Local has been created to build capacity and contribute to local economies in-territory.

What % of the total will be spent in the OTs? [REDACTED]

If less than 80% of the total project spend is to be spent within the OT(s), please explain why.

No Response

Section 8 - Local and National Priorities

Q11. Local and national priorities

Please explain how this project aligns with local and national priorities? You may wish to consider the project in the context of national environmental laws, objectives, strategies, territory specific agreements, action plans or policies.

Ascension Island Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP 2023-26) aims to safeguard Ascension's biodiversity and ecosystems for the future. Protecting cloud forest expansion is in keeping with the following strategic objectives:

BSAP 1. No native species or genetically distinct populations are lost from Ascension and the size of the distribution of native populations is maintained or increased.

BSAP 3. Habitats are improved to support self-sustaining populations of endemic species that require little or no ongoing management.

BSAP 7. The knowledge and value of Ascension's biodiversity are shared with the Ascension and global community.

Protecting the cloud forest extension is also a priority within the Green Mountain National Park Management Plan (GMNP MP 2023-28):


GMNP MP. 1.1 Maintain and expand the range and abundance of endemic flora within GMNP. More specifically, maintain intact favourable habitat through invasive species clearance.


Protecting endemic flora within the cloud forest also aligns with national priorities such as the UK Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, which aims to 'where possible prevent human induced extinction or loss of known threatened species in England and the Overseas territories'.


Will the project take place on Government owned land or water or involve biocontrol, invasive alien species control or eradication?


Yes

Please attach evidence that you have Government support for this project i.e. a Letter of Support. Applications which indicate that they do not take place on Government land or water, but which propose work that appears to the reviewers would be difficult/impossible to carry out without working on government land or waters may be ineligible if no Letter of Support is provided.

 [20240617 AIG Letter of support - Darwin Local R 4 - Protecting Cloud Forest Expansion on Ascension](#)

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Section 9 - Project Risks

Q12. Project Risks

Please demonstrate your consideration of any risks involved in this project and how you intend to manage them. Please note the importance of health and safety and environmental risk assessment in the design of your project. If there is any possibility that your project may have negative impacts on the environment or human health, it is important that you provide a comprehensive analysis of potential environmental and human health risks, and the prevention measures you will take to ensure the work does not cause harm.

Depending on your project, you may wish to consider:

- Biosecurity risks – particularly for projects involving external equipment.
- Safeguarding risks – particularly for projects involving vulnerable groups such as children, older people or people with disabilities.

Risk	Mitigation
Accidental removal of endemic species or facilitator trees during invasive vegetation clearance.	All personal working in the cloud forest area will be clearly informed of the identity and whereabouts of the endemic ferns and facilitator tree species, particularly small trees that may be obscured by other vegetation. These plant species will be protected and not cleared, especially endemics under the Wildlife Protection Ordinance (2013). Particular care will be taken when operating machinery around them.
Non-native and invasive species encroachment and failure of newly planted trees.	Regular habitat clearance adhering to the schedule. Increase the frequency of clearance if required. Constant monitoring of newly planted trees and replacement should any succumb.
Injury to persons working on site, especially whilst using power tools.	Full safety briefing prior to the use of any equipment. Adhere to all risk assessments. Only staff with adequate training and PPE to use the power tools. Lead staff have received fist aid training.

Do you require more fields?

Yes

Risk	Mitigation
Introducing threatening, non-native species through shipping of equipment.	Biosecurity regulations (Biosecurity Ordinance 2020) are in place to reduce introduction of invasive species that will threaten people and native/endemic species. Inspections are carried out by AIG biosecurity team during every shipment.
<i>No Response</i>	<i>No Response</i>
<i>No Response</i>	<i>No Response</i>
<i>No Response</i>	<i>No Response</i>
<i>No Response</i>	<i>No Response</i>

Section 10 - Terms & Conditions

Q12. Terms and conditions (Guidance section 3.10)

By applying for Darwin Plus Local you are adhering in full to the grant Terms and Conditions in full (available at: [Darwin Plus website](#) and as referenced in the Guidance at section 3.10). For information, the Terms and Conditions include requirements for all applicants to (amongst other requirements as per the full Terms and Conditions):

- Uphold a zero tolerance for inaction approach to tackling sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment.
- Where appropriate, make all reasonable and adequate efforts to address gender inequality and other power imbalances.
- Notify all cases of fraud and theft (whether proven or suspected) relating to the project to the Grant Administrator as soon as they identified.

Please indicate you have read, and understood, and will adhere to the Terms and Conditions.

Checked

Supporting documents list (please have these ready to attach with application)

- Cover Letter of no more than two A4 pages. (Guidance section: 4.2 has information on what this cover letter should include).
- If the project takes place on public land or water or is addressing invasive alien species, a Letter of support from OT Government.
- Project Workplan in the template provided for Darwin Plus Local (available at: <https://darwinplus.org.uk/apply/local-applications/>).
- Map and additional information (optional) maximum five additional pages.

If your application is successful

If your project application is successful, the Fund Administrator (NIRAS) will ask you to provide some financial evidence for due diligence checks before you receive your project grant. (Please see section 3.3 of the Darwin Plus Local Finance Guidance). Please be ready to provide this evidence promptly.

- **Financial evidence for organisations:** Year-end financial statements, the latest management accounts or audited accounts (if you have these).
- **Financial evidence for individuals:** Proof of identity such as a passport, ID card or driving licence and solvency (such as bank statements) and a police check.

Section 11 - Certification

Certification

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the statements made in this application are true and the information provided is correct.

Checked





I have the authority to submit an application on behalf of my organisation.

Checked

Name: Anna Weir

Position in the organisation: (if applicable) Assistant Park Warden

Signature (please upload e-signature)

 Anna's sig
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Date: 20 June 2024

Section 12 - Submission Checklist

Checklist for submission

	Check
I have read the Guidance documents, including the "Darwin Plus Local Guidance" and the "Darwin Plus Local Finance Guidance".	Checked
If my proposed project takes place on public lands or water or is addressing alien invasive species, I have uploaded a Letter of Support from Government.	Checked
I have uploaded a cover letter that details the information requested in the guidance (Guidance section 4.2 has information on what this cover letter should include).	Checked
I have read, and can meet, the current Terms and Conditions for this fund (found at: https://darwinplus.org.uk/apply/local-applications/) for this fund.	Checked
I have provided actual start and end dates for my project that fit this Round.	Checked
I have provided my summary budget based on UK government financial years i.e. 1 April – 31 March and in GBP in the application form.	Checked
I have uploaded my project workplan using the specific template provided (available at: https://darwinplus.org.uk/apply/local-applications/).	Checked
I have uploaded all supplementary documents if I have any.	Checked
(If copying and pasting into Flexi-Grant) I have checked that all my responses have been successfully copied into the online application form.	Checked
The application has been signed by a suitably authorised individual (clear electronic or scanned signatures are acceptable).	Checked
I have checked the Darwin Plus website immediately prior to submission to ensure there are no late updates.	Checked
I have read and understood the Privacy Notice on the Darwin Plus website.	Checked

We would like to keep in touch!

Please check this box if you would be happy for the lead applicant (Flexi-Grant Account Holder) and project leader (if different) to be added to our mailing list. Through our mailing list we share updates on upcoming and current application rounds under Darwin Plus. We also provide occasional updates on other UK

Government activities related to biodiversity conservation and share project news. You are free to unsubscribe at any time.

Unchecked

Data protection and use of personal data

Information supplied in the application form, including personal data, will be used by Defra as set out in the **Privacy Notice**, available from the [Forms and Guidance Portal](#).

This **Privacy Notice must be provided to all individuals** whose personal data is supplied in the application form. Some information may be used when publicising Darwin Plus including project details (usually title, lead partner, project leader, location, and total grant value).

Project Title: A regime for protecting Green Mountain's new cloud forest extension

Darwin Plus Local

Provide a **Project Implementation Timetable** that shows the key milestones in project activities. Complete the following table as appropriate to describe the intended workplan for your project. Round 4 is for a **maximum of 6 months** with activities starting from 1 October 2024. All activities must be completed by 31 March 2025.

Please add/remove columns to reflect the length of your project. For each activity (add/remove rows as appropriate) indicate the number of months it will last, and shade only the months in which an activity will be carried out. The workplan can span multiple pages if necessary.

Activity #	Description (max 25 words)	No. of months	UK Financial Year 2024/25					
			Calendar Year 2024			Calendar Year 2025		
			Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
1	Purchase power tools and PPE. Order to Richard James International by October 2024 and shipped to Ascension by November 2024.	2 months						
2	Trained staff will use power tools (brush cutters and chainsaw) to clear encroaching non-native vegetation down to ground level around facilitator trees. Access path will also be maintained.	3 months (6 days per month)						
3	Monitor the 15 newly planted facilitator trees. Replacing dead trees or planting additional trees if possible.	3 months (1 day per month)						
4	Suppress non-native ground flora with wood chip, made using cut material from invasive plant species. Invite volunteers to assist with these conservation work days. Also update public with social media posts.	3 months (2 days per month)						
5	Assess and make final adjustments to schedule for long-term sustainability of non-native clearance and care of the cloud forest. Write final report and social media update.	1 month						