

DPLR4\1053

Darwin Plus Local - Final Report (1)

Officer: Linzi Ogden

Section 1 - Darwin Plus Local Project Information (Essential)

Project Reference Number

DPL00097

Q1. Project Title

No Response

Overseas Territory(ies)

☒ St Helena, Ascension, and Tristan de Cunha

Lead Organisation or Individual

Ascension Island Government Conservation and Fisheries Directorate (AIGCFD)

Partner Organisation(s)

Ascension Island Government

Value of Darwin Plus Local Grant Award

£9,600.00

Project Start Date

01 October 2024

Project End Date

31 March 2025

Project Leader Name

Dr Tiffany Simpson (Lead applicant) / Anna Weir (Project leader)

Project Website/Twitter/Blog etc.

www.ascension.gov.ac

Report Author(s)

Report Date

23 April 2025

Project Summary

No Response

Project Outcomes

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

Section 2 - Project Outcomes (Essential)

On a scale of 1 (high – outcome substantially exceeded) to 5 (low – outcome substantially did not meet expectation), how successful do you think your project has been?

⦿ 3 - Outcome met expectation

Project outcomes and justification for rating above

The objectives of this project have been met. This project enabled the survival of new facilitator trees and upkeep of established Cloud Forest by clearing persistent, and encroaching invasive plant species.

- Positive changes were made to the management of Cloud Forest Restoration sites:
- A schedule for regular clearance of encroaching invasive vegetation was implemented at all Cloud Forest Restoration sites, including the newly extended sections. Regular clearance (every 3 months), using power tools, now only takes one day for a team of two trained staff to complete.
 - Ground vegetation at the restoration sites, particularly the Dew Pond site, is dominated by grasses. This is easier to manage compared to the Tallow Vine (*Commelina diffusa*) that engulfed young facilitator saplings and was challenging to clear. The site is now also more enjoyable for visitors passing through when hiking to the summit of Green Mountain.
 - Recovered 10+ Cape Yew (*Afrocarpus falcatus*) trees (10/15yrs old) at the Queen Elizabeth II Restoration site that were completely surrounded by invasive Guava (*Psidium guajava*) and Shell Ginger (*Alpinia zerumbet*).

These trees responded well after clearance efforts, with new growth visible already.

- Chainsaws were used by trained staff to remove large Guava trees, preventing these trees from dropping fruit and seedling recruitment.

Two Action Plans were implemented:

1) Developing a work schedule for habitat management proved successful. Power tools increased staff capacity to clear encroaching vegetation. Older Purple fern restoration areas could be cleared of invasive plants – these sites had previously not been managed regularly.


An additional area (<1ha) was cleared adjacent to the Dew Pond Restoration site and Dew Pond road to allow these sites to link up as part of the Cloud Forest extension. Three trees were planted in this area, as well as four more at QEII Gardens.


2) We had successful volunteer days since the commencement of this project to help clear invasive vegetation from QEII Gardens. The use of brush cutters were effectively used to clear prickly vegetation before volunteer days to create access to facilitator trees. All Guava trees were removed at QEII Gardens from inside the boundary and an additional buffer zone was started down the Bishop's footpath. Volunteer events are popular, with more than 20 people in attendance. A successful Conservation Team day at the Dew Pond Restoration site helped to clear invasive Vitex trees whilst more facilitator trees were planted.


The project's success was measured through the following:


- 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.

Supporting Evidence - file(s) upload

 [Supporting evidence Protecting Cloud Forest Expansion \(DPL00097\).](#)

 22/04/2025

 12:27:15

 pdf 3.41 MB

Supporting Evidence - links to published document/online materials

'Supporting evidence_Protecting Cloud Forest Expansion Report' document.

Photos: Anna Weir & Alice Fry

Project Challenges

Delays in the shipment of equipment slowed progress of this project, but targets could still be achieved.

The chipper was only received at the end of the project and therefore has not been used at the time of reporting. The chipper will still be useful during future invasive clearance efforts. The chipper will be assembled and incorporated into the regular clearance schedule as soon as possible. In the meantime, Shell ginger was used to suppress weeds at the base of facilitator trees. The ginger will be replaced with wood chippings made from invasive cut plant material once the chipper is assembled. The effectiveness of chippings for suppression of weeds will have to be assessed over time. This method was successfully applied in previous years, so it looks likely to be effective.

Lessons Learned

- Scheduling clearance for every 3 months works well. Leaves and grass are long enough between clearance efforts for vegetation to grow up and be worthwhile cutting (fuel/cost-effective), but do not exceed heights that

obscure trees or make it difficult to walk through. Cutting a smaller sword height also takes less time, therefore restoration sites can be cleared within one day with two brush-cutting staff.

- Power tools (brush cutters/chainsaws) are excellent in helping to clear sites quickly and effectively. Chainsaws proved helpful in felling large Guava trees, and for preparing cut material for chipping.
- Raking cut ground vegetation proved important to avoid new vegetation growth. This was not done initially so it took longer to remove Tallow vine.
- We are yet to assess the effectiveness of placing wood chippings around the base of trees. However, work from previous years suggests that chipping should be successful. It could potentially be used to suppress weeds around the base of facilitator trees, but also as ground cover under existing mature Ficus trees to encourage germination of Purple Fern – observations of this endemic plant in the wild suggest that it grows well on dead wood.
- New growth on facilitator trees within the Cloud Forest extension shows that the site is visibly managed more successfully.
- Starting with small manageable areas until people and resources are available worked well to maintain a consistent schedule. This prevents previously cleared areas from becoming overgrown again.

Section 3 - Project Finance (Essential)

Project Expenditure

Project Spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2023/24 Grant (£)	2023/24 Total actual Darwin Plus Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff Costs				
Consultancy Costs				
Overhead Costs				
Travel and Subsistence				
Operating Costs				
Capital Items				
Others				
Total	9,600.00	5,619.80	-41.46	

Please provide a short narrative summary on project finances.

Prices of power tools & PPE were overestimated - some items were unable to be procured so the project is underspent in capital items.

The shipping costs are only received by AIG Finance following receipt of items. Due to delays in shipping, some items will only be received after 30 April. Additional shipping costs will be reported in the Financial Report as soon as available.

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

Power tools increased staff capacity to clear encroaching vegetation.

Group B: Policies, Practices and Management- Core Darwin Plus Standard Indicators (select one)

Checked	DPLUS-B01: Number of new/improved habitat management plans available and endorsed.
Unchecked	DPLUS-B02: Number of new/improved species management plans available and endorsed.
Unchecked	DPLUS-B03: Number of new/improved community management plans available and endorsed.

Unchecked	DPLUS-B04: Number of new/improved sustainable enterprises/ community benefits management plans available and endorsed.
Unchecked	DPLUS-B05: Number of people with increased participation in local communities / local management organisations (i.e., participation in Governance/citizen engagement).
Unchecked	DPLUS-B06: Number of Local Stakeholders and Local Communities (people) with strengthened (recognised/clarified) tenure and/or rights.

Group B Indicator Results

The Park Warden team was able to implement an improved habitat management schedule for invasive species management on Green Mountain. <50 people took part in the volunteer days focussed specifically on Cloud Forest Restoration.

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.
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

By implementing the improved habitat management schedule for invasive species management, AIGCFD is able to monitoring progress of the Cloud Forest Restoration sites and facilitator trees. Improved access will encourage monitoring of the endemic Purple fern to continue.

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

Checked	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

The Cloud Forest Restoration site were extended to > 3 hectares under the improved habitat management schedule using power tools funded by this project. This connects the original Cloud Forest at Dew Pond Restoration site, the road and QEII Gardens.

Section 5 - Project Partnerships, Wider Impacts and Contributions

Project Partnerships

Green Mountain volunteer days proved to be popular amongst community members with < 50 people taking part in volunteer days focussed specifically on Cloud Forest Restoration.

Wider Impacts and Decision Making

The expansion of the Cloud Forest Restoration site from Dew Pond to QEII Gardens will help counter effects of climate change on very sensitive endemic species found in this habitat. This project improved capacity through the procurement of appropriate power tools to assist with invasive clearance around facilitator trees. Improved access will encourage monitoring of the endemic Purple fern to continue.

Sustainability and Legacy

The improved habitat management schedule will be incorporated in daily activities of the Park Warden team and upkeep of the Cloud Forest Restoration sites will continue after the project ends. Power tools and PPE purchased by this project will be used for future habitat management activities. Cleaning and maintenance of equipment and PPE are essential to ensure longevity of these tools.

Section 6 - Communications & Publicity


Exceptional Outcomes and Achievements


N/A


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.

 [Before and after pictures of Dew Pond Restorati
on site](#)

 22/04/2025

 12:39:49

 pdf 751.81 KB

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

Figures 1 & 2: Invasive species were removed from Dew Pond Restoration site as part of the Cloud Forest extension (A. Weir & A. Fry)

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: <https://www.facebook.com/AscensionIslandConservation>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/AIGConservation>

Website: <https://www.ascension.gov.ac/>

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	Dr Tiffany Simpson
Role within Darwin Plus Project	Director of Conservation (Lead applicant)
Email	
Phone	
Do you need further sections to provide additional contact details?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No