DPLR4\1057

Darwin Plus Local - Final Report (2)

Officer: Linzi Ogden

Section 1 - Darwin Plus Local Project Information (Essential)

Project Reference Number

DPL00098

Q1. Project Title

No Response

Overseas Territory(ies)

☑ Falkland Islands (FI)

Lead Organisation or Individual

South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute

Partner Organisation(s)

Green Hound LTD

Value of Darwin Plus Local Grant Award

£43,300.00

Project Start Date

01 November 2024

Project End Date

31 March 2025

Project Leader Name

Alastair Baylis

Project Website/Twitter/Blog etc.

https://www.south-atlantic-research.org/saeri-front-page/our-science/ecosystems-projects-landing-page/

Report Author(s)

Alastair Baylis

Report Date

01 May 2025

Project Summary

No Response

Project Outcomes

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

⦿ 3 - Outcome met expectation

Project outcomes and justification for rating above

As a direct result of the project, several meaningful changes have taken place in both conservation practice and environmental planning within the Falkland Islands.

The project generated new baseline ecological data through successful surveys of South Jason Island and Elephant Jason Island, focusing on burrowing seabirds and plant communities. This information has been compiled into a field report submitted to the Falkland Islands Government Environment Department. The report will act as a critical reference point for future monitoring and management planning, ensuring that future conservation efforts can be evidence-led and effectively tracked over time. Data will be submitted and stored on the Falkland Islands Data Portal. Importantly, the project also fostered stronger local engagement, through the involvement of community volunteers and contributions from experienced, non-partner seabird biologists. This collaborative approach has not only enhanced the scientific rigor of the project but also helped build local capacity and awareness around conservation and monitoring practices. The project successfully trialed the use of a bird detection dog in remote island conditions—marking the first time this method was applied in the

Falklands. This innovation has demonstrated its value as a reliable and efficient tool for locating burrowing seabirds in dense tussac habitats, which has already begun to influence thinking around future wildlife survey methods.

The project has successfully achieved all of its original aims and outcomes, with the exception of a UAV survey, which is planned for summer 2025/26. The key objectives—to survey South Jason Island and Elephant Jason Island for burrowing seabirds, conduct a plant survey, and trial the application of a bird detection dog in a remote island environment—were fully met. All planned fieldwork was completed (with the exception of UAV flights), and the detection dog method proved to be both feasible and highly effective, particularly in complex and vegetated terrain. The resulting dataset provides the first comprehensive ecological baseline for these islands, and the field project report submitted to Falkland Islands Government Environment Department will directly support the development of future management and monitoring plans for the area.

Moreover, the project has laid the foundation for the integration of detection dogs into broader conservation strategies in the Falklands, while enhancing collaboration between government, NGOs, and technical specialists. This positions the project as a model for future multidisciplinary conservation work in the region.

Supporting Evidence - file(s) upload

Project Report_Jason prions_10 April
01/05/2025
15:47:47
pdf 5.27 MB

Supporting Evidence - links to published document/online materials

Please refer to our website: https://www.south-atlantic-research.org/saeri-front-page/our-science/ecosystems-projects-landing-page/

Project Challenges

With decades of field experience on remote tussac islands in the Falklands, we are well-versed in the challenges of working in such environments. However, this project introduced unique logistical hurdles that required careful planning. For the first time, we conducted fieldwork with a bird-detecting dog and managed provisions for a nine-person crew in a remote camp setting, relying solely on small single-burner stoves. By scaling up our well-established protocols (covering food supplies, communications, first aid, and emergency procedures), we successfully adapted to these requirements.

One of the most significant challenges we faced was UAV operations. We routinely launch DJI Phantom 4's from boats. However, we opted to use our larger DJI Matrice with its superior photogrammetry camera, as flight planning indicated that the survey could be completed in a single day. Despite building a platform on the boat, on two separate occasions (January and March), the UAV crashed due to electronic interference from the boat, causing UAV sensor issues and erratic flying. The repair and replacement process takes approximately 1.5 months, and as of this final project report, the Matrice is in transit back to the UK. As a result, no UAV images were captured during either attempt (January or March). The UAV survey to develop detailed maps of South and Elephant Jason Island will be attempted again in the 2025/26 austral summer, with SAERI covering costs of the survey. This set-back highlighted the need for good insurance and contingency plans for essential equipment.

Lessons Learned

(i) Logistics and planning were greatly aided by favorable weather conditions. However, given that we were working on extremely remote islands accessible only by boat and under specific weather conditions, the success of our logistical planning was a major highlight. It allowed us to efficiently support a nine-member field crew. While a larger team has both benefits and challenges, including potential environmental impact, having nine field members was crucial to the project's success. This team size enabled us to deploy four survey teams, covering nearly 1,000 transect points within just two weeks. A smaller team would have significantly prolonged the survey period and increased fatigue, potentially compromising data quality. Even with 4 teams, we were completely exhausted by the end of fieldwork! Ultimately, the dedication and collaboration of the field crew were key to our success, and the outstanding team dynamic made the experience both productive and enjoyable for all involved.

(ii) One major setback was the failure of our planned UAV operations, due to UAV crash-landing.

(iii) In future, we will use smaller Phantom 4 UAVs and allocate more time for UAV surveys, so they can be conducted from land.

(iv) While we were fortunate to have good weather for boating, which prevented extended delays, part of our success also stemmed from having a larger team. A larger crew provided flexibility in scheduling and significantly increased the speed at which we completed transects. Future projects should consider the cost/benefit of a larger team when planning remote fieldwork.

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	[redacted]			
Consultancy Costs				
Overhead Costs				
Travel and Subsistence				
Operating Costs				

Capital Items	[redacted]		
Others			
Total	43,300.00	43,300.00	0

Please provide a short narrative summary on project finances.

There was significant matched funding for the project, particularly with field equipment. The project undertaken in the Jason Islands was an outstanding example of cost-effective conservation work. A team of nine was deployed in the field for two weeks, with nearly half of this team consisting of volunteers. The volunteers were all locals, many of whom had never visited the Jason Islands before. This provided invaluable community engagement, fostering a sense of local stewardship over the islands' biodiversity.

By incorporating volunteers into the project, financial resources were allocated more efficiently, ensuring that funding was directed toward essential conservation efforts rather than excessive operational expenses. The inclusion of local participants also strengthened ties between the conservation community and residents of the Falkland Islands, creating a lasting impact beyond the project's immediate scope. Additionally, the hands-on experience for volunteers provided training opportunities that may contribute to future conservation efforts in the region.

The combination of a dedicated field team, effective resource management, and strong community involvement ensured that the project delivered exceptional results while remaining financially responsible. The investment in this initiative not only benefited the immediate conservation objectives but also laid the groundwork for continued engagement, education, and preservation efforts in the Jason Islands for years to come.

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

3 local organizations with improved capability and capacity

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

Our 9-person field team included seven locals , three of which had never visited the Jason Islands—an inspiring, empowering experience that deepened their connection.

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.**
Checked	**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.**
Checked	**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

Data collected contributes to numerous MEAs, including CBD. We have also provided baseline data on these pristine islands.

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

Unchecked	**DPLUS-D01 Hectares of habitat under sustainable management practices.**
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

NA

Section 5 - Project Partnerships, Wider Impacts and Contributions

Project Partnerships

Our principal project partner was Green Hound Limited (South Atlantic Detection Dogs). As this was the first survey in the Falkland Islands to use a detection dog on a remote tussac island, their involvement was critical across all phases of the project—planning, decision-making, and on-the-ground implementation. Their expertise ensured that all proposed activities were both feasible and safe for the detection dog, particularly given the challenging terrain and remote location of the Jason Islands. The Falkland Islands Government Environment Department (FIG ED) also played an important role, providing logistical support and permissions for accessing the Jason Islands.

One of the key achievements of this partnership was the successful demonstration of the effectiveness of bird detection dogs in such remote environments. This has opened up exciting possibilities for enhancing biodiversity monitoring efforts in the region. The strength of the partnership lay in the complementary expertise of all

parties and a shared commitment to conservation outcomes. Open communication and flexibility were essential in navigating the logistical challenges, and these were addressed through regular check-ins and adaptive planning. We were also fortunate to receive strong interest and support from the local community, with several individuals volunteering to assist with fieldwork. In summary, the collaboration with Green Hound Limited and the support from FIG ED and the local community, were instrumental to the success of the project. Overall, this collaborative approach fostered a sense of shared ownership in the project and helped to build relationships that will be valuable for future conservation work.

Wider Impacts and Decision Making

The project has contributed to embedding environmental considerations more deeply into local decision-making, particularly in relation to biodiversity monitoring methods and island conservation practices. By successfully demonstrating the value and feasibility of using a bird detection dog on a remote tussac island, the project has introduced a new and highly effective tool for species monitoring in challenging environments. This has drawn interest from both the Falkland Islands Government Environment Department and the wider conservation community, prompting serious consideration of detection dogs as a standard tool in future ecological surveys. The project also underscored the importance of rigorous planning and animal welfare in the design of environmental fieldwork - offering valuable insights that may help shape future permitting and operational procedures.

The collaborative approach, including detailed reporting to the Environment Department and broad stakeholder engagement, has strengthened the evidence base for policy and land management decisions. The data collected will directly inform conservation strategies, particularly for threatened plant species and National Nature Reserve management. In addition, the findings are expected to support future wildfire risk planning. Overall, the project serves as a strong case study for the impact of cross-sector, science-led partnerships in driving meaningful conservation outcomes.

Sustainability and Legacy

The project created a number of lasting benefits that will continue well beyond its formal end. Most notably, the survey data collected on South Jason and Elephant Jason Islands now forms a valuable ecological baseline for burrowing seabirds and vegetation communities in these remote locations. This dataset has been shared with the Falkland Islands Government and will serve as a foundation for future monitoring, conservation management, and policy decisions related to National Nature Reserve biodiversity and habitat protection.

The successful trial and demonstration of a bird detection dog in remote islands is another key legacy of the project. The results from this pilot have sparked interest in integrating detection dogs into future survey initiatives—a practical tool now proven to be effective and safe. We will retain and build on the expertise developed during the project, making it available for future ecological work in the Falklands and potentially in other UKOTs.

The project also involved local volunteers and technical specialists, helping to build capacity and grow regional expertise in seabird monitoring, remote island logistics, and innovative survey methods. Although ended, project staff and resources have not been lost. Partnerships formed remain active, and technical experience gained will continue to inform future proposals and conservation work. Project equipment have been retained within SAERI and its partners, ensuring they can be re-used or built upon in subsequent research efforts.

In short, the project has created new tools, datasets, and relationships that will continue to support long-term biodiversity monitoring, conservation planning, and innovation.

Section 6 - Communications & Publicity

Exceptional Outcomes and Achievements

This project achieved something truly exceptional—an ambitious expedition to Elephant and South Jason, two of the most remote and least visited islands within the spectacular Jason Islands group. The logistics alone were a significant accomplishment, enabling the team to access and work in these challenging, isolated environments. During the expedition, we confirmed the presence of nesting burrowing seabirds and documented several threatened endemic plant species. These findings reaffirm the ecological importance of the Jason Islands and highlight their conservation value. A major highlight was the use of a trained bird detection dog to locate hidden seabird burrows. This innovative approach dramatically improved our ability to detect elusive species, offering a step change in how such surveys can be conducted in challenging terrain. Notably, the team included two local Falkland Islanders visiting the Jason Islands for the first time—an inspiring and empowering experience that strengthened local engagement with conservation. The data collected provides a vital ecological baseline for these unique tussac islands, laying the groundwork for future monitoring and the development of informed management plans.

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.

IMG_6286
01/05/2025
14:13:52
jpg 4.86 MB

20250108_211408
01/05/2025
14:09:29
jpg 2.87 MB

IMG_20250106_181211982_HDR
01/05/2025
14:05:39
jpg 5.87 MB

IMG_20250106_162059950_HDR
01/05/2025
14:04:12
jpg 1 MB

IMG_6205
30/04/2025
18:57:25
jpg 7.45 MB

IMG_6151
30/04/2025
18:56:43
jpg 5.79 MB

IMG_6505
30/04/2025
18:52:18
jpg 4.62 MB

IMG_6770
30/04/2025
18:51:04
jpg 3.89 MB

IMG_6702
30/04/2025
18:46:13
jpg 5.96 MB

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

IMG 6205 - Falkland Islands, Dinner, Megan Tierney
IMG 6151 - Falkland Islands, Fieldwork, Megan Tierney
IMG 6286 - Falkland Islands, Black-browed Albatross, Megan Tierney
IMG 6505 - Falkland Islands, Burrow-scope, Megan Tierney
IMG 6770 - Falkland Islands, Tents, Megan Tierney
IMG 6702 - Falkland Islands, Dog team, Megan Tierney
IMG 6321 - Falkland Islands, Tussac, Megan Tierney
20250108_211408 - Falkland Islands, Sunset, SAERI
IMG_20250106_162059950_HDR - Falkland Islands, Hairy Daisy, Simon Browning
IMG_20250106_181211982_HDR - Falkland Islands, native grass, Simon Browning

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.

@SAERI_FI

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	Alastair Baylis
Role within Darwin Plus Project	Project lead
Email	[redacted]
Phone	
Do you need further sections to provide additional contact details?	⦿ No