



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office



Department
for International
Development

Darwin Plus: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2015)

Project Ref No	DPLUS015
Project Title	Strategic management of invasive alien plants on South Georgia
Country(ies)	South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands
Lead Organisation	Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands
Partner(s)	Kew Gardens
Project Leader	Jennifer Lee
Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)	HYR2
Project website	N/A

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up) (max 500 words).

April-September is the austral winter and there has been no work on the ground in South Georgia. Instead the focus has been on office-based tasks such as data compilation, report writing and planning logistics for the 2015/16 field season.

After successful completion of weed surveys in areas with a history of human habitation, an end of year report including details of survey published online on www.gov.gs (**output 1**).

The main achievement in the last six months has been drafting of the Weed Management Strategy (**output 2**) and associated Environmental Impact Assessment. These documents will act as a roadmap for South Georgia weed management operations for the next five-years. Kelvin Floyd (consultant) and Bradley Myer (Project Officer) utilized the data collected in the preceding field season as a basis for the documents and after internal reviews within GSGSSI, they have now been sent for external review. To ensure the end product reflects best international practice, the reviewers chosen have extensive knowledge of weed management techniques and the South Georgia environment. These were: Kerry Brown (Island Advisory Group) Peter Williams (New Zealand Department of Conservation) and Colin Clubbe (Royal Botanic Gardens Kew). We hope to receive the reviews by the end of October and will be on schedule to publish the strategy in early 2016 (**output 2**).

An important element of the Weed Management Strategy was to consider what resources would be required to ensure the benefits would be sustained after the Darwin funding came to an end. This was also highlighted as an issue in the year 1 project review. A decision on the nature of future resourcing can only be made once external reviews have been received and the strategy finalised but continued support for the weed management programme has been highlighted as a priority in the GSGSSI 2015-2020 strategy.

Another important output for the project and an element which will ensure its future sustainability is the weed management database. This tool is a central repository where all information about the distribution of non-native plants is stored along with photographs and operational documentation relating to their management. An early version of this database is available online

██████████. We aspire to further improve the database to make it inline with regional best practice, and a more useful tool for managers, we hope to integrate the database with GIS software. Kelvin Floyd met with the GSGSSI data manager at BAS to discuss further development of the database in this manner (output 5)

As weed survey and control work is highly seasonal, considerable logistic input is needed to move staff from their home bases around the world to South Georgia. Travel bookings (including flights and ship scheduling) has now been completed and provision has been made for the field team to be in place to undertake the weed control work detailed in the Management Strategy (output 3)

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities (max 300 words).

Progress has not yet begun on weed guide (output 4) as Rebecca Upson, the key member of staff at Kew allocated to the project, is currently on maternity leave. This was discussed with Kew and the project team is content that a draft weed guide will be available to trial at the start of the field season and a final version will be available by completion of the project. In order to expedite the production of the draft strategy Bradley Myer will spend some time working at Kew in January before traveling to South Georgia later the same month. After the draft guide has been field-tested it will be finalised by Rebecca when she returns from maternity leave.

This small change should not impact the overall project outcome. Whilst at this stage, it is not anticipated that there will be any budgetary implications, the slightly higher travel costs via the UK will need to be accounted for. The final spend on subsistence and travel will only be know when berths are confirmed on the return journey which is not likely to be until the new year.

2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with LTS: No

Formal change request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance: No

3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g., more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully as it is unlikely that any requests to carry forward funds will be approved this year. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

We do not anticipate a significant underspend but as last year, because a large proportion of the budget is allocated to staff costs, and the availability of berths on vessels traveling to-and-from South Georgia is unpredictable, it is hard to be certain of final budgets until the end of the field season.



4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

No

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with LTS International through a Change Request.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk . The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g., Subject: DPLUSXXX Darwin Half Year Report**