

## Darwin Initiative Main/Post/D+ Project Half Year Report (due 31 October 2016)

<b>Project Ref No</b>	DPLUS037
<b>Project Title</b>	Conserving the genetic diversity of St Helena's threatened endemic flora
<b>Country(ies)/Territory(ies)</b>	St Helena
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Environmental Management Division, St Helena Government
<b>Project Leader</b>	<i>Thomas Heller</i>
<b>Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)</b>	<i>HYR2</i>
<b>Project website/ Twitter/ Blog/ Instagram etc</b>	<i>n/a</i>
<b>Funder (DFID/Defra)</b>	<i>n/a</i>

### 1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) 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 to end September).

This year of the project is focused almost entirely on developing the *ex-situ* collections of endemic plants as well as undertaking surveys of sites otherwise difficult to access, under the following activities listed in the baseline timetable:

**Activity 1.3 Key populations and remote locations surveyed by drone.** Time has been spent by Environmental Management Division (EMD) staff gaining flying experience with the quadcopter drone. Priority sites for surveying have also been identified, but suitable weather has continued to be a challenge, with exceptionally still conditions required for flying in the typically exposed sites of particular interest.

**Activity 2.2 Collecting and horticultural support.** Following from the in-country horticultural training, delivered in March 2016, support has continued, with Marcella Corcoran (Kew) fielding queries from the relevant nursery teams in St Helena, seeking advice ranging from pest control to growing media.

**Activity 3.1 Monitor target populations for availability of seed.** Members of the Environmental Management Division (EMD) team have been making regular visits to target populations across the island identified in the gap analysis and, while success has been met in locating target populations, few plants have been found to be in fruit. However, recent monitoring indicates that a number of endemic fern species will soon be ready to collect spores from.

**Activity 3.2, 3.3 & 3.4 Make, process and bank seed collections** 26 collections have been made during the course of the project so far, representing 18 of the 45 plant species endemic to St Helena. 26 species remain to be collected by the end of the project in March 2017, with 1 fern species not expected to be bankable as it produces 'green' spores. Collections are dried and cleaned promptly after collecting. Once moisture levels of seeds are sufficiently low, they are sealed in foil bags and frozen in EMD's seed bank. A batch of six seed collections were sent to the UK in September 2016, for duplicating at the Millennium Seed Bank.

Activities 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 were completed in year 1 of the project.

**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.**

As indicated in section 1, above, one of the main difficulties encountered has been finding plants in fruit, likely the result of an unusually dry winter. Local Met Office data indicates that 2016 has had significantly lower rainfall than expected, with the year-to-date rainfall 34-38% below the 16-year average for the equivalent period. Combined with the very small size of many of the target populations, this is resulting in poor seed availability.

Partners at EMD remain optimistic that the target of one new collection of each of the endemic species is achievable within the timeframe of the project, this is nevertheless dependent on climatic conditions favourable to the plants flowering and fruiting, a risk identified at the outset. Though continued unfavourable weather will not have impacts on the budget, it will have implications for meeting the targets of number of endemic species being banked, or the seed quantity indicator, within the current timetable. The situation will continue to be monitored.

**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: Yes/No

Formal change request submitted: Yes/No

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/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.** Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project please submit a rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a rebudget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary.

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

None

**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](mailto:Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk) . The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g., Subject: 22-035 Darwin Half Year Report**