



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

Project Ref No	DPLUS041
Project Title	Creating a Terrestrial Action Plan for the Chagos Archipelago
Country(ies)/Territory(ies)	British Indian Ocean Territory
Lead Organisation	Chagos Conservation Trust
Partner(s)	British Indian Ocean Territory Administration, ZSL, RBG Kew, IUCN, RSPB
Project Leader	Peter Carr
Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)	21 October 2016, HYR1
Project website/ Twitter/ Blog/ Instagram etc	www.chagos-trust.org
Funder (DFID/Defra)	Defra

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).

1. Produce biosecurity recommendations for visitors to the northern atolls

1.1 Recruit biosecurity specialist: Dr Grant Harper has now been contracted as part of the team.

1.2 Undertake fieldwork: The expedition component of the project has been delayed until April/May 2017 (see 2a).

1.3 Undertake analysis: Dr Harper has developed a draft rat eradication plan that will be agreed with the project leader. The final plan will set out a strategic method of eradication for the entire archipelago and forms a key component of the *Terrestrial Action Plan*.

1.4 Write biosecurity instructions for peer review: Work has begun on the instructions that will result in written recommendations on biosecurity measures for all visitors to the northern atolls.

2. Produce an IUCN sponsored Regional Red List for BIOTA

2.1 Recruit IUCN Regional Red List specialist: Dr Justin Gerlach has now been contracted as part of the team.

2.2 Train expedition members in the information-gathering requirement to produce an IUCN-sponsored RRL: To assist planning for the delivery of the Regional/National Red List assessments of the different taxonomic groups being studied by the project, Dr Gerlach has developed a data recording form. He has been working with the RBG Kew team who will undertake an assessment of the ~45 native vascular plant species using the published regional red list criteria to produce a "BIOT National Red List of Vascular Plants". He will continue working with the broader team to ensure data collection is standardised and formatted correctly for the production of the Red List.

2.3 Undertake fieldwork: The expedition component of the project has been delayed until April/May 2017 (see 2a).

3. Produce an overview of the sequence of events required for the terrestrial rehabilitation of the Chagos Archipelago for conservation

3.1 Recruit terrestrial management specialists: Expert teams have been contracted for each discipline.

3.2 Undertake literature reviews to identify knowledge gaps: Each sub-team has been working on reviewing existing knowledge and identifying gaps.

ZSL – the invertebrate team has compiled an invertebrate inventory for every island based upon the available literature. This will be ground truthed and added to during the fieldwork phase.

RBG Kew – the vegetation and GIS teams have conducted computer and manual assessments of island vegetation communities, developed vegetation community layers, determined areas to assess in the field and have developed methods for improving their vegetation assessments using historical maps and satellite data available.

RSPB - analysis of all the islands using satellite maps focusing on features including existing bare ground (suitable for ground nesting birds), native trees (suitable for aerial nesting birds) and coconut dominance (to assess restoration opportunities).

Invasive plant specialist – has produced a database of the potentially invasive/invasive species by island from the published and grey literature.

Invasive mammal specialist – has liaised with the expedition leader to mine unpublished information regarding the potential for undiscovered invasive mammals (cats) and to areas of uncertainties for the distribution of rats in the territory.

3.3 Undertake fieldwork: The expedition component of the project has been delayed until April/May 2017 (see 2a).

3.4 Undertake data analysis: Existing data analysis is continuing. Due to the expedition delay new data produced during the fieldwork will be analysed post May 2017.

4. Produce a prioritised list of the terrestrial management requirements by island with costs

4.1 Recruit terrestrial management specialist: A terrestrial habitat management specialist has been recruited from the RSPB. A habitat management prioritisation scientist from the RSPB has agreed to advise and undertake the analysis for island rehabilitation prioritisation, free of charge.

4.2 Undertake literature reviews to identify knowledge gaps: The literature review in to the prioritisation of islands for rehabilitation has been completed and resulted in the recruitment of the prioritisation scientist above.

4.3 Undertake fieldwork: The expedition component of the project has been delayed until April/May 2017 (see 2a).

5. Produce an island by island TAP

5.1 Agree TAP template: The template for the TAP is under development and will be reviewed internally on 18 January 2017 prior to submission for peer review.

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.

The project aims to survey the islands of the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) and will result in a Chagos Archipelago Terrestrial Action Plan for the BIOT Administration. The islands of the BIOT are only accessible by vessel and as such CCT has partnered with the BIOT Administration for this project with their main contribution being the BIOT Patrol Vessel.

Unexpectedly the BIOT Administration decommissioned the patrol vessel in April 2016 and has been involved with the procurement process since to secure a new vessel. This process has been significantly delayed and the Administration is currently unable to confirm when a vessel may be available. As such CCT has had to delay the planned expedition until April/May 2017 to ensure the Administration has a suitable vessel available.

This delay impacts the project in two ways:

1. Completing the expedition by September 2016 as initially planned would have resulted in the *Terrestrial Action Plan* being completed by December 2017. The delays now mean the plan will be completed by August 2018.
2. Initially when the expedition was planned for August the bulk of the funds would have been spent in Year 1. Unfortunately now part of the Year 1 funds need to move into Year 2 due to the delays that have occurred.

CCT submitted a change request to Defra on 5th September 2016 requesting a budget adjustment and a six-month “no-cost” extension. Notification that this was approved was received on 19th September 2016.

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

Formal change request submitted: Yes

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes

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.

We have submitted a change request that was approved by Defra.

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

Not at this juncture.

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 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**