

## Darwin Plus: Overseas Territories Environment and Climate Fund Annual Report

To be completed with reference to the “Writing a Darwin Report” guidance:  
(<http://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources-for-projects/reporting-forms>). It is expected that this report  
will be a **maximum** of 20 pages in length, excluding annexes)

**Submission Deadline: 30<sup>th</sup> April 2020**

### Darwin Plus Project Information

Project reference	DPLUS096
Project title	Building Ascension Island’s Biosecurity Capability
Territory(ies)	St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha
Lead organisation	Ascension Island Government Conservation and Fisheries Department
Partner institutions	St Helena Agriculture and Natural Resources Division
Grant value	£38,090
Start/end dates of project	1/5/2019 – 1/5/2020
Reporting period (e.g. Apr 2019-Mar 2020) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2)	May 2019-Mar 2020 Annual Report 1
Project Leader name	Diane Baum
Project website/blog/social media	N/A
Report author(s) and date	Diane Baum 20/04/2020

### 1. Project summary

Early detection, containment and eradication are accepted as the most effective means of preventing future damage from non-native invasive species, but prior to this project there were no procedures on Ascension Island for checking cargo or visitors, nor any rapid response or surveillance capability. In a 2017 review of biosecurity capabilities across UK Overseas Territories, Ascension was one of the lowest scoring territories with either no capacity or only basic structures in place across most of the assessed categories.

This project has created a fully-functioning biosecurity programme that is in line with international best-practice and consistent with our closest neighbour, St Helena. It achieved this by addressing five key areas:

1. Establishment of legislation providing powers to detect and respond to threats
2. Develop the staff and resource capability to check cargo and passengers
3. Establish effective rapid response protocols
4. Improve surveillance monitoring for new introductions
5. Raise awareness amongst island community and importers

The risk of new introductions can never be completely eliminated, but the procedures and capability created through this project will greatly reduce the threat posed to biodiversity and public health on Ascension.

## 2. Project stakeholders/partners

This project was initiated by the Ascension Island Government (AIG) because the need for biosecurity controls had been identified as a priority in the territory. Implementation of the new biosecurity system will be the responsibility of AIG and so it rightly took the lead in project planning, monitoring and decision making, but the following partners and stakeholders have played a key role:

- **The St Helena Agriculture and Natural Resources Division** provided technical support to the project. St Helena has recently developed a biosecurity system and the parallels between the two islands meant it provided a useful model on which to build. ANRD have been extremely generous sharing their documentation, databases and public engagement material to serve as templates for Ascension and providing training for members of AIG staff who visited St Helena. Many of the import routes are shared between the islands and an important outcome of this collaboration has been consistent import standards (Annex 3) that make it easier for importers to implement, and cooperation between the two jurisdictions will help to increase detection and compliance rates.
- **The Tackling Invasive Non-native Species in the Overseas Territories Project (TINSOT) led by the GB Non Native Species Secretariat** has been running in parallel to this project and has provided expert advice throughout the development of the Ascension Biosecurity Strategy. The gap analysis carried out by TINSOT in 2017 provided an important baseline against which progress has been measured (Annex 4). The pathway and horizon scanning elements of the TINSOT drew on international experts and the results of these have been incorporated into the Ascension Biosecurity Strategy (Annex 5).
- **The Ascension Island Council (AIC)** is the elected body that advises on all policy and legislation decisions on the island. The introduction of biosecurity legislation requires the support of the AIC and so they have been involved throughout the project. Records of Council meetings (Annex 6) demonstrate it has been discussed at length both before and after the public consultation. The Council has indicated they will give final approval for the adoption of the legislation and strategy on 30<sup>th</sup> April. Key to the successful engagement with the Council has been the willingness to focus on their areas of concern. A specific document assessing the financial implications of a new biosecurity system to AIG and other organisations on the island was prepared in anticipation of their major concern and helped to allay their fears.
- **Importers to Ascension** will be crucial to the success of the new biosecurity system since they will be expected to take responsibility for the condition of their imports and in some cases put in place additional measures to ensure they comply with the new standards. Detailed discussions have taken place with all the major importers to understand their businesses and ensure the biosecurity controls cause no disruption or burden beyond those required for the system to be effective (Annex 7). This inclusive approach built trust and support to the level that two importers were willing to allow inspections to take place before any legislation was passed so we could refine our procedures. As Annex 7 shows, almost all importers have expressed a willingness for their employees to be trained and provide extra detection capacity.

### **3. Project progress**

#### **3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities**

##### **Output 1. Pre-border risk management system in place**

As a result of this project, an Ascension Biosecurity Strategy and associated legislation have been produced and will be recommended by the Ascension Island Council for approval by the Governor on 30<sup>th</sup> April. This includes the creation of Import Health Standards consistent with those on St Helena (example provided in Annex 1). These have been produced based on risk assessments and horizon scanning exercises undertaken in collaboration with the TINSOT ensuring resources are directed at the most important threats. It took longer than expected to secure the Council's formal approval for the Strategy due to other competing legislative priorities. This had a knock on impact for the public engagement element of the project discussed further under Output 5.

It is important that those who will be affected by the new system had a chance to input into its design and that the new procedures are effectively communicated before they come into force. A public consultation on the strategy and legislation ensured that importers on the island had an opportunity to comment on the draft Import Health Standards and were able to prepare for their implementation (Annex 7). One member of AIG staff travelled to shipping companies in the UK and St Helena to inspect cargo bound for Ascension and discuss the new import procedures with them. A new biosecurity declaration form has been produced and will begin to be distributed to all passengers arriving on Ascension once the legislation is adopted.

##### **Output 2. On-island inspection regime initiated**

Ascension will always have limited resources and so the inspection regime will act as a deterrent against non-compliance rather than an impregnable line of defence in its own right. For this to be effective, the standard of inspection and evidence collection must be very high in order to drive compliance from importers. Three members of the AIG Conservation and Customs teams visited St Helena to receive training and take part in inspections (Annex 8). The techniques and processes learnt on St Helena were then adapted to suit Ascension and refined through testing to develop inspection protocols that have been used to train a further six members of AIG staff. Inspections are now being carried out on a range of cargo types arriving on Ascension (Annex 9). Due to ongoing resource constraints it has been decided not to inspect all shipments, but a risk-based approach will be taken and each import pathway will be inspected at least twice a year providing a sufficiently robust deterrent against non-compliance. Planted contaminants were detected during simulation exercises indicating the inspection regime is effective.

##### **Output 3. Rapid response capability operational**

Response plans have been created for the different categories of potential introductions in collaboration with external consultants (Annex 10). Equipment and pesticides have been purchased to enable an effective response to be mounted for a range of Biosecurity threats. Two dedicated half containers are now in place at two key unloading sites on the island and will be used to isolate and treat contaminated cargo. A range of nets, gloves, traps and pesticides are now available on island and should allow the capture or destruction of all the highest risk species identified in a biosecurity horizon scanning exercise for Ascension. Due to the cancellation of a pesticide application training course on St Helena, it has so far only been possible to train one member of AIG staff in the safe use of pesticides during their visit to the UK (Annex 11). This member of staff was able to make the most of the opportunities in the UK to undertake additional training in wider pest control methods including trapping, fumigation and rodent control. A second member of AIG staff was due to receive pesticide training in the UK in March, but has been unable to travel due to COVID-19 related cancellations. We are keen for this training to go ahead if possible to create sufficient resilience within the team to undertake responses. The planned simulation exercises were not necessary as inspections detected real life incidents that provided the opportunity to test response protocols. The first detections occurred before all the response equipment had arrived on island and highlighted the need to

have it in place, but later responses have been more rapid and showed good coordination and knowledge of the procedures within the team.

#### **Output 4. Effective surveillance monitoring for high risk threats**

Surveillance monitoring has been significantly increased on Ascension and is targeted at those species identified as the highest risk in a horizon scanning exercise for Ascension. A set of post-border monitoring protocols has been developed (Annex 12) including baited ant and rodent traps as well as general invertebrate refuge traps. The monitoring differs from the target set for the project by including ten sites rather than the original five but reducing the sampling frequency to once every 2-3 months. Difficulties have been encountered identifying specimens caught in the sampling. A reference collection is being created on Ascension and knowledge is being amassed, but ant species pose a particular challenge given the number of species already present on the island and the expertise required to make species level identifications. Support from the UK has not been as easy to obtain as hoped due to overstretched resources and we are focusing on ways to crowd source expertise. Key to this will be practice in taking high resolution photographs that can be shared on line and this is currently ongoing.

#### **Output 5. Raised public awareness of non-native species and actions to prevent their introduction**

The effectiveness of biosecurity controls will be greatly increased with the support of the Ascension population and those importing goods to the island. We have produced banners, leaflets and signs highlighting the risk (Annex 13) that will arrive on the island in May and will be displayed at entry points and online. Through our collaboration with St Helena we have also agreed to display each other's material at departure points for people and goods travelling between the islands. The delay in securing agreement from the Council for the strategy meant that the public engagement and volunteer training events planned were pushed back until the end of the project time frame because we could not publicise a strategy that was still being discussed by Council. Unfortunately large gatherings are not currently possible due to COVID-19 social distancing guidance and island events such as the Ascension Day Fair and National Park Anniversary at which we intended to have displays on biosecurity have been cancelled. The public engagement campaign will go ahead and be delivered by AIG staff, but is likely to now stretch beyond the end of this project.

### **3.2 Progress towards project Outputs**

#### **Output 1. Pre-border risk management system in place**

Prior to this project, Ascension had no biosecurity system in place meaning there were no controls on what was entering the island and no means of reducing the threat. There is now a comprehensive Biosecurity Strategy (Annex 5) and soon to be approved legislation that puts the emphasis on importers taking measures to reduce the risk of new introductions. This includes Import Health Standards for eight classes of imports, exceeding the target of four in the project logframe. We have also introduced a licensing system for the highest risk imports, including all live animals, to ensure tailored conditions can be applied to any application that is approved. The Import Health Standards follow the model of St Helena's and the Falkland Islands and changes have only been introduced where differing risk assessments required it. This has been received positively by importing organisations, who have been consulted through the development of the system and are supportive of the import standards (Annex 7).

A visit made by a member of AIG staff to shipping agents in the UK and St Helena helped to raise awareness of the incoming standards and allowed good personal relationships to be formed that have aided the flow of information and support for the system as it has been rolled out. From May onwards compliance with the standards will be a legal requirement, but regular importers as well as contractors undertaking the major runway repair project on the island are already following the standards.

A declaration form for visitors entering Ascension has been prepared and will become a legal requirement from May, but it has not been used yet due to flights being suspended as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The aim of this one year project was to put the system in place and so the indicators relate to the creation of new standards and processes and efforts to secure support from stakeholders through dialogue and consultation. These indicators were appropriate and have demonstrated great progress to create an effective system from scratch with high levels of cooperation from those who will be affected. The success of the next phase of this initiative, as we implement the strategy and enforce the legislation, will require different indicators of success that focus on the compliance with standards, detection of introductions, collaborative improvement plans and, where necessary, appropriate enforcement action.

## **Output 2. On-island inspection regime initiated**

The training of AIG staff in inspection techniques on St Helena was one of the most important parts of this project creating not just the output of trained staff but also lasting relationships between teams working in biosecurity on Ascension and St Helena. This has been of great benefit to both territories since it has laid a strong foundation for cooperation in the future. The training visit also helped to establish the sense of an AIG Biosecurity Team as colleagues from the Conservation and Customs teams worked together for the first time. The target of three people trained was met, but this indicator does not adequately capture the multiple benefits that resulted from this exposure visit.

Training of further staff on Ascension was delayed relative to the original project timetable as it was felt necessary to refine the inspection protocols and get approval for the wider Biosecurity Strategy from the Ascension Island Council before involving more colleagues. Training has now been delivered. Six members of the Conservation and Customs teams are being given comprehensive training on how to follow inspection protocols to maximise the chances of detection and ensure evidence is collected to a high standard. In addition, further people working for AIG and other organisations who are involved in offloading cargo will be given basic training in how to detect and contain threats and who to contact to take further action. This will multiply our effectiveness and provide crucial extra capacity with little extra resource required.

Without the legislation in place, we have not had the powers to inspect all cargo and passengers, but we have been working with some importers and AIG staff returning from leave who have allowed us to carry out inspections to refine the protocols and train staff. A risk assessment tool has also been developed to allow Biosecurity Officers to identify the highest risk imports and make an inspection plan with detail on the shipments and cargo type that will be targeted and the required sampling rate. We now have the protocols and experienced staff to roll out inspections on civilian imports once the legislation is passed in May. Military imports to Ascension will be covered by the legislation but we need to finalise MoUs with the RAF and USAF to be able to inspect their containers. Some initial work has been done on this, but it could not be progressed formally until the legislation was finalised. Dialogue with the military organisations has been undertaken throughout the project and we are confident that good working relationships and joint inspection procedures will be possible.

The inspections carried out to date have intercepted a range of introduced organisms or identified practices that would not be compliant with the new legislation (Annex 9). This provides some evidence that the system is working, but to try to demonstrate the degree of efficacy two simulation exercises were carried out whereby foreign items were placed in break bulk cargo without the inspection team's knowledge. These were all discovered during the inspection and the intention is to repeat these exercises to ensure standards are maintained. The presence of customs seals means it is more difficult to set up simulated incidents for containerised cargo, but we will endeavour to find ways to test the efficacy of these inspections in the future.

### **Output 3. Rapid response capability operational**

Response plans have been prepared to cover all the main types of introductions likely to occur on Ascension (Annex 10). These have been prepared with the input of consultants from Australia and New Zealand and the Ascension Environmental Health Team. The plans have been shared with AIG colleagues during training sessions, which have also provided the opportunity to practice with new equipment that has been purchased for the containment and treatment of introduced species.

Only one member of AIG staff has been able to gain a qualification in the safe use of pesticides through this project (Annex 11). The cancellation of a planned training course in St Helena prevented two other people from being trained. It had been hoped that another member of the AIG Conservation team would be able to travel to the UK for training in March 2020, but flight restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic led to the cancellation of this trip. There are currently three members of AIG staff with qualifications in the safe use of pesticides and, while we would like to increase this number to build resilience, it should allow us to mount a safe and effective response to any biosecurity threat detected.

It had been intended to create simulated incidents following the initial training of AIG staff in order to test and improve response capabilities. However, inspections of incoming cargo detected a range of new introductions that provided ample opportunity to test our response capability. The first detection occurred before the equipment had arrived on island and the response training had been delivered. However, AIG Conservation and Customs staff worked well together to contain the threat (live Dipteran larvae within the packaging of a mattress) and Environmental Health were able to control it. This was not completed within the target time, but the containment was good enough that there was no threat of escape. Subsequent detections have led to responses being mounted within the one hour target.

### **Output 4. Effective surveillance monitoring for high risk threats**

Surveillance monitoring has been stepped up and now covers all high risk species identified in the horizon scanning exercise. A surveillance monitoring strategy has been produced (Annex 12) and is now being implemented by AIG with assistance from the MOD who have an established mosquito monitoring programme on the island. Ants have been a particular focus given the high likelihood of them arriving on imports and the threat they pose to native species on Ascension. Initially the intention had been to monitor five sites monthly, but it was felt that detection rates would be better if the number of sites was increased and sampling occurred less frequently. We are now sampling 10 sites every 2-3 months.

Identification of the samples collected during surveillance monitoring has been difficult. They have been preserved and some sent to the FERA laboratory in the UK. However, we have yet to receive any results back. Attempts have been made to record and identify the samples retained on-island and species level identification has been possible in some cases, but for groups such as ants the level of specialist knowledge required exceeds our capability. It looks unlikely that FERA will be able to provide the ongoing identification capacity required and so we will have to explore other means of identifying samples from our surveillance monitoring.

### **Output 5. Raised public awareness of non-native species and actions to prevent their introduction**

We have produced banners, posters and leaflets to be displayed around Ascension and at St Helena Airport to alert people to the new import standards (Annex 13). Information will also be provided with new contracts for people moving to the island and with tourist entry visas.

We have not yet been able to deliver the outputs of raising public awareness and training volunteers since public meetings and events were delayed by the need to get the strategy and legislation approved by the Council. These will occur after the strategy is approved on 30<sup>th</sup> April and once social distancing measures are eased. There is existing staff capacity within AIG to deliver this beyond the end of the project funding.

### 3.3 Progress towards the project Outcome

As a result of this project and the assistance of the TINSOT, Ascension now has a biosecurity system that meets international standards. The revisited Gap Analysis (Annex 4) provides an excellent summary of the progress made from the baseline when this exercise was first carried out in 2017. In almost all cases Ascension's capabilities have improved and for many criteria the assessment has gone from no or basic provision to good status. It is unfortunate that the introduction of legislation will not quite occur before the project end date, but the Ascension Council's anticipated recommendation on the 30<sup>th</sup> April will secure this output and mean that there are legal powers to support the implementation of the Biosecurity Strategy.

The protocols, databases, template forms and guidance are all now in place to provide the structure of an effective system. They have been designed to be easily understood by non-specialists, since biosecurity will form only a small part of the duties of most AIG staff implementing the strategy. One of the most positive aspects of this project is the way that members of the AIG Conservation and Customs Teams have worked together and shared knowledge to develop the system and how people from other areas of AIG and organisations working on the island have been keen to help. Workplans have not proved an effective indicator of this since the unpredictability of ship and plane arrivals means that biosecurity activities cannot be incorporated accurately into forward-looking workplans, and the time spent on these activities is better recorded retrospectively.

The public engagement strand of this project has been delayed due to the length of time it has taken to get Council approval for the strategy. Some engagement work has been carried out as part of the consultation on the strategy, but events and public meetings have so far not taken place. These may now be further delayed due to social distancing requirements as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and so may not be possible within the duration of the project. Engagement material has been created and will be distributed around the island and we have prepared press articles and social media posts in anticipation of the Council's recommendation of the strategy on 30<sup>th</sup> April. Public meetings and information and activities at island events will follow as soon as these resume on island.

### 3.4 Monitoring of assumptions

#### **Assumption 1: Appetite for introduction of biosecurity controls maintained within AIG and the Ascension Council.**

**Comments:** The Appetite for introducing new biosecurity controls has remained strong within AIG even though there has been a change in Administrator on the island during the course of the project. The election of a new Council in September 2019 did cause some disruption since the justification for biosecurity controls had to be made again and factors unconnected to the project such as projected AIG income had led some Councillors to feel that AIG should not be taking on any extra responsibilities at this time. Through discussions with the Councillors it was possible to demonstrate that biosecurity controls were a more efficient use of resources than dealing with the consequences of non-native species. The Council's views on the topic are evidenced in Annex 6.

#### **Assumption 2: AIG employees and importing organisations open to new working arrangements and maintain ongoing support for biosecurity controls**

**Comments:** This assumption has been met to a much greater degree than we predicted. There has been widespread support and enthusiasm for this project amongst colleagues across AIG and in other organisations. People who work unloading cargo have taken a great interest in what might be found on it and are conscientiously checking and reporting detections to us. Other organisations have seen the need for these controls and have allowed us access and offered to help with inspections. Even the military organisations on Ascension have been very open to the system from the outset and we have had to do far less persuasion than we anticipated. The attitude of organisations on the island is captured in the summary of responses to the biosecurity consultation (Annex 7).

**Assumption 3: New biosecurity legislation is adopted giving AIG powers to treat or destroy cargo.**

**Comments:** Biosecurity legislation will be adopted in May 2020. This is later than we had anticipated and has meant the development, training and testing of procedures has had to be done in advance of the legislation, which has not been ideal. We had hoped to be able to use the template legislation produced as part of TINSOT, but this proved to be too detailed to be workable in a small territory such as Ascension. With a vacancy in the position of Crown Council on Ascension between March and September 2019, there was an inevitable delay in the drafting of Ascension-specific biosecurity legislation. However, our new Crown Council prioritised this and worked assiduously to produce a draft by February 2020, which has now been discussed with Council and is likely to get final approval in May 2020. The new ordinance has been designed to support the Ascension Biosecurity Strategy and will provide all the powers necessary to implement it.

**Assumption 4: The training experience on St Helena is sufficiently comprehensive to allow effective dissemination and delivery of inspection regime**

**Comment:** The Biosecurity Team within ST Helena's ANRD could not have been more welcoming and helpful. They allowed members of AIG staff to shadow and take part in inspections, and generously shared their forms and procedure documents to act as templates for Ascension. The training was in depth and allowed us to understand every aspect of the St Helena system. What had been slightly underestimated was the difference in infrastructure, resource availability and risk prioritisation between St Helena and Ascension that meant there was a greater degree of adaptation required to design a system suitable for Ascension than had been anticipated. This did not jeopardise the project, but did require more work and time after the St Helena visit before an Ascension-specific regime could be produced and added a delay to the consultation and training elements of the project.

**Assumption 5: Range of treatment options developed on Ascension are appropriate for all scenarios.**

**Comments:** Through this project we have developed a number of treatment options that cover all the high risk groups identified in the horizon scanning exercise and those recorded previously on Ascension and St Helena. However, reports of a bat on Ascension did demonstrate we had not covered all possibilities! The animal turned out to be a bird and the likelihood of a bat arriving on Ascension is very low, but it did illustrate that we cannot be prepared for every eventuality and may have to improvise with the skills and equipment we do have.

**Assumption 6: Cost-effective monitoring strategies are available for all species identified as high risk invaders.**

**Comments:** We have been able to put in place effective monitoring of all high risk terrestrial species within the limited resources available. Marine species are more challenging, but our newly-recruited Marine Team Leader is a specialist in the use of environmental DNA (eDNA) to identify marine non-natives. As part of the establishment of our Marine Protected Area, we hope to roll out eDNA surveillance monitoring in conjunction with the Pew Charitable Trust and University of Liverpool by the end of 2020/21.

**Assumption 7: FERA able to provide ongoing identification capability**

**Comments:** This assumption has been violated and will present some difficulty for our ongoing surveillance monitoring. It became evident early on in the project that there was not sufficient capacity within FERA to provide an identification service for all OTs and this combined with the difficulty of sending samples from Ascension led to long delays. To some degree we were



already prepared for this and have designed a border inspection and response regime that does not rely on identification; instead we are taking a precautionary approach and all organisms found in cargo will be assumed to be non-native. The lack of identification capacity will impact our ability to conduct effective post-border surveillance monitoring and pick up non-native species that have evaded the border controls. This is already compromised by our lack of knowledge about native and established non-native invertebrates. Further grant funding will be sought to establish a baseline and build systems that allow on-island identification of invertebrate species. In the meantime, we are concentrating on being able to distinguish the highest risk introductions so that they can be quickly identified if they arrive on Ascension.

**Assumption 8: The public are willing to engage with the range of education activities run through the project. People sufficiently aware of the importance of the issue to volunteer their time.**

**Comments:** This aspect of the project has not progressed as far as hoped, however, we have seen a high level of interest amongst the Ascension population and the visibility of the project during training and consultation on the strategy has led a number of people to report sightings and ask for more information. So far this assumption has not been properly tested, but there are positive indications that it will be met.

#### **4. Project support to environmental and/or climate outcomes in the UKOTs**

Non-native species are identified as the major threat to biodiversity on Ascension in the National Biodiversity Action Plan with all 17 of the Species Action Plans citing it as a major threat. The Ascension Environmental Charter includes a commitment to attempt to control and eradicate non-native species, and the Ascension Marine Protected Area Management Plan lists non-native species as one of the major threats to achieving its objectives.

This project has established a biosecurity system on Ascension, reducing the risk of new introductions and taking a major step forward in tackling non-native species on the island. This will help Ascension to meet its obligations under the Convention on Biodiversity and Convention on Migratory Species as the species identified as the highest risk future invaders would threaten Ascension's endemic plants, invertebrates, frigatebird and fish as well as green turtle, which are listed on Annex I of the Bonn Convention.

The project has been designed specifically to create an effective biosecurity system that can be operated within the ongoing capacity of AIG.

#### **5. OPTIONAL: Consideration of gender equality issues**

In this instance there is a gender aspect to the project and so this question is not relevant.

#### **6. Monitoring and evaluation**

Given the relatively low cost and short time period of this project it would be disproportionate to devote significant resources to Monitoring and Evaluation. The AIG Project Lead and Project Officer were responsible for M&E and used the internal AIG monitoring and evaluation protocols with the outputs listed in the logframe used as key performance indicators. As described in other sections of this report, these have mostly been met within the project time frame. The major slippage caused by the delay in approval for the strategy and the consequences of this for the public engagement strand, was picked up by the monitoring and recognised in the half year report. However, putting greater pressure on the Council or launching the public engagement campaign in advance of their approval risked jeopardising the Council's overall support. It was felt that meeting the other project targets and accepting a delay to the public engagement strand was the best approach. The COVID-19 pandemic may delay the public engagement work further, but the resources have been produced and AIG will have the staff capacity to deliver it after the end of this project and so the outputs will still be achieved.

The Gap analysis (Annex 4) demonstrates the very low baseline Ascension started from and the progress that has been made to achieving the project outcome. The outputs of this project have clearly contributed the necessary elements to creating a biosecurity system that simply didn't exist when the project began.

## **7. Lessons learnt**

The collaboration with St Helena's Biosecurity Team has worked extremely well and the relationships formed will continue to strengthen the biosecurity controls on both islands beyond the end of this project. The timing of this project relative to TINSOT has also been very helpful allowing the outputs and expertise available through TINSOT to feed into this project. The approach taken to consult with those who will be affected by the changes and those who will be implementing the system throughout the development of the strategy has been crucial to the success of this project and resulted in widespread support from stakeholders.

A major difficulty with this project was progressing training and public engagement before the strategy and legislation had been finalised and approved by the Ascension Island Council. This was partly due to other priorities for the Council and an unexpected gap in legal capacity on the island that could not have been anticipated, but greater effort should have been made to progress the strategy and an outline of legal powers even if the legal drafting had to be delayed. This would have given us the assurance to press ahead with training and consultation knowing they would not be significantly altered in the future.

The main recommendation from this project is to involve stakeholders very early in the process and be prepared to address their areas of concern in research and consultation material rather than provide the information you have determined is important. Really listening to people and understanding what matters to them has allowed us to provide reassurance or find solutions and compromises that meet everyone's needs.

Development of policy and legislation is always a complicated and multi-staged process. As a result of this project, greater emphasis will be placed on scoping consultations and supporting information with stakeholders prior to it being produced to ensure it is focused on the questions they want answered.

## **8. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)**

N/A – No previous reviews undertaken

## **9. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere**

This project lasted only a year and so there were limited opportunities for refinement during its duration. It will leave Ascension in an excellent position to undertake biosecurity controls, but further refinement of methods will undoubtedly take place as we enter the implementation phase. The important aspect of work over the past year is that it has built consensus and support amongst stakeholders that mean those refinements will be undertaken collaboratively.

## **10. Sustainability and legacy**

One of the main strengths of this project has been the focus from the beginning on how it would lead to a biosecurity system that could be sustained by AIG into the future. The starting point was the resources AIG would have to devote to this and working backwards from there to see if an effective system could be created within that limitation. Approaching the problem in this way has resulted in a strategy that can realistically be implemented. AIG will be the body responsible for implementing the strategy and our ownership of this project has ensured the outputs meet our needs for the sustained operation of the biosecurity system.

Ascension now has a strategy, legislation, protocols, equipment and most importantly a trained team in place to deliver much-needed biosecurity controls on the island. These elements have been tested during the development phase and will require minimal resources beyond those already available within AIG. Delivering the Biosecurity Strategy is written into the objectives of

the Director of Conservation and Fisheries and the Biosecurity Officer ensuring there are individuals responsible and accountable for sustaining the process beyond the end of this project.

## 11. Darwin identity

The Darwin logo has been used in engagement and publicity material associated with this project (Annexes 5 and 13) and the contribution made acknowledged in the Biosecurity Strategy and during discussions with the Ascension Island Council. There is good recognition of the Darwin Initiative amongst the Council and senior members of AIG due to this project and past support for high profile work connected to the MPA and endemic plant restoration.

We have not publicised the Biosecurity Strategy through social media until it has been approved by the elected Council, but once this does occur we will post about it and link to the Darwin Initiative channels.

## 12. Safeguarding

AIG is developing a safeguarding policy and regular safeguarding training is delivered by the social worker based on Ascension. There is a Code of Conduct that all AIG staff must sign at the commencement of their contract. This includes the complaints and disciplinary procedures contained with the AIG Code of Management.

No safeguarding issues or complaints have connected with this project have occurred over the last year.

## 13. Project expenditure

**Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020)**

<b>Project spend (indicative) in this financial year</b>	<b>2019/20 D+ Grant (£)</b>	<b>2019/20 Total actual D+ Costs (£)</b>	<b>Variance %</b>	<b>Comments (please explain significant variances)</b>
Staff costs				
Consultancy costs				
Overhead Costs				
Travel and subsistence				
Operating Costs				
Capital items				
Others (Please specify)				
<b>TOTAL</b>				

Expenditure is significantly lower than expected for Consultancy Costs, Travel and Subsistence and Other costs. We should receive an invoice for freight costs within the next week meaning the final total for 'Other costs' will be within 5% of the budget. Spend in the other two budget areas has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and will not now take place within the agreed duration of the project. This has not yet been discussed or agreed with the Darwin Initiative and the situation has changed only recently and still remains uncertain. Discussions will take place as soon as possible to find an acceptable solution.

## Annex 1: Report of progress and achievements against Logical Framework for Financial Year 2019-2020 – if applicable

Project summary	Measurable Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2019 - March 2020	Actions required/planned for next period
<p><b>Impact</b></p> <p>Significant reduction in the risk that new non-native invasive species will become established on Ascension</p>		<p>As a result of this project a strategy and new legislation will soon be adopted that will reduce the risk of non-native species arriving on Ascension. AIG staff are now trained and equipped to detect and respond to new introductions and there is a high level of support for these measures amongst organisations on the island.</p>	
<p><b>Outcome</b> Outcome: Ascension will have an international-standard biosecurity system incorporating pre-border requirements, compliance inspections, rapid response and surveillance</p>	<p>0.1 By Y1Q4 compliance with APHA biosecurity capability checklist</p> <p>0.2 By Y1Q4 effective inspections and response capability incorporated within AIG core functions</p> <p>0.3 By Y1Q4 At least 25% of island population aware of biosecurity issues</p>	<p>The capability checklist shows significant improvement from the 2017 baseline with Ascension now having good provision in 13 of the 22 criteria (Annex 4)</p> <p>Effective inspections and responses are being carried out by trained AIG staff following protocols established during this project (Annexes 9 &amp; 10)</p> <p>Public engagement work has not proceeded as quickly as hoped due to a delay getting the strategy approved by Council. Materials have been prepared and engagement with organisations and members of the public during the consultation has been positive. No measurement of awareness has yet been undertaken.</p>	<p>Deliver public engagement work as planned using ongoing AIG staff capacity. This will include the display of posters and banners, public meetings, displays at public events and articles in the local press.</p>
<p><b>Output 1. 1.</b> Pre border risk management system in place</p>	<p>1.1 By Y1Q2 Import health standards adopted for 4 key import types</p> <p>1.2 By Y1Q3 uptake of 4 import health standards by all importing</p>	<p>Import health standards have been prepared for eight classes of imports and will come into legal force in May 2020 (Annex 3). The standards have followed the format of those on St</p>	<p>Once the legislation is passed in May 2020, all importers will be required to follow the import health standards. Compliance will be monitored through</p>

Project summary	Measurable Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2019 - March 2020	Actions required/planned for next period
	<p>organisations</p> <p>1.3 By Y1Q2 coordination of 4 import health standards with St Helena</p> <p>1.4 By Y1Q3 Inspection visits made to 3 main importers in St Helena and UK</p> <p>1.5 By Y1Q2 biosecurity declaration required for all visitors</p>	<p>Helena and where possible the same measures have been stipulated. There has been no legal requirement to follow the Import Health Standards, but two importers and the contractors repairing the runway have already begun following them and allowing us to carry out inspections on a voluntary basis (Annex 9).</p> <p>Visits were made to three importers and shipping agents in St Helena and the UK allowing the proposed new standards to be explained.</p> <p>A biosecurity declaration form has been prepared but its formal use will not begin until the legislation is adopted.</p>	<p>the inspection regime.</p> <p>Biosecurity declarations will be required form all passengers arriving on Ascension once the legislation come into force.</p>
Activity 1.1 Create import health standards for fresh food, aggregate, plant materials and sea containers that are consistent with St Helena and international best practice		Eight Import Health Standards have been created following the model of St Helena (Annex 3)	
Activity 1.2 Incorporate health standards into new regulations		The Import Health Standards form part of the new Biosecurity Regulations	
Activity 1.3 Communicate health standards to importing organisations and create verification and reporting procedures		The Import Health Standards have been developed in consultation with importers. Compliance checking procedures are in place.	Publication of the Import Health Standards and further awareness raising among importers and visitors
Activity 1.4 One member of AIG staff travel to St Helena and UK to conduct inspection visits and communicate new import procedures with main importers		One member of AIG staff travelled to St Helena and the UK in May/June 2019 to discuss import requirements	Further awareness raising of the new standards through email contacts and the AIG website
Activity 1.5 Communicate new biosecurity restrictions to SA Airlink for inclusion in passenger information and include biosecurity declaration in entry visa		Biosecurity declaration prepared	Declaration form to be used at airport and communicated to SA Airlink staff

Project summary	Measurable Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2019 - March 2020	Actions required/planned for next period
			so they can advise passengers
<b>Output 2.</b> On island inspection regime initiated	<p>2.1 By Y1Q1 3 AIG staff trained in inspection techniques by ANRD</p> <p>2.2 By Y1Q2 6 further AIG staff trained in inspection techniques by AIG staff who visited St Helena</p> <p>2.3 By Y1Q3 inspections carried out on all high risk and proportion of all cargo and passengers at entry</p> <p>2.4 By Y1Q4 inspection regime able to detect contaminated cargo in two simulated exercises</p>	<p>3 AIG staff trained in St Helena inspection techniques (Annex 8)</p> <p>6 AIG staff trained on island to carry out inspections Jan-March 2020.</p> <p>Inspections being carried out on a proportion of cargo entering Ascension based on risk assessment (Annex 9)</p> <p>Simulated incidents demonstrated effectiveness of inspections on break bulk cargo</p>	
Activity 2.1 Three AIG staff travel to St Helena to receive training in inspection techniques		3 Aig staff were trained on St Helena by ANRD in May/June 2019	
Activity 2.2 Trained AIG staff in turn train 6 staff on Ascension in inspection techniques		6 AIG staff trained by those who visited St Helena following adaptation of inspection protocols	Widen training to include more AIG staff and people from other organisations who unload cargo
Activity 2.3 Inspection protocol designed and tested		Inspection protocol has been created and used	
Activity 2.4 Inspections carried out on all shipments		Inspections being carried out on shipments with the agreement of 2 importers. AIG will have the power to inspect all cargo once the legislation is passed in May 2020.	Inspections will continue to be carried out on cargo entering Ascension on a risk assessment basis.
Activity 2.5 Two simulated incident exercises to test effectiveness of inspections		Two simulated incidents carried out using small objects hidden in break bulk cargo	More simulated incidents will take place to ensure efficacy is maintained and include containerised cargo.
<b>Output 3.</b> Rapid response capability operational	3.1By Y1Q2 4 Incidence response plans in place and understood by key AIG personnel	Emergency response plans have been prepared for the different categories of introduction that will be encountered	

Project summary	Measurable Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2019 - March 2020	Actions required/planned for next period
	<p>3.2 By Y1Q1 3 AIG staff gain qualifications in safe use of pesticides</p> <p>3.3 By Y1Q4 appropriate treatment identified and deployed within 1 hour of detection in two simulated incidents</p>	<p>(Annex 10).</p> <p>One member of AIG staff is now trained in the safe use of pesticides and further pest control techniques (Annex 11). Other training could not take place due to a course cancellation and flight restrictions in March 2020.</p> <p>Simulated incidents were not carried out because inspections resulted in detections that allowed the response capability to be tested under real life conditions. The response procedures worked well and have improved with the delivery of training and equipment.</p>	
Activity 3.1 Purchase of container, equipment and pesticides		Equipment and treatment containers have been purchased and delivered to Ascension.	
Activity 3.2 Three AIG staff travel to St Helena to receive training and gain qualification in safe use of pesticides.		The pesticide training course on St Helena was cancelled. One member of AIG staff received training in the safe use of pesticides in the UK.	Attempt to train one further member of AIG staff in the UK once travel restrictions are lifted
Activity 3.3 Biosecurity incident plans created, tested through two exercises then refined		Emergency response plans have been created and tested following real life detections. Simulated exercises were not felt	
<b>Output 4.</b> Effective surveillance monitoring for high risk threats	<p>4.1 By Y1Q2 traps appropriate for high risk species deployed and checked at 5 key locations</p> <p>By Y1Q2 effective procedures in place to identify any novel organisms</p>	<p>A post-border surveillance monitoring protocol has been put in place to include all high risk potential introductions and is being carried out by AIG staff.</p> <p>It has not yet been possible to establish procedures for the identification of species caught during the monitoring. We are exploring ways to increase expertise on Ascension and use crowd-sourcing to identify more complicated taxa.</p>	

Project summary	Measurable Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2019 - March 2020	Actions required/planned for next period
Activity 4.1 Devise surveillance monitoring strategy to capture high risk species identified in horizon scanning project		Surveillance monitoring protocol has been produced including all high risk species (Annex 12)	
Activity 4.2 Deploy traps at five locations on island to cover points of entry and different habitat types. Begin monthly checks		Sampling is taking place at 10 locations every 2-3 months. A lower frequency of sampling over a greater area was felt to be a better use of resources.	Checks will continue
Activity 4.3 Review and strengthen existing sample preparation protocols and relationship with FERA to ensure ongoing identification of specimens		Unable to establish procedures to allow identification of samples during project	Source additional funding for baseline invertebrate survey, training of AIG staff and creation of network of experts online to allow ongoing identification.
<b>Output 5.</b> Raised public awareness of non-native species and actions to prevent the	<p>5.1 By Y1Q3 500 copies of a leaflet and four banners highlighting biosecurity risks on Ascension produced and distributed online and displayed at key locations</p> <p>5.2 By Y1Q3 at least 25% of people living on Ascension aware of non-natives</p> <p>5.3 By Y1Q4 10 Volunteers trained to spot potential new introductions</p>	The banners, leaflets and posters have been produced but will not be distributed until Council gives final approval for the strategy and legislation. We have not been able to complete the public engagement strand of the project yet due to the delay in Council approval and social distancing rules, and so we have not measured level of awareness amongst the public or trained volunteers.	
Activity 5.1 Creation of leaflets and signs be available at entry ports, online and provided to all visa and import applicants		Leaflets, banners and posters have been produced (Annex 13)	Leaflets, posters and banners will be displayed around the island, at St Helena airport and online.
Activity 5.2 Meetings with island employers and open public meetings		Meetings with island employers and individuals took place during the strategy consultation work (Annex 7)	Public meetings outlining the new strategy and legislation will be held once social distancing rules are relaxed.
Activity 5.3 Dedicated biosecurity themed activities with school and community groups and focus on biosecurity at AIGCFD visitor centre and event stalls		This has not taken place due to the delay in getting approval for the strategy and legislation and then	Displays at Ascension Island events and school activities will be organised once social distancing rules are



Project summary	Measurable Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2019 - March 2020	Actions required/planned for next period
		restrictions on public events due to COVID-19	relaxed.
Activity 5.4 Recruit and train volunteers to be vigilant for new introductions		Volunteers have not been recruited yet due to the delay in getting approval for the strategy and legislation and then restrictions on gatherings due to COVID-19	Volunteer recruitment and training events will take place once social distancing rules are relaxed.

## Annex 2: Project’s full current logframe as presented in the application form (unless changes have been agreed) - if applicable

*N.B. if your application’s logframe is presented in a different format in your application, please transpose into the below template. Please feel free to contact [Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk](mailto:Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk) if you have any questions regarding this.*

Project summary	Measurable Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
Impact: Significant reduction in the risk that new non-native invasive species will become established on Ascension			
Outcome: Ascension will have an international-standard biosecurity system incorporating pre-border requirements, compliance inspections, rapid response and surveillance	0.1 By Y1Q4 compliance with APHA biosecurity capability checklist 0.2 By Y1Q4 effective inspections and response capability incorporated within AIG core functions 0.3 By Y1Q4 At least 25% of island population aware of biosecurity issues	0.1 Copy of completed checklist 0.2 Amended workplans, inspection reports, reports of incident response exercises 0.3 Records of attendance at public meetings, number of volunteers acting as ‘eyes’. Public questionnaires	Appetite for introduction of biosecurity controls maintained within AIG and the Ascension Council.  AIG employees and importing organisations open to new working arrangements and maintain ongoing support for biosecurity controls
Outputs: <b>1. Pre border risk management system in place</b>	1.1 By Y1Q2 Import health standards adopted for 4 key import types 1.2 By Y1Q3 uptake of 4 import health standards by all importing organisations 1.3 By Y1Q2 coordination of 4 import health standards with St Helena 1.4 By Y1Q3 Inspection visits made to 3 main importers in St Helena and UK 1.5 By Y1Q2 biosecurity declaration	1.1 Import health standard documents available online 1.2 Copies of compliance certificates for all cargo 1.3 Correspondence between AIG and ANRD 1.4 Records of inspection visits 1.5 Declaration proforma and records of passenger completion	AIG Council are persuaded of the need and recommend adoption of new biosecurity regulations or instruction comes down from Governor.

	required for all visitors		
2. On island inspection regime initiated	<p>2.1 By Y1Q1 3 AIG staff trained in inspection techniques by ANRD</p> <p>2.2 By Y1Q2 6 further AIG staff trained in inspection techniques by AIG staff who visited St Helena</p> <p>2.3 By Y1Q3 inspections carried out on all high risk and proportion of all cargo and passengers at entry</p> <p>2.4 By Y1Q4 inspection regime able to detect contaminated cargo in two simulated exercises</p>	<p>2.1 Record of training attendance</p> <p>2.2 Record of training attendance</p> <p>2.3 Copies of inspection reports</p> <p>2.4 Results of simulated incident exercises</p>	<p>New biosecurity legislation is adopted giving AIG powers to inspect. AIG staff able to travel to St Helena.</p> <p>Training experience sufficiently comprehensive to allow effective dissemination and delivery of inspection regime</p>
3. Rapid response capability operational	<p>3.1 By Y1Q2 4 Incidence response plans in place and understood by key AIG personnel</p> <p>3.2 By Y1Q1 3 AIG staff gain qualifications in safe use of pesticides</p> <p>3.3 By Y1Q4 appropriate treatment identified and deployed within 1 hour of detection in two simulated incidents</p>	<p>3.1 Copies of incident response plans</p> <p>3.2 Qualification certificates</p> <p>3.3 Results of simulated incident exercises</p>	<p>New biosecurity legislation is adopted giving AIG powers to treat or destroy cargo.</p> <p>Range of treatment options developed on Ascension are appropriate for all scenarios.</p> <p>AIG staff feel sufficiently confident and empowered to enact incident response plans</p>
5. Effective surveillance monitoring for high risk threats	<p>5.1 By Y1Q2 traps appropriate for high risk species deployed and checked at 5 key locations</p> <p>5.2 By Y1Q2 effective procedures in</p>	<p>4.1 Copy of surveillance monitoring strategy and results of monitoring</p> <p>4.2 Copies of MoU between AIGCFD and FERA</p>	<p>Cost effective monitoring strategies are available for all species identified as high risk invaders.</p> <p>FERA able to provide ongoing</p>

	place to identify any novel organisms		identification capability
6. Raised public awareness of non-native species and actions to prevent the	<p>5.1 By Y1Q3 500 copies of a leaflet and four banners highlighting biosecurity risks on Ascension produced and distributed online and displayed at key locations</p> <p>5.2 By Y1Q3 at least 25% of people living on Ascension aware of non-natives</p> <p>5.3 By Y1Q4 10 Volunteers trained to spot potential new introductions</p>	<p>5.1 Copies of leaflets. Photographs of banners displayed at port and airport</p> <p>5.2 Attendance at public meetings and copies of leaflets and signs, results of questionnaires before and after project</p> <p>5.3 Attendance at volunteer training and copies of monitoring forms filled out by volunteers</p>	Public are willing to engage with the range of education activities run through the project. People sufficiently aware of the importance of the issue to volunteer their time.
<p><b>Activities</b> (each activity is numbered according to the Output that it will contribute towards, for example 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 are contributing to Output 1)</p> <p>1.1 Create import health standards for fresh food, aggregate, plant materials and sea containers that are consistent with St Helena and international best practice</p> <p>1.2 Incorporate health standards into new regulations</p> <p>1.3 Communicate health standards to importing organisations and create verification and reporting procedures</p> <p>1.4 One member of AIG staff travel to St Helena and UK to conduct inspection visits and communicate new import procedures with main importers</p> <p>1.5 Communicate new biosecurity restrictions to SA Airlink for inclusion in passenger information and include biosecurity declaration in entry visa</p> <p>2.1 Three AIG staff travel to St Helena to receive training in inspection techniques</p> <p>2.2 Trained AIG staff in turn train 6 staff on Ascension in inspection techniques</p> <p>2.3 Inspection protocol designed and tested</p> <p>2.4 Inspections carried out on all shipments</p> <p>2.5 Two simulated incident exercises to test effectiveness of inspections</p> <p>3.1 Purchase of container, equipment and pesticides</p> <p>3.2 Three AIG staff travel to St Helena to receive training and gain qualification in safe use of pesticides.</p> <p>3.3 Biosecurity incident plans created, tested through two exercises then refined</p> <p>4.1 Devise surveillance monitoring strategy to capture high risk species identified in horizon scanning project</p> <p>4.2 Deploy traps at five locations on island to cover points of entry and different habitat types. Begin monthly checks</p> <p>4.3 Review and strengthen existing sample preparation protocols and relationship with FERA to ensure ongoing identification of specimens</p>			

5.1 Creation of leaflets and signs be available at entry ports, online and provided to all visa and import applicants

5.2 Meetings with island employers and open public meetings

5.3 Dedicated biosecurity themed activities with school and community groups and focus on biosecurity at AIGCFD visitor centre and event stalls

5.4 Recruit and train volunteers to be vigilant for new introductions

## Annex 3 Example Ascension Island Import Health Standard

### Checklist for submission

	Check
<b>Is the report less than 10MB?</b> If so, please email to <a href="mailto:Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk">Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk</a> putting the project number in the Subject line.	x
<b>Is your report more than 10MB?</b> If so, please discuss with <a href="mailto:Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk">Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk</a> about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the Subject line.	
<b>Have you included means of verification?</b> You need not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	x
<b>Do you have hard copies of material you want to submit with the report?</b> If so, please make this clear in the covering email and ensure all material is marked with the project number. However, we would expect that most material will now be electronic.	
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	x
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	x
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	