

Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31st October 2020)

Project reference	DPLUS106
Project title	A Marine Turtle Action Plan for Montserrat
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Montserrat
Lead organisation	Government of Montserrat (GoM) and University of Exeter (UoE)
Partner(s)	Marine Conservation Society (MCS)
Project leader	Nicola Weber
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	Currently through @ExeterMarine

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed project implementation timetable (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end September).

Reporting period: July 2020 (project start) – September 2020

Output 1:

- 1.1: A local Project Officer – Mr John Jeffers, a former employee of the Department of the Environment for the Government of Montserrat – was contracted by the Government of Montserrat to carry out turtle monitoring July – September 2020, alongside their permanent Fisheries Data Collectors.
- 1.2: A Microsoft Access database to house all data collected pertaining to Montserrat's marine turtles has been created and sent to the local GoM Project Leader. 2 formal training sessions have been provided via Skype and ad hoc questions answered via email/ Skype as required. Some data from the 2020 season have been entered, but consolidation training is required and it is likely that this will need to be face-to-face to be most effective.
- 1.3: The GoM Project Lead has supervised his team to ensure that data collection has taken place during the 2020 field season. This is currently being digitised from the field notebooks and entered into the Access database. When done, the UoE team will review this to inform monitoring and training plans for the 2021 nesting season to further advance the systematic collection of the data. The Project Officer, Mr Jeffers, has provided on the job training to the local Data Collectors from the Fisheries and Ocean Governance Unit who have assisted him with the surveys and the collection of some nests that were moved into the hatchery and then released after hatching. Evaluation of the use of the hatchery will be carried out in Y2 when the overseas team can also input.
- Work progresses towards Outputs 1.4 – 1.9 that will be carried out during the 2021 turtle nesting season in Y2, including the ordering of equipment and developing of logistical plans, including to accommodate any developments and residual impacts with regard to restrictions imposed by COVID-19.

Output 2: All activities are planned for Y2.

Output 3: Activities to take place once international travel to Montserrat is permitted. Although community engagement meetings and semi-structured interviews were originally planned for Y1Q3/Q4, it is looking increasingly likely that this will now have to be postponed until Y2 due to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19. MCS are currently working with the local Project Leader to develop an online 'Turtle Quiz' – similar to the one used in the British Virgin Islands (DPLUS111), but adapted to suit the needs of this project and Montserrat community. The quiz is designed to collect baseline data on local knowledge and attitudes towards turtles and their conservation and will be used to inform subsequent on-island work.

Output 4:

- 4.1: The design and creation of the signage boards is underway.
- 4.2: Activities planned for Y2.
- 4.3: At the invitation of the UK Representative for the Government of Montserrat, Janice Panton, representatives from the GoM, UoE and MCS teams joined a virtual meeting of the Montserrat diaspora group (21/07/2020) to raise awareness of the project. Additionally, representatives from the GoM, UoE and MCS teams all joined a popular radio show – The Cultural Show on Montserrat Radio Echo (23/08/2020) where they discussed the project and Montserrat's turtles more generally. The discussions lasted for 1 hour 30 mins and there were a number of calls in from members of the public on Montserrat and the Montserratian diaspora asking questions and sharing local knowledge. Visits to two primary schools on Montserrat took place in August and September by the local Project Officer who brought turtle hatchlings in from the hatchery and talked about Montserrat's turtles in general. An awareness raising campaign is currently being planned to encourage engagement with the quiz described in Output 3.

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months (for Covid-19 specific delays/problems, please use 2b). Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

See below.

2b. Please outline any specific issues which your project has encountered as a result of Covid-19. Where you have adapted your project activities in response to the pandemic, please briefly outline how you have done so here. Explain what residual impact there may be on your project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

The project had originally been designed to have a full turtle survey and research work carried out in Y1 of the project with the overseas team based on Montserrat for 3 months to add capacity and training to the local team. As this couldn't happen due to travel restrictions, the full survey has been moved to Y2 (change approved) and the local team employed a retired former employee of the Department of the Environment for the Government of Montserrat to support their monitoring efforts during the 2020 turtle nesting season. There were a number of virtual meetings between the overseas and local teams (with some practical issues relating to poor internet connection) during the season to discuss monitoring methods, collection of data and methods of best practice relating to the use of their turtle hatchery. This resulted in many useful insights into the turtle nesting activity, monitoring methods and practical conservation and outreach activities. The data collected, however, is incomplete and as acknowledged by the local Project Leader, in order for new survey methodology and data management protocols to be fully embedded it is necessary for the overseas team to have a physical presence on the island. We do not anticipate any residual impacts on budget or timetable of project activities though and with the local team primed for next season, we will be ready to hit the ground

running for the 2021 turtle nesting season on Montserrat, providing that travel restrictions are eased as expected by June 2021.

In our first Change Request Form we moved the social science community meetings and interviews to be carried out by MCS to Y1 Q3/4, as it had generally been anticipated that the Island's borders would reopen by this point. However, with access to Montserrat still extremely limited, and with further restrictions potentially following the Christmas holidays, it is looking like these activities will need to be moved into Year 2. A Re-budget and Change Request will follow shortly once project partners have met to discuss the most pragmatic approach.

2c. 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.

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. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

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

N/A

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 DO NOT send these in the same email.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to 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: 25-001 Darwin Half Year Report**