

## Darwin Initiative Main Annual Report

To be completed with reference to the “Writing a Darwin/IWT Report” Information Note:  
(<https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources-for-projects/reporting-forms-change-request-forms-and-terms-and-conditions/>).

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum** of 20 pages in length, excluding annexes)

**Submission Deadline: 30<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

### Darwin Project Information

Project reference	DPLUS121
Project title	Strengthening Biosecurity to Protect Turks & Caicos’ Iguana Islands
Country/ies	TCI (Turks and Caicos Islands)
Lead organisation	RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds)
Partner institution(s)	Turks and Caicos National Trust (TCNT); Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR); San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance (SDZWA); Department of Agriculture (DoA); Environmental Health Department (EHD); Pine Cay Homeowners Association (PCHA); Waterloo Investment Holdings Ltd (WIHL)
Darwin grant value	£299,603
Start/end dates of project	01 July 2021 – 31 March 2024
Reporting period (e.g. Apr 2020 – Mar 2021) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2, 3)	April 2021 to March 2022 AR2
Project Leader name	Sarah Havery
Project website/blog/social media	<a href="https://www.nationaltrust.tc/2020/09/23/saving-the-iguana-project">https://www.nationaltrust.tc/2020/09/23/saving-the-iguana-project</a>
Report author(s) and date	Simon Busuttil, Sarah Havery. April 2022

### 1. Project summary

The Turks & Caicos Islands (TCI) has one of the weakest biosecurity capacity of all UKOTs. This multi-sector collaborative project is aiming to strengthen biosecurity capacity across TCI, enhancing protection of the islands’ natural assets. Focussing on the high profile and well-known Endangered TCI Rock Iguana, we are seeking to mitigate the impact of invasive vertebrates and plants and uncontrolled tourism across 11 islands; spanning three national parks and three privately-owned islands. Building on previous successes, this project represents the first attempt at holistic management for invasive vertebrates in the region.

Invasive species are one of the greatest threats to biodiversity in the UKOTs; and biosecurity controls that minimise the risk of new arrivals are the most effective way of reducing this threat. DPLUS055 set a strong foundation of cross-organisational partnership and improved local knowledge of biosecurity, with implementation of biosecurity on two Iguana Islands. Despite this,

risks remain high; over the last 3 years there were three incursions of invasive rodents to Big Ambergris Cay, likely through transportation of building materials. The 10-island Pine Cay complex now free of feral cats was re-invaded by rats at the start of this project. Following DPLUS055, TCI partners had a desire to further implement holistic biosecurity and highlighted significant capacity gaps to achieve this ambition.

There has been significant previous investment from TCI partners, including funding the Pine Cay cat eradication and committing to designating biosecurity staff; however further support was needed to meet the challenge to ensure these investments remain sustainable. If these issues are not addressed, the likelihood of further incursions of invasive species to iguana islands will increase and the positive benefits of the eradication rapidly lost.

TCI partners had further highlighted urgent need to address uncontrolled tourism on Half Moon Bay, TCI's premier eco-destination. Over 20 unregulated tour operators use Half Moon Bay, resulting in rubbish entangling iguanas and poor etiquette, with people touching and feeding them.

## **2. Project partnerships**

This project was fully devised following the DPLUS055 iguana conservation planning workshop in TCI in July 2019, where the Iguana Islands Partnership (made up of all project partner institutions) and stakeholders agreed the priority actions needed for iguana conservation in TCI.

The Project Steering Group has held two virtual meetings in year 2, in June and September 2021 (meeting notes and actions in Annex 4) and a face-to-face half-way review and look forward in March 2022. A wider Iguana Islands partnership group met first in January 2021 and then finally face-to-face in March 2022.

The GB Non-Native Species Secretariat (GBNNSS) Project Manager for their OT Biosecurity Project is a member of the steering group and has provided support to the Department of Agriculture (DoA) with advancing biosecurity legislation including visiting personally in March 2022 and gave a presentation at the mid-point celebration event (see Annex 4).

Wildlife Management International Ltd (WMIL), who delivered the feral cat and rat eradication from the 10-island Pine Cay complex in 2019, have been contracted to provide technical input and advice throughout the project.

In all examples above, restrictions and delays have resulted from the global C19 pandemic but at the time of writing are no longer being significant e.g. a team of staff and volunteers from San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance (SDZWA) was finally able to visit to carry out monitoring in February 2022 and face-to-face meetings of Project Partners were held in March 2022.

The partnership has expanded with additions from the NGO and commercial sectors joining. Examples include the Turks and Caicos Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (TCSPCA) and South Bank Marina. The former has been providing advice on animal welfare in relation to both active management (euthanising cats and green iguanas) and legislation and the latter have provided significant logistical help for the SDZWA through the life of the project. Further partners are expected to join.

His Excellency, The Governor of the Turks and Caicos was briefed personally on the project by the Biosecurity Advisor in January 2022.

## **3. Project progress**

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

#### **Improving Site Management**

Agreed rat control plans meeting international best practise have been implemented on both Pine and Little Water Cays. Over 1000kg (worth over \$17,000) of Klerat bait was donated by Syngenta towards this. Staff from Pine and Little Water Cays have been working together to improve techniques and develop best practise. This includes collecting standardised data (see Annex 4 for examples)

Biosecurity monitoring has been carried out monthly on Big Ambergris Cay and a potential rat sighting responded to in line with the agreed (international best practise) Biosecurity Plan in March 2022. As of writing no rat is believed to be present on Big Ambergris Cay. Full records have been kept - see Annex 4.

No stakeholder workshop for a management plan of Big and Little Ambergris Cays has yet been carried out. Big Ambergris Cay has been incredibly supportive of work on both Ambergris Cays and an approach has been made to the owners with an offer of closer partnership working.

A combination of initial focus on Pine and Little Water Cays plus Covid restrictions on international travel preventing SDZWA visiting Ambergris has meant that progress on signage and actions to increase awareness amongst the various stakeholders on Big Ambergris has been limited. SDZWA visited in March 2022 and actions have been agreed to move this forward.

Agreement has been reached with the managers of the South Dock extension that services Big Ambergris Cay to establish biosecurity measures there (primarily baited rat stations). One of the two barge companies regularly visiting Big Ambergris Cay has agreed to establishing rat control on board its boats. The other has been approached but no response has been received yet. We have recently come to believe that a third company is now visiting Big Ambergris Cay and are investigating this.

Assessments were carried out of six other cays for rats following the failure of the pre-project eradication in 2019. Rats were confirmed on all these islands except Bird Cay. Just one remains to be surveyed.

At Half Moon Bay 14 acres of Australian pine (*Casuarina equisetifolia*) was cleared and treated under license from DECR. Work was carried out by volunteers using equipment purchased by RSPB which will remain with TCNT. Ca 30% of the total area has been cleared so far.

Targeted approaches to tour companies led to two workshops being held with staff from one of the biggest three companies to raise awareness of biosecurity issues (particularly the need to stop cats and dogs from arriving on the islands and the threat from Australian pines) and the need to follow the Iguana Code of Conduct. The other two large companies have been approached with a positive response from one of them though no workshops have been arranged yet. Two smaller companies have been positively engaged with a view to workshops when the peak tour season is over (photos in Annex 4).

Social media and TV have been used to communicate the need for this management and there has been far less opposition or comment on the Australian pine clearance at Half Moon Bay than anticipated. No specific stakeholder meeting has been carried out so far, as progress has been effective through action on the ground including engaging with tour companies on site whilst management is taking place. Integration with initiatives run by DECR with the industry is planned for April 2022. Stakeholders are thus being engaged but through a different approach.

## **Building Biosecurity Capacity**

The Biosecurity Advisor arrived in TCI in April 2021. A Pine Cay Biosecurity Officer was recruited in November 2021. The TCNT employed Biosecurity Officer for Little Water Cay has been active throughout.

Work continued supporting the development of effective biosecurity legislation in TCI. During the period the Directors of two of the three partnering Government Departments left their posts and the third Department was split into two, following a change of Government in April 2021. Despite all these significant changes, a Cabinet Paper on Biosecurity Policy has been produced and is awaiting approval. The paper recommends amending two existing Ordinances – Plant Health and Animal Health – to include management of invasive species.

Training - a mixture of workshops and in-the-field coaching has been carried out by the Biosecurity Advisor for TCNT staff and management, the Pine Cay Biosecurity Officer and the Head of Security on Big Ambergris Cay (the management team member with responsibility for biosecurity). Subjects covered for TCNT and Pine Cay staff include data quality and management. No formal training has been carried out with staff from Government departments yet. In total six staff from three partners have received training to a variety of levels.

Twelve staff from one tour company attended two training workshops which included biosecurity alongside how to behave at Half Moon Bay.

The Biosecurity Advisor has planned the approach to developing Green Iguana response teams on South Caicos, North Caicos and Providenciales looking at embedding both equipment and training in suitable communities or organisations to ensure continuity after the project. Initial contacts have been made with the key stakeholders on all three islands.

Magazine adverts, articles, social media and talks have been made to raise the awareness of the threats posed by green iguanas and Australian pine (see Annex 4 for examples).

The Biosecurity advisor has spoken with several key players on the island to raise the issue particularly of the threat of green iguanas. Awareness material (see Annex 4) including the Green Iguana hotline number has been circulated. Examples include messaging on Homeowner Association WhatsApp Groups, Pest Control and Landscape Gardening Companies and Resorts.

## **Understanding Ecological Impacts**

Eight of the ten islands in the “Pine Cay complex” have been assessed through survey for presence of rat. Of these, seven have rats present. Cats have not been recorded. It is too early to confirm whether the implementation of the Pine Cay rat control plan is effective at reducing numbers of rats. The monitoring being carried out will be able to demonstrate if this is the case.

Monitoring of rock iguanas does not yet show a statistically significant change in the number of juveniles present in the area where cats have been eradicated. Monitoring will continue through the lifetime of this project.

No plant surveys have been carried out and the value of this activity has been re-assessed in the light of rat re-establishment on the relevant Cays. Its purpose was to be a broad-brushed assessment of any vegetation changes post rat eradication.

Iguana and Boa surveys have been carried out on Big Ambergris Cay in March 2022 and a total of 27 iguana blood samples for rodenticide assay were collected.

Grouper Cay was assessed for presence of rats in December 2021. Unsurprisingly, rats were confirmed as present with signs being found in ca 60% of stations. The presence of rats on a recipient site for a translocation is not ideal and so the idea of a translocation to Grouper is being reviewed in the light of this significant development.

## **Increased Biosecurity Awareness by Tour and barge Operators**

An Iguana Friendly Code of Conduct has been agreed between stakeholders and signed off by DECR. The Tourist Board is currently being replaced with a Destination Marketing Organisation which will have other priorities initially so an approach has been made to the Turks and Caicos Hotel Association (TCHA) to see if they would support its development.

The Code has been fully incorporated into the workshops being delivered by the Biosecurity Advisor to the Tour Companies alongside supporting stories and information. Materials supporting this have been produced.

Two workshops with 14 attendees have been completed with one operator. They are committed to ca 30 staff attending when schedules allow. Four other companies have been approached. The four largest tour operators are all included in these five.

No meetings have yet been held with resorts/hotels. These will be stronger if the TCHA supports the idea of Iguana Friendly certification.

As support to the above various posts on social media and the Watersports WhatsApp Group have been made to raise awareness of issues at Half Moon Bay.

To support the messaging around Half Moon Bay, a small co-funded study on the economic benefits of Rock Iguanas to TCI has been produced (final draft being completed at time of writing). This is appended in Annex 4.

## **Project Management**

There have been no significant issues regarding project management or reporting (financial or activity).

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

#### **Output 1. Improved site management – Pine Cay complex and Big Ambergris Cay**

Significant progress has been made towards this output.

Cats remain absent from Pine, Water and Little Water Cays following eradication.

Site management of Little Water and Pine Cays has been improved. A Pine Cay Biosecurity Officer was recruited in December 2021 joining a TCNT Officer working on Little Water Cay. Both are now implementing internationally best-practise rat control plans (see Annex 4) under the training and guidance of the Project's Biosecurity Advisor.

It is however not feasible to control rats at present on Water Cay or on any of the other smaller cays in the complex.

Development plans have been submitted for Water Cay which sits between and is conjoined with Pine and Little Water Cays. The Biosecurity Advisor, RSPB and DECR are working closely together to try to ensure any proposed development does not jeopardise the management progress made. The Biosecurity Advisor has met with the TCIG planning department and the developers to explain the level of investment to date and what measures need to be taken or put in place to secure it.

Around 14 acres of Invasive Australian pine (*Casuarina equisetifolia*) has been removed from Half Moon Bay under the direction of the Biosecurity Advisor and there is now apparent stakeholder understanding of why this management is beneficial.

A planning application has been submitted to erect a shelter on site to form a base for two TCNT staff members to engage with visitors around "iguana etiquette" (ie behaviour on site).

On Big Ambergris Cay (BAC) the internationally best practise Biosecurity Plan produced during DPLUS055 is being implemented under the direction of the Biosecurity Advisor. A possible sighting of a rat on the cay in March 2022 was responded to in accordance with the plan and is ongoing at the time of writing. All visits by the Biosecurity Advisor involve meeting island staff and raising the profile of biosecurity. A meeting has also been held in March 2022 with the CEO of the islands ownership company to discuss improving biosecurity further.

Agreement has been reached with the owners of the primary departure point on Providenciales for boats to BAC and with one of the two Providenciales based companies running barges to BAC to increase biosecurity. A new route direct to BAC from Dominican Republic has been identified.

In March 2022 SDWZA staff and volunteers were finally able to monitor iguana populations on the Pine Cay complex and Big Ambergris Cay. They also carried out planned boa monitoring and continued with monitoring Iguana roadkill on BAC. The results are attached in Appendix 3.

## **Output 2. Improved biosecurity capacity within TCI partners**

Significant progress has been made towards the achievement of this output.

The Biosecurity Advisor started work on the islands on 10th April 2021. The biosecurity capacity of two partners – TCNT and Pine Cay has been strengthened through their employment of biosecurity officers under the direction and guidance of the Biosecurity Advisor. Additionally, the Advisor has been working with these two partners to ensure the posts and other necessary measures are embedded in the management structures through training in data quality control and management plan training.

Three biosecurity staff (the advisor plus the two officers) are now regularly interacting with Big Ambergris Cay to facilitate better joint understanding of issues and free flow of information, techniques and practices). Discussions with Big Ambergris Cay management regarding their employment of a biosecurity officer continue with a meeting with the CEO of the holding company on this issue in March 2022.

TCNT's institutional strengthening plan (which includes biosecurity) is being led by the TCNT Executive Director and is underpinning the Trust's work and investment at Little Water Cay and Half Moon Bay (eg Cabinet paper mentioned above).

The Department of Agriculture is leading on the Cabinet Paper on Biosecurity policy. The paper has been drafted by an experienced consultant based on a template produced by the GB Non-native Species Secretariat. A detailed suite of draft amendments has been produced to enact biosecurity measures. These have been incorporated into four pieces of existing and draft legislation: animal and plant health Ordinances and associated draft Regulations. All three government department partners are supportive and good progress has been made despite significant leadership changes.

Through the project the Biosecurity Project Officer of the GB NNSS visited TCI in February 2022 and met with Government partners. Discussions focussed on equipment and training needs to support better border biosecurity.

DECR and the Biosecurity Officer continue to work closely particularly on the Green Iguana hotline – the publicised method for the public to report sightings. Five sightings of possible green iguanas have been made and all responded to. Of the five, three were green iguanas and two were euthanised, one escaped. Policies and standardised operating procedures are being prepared as a result of learning from experiences to date eg to clarify acceptable methods of euthanasia. Whilst green iguana response teams have not yet been set up across the inhabited islands, work to raise awareness of the issue with individuals, communities and organisations has taken place and the current ability to respond is adequate.

## **Output 3. Improved understanding of ecological impacts**

Progress towards this output is now progressing well after a slow start delayed by C-19 travel restrictions.

A team from SDWZ visited in February and March 2022 and collected data on iguana and boas on the relevant cays. The baseline blood analysis of rodenticide impact on iguanas has been established and repeat monitoring made. There are though administrative and licensing delays to

The planned re-introduction of rock iguanas to Grouper Cay is being re-assessed in response to the re-invasion by rats.

The planned collection of plant datasets on Little Water and Pine Cays will not go ahead. The datasets were to be broad-brushed (lists of species in particular seedlings) rather than finely detailed. The fact that rats have not been extirpated means that there is limited or negligible value to this activity.

#### **Output 4. Increased awareness of biodiversity, biosecurity and the impacts of invasive species resulting in improved/better managed tour & barge operator practices**

The proposed baseline questionnaire was designed by the RSPB's Senior Social Scientist. The delay to the Biosecurity Advisor's arrival and on-island Covid restrictions in place when he arrived prevented the questionnaire being used prior to significant awareness raising work being carried out. As a result, no "pre-project" baseline data has been collected.

Once meetings with tour and barge companies were underway it was clear that given the limited time they were making available in their commercial schedules, the time was better spent actively communicating about the issues. Different methods of assessing behavioural impact are being looked at.

#### **Output 5. Effective Project Management**

C-19 restrictions restricted face-to-face meetings but meetings of the Iguana Islands Steering Committee (the project steering group) took place via video. The wider Iguana Islands Partnership Group designed around face-to-face meetings on-island met finally around a celebratory workshop on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022 in Providenciales, TCI. On-island the Biosecurity Advisor has held regular meetings with most partners and occasional meetings with the remainder.

### **3.3 Progress towards the project Outcome**

The project outcome is stated as Increased biosecurity capacity and stakeholder commitment to **safeguard the endemic Turks & Caicos rock iguana and its natural habitats**. The project is on course to achieve this as demonstrated by progress on the delivery of the seven indicators. The only significant concern is with progress against indicator no. two.

The first measurable indicator is that *the 10-island Pine Cay complex remains cat-free and Big Ambergris Cay remains invasive-predator free throughout project and beyond, with rapid and effective responses delivered to invasive mammal incursions*. As measured by the single means of verification, this is clearly being achieved now and there is considerable progress towards making sure that this will continue beyond the life of the project. The indicator is a key measure for what is happening during the life of the project. What is harder to measure is how secure the new ways of operating into the future, how embedded they are in partner organisations and thus how likely they are to continue.

There has been no measured progress towards achieving the second indicator which is *to reduce human impact on iguanas on Big Ambergris Cay through a halving in iguana road mortalities by 2023*. Monitoring has been carried out to enable measurement and the indicators are SMART. Iguana mortality remains high, and no workable measures are yet in place. A plan to close the gap towards achieving this will be developed by Yr 3 Q1.

There has been good progress towards achieving the third indicator *to improve the capacity within TCI partners/stakeholders to lead biosecurity efforts collaboratively and independently by 2023*. The indicator is still highly relevant to judging the project outcome and will likely be achieved at the end of the project. One of the three means of verification that a Cabinet paper to TCIG for addressing biosecurity gaps (0.3.3) has been produced though not yet approved, there has been progress against one other, that TCI partner staff workplans include leading biosecurity efforts and stakeholder training (0.3.1) and the third will be carried out at the end of the project, the repeated capacity assessment report (0.3.2).

The fourth indicator – *that increased biosecurity awareness shows greater compliance with biosecurity protocols from 10 tour operators using iguana islands by 2023* - is still a highly relevant indicator. It is likely to be fully achieved by the end of the project. There has been considerable progress towards 0.4.1 and 0.4.2 though achievement of the latter depends entirely on the full participation of a third party outside the project partnership. 0.4.4 will be carried out at the end of the project. The repeat assessment report (0.4.3) will need to be re-stated. It has not proven possible given the very short time that operators have available outside their core activities to go through a face-to-face questionnaire as originally devised. Given the time available the

Biosecurity Advisor felt it was more important to get messages across. A different way of judging whether operators have changed behaviour will be drawn up with the support of RSPB social scientists during 2022.

The fifth measurement is *that the number of iguanas is stable or increasing against baseline, across the 10-island Pine Cay complex and Big Ambergris Cay throughout project, with an increase in range through one re-introduction in 2022/23*. This indicator is the core measurement of the project outcome and thus remains fully relevant. Of the two component parts of the indicator, the first will most likely be achieved. The second (the re-introduction) may not be actioned. This would be due to the partnership taking a decision that in the light of rat re-invasion conditions were no longer suitable. It would thus be an active decision as recognised by the means of verification (0.5.2) being a plan which states the grounds on which such a trans-location should not be actioned.

The sixth indicator - *Increased evidence of the benefits of invasive species eradication for iguanas, and regional recommendations for practitioners on multi-island eradications, and biosecurity for islands at high risk of reinvasion, produced by 2023* - will most likely be achieved by the end of the project and will be demonstrated by the single means of verification.

The seventh, that *a national biosecurity policy is endorsed by the TCI Government and national biosecurity legislation is drafted and submitted to Cabinet for approval, with the support of at least one Minister*, is likely to be achieved. Both means of verification are already well advanced.

### **3.4 Monitoring of assumptions**

Outcome and output level assumptions/risks. There are no significant issues in managing these, they all still “hold true” and no new significant risks have been identified

#### **Assumption 1: TCI Government continue to see importance of biosecurity to TCI’s native wildlife and related industries**

The Government of TCI changed in April 2021 with many members new to Government. This has meant a different set of personnel to bring up to date with the issues. Post C19 the Government is focussed on economic growth. The project has adapted to meet these challenges. Briefing meetings have been held and an economic impact study produced to monetarise the value of rock iguanas in an economic context.

#### **Assumption 2: Tour operators and developers ready to engage in discussions about biosecurity**

These groups have if anything been more willing to engage than expected.



**Assumption 3: The 10-island eradication project is successful at removing all invasive mammalian predators**

Rats re-invaded in 2019 (before this project formally started). Cats however were the greatest threat to the iguana population therefore we are still expecting to see population increases in time.

**Assumption 4: The project is not affected by extreme weather events such as hurricanes**  
No impact yet.

**Assumption 5: Private-island management continue to engage with collaborative biosecurity efforts**

Both private islands continue to fully engage with the project

**Assumption 6: The economic impact of the global covid-19 pandemic does not impact TCI Government's ability to engage**

TCI Government's primary focus has of course been managing and now recovery from C19. This focus has extended to the departments. This has perhaps slowed down project progress. Project messaging has been adapted to this eg focusing on resilience and adapting to new Government initiatives such as food security.

**Assumption 7: Private-island owners remain committed to developing biosecurity.**

See comments above

**Assumption 8 It remains possible for project staff to access all of the islands. This currently holds true due to equipment purchased in DPLUS055**

There are and have been no issues

**Assumption 9: Government agencies are committed to inputting and approving management plans. The key agencies are project partners and are fully supportive of the project**

Commitment is there in principle, but resource limitations are the limitation to developing plans

**Assumption 10: Successful recruitment of appropriate candidates**

There have been no issues with recruitment

**Assumption 11: TCI partners remain committed to addressing biosecurity capacity gaps, as demonstrated with hiring Biosecurity Officer for Pine Cay / Big Ambergris**

Partners appear to remain committed.

**Assumption 12: TCI Government continue to see importance of biosecurity to TCI's native wildlife and related industries**

The relevant Government Department heads continue to show strong support for improved biosecurity capacity. This despite personnel changes.

### **3.5 Impact: achievement of positive impact on biodiversity and poverty alleviation**

The project has a positive impact on poverty alleviation directly as a significant number of lower-waged workers are employed in the tour industry, a significant component of which is based on the “iguana experience”. This project helps protect the asset (healthy visible rock iguana populations) underpinning this.

Green Iguanas pose a threat to agricultural output (primarily on N Caicos) and to the increasing number of small supplementary subsistence gardens and plots that are created largely by poorer community members on the islands. This project will reduce the risk of invasion by this species.

At a broader level we know that threats and/or weaknesses in resilience almost always adversely affect poorer communities and individuals disproportionately. This project will have an influence on increasing resilience through better biosecurity.

## **4. Contribution to the Global Goals for Sustainable Development (SDGs)**

The project contributes to Global Goals no.15 *Life on Land*.

## **5. Project support to the Conventions, Treaties or Agreements**

The project contributes to the UK’s commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Article 8(h) on alien species; Article 12 on research and training; and Article 13 on public education and awareness. In addition, it delivers against Sustainable Development Goals 15 (Life on Land) and 17 (Partnerships).

The project also delivers against the 25-Year Environment Plan (2018) target “to prevent human induced extinction or loss of known threatened species in UK and the Overseas Territories”, and strategic priorities (i) baseline data and (ii) invasive species of the UK Government’s Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy (2010).

The project will deliver the priority conservation actions outlined in the IUCN Turks and Caicos Rock Iguana Conservation and Management Plan 2020 – 2024 (Annex 4).

The project was presented at the IUCN Iguana Specialist Group Conference hosted by project partner SDZWA (<https://www.iucn-isg.org/next-meeting/>) with the presentation included in Annex 3.

Finally, the following TCI government priorities are addressed:

Revised National Parks Ordinance (2016) through supporting management actions spanning across two national parks (Princess Alexandra Land & Sea National Park, Princess Alexandra Nature Reserve; Fort George Land & Sea National Park)

The National Tourism Policy and Strategic Implementation Plan (2015)

The Environmental Charter (2001) Principle 7 (To safeguard and restore native species, habitats and landscape features, and control or eradicate invasive species).

## **6. Project support to poverty alleviation**

Whilst outwardly TCI has all the appearances of wealth (luxury holiday destination etc) this is of course facilitated by a large population of low-income families. The island also attracts low-income economic migrants particularly from Haiti. There is thus considerable poverty on the main holiday islands. Additionally, wealth is concentrated in Providenciales and relatively little of it trickles to the other islands. This project will contribute to alleviating these factors in the following ways:

- Protection of economic assets

- Protection of agricultural assets

All communities are expected to benefit in some way from the increased biosecurity capacity resulting from this project. Incursions (biosecurity breaches) will cost money to deal with. Reducing the risk of breach reduces the risk of the expenditure having to be made and thus diverted from elsewhere (eg social programs). The project will also raise awareness of the importance of the natural assets of TCI and the need to invest in them.

## **7. Consideration of gender equality issues**

Both the project team and project steering group comprise of ca 50% women, ranging from technical delivery of biosecurity and awareness raising to Director-level project steering support. Of the four TCI-based Government partners, three are led by women.

One of the two biosecurity officers employed under the project remit is a woman. This is important as it helps reduce the embedded cultural view that women can't or don't lead fieldwork and technical roles in TCI, roles generally regarded as men's roles. This project will continue to advance this movement and will assist with providing an inclusive environment where women can lead in fieldwork roles. Technical assistance to the project from both UK and NZ is provided by women in the relevant roles. The Project Leader in UK is female. These are important role models for the communities on TCI.

This project will also help start to address the challenge that conservation jobs in TCI are often not seen as a career, particularly in the NGO sector, and therefore can suffer from high staff turnover. The TCNT wardens on Little Water Cay are often from disadvantaged backgrounds, therefore this project will provide training and support to these roles.

## **8. Monitoring and evaluation**

The logframe has been formally amended at each reporting period to reflect the changing realities of the project (eg rat re-invasion) through change requests and so remains relevant with clear links from activities to outputs. The links from activities through to impact thus still feel valid.

M&E is largely carried out by the lead partner RSPB. Consultation with other partners takes place through the regular project meetings (see section 2 above). The Biosecurity Advisor is based in TCI and has regular contact with most partners particularly TCNT, DECR, SDZWA and the two privately owned islands. This allows ongoing conversations about progress against objectives as the Advisor is line managed by the Project Lead Sarah Havery who discuss the project monthly.

A number of spreadsheets and other tools (eg for data collected on biosecurity and rat control visits, stakeholder workshops) are used to both monitor and evidence activities. Most are the responsibility of the Biosecurity Advisor to collate. Financial data is collated by the RSPB's Finance Department. Monthly reports are produced and quarterly financial review meetings are held. RSPB has an internal TCI focus group which meets monthly to discuss issues including those within and adjacent to the project. An example of the latter would be the proposed development of Water Cay.

## **9. Lessons learnt**

The main lesson learnt was the value of flexibility

i.) across the project activities – some being able to be progressed fast and others put on hold – as island adapted to post Covid conditions.

ii.) in response to local conditions eg moving ahead with physical management at Half Moon Bay ahead of having a more formal stakeholder process.

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

Six items were listed in the comments and queries section (2) of the feedback on the first Annual Report. These are dealt with here.

- The project timeline was updated at the half year report.
- The Biosecurity Officer's CV is included in Annex 1 of this report
- The two outputs from the TCNT Institutional Strengthening work are included in Annex 4 of this report
- A link to the TCI Rock Iguana Conservation Management Plan 2020 – 2024 is included in Annex 4 of this report
- The Project M&E Plan has been amended in light of comments – included in this report as Annex 3.1
- The comment about links between Rock Iguana specific and wider Biosecurity issues has been considered and is responded to directly here;

Feedback received after Year 1 reporting suggested that the project team consider whether the project objectives, logframe & indicators should be amended to reflect an expansion from its agreed focus (Project Outcome) on the TCI Rock Iguana to the wider issue of invasive alien species (Project Impact). It mentioned specifically work on the Biosecurity Policy and the *Casuarina* management plan to illustrate this.

The project impact remains the same. *That the unique species and habitats of the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) are protected from invasive alien species and continue to provide critical nature based national development benefits into the future.* Improved biosecurity capacity to deal with both current and future threats, management of *Casuarina* on the specific site of Half Moon Bay and the use of that activity to communicate about the threats of invasive species (and the consequent need for improved biosecurity) in general and specifically as applied to rock iguanas have always been part of the project plan.

It may be that the annual reporting did not make clear the scope of the management plan. The plan is specifically for Half Moon Bay and thus the management proposed is specifically directed at iguanas. It may also be that the annual reporting should have been clearer that the biosecurity policy being developed was required as part of the process of getting legislation passed by TCIG (a key project deliverable).

## 11. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

The project has not faced any particular risks or difficulties this year outside those discussed above. Discussions about legacy and exit strategy are now taking place within both the lead partner (RSPB) and between partners.

## 12. Sustainability and legacy

A half-way celebration event was held with partners and key stakeholders on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022. Relevant Government Ministers were invited but did not attend. A follow up one-to-one briefing session is planned.

The economic impact study will be given a high-profile launch and will land with some sectors (in Government and commerce) in a way that has not happened before by giving a monetary value to Rock Iguanas and hence an understanding of the Rol of conservation work.

There is clearly concern about biosecurity threats across Government departments but current lack of resources and (to a lesser extent) training to meet that threat.

There is some awareness of the threats from breaches of biosecurity eg many individuals are aware of the Green Iguana issue on Grand Cayman. Some firms particularly landscaping firms appear to be pro-active in mitigating risks. However, this is a small sub-set of what is required.

The exit strategy remains the same – the Project is largely about creating a legacy of relevant legislation, stronger institutions, greater awareness and trained individuals.

### 13. Darwin identity

An effort has been made to publicise the Darwin Initiative. The Darwin Logo appears on the partnership signature for all e-mails on island as one of the several partners. For most materials produced (inc on social media) the Darwin logo appears alongside just the TCNT logo as it is felt that, in country, these are the two most important elements of the partnership to promote.

Darwin is mentioned as a funder in almost all talks, interviews etc. See Annex 4 for examples. The recently produced report on the economic benefits of rock iguanas to the TCI economy also mentions Darwin funding.

Darwin is funding several projects in TCI presently so awareness at least amongst the relevant communities (Government and practitioners) is high.

In some posts (though not all) Darwin has been hash-tagged. At least one example is included in Annex 4.

### 14. Impact of COVID-19 on project delivery

Impacts from Covid on delivery have been detailed at half-year and in previous sections of the report. Delays to appointments, inability for experts to travel and Government and business focus on economic recovery have all had their impacts. At the time of writing the project is catching up and it is not foreseen that there will be an adverse impact by the end of funding.

### 15. Safeguarding

Please tick this box if any safeguarding or human rights violations have occurred during this financial year.

If you have ticked the box, please ensure these are reported to [ODA.safeguarding@defra.gov.uk](mailto:ODA.safeguarding@defra.gov.uk) as indicated in the T&Cs.

### 16. Project expenditure

We have not yet received all financial information from project partners, so a complete detail of expenditure will follow in the expense claim for the fourth quarter of the project.

**Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022)**

Project spend (indicative) since last annual report	2020/21 Grant (£)	2020/21 Total Darwin Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs (see below)				
Consultancy costs				
Overhead Costs				
Travel and subsistence				
Operating Costs				
Capital items (see below)				

Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)				
Others (see below)				
<b>TOTAL</b>				

## 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.	Yes
<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.	No
<b>Have you included means of verification?</b> You should not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	Yes
<b>Do you have hard copies of material you need 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.	Yes
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	Yes
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	