

Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus Half Year Report

Note: If there is any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website, please ensure you clearly highlight this.

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2022

Project reference	DPLUS127
Project title	Improving reef resilience through sustainable fishery management on Diego Garcia
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)
Lead partner	Zoological Society of London
Partner(s)	Bangor University and University of Guam
Project leader	Dr David Curnick
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR2
Project website/blog/social media	N/A

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).

Most of the last 6 months has been spent preparing for our first expedition. As noted in our annual report, we had hoped to finally run this expedition in Y2Q2. However, the crucial military flights to Diego Garcia were unavailable throughout that period. Thus, we have been working to put everything in place for the expedition to run in Y2Q3. We are now all booked onto military flights to Diego Garcia on the 8th of November 2022 and will be there for three weeks (except Dr Claire Collins who will be staying for an additional week). The expedition team is as follows

Dr David Curnick; ZSL; Expedition lead
 Dr Claire Colins; ZSL; Social science lead
 Dr Ronan Roche; Bangor University; Benthic photogrammetry lead
 Dr Brett Taylor; University of Guam; Reef fish and fisheries lead
 Andrew Mc Innis; University of Guam; Reef fish and fisheries assistant
 Kathryn Dawson; Tritonia Scientific; Dive Officer

All necessary expedition planning (e.g., permit applications), diving risk assessments and advanced equipment procurement has been completed (again). As reported previously, the social survey plan (i.e., our participatory mapping approach) we developed in conjunction with the Environment Officer and the Marine Management Organization (MMO), is ready for implementation and will be led by Dr Claire Collins next month. This plan has previously been reviewed and approved by the University of Exeter's ethics committee.

Key activities completed

1.1 Review and analyse existing MWR logbook data and protocols.

This activity has now been completed (up to and including 2021 data) and formed part of an MSc student project at the Royal Veterinary College supervised by Dr David Curnick. The project was awarded a Distinction.

1.2 Review analyse, and report on existing creel survey data.

This activity has now been completed and a short report was produced in July 2022. This report will be used to inform our participatory mapping approach during our upcoming expedition in November 2022.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

For much of this period, we have been waiting for flights to become available to Diego Garcia. These have come through slightly later than had hoped, but we must appreciate that military and official business on Diego Garcia takes precedent over scientists/civilians. Nonetheless, we have been preparing all the necessary paperwork and procurement to travel to Diego Garcia on the 8th of November and collect the first round of field data for the project.

3. Have any of these issues been discussed with NIRAS-LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with NIRAS-LTS: No

Formal Change Request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance No

Change request reference if known:

4a. 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: £

4b. 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 re-budget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget 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.

5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

Whilst further delays to the expedition have been unfortunate, we are confident that we will still deliver on the aims and objectives of the project. We have also started planning for our second expedition in March 2023.

We do not currently envisage any significant underspend this financial year. However, during our upcoming expedition in November, we will be discussing logistics of our second expedition. This is currently planned for March 2023, and therefore still within Y2. Should we need to shift the dates of this expedition slightly to April 2023, then some of the expenditure and budget will need to move to Y3. Should this be desired, we will submit a change request form in December 2022.

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response (including the submission of your risk register), or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response 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 NIRAS-LTS International through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to BCF-Reports@niras.com. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Half Year Report**