



**Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects
Half Year Report
(due 31st October 2021)**

Project reference	DPLUS144
Project title	Protecting South Georgia from climate change-invasion synergies
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI); Falkland Islands
Lead organisation	Durham University
Partner(s)	Royal Botanic Gardens Kew (Kew), British Antarctic Survey (BAS), South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI)
Project leader	<i>Wayne Dawson</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>HYR1</i>
Project website/blog/social media	<i>n/a</i>

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).

Output 1: We held our first project management meeting on the 12th of July 2021, with project partners and representative of the GSGSSI present (activity 1.1 completed). We discussed and agreed on planning actions for the 1st fieldwork period of the project and for Output 2, and postdoctoral research assistant (PDRA) recruitment strategy. The PDRA position was advertised by DU, and 5 candidates out of 27 applications were interviewed on the 24th of September. An offer was made to the best candidate (Dr Pierre Tichit) who has accepted the offer, and he will start the position on the 1st of December (activity 1.2 completed). A Falkland Islands based field assistant has also been recruited by SAERI (Ryan Irving). A collaboration agreement has been drafted by DU, for consideration and agreement by project partner institutions (1.3 in progress); we aim to have the agreement completed by the end of 2021.

For logistical and administrative reasons (see section 2a), the project team agreed to postpone the 1st fieldwork period of the project to March 2022. As a result, fieldwork site selection (1.4 in progress) and production of fieldwork protocols (1.6 in progress) are ongoing, and we aim to have these completed by the end of November 2021. Subsequent fieldwork permits (1.7) and logistics planning (1.8) will be completed in December by the PDRA. A UK-based team meeting at BAS (Cambridge) will be held in December 2021 or January 2022 to include the PDRA (1.5).

Output 2: Seven native plant species and 8 non-native plant species have been initially selected for the planned experiment: seed collections from South Georgia are available from Kew for all native species and for 5 non-native species (2.1 completed). Seeds of species will be collected where possible during the first fieldwork season for all species, but especially the remaining non-native species. Back-up collections from elsewhere are also available from Kew for these species.

Output 3: N/A

Output 4: N/A

Output 5: The project webpage is in the design-phase and its launch will be postponed to December 2021 for inclusion and input from the newly hired PDRA (5.1). As a result, the first webinar will be advertised (5.2) and held later than originally planned (5.3- aim for Jan 2022), allowing fieldwork planning to be prioritised for the rest of 2021.

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.

Administrative delays at the start of the project meant that PDRA recruitment and position start date are later than originally planned: the PDRA will start on 1 December 2021 (2 months delay). This was because DU was not allowed to advertise the PDRA until the grant agreement letter was received. Therefore, we made a change request to shift funds covering 2 months' of PDRA staff costs from the beginning of the project (financial year 2021-2022) to 2023-2024, to ensure the PDRA position lasts for 24 months as advertised.

In addition, there are logistical limits on access to South Georgia in the 2021 field season period (demand for travel on the Pharos ship is high this year due to covid-related postponed fieldwork of other researchers; the Pharos will also be out of action in dry-dock over the fieldwork season until March 2022). As a result, we decided to postpone the fieldwork period for Output 1 to March 2022, and we have reserved space on the Pharos with GSGSSI. While fieldwork in the Austral Autumn period may increase the risk of disruption due to adverse weather, it also increases the chances that viable seeds of species required for Output 2 can be collected.

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.	
No specific issues. The PDRA will be required to quarantine on arrival in the Falkland Islands before travelling on to South Georgia for the first fieldwork period, but the cost of this was already factored into our project budget at the stage 2 application stage, and it should not affect the timetable of project activities.	
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

<p>3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Estimated underspend: £</p>
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?</p> <p>None</p>

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**