

Darwin Plus: Overseas Territories Environment and Climate Fund Annual Report

To be completed with reference to the "Project Reporting Information Note"
(<https://dplus.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources/information-notes/>).

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

Submission Deadline: 30th April 2022

Darwin Plus Project Information

Project reference	DPLUS 147
Project title	A collaborative approach to managing coral disease in UK Overseas Territories
Territory(ies)	The British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands
Lead partner	JNCC
Project partner(s)	Turks and Caicos Islands - Department of Environment and Coastal Resources, British Virgin Islands - Ministry of Natural Resources, Labour and Immigration, Cayman Islands' Government Department of Environment, Nature2
Darwin Plus grant value	£496,257
Start/end dates of the project	July 2021- March 2024
Reporting period (e.g. Apr 2021-Mar 2022) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2)	July 2021- March 2022, Annual Report 1
Project Leader name	Bryony Meakins, JNCC
Project website/blog/social media	https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/collaborative-coral-reef-working-group/
Report author(s) and date	Bryony Meakins

1. Project summary

Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease spreads rapidly across reefs in the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories (OTs), threatening biodiversity, tourism, food security, livelihoods, and disaster resilience. An urgent priority, this project will develop a robust collaborative approach to managing the disease in the Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands, and the British Virgin Islands and consider modelling approaches to inform adaptive management options. Knowledge exchange will be extended to all Caribbean OTs, and a longer-term partnership to support coral reef resilience will be fostered.

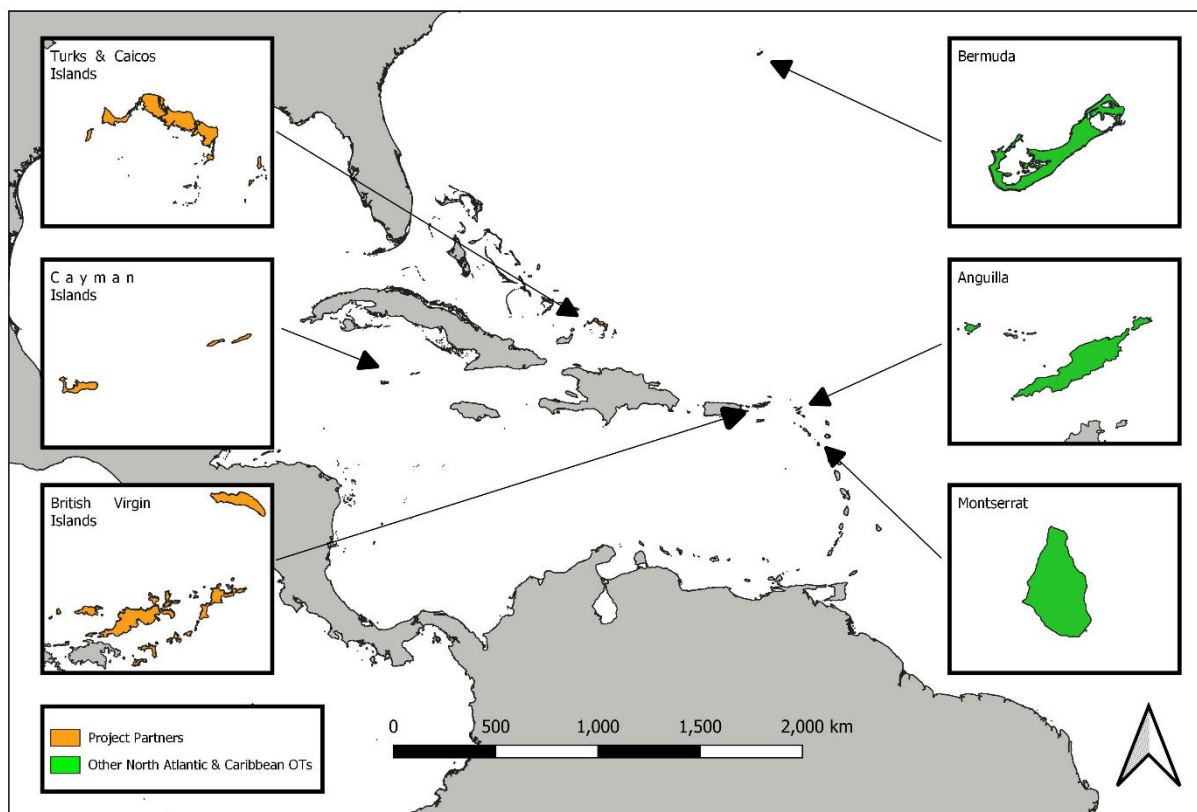


Figure 1. Map showing locations of DPLUS147 OT project partners and key stakeholders.

2. Project stakeholders/partners

The working group has met 10 times (Annex 1) between the project start and the end of March 2022 and has involved members of all project partners, including the partner OTs. The group membership is much wider than project partners and involves key stakeholders within the OTs of the partners, such as NGOs (TCRF, CCMI and MCS) and educational establishments (School for Field Studies, TCI). Active group membership is also widened out to non-partner OTs that have confirmed the presence of SCTLD, such as Montserrat and Anguilla and OTs without the disease present (Bermuda). Given the importance of prevention and early detection of SCTLD outside the Caribbean region, the online Teams platform has also been made available to OTs with tropical coral reefs outside of the region (BIOT & Pitcairn).

3. Project progress

3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities

Progress against activities for Output 1:

The Collaborative Coral Reef Working Group met for the first time under Darwin+ funding on 13th July 2021. We were fortunate enough to receive Defra funding to pilot the approach between December 2020 and June 2021, so meetings were able to seamlessly continue when funding was confirmed. The C-COT partnership agreements outline the working group's aims and ways of operating; these were discussed on 7th September 2021 and formalised and agreed with members on 5th October 2021. Meetings were delivered throughout the financial year as agreed based on member availability, and 10 meetings were held between July 2021 and March 2022. Members agreed to have an informal approach with scientific experts and invite speakers on an ad-hoc basis to present to the group. Table 1 outlines the science experts, their subject focus and the date to which they presented to the group. A more formal arrangement was made with Dr Blake Ushijima following his presentation on using probiotics to treat SCTLD, where the opportunity to collaborate with him to develop probiotic cultures for our Darwin Plus Annual Report Template 2022

partner OTs presented itself. A partnership agreement was drawn up between group members, outlining the purpose of the group and outlining roles and responsibilities. In late 2021, members began discussing the outward-facing identity of the CCRWG, and in February 2021, the name of the CCRWG was formally changed to Coral Conservation in the Overseas Territories (C-COT).

Table 1. Science experts presented at the C-COT Working Group meetings between March 2021 and April 2022, their presentation topic, and presentation date.

Science Expert	Topic	Date
Blake Ushijima, University of North Carolina	Probiotics to treat SCTL	30/03/2021
Dr Greta Aeby	Environmental Cofactors – Findings from NOAA Disease environmental co-factors working group	20/04/2021
Sarah-Frias Torres, Vulcan	Brainstorming with Vulcan: ‘SCTL game changer’	11/05/2021
Dr Ernesto Weil, University of Puerto Rico	Historical Perspective of coral disease	08/06/2021
Alizee Zimmerman, Turks and Caicos Reef Fund	Coral cure D SCTL treatment trials in TCI	13/07/2021
Dr Greta Aeby and Alexander R. McLeod, DECR	Chlorinated cocoa butter SCTL treatment trials in TCI	13/07/2021
Emma Irving, JNCC	Behavioural Science for Conservation	03/08/2021
Amdeep Sanghera, Marine Conservation Society	Community voice method, engaging stakeholders in marine conservation policy	03/08/2021
Dr Greta Aeby	Presentation on DPlus147 SCTL Treatment Strategy	09/11/2021
Will Greene, Perry Institute for Marine Science	Photogrammetry for coral reef monitoring	16/11/2021
Dr Mike Sweet, University of Derby	Aquaria for coral rescue and restoration	25/01/2022
Emily Hardman, Marine Management Organisation	Marine Biosecurity and Ballast Water Resources	22/03/2022
Michael Studivan, NOAA Affiliate	Understanding transmission sources and treatments for SCTL	19/04/2022
Dr Greta Aeby	<i>Diadema</i> Die-off in the Caribbean	19/04/2022

Progress against activities for Output 2:

A SCTL status report was produced following regular updates provided at meetings by OTs and collated by JNCC. This baseline status report was shared and agreed with the PMG on 18th January 2022. Project partner Dr Greta Aeby was tasked with collating all existing understanding around the treatment of SCTL presented this to the group to gain feedback. Dr Aeby presented her summary on 9th November, 2021 and used this, and any feedback given, to form the basis of the Collaborative Treatment Strategy. The document also outlines key scientific considerations for members when setting up treatment trials to collect high quality data. The document was shared with C-COT on 22nd March 2022 and signed off through the PMG and C-COT on 25th March 2022.

SCTL Treatment in TCI:

Under DPLUS 147, the TCI continues to develop its capacity to monitor its coral reefs and respond to SCTL. The Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR), in local partnership with the Turks and Caicos Reef Fund (TCRF), has led public outreach efforts with the aim to identify individual colonies suspected to be SCTL resistant, targeting highly

susceptible coral species first (*Colpophyllia natans*, *Dendrogyra cylindrus*, *Diploria labyrinthiformis*, and *Meandrina meandrites*). Those colonies identified would later be sampled for the potential development of probiotic treatments in partnership with Dr. Blake Ushijima. This programme has started and will continue in FY 22/23. Lessons learned from Will Greene in photogrammetry techniques for coral reef monitoring led to the DECR investing in relevant computer and underwater camera equipment to enable such methods to be used in their ongoing monitoring and research activities. C-COT meetings have supported the DECR in remaining up-to-date on contemporary issues threatening coral reefs, specifically new information regarding SCTL and the new regional threat of a *Diadema* disease outbreak. Finally, the DPLUS 147 is enabling the DECR to partner with TCRF to further trial antiseptic treatment options from Ocean Alchemist; this process has started and will continue in FY 22/23. It is also believed that by strengthening the relationship between Government and NGOs, the TCI will be better equipped to monitor and manage its coral reefs.

SCTL Treatment in the Cayman Islands:

The funding provided from through the Darwin+147 grant from October 2021 to March 2022 was used to purchase amoxicillin and Base2B, the chosen treatment option available for Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTL) to contribute to the overall disease treatment effort by the Cayman Islands Department of Environment (CIDoE). From May to December 2021, a total of 21,821 corals were treated by the CIDoE (Figure 2), a portion of which, were funded through the budget allocated through this project. From July 2021 to February 2022, CIDoE's Eastern District Strike Team treated 4,365 corals and provided weekly treatments to the highly susceptible Pillar coral (*Dendrogyra cylindrus*) colonies within their monitoring area on the East End of Grand Cayman. The remaining funding from JNCC was used to pay salaries of nine trained SCTL Response Divers, contracted by the DoE.



Figure 2. Figure outlining the Cayman Island Department of Environment's SCTL disease treatment efforts and a photograph © Tammi Warrender of a coral treated with antibiotics.

SCTL Treatment in BVI:

Since the discovery of SCTL in the British Virgin Islands back in May 2020, the main way of combating the disease was by administering antibiotics to slow the lesion progression of the disease. With minimal success, the Government of the Virgin Islands collaborated with the National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands and used the project funding to recruit Dr. Greta Aeby toto train government officials in the medicated clay band method, which previously had shown some success in treating corals in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Three treatment sites were set up with one site in Tortola (Wreck of the Rhone, the Territory's only Marine Park) and two sites off Virgin Gorda (Little Grotto and Seal Dog Island). At each site, an in-depth coral survey was conducted. Corals showing signs of SCTL and healthy corals of susceptible species were flagged and subsequently tagged with cow tags to easily identify and mark the progression of the lesions, photographed and mapped accordingly. As a control measure, some tagged colonies were left untreated, while others were treated with the

cocoa butter-chlorine powder mixture covered with a clay band (medicated clay band). These trials will continue into FY 2022/2023 and will be monitored to determine the rate of success.

Progress against activities for Output 3:

The literature review on reef resilience models was started and will continue in FY 2022/2023.

Progress against activities for Output 4:

The Project Management Group was established and included in the ToR for the CCRWG. The PMG met 4 times between July and March, and it was agreed that the meeting scheduling would be quarterly or as required. The M&E plan was drafted to include gender disaggregation and signed off by the PMG and working group on 15th March 2022. The mid-year report was submitted in December 2021.

3.2 Progress toward project Outputs

Output 1: Collaborative partnership to optimise the treatment and management of Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) established

A successful collaboration has been established between the Caribbean and Western Atlantic Overseas Territories. STCLD remains a devastating disease that has significant impacts for our partner OTs.

Output 2: Optimised treatment and management of SCTLD using best available scientific evidence and expertise

Progress has been made in delivering treatment and management of SCTLD in the OTs, with new treatment methodology trials underway, including probiotic sampling, in conjunction with Dr Blake Ushijima, chlorine trials guided by Dr Greta Aeby, natural antiseptic (honey) trials and a continuation of antibiotic treatment. Capacity in the OTs remains limited with many pressures placed upon key staff members, highlighting the importance of project partners to include wider partners to deliver appropriate work, e.g. NGOs, dive operators, and volunteers.

Output 3: Conceptual Reef Resilience Model to support the long-term management of coral reefs

Work towards this output started this year, but was rescheduled to allow learnings from ongoing projects in some OTs (e.g. DPLUS 150) to gain maximum benefit.

Output 4: Project management, monitoring and evaluation

A robust project team and governance structure has been established within CCOT meetings as well as a project management group (PMG) that meets quarterly or as required. Monitoring and Evaluation documents have been signed off through the PMG.

3.3 Progress towards the project Outcome

Outcome: Effective collaboration is established that shares information, knowledge, skills, resources and tools that supports evidence-based decisions to address the spread of Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease in three Caribbean OTs

Good progress has been made towards an effective collaboration that addresses SCTLD in the three partner OTs and the three additional Caribbean and Western Atlantic OTs who have also more recently detected SCTLD in their waters (Montserrat and Anguilla) or wish to be as prepared as possible should it appear on their reefs (Bermuda). Attendance is good from government agencies, but more efforts will be made this coming year to broaden representation

within CCOT from other key stakeholders in the SCTL D response, such as NGOs and dive operators. Discussions will shift to the group's long-term prospects, developing an exit strategy beyond Darwin+ investment.

3.4 Monitoring of assumptions

Assumption 1: Political will remains to support the project

Comment: MoA's signed by OT cabinets outline high-level commitment and support for the duration of the 3-year project. SCTL D remains a high priority within OT governments, but many other competing priorities may affect staff availability and resources.

Assumption 2: Partners remain committed and have the capacity to engage in the project

Comment: This assumption holds, OT partners remain fully engaged in project work. This is demonstrated through active engagement and attendance at C-COT meetings and regular fortnightly catch ups with individual partner governments. Group attendees regularly share lessons learnt with one another in group meetings.

Assumption 3: The work prepared for future bids aligns and is suitable for future funding streams

Comment: Changes to the project timeline and the development of a reef resilience model framework mean that currently, this assumption holds true but has not been tested. This will need to be revisited in Y2 of the project based on the reef resilience model framework outcome and other modelling exercises underway within the coral reef community. Once developed, it will be reassessed whether a bid to develop a new model is required or if sufficient models exist that can be modified to suit OT requirements.

Assumption 4: Experts and on-island Project Officers are available in a timely manner to contribute to discussions

Comment: This assumption is still correct, evidenced by the attendance of experts regularly at C-COT meetings and the continued attendance of project officers at C-COT meetings, project management group meetings and fortnightly project catch ups. Where project officers have been unable to attend, they have nominated a colleague to attend in their absence, as outlined in the C-COT terms of reference.

Assumption 5: Covid-19 or other natural disasters do not prevent Project Partners/Officers from collaborating at appropriate times

Comment: Covid-19 and other natural disasters did not prevent project partners from collaborating through remote, online mechanisms and attending C-COT meetings throughout the project. However, Covid-19 restrictions did impact the delivery of fieldwork in some partner OTs due to work from home orders. Similarly, the after-effects of contracting Covid-19 did impact an NGO collaborator's ability to conduct fieldwork in Y1 due to prolonged sickness and an inability to dive.

Assumption 6: Covid-19 or other natural disasters do not prevent in-field training

Comment: Covid-19 did impact the ability to deliver the first workshop planned in the project and as such this workshop has been moved to Q2 Y2 in the summer months where the impacts of Covid-19 and hurricanes are likely to be minimised during this season.

Assumption 7: The partners continue to be able to undertake SCTL D treatment

Comment: The partners have been able to undertake SCTL D treatment throughout Y1 of the project; however, some factors have impacted this, including poor weather conditions, Covid-19 restrictions, and staff resource availability. Moving forward, partners are planning to begin fieldwork earlier in the year in Y2 to avoid poor weather conditions as much as possible. Partners have also identified on-the-ground collaborators in the form of NGOs and dive operators involved in the delivery of SCTL D management activities to reduce the demand on limited government staff resources.

Assumption 8: Experts available to support treatment and management of SCTL D

Comment: Assumption still holds, as demonstrated by the range of experts available to present to C-COT and work with OT partners, as listed in Table 1. In addition, Dr Greta Aeby, a project partner, remains under contract through the project to provide scientific advice to the OTs.

Assumption 9: OT project partners have the technical abilities to feed into the model framework design

Comment: This assumption has not yet been tested as the development of the model framework has been postponed to Y2 of the project. This assumption will be re-visited in Y2 reporting.

Assumption 10: Project remains a priority with OT partners. OTs ensure continued staff and resource availability and engagement.

Comment: This assumption remains; OT partners remain fully engaged in project work. This is demonstrated through attendance at C-COT meetings and regular fortnightly catch-ups with individual partner governments. Partners have also committed staff time and resources to support an in-person workshop in Y2 which further demonstrates continued engagement.

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

Project outcomes support UK policy objectives within the **UK Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy (UKOTBS) and the 25 Year Environmental Plan (25YEP)**. Strategic priorities under the UKOTBS include providing UK Government support to: 1) enable data collection on the location and status of biodiversity interests and the human activities affecting biodiversity to inform the preparation of policies and management plans (including baseline survey and subsequent monitoring); and develop ecosystem-based initiatives for the conservation and sustainable use of the marine environment. By supporting SCTL management and managing coral reefs for resilience, this project will also contribute to the following key policy areas of the **25YEP: Recovering nature and Securing clean, healthy, productive and biologically diverse seas and oceans**.

The **UK OT Coral Reef Initiative** was started to respond to the UK Government's **25 Year Environment Plan**, which states: "*Coral reefs are under direct and sustained pressure. The UK's ambition is to champion and support their conservation and biodiversity in UK and Overseas Territories' (OTs') waters and around the world-to work with OTs to encourage the adoption of best sustainable management practice of coral reefs, as well as their associated ecosystems. We want to provide sustainability for fisheries and ensure food security while upholding social and cultural wellbeing.*"

The project also supports the **UKOT Coral Reef Action Plans** developed as part of the **UK OT Coral Reef Initiative** outline priorities for coral reef conservation in the UKOTs. A key priority is improving collaboration across OTs to knowledge share and build capacity to support management action.

Although some of the partner OTs are yet to ratify the Convention of Biological Diversity, it is under consideration to do so by OT governments and this project will contribute to achieving **Aichi Targets 1 (Public Awareness), 10 (Vulnerable Ecosystems), and 19 (Knowledge, Science and Technology)**. **UNCLOS 61(2)** also requires coastal states to take 'into account the best scientific evidence available to it' in determining conservation and management measures.'

At national levels, the project supports goals in the **TCI Vision 2040: 'SDD 3 – Healthy and Natural Environment and Heritage and Cultural Areas; NC3.1 Good Ecosystems, marine and aquatic resource management'** by supporting the 'development of management frameworks and increasing management capacity through stakeholder partnerships'. A **TCI Environment Strategy** is being developed, and DPLUS147 supports objectives: 1) 'Provide a framework for the sustainable management of natural resources to protect the future of healthy and

productive ecosystems at land and sea’ and 3) ‘Facilitate the sharing of data between stakeholders so that the environment can be monitored and managed efficiently’.

The Cayman Island Environment Charter (CI/UK) outlines a commitment from the Cayman Islands Government to *‘Ensure the protection and restoration of key habitats, species and landscape features through legislation and appropriate management structures and mechanism’*. DPLUS147 contributes to **Cayman Island National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP)**, particularly the **Coral Reefs Habitat Action Plan**, supporting goals to *‘maintain and manage the variety of habitats, communities and species on coral reefs’* and *‘seek improvement of coral reefs which have been degraded’*.

The project is also contributing to the goal outlined in **The Green Paper on Environmental Management Climate Adaptation and Sustainable Development for the [British]Virgin Islands** to *‘actively promote and advance the restoration of the natural environment’* and the (British) **Virgin Islands Climate Change Policy**, by increasing the resilience of ecosystems to climate change by reducing the stress on these systems from controllable local impacts.

5. OPTIONAL: Consideration of gender equality issues

The gender split within the C-COT working group consists of 12 men and 10 women. Age ranges amongst C-COT members from early 20s to mid-50s.

Recordings of all training and expert presentations have been used to provide accessibility at times convenient for stakeholders. Future in-person venues will be made accessible for those with physical disabilities. In Y2, as the project hosts the first in-person workshop, specific consideration will be given to accommodate those with caregiving responsibilities by taking a flexible approach to planning and timing of sessions, alongside recording sessions for those that are unable to attend. Final project outputs will be made accessible to those with learning, visual or hearing impairments and follow Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

6. Monitoring and evaluation

There is a strong monitoring process, with outputs and activities and documents being assessed and approved by both the PMG and the wider C-COT group. The Monitoring and Evaluation Plan was written and approved in Q4 and the project also retains the Risk Register as a further tool to monitor the progress of the project. The PMG, which is comprised of representatives from each partner institution (and meets quarterly) is jointly responsible for monitoring and steering the project, ensuring it aligns with the project proposal, and that the project is delivered on time and within budget. Whilst the PMG is a critical component of the monitoring and evaluation process, JNCC takes a leading role in assessing the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and Risk Register.

The project logframe is a core component of the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and provides a clear set of indicators and outputs against which the project can be assessed. Timeframes have been amended (through an approved Change Request) for some deliverable approval dates (including the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan itself) in the logframe as a result of delays in the project start date and challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. Progress towards the stated Outcome and Outputs can be clearly cross-referenced with the relevant indicators and information on a number of these is clearly demonstrated in this report, particularly related to C-COT’s running and associated activities. Reflecting on future changes in this area, now that the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan has been approved, this year will involve more in-depth discussions with the PMG on the project evaluation and more clarity of the roles and responsibilities associated with this plan.

7. Lessons learnt

The engagement has been high at C-COT meetings. Group discussion and interactive engagement are an important part of this. Attendance has been patchy at times. It is important to establish why and addresses it through ongoing reviews and questioning. So far, periods of low attendance at C-COT meetings have coincided with times of on-island workshops or busy periods such as the end of the financial year. Highlighting the demand on partner staff time.

Established the C-COT partnership agreement was a simple process and widely accepted by C-COT members, showing members' willingness to partake long-term in C-COT. This agreement provides a solid governance base for co-operation.

The C-COT chair reflected that it can be challenging soliciting feedback during the C-COT setting and it is important to build in on-going opportunities for partners to provide feedback and make use of smaller settings and 1-1 feedback sessions on more important topics.

Engaging with other networks is extremely important but can be very time consuming. This requires a dedicated point of contact and open communication and collaboration to ensure success and will be considered in more detail in Y2.

The C-COT newsletter seems to be an excellent tool for engagement between meetings and maintaining momentum, but contributions are mainly from the secretariat with some contributions from C-COT members, in Y2 we would like further to encourage ownership and participation in the newsletter from members.

Recommendations for similar projects:

Develop a strong and responsive secretariat

Foster transparent communication

Allow flexibility so that partnerships and engagement can evolve

8. Sustainability and legacy

Partner OTs have increased their capacity to conduct SCTLTD management due to the provision of funds for these activities provided through MoAs and have enabled NGOs, dive operators and volunteers to be funded to carry out further activities. In addition, all members of C-COT have increased access to the most up-to-date science and experts working in the region, as evidenced in Table 1, scientific experts that have collaborated with C-COT. Increased capacity and information to support OT's SCTLTD responses is also evidenced in the production of project outputs, including the C-COT collaborative SCTLTD treatment strategy which outlines guiding principles for treatment trials, data collection and making evidence-based management decisions. In addition, there has been increasing interest in C-COT from external conservation organisations looking to collaborate with the group and members, most of these collaborations are currently in discussion and include NGOs such as The Reef World Foundation (Green Fins initiative), other regional working groups, academics and private, scientific consultants. C-COT has also established a close working relationship with NOAA's Caribbean Co-operation Team, NOAA's Disease Advisory Committee and the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network Steering Committee.

The current planned exit strategy still stands, in Y2, the project will begin to consider the ownership and identity of C-COT beyond the life of the project and potential sustainable financing mechanisms to support the sustainability of the group.

9. Darwin identity

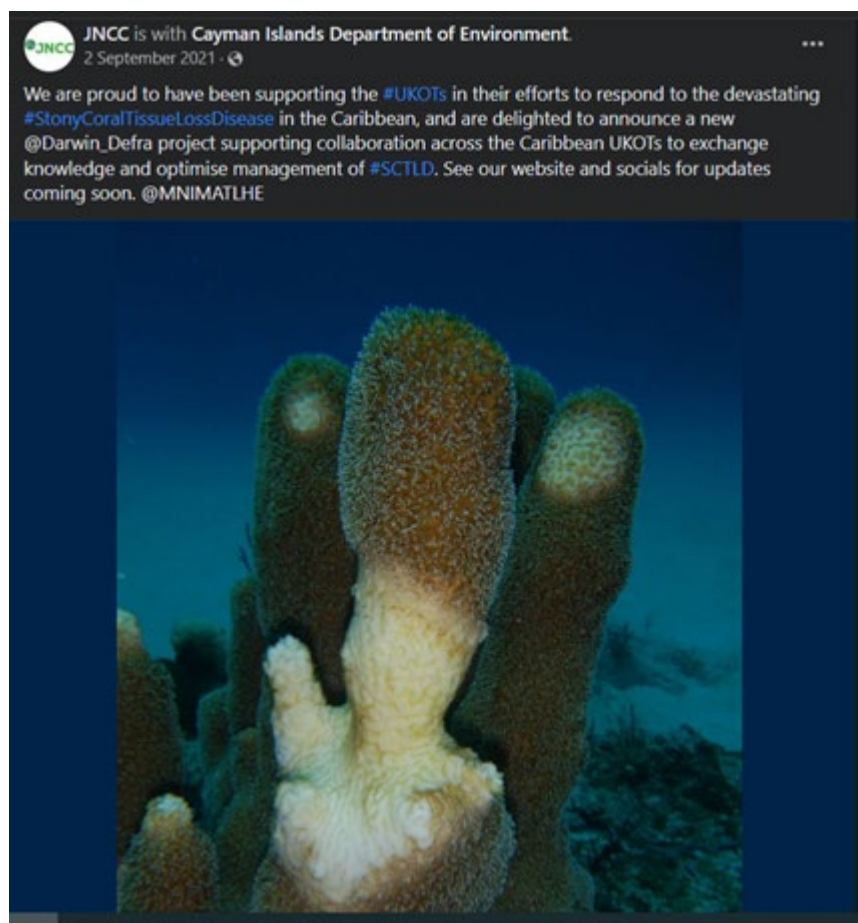
The DPLUS147 project has publicised Darwin Plus funding through a range of communication materials intended to reach project partners and stakeholders in the Overseas Territories, C-COT members, NGOs, funders, and the general public. Communication mediums which

highlight Darwin Initiative funding through reference and the use of the logo include social media posts (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn), weekly C-COT newsletters (Mailchimp), a project summary leaflet, and a project webpage.

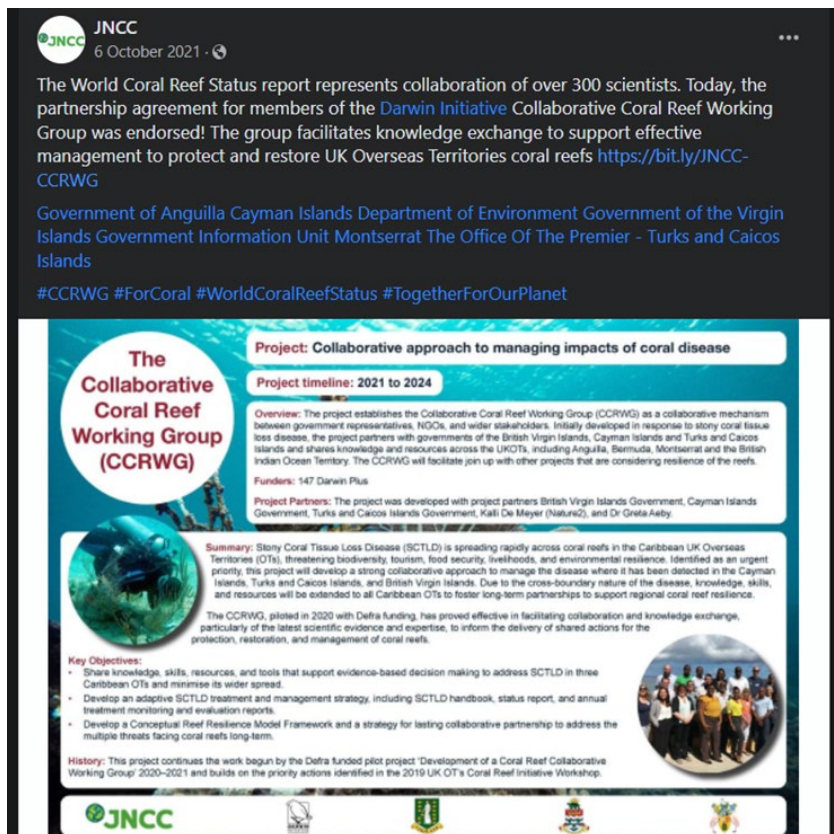
Darwin Plus is recognised throughout communications as funding a distinct project which is continuing the funding for the C-COT working group as part of DPLUS147. Regular DPLUS147 project updates have been provided to partners through PMG meetings and C-COT working group meetings, so partners and stakeholders in the Overseas Territories are familiar with the project delivery, and Darwin Plus provides that funding.

Communication materials promoting the Darwin identity are evidenced below:

Social media post 02/09/21: DPLUS147 project start announcement with @Darwin_Defra handle. 12 shares including project partners in the Overseas Territories.

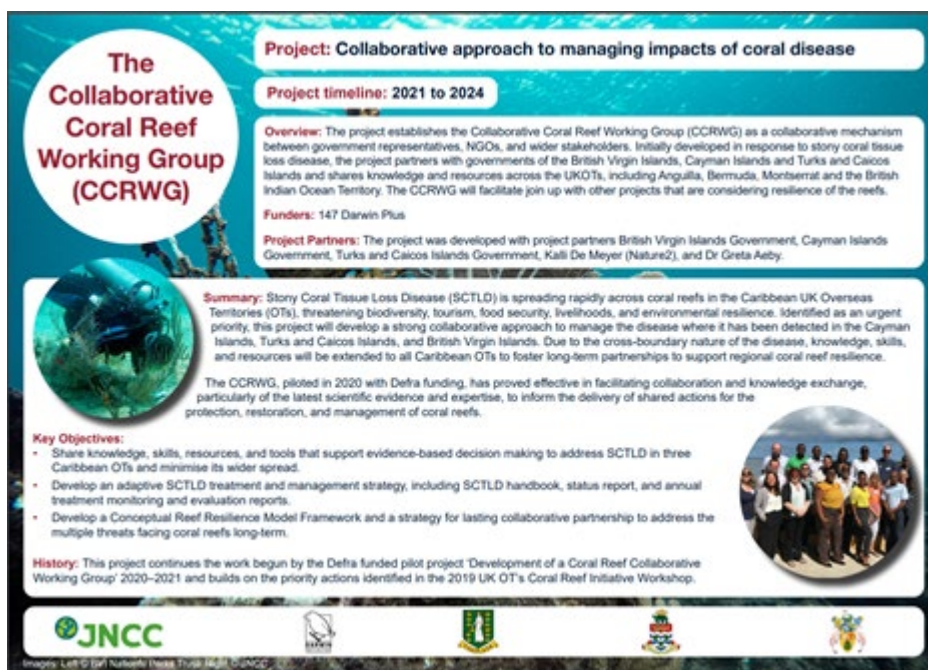


Social media post 06/10/21: Darwin Plus funded C-COT Working Group partnership agreement announcement highlighting Darwin initiative membership and linking to the Darwin Initiative Facebook page.



C-COT Newsletter: a weekly newsletter providing C-COT members with project information, meeting updates (agendas, minutes, and recordings), and resources relating to coral reef and marine management, including news, guides, training, webinars, conferences, scientific and technical developments, events, and relevant literature. Recognition of funding support is given to the Darwin Initiative in the Acknowledgments section alongside the Darwin Initiative logo. The C-COT working group has provided feedback that the newsletter is a valuable resource they would like to continue. To date, no members have unsubscribed from the mailing list.

DPLUS147 Project Summary Leaflet: provides an overview of the project highlighting Darwin Plus as the funder in writing and with the Darwin Initiative logo.



DPLUS147 Project JNCC Webpage: provides a summary of the project, including the context, objectives, outputs, and related work, highlighting Darwin Plus funding in the preamble. The Darwin Plus Annual Report Template 2022

webpage details the establishment of the C-COT working group and clearly states that the group is now funded by the Darwin Initiative under the DPLUS147 project. The Darwin Initiative logo and acknowledgment statement is included in the 'Partners and Funders' section.



10. Impact of COVID-19 on project delivery

COVID-19 continues to impact project delivery in a number of different ways. Firstly, a planned workshop in Y1 in the Cayman Islands was delayed to Y2 due to the continuing travel restrictions in 21/22. This change was formalised through a change request submitted in December 2021. Secondly, when travel did open up, the OTs experienced a significant increase in the number of workshops in Q4, which significantly impacted their ability to carry out fieldwork. Due to this second point, we have decided to move the planned Q4 workshop from Q4 2022/2023 to Q1 2023/2024

11. Safeguarding

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

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

12. Project expenditure

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

Project spend (indicative in this financial year)	2021/22 D+ Grant (£)	2021/22 Total actual D+ Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs	██████████	██████████	██████	Busy work schedules in the OTs with multiple competing projects meant that the meetings originally planned for every 3 weeks at the beginning of the project were requested to reduce to every 4 weeks, resulting in slightly less staff time being spent than planned.
Consultancy costs	██████████	██████████	██████	
Overhead Costs	██████████	██████████	██████	Tied to staff costs, see explanation above.
Travel and subsistence	██████	██████	██████	
Operating Costs	██████████	██████████	██████	Illness due to Covid-19 and delays in getting MoAs in place resulted in underspend by partner OTs for fieldwork. A change request has been submitted to the Darwin+ panel to request these unspent funds in 2022/23.
Capital items	██████	██████	██████	
Others (Please specify)	██████	██████	██████	
TOTAL	████████████████████	████████████████████		

13. OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements of your project during the reporting period (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes

I agree for the Darwin Secretariat to publish the content of this section (please leave this line in to indicate your agreement to use any material you provide here).

In the past year, C-COT has facilitated access to the most up-to-date scientific thinking around SCTL through the inclusion of a range of experts in the group from behavioural scientists to molecular biologists and disease ecologists. The baseline status of SCTL in the 5 Caribbean UKOTs where SCTL is present has been established and continually monitored qualitatively through C-COT. Coral mucus samples have been taken from partner OTs and sent to Dr Ushijima at the University of North Carolina screening to screen for potential probiotics from the

region for the development of SCTL D treatment, which will progress further towards practicality application in Y2. application in Y2. C-COT has developed a treatment strategy to guide partner fieldwork in SCTL D management to capitalise on the collaborative element of the project, maximising efficiencies across OTs to ensure that findings are scientifically robust to support management decisions and progress the response to SCTL D across the UKOTs.

Checklist for submission

	Check
Different reporting templates have different questions, and it is important you use the correct one. Have you checked you have used the correct template (checking fund, type of report (i.e. Annual or Final), and year) and deleted the blue guidance text before submission?	
Is the report less than 10MB? If so, please email to Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk putting the project number in the Subject line.	
Is your report more than 10MB? If so, please discuss with Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the Subject line.	
Have you included means of verification? You should not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	
Do you have hard copies of material you need to submit with the report? 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	
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	