



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

Project reference	DPLUS157
Project title	Managing the pathogens threatening St Helena's biodiversity and food security
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	St Helena
Lead organisation	CABI
Partner(s)	St Helena Research Institute (SHRI), Environment, Natural Resources and Planning Directorate (ENRP)
Project leader	<i>Rob Reeder</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	16/11/21; HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	https://blog.cabi.org/2021/09/27/cabi-to-work-in-partnership-to-help-protect-st-helenas-biodiversity-and-enhance-its-agriculture/

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).

The grant offer letter from Darwin was sent on 16th September 2021. Adding a few days for preparing the supplier form, signing off the acceptance letter and having the project internally set up, activities could only start in early October, which is a whole quarter delayed compared with the proposed start of 1st of July 2021 in the submitted proposal.

A first inaugural team meeting took place on the 21st October, however planning for a first team visit to St Helena began right at the start of the project and flights and accommodation are already arranged for the period 14th February to 9th March; the earliest possible due to significant flight restrictions still in place.

Rob Jackson from BIFoR and Amy Webster, the PhD student involved in this project visited CABI on 21st to discuss cooperation during the project and how the facilities at Egham can be used to assist Amy's work.

During October most of the capital equipment and consumables for the laboratory were purchased and are currently on their way to St Helena arriving well in time for the first team visit. This will allow a joint set up of the laboratory facilities by the team and for training in the use of the equipment to take place during the first visit.

In addition, background research including a literature review has also already started and an activity agenda for the first onsite visit is under development.

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.

This project involves extensive surveys of plant pathogens and insect vectors, much of which can only be conducted during specific times of the year so that the seasonality of the target organisms can be taken into account.

An important part of the first surveying season has already been lost in the first financial year, due to the delayed start. Due to the seasonality of the work a simple catch up through higher work intensity during the remaining time is therefore not possible. There are also knock on effects to the proposed training activities, as these largely depend on the results of the field surveys. This means that simply extending the project by three months won't be sufficient.

To address the implications caused by the delayed start of the project, the project team is currently preparing a change request. In this we would like to ask for a cost neutral extension of the project until the end of the last financial project year (31 March 2025) and an according shift of budget positions between the individual financial years.

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

The delayed start of the project had already a Covid-related knock on effect on the planned activities. Covid restrictions severely limit the availability of flights compared to pre-Covid times, currently require booking of flights several months ahead. So effectively, the project has lost out to conducted a first survey during early summer on the island, which will need to be covered instead in the second financial year having a knock-on effect on the other planned activities.

The change of the flight pattern also resulted in increased flight costs and the need for much longer on-island stays, having implications on the staff-time budget. Some time during the time visits on St Helena will have to be spent in quarantine, making the overall time spent there not as efficient as originally planned.

However, after detailed discussion of these issues during the first project team meeting we believe that all these problems can be dealt with through a cost neutral extension of the project time frame. This will allow to cover al project activities as planned.

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/No

Formal change request submitted: Yes/No but currently under preparation

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/No

3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a rebudget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.**

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

Not at this stage of the project.

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**