

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

Half Year Report

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 2-3 pages** in length.

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 2024

Please note all projects that were active before 1 October 2024 are required to complete a Half Year Report.

Submit to: BCF-Reports@niras.com including your project ref in the subject line.

Project reference	DPLUS160
Project title	Multi-Purpose Soil Survey: informing environmental management and climate change mitigation
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	British Virgin Islands
Lead Organisation	University of Portsmouth, UK
Partner(s)	BVI Government: Department of Disaster Management; Land Survey; Agriculture & Fisheries; Environmental Health; Town & Country Planning; and the Ministry of Natural Resources, Labour & Migration; BVI National Parks Trust; and also the H. Lavetty Stout Community College (HLSCC).
Project leader	Prof. Richard Teeuw, University of Portsmouth
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	13/11/2024; HYR3
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100087320503724

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed project implementation timetable (if your project started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end of September).

The past 6 months of the project have gone well, with the BVI Soil Survey now completed, along with the Soil database and GIS; the Tortola-base Soil Lab is installed and operating and all of the related training courses are now completed.

Prof Teeuw and Dr Argyriou (Soil GIS) visited the BVI during April 2024, primarily to run Soil GIS training workshops and project publicity activities, but also for fieldwork and Soil Lab activities to fill a few gaps in the BVI soil analysis database.

Since April, Prof Teeuw and Dr Argyriou have been working on the completing various GIS-generated soil maps, with Prof Teeuw focusing on completing the project final report before the end of 2024.

Progress with Project Outputs, evidenced by SMART indicators:

1.4 Review of predictive accuracy: relative variance of each mapped soil type, by Jan 2024.
- ongoing, but delayed: (a) while final soil samples were collected during the April 2024 BVI visit; (b) while the April soil samples were analysed by the BVI Soil Lab (sieving, soil strength and soil chemistry) and the UoP Soil Lab (% sand, % silt, % clay); with the final set of those results added to the BVI Soil database in September 2024. The review of predictive accuracy will now be provided within the project summary report, which is due before the end of December 2024.

1.5. Four soil-based thematic maps, with explanatory documents. (i) BVI Soil Types; then Soil Suitability for: (i) Farming, (ii) Construction, and (iii) Waste Management, by January 2024.
- this was delayed pending the April 2024 BVI visit, with the supply of final soil data and completion of the BVI Soil Database and GIS in September 2024 – the sets of thematic maps and the Soil Suitability documents will now be provided within the project summary report, which is due before the end of December 2024.

2.2 Training in soil database management and GIS usage for mapping and climate change impact assessment: a hands-on; workshop, augmented by online training materials, by January 2024
- delayed, but **completed in April 2024**.

2.3 Training on analysis-ready soil maps & briefing documents, for environmental managers and policy makers: two online workshops, by January 2024.
- delayed, but **completed in April 2024**.

2.4. *Learning outcomes from each technical training workshop applied within the participating organisations, by March 2024.*
- delayed, but all of the technical training workshops were completed in April 2024; the project's lead organisation in the BVI, the Department of Disaster Management, is awaiting responses from the six other BVI partner organisations, to a survey on the degrees to which workshop learning outcomes have been applied. The results of that survey will be included within the project summary report, which is due before the end of December 2024.

3.1 Key soil survey findings used to inform policy: for each of the project partners, the project will produce a briefing document, by January 2024.
- delayed, with all of the technical training workshops being completed in April 2024. A policy briefing document will be produced for each of the seven BVI partner organisations, within the project summary report, which is due before the end of December 2024.

3.2 Report on BVI Soils, their land use suitability, the risks associated with each soil type and recommendations for climate change adaptation, by Feb 2024.
- delayed, with the BVI Soil Database and GIS only completed in September 2024. This information will be included in the final report of the project, which is due before the end of December 2024.

3.3. The BVI procedures for risk assessment of new developments will be adjusted to include inputs from the soil survey guidelines on land use suitability and the Soil GIS maps, by March 2024.
- delayed: awaiting the summary report of the project, which is due before the end of December 2024, after which the relevant BVI Government agencies (Town & Country Planning and Disaster Management departments) will be asked to complete a survey on how their risk assessment procedures for new developments have been adjusted to include inputs from the Soil GIS maps and the soil survey guidelines on land use suitability. Due by the the end of March 2025.

3.4. Public-access version of the Soil GIS and user guides, hosted by the BVI Government NGIS website and the Lavetty Stoutt Community College, by March 2024.

- delayed, with the BVI Soil Database and GIS only completed in September 2024. Negotiations are ongoing, with the public-access version of the Soil GIS and user guides being available before the end of December 2024.

3.5. Press releases, to raise public awareness about the importance of soils:

- (i) Sept 2022 (completed)
- (ii) March 2023 (completed)
- (iii) Sept/Dec 2023 (completed)
- (iv) March/April 2024 (completed).

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.

No major problems were encountered with the running of the project, other than catching-up after many unexpected delays.

There was an issue with the project finances, regarding getting our main BVI partner (the Department of Disaster Management) to refund £5,900 of unspent project funding – that has now been resolved.

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

Discussed with NIRAS:

No

Formal Change Request submitted:

Yes - 19.08.2024
(another on 11.11.2024)

Received confirmation of change acceptance:

Yes

Change Request reference if known:

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024)

4b. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this financial year (ending 31 March 2025)?

Yes

4c. If you expect and underspend, then you should 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 to your project 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?

No

6. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent annual report.

The reviewer of the 2023-2024 annual report was relatively happy with the project progress, but foresaw problems with achieving all of the anticipated goals within the available timeframe. The reviewer thus requested that the project's current Impact statement and Outcome statement are swapped. To quote the Reviewer: "...in retrospect, the project's Impact statement 'BVI soil types and soil biodiversity surveyed and mapped, with self-sufficiency in soil survey and analysis capabilities, *enabling improved management of land and waste*, with better risk management and climate change preparedness' would have made a better project Outcome statement – and the current Outcome statement the project's Impact-level statement."

What the annual report reviewer requested forms part of a Change Request submitted on 11.11.2024.

Checklist for submission

For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1st April 2024)	
Have you responded to any additional feedback (other than caveats) received in the letter you received to say your application was successful which requested response at HYR (including safeguarding points)? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	
If not already submitted, have you attached your risk register ?	
For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1st April 2024)	
Have you responded to feedback from your latest Annual Report Review ? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	Yes
For All Projects	
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	Yes
Submit to BCF-Reports@niras.com .	Yes
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	Yes
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	Yes
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	Yes