Darwin Plus Main: Annual Report

- **Darwin Plus Project Information**

Project reference	DPLUS176
Project title	Turning the tide on plastic pollution in St Helena and Ascension
Territory(ies)	Ascension and St Helena
Lead Partner	Zoological Society of London (ZSL)
Project partner(s)	Ascension Island Government (AIG), St Helena National Trust (SHNT), St Helena Government (SHG), University of Exeter, Cape Town University, Nelson Mandela University, BLUE Marine Foundation
Darwin Plus grant value	£499,234
Start/end dates of project	1/5/2022 to 31/3/2025
Project Leader name	Shauna [redacted]
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.zsl.org/ @ZSLMarine @OfficialZSL @ZSLconservation https://www.ascension.gov.ac/ @AscensionMPA @AIGConservation http://www.trust.org.sh/ @SHnationaltrust
Report author(s) and date	The content of this report was led by: Shauna [redacted], Jessica [redacted] and Tobias [redacted], Neil [redacted], Matthew [redacted] and Helena [redacted]

1. Project summary

Plastic pollution is widely recognised as one of the biggest threats to marine biodiversity; over 700 species are negatively impacted[1], including some present in Ascension and St Helena.

The South Atlantic oceanic islands are geographically isolated and encompass a diverse array of marine life, including many endemics. The UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) of Ascension and St Helena Islands have designated Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) as part of the UK Government's Blue Belt Programme, cumulatively protecting 898,411km^2 of the South Atlantic ocean. Ascension Island (7°56'S, 14°22'W) has an area of 98 km^2 and is located ~ 90 km west of the mid-Atlantic Ridge, while St Helena Island (15°57'S, 5°42'W) is bigger with an area of 120 km^2 and is located 930 km east of the mid-Atlantic Ridge.

This project is addressing both plastic arriving from extrinsic sources, and that leaking into the environment from the islands. It aims to trial and implement interventions that will benefit and empower communities to take action to protect their environment, and benefit the ocean and key wildlife species by 2025.

Together we will trial innovative solutions and interventions; and create conditions for islanders to reduce the reliance on single-use plastic (SUP); build and implement inclusive locally-developed strategies with communities to reduce plastic litter and improve associated waste management efficiency, across both islands.

The results will contribute to numerous local, national, and international conventions, treaties, and agreements. For example, St Helena Government's Vision and Strategic Plan 2022-2025 highlights *"…the preservation of land wildlife, marine and built heritage, and [utilising] renewable power and technology to deliver greener social economic outcomes including better management of waste*". Ascension Island Marine Protected Area Management Plan (MPA) 2021-2026 identifies litter as a significant threat to the natural features of the MPA; operational objective 1d of the plan states *"…monitoring, regulation and management regime effectively tackles all known threats to inshore ecosystems*".

The project also aligns with global strategies and commitments to deal with plastic pollution, including the Honolulu Strategy, United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), Sustainable Development Goal 14 - Life Under Water, and the United Nations Treaty to End Plastic Pollution.

2. Project stakeholders/partners

The collaborative efforts within the Darwin Plus project have seen significant engagement between delivery partners, relevant actors, and local communities on both St Helena and Ascension islands.

Partnerships between the delivery partners and various local actors (e.g. retailers, schools, fisher associations, youth groups, hospitality sector and utility companies) have been crucial over the past 12 months. These relationships were often derived from shared goals, particularly evident in collaborations with in-territory government departments such as Waste Management, as well as St Helena's Equality & Human Rights Commission.

All formal partners have been closely involved in project planning stages, indicating a high level of engagement and commitment. A miscommunication did arise in 2023 between delivery partners and SHG's Waste Management Team regarding a decision to purchase new recycling bins, however this was identified swiftly and resolved sensitively by both SHG and SHNT.

Equitable engagement with local community members has been fundamental to our project design since conception (see AR1 Apr 2023), and has been particularly strong over the past 12 months, with a diverse range of islanders feeding into project design via engagement activities such as presentations, workshops, and interviews conducted to gather input for decision-making processes related to piloting interventions (see Activity 1.3 for detail). Community input has been crucial in shaping project activities, garnering support, and ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing single-use plastics and addressing environmental concerns.

Overall, the collaborative efforts within the project have shown progress over the past year, with notable achievements, lessons learned, strengths, and challenges identified and addressed through ongoing engagement and collaboration with formal partners and key relevant actors. Weekly project management meetings between the lead partner (ZSL) and in-territory partners (SHNT and AIG) have been sustained throughout project year two, with ZSL providing direction, guidance and training where needed, to support AIG and SHNT in their roles as leading project delivery on the ground. ZSL has also been bridging a relationship between the UK Government's team leading on the UN Global Plastics Treaty negotiations, with our project partners, to support UKOTs in feeding into global decision making spaces.

3. Project progress

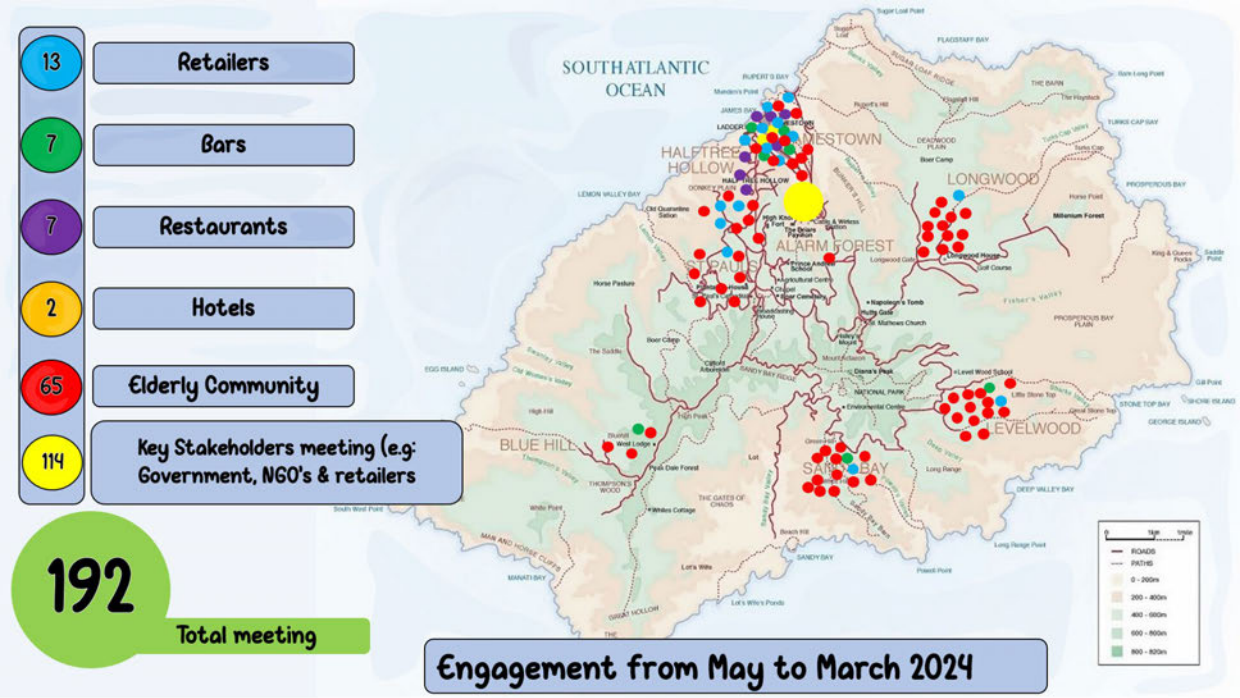
3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities

Output 1: Systems for quantifying and reducing plastic waste are consolidated with a proposed strategy to trial interventions for SUP reduction in St Helena and Ascension

Activity 1.1 and activity 1.2 - Both completed during project Yr1, please see HYR1 (Oct 2022) and AR1 (Apr 2023) for more detail.

Activity 1.3 - Over the past 12 months, inclusive community engagement has continued across both St Helena and Ascension.

On St Helena, 192 individuals have now been engaged in total through various methods to discuss behaviours and attitudes towards single-use plastic. Important insights were gleaned from as many diverse groups and sectors as possible, including hospitality, retail, social groups, and government staff. Approaches were tailored for different groups, to ensure voices were being heard and those typically excluded were not falling through the cracks. For example, the team identified St Helena's elderly community living outside of the town centre as typically excluded from initiatives that derive from the town centre. For this reason we conducted surveys with 65 members of the elderly community, with a bespoke in-person approach across 6 locations Jamestown, Sandy Bay, Longwood, Levelwood, Half Tree Hollow and Blue Hill (acknowledging that many cannot access Jamestown). In addition, retailers were identified as a key group that could be impacted negatively by changes made to plastic product imports on island. Therefore, a workshop was designed and delivered with island retailers in May 2023 (see Annex 1) entitled 'Rethinking alternatives for single-use plastic in St Helena Island', where eight retailers shared their knowledge and perspectives on single-use plastic products, including most commonly sold items and challenges around the availability and affordability of alternatives. To remove barriers to participation, refreshments were provided and transportation expenses offered.



On Ascension Island, community engagement continued with local actors to further understand contextual, social, and behavioural insights behind the use of single-use plastic and complete the system diagnosis (see Annex 2 for AIG's Community Engagement Plan). At the point of the Ascension island element of this project concluding (end of March 2024, when match funds from John Ellerman Foundation wrapped up), in total 26 1:1 meetings had been held with 37 individuals. In addition, wider engagement activities included hosting a stall at the Ascension Island Marine Protected Area (MPA) Festival in June 2023, and providing a project wrap-up presentation at the Travellers Hill Cinema in March 2024, attended by 26 people. During a cross-island exchange visit between the AIG & SHNT (July 2023), Tobias Capel (AIG's Project Coordinator) also presented his findings from Ascension Island via a number of talks, including at SHNT's all-staff meeting, at SHG's Marine Team offices, as well as a public presentation at St Helena's Museum in Jamestown.

Options for establishing baseline plastic waste data on both Ascension Island and St Helena were explored with each island's waste management team, however following a pilot on Ascension (see AR1, April 2023) and further conversations with SHG's Waste Management team, these methods were deemed unscalable due to the increased resource needed and particularly on Ascension, the complexity of navigating variations between multiple waste management systems eg the US base vs AIG's estate. Instead we concluded it would be more effective to track changes further upstream, looking at importation of plastic products to the islands. Therefore, we conducted an import audit of key single-use plastic products with retailers on both islands, which will serve as our foundation for evaluating change when piloting interventions.

Activity 1.4 - In June 2023, ZSL conducted remote training with AIG and SHNT on how to code their community insights thematically. Tobias Capel led this process on Ascension island, which surfaced key themes and barriers to change such as waste management systems, island policy, and perspectives on public drinking water. Nine intervention opportunities were also surfaced, which have now been illustrated as a plastic system map for Ascension Island with support from system change consultant Forum for the Future (see Annex 3). With the match-funded Ascension element now complete, the team have been drafting an Executive Summary document as a legacy output to be picked up by AIG in order to take recommended interventions forwards. This document is due to be completed in Q1Y3 and will be branded as a Darwin contribution.

Similarly, on St Helena, Maria Frietas (Previous SHNT Project Manager) led a thematic analysis which surfaced multiple themes as mentioned in our HYR2 (Oct 2023). However, following further discussion, the team concluded that multiple visual assets, as opposed to a standard system map, will be necessary to validate results with the local community. This decision was made to ensure all outputs best serve the

audience on-island. As validation and co-design of the interventions takes place in Y3Q1, we will be producing relevant visual assets as required, and will be sharing these in future reports.

Activity 1.5 - On St Helena, we had intended to hold validation workshops in YR2Q4, however, due to team changes within SHNT (ie the departure of the Project Manager in Dec 23, and the on-boarding of the new Head of Marine in Jan 24), and the need for further analysis of the coded community insights to ensure results were indeed robust and unbiased, the timelines have shifted. Inclusive workshops to assess the social acceptability of findings will now take place as a priority in YR3Q1.

On Ascension, the production of the system map also took longer than anticipated and left only a short period before Tobias Capel's, AIG Marine Plastic Coordinator, post concluded on island for him to facilitate validation exercises with the community. Despite this, all relevant actors were recontacted, and 8 meetings were held with AIG's Crown Counsel, Conservation and Fisheries department, Operations and Facilities teams (including Waste Management), and Mitie (private contractor). Although Tobias is no longer in post, the AIGCFD director, Tiffany Simpson, and AIGCFD Marine Team Leader, Cuen Muller, will continue this validation exercise in parallel with the final year of our Darwin Plus project on St Helena, to ensure all respondents on Ascension were re-engaged to validate the final outcome. All local actors, including those who did not respond to the offer for a meeting before Tobias departed the island, were sent an email copy of the Ascension Island system map, with thanks for their input, and provided the contact details for future project related queries of both AIG and ZSL project partners.

Activity 1.6 - This will commence in project Yr3.

Output 2: Pilot interventions to reduce most problematic/prevalent SUP items and switch to sustainable alternatives are completed, monitored and evaluated with new policy in place for SUP reduction in St Helena

Activity 2.1 and Activity 2.3 - As per our AR1 (April 2023), a refillable water bottle campaign in schools was paused in response to our learnings around public perceptions of tap water on both islands. We have since shifted our school engagement focus as follows:

On St Helena; in further consultation with the schools, we learnt a refillable water bottle for pupils had already been established and all school children had access to a reusable water bottle. In April 2023, all island primary and secondary schools participated in an island wide clean up organised by SHNT. A total of 286.3kg of trash was collected over the week-long event. In October 2023, Matthew Owen, SHNT Marine Project Assistant, spent time with the New Horizons Youth Group.The workshop was based around spreading awareness about single-use plastics and encouraging sustainable habits; providing them with valuable knowledge and tools to tackle the issue of plastic waste in their community. A comic book was developed by Matthew Owen, to educate 5-16 yr olds about the impacts of single-use plastic on wildlife; "Invisible threats to Whale Sharks". Printed comic books were distributed over the past 12 months to St Helena's schools: Pilling (130 copies), Halford (150 copies), St Paul's (150 copies), Prince Andrew (200 copies), and also 10 copies were sent to the St Helena Library. Additionally, 8 copies were provided to the Governor & Ministers. On Ascension island, Tobias distributed the comic book to Two Boats School (120 copies) and an electronic version was also sent to Tristan Da Cunha for distribution within their school, which inspired them to create their own comic book called 'Floppy makes friends around Tristan Da Cunha' (see Annex 4 and 5) . The comic book was uploaded to SHNT's website for wider accessibility, and a promotional video for the was created and uploaded to ZSL's YouTube and SHNT's social media platforms, with 117 clicks (see Annex 6). Distribution of the comic book aimed to educate and engage the public on the issue of single-use plastics and promote behaviour change. The campaign utilised both physical and digital platforms to maximise outreach and accessibility. With the comic book freely available to the public, the campaign sought to garner support across various levels of society.

On Ascension island, Tobias Capel has been highly engaged with the island's youth community. Over the past twelve months, he co-designed and delivered a third session for the Ascension Island MPA Youth Committee group together with AIG's MPA Engagement Officer (Dec 2023); delivered a lesson on plastic pollution for a Yr 7/8 Geography class (Oct 2023); taught our shoreline monitoring methodologies to the GCSE Geography class during a coastal fieldwork trip (Oct 2023); delivered four classes on plastic pollution for secondary years entitled "Plastics and You", which informed all secondary school students of what we he had learnt about the local context on island and the possible opportunities for action that were emerging (Nov 2023); led a third assembly at Two Boats School to inform school children of the

project activities (twice in Oct 2022 and again in Mar 2024); and as noted above, delivered the comic book created by the SHNT to all school children on Ascension.

Activity 2.2 - Our engagement evidenced a public dislike for tap water on both islands due both the taste of chlorine, and/or apprehension about the health implications of drinking public tap water despite regular quality testing taking place, which created reservations around pursuing this intervention last year. Following further discussion, the team have decided to retain this opportunity as a proposed intervention on St Helena and will be validating the feasibility and social acceptability of partnering with Connect to deliver fountains during community workshops in YR3Q1.

Similarly, we have proposed an intervention for Ascension (see system map, Annex 3) around the installation of trusted water filters on public drinking fountains and workplace taps across AIG's estates. These filters would remove the chlorine taste from tap water, thereby increasing its palatability. A complementary campaign to rebuild trust in drinking this water would also be required to shift islanders away from buying SUP bottled water and embrace a refill culture. Involving AIG employees in the co-design of fountain locations will be vital to ensure that the intervention meets their needs and maximises usage. As a pilot study, AIG was successful in securing a small amount of funding from the FCDO IP Challenge Funds to purchase water fountains for AIG workplaces in Georgetown. Funds will be managed by the Head of the Administrator's Office but installation and management of these fountains will be shared by the Conservation and Operations Directorates to ensure that they are placed in the most effective locations and maintained regularly. We hope this initiative will be welcomed by AIG staff and provide a valuable contribution towards minimising SUP water bottles in the workplace. This was partly inspired by conversations Tobias held with the US Army Base, where a similar initiative has already resulted in successful reductions in bottled water consumption (see Annex 7 for case study).

Activity 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 - All interventions will be piloted on St Helena in project Yr3, and behaviour change surveys/evaluation approaches co-developed accordingly. On Ascension island, as reported in HYR2 (Oct 2023), AIG delivered Darwin Local (DPL0010) to reduce cigarette butt litter around beach huts. Cigarette bins were installed at seven key coastal areas, with effectiveness monitored through the existing shoreline monitoring strategy (see Annex 8 for final report).

Activity 2.7 - The team has been maintaining a comprehensive M&E framework over the past 12 months. We will create bespoke evaluation approaches in Yr3 to monitor the impact of implemented interventions.

Activity 2.8 - Following validation of proposed opportunities for action in Y3Q1, the team will be making a decision as to whether this is indeed a priority area to co-develop with the community on St Helena island. On Ascension Island, this came through clearly as a need during the community consultations, and has therefore been included in the system map (Annex 3) as a recommended intervention point i.e. to develop legislation banning certain plastic items. However, this must only be taken forwards with an improved, inclusive approach, to how the community is consulted in the development of any new policies relating to single-use plastics on island.

Output 3: Characteristics and sources of plastic waste pollution and associated threats to wildlife in St Helena and Ascension shores are understood, with appropriate mitigation measures developed and implemented

Activity 3.1 - Shoreline monitoring continued regularly on both islands at the same sites using approaches outlined in our AR1 (Apr 2023). These were reviewed in September 2023 to ensure comparison across both islands (see activities 3.3 and 3.4 for further information).

While the photo quadrat survey methodology deployed on St Helena in project Yr2 has provided valuable insights, there is recognition that it may not fully represent the entire beach and could potentially introduce unintentional geographical bias. An adjustment was suggested after the new SHNT Head of Marine assumed the post (Jan 24), indicating a commitment to refining and improving monitoring techniques. Starting from Apr 24, the team plans to transition to a more standardised method of random quadrat testing along the entire length of the beach. The original data collected through the previous methodology remains valid and can be incorporated into overall insight of the plastic pollution. The proposed adjustments aim to enhance the data set by employing a more comprehensive and standardised approach, allowing for better comparability with international surveys.

Activity 3.2 - Completed during project Yr1, please see HYR1 (Oct 2022) and AR1 (Apr 2023).

Activities 3.3 and 3.4 - On St Helena, shoreline monitoring has been consistent with only a few data gaps due to bad weather impeding access to sites. The survey techniques utilised in the past year have yielded a good quality data set, indicating the effectiveness of the monitoring efforts. After 12 months in a supporting role, we are pleased to report Matthew Owen (SHNT's Project Coordinator) has progressed to take on leadership of the shoreline monitoring strategy on St Helena (from Jan 24). The transition was smooth, with support from SHNT volunteers who have played a significant role in supporting the team's monitoring efforts, with the necessary training and development provided by Matthew. Over project year 2, from May 23-Mar 24, the team collected a total of 13,660 items from Sandy Bay Beach, with 13,243 items being plastic, and a total of 7,210 items from Rupert's Beach, with 5,140 items being plastic.

On Ascension, quarterly shoreline monitoring continued along the Waterside shoreline and Beach Nature Reserves shoreline (BNRs), concluding in Nov 23 and Jan 24 respectively. An additional survey was carried out in the BNRs to evaluate the impact of cigarette bins installed under DPL0010 at beach hut areas, which found a reduction in cigarette butts (in terms of litter composition) at 2 of 7 installation locations (see Annex 8). Shoreline monitoring protocols have been provided to the AIG MPA Officers who will continue with long term monitoring beyond the scope of this project.

The data collected to date from both Ascension and St Helena were analysed by a Masters student from University of Exeter, Oscar Lloyd, who provided consolidated results of the prevalence, composition and re-accumulation of debris in the surveyed areas (see Annex 9).

Activity 3.5 -

Seabirds
The brown booby (*Sula leucogaster*) study was completed in Mar 2024. Utilising the collection methods detailed in AR1 (Apr 23), the total prevalence of anthropogenic debris in brown booby nests on the Letterbox peninsula across the two breeding seasons was found to be 18.92% (23.08% (n=15) in 2022/23 and 14.75% (n=9) in 2023/24). A total of 43 items were found in 23 nests; the composition of that material demonstrated a selective preference by the brown boobies for collecting plastic Netlon tubes and rope fragments (Annex 10).

Bird carcasses stored by AIG on Ascension island were scheduled for transport to our partner in South Africa in Oct 23 (see HYR2 Oct 23 for details), however despite significant efforts from the team, this was blocked due to a requirement for veterinary approval - however there are no vets on Ascension - and further complicated with a rise in HPAI. Following partner discussions, a solution was reached whereby the plastics team at Cefas have kindly agreed to assist us with processing these samples using the Blue Belt budget, with our partners in South Africa still being responsible for the write-up. However, the samples require an import permit to the UK (despite Ascension being a UKOT), and whilst AIG and Cefas have been working hard to complete the permit, the Cefas laboratory requires additional APHA permits which they now need to obtain. The team are exploring multiple back-up plans, to ensure this work gets overline within the coming months.

Turtles
The green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) study was also completed in March 2024 utilising methods designed to be performed alongside the routine productivity monitoring (see AR1, Apr 23). The 2022/23 turtle season was an indicator year when only the three largest beaches were monitored. During 9 surveys between 15/03/2023 - 27/04/2023, 791 nests were surveyed of which 0.88% (n=7) were found to contain anthropogenic debris. The 2023/24 turtle season was a full island census year where almost all beaches are monitored. During 12 surveys between 09/01/2024 - 15/03/2024, 253 nests were surveyed on 18 beaches with nesting activity of which 1.58% (n=4) were found to contain items of anthropogenic debris. The debris found in the turtle nests appeared to be a mix of legacy waste and more recent local litter. The composition of the debris found was varied and presented a mix of items.

Fish study
On Ascension Island, a study investigating microplastic contamination in the coastal marine food web of Ascension Island has been designed with the intent to sample the gastrointestinal tracts of 30 rock hind *(Epinephelus adscensionis*) and 30 black triggerfish (*Melichthys niger*) as well as 30 whole Natal rock oysters (*Saccostrea cucullata*). The sampling will be done under appropriate controls to mitigate/control for microplastic contamination (see ZSL Ethics Form Annex 11, approved ZSL Ethics Committee 18th Jan 2024, ZPD Ref Code: AQ82) and then they will be air freighted to South Africa, via St Helena, to project partners at Nelson Mandela University to be processed using digestion, filtration and FTIR spectroscopy. Sampling is scheduled for May 2024 with results to follow.

Similarly on St Helena; as a small island community in the Atlantic Ocean that depends greatly on its fisheries industry to provide economic and food stability, studying the presence of microplastics in key prey fish species like the Atlantic chub mackerel (*Scomber colias*) and the St Helena butterflyfish (*Chaetodon sanctaehelenae*) is crucial for assessing the extent of plastic pollution in the local marine food web. In collaboration with local fishermen, we intend to catch up to 35 Atlantic chub mackerel and 35 St Helena butterflyfish. These fish will be preserved (frozen) and sent to Dr Maelle Connan (Nelson Mandela University, South Africa) for further study, to look at the composition and quantity of any microplastics found inside the fish guts. All of this process will be undertaken under controls as set up with the Ethics Committee at ZSL (see ZSL ethics form AQS8 in Annex 12).

Additional -
Additional opportunistic recording of occurrences of plastic and wildlife interactions have continued, with two new reports of rock hind entangled in fishing line on Ascension, bringing the total up to nine entanglements on-island, of which eight were with fishing gear. In recognition of a newly perceived threat, an additional opportunistic recording procedure was established on Ascension Island for Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs). FADs were observed arriving at Ascension in small numbers consistently throughout the duration of the project (four between Jan 23 - Mar 24). A new procedure was established to standardise the recording of FADs and data were collected retrospectively where possible. To date a total of eight FADs have been entered into this dataset, where patterns in the design of the FADs are emerging already and one FAD was able to be attributed to a fishing vessel operating out of Ghana.

Several observations have been made regarding entanglements on St Helena primarily consisting of Portuguese Man o' War *(Physalia physalis)* n=3 and Goose barnacle *(Pollicipes pollicipes)* n=8 with plastic pollution at Sandy Bay Beach. The Portuguese Man o' War and Goose barnacles were observed to be deceased but still attached to plastic waste (either entangled or colonising) determined to be from overseas and not from St Helena due to foreign markings or objects (e.g: bottles,lids and Nurdles). It is known that Goose barnacles colonise certain materials, one being plastic debris, this knowledge is used to estimate the time in which the plastic has been drifting in the ocean (larger biofouling means longer exposure to the ocean). In addition, a Smooth Hammerhead Shark *(Sphyrna zygaena)* was captured via BRUVS (baited remote underwater video) showing the entanglement of a fishing hook and line extending from the mouth to the dorsal fin. This is particularly concerning because the Smooth Hammerhead Shark is listed by the IUCN on its Red List of Threatened Species as Vulnerable (please see Annex 13 for entanglement logs).

Activity 3.7 - On Ascension Island, of the 903 plastic bottles recorded on the windward southern coastline, 450 had markings indicating 39 brands (see the most prevalent in Annex 14, Fig.1). 383 bottles could be attributed to 16 countries of manufacture, but just five of those countries had more than one bottle attributed to them (see Annex 14, Fig. 2 showing the most prevalent country of manufacture). On St Helena, to date 211 plastic bottles have been recorded, of which 21 brands could be identified. The five most prevalent brands were Nongfu Spring, Fontana, WA HA HA, AQUA and C'estbon. The most prevalent manufacturing countries were Asian (75%), which consisted of 38%= China, 17% = Indonesia, 20% = Asian unknown (due to visible marking but not enough information to correctly identify).

The results from this dataset have since inspired further work, including reverse-particle tracking models being developed by Phil Hosegood (Plymouth University, match funded by AIG). This piece will look at bottle data collected across the duration of this project, and compare sources inferred from oceanographic models to ground truth our findings, and to better understand the currents that act as potential pollution pathways in bringing the litter to both islands.

Activity 3.8 - The team decided not to progress this activity, for reasons outlined in HYR2 (Oct 2023).
Activity 3.9 - This will be delivered in project Yr3.

Output 4: Opportunities for international action and scaling for reducing marine plastic pollution are explored and developed with other UKOTs

Activity 4.1 - We hosted two UKOTs plastic pollution network meetings in the last year (April and October 2023), with 32 and 33 attendees respectively from a total of 10 UKOTs. Each meeting was repeated twice, to accommodate different time zones and ensure this wasn't a barrier to inclusion. For details on the Apr 23 meeting please see HYR2 (Oct 2023) and meeting notes (Annex 15). The more recent Oct 23 meeting was attended by 33 representatives from across the UKOTs and Crown Dependencies, covering Ascension, Bermuda, British Indian Ocean Territory, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falklands, Isle of Man, Pitcairn, and St Helena, Turks & Caicos as well as UK-based representatives (CEFAS, DEFRA, MMO, Universities and NGOs), and have a focus on plastics policy.

The meeting included presentations from AIG, Government of Bermuda, DEFRA, Fauna & Flora, Green VI, SHNT, Government of Turks & Caicos, and the UN Environment Programme. Breakout discussions focused on the barriers and opportunities for co-designing, implementing, and monitoring local plastics policy. We then regrouped in plenary to focus on international plastics policy, namely the the UN Global Plastics Treaty, and heard from DEFRA's lead negotiator Julius Percy, on progress to date and UK priorities, before entering an open Q&A with the UKOTs network to consider how these territories can be better represented in the process. It was clear there was significant appetite within the network to feed into the negotiation process and support DEFRA's team, however there was clearly an existing barrier to engaging and practical next steps for people to do so remain unclear.

Activity 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 - As mentioned in previous reports, we had pre-empted activities around plastic-free tourism at the point of application but we decidedly held off from progressing this workstream until we had built the UKOTs network and heard directly from representatives what they would most like to focus on. Our first meeting in Apr 23 had breakout sessions to cover objectives, themes and areas of interest, of which the results were: developing standardised methods and indicators; collaboration, development and sharing of knowledge and resources; agreeing a standardised plan of action to tackle plastic pollution at source with accompanying time-scale; ensuring voices from all sectors, backgrounds and community groups are included in discussions; developing solutions to plastic recycling, reuse and reductions; combining voices and agreeing on key messages to feedback to global agendas such as the UN Global Plastics Treaty; outreach and education (see Annex 15). When discussing which outputs the network wanted to co-produce, responses were: a UKOTs plastics strategy; a consolidated 'toolkit' of case studies and solutions; standardised baseline data set for plastic impacts across UKOTs; a position paper/statement for Global Plastics Treaty; tailored communication outputs to maintain engagement across local communities and wider partnerships. Therefore we have decided to shift the target focus under this output, instead to focus on the UN Global Plastics Treaty, and continued engagement between the UKOTs network and the negotiations process over the final twelve months. We will be submitting a change request accordingly.

In addition to our UKOTs plastics network, we were invited to present our project at the UKOTs Conversation Forum in November 2023 which was attended by a wide range of Overseas Territories Ministers. The update was well received with positive feedback on the call, and we have been invited to return again at the next forum meeting in May 2024 to share more.

3.2 Progress towards project Outputs

Output 1: Systems for quantifying and reducing plastic waste are consolidated with a proposed strategy to trial interventions for SUP reduction in St Helena and Ascension

Very good progress has been made on this output. The system diagnosis has now been completed on both islands, including two knowledge exchange visits between the AIG Project Coordinator and SHNT Project Coordinator to St Helena and Ascension islands respectively for knowledge and capacity sharing. The work conducted throughout year two against this output has generated significant social, economic, and environmental insights to inform a clear picture of the barriers and opportunities for reducing the impacts of single-use plastic waste on both islands, and has enabled each island team to surface a number of clear and effective interventions that could be co-developed with the community. This has placed SHNT in a strong position for the final 12 months to move forwards with co-designing, piloting and evaluating interventions on the island. Similarly, our goal has been reached in completing the Ascension Island element with a strong set of recommendations, to equip AIG in future application of interventions on the island. As a reminder, these intervention suggestions can be found in the Ascension system map (Annex 3). In regards to baseline data, engagement on both islands surfaced multiple challenges with relying on waste data to monitor change over time, and the team refined its focus to importation statistics instead, with all but one target retailer submitting data when requested throughout the past 12 months. This shift away from waste data has been updated in the logframe. As noted earlier, we will design bespoke evaluation approaches when St Helena's interventions are selected in YR3Q1, and any further necessary baselines will be sourced as a priority before monitoring impact.

Output 2: Pilot interventions to reduce most problematic/prevalent SUP items and switch to sustainable alternatives are completed, monitored and evaluated with new policy in place for SUP reduction in St Helena

Good progress has been made towards this output. Whilst the timelines for launching interventions on St Helena were pushed back to Yr 3 to accommodate completion of the diagnosis phase and ensure all community members were feeding into the project, the team is now very happy with the solid set of intervention ideas for each island. Despite prior concerns about the acceptability of installing drinking fountains to reduce the purchase of single-use plastic water bottles on both islands, as mentioned above,

following further conversations we have since reinstated this as a possible intervention on both St Helena and Ascension Island, and validation exercises in YR3Q1 will confirm whether this should indeed be taken forwards. Meanwhile, we have conducted significant school engagement around the project, and AIG's Project Coordinator, Tobias Capel, has also completed the DPLUS (DPL0010) project on Ascension island (see Annex 8).

Output 3: Characteristics and sources of plastic waste pollution and associated threats to wildlife in St Helena and Ascension shores are understood, with appropriate mitigation measures developed and implemented

Very good progress has been made on this output. On both Islands, AIG and SHNT have performed a thorough investigation into the prevalence, composition and potential sources of plastic pollution found in the immediate marine and coastal environments through conducting regular shoreline monitoring over the past 12 months. They each now have a clear picture of both the pollution generated overseas that is being brought to Ascension on ocean currents, as well as plastic pollution being generated locally by islanders.

As detailed above, we have now completed two of our wildlife workstreams on Ascension island ie monitoring the presence of plastic pollution in the habitats of brown boobies and green turtles), and following a number of logistical complications, we should soon be able to progress he seabird stomach FTIR analysis thanks to a new partnership with Cefas. Following much back-and-forth on the best fish species to study on Ascension and St Helena, and further logistical challenges, we are very happy with the agreed approach for each island, and have successfully secured the permits from ZSL's Ethics Committee to proceed with the work. We look forward to sharing all findings from various analyses in due course.

Output 4: Opportunities for international action and scaling for reducing marine plastic pollution are explored and developed with other UKOTs

Very good progress has been made on this output. The level of interest in the UKOTs plastic pollution network has been very encouraging, with a high turn out for both the April and October 2023 Zoom calls. Diversity in representation has been excellent, with 14 territories represented to date, and individuals spanning many different sectors/job roles providing short presentations. We have been piloting different approaches, from plenary, to breakout groups, to short talks, to try and make the sessions as inclusive as possible and meet the needs of different participants. The desire to pursue certain topic areas / outputs has been made clear, and we will look to sustain this appetite with the network with a third network call in YR3Q1. Our long term goal of re-assigning leadership to the OTs is still a priority, and we will be using the meetings this coming year to explore how best to do this, e.g. through a rotation of chairing roles, as we want to ensure the moment of this rich network is sustained beyond the remaining funded window.

One thematic area of interest highlighted by the network was plastics policy, namely the UN Global Plastics Treaty, which ZSL has been engaging with over the past 12 months to ensure that the needs and contexts of the UKOTs are being fed into the negotiations. To this end, ZSL hosted two workshops in September 2023 to work through priority focus areas for the treaty with UKOTs partners present (see Annex 16), which resulted in the creation of our Joint Position Statement (Annex 19). ZSL then presented these findings to Defra's lead negotiating team, who consequently agreed to join our October 2023 UKOTs network calls (see Output 4 and Annex 15 for detail). In addition to this we have produced a number of other outputs, including a Biodiversity Primer (Annex 17) and a submission on Scope & Principles not discussed at INC2 (Annex 18).

The project team discussed supporting Helena Bennett and Matthew Owen (SHNT) to attend the INC negotiations, however following ZSL's experience at INC2 where observers had very little opportunity to interact with country delegates or influence negotiations on the ground, we concluded this would not be the most effective opportunity for them to pursue. Instead, the team shifted focus to ensure Helena and Matthew could engage in the UN Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona, April 2024, which we look forward to reporting on in HYR3 Oct 24.

As noted in 3.1 (activity 4.4) we are also in touch with the UKOTs Conservation Forum and are keeping global OTs ministers up to date with project progress.

3.3 Progress towards the project Outcome

Project outcome: Islanders drive a decline in SUP, improving waste management efficiency in St Helena and Ascension, contributing to ocean conservation, benefitting the marine environment and key wildlife species by 2025.

Overall progress against the project outcome is good and on track to achieve the project outcome by the end of the project. Collaborative systems diagnoses for both islands have now been completed, resulting in several clear recommendations for AIG to take forwards on Ascension Island. On St Helena, we are now in a strong position to validate findings with the local community and implement actions to improve management/ reduction of SUP on island over the final 12 months.

0.1 Estimated proportion of plastic waste comprising SUP reduced by at least 30% in St Helena and 20% in Ascension by Q4 Yr3 from baseline set in Q4 Yr1 in St Helena and Q3 Yr2 in Ascension

Options for establishing baseline plastic data within the waste streams on both islands were explored, but were deemed unscalable (see section Section 3.1, Activity 1.3), therefore we have instead established baselines via an import audit of key single-use plastic products with retailers on both islands to serve as a baseline. On Ascension, the 20% reduction target was expected to be achieved through shifting schools towards using refillable water bottles, which could not be progressed due to complexities around public perceptions of tap water, therefore this was not achieved. The match funded Ascension element of the project has now concluded, however we will continue to maintain communication with AIG's Director, who will be progressing conversations internally around future application of our other recommended interventions (see system map Annex 3). On St Helena we remain positive that it will be possible to reduce SUP on island, but will be in touch with any necessary change request to the specific indicator set once the interventions are selected in Q1Y3.

0.2 Negative interactions (entanglement/entrapment/ingestion) between plastic pollution and four priority species identified by Q2 Yr3 with a targeted mitigation plan in place by Q4 Yr3.

As detailed in Output 3 we now have interesting results from two of our wildlife workstreams on Ascension island where we have been monitoring the interaction of brown boobies and green turtles with marine debris. Additionally, we are progressing the seabird stomach FTIR analysis (through a new partnership with Cefas - who are in the process of securing an import permit), and we are in the final planning stages for a study of microplastics in fish gastrointestinal tracts. We look forward to sharing all findings from various analyses in due course, and will feed findings into mitigation recommendations.

0.3 Plastic pollution pathways and hotspots identified, and possible mitigation actions are published and disseminated to relevant people, including businesses (products, shipping) and countries by Q4 Yr3.

The composition and sources of plastic pollution are now well understood for both islands, through conducting regular shoreline monitoring over the past 12 months. We have a clear picture of both the pollution generated locally and also coming from overseas on ocean currents. Plastic pollution pathways have been described in a visual form for Ascension Island in a system map (Annex 3) and cigarette bins were installed at 7 sites to reduce cigarette butt litter on Ascension Island (so far evidence suggests success at 2 of the installed project sites). On St Helena, monitoring will continue in Yr 3 and feed into recommended mitigation actions.

0.4 Three locally-led, plastic reduction interventions trialled, informed by the system diagnosis (including one inclusive and sustainable business model/financial mechanism and SUP water bottle reduction campaign), with methods and impact communicated to other UKOTs Q4 Yr3.

The system diagnosis has now been completed for both islands, providing valuable information on usage, attitudes, behaviours and pathways of SUP litter. This has resulted in clear recommendations for AIG to take forward to tackle SUP of Ascension Island. The first recommendation to be implemented will be installation of several filtered water fountains in AIG workplaces to evaluate the potential for reduction in SUP water bottle usage from AIG employees. On St Helena, the next step is consultation with community members to validate findings and guide the selection of interventions (which may include a sustainable business model/SUP water bottle reduction actions). Interventions will then be implemented and evaluated during project Yr 3. Project updates are provided at our UKOTs plastic pollution network calls, as well as the UKOTs Conservation Forum bi-annual meetings, of which another is upcoming in May 2024.

0.5 New policy on SUP reduction in St Helena is developed and adopted/implemented.

On Ascension, local plastic policy change was discussed during the community consultations and has been included in the system map as a recommended intervention (Annex 3). Conversations should be taken forwards by AIG through an equitable, consultative approach with engagement from all relevant actors and businesses that might be impacted by any policy change. On St Helena, the team will be making a decision as to whether policy is indeed a priority area to progress following validation of proposed opportunities for action in Y3Q1. Further consultation with the community would then be needed to draft any legislation.

0.6 Plastic Free UKOTs tourism best practice guidelines implemented in other UKOTs by Q4 Yr3. As noted in section 3.1, we have decided to shift the target focus instead to the UN Global Plastics Treaty. We will continue engagement between the UKOTs network and the negotiations process over the final twelve months of the project.

3.4 Monitoring of assumptions

Assumption 0.1 Plastic waste reduction among school children and existing community-based organisations significantly drives reduction in wider society, as seen with London #OneLess campaign. Through dialogue with school teachers and parents, it is noted that although children can positively influence the family unit through sharing their school experiences, this does not negate the need for adults to also be accountable and engage in environmental initiatives. Outreach on both islands has included all age groups, with a bias towards the elderly population on St Helena to ensure equitable input. For engagement specifically with school children please refer to Output 2.

Assumption 0.2 SH ministers endorse the plan. St Helena's Ministers remain positive and engaged with the project, through participating in meetings around the barriers/ solutions to reducing SUP on island, presenting at the October 2023 UKOTs plastic network meeting, and supporting a presentation given by the project team at the UKOTs Conservation Group meeting in November 2023. In addition, SHG's Marine Team attended a presentation given by the visiting AIG Marine Plastic Coordinator in July 2023 to hear more about the project.

Assumption 0.3 Governments /administrations across UKOTs are willing to participate in, and contribute towards, the Plastics Steering Group. We hosted two UKOTs plastic pollution network meetings in the last year (April and October 2023), with 22 attendees from governments/ administrations from across 10 different UKOTs and Crown Dependencies (see Output 4 for more detail)..

Assumption 1.1 Data available from retail outlets, existing reports, and surveyed individuals accurately captures volumes and movement of SUPs. After reviewing our monitoring approach, the team decided the most reliable indicator to monitor a change in plastic consumption on both islands would be to monitor SUP importation rather than SUP abundance in waste management systems. Data were available from the top five importers/retailers on St Helena. On Ascension, SUP data were accessible from three of the four major retailers that import SUP items to the island, which the project team agreed provided an accurate enough picture upon which to base the system map.

Assumption 1.2 Beyond SUP water bottles, additional priority intervention points and practical alternatives can be identified. Now that the systems diagnosis has been completed on both Ascension and St Helena, we are pleased to report multiple potential interventions have surfaced. Validation of these findings and co-development of the top 3 will take place in Q1Y3 on St Helena.

Assumption 1.3 Islanders are willing to engage with feasibility assessment review and **Assumption 2.1 Community is willing to engage.** Islanders have been happy to engage with the projects on both islands to date, and several key individuals have indicated their interest in regrouping to co-design solutions on St Helena to help reduce single-use plastic.

Assumption 2.2 Planning process approves installation of public drinking fountains. On St Helena whether installation of water fountains is an appropriate solution for the community remains to be discussed during the community co-design. On Ascension, this assumption remains the same as 21 water fountains were installed previously by the US military (see HYR2 - Oct 2023), and so it is assumed planning would approve any future installations. AIG has secured funding to trial the installation of a few water fountains in select AIG workplaces. AIG Operations has committed to co-management to help identify the best locations, install the fountain units and maintain the filters.

Assumption 2.3 Schools in St Helena and Ascension are willing to partner and engage in the project. Schools on both islands have been successfully engaged - see Output 2.

Assumption 2.4 Community banking initiatives are an appropriate sustainable business model in the local context, and if not, alternative strategies identified through systems change mapping can be implemented within the available budget. and **Assumption 2.5 Locally appropriate sustainable business models identified and linked to existing work, or be feasible to engage with on top of current employment.** Whether interventions could include community banking or sustainable business models on St Helena will be determined after completing the community validation in Q1Y3. We will be able to review this assumption in Yr 3.

Assumption 2.6 SUP water bottles are an effective flagship item to represent the issue of marine plastic pollution and connect school children to the issue better to the ocean, as has been the case in the London based #OneLess campaign. Given the issue of distrust for drinking the tap water, we will also be looking at sustainable packaging alternatives to SUP for drinking water and reviewing whether plastic bottled water is indeed the priority 'flagship' SUP item to focus on. That said, engagement with schools has revealed that most children on both Ascension and on St Helena use reusable water bottles at school.Therefore, the potential efficacy of this as a flagship will be further discussed for St Helena during the co-design phase. Water fountains were suggested as a key intervention for Ascension (i.e. to refill water bottles), but this was suggested broadly, rather than just in schools.

Assumption 2.7 Current barriers to people drinking tap water due to taste can be overcome, with existing solutions identified through BIOT Darwin and #OneLess London replicable in St Helena. As per our AR1 (Apr 2023), a refillable water bottle campaign in schools was paused in response to our learnings around public perceptions of tap water on both islands. On Ascension Island barriers of taste and trust were identified, but the team came to a recommended intervention of installing fountains with trusted water filters that actively address these concerns. Examples already exist on Ascension where this type of intervention has affected some change (See US BASE water fountain case study). In St Helena we have also retained the installation of filtered public drinking water as a potential intervention, which we will validate with the community in Q1Y3.

Assumption 3.1 Access to beaches is possible. As described in AR1 (Apr 2023) only two beaches in St Helena are accessible and this formed the basis of our monitoring strategy for the duration of the project. Accessibility on Ascension's coastline can be mixed, sometimes requiring steep hikes. Monitoring progressed as planned in Yr2, with the exception of the final month of shoreline monitoring, where fencing prevented access to waterside coves. However, the team is happy with the volume of data collected in total.

Assumption 3.2 Beach clean volunteers have access to Internet/mobile data for data uploads. This continued to be an on-going challenge which resulted in offline uploads of databases, once teams had returned to their offices following monitoring activities.

Assumption 4.1 People are willing to participate in workshops.
In St Helena people have been willing to participate in workshops (see Activity 1.3), whereas on Ascension Island one-on-one meetings have been found to be more successful in engaging key contacts.

Assumption 4.2 UKOTs are willing to join the Steering Group and participate in 2x yearly meetings/workshops. As outlined in Assumption 0.3, we have had excellent participation in Steering Group meetings, and held two meetings in 2023.

Assumption 4.5 Government and partners in St Helena support the concept of 'plastic free tourism' and it aligns with the Economic Development Plan. The focus areas of the working group were brainstormed during the UKOTs network meetings; tourism was not identified as a priority focus area (please see Activity 4.1-4.4 for more detail). Instead we are shifting the focus towards engagement of the network within the UN Global Plastics Treaty.

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

This project continually works towards targets 1,3, 7, 11, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23 of the Global Biodiversity Framework.

To date on St Helena islanders have engaged in conversations around human health and biodiversity, which have been valuable for exploring how the project will contribute towards the following key long-term strategies: **Environmental Protection Ordinance (2016), St Helena Marine Management Plan (2023-2027), National Environmental Management Plan (2012-2022),** and **Waste Management Implementation Plan (2020-2027)**.

On Ascension Island, the team's bird monitoring contributed to the development of the **Wide Awake Fairs Management Plan (2023-2028)**, encompassing the Mars Bay and Waterside Nature Reserves, which identifies litter as a Medium threat having *"some effect on the health of the ecosystem/species of the reserves".* Data on the presence of plastic in brown booby nests also fed into the development of the

Letterbox Nature Reserve and Boatswain Bird Island Sanctuary Management Plan (2023-2028, in preparation), which has identified litter as a medium threat, having *"some effect on the health of the ecosystem/species of the reserves".* These have now all been completed and are currently being assessed in an annual review, with data from the past 12 months feeding into the process. Monitoring plastic pollution is included in the **Ascension Island Marine Protected Area (MPA) Management Plan**, also the **Ascension MPA Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Strategy**. This project is also proactively working to deliver the primary aims of the **The Ascension Island Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2026**, which identified a threat assessment of the extent and impacts of plastic pollution as a research priority. It calls for plastic pollution levels to be monitored and their impact on protected species and habitats quantified by March 2025, with an ongoing strategy established. The research conducted throughout this project (see Output 3) and the results obtained have been evaluated by the AIGCFD Director, Head of Marine and Coastal Reserve Manager and used to inform the design of a long term plastic pollution monitoring strategy.

As detailed in Output 4, ZSL has been engaging in the UN Global Plastics Treaty over the past 12 months to ensure local communities and biodiversity are being prioritised in the commitments. ZSL sought input from our in-territory project partners when creating a joint statement (Annex 19), and co-created a short case study on St Helena's plastic challenge (Annex 21) which was shared across social media during the INC3 Negotiations in November 2024. As mentioned previously, we successfully secured the UK's lead Treaty negotiator, Julius Percy, as a speaker at our UKOTs network meeting in October 2023, which was a great opportunity to bridge the UK Government with our UKOTs plastics network and start to build communication lines, with a goal of ensuring the needs of the UKOTs will be fed into the plastic treaty commitments.

5. Gender equality and social inclusion

Please quantify the proportion of women on the Project Board[1].	Three: Helena [redacted] (Director of SHNT), Heather [redacted] (Senior Technical Specialist, ZSL) and Tiffany [redacted] (Director of Conservation and Fisheries, AIG).
Please quantify the proportion of project partners that are led by women, or which have a senior leadership team consisting of at least 50% women[2].	SHNT has a female director and 66% of the senior leadership team is female. AIGCFD has a female director and 60% of the senior leadership team is female. ZSL Conservation & Policy Department's Senior Management team is 60% women.

GESI Scale	**Description**	**Put X where you think your project is on the scale**
Transformative	The project has all the characteristics of an 'empowering' approach whilst also addressing unequal power relationships and seeking institutional and societal change	X

The team has been actively considering the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) context continuously, ensuring that we foster inclusivity and fairness. Our project team demonstrates gender equality, with a balanced representation of female scientists and coordination/management staff. ZSL has secured approval from its internal Human Ethics Committee for the approaches taken in this project, please see Annex 22 for further information.

[1] A Project Board has overall authority for the project, is accountable for its success or failure, and supports the senior project manager to successfully deliver the project.

[2] Partners that have a formal governance role in the project, and a formal relationship with the project that may involve staff costs and/or budget management responsibilities.

Throughout the past 12 months in completing our system diagnosis on both islands, our team has actively embraced intersectionality, comprehensively understanding the multi-dimensions, encompassing gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, and educational background. As detailed in previous reports, ensuring our project approach is equitable, inclusive and truly foregrounding the needs of local communities on Ascension and St Helena has been paramount to all our decision making processes. Our timelines shifted quite significantly for this reason, as we recognised the need for more inclusive and in-depth community engagement processes before we could move towards co-designing and implementing effective pilot interventions that would benefit people as well as wildlife. As detailed in section 2 this included getting a better understanding of the typically excluded groups, such as the elderly living outside of Jamestown in St Helena, and then co-designing tailored engagement approaches to ensure we were actively removing barriers to engagement for these people. To date, 43% of the community engagement on St Helena has been with women.

Whilst Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) was embedded throughout all our engagement in the past twelve months, we were unable to roll out effective grievance mechanism design on Ascension in this time. However, we did progress this on St Helena, whereby a partnership was established with the Ethics & Human Rights Commission Office, in which their team has agreed to process incoming grievances for our project anonymously. We have designed multiple input mechanisms to capture different audience feedback, including a hotline, an email address, an office drop-in, and drop-in boxes placed in shops across all island districts (see Annex 23 for more detail). In April 2024, these mechanisms will be advertised in the local newspaper and boxes set-up in shops accordingly. Additionally, with limited resource and time constraints on the match-funded Ascension island element, we did not complete the community engagement with everyone we would have liked to. Therefore to address these gaps moving forward, Tobias Capel (AIG Coordinator) has recommended a consultative approach for AIG to collaborate with key actors when taking any interventions forwards from our recommendations within the system map output (Annex 3).

Our team is committed to addressing unequal power dynamics. As mentioned in this report, as project lead ZSL has been working to redistribute leadership to the territories. As such in year 2, ZSL's travel funds were reallocated to support exchange visits between the island teams instead. As per our recent communications with BCF, we have also spent Feb and Mar 2023 negotiating participation of our Saint partners (Helena Bennett and Matthew Owen) at the UN Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona (Apr 24) to ensure we are driving better representation in global spaces. Surshti Patel and Shauna Young (ZSL) stepped back from attending the event and gave our passes to our partners to enable this opportunity (we will report more on this in year 3 reports). Furthermore, our focus on the UN Global Plastics Treaty has been rooted in disrupting typically inaccessible global decision making spaces, by consulting our international contacts, building bridges with the UK's lead negotiating team, and producing outputs such as a Joint Position Statement, and a Biodiversity Primer document, to ensure the needs of the UKOTs are feeding into the process.

Through ongoing reflection and improvement, we remain committed to promoting equity and inclusion within our project activities. ZSL is working together with SHNT to co-design and deliver an in-person two week workshop on integrating equitable conservation approaches in-territory, drawing on ZSL's new 'FAIRER Conservation' programme led by the project's Human Rights and Social Equity Specialist, Surshti Patel, with a view to driving institutional change at SHNT. Originally we had considered delivering this workshop in Q4Y2, however Tobias Capel would not yet have moved to St Helena to take up the Project Management post there, and it felt essential that he was there for this training, so the workshop has now been scheduled for Summer 2024 instead.

6. Monitoring and evaluation

Project year two has seen robust implementation of continued monitoring approaches - both shoreline and wildlife related strategies. In-territory teams have used the past 12 months to complete the system diagnosis on both islands using mixed data collection techniques (both qualitative and quantitative). Baseline importation statistics have been sourced for both islands, however when the interventions are selected in Q1Y3 for St Helena, further relevant baselines will likely be established to effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of specific pilot interventions. The monitoring and evaluation of the project is shared across the core project management team (AIG, SHNT and ZSL), with each partner focused on their primary project activities. The M&E framework will continue to be a key tool for the project's duration. Project team meetings are held each week to monitor progress with deliverables, and evaluate the success of on-going project activities. Achievements will be measured by analysing both quantitative and qualitative data, which will be collected throughout the project. Information is stored across a shared Google Drive and Microsoft Teams (MS) site hosted by ZSL.

7. Lessons learnt

Similar to our experience in year one, the past 12 months have proven again how valuable the in-person island visits are. The two island exchange visits between AIG and SHNT (July 23 and Jan 24) were a huge success and really helped to align approaches across the two territories and strengthen relationships between partners. Whilst we had originally planned for ZSL to visit the territories again in year two, these funds were used far more effectively to enable these exchange visits - particularly for SHNT's Project Coordinator, Matthew Owen, as the youngest member of the team and a representative of the local Saint community.

As noted earlier, there was a misunderstanding whereby SHG purchased additional recycling bins in Aug 23, when other project partners had been waiting to finalise intervention selections before making any decisions around purchases. This highlighted the need for improved communications and better joint decision making processes between all project partners. The team is looking to review how we do this better in the final 12 months, with more regular touch points for those that aren't as close to the weekly activities.

The seabird and fish stomach studies have taken significantly more planning time than originally anticipated, which has been a valuable learning when considering timelines for permits and logistics.

Our project team has experienced multiple changes over the past 12 months. Following the departure of Michelle Fletcher, SHNT were without a Head of Marine for 6 months between Aug 23 - Jan 24. Meanwhile ZSL's Senior Project Manager, Fiona Llewellyn, moved on in July 2023 to another NGO, whilst Project Manager, Alice Chamberlain, left in October 2024 to pursue a personal opportunity to travel. SHNT's Project Manager, Maria Freitas, had to leave St Helena at very short notice in December and return to Brazil for personal reasons. Diane Baume, AIGCF Director, left the island in June 2023. These timelines and staff gaps have been managed as best as possible, however, due to the remote locations of both islands, timelines can be prolonged when arranging replacements. The past 12 months have spotlighted how ambitious our original activities and deliverables were and how important it is to have a consistent team. Happily, on Ascension Island, we secured an extension with our match-funder (John Ellerman Foundation) as we still had a lot of work we wanted to achieve on-island before Tobias Capel left his position. We were successful and he remained on island beyond Oct 23, to March 24. We are delighted that following leave in the UK during Apr 24, Tobias will be moving to St Helena island to assume the Project Manager posting with SHNT on this project. Continuity in personnel has become increasingly important for our team, and this heavily influenced our recruitment approach to replace Maria Freitas.

8. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)

We found the annual report review last year (AR1) to be very helpful and we remain grateful for reviewers' comments. Following this feedback we created a risk register and submitted this alongside HYR2 in Oct 2023. We have updated this again for inclusion with this report (see section 9). We have also weaved responses throughout the body of this report to speak to the various comments through AR1. For clarity, these four headline comments have been addressed in the following sections:

- **Provide more information on how baselines are being established with support from retailers and waste management teams in-territory** - see sections 3.1 (Activity 1.3), 3.2, 3.3 and 6.
- **Please provide guidance on the process for replacing flagship SUPs in project implementation in the event that no suitable or limited alternatives are found to fulfil the role of a 'flagship' item such as water bottles. This may result in changes to Indicators under Output 2, which would need to be submitted via a change request form** - see sections 3.1 (activity 2.2), 3.2 and 3.3.
- **Please provide more detail on how equity in community engagement and GESI engagement is ensured. How does this work in practise RE research and ensuring participation of marginalised groups, beyond simply issuing invites** - see sections 3.1 (activity 1.3) and 5.
- **Please make sure to submit any changes that occur as a result of the UKOT steering group meeting, such as adjustments to Indicator 4.3 'Plastic Free Tourism,' or to the meeting timings under 4.1, via a change request** - see sections 3.1 (output 4) and 3.3.

9. Risk Management

Please find our updated risk register included with this report submission.

10. Sustainability and legacy

On Ascension, match funding from the John Ellerman Foundation has now concluded, and Tobias Capel (in-territory Project Coordinator) wrapped up his work and left the island at the end of March 2024. Throughout the duration of the project, there has been a consistently strong focus placed on enabling project legacy and sustainability beyond the fixed funded timelines we were working to. This was in recognition that conservation projects can be shelved and/or lose momentum when personnel changes take place or specific funding runs out. First and foremost, we have been actively mitigating this risk through our inclusive community-led approach, whereby recommendations for long-term change have been sourced directly from the islanders themselves. This will contribute to long-term success when interventions are implemented, as they will be locally appropriate, fit for purpose, and in service of the local community. Further, prior to leaving Ascension, Tobias conducted a series of handover meetings with key actors on the island, walking them through the plastic system map (Annex 3), covering the suggested opportunities for action and establishing who should be responsible for taking each one forward. This fed into the creation of the executive summary document (in draft), with clear recommendations for specific groups and departments. The summary document is being designed for a new audience to pick up; to contain the necessary evidence to back-up our recommendations; and have clear calls-to-action for those with the power/influence/resource to 'pick up the baton' and sustain this work on Ascension. Already, recommendations for sustained wildlife and shoreline monitoring approaches are being embedded into the long-term monitoring plans for the management of Nature Reserves on Ascension.The systems map is being carried forward with discussions around potential interventions being conducted with relevant parties. Many of the recommendations may be able to be incorporated within the Ascension Island Cross Government Sustainability Strategy to ensure that positive changes are taken forward across the whole island. As mentioned in Activity 2.2, AIG has already been successful in securing a small amount of funding from the FCDO IP Challenge Funds to purchase water fountains for AIG workplaces in Georgetown, which will hopefully lay the foundations for minimising SUP water bottles in the workplace.

On St Helena, we will soon conduct validation of our findings and pilot interventions together with the community. Similarly to Ascension, this approach is interlinked with enabling locally-appropriate, sustainable solutions that will last beyond the project's lifespan. As noted previously, our experience with participatory diagnosis and involving the community in decision-making, has proven to be effective and unprecedented on St. Helena. According to feedback from the Saints, no other conservation project has sought their opinions and insights to this extent. The inclusive social approach adopted in the project is anticipated to ensure lasting impact and potentially influence public policies on island. The introduction of grievance mechanisms in Q1Y3 will be key to ensure we continue hearing from the community, and can adapt deliverables based on any input received. The final project year will have a key focus on embedding our findings and recommendations within relevant Conservation Management Plans, to ensure the legacy of this work is sustained beyond March 2025.

11. Darwin Plus identity

The Darwin Initiative is acknowledged on project communications and outputs, including use of the Darwin logo in presentations. ZSL, SHNT and AIG have each released project updates throughout the past 12 months online, with Darwin accounts tagged wherever possible (please see some examples of social posts and statistics in Annex 24). Communications around the project are shared at key moments, be it in line with internal project activities or aligning with global dates such as the negotiations of the UN Global Plastics Treaty.

In project year two, ZSL launched a project webpage which sits on ZSL's main website, embedded within ZSL's marine conservation and science programmes: https://www.zsl.org/what-we-do/projects/south-atlantic-plastics-project. This page has received 258 views since launching in November 2023.

The understanding of Darwin Plus within the territory of St. Helena appears to be primarily within organisations and individuals whom the team have directly engaged. SHNT has a longstanding relationship with the Darwin program, indicating a solid understanding of its objectives and activities. Additionally, individuals working within the government framework are likely to be familiar with Darwin Plus due to their involvement in conservation efforts and collaboration with external funding programs. While there has been some public engagement via radio and newspapers regarding our Darwin Plus project, the level of public knowledge about the program is not well documented. However, given the small size of the territory and the close-knit nature of the community, it's reasonable to assume that awareness of Darwin Plus may extend beyond those directly involved in conservation work, albeit to a lesser extent. There may be opportunities to enhance awareness and engagement of the project as a

Darwin Plus funded initiative, with the first example being the launch of our public grievance mechanisms (as part of our ethical approach) which will be advertised through the local newspaper in Q1Y3.

12. Safeguarding

Has your Safeguarding Policy been updated in the past 12 months?		No
Have any concerns been investigated in the past 12 months		
Does your project have a Safeguarding focal point?	Surshti [redacted], [redacted] and Emily [redacted]	
Has the focal point attended any formal training in the last 12 months?	The focal points possess specialised expertise in this area and have also collaborated closely with other experts in this field, engaging in ESMS and other safeguarding-related initiatives, providing on-the-job training.	
What proportion (and number) of project staff have received formal training on Safeguarding - All ZSL team members have completed mandatory safeguarding training, plus are undergoing continued additional training via ZSL's FAIRER Programme. All AIG conservation staff have completed safeguarding training on island. SHNT's safeguarding policy is still undergoing review; there was a safeguarding training scheduled for early this year which was postponed due to sickness and capacity from the training provider and the Trust. However, all SHNT staff will be participating in a two-week workshop on FAIRER conservation approaches when ZSL visits SHNT in July 2024.		Past:% 63 (5 people) Planned: % 27 (3 people)
Has there been any lessons learnt or challenges on Safeguarding in the past 12 months? Please ensure no sensitive data is included within responses - Yes, as reported in our risk register submission in October 2023, there was an important learning opportunity for our team over the past 12 months.		
Does the project have any developments or activities planned around Safeguarding in the coming 12 months? If so please specify - ZSL is working together with SHNT to co-design and deliver an in-person two week workshop on integrating equitable conservation approaches in-territory, drawing on ZSL's new 'FAIRER Conservation' programme led by our Human Rights and Social Equity Specialist, Surshti Patel. This is scheduled for Summer 2024 to align with Tobias' taking up the role of Project Manager on-island.		
Please describe any community sensitisation that has taken place over the past 12 months; include topics covered and number of participants - We have actively adopted an equitable and inclusive conservation approach throughout the duration of this project, and speak to this point frequently in our reports. As noted earlier, our timelines for community engagement shifted considerably in order to enable continued sensitisation and increased understanding of the island communities on Ascension and St Helena.		
Have there been any concerns around the Health, Safety and Security of your project over the past year? If yes, please outline how this was resolved. N/A		

13. Project expenditure

■ **Table 1: Project expenditure <u>during the reporting period</u> (1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024)**

Project spend (indicative) in this financial year	**2023/24 D+ Grant (£)**	**2023/24 Total actual D+ Costs (£)**	**Variance %**	**Comments (please explain significant variances)**
Staff costs	[redacted]			
Consultancy costs				
Overhead Costs				

Travel and subsistence	[redacted]			
Operating Costs				
Capital items				
Others (Please specify)				We are [redacted] over this budget line due to an unexpected purchase of recycling bins, explained in the technical report.
TOTAL	**£122,874.34**	**£121,630.70**	**-1.01%**	

Table 2: Project mobilising of matched funding during the reporting period (1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024)

	Secured to date	Expected by end of project	Sources
Matched funding leveraged by the partners to deliver the project (£)	Mobilised to date [redacted] mobilised in total across years 1 and 2	Expected to be mobilised by end of project = A further [redacted] expected to be mobilised in year 3	● Bertarelli Foundation ● Ascension Island Government ● St Helena Government ● University of Cape Town ● St Helena National Trust ● John Ellerman Foundation ● BLUE Marine Foundation ● University of Exeter ● Ocean Conservancy Fund ● Darwin Plus Local
Total additional finance mobilised by new activities occurring outside of the project, building on evidence, best practices and project (£)	[redacted] of the total above was sourced after the project commenced, from the Ocean Conservancy and Darwin Plus Local funds.		

14. **Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere - N/A**

15. **OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements or progress of your project so far (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes - N/A**

- **Annex 1: Report of progress and achievements against logframe for Financial Year 2023-2024 – <u>if applicable</u>**

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2023 - March 2024	Actions required/planned for next period
Impact Improved efficiency in plastic waste management in St Helena and Ascension enabling community action to near-zero SUP use, eliminating the impact of marine plastic pollution on wildlife, increasing ocean resilience and driving broader impact across other UKOTs.		The systems diagnosis has been completed for both islands. On Ascension Island, this resulted in identification of nine key recommendations for AIG to take forward to address marine plastic pollution. On St Helena, we are now in a strong position to move forwards with implementation and evaluation in Yr 3. Shoreline and wildlife monitoring on St Helena will continue to feed into the implementation of biodiversity targets on island.	
Outcome Islanders drive a decline in SUP, improving waste management efficiency in St Helena and Ascension, contributing to ocean conservation, benefitting the marine environment and key wildlife species by 2025.			
0.1 Estimated proportion of plastic waste comprising SUP reduced by at least 30% in St Helena and 20% in Ascension by Q4 Yr3 from baseline set in Q1 Yr2 in St Helena and Q3 Yr2 in Ascension.		0.1 Options for establishing baseline plastic waste data on both islands were explored, however these methods were deemed unscalable (see section Section 3.1, Activity 1.3). Instead we conducted an import audit of key single-use plastic products with retailers on both islands, which will serve as our baseline for evaluating change when piloting interventions. Unfortunately it was not appropriate to pursue the shift towards using refillable water bottles in schools on Ascension Island due to perceptions around tap water, therefore the 20% reduction of plastic waste on Ascension was not achieved.	0.1 When the interventions are finalised in Q1Y3, additional baselines will be established as appropriate to suit evaluation of the intervention in question.

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2023 - March 2024	Actions required/planned for next period
0.2 Negative interactions (entanglement/entrapment/ingestion) between plastic pollution and four priority species identified by Q2 Yr3 with a targeted mitigation plan in place by Q4 Yr3.		0.2 Monitoring complete for plastic interactions with Brown Boobies nest and Green Turtles on Ascension Island (see Activity 3.5). On St Helena, ethics approvals and preparation is now complete for the fish studies in year 3.	0.2 Seabird stomachs will be analysed in project Yr 3 by Cefas (waiting on an import permit to the UK) and the study will be written up by our partner in South Africa. Plans for the study investigating microplastic contamination in the coastal marine food web of Ascension Island is also underway. Sampling is scheduled for May 2024, with samples to be air freighted to South Africa for processing by our partners at Nelson Mandela University.
0.3 Plastic pollution pathways and hotspots identified, and possible mitigation actions are published and disseminated to relevant people, including businesses (products, shipping) and countries by Q4 Yr3.		0.3 12 months of ongoing shoreline monitoring means we have a good understanding of the composition and sources of plastic pollution (i.e. locally litterred vs global sources). The development of the system map has identified plastic pollution pathways on Ascension Island (Annex 3) and cigarette bins have been installed at 7 sites to tackle one of the key sources of litter (see Activity 2.4).	0.3 We have now completed this workstream on Ascension island. On St Helena, monitoring continues into Yr 3 to inform recommended mitigation actions.
0.4 Three locally-led, plastic reduction interventions trialled, informed by the systems diagnosis (including one inclusive and sustainable business model/financial mechanism and SUP water bottle reduction campaign), with methods and impact communicated to other UKOTs Q4 Yr3.		0.4 The systems diagnosis has now been completed for both islands. A system map (Annex 3) was created for Ascension Island which identifies 9 potential interventions for AIG to take forward (if they wish to do so). On St Helena, barriers and opportunities for change have been summarised ahead of validation workshops in Yr3.	0.4 SHNT will validate the findings with the St Helena community to inform the selection of the interventions. Intervention pilots will be launched and evaluated during Yr 3.

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2023 - March 2024	Actions required/planned for next period
0.5 New policy on SUP reduction in St Helena is developed and adopted/implemented.		0.5 We have now completed the systems diagnosis on both islands. On Ascension Island, policy change came through clearly as a need during the community consultations, and has therefore been included in the system map (Annex 3) as a recommended intervention point.	0.5 Following validation of proposed opportunities for action in Y3Q1, the team will be making a decision as to whether this is indeed a priority area to progress on St Helena. Further conversations/ consultation with policy actors and the community would then be needed to draft any legislation. On Ascension Island, policy actions to reduce SUP have been recommended, but must only be taken forwards through a consultative approach.
0.6 Plastic Free UKOTs tourism best practice guidelines implemented in other UKOTs by Q4 Yr3.		0.6 Discussions with the UKOTs network found tourism was not a key focus area / priority for the group (see Activities 4.2-4.4).	0.6 We expect to hold several UKOTs steering group meetings in Yr 3, covering varied priority topics but in particular surrounding input to the UN Global Plastics Treaty. We will submit a change request to reflect the shift in focus away from tourism.
Output 1. Systems for quantifying and reducing plastic waste are consolidated with a proposed strategy to trial interventions for SUP reduction in St Helena and Ascension.			
1.1 Existing system diagnosis and social insight methods are tailored to context for use in 1.2 Q2 Yr1.		1.1 Completed in Yr 1.	N/A

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2023 - March 2024	Actions required/planned for next period
1.2 SUP system of retail (procurement, supply, and sale) and usage (purchase and use) in St Helena and Ascension is audited (Q4 Yr1), analysed and mapped using established methods by Q1 Yr2.		1.2 Complete - the team decided the most reliable indicator to monitor a change in plastic consumption on both islands would be to monitor SUP importation rather than SUP abundance in waste management systems. Data was obtained from the top five importers/retailers on St Helena, and from three of the four major retailers that import SUP items to Ascension.	1.2 When the interventions are selected in Q1Y3 we will establish any other baselines needed to monitor change.
1.3 A minimum of three potential intervention points for change, including one focusing on the reduction of SUP water bottles (retail, sale, and/or infrastructure) are identified by Q1 Yr2, with feasibility assessment completed and reviewed with islanders through workshops by Q2 Yr2.		1.3 Systems diagnosis has been completed for St Helena, following extended timelines for community engagement in project year 2. Barriers and opportunities for change have been summarised ahead of validation workshops in Yr3.	1.3 Validation of the systems diagnosis outputs with the local community on St Helena will take place Q1Y3 to enable selection of interventions. We will update target dates in a change request.
Output 2: Pilot interventions to reduce most problematic/prevalent SUP items and switch to sustainable alternatives are completed, monitored and evaluated with new policy in place for SUP reduction in St Helena.			
2.1 Plastic waste reduction campaign targeting schools (Ascension and St Helena) and wider community (St Helena) launched by Q2 Yr2. 80% of school children switch from SUP water bottles to refilling by Q1 Yr3; 30% reduction in other island plastic waste items by Q4 Yr3.		2.1 As reported in Activity 2.1, a refillable water bottle campaign in schools was not progressed in response to our learnings around public perceptions of tap water on both islands. That said, there has been	The roles of schools and the direction of a 'refill' campaign will be reviewed following the interventions validation stage (Q1Y3) i.e. it will be workshopped with communities to determine if it would be a locally-

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2023 - March 2024	Actions required/planned for next period
		other significant engagement around the issue of plastic pollution with school communities on both islands to date.	appropriate and impactful activity on St Helena. Ascension has now concluded and this target was not achieved for reasons noted.
2.2. Three intervention points in St Helena (including SUP water bottle reduction) are trialled, monitored, and evaluated, with project findings consolidated and final recommendations for plastic waste reduction by Q4 Yr3.		2.2 As above, systems diagnosis complete and baselines on SUP imports have been established with support from retailers and waste management teams in-territory.	2.2 Systems diagnosis will inform the interventions to be consulted on with community members Q1Yr3. Pilots will be initiated, monitored and impact evaluated over the course of Yr 3.
2.3 As part of the interventions piloted (2.2) and in line with St Helena's Sustainable Economic Development Plan 2018-2028, a minimum of one inclusive and sustainable business model/financial mechanism, underpinning plastic waste reduction is identified, assessed, and established with communities by Q1 Yr3.		N/A	2.3 Options for a sustainable business model will be explored with islanders during the workshops of summer 2024, following completion of the systems diagnosis.
2.4 New policy for SUP reduction in St Helena is developed, consulted on, with agreed policy adopted and endorsed by SHG by Q3 Yr3.		2.4 We have now completed the systems diagnosis on both islands, with policy change included as a potential option to discuss with the community during the validation phase.	2.4 This will be progressed if it is identified as a priority area during the validation of proposed interventions in Y3Q1.
Output 3: Characteristics and sources of plastic waste pollution and associated threats to wildlife on St Helena and Ascension shores are understood, with appropriate mitigation measures developed and implemented.			

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2023 - March 2024	Actions required/planned for next period
3.1 Beach clean data consolidated (Q2 Yr1) and monitoring strategy developed for 3 key priority sites on each island (Q4 Yr1). Documentation of wildlife/plastic interactions consolidated (Q3 Yr3).		3.1 Shoreline monitoring strategy was reviewed in September 2023 to ensure comparison across both islands (see Activity 3.1) and monitoring has been ongoing over the last project year. Wildlife and plastic interactions studies for brown boobies and turtles have been completed on Ascension Island.	3.1 Shoreline monitoring will continue on St Helena - starting from Apr 24, the team plans to transition to a more standardised method of random quadrat testing along the entire length of the beach.
3.2 Biodiversity threat assessment conducted to understand the vulnerability of wildlife in St Helena and Ascension to plastic pollution, using empirical data, local knowledge, and from reports and published studies on related species by Q4 Yr1.		3.2 MSc project completed by Yr 1.	N/A
3.3 Systematic documentation of presence and type of plastics in bird nests through photo documentation, stomachs of bird and turtle carcasses and game fish, and entrapment of hermit crabs on both St Helena and Ascension by Q4 Yr3.		3.3 Brown booby and green turtle nest monitoring is complete for Ascension. Planning.	3.3 Logistics for seabird and fish stomach sampling on both Ascension and St Helena is underway with academic partners in South Africa.
3.4 Primary types of SUP bottles in Ascension and St Helena and sources and hotspot locations identified, including from shipping and transiting vessels by Q4 Yr2.		3.4 Bottle identification methodology has been sustained over the last 12 months (see findings under Activity 3.7).	3.4 The results from this dataset have since inspired further work, including reverse-particle tracking models being developed by Phil Hosegood (Plymouth University, to be match funded by AIG - see Activity 3.7).
3.5 Beach clean best practice guidelines developed (ZSL, SHNT), and being used by SHNT and AIG staff with volunteers by Q1 Yr2, and followed by 100% of volunteer teams conducting organised beach cleans by Q4 Yr3.		3.5 This activity was not progressed on Ascension due to issues with accountability for implementing clean-ups using proposed guidelines (see	3.5 SHNT will continue to draw on staff who are now trained in running continuing beach cleans. Trained

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2023 - March 2024	Actions required/planned for next period
		Activity 3.8). On St Helena, the team has wanted to avoid data disturbance and maintain sampling standardisation, so has avoided encouraging public beach cleans. On occasion SHG marine staff have supported SHNT with monitoring efforts.	SHNT volunteers will continue to support the team's broader monitoring efforts.
3.6 Mitigation strategy developed for wildlife and integrated into Conservation Management Plans by Q4 Yr3.		3.6 Ascension Island monitoring is now complete and is being feed into a long term monitoring plan (see Section 10).	3.6 Shoreline monitoring and biodiversity monitoring results are informing recommended mitigation actions for St Helena.
Output 4: Opportunities for international action and scaling for reducing marine plastic pollution are explored and developed with other UKOTs.			
4.1. Establish Plastic Pollution Steering Group that sits across UKOTs, shares knowledge and best practice on plastic pollution interventions, and meets twice per year to scale impact across UKOTs (Q4 Yr1).		4.1 Group successfully met twice in project Yr 2 (see Section 3.2, Output 4).	4.1 There will be further meetings held in project Year 3. It will be important to clarify the long-term management of the group in order to sustain momentum.
4.2. Virtual workshop held with relevant individuals and experts from around the world to learn and explore opportunities for developing 'plastic free tourism' across the UKOTs Q4 Yr2.		4.2 As above, meetings were held in project Yr 2 where the group decided the priority topics to focus on did not include plastic free tourism.	4.2 Meetings will continue to cover topics outlined as a priority by the group, with a priority focus on engaging with the UN Global Plastics Treaty. A change request is being submitted accordingly.
4.3. 'Plastic Free Tourism' best practice materials and guidelines published, targeting visitors to the UKOTs. Shared via UKOTs Plastic Pollution Steering Group for international scaling (Q3 Yr3).		4.3 As above, tourism not identified as a focus area for this group.	4.3 As above.

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Progress and Achievements April 2023 - March 2024	Actions required/planned for next period

- **Annex 2: Project's full current logframe as presented in the application form (unless changes have been agreed)**

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
Impact: Improved efficiency in plastic waste management in St Helena and Ascension enabling community action to near-zero SUP use, eliminating the impact of marine plastic pollution on wildlife, increasing ocean resilience and driving broader impact across other UKOTs.			
Outcome: Islanders drive a decline in SUP, improving waste management efficiency in St Helena and Ascension, contributing to ocean conservation, benefitting the marine environment and key wildlife species by 2025.	0.1 Estimated proportion of plastic waste comprising SUP reduced by at least 30% in St Helena and 20% in Ascension by Q4 Yr3 from baseline set in Q1 Yr2 in St Helena and Q3 Yr2 in Ascension. 0.2 Negative interactions (entanglement/entrapment/ingest ion) between plastic pollution and four priority species identified by Q2 Yr3 with a targeted mitigation plan in place by Q4 Yr3. 0.3 Plastic pollution pathways and hotspots identified, and possible mitigation actions are published and disseminated to relevant people, including businesses (products, shipping) and countries by Q4 Yr3. 0.4 Three locally-led, plastic reduction interventions trialled, informed by the systems diagnosis (including one inclusive and sustainable business model/financial mechanism and SUP water bottle reduction campaign), with methods and impact communicated to other UKOTs Q4 Yr3.	0.1 Volume of SUP through retail, sales and procurement figures for SUP items. 0.2 Threat assessment of plastic quantities and types for key species in Ascension and St Helena with a government endorsed mitigation plan in place. 0.3 Database of all beach litter, and a list of primary source countries/routes identified for SUP bottles. Summary produced with recommendations for mitigation. 0.4 Systems change map produced, M&E reports of pilot interventions, strategy report, behaviour change surveys. 0.5 New policy on SUP reduction for St Helena. 0.6 UKOTs Plastic Pollution Steering Group is formed and used to share project findings, solutions and best practice recommendations for SUP reduction and mitigation in other UKOTs. Guidelines endorsed and shared by Plastic Steering Group	Plastic waste reduction among school children and existing community-based organisations significantly drives reduction in wider society, as seen with London #OneLess campaign. SH ministers endorse the plan. Governments /administrations across UKOTs are willing to participate in, and contribute towards, the Plastics Steering Group.

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
	0.5 New policy on SUP reduction in St Helena is developed and adopted/implemented. 0.6 Plastic Free UKOTs tourism best practice guidelines implemented in other UKOTs by Q4 Yr3.	across other UKOTs. Implementation of guidelines in other UKOTs.	
Outputs: **1**. Systems for quantifying and reducing plastic waste are consolidated with a proposed strategy to trial interventions for SUP reduction in St Helena and Ascension.	1.1 Existing system diagnosis and social insight methods are tailored to context for use in 1.2 Q2 Yr1. 1.2 SUP system of retail (procurement, supply, and sale) and usage (purchase and use) in St Helena and Ascension is audited (Q4 Yr1), analysed and mapped using established methods by Q1 Yr2. 1.3 A minimum of three potential intervention points for change, including one focusing on the reduction of SUP water bottles (retail, sale, and/or infrastructure) are identified by Q1 Yr2, with feasibility assessment completed and reviewed with islanders through workshops by Q2 Yr2.	1.1 Methods and tools developed. 1.2 Audit of SUP usage undertaken consolidating existing strategic reports, materials and other sources. Community groups identified and interviews conducted. System analysed and 'system map' produced. MSc thesis produced (Plymouth). 1.3. Feasibility assessment of interventions completed that includes input from #OneLess business pioneer network, key suppliers involved in plastic reduction (e.g., Iceland supermarket) and relevant people from other UKOT projects e.g., BIOT. Report and strategy produced for trial interventions.	Data available from retail outlets, existing reports, and surveyed individuals accurately captures volumes and movement of SUPs. Beyond SUP water bottles, additional priority intervention points and practical alternatives can be identified. Communities are willing to engage with feasibility assessment review.
2. Pilot interventions to reduce most problematic/prevalent SUP items and switch to sustainable alternatives are completed, monitored and evaluated	2.1 Plastic waste reduction campaign targeting schools (Ascension and St Helena) and wider community (St Helena) launched by Q2 Yr2. 80% of school children switch from SUP water	2.1. Campaign materials and outreach plan developed and implemented. School children in St Helena and Ascension pledge to stop using SUP water bottles. Reduction in plastic items	Community is willing to engage. Planning process approves installation of public drinking fountains.

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
with new policy in place for SUP reduction in St Helena.	bottles to refilling by Q1 Yr3; 30% reduction in other island plastic waste items by Q4 Yr3. 2.2. Three intervention points in St Helena (including SUP water bottle reduction) are trialled, monitored, and evaluated, with project findings consolidated and final recommendations for plastic waste reduction by Q4 Yr4. 2.3 As part of the interventions piloted (2.2) and in line with St Helena's Sustainable Economic Development Plan 2018-2028, a minimum of one inclusive and sustainable business model/financial mechanism, underpinning plastic waste reduction is identified, assessed, and established with communities by Q1 Yr3. 2.4 New policy for SUP reduction in St Helena is developed, consulted on, with agreed policy adopted and endorsed by SHG by Q3 Yr3.	sent to island recycling unit. Refill data from water fountain(s)/refill points collected alongside behaviour change surveys, waste management reports and feedback from school outreach sessions. 2.2 Intervention trials in St Helena complete, including M&E. A simple report presenting and analysing each intervention for St Helena. Strategy produced that recommends action going forward on SUP reduction activities, with cost benefit analysis. 2.3 Attendance sheets, training materials and sustainable business model report. 2.4 Draft policy document, consultation responses, consultation report and recommendations, final policy document, statement on policy adoption by SHG.	Schools in St Helena and Ascension are willing to partner and engage in the project. Community banking initiatives are an appropriate sustainable business model in the local context, and if not, alternative strategies identified through systems change mapping can be implemented within the available budget. Locally appropriate sustainable business models identified and linked to existing work, or be feasible to engage with on top of current employment. SUP water bottles are an effective flagship item to represent the issue of marine plastic pollution and connect school children to the issue better to the ocean, as has been the case in the London based #OneLess campaign. Current barriers to people drinking tap water due to taste can be overcome, with existing solutions identified through BIOT Darwin and #OneLess London replicable in St Helena.
3. Characteristics and sources of plastic waste pollution and associated threats to wildlife on St Helena and Ascension shores are understood, with appropriate mitigation measures developed and implemented.	3.1 Beach clean data consolidated (Q2 Yr1) and monitoring strategy developed for 3 key priority sites on each island (Q4 Yr1). Documentation of wildlife/plastic interactions consolidated (Q3 Yr3).	3.1 Analysis of waste collected during beach cleans (previous and during project) to establish main sources and composition (Uni of Cape Town/Nelson Mandela Uni) i.e., type of item and plastic materials, including numbers of entrapped hermit crabs. MSc thesis	Access to beaches is possible. Beach clean volunteers have access to Internet/mobile data for data uploads.

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
	3.2 Biodiversity threat assessment conducted to understand the vulnerability of wildlife in St Helena and Ascension to plastic pollution, using empirical data, local knowledge, and from reports and published studies on related species byQ1 Yr2. 3.3 Systematic documentation of presence and type of plastics in bird nests through photo documentation, stomachs of bird and turtle carcasses and game fish, and entrapment of hermit crabs on both St Helena and Ascension by Q4 Yr3. 3.4 Primary types of SUP bottles in Ascension and St Helena and sources and hotspot locations identified, including from shipping and transiting vessels by Q4 Yr2. 3.5 Beach clean best practice guidelines developed (ZSL, SHNT), and being used by SHNT and AIG staff with volunteers by Q1 Yr2, and followed by 100% of volunteer teams conducting organised beach cleans by Q4 Yr3 3.6 Mitigation strategy developed for wildlife and integrated into Conservation Management Plans by Q4 Yr3.	published (Exeter). Maps of key sites for species (e.g., nesting, foraging) overlaid onto plastic hotspots. Monitoring data available open source through apps (e.g. Marine Debris Tracker) 3.2 Prioritised vulnerability list of species to plastics in St Helena and Ascension with associated priority list of most damaging plastic type and interaction (e.g. ingestion, entanglement). MSc thesis published (Exeter). 3.3 List of plastic sizes, colour, types, materials found in bird nests and bird/turtle/game fish stomachs. Report and peer-reviewed publication published (Uni of Cape Town/Nelson Mandela Uni). MSc thesis published (hermit crabs, Exeter). 3.4 Database of bottle/bottle lids and source countries. Open access Movebank database. 3.5 Beach clean best practice guidelines for St Helena and Ascension published, based on existing BIOT guidelines. 3.6 Mitigation strategy actions in Marine Management Plans for St Helena and Ascension.	

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
4) Opportunities for international action and scaling for reducing marine plastic pollution are explored and developed with other UKOTs.	4.1. Establish Plastic Pollution Steering Group that sits across UKOTS, shares knowledge and best practice on plastic pollution interventions, and meets twice per year to scale impact across UKOTs (Q4 Yr1). 4.2. Virtual workshop held with relevant people and experts from around the world to learn and explore opportunities for developing 'plastic free tourism' across the UKOTs Q4 Yr2. 4.3. 'Plastic Free Tourism' best practice materials and guidelines published, targeting visitors to the UKOTs. Shared via UKOTs Plastic Pollution Steering Group for international scaling (Q3 Yr3).	4.1. Establishment of UKOTs Plastic Pollution Steering Group with communication system and frequency in place. Workshop report and recommendations for action. 4.2. Workshop report and recommendations for action across UKOTs on plastic-free tourism. 4.3. Plastic-free UKOT tourism guidelines published distributed amongst UKOTs via Plastic Pollution Steering Group.	People are willing to participate in workshops UKOTs are willing to join Steering Group and participate in 2x yearly meetings/workshops. Government and partners in St Helena support the concept of 'plastic free tourism' and it aligns with the Economic Development Plan.

Activities (each activity is numbered according to the Output that it will contribute towards, for example 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 are contributing to Output 1)

Output 1: Systems for quantifying and reducing plastic waste are consolidated with a proposed strategy to trial interventions for SUP reduction in St Helena and Ascension.

1.1 Existing system diagnosis and social insight tools are reviewed, then tailored to context Q2 Yr1 (ZSL/SHNT/AIG)
1.2 MSc study to audit SUP usage, consolidating existing strategic reports, materials, and other sources by Q4 Yr1 (ZSL/SHNT/AIG/Plymouth)
1.3 Using tailored tools, identify and map out islanders (retailers, members of the public and waste management sector) and conduct interviews, surveys, and workshops to analyse procurement, supply, and sale of SUP, and understand contextual, social, and behavioural insights behind the use of and solutions to SUP by Q1 yr2 (ZSL/SHNT/AIG)
1.4 Produce system map of SUP usage in St Helena and Ascension by Q1 Yr2 (ZSL/SHNT/AIG/Plymouth)
1.5 Facilitate inclusive workshops with communities to assess the social acceptability of the system map findings and feed in their response to opportunities for action/intervention Q1 Yr2 (ZSL/SHNT)
1.6 Use workshop outcomes and system diagnosis to select three interventions that complement St Helena's SEDP (including one focusing on SUP water bottles) by Q1 Yr2. Assess feasibility of the three interventions and review with communities through workshops by Q2 Yr2 (ZSL/SHNT)

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions

Output 2: Pilot interventions to reduce most problematic/prevalent SUP items and switch to sustainable alternatives are completed, monitored and evaluated with new policy in place for SUP reduction in St Helena.

2.1 Develop campaign materials and run a campaign for SUP water bottle reduction in St Helena, targeting schools, existing community-based organisations and other early adopters identified from the community. Run smaller campaign in Ascension to target school children only (Q2 – Q4) Yr2 (ZSL/SHNT)
2.2 Work with CONNECT to install 2 new public refill stations in St Helena Q2 Yr2. Collect data on water refills until Q4 yr 3 (ZSL/SHNT)
2.3 Distribute refillable water bottles to all school children in St Helena and Ascension Q2 Yr2 (ZSL/SHNT/AIG/SHG)
2.4 Collaborate with communities to pilot 2 other interventions for reducing SUP, aligned with St Helena's SEDP as identified in output 1 (ZSL/SHNT/SHG)
2.5 Conduct before and after behaviour change surveys and analyse waste management reports to monitor change Q2 Yr2 and Q3 Yr4 (ZSL/SHNT/SHG/AIG)
2.6 Identify and launch 1 sustainable business model with local community. Provide training session (Q1 yr2) and monthly monitoring
2.7 Monitor and evaluate all interventions in St Helena and SUPWB intervention in Ascension. Consolidate final recommendations made for a plastic waste reduction strategy in St Helena by Q4 Yr4 (ZSL/SHNT/SHG).
2.8 Develop and consult on policy for reducing SUP in St Helena (SHG/SHNT/ZSL) Q2 yr2 to Q4 yr3

Output 3: Characteristics and sources of plastic waste pollution and associated threats to wildlife on St Helena and Ascension shores are understood, with appropriate mitigation measures developed and implemented.

3.1 Building on recognised methodologies, and previous beach litter monitoring efforts and data, design a robust sampling strategy for shore litter (Q4 yr1)
3.2 MSc study to conduct biodiversity threat assessment through an analysis of secondary data to establish the vulnerability of wildlife to plastic pollution. Produce prioritised vulnerability list of species with associated priority list of most damaging plastic type and interaction by Q1 Yr2(ZSL/Exeter/SHNT)
3.3 Implement robust sampling strategy for shore litter in St Helena (monthly), and use to characterise litter composition and identify plastic hotspot sites (SHNT/ZSL)
3.4 Implement robust sampling strategy for shore litter in Ascension (bimonthly for 3 months in Yr2 and Yr3), and use to characterise litter composition and identify plastic hotspot sites (Exeter MSc student/AIG/ZSL)
3.5 Based on threat assessment and current wildlife monitoring protocols, conduct wildlife-plastic interaction monitoring of priority species (identified in 3.1) at plastic hotspot sites (SHNT/AIG/Exeter MSc student/ZSL)
3.6 Quantify plastics in bird nests, stomachs of opportunistically collected seabird and turtle carcasses, game fish guts and hermit crab entrapment using comparable methods to Tristan da Cunha, Pitcairn and BIOT. Publish report Q4 Yr3 (Uni of Cape Town/Nelson Mandela Uni) and MSc thesis (hermit crabs, Exeter)
3.7 Use established identification methods to document origins of SUP bottles/lids to determine source countries and routes of shore litter (ZSL/SHNT/Uni of Cape Town/Nelson Mandela Uni) by Q4 yr 2
3.8 Create (ZSL/SHNT/AIG) and begin using beach clean best-practice guidelines for organised beach cleans with SHNT and AIG staff and local volunteers (SHNT/SHG/AIG)
3.9 Develop and implement a mitigation strategy for wildlife, based on outcomes of threat assessment, and working with relevant authorities and NGOs integrate into Conservation Management Plans (SHNT/ZSL/AIG)

Output 4: Opportunities for international action and scaling for reducing marine plastic pollution are explored and developed with other UKOTs.

4.1 Identify people in the UK and other UKOTs and establish a UKOTs Plastic Pollution Steering Group that meets virtually at least 2x per year (first workshop inQ4 yr1)

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
4.2 Review and consolidate existing information (grey literature and peer-reviewed) about best practice plastic-free tourism globally and consolidate into short briefing document (ZSL) 4.3 Hold workshop with Steering Group and relevant people to review plastic free tourism briefing/information and produce workshop report with recommendations Q4 Yr2 4.4 Develop guidelines for UKOTs plastic-free tourism. Create communication materials and distribute across Ascension and St Helena (govts and airports). Share with the UKOTs Plastic Pollution Steering Group by Q3 Yr3			

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  - **Annex 3: Standard Indicators**
    - **Table 1 Project Standard Indicators**

■ **Table 1 Project Standard Indicators**

DPLUS Indicator number	Name of indicator	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total to date	Total planned during the project
DPLUS-A03	Number of local/national organisations with improved capability and capacity as a result of the project.	Organisations			10		10	10
DPLUS -C05	Number of projects contributing data, insights, and case studies to national Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) related reporting processes and calls for evidence.	Number			3		3	5
DPLUS-A02	Number of secondments or placements completed by individuals of key local and national stakeholders **Please note: this indicator was 'tbc' in last year's report (April 2023), but we've successfully actioned two exchange trips in project year two and are therefore pleased to report against this indicator.**	People	Gender; Age Group; Stakeholder group:		2 (AIG Coordinator, exchange visit to St Helena in July 23 - Male, Age Group 25-30; SHNT		2	2

					Coordinator, exchange visit to Ascension Jan 24 - Male, Age Group 18-25)			
DPLUS -B04	Number of new/improved sustainable enterprises/ community benefits management plans available and endorsed*.	Number						1
DPLUS -C01	Number of best practice guides and knowledge products published and endorsed.		**Please note: we had included this indicator in last year's report, in reference to producing 'plastic free tourism guidelines' with the UKOTs plastic pollution network, however as per this year's report, this deliverable is not being progressed. We will therefore not be reporting on this indicator going forwards.**					
DPLUS -B01	Number of new/improved habitat management plans available and endorsed	Number						1
DPLUS -D03	Number of policies with biodiversity provisions that have been enacted or amended21 .	Number						2

- **Annex 4: Onwards – supplementary material (optional but encouraged as evidence of project achievement)**

Additional Project Annex List:

Annex 1 - St Helena retailer workshop

Annex 2 - AIG Community Engagement Plan

Annex 3 - Ascension Island Plastics System Map

Annex 4 - “Invisible threats to Whale Sharks” comic book

Annex 5 - Comic book distribution to schools across the UKOTs (photos)

Annex 6 - Comic book Youtube and social media posts (statistics)

Annex 7 - US Base Water Fountains Case Study

Annex 8 - Darwin Local (DPL0010) final project report

Annex 9 - University of Exeter, Msc project - analysis of shoreline data

Annex 10 - Brown booby study

Annex 11 - ZSL Approved Animal Ethics: Ascension Fish Study

Annex 12 - ZSL Approved Animal Ethics: St Helena Fish Study

Annex 13 - Entanglement logs

Annex 14 - Shoreline monitoring results - plastic bottles

Annex 15 - UKOTs Plastic Pollution Network Meetings - miro boards and minutes

Annex 16 - UN Global Plastics Treaty - Sept 23 workshops

Annex 17 - UN GPT Biodiversity Primer

Annex 18 - Submission A - INC2

Annex 19 - UN GPT Joint Position Statement

Annex 20 - AIG legacy shoreline monitoring: example data sheet

Annex 21 - UN GPT - SHNT Case Study

Annex 22 - ZSL Human Ethics - Approved

Annex 23 - SHNT/Human Rights Council - Signed contract re: Grievance Mechanisms

Annex 24 - Online presence

- **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 BCF-Reports@niras.com putting the project number in the Subject line.	
Is your report more than 10MB? If so, please discuss with BCF-Reports@niras.com 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.	
If you are submitting photos for publicity purposes, do these meet the outlined requirements (see section 15)?	
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.	