Darwin Plus: Final Report

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

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

Submission Deadline: no later than 3 months after agreed end date.

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

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 Organisation	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 date of project	01/05/2022 to 30/06/2025
Project Leader name	Rebecca Austin / Shauna Young
Project website/Twitter/blog etc.	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 written by: Rebecca Austin, Tobias Capel, Matthew Gollock, Laura Shearer, Tiffany Simpson, Neil Thorp, Shauna Young, Jessica Vagg

1 Project Summary

Plastic pollution is widely recognised as one of the biggest threats to marine biodiversity; over 700 species are negatively impacted, 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 aimed to address both plastic arriving from extrinsic sources, and that leaking into the environment from the islands. It aimed to trial and implement interventions that would benefit and empower communities to take action to protect their environment, and benefit the ocean and key wildlife species by 2025. It aimed to create conditions for islanders to reduce the reliance on SUP (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 Partnerships

This project has been a truly collaborative effort from its initial co-design in 2021 right through to its delivery and completion in 2025. The key delivery partners (Ascension Island Government, St Helena National Trust and Zoological Society of London) established effective ways of working in a project-launch workshop held in Spring 2022 (see AR1 Apr 2023). In a commitment to facilitate local leadership and more inclusive and equitable approaches, our ways of working as a multi-partner team were continually refined and adapted over the three years. Weekly meetings have been held throughout, but in addition ZSL staff were hosted on island multiple times by both Ascension and St Helena island partners to exchange skills, align approaches, refine project direction, monitor and evaluate on-going impact, and share in decision making. Partners carried out exchange trips between their territories for cross-pollination and skills sharing, and our youngest project staff member was flown from St Helena to Europe for the UN Ocean Conference alongside ZSL in 2024, overcoming multiple barriers to participation. In addition, ZSL's FAIRER team traveled to St Helena to upskill partners on inclusive conservation approaches through a week-long training course. Partners have gone above and beyond to support each other. At both the start and end of the final year, we held an open discussion on challenges faced and lessons learned from working together. There is a keen appetite to work together in the future, and these learnings (see Annex 5) will therefore be taken forward into future collaborations. A proposal was submitted to the John Ellerman Foundation in 2025 for a second phase of this work, and we are also exploring other opportunities to continue working together to scale the impact of this project.

Partnerships with local actors (e.g. retailers, schools, fisher associations, youth groups, hospitality sector and utility companies) have also been essential. As detailed in all previous reports, equitable co-design with the community has been fundamental to the project's success; with islander input crucial in shaping project activities, garnering support, and ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of interventions. This was also reflected in our positive collaboration with St Helena's Equality & Human Rights Commission .

The partnership with St Helena Government (SHG) has been particularly strong in the final year. Sessions were held with Ministers and Senior Leadership to gather input and buy-in for interventions taken forwards. Additionally, SHG's Environmental Risk Management Division delivered educational activities around plastic waste, and fed into a waste management options assessment. This positive partnership with the local government resulted in exciting and meaningful outcomes for our project on St Helena, including the recent adoption of strategic waste management action plans into the political agenda. Whilst the work on Ascension Island formally completed in Mar 24, our relationship with the Ascension Island Government was sustained, with their Conservation & Fisheries team providing ongoing support and taking forward interventions based on our project recommendations, including the procurement of water fountain stations on island to reduce reliance on single use plastic water bottles, as well as a commitment to continue conducting wildlife/plastic interaction surveys and beach cleans. ZSL also built an effective relationship with the UK government's negotiators of the UN Global Plastics Treaty to support UKOTs in feeding into global decision making spaces.

3 Project Achievements

3.1 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.
Completed - Two thorough systemic diagnoses were completed on both islands. A complex understanding of the plastic life cycle was achieved, whilst significant equitable engagement with both island communities provided a valuable understanding of the intersection between plastics and community. Multiple inclusive, locally-appropriate, evidence-based interventions were recommended and validated by actors on both islands.

Activity 1.1 Existing system diagnosis and social insight tools are reviewed, then tailored to context Q2 Yr1 (ZSL/SHNT/AIG)
Approaches and methodologies used by ZSL in previous projects were shared with AIG and SHNT during the project design phase, eg. the #OneLess Practical Guide and Sea to Source: Ganges Expedition, which provided an introduction to applying systemic and community-driven approaches for reducing plastic waste. Practical techniques such as diagnosing and mapping the plastic system were revisited in person during the two expeditions. Methodologies were adapted to be locally appropriate for Ascension and St Helena, and tailored community engagement plans co-developed (O.I. 1.1).

Activity 1.2 MSc study to audit SUP usage, consolidating existing strategic reports, materials, and other sources by Q4 Yr1 (ZSL/SHNT/AIG/Plymouth)
During summer 2022, Juliette Fraser (an MSc student from the University of Plymouth, co-supervised by ZSL's Senior Technical Advisor) remotely conducted 16 key informant interviews to gather initial data on behaviour and attitudes towards the importation, distribution, consumption, and disposal of SUP items across both Ascension and St Helena. Starting with project partners, key informants were recruited via snowball sampling. Survey questions were co-designed with AIG, SHNT, and ZSL and tailored to each island to spotlight potential social and/or economical barriers to reducing plastic waste. The interviews were supplemented with desk-based research and insights translated into 2 infographics and the first draft of a digital plastics systems map (O.I. 1.2) (Annex 6). This served as a springboard for the next stage of the system diagnosis on both islands.

Activity 1.3 Using tailored tools, identify and map out stakeholders (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)
On St Helena, 192 individuals were engaged in total through various methods to discuss behaviours and attitudes towards SUP (Annex 7). Insights were gleaned from as many diverse sectors as possible: including hospitality, retail, social groups, and government staff. Approaches were tailored to ensure those typically excluded were not. For example, the team identified St Helena's elderly community living outside of the town centre as typically excluded from initiatives: for this reason we conducted surveys with 65 members of this group, with a bespoke in-person approach across six locations. Retailers were also identified as a key group that could be impacted negatively by changes made to plastic product imports, therefore a workshop was designed and delivered with eight retailers in May 2023 (Annex 8) where they shared their knowledge and perspectives on SUP products, including most commonly sold items and challenges around the availability and affordability of alternatives.

On Ascension Island, community engagement continued with local actors to further understand contextual, social, and behavioural insights behind the use of SUP and complete the system diagnosis. By Mar 24, when match funds from John Ellerman Foundation ended, 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 (Jun 23) and providing a project wrap-up presentation at the Travellers Hill Cinema (Mar 24) attended by 26 people. During a cross-island exchange visit between the AIG & SHNT (Jul 23), Tobias Capel (AIG's Project Coordinator) presented his findings at SHNT's all-staff meeting, SHG's Marine Team offices, and a public presentation at St Helena's Museum.

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, Apr 23) and further conversations with SHG, these methods were deemed unscalable due to the resource needed, and the complexity of navigating variations between waste management systems on Ascension's US base and AIG's estate. Instead, we concluded it would be more effective to track changes further upstream, looking at importation of plastic products. We conducted an import audit of key SUP products with retailers on both islands, which served as a foundation for evaluating change when piloting interventions (Annex 9) (O.I 1.2).

Activity 1.4 Produce system map of SUP usage in Ascension by Q1 Yr2 (ZSL/SHNT/AIG)
In Jun 23, 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 surfaced and illustrated as a plastic system map for Ascension Island, with support from system change consultant Forum for the Future (Annex 10) (O.I. 1.2 & 1.3).

Activity 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)
Rather than holding inclusive workshops, we tailored our approach to be more accessible and instead held individual consultations directly with key actors on each island to remove potential barriers to access. On Ascension, all who originally inputted to the system diagnosis phase were recontacted, and eight meetings were held with AIG's Crown Counsel, Conservation and Fisheries department, Operations and Facilities teams (including Waste Management), and Mitie (private contractor) to validate our findings. Despite JEF match-funding concluding in Mar 24, the AIGCFD director, Tiffany Simpson, and AIGCFD Marine Team Leader, Cuen Muller, continued this validation exercise in parallel with the final year of our Darwin Plus project on St Helena, ensuring all respondents on Ascension were re-engaged to validate the findings as per our commitment to inclusive co-design. In addition all local actors were sent an email copy of the system map and provided contact details for future project related queries. Follow up conversations with AIG's Director of Operations and Facilities led to the procurement of 10 filtered water stations, which will be installed in AIG Government buildings and in Georgetown Square during summer 2025. On St Helena, the consultations to validate our findings from the community engagement phase took place later than planned in Q1 Yr3 due to delays around staff changeovers on island. Subsequently, 14 meetings took place to discuss proposed interventions and all but one of the identified actors were consulted, validating the interventions identified and exploring the scope for further collaboration to implement a selection of the interventions (O.I. 1.3).

Activity 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 stakeholders through workshops by Q2 Yr2 (ZSL/SHNT)
The outcomes of consultations in Activity 1.5 were evaluated by the internal project team, and consulted on with SHG Senior Leadership Team and Legislative Council as representatives of the general public in Jul 24. The decision was made to proceed with the following interventions in Q2 Y3: 1) Run a pilot scheme to introduce non-plastic or sustainable alternatives for target SUP items with cooperative retailers on St Helena; 2) Work with partners at the St Helena Government (SHG) Environmental Risk Management (ERM) section to conduct an updated options assessment for recyclable materials; 3) Perform educational activities to promote public understanding of ethical waste disposal on St Helena and promote active participation at the household

level; and 4) Perform a bin infrastructure experiment in Rupert's Bay to promote accessibility to segregated waste disposal and help identify the barriers influencing littering around the BBQ areas. A SUP water bottle-focussed intervention was not progressed, based on extensive consultations with a number of local actors on their feasibility: including Connect St Helena, who provide tap water on island, and SHG representatives. They noted concerns in our discussions regarding the implementation of drinking water-based interventions, which had also been expressed to us previously in the initial expedition (specifically, the need for a consumer behaviour shift on island toward drinking locally produced water, which comes with a host of challenges as identified and communicated in previous reports). In line with our commitment to putting the needs of the community first, we adapted the project deliverables accordingly and focussed on the interventions above (O.I 1.3).

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.
Mostly completed - On St Helena, interventions were launched in project year three following extensive consultations in years one and two. First, a bin infrastructure experiment in Rupert's Bay was completed to promote accessibility to waste disposal and help identify the barriers influencing littering. Second, effective collaboration has resulted in the production of a comprehensive assessment of Waste Management and Recycling Options for St Helena, leading to recommendations being adopted by the government. Third, foundations have been laid for a segregated waste management service at the household level in partnership with SHG ERM. Fourth, a pilot scheme to introduce sustainable alternatives for target SUP items with retailers on was initiated, achieving a co-designed feasibility assessment and product review, and initial product trials - however these could not be completed within the project timeline. On Ascension, although pilots were not anticipated, a cigarette-butt bin intervention was successfully implemented on island using match funding (Darwin Local project DPL0010).

Activity 2.1 Develop and launch campaign materials for spreading awareness about SUPs and encouraging sustainable habits; providing people with valuable knowledge and tools to tackle the issue of plastic waste in their community Yr2 (ZSL/SHNT)
The reviewed project Logframe (Jun 24, Annex 11) broadened the scope of activity 2.1 to include raising awareness of issues around SUPs and encouraging sustainable practices in the wider community; this led to intervention three (see Activity 1.6). SHG ERM successfully secured funding to distribute wheelie bins for household waste segregation, plastic, paper, cardboard, and cans. This new service will be implemented in the 25/26 financial year. Ahead of this, we collaborated with a local designer to create leaflets promoting responsible plastic waste management. These will be distributed with the bins to promote compliance with the new service (Annex 12). In addition, ERM and SHNT co-delivered a "design competition" for school children across St Helena to produce a "recycling superhero" for the island. In total 52 children participated and a graphic was created from the three winning designs, which will be showcased on waste collection vehicles and future communications. SHG and SHNT staff also delivered four Waste Management and Sustainability Lessons to Key Stage 2 pupils in all primary schools in St Helena between Jan-Feb 25, reaching a total of 80 children (Annex 13) (O.I 2.1).

Activity 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)
Negative perceptions of drinking treated tap water were identified during the system diagnosis phase and validated again during the consultation process in Q2 Yr3. This year the team concluded it would not be a suitable intervention for St Helena under its current context, with concerns that fountains would not be widely accepted by the public due to barriers around the perception of drinking treated water. This issue is compounded by the lack of appropriate locations to install a truly "public" water fountain and identifying who would be responsible for that infrastructure following installation, as it became clear this could not fall under the remit of our core partners at SHNT and or SHG Waste Management. Installing and managing public drinking infrastructure was also not something that Connect St Helena were willing to manage, and conversations here also highlighted concerns around ownership of water supply charges, as well as possible concerns over public health safety if there was a lack of use/water flowing through the system. This became far more complex and dynamic than originally anticipated, and should this area be explored again in the future, the approach would need to be multifaceted to overcome layered barriers. These decisions were made following extensive consultation with a number of local actors on feasibility: including Connect St Helena, SHG Senior Leadership Team and Legislative Council (O.I. 2.2).

Activity 2.4 Collaborate with stakeholders to pilot 2 other interventions for reducing SUP, aligned with St Helena's SEDP as identified in output 1 (ZSL/SHNT/SHG) and **Activity 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)**
Of the four interventions trialled in St Helena, the three below are relevant under these activities (O.I. 2.4 & 2.5) - please see Activity 2.1 for more detail on the fourth intervention taken forwards:

Run a pilot scheme to introduce non-plastic or sustainable alternatives for target SUP items with cooperative retailers on St Helena. Three of the four largest retailers on St Helena expressed their interest in working to introduce non-plastic sustainable alternatives for target SUP items in their stores. Discussions

during the co-design phase highlighted that this intervention should include: (1) a report exploring the current alternatives on the market for SUP products that the retailers either sell or use, and (2) an evaluation of the economic feasibility of switching to the alternative products, as well as (3) market research within the shops to gather customer input on their views of SUPs and evaluate their willingness to pay for SUP alternatives. Research was led by ZSL, with input and review from project partners SHNT and participating island retailers. The report also captures sustainable alternatives already being successfully implemented by retailers to create a standardised approach for reducing the consumption of SUP. The report was presented to retailers, SHG, and the Chamber of Commerce in Mar 25 (Annex 14). As the choice of trialling alternatives sits with the retailers, it was concluded any trial period of products should take place after the finalising of the feasibility report to allow for an informed choice to be made. As a time-efficient strategy, we procured samples of alternatives identified in the report and held a showcase workshop for the retailers in Mar 25 to evaluate the products and decide whether to take any forward as a trial beyond the project timeline (Annex 15). We have received some initial feedback regarding the SUP alternative products from retailers, detailed in Annex 15, and are awaiting further feedback. Results from the short questionnaire (Annex 16) on public perceptions to SUP alternatives revealed some consumer willingness to pay for more sustainable packaging, and a general enthusiasm for alternative options in supermarkets. This additional report was provided to retailers in May 25 to complement any future decision making. ZSL will continue to communicate with the retailers and SHG to ensure the product trial feedback can be shared and built upon.

Perform a bin infrastructure experiment in Rupert's Bay to promote accessibility to waste disposal and help identify the barriers influencing littering around the BBQ areas. Consultation with SHG ERM identified an opportunity to experiment with different bin infrastructure in the BBQ areas to understand and reduce littering behaviour in this area. SHNT performed fortnightly surveys in Rupert's Bay throughout the experiment, enabling a direct comparison of the volume of waste littered during the experiment to the average volume of litter previously recorded in those areas. The data have now been reviewed and compiled into a report (Annex 32). Although a modest reduction in litter was observed at three of the five BBQ areas during the trial, the difference compared to the previous year's data were not statistically significant. Recyclable materials remained a substantial component of the waste recorded, but bin contamination—due to mixed disposal—prevented successful recycling, and all experimental bins were used for mixed general waste. This study highlights the importance of addressing infrastructure and user behaviour in future segregated waste management strategies. While the improved bins offered practical benefits in terms of accessibility and design, the results suggest that further work is needed to better understand and influence public disposal practices. The findings provide a foundation for continued engagement, data integration, and refinement of future litter management approaches.

Work with partners at the St Helena Government (SHG) Environmental Risk Management (ERM) section to conduct an updated options assessment for recyclable materials. Consultations with SHG ERM identified the need for an updated options assessment for recyclable materials that could provide waste management practitioners with information and mechanisms to establish new sustainable recycling models for waste materials, including plastic. Almost a decade has passed since the first assessment was made in 2015, which inspired numerous changes and advancements in waste management practices on St Helena. In addition, there have been context changes on St Helena, global systemic shifts such as the development of the UN Global Plastic Treaty, and technological innovations, including those trialled in DPL00024 for plastic waste in the Chagos Archipelago (Diego Garcia), that have significantly changed the landscape of plastic waste management. Following a procurement process, experienced contractors Urbanisland conducted the renewed assessment, incorporating knowledge of local actors such as Patrick Crowie (Horse Point Landfill Site Manager), Connect St Helena, SHG EMD, and local retailers. The report revealed key recommendations on the future of St Helena's waste management system (Annex 17). Unfortunately, the absence of weighing scales for a number of years at the landfill site has meant that an accurate baseline of waste quantities has been difficult to determine; however, the report utilises statistics from past years to build up a picture of waste usage on island, as a means to make recommendations for change going forward. This document was presented to SHG in Mar 25, and adopted by the ENRP Advisory board in Jun 25.

Activity 2.6 Identify and launch 1 sustainable business model with the local community. Provide training sessions (Q1 yr2) and monthly monitoring.
Please see content under Activity 2.4 and 2.5 for further details regarding the following intervention: "**Run a pilot scheme to introduce non-plastic or sustainable alternatives for target SUP items with cooperative retailers on St Helena"** (O.I. 2.2 & 2.3). Monthly monitoring has not been conducted under this intervention, as the choice of trialling alternatives sits with the retailers, so it was concluded any trial period of products should take place after the finalising of the feasibility report (Mar 25) to allow for an informed choice to be made in the retailers' own time. The intention for the work undertaken under this intervention, including the resulting reports and workshop with retailers, has been to advise local business owners on more sustainable SUP alternatives available to them, and provide the information required to make their own informed choices on these.

Activity 2.7 Monitor and evaluate all interventions in St Helena and consolidate final recommendations made for a plastic waste reduction strategy in St Helena by Q4 Yr3 (ZSL/SHNT/SHG) and **Activity 2.8 Develop and consult on policy for reducing SUP in St Helena (SHG/SHNT/ZSL) Q 2 yr 2 to Q4 yr3.**

After concluding the following intervention work on St Helena: 1) Run a pilot scheme to introduce non-plastic or sustainable alternatives for target SUP items with cooperative retailers on St Helena, and 2) Work with partners at the St Helena Government (SHG) Environmental Risk Management (ERM) section to conduct an updated options assessment for recyclable materials, the team identified aspects of existing legislation that could be modified to aid reduction of SUP use in St Helena. A strategic approach document (Annex 18) was developed by SHNT and discussed with SHG Senior Leadership Team, Legislative Council and Tax and Revenue Working Group in meetings undertaken in Mar 25. Specifically the document recommended clarity when using the term "bioplastic" and ensuring these are not encouraged whilst the infrastructure to manage this waste does not exist on St Helena. It also recommended incentivisation of paper bags as a cost effective plastic alternative; and the disincentivisation of polystyrene trays. Following further consultation with SHG, SHNT has developed a Strategic Action Plan (Annex 19), which was adopted by ENRP in Jun 25 and will go before the Tax and Working Group in Sept 25, before being adopted into future policy (O.I. 2.4). Additionally, recommendations on future waste management decisions for St Helena, as laid out in the updated 2025 report: "St Helena Waste Management and Recycling Options Assessment" (Annex 17), have been accepted by SHG ENRP in Jun 25, following further discussion and presentation of the results and recommendations contained within the report in Q1 Y4 (O.I. 2.4). Intervention work and future recommendations undertaken in St Helena are being consolidated into a "St Helena Executive Summary" report (in prep), which will be provided to SHG and SHNT following the end of the project.

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.
Mostly completed - Extensive shoreline monitoring on both islands has provided a thorough illustration of the prevalence and composition of plastic pollution as well as their likely sources; in particular using plastic drinking bottles to identify local vs international pollution pathways. Multiple diverse wildlife studies have been conducted - many are now complete and have begun feeding into local agendas. In addition, island case studies were platformed at the UN Global Plastics Treaty and the UN Ocean Conference to help inform global strategies. However, significant delays has meant data are still being analysed and further specific mitigation recommendations will need to be shared with governments later this year in order to inform upcoming MPA strategy reviews on each island.

Activity 3.1 Building on recognised methodologies, and previous beach litter monitoring efforts and data, design a robust sampling strategy for shore litter (Q4 yr1).
In Year 1 AIG, SHNT and ZSL co-designed each island's on-going shoreline monitoring strategies, with technical advice from our international academic partners. The expeditions of Oct 22 and Feb 23 included multiple pilots of several shoreline monitoring methodologies (Annex 20). On St Helena, Sandy Bay Beach and Rupert's Beach were selected as priority pilot sites due to a combination of oceanographic, biological, and recreational reasons. On Ascension, sites were selected for ongoing monitoring due to their importance as green turtle nesting sites and exposure on the windward side of the island to pollution brought in on ocean currents. Ongoing monitoring plans were finalised (Annex 21) and continued regularly on both islands. These were reviewed in year 2 and while the photo quadrat survey methodology deployed on St Helena provided valuable insights, there was recognition that it may not fully represent the entire beach and could introduce unintentional geographical bias. Starting from Apr 24, the team transitioned to a more standardised method of random quadrat testing. Whilst the original data collected remains valid and can be incorporated into overall insight of the plastic pollution, this enhanced the dataset by employing a more comprehensive and standardised approach, allowing for better comparability with international surveys. (O.I 3.1)

Activity 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).
In summer 2022, an MSc student from Imperial College London (Constanza Fernandez) completed a biodiversity threat assessment of plastic pollution in Ascension and St Helena using literature available on vulnerability (plastic interaction), hazard risk (plastic concentration according to Global Plastic distribution model) and species exposure risk to plastic (Annex 22). Constanza presented her findings to partners, offering an understanding of previous work that had taken place across both islands and identifying the species most at risk to inform our wildlife monitoring strategies (O.I. 3.2).

Activity 3.3 Implement robust sampling strategy for shore litter in St Helena (fortnightly), and use to characterise litter composition and identify plastic hotspot sites (SHNT/ZSL).
On St Helena, shoreline monitoring was consistent with only a few data gaps due to bad weather impeding access to sites. After 12 months in a supporting role, Matthew Owen (SHNT's Project Coordinator) progressed to take on leadership of the shoreline monitoring strategy on St Helena. From May 23 to Oct 24 the team collected a total of 30,636 items from Sandy Bay Beach, with 299,88 items being plastic, and a total of 10,608 items from Rupert's Beach, with 7,336 items being plastic.

Activity 3.4 Implement robust sampling strategy for shore litter in Ascension (quarterly), and use to characterise litter composition and identify plastic hotspot sites (Exeter MSc student/AIG/ZSL).
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 between 09/01/2023 - 04/10/2023 on Ascension and between 02/05/2023 - 16/10/2023 on 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 (Annex 23) (O.I 3.1).

Activity 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).

Green turtles (Chelonia mydas) - Green turtles nest from November to June on sandy beaches around Ascension's coastline, the three largest and most important beaches being Long Beach, Pan Am and North East. The two methods chosen were: 1) investigate the prevalence and composition of plastic debris on fresh tracks and cover-ups during routine activity monitoring; and 2) investigate the prevalence and composition of plastic debris within the egg chambers of turtle nests during excavations of nests performed for the 60 nests that are already being studied for climate impacts on temperature-determined sex. Monitoring took place from Mar 23 was completed in Mar 24 utilising methods designed to be performed alongside routine productivity monitoring. 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 (O.I. 3.1 & 3.3) (Annex 21).

Activity 3.6 Quantify plastics in bird nests, stomachs of opportunistically collected seabird and turtle carcasses, game fish guts and entrapment using comparable methods to Tristan da Cunha, Pitcairn and BIOT. Publish report Q4 Yr3 (University of Cape Town/Nelson Mandela Uni) and MSc thesis (University of Exeter)

Beyond a few records documenting presence and prevalence of anthropogenic marine debris in the environment on Ascension Island and St Helena, there has yet to be an attempt to investigate the potential impacts that plastic pollution is having on marine wildlife. The below studies aimed to address this knowledge gap (O.I. 3.3)

Brown booby (Sula lucogaster): Ascension Island supports 11 species of seabird that breed in internationally important numbers, including the brown booby (*Sula leucogaster*), which have previously been noted to collect plastic debris for nesting material. 248 brown booby nests were sampled between Nov 22-Feb 23 and Nov 23 to Mar 24; 125 of which were assessed for the presence of anthropogenic debris. Results from survey methodology comparisons, including disturbance time, are presented alongside anthropogenic debris data in a preliminary report (Annex 24), which was passed to project partners in St Helena and Ascension Island (Jun 25). The intention is to publish findings in a peer-reviewed journal in the coming months, which will be shared with BCF when available.

Seabird stomachs: Bird carcasses collected opportunistically from Ascension Island were dissected and the stomachs removed for plastic analysis, with the ambition to be processed by project partners at Nelson Mandela University. Samples were scheduled for transport to our partner in South Africa in Oct 23 (see HYR2 Oct 23 for details), however, this proved significantly difficult as required veterinary certificates for imports, which was not possible as there are no vets on Ascension, and was further complicated with a global rise in HPAI (bird influenza). A solution was finally reached, transporting samples to the marine plastics team at Cefas to process the samples under the UK Government's Blue Belt budget. The initial data from this study have recently been shared with project partners by Cefas (Annex 25), with the aim to analyse and publish findings as a scientific manuscript within upcoming months. The team will be glad to share this with BCF, and relevant actors on island, as soon as possible.

Fish study: In Aug 24, 35 Atlantic Chub Mackerel *Scomber colias* and St Helena Butterfly fish *Chaetodon sanctaehelenae* were collected in James Bay, St Helena. Fish were frozen whole for later plastics analysis. On Ascension Island, fish and oyster samples were collected from multiple locations on the west coast near Georgetown : 30 Black Triggerfish *Melichthys niger* were collected on 27-28 May 2024, 32 Rock Hind *Epinephelus adscensionis* were collected between 25 May-28 Jun 24, and 33 Rock Oyster *Pseudochama cristella* were collected on 14 May-28 May 25. The results from analysis thus far are available as a preliminary report (Annex 25), which was provided to project partners in Ascension Island and St Helena in Jun 25. Final results will be written into a scientific manuscript within the upcoming months to determine the presence and type of microplastics in different fish/inverts with different feeding strategies. This will be shared with BCF when available.

Ad-hoc entanglement of marine species: An internal system was set up within AIG and SHNT to record ad-hoc entanglements internally. These occurrences were of great interest to the team but were not occurring at a high enough frequency to become a more significant monitoring approach. Seven instances of entanglements with plastic fishing gear were recorded ad-hoc in Ascension Island between Jan 21-Jan 23, including: Galapagos shark (Carcharhinus galapagensis), Ascension frigatebird (Fregata aquila), brown booby (Sula leucogaster) and masked booby (Sula dactylatra).

Activity 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

SUP bottles and lids were collected from transects performed between Oct 22-Nov 23 on Ascension, and between Jan 23-Nov 24 on St Helena, during the shoreline monitoring efforts to quantify the prevalence and composition of debris present in these coastal environments. Some were also collected ad-hoc from other beach clean activities. All items encountered were recorded and classified using the Marine Debris Tracker mobile application, which provides a survey recording tool for organisations and hosts an open-source data platform for scientific research (https://debristracker.org/).

Utilising methodology from Ryan et al's 2020 paper "Message in a bottle: Assessing the sources and origins of beach litter to tackle marine pollution", 455 sampled items from Ascension Island revealed 24 manufacture countries of origin: including China, DRC, and Malaysia. The sampled items on Ascension Island were an average of 2.20 years old and median age of 1.81 years old. On St Helena, 288 samples items revealed 15 manufacture countries of origin: including China, Indonesia, and South Africa. The sampled items on Saint Helena were an average of 1.43 years old and median age of 1.16 years old. Preliminary results were presented to project partners in Ascension and St Helena in June 2025 (Annex 20). A full report will be produced in coming months that will infer the origins of SUP drink bottles and loose lids using their brands, countries of manufacture, types of drink, and ages, along with a combination of additional data including ocean current models and data from Global Fishing Watch. Further results will be shared with stakeholders on both islands and will be published in a peer-reviewed journal, and provided to BCF when available (O.I. 3.4).

Activity 3.8 Create (ZSL/SHNT/AIG) and begin using beach clean best-practise guidelines for organised beach cleans with SHNT and AIG staff and local volunteers (SHNT/SHG/AIG).

As noted in previous reports, the team did not progress this activity for the following reasons: on Ascension Island, beach huts have different ownerships and booking systems, so there is a challenge around accountability for implementing clean-ups using proposed guidelines. Additionally there was no capacity within AIG to enforce the guidelines at AIG-owned beach huts. However, in response to this project, additional beach cleans were performed on Ascension in 2024 to encourage local awareness of the impacts of plastic pollution. It is hoped to continue these cleans annually where AIG capacity allows. Furthermore, beach cleaning stations (The 2 minute foundation: Stations) have been sourced to be installed on beach nature reserves to increase local involvement to tackle marine litter. Shoreline surveys also identified a high abundance of cigarette butt litter around beach huts. This led to the successful completion of the Darwin Local project DPL0010 which involved installation of cigarette butt bins at several indicator sites and resulted in a significant decrease in cigarette butt litter around the beach hut areas. Disposal of waste from these bins is now coordinated by the AIG Waste Management team. On St Helena, the two focus beaches were spot cleaned by EMD weekly and when capacity has allowed SHNT undertook clean ups. On occasion, through a capacity building initiative between marine teams, SHG marine staff and volunteers have supported SHNT with monitoring efforts. In these instances, they are briefed on the approach and necessary health & safety measures. (O.I 3.5)

Activity 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)

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)**, which identified litter as a medium threat, having *"some effect on the health of the ecosystem/species of the reserves".* Annual reports are published on the AIG website to provide updates on the work being undertaken across Nature Reserves. One of the research priorities in the AIG Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP) is to identify the extent and impacts of plastic pollution. The surveys completed through this project on the shorelines and Letterbox Nature Reserve helped to identify not only the extent of plastic pollution around the island, but also the impact on wildlife including Green turtles and seabirds. Analysis of the plastic drinks bottles collected has also provided insight into potential sources of plastic pollution. These surveys have set the protocols and baselines for ongoing monitoring which will inform management decisions. Another goal within the BSAP is to introduce regulations to control sources of marine pollution and SUP not already covered by legislation. The approval by Council for the ban on single-use vapes in 2025 was a successful start to limiting the import of SUP. MPA management plans for both islands are being renewed after the lifespan of the project, with existing plans spanning to 2027 in St Helena, and 2026 in Ascension. Outcomes of wildlife impact studies undertaken throughout the project will be presented to AIG and SHG in Executive Summary Reports

(in preparation), alongside original research outputs, so the results can be used to inform the development of the future management plans accordingly. (O.I. 3.6)

Output 4: Opportunities for international action and scaling for reducing marine plastic pollution are explored and developed with other UKOTs.
Completed - A Plastic Pollution Network was successfully launched, with active participation from a diverse representation of UKOTs and CDs. Rich discussions covered past and current action for tackling plastic pollution, with a keen focus on both local and international policy e.g. UN Global Plastics Treaty. Inclusive and equitable approaches underpinned our ways of working, identifying and working to overcome typical barriers experienced by small islands. An agreed Terms of Reference document has provided a foundation for continuing this work beyond the timeline of this grant.

Activity 4.1 Identify stakeholders 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).
The project team formed a Plastic Pollution Network with representatives from across seventeen different UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies to enable capacity sharing, knowledge exchange, and scaling of successful interventions to reduce plastic pollution in small island contexts. Representatives from local and national government, academia, NGOs and IGOs have taken part in four meetings held online to date in Apr 23, Oct 23, Sept 24 and Mar 25, with each meeting repeated to accommodate multiple time zones and overcome barriers to engagement. An average of 38 individual participants have been present at each meeting thus far, highlighting the interest in, and need for, such a group to exist. An open access approach has been prioritised, and participants were asked to help us continually expand and diversify Network participation. A "Terms of Reference" document was co-created in 2025 by an inter-sessional working group to solidify on-going ways of working together (Annex 26), helping to shape the continuation of the Network following the conclusion of this project. ZSL will take on the Secretariat function of this group temporarily, and as future funding is being sought for ongoing work on marine plastic pollution in the UKOTs, the continuation and expansion of this group will be embedded in any such future proposals. It was agreed by the Network that the role of Chair would be voluntary, with the intention of anchoring leadership of the Network and its activities within the UKOTs and CDs to ensure it remains relevant (see all meeting notes and summaries in Annex 27).

Activity 4.2 Host workshops to identify specific needs and requests from the UKOTs network from UN Global Plastics Treaty, to inform the production of a Joint Position Statement (Q3 Y2).
Plastics policy, namely the UN Global Plastics Treaty, was highlighted as a keen area of interest for the Network, therefore ZSL has been engaging with negotiations over the course of the project to ensure that the needs and contexts of the UKOTs are being fed in. To this end, ZSL hosted two workshops in Sept 23 to work through priority focus areas for the Treaty with UKOTs partners present (Annex 28), which resulted in the creation of our Joint Position Statement (Annex 29). ZSL then presented these findings to Defra's lead negotiating team, who consequently agreed to join our Oct 23 UKOTs Network calls. In addition to this we produced a number of other outputs, including a Biodiversity Primer (Annex 30) and a submission on Scope & Principles not discussed at INC2 (Annex 31).

Activity 4.3 Provide updates to the UKOTs Plastic Pollution Network on the treaty negotiations, drawing on contacts within the UK government's lead negotiating team (on going until Q4 Y3).
Shauna Young (ZSL) attended INC2 in Paris, May 23, to understand what role this project team could play in strengthening the outcome of negotiations. It became clear that the impacts of plastic pollution on both biodiversity and local communities - including those within the UKOTs - are not being prioritised within the process. ZSL then partnered with Fauna & Flora and IUCN to work on these areas, and ensure the needs of the UKOTS are represented by the Treaty. As mentioned earlier, representatives from the Defra Global Plastics Treaty negotiation team have also been invited to, and attended, meetings of the Network: providing updates on progress of the negotiations, and offering an opportunity for questions and feedback from members of the group. These agenda items have been met with useful and interesting discussion with the aim to foster inclusivity of UKOTs and CDs in decision-making processes.

In Apr 24, ZSL partnered with DEFRA to deliver the "Tackling Plastic Pollution Together" event at the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development conference. ZSL's Heather Koldewey presented on "People, wildlife, plastics" This knowledge sharing event provided a showcase for science which is helping us to build our understanding of the challenge plastic waste poses and guide effective solutions. The event team created a flipbook detailing a variety of projects and programmes on marine plastics, including case studies from the Network, and launched a social media campaign to the same effect. A discussion forum has now been launched on the UN Decade platform which is open to everyone: Tackling plastic pollution together | The Ocean Decade. Two members of SHNT attended the session and held a dialogue after the session with the DEFRA team.

Activity 4.4 Produce further collaborative outputs as required to feed into the UN Global Plastics Treaty process (on going until Q4 Y3).
As mentioned above, 2023 saw the creation of our Joint Position Statement (Annex 29). In addition to this we produced a number of other outputs, including a Biodiversity Primer (Annex 30) and a submission on Scope & Principles not discussed at INC2 (Annex 31). ZSL, alongside Flora & Fauna and IUCN, later published an

information brief on 16th October 2024 entitled: Reinforcing Commitments to Nature and Communities: Options to include Biodiversity in the future Global Plastics Treaty".

3.2 Outcome

We believe our project activities have generated significant movement towards achieving the project outcome, for which evidence is provided below against each of the agreed indicators, alongside explanations where required as to why certain aspects of work could not be achieved.

0.1 Estimated proportion of plastic waste comprising SUP reduced by at least 30% in St Helena and 20% in Ascension by Q4Y3 from baseline set in Q4 Yr1 in St Helena and Q3 Yr2 in Ascension.
Many logframe indicators associated with this outcome were successfully met; two systems diagnoses were completed, validation/feasibility exercises carried out on both islands, and more than our three target interventions were identified. However, options for establishing baseline plastic data within the waste streams on both islands were explored and deemed unscalable (see Section 3.1, Activity 1.3), therefore we instead established baselines via an import audit of key SUP products with retailers on both islands. Our indicator targets (20% in Ascension and 30% in St Helena) were set in anticipation of trialing drinking water-based interventions including distributing refillable water bottles and installing water fountains, however these interventions could not be progressed due to complexities discussed in Section 3.1, Activity 2.2. Following a prolonged feedback process with SHG ministers and senior leadership from Jul-Sept 24, and multiple consultations with relevant parties, it was determined that water fountains were not an appropriate intervention at this stage. (This was further explained in the Oct 24 half-year report and our change request as submitted in Dec 24). Other interventions were instead taken forwards however due to a reduced implementation timeframe owing to extended key actor consultations, a reassessment of importation data against the baseline was not conducted as the retailers are still providing feedback on sample products at this stage, and this measure would need to be taken after the products have been trialled in stores with customers. Nevertheless, these are key steps and we are confident they will contribute towards meeting our original indicators in the near future - especially with the progress made in regard to waste management policy as detailed in Section 3.1, Activities 2.7 & 2.8.

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.
Many logframe indicators associated with this output were successfully met; a biodiversity threat assessment was conducted and wildlife/plastic interactions were monitored for more than our target of four priority species on both islands (see Section 3.1, Activities 3.5 & 3.6, for more detail on the results of brown boobies and green turtles interacting with marine debris). This work Ascension has already fed into the following: Wide Awake Fairs Management Plan (2023-2028), Letterbox Nature Reserve and Boatswain Bird Island Sanctuary Management Plan (2023-2028), and Ascension Island Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (see Section 3.1, Activity 2.9). As noted in Section 3.1, Activity 3.6, following significant logistical challenges in transferring samples to our partner Nelson Mandela University, fortunately the project extension to Jun 25 allowed for extra time for this analysis to take place however not enough time for the results to feed into targeted mitigation plans. Preliminary reports of findings were completed prior to the end of the project, with the intention to complete further analysis and publish reports in peer-reviewed journals in the months following. Wider MPA management plans for both islands are being renewed soon, with existing plans spanning to 2027 in St Helena, and 2026 in Ascension. Outcomes of wildlife impact studies undertaken throughout the project will be presented to AIG and SHG in Executive Summary Reports (in prep), alongside original research outputs, so that results can be used to inform the development of the future management plans.

0.3 Plastic pollution pathways & hotspots identified, and possible mitigation actions published & disseminated to relevant people, including businesses (products, shipping) & countries by Q4Y3
Many logframe indicators associated with this output were successfully met; with robust shoreline monitoring strategies established and conducted on both islands, including drinking bottle pollution data which has been collected, analysed and sources identified. The composition of plastic pollution is now well understood for both islands, and we have a clear picture of both the pollution generated locally and coming from overseas on ocean currents. This has been illustrated in the Ascension system map (Annex 10) and shared with key island actors (see Section 3.1, Activity 1.5 for more detail). Already, one recommendation has been realised through the installation of new cigarette bins at 7 sites on Ascension Island. On St Helena, shoreline monitoring results informed the trial of new bin infrastructure at Rupert's Bay beach BBQ areas, to see if the installation of "olympic bins" (two-sided bins for both recycling and general waste) in new locations would reduce the amount of litter in the area. Results of this study are detailed under Section 3.1, Activity 2.4. Results of plastic pollution pathway and hotspot studies have already been made available to project partners in Ascension and St Helena; but will also be presented to AIG and SHG in Executive Summary reports following the project end date with the goal to feed into mitigation action both locally and at the global scale.

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.
Many logframe indicators associated with this output were successfully met; five interventions were launched across both islands, three of which were completed and two are still on-going. The reduction of SUP water

bottles was deemed unsuitable to implement during this project's timeframe, following extensive community engagement and key actor consultations. This has previously been communicated in Annual Reports and through email correspondence to BCF. Additionally, a sustainable, local business model was also not pursued - rather a suite of other plastic reduction interventions were taken forward in response to the priorities highlighted by the community through our inclusive co-design process (more detail is available in Section 3.1, Activities 2.1 and 2.5). The methods and results of intervention work undertaken on St Helena were shared with other UKOTs in Mar 25 through online meetings of the UKOTs and CDs Plastic Pollution Network, and further updates around the impact of these interventions can be disseminated through this Network at future meetings.

0.5 New policy on SUP reduction in St Helena is developed and adopted/implemented.
Indicators associated with this output were successfully met. Recommendations from the "St Helena Waste Management and Recycling Options Assessment" (Annex 17) were disseminated to SHG and adopted by the ENRP Advisory Board in Jun 25. The recommendations will help to reduce the amount of plastic waste going to landfill (and leaking into the wider environment), through an increase in on-island and overseas recycling. Further recommendations were presented to SHG in the third year of the project (Annex 18) following the SUP-alternative work undertaken with retailers, which recommended new tax legislation on specific items to make it more economically feasible for retailers to choose and use sustainable plastic alternatives, such as paper bags. These legislative changes were included in a strategic action plan developed by SHNT (Annex 18), which was adopted by the ENRP in Jun 25 and expected to be brought to the Tax & Working Group in Sept 25. Whilst these mechanisms are ongoing, new policy on SUP reduction has not been implemented as of yet on St Helena, but we anticipate this will commence in the new parliamentary year.

0.6 UKOTs Plastic Pollution Network is actively engaged in UN Global Plastics Treaty until Q4Y3
Indicators associated with this output were successfully met. On two occasions Defra's negotiating team for the UK Global Plastics Treaty joined our Network meetings, providing updates to attendees. This served as a valuable platform for dialogue between the Territories and Defra colleagues. A Network ToR (Annex 26) was agreed in 2025, providing a springboard for continuation of the Network. This is especially pertinent given that the UK Global Plastics Treaty negotiations are still underway.

3.3 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: Yes correct but modification needed **-** Through dialogue with school teachers and parents, it was 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, but for engagement specifically with school children please refer to Output 2.

Assumption 0.2 SH ministers endorse the plan: Yes correct **-** St Helena's Ministers have remained positive and engaged with the project, participating in meetings around barriers/solutions to reducing SUP on island, presenting at Network meetings, and supporting presentations given by the project team at the UKOTs Conservation Group meeting in Nov 23 and May 24. St Helena's Environment Minister confirmed ENRP adopted our recommendations (Jun 25), (see supporting document at end Annex 17).

Assumption 0.3 Governments/administrations across UKOTs are willing to participate in, and contribute towards, the Plastics Steering Group. Yes correct - We hosted four successful Network meetings with 17 UKOTs and Crown Dependencies in attendance (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. Yes correct - 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. Yes correct - multiple interventions were surfaced and co-development took place in project year 3. See Output 2.

Assumption 1.3 Islanders are willing to engage with feasibility assessment review and **Assumption 2.1 Community is willing to engage.** Yes correct - having adopted ZSL's FAIRER conservation approach, which meant the project design was embedded in a commitment to inclusive and equitable outcomes, islanders have been happy to engage in all project phases on both islands, with several key individuals indicating their interest in continuing to work together in future.

Assumption 2.2 Planning process approves installation of public drinking fountains. Yes correct but with modifications **-** On Ascension, AIG has secured funding to trial the installation of 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. The installation of water fountains on St Helena was not achieved within the project timeframe but is open for more discussion in future.

Assumption 2.3 Schools in St Helena and Ascension are willing to partner and engage in the project. Yes correct **-** Schools on both islands were 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.** Undetermined **-** We diverted away from this original plan to instead pursue other interventions on the island, in a commitment to respond to local needs and priorities as surfaced through our equitable co-design approach (see Output 2).

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. Incorrect **-** given challenges detailed earlier in this report, the potential efficacy of this as a flagship was determined as low.

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. Yes and no **-** On Ascension Island, trial fountains with trusted water filters are being installed throughout AIG work spaces. In St Helena it was determined, following a final discussion with Ministers in July 2024, and following feedback from Connect St Helena and community groups (positively acknowledged by the Ethics Council on the island) not to pursue water-based interventions on the island in the remainder of the project. This decision was made through an inclusive, community-led approach that ensured key actors on St Helena felt heard and respected. It became apparent that the complexity of the water situation on St Helena — due to legal, contractual, and social behaviours — was beyond the scope of this project. However, to continue exploring these facets, we undertook several community meetings and raised the issue at the government level. Discussions are ongoing, but the government has acknowledged there is a public confidence issue in the tap water on St Helena and is exploring options.Although the resulting change request to amend the project log frame accordingly was submitted later than ideal (Dec 24), due to an effort to bundle logframe amendments with financial changes, and it occurred during a particularly busy period for the team. The project accepted the funder's decision not to approve late logframe changes and have continued to report against the Jun 24 version. This experience demonstrates how the project effectively managed evolving assumptions through adaptive project management, ensuring alignment with local realities and ethical standards.

Assumption 3.1 Access to beaches is possible. Yes and no**-** only two beaches in St Helena are accessible, and Ascension's coastline sometimes required steep hikes.

Assumption 3.2 Beach clean volunteers have access to Internet/mobile data for data uploads. Incorrect **-** This was an on-going challenge over the course of the project.

Assumption 4.1 People are willing to participate in workshops. Yes and no **-** In St Helena people were very willing to participate in workshops (see Activity 1.3), whereas on Ascension Island one-on-one meetings were found to be more successful.

Assumption 4.2 UKOTs are willing to join the Steering Group and participate in 2x yearly meetings/workshops. Yes correct - we have excellent participation in the Network to date.

Assumption 4.5 Government and partners in St Helena support the concept of 'plastic free tourism' and it aligns with the Economic Development Plan. Incorrect **-** tourism was not identified as a priority focus area by the Network.

4 Contribution to Darwin Plus Programme Objectives

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

This project has directly contributed to St Helena's long-term environmental goals by supporting action on plastic waste reduction, promoting sustainable consumption, and embedding environmental considerations into public discourse, policy engagement, and community practices. While the challenges of systemic change remain, the project has successfully advanced key foundations for long-term environmental management on the island. The project supported SHG in progressing strategic aims outlined in the **Waste Management Implementation Plan (2020-2027)** and has been aligned with the island's commitments under the **Environmental Protection Ordinance (2016),** which includes objectives to reduce waste generation and improve environmental stewardship. By conducting research into plastic consumption patterns, co-desiging interventions, and facilitating conversations around policy and behavioural change, the project has positioned

SHG and local stakeholders to take forward informed, practical next steps. The project has also remained aligned with the **St Helena Marine Management Plan (2023-2027)** and **National Environmental Management Plan (2012-2022)**.

The project has also played a role in influencing wider decision-making. For example, discussions and briefings with SHG ministers and senior officials helped integrate environmental concerns, particularly waste and plastics, into mainstream policy considerations. Project staff engaged directly with decision-makers to influence future policy tools, such as economic instruments and import restrictions, grounded in the data gathered through this project. A notable legacy is the strengthened relationship between SHNT, SHG, and community sectors around the issue of plastics and improved local understanding of the systemic nature of environmental problems. While not all intended outcomes were achieved in full within the original timeframe, due in part to project staffing transitions and the complex balance between action and alignment with legislative frameworks, the groundwork laid by this project has enabled future efforts to be more targeted and better informed. In addition, the equitable and inclusive approach this project has taken in relation to co-design, provides an effective blueprint for adoption across other threats to the environment. ZSL's FAIRER training workshop delivered on island Jul 24, ensured SHNT were equipped with these skills and could apply them within their local projects - see Annex 33 for feedback from Director Helena Bennett regarding the training.

On Ascension Island, the team's bird monitoring contributed to the development of the **Wide Awake Fairs Management Plan (2023-2028)**, 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 **Letterbox Nature Reserve and Boatswain Bird Island Sanctuary Management Plan (2023-2028)**. 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 also proactively worked 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 Mar 25, 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. Finally, many of the interventions identified by the Systems Map have been incorporated into the **Ascension One Island Sustainability Strategy**, including the prohibition of import of certain SUP items and cross island working groups to coordinate more efficient waste management. The commitment of all parties involved in the Sustainability Strategy will ensure that decision making is coordinated across the island and considers the outcomes of this project in policy development.

As detailed in Output 4, ZSL has been engaging in the UN Global Plastics Treaty 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 29), and co-created a short case study on St Helena's plastic challenge (Annex 34) which was shared across social media during the INC3 Negotiations in November 2024. In two of our Network meetings we have had representation from Defra's plastic policy team, providing key opportunities 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. Negotiations have gone on longer than anticipated, with the final round taking place in Aug 25, however the knowledge and systems set up in this project will help St Helena and Ascension respond to Treaty agreements.

Furthermore, the project contributed to St Helena and Ascension Island's ability to deliver on international commitments under multilateral environmental agreements extended to the UKOTs, particularly the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), with contributions towards targets 1,3, 7, 11, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23 of the Global Biodiversity Framework, and SDG 14 - Life Under Water. Reducing marine plastic pollution helps safeguard local marine biodiversity and supports ecosystem health, improving climate resilience. The project's outreach and education work across both territories—delivered in partnership with schools, youth groups, and the Equality & Human Rights Commission—also promoted public awareness of environmental rights and responsibilities.

4.2 Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

Please quantify the proportion of women on the Project Board[1].	Three: Helena Bennett (Director of SHNT), Heather Koldewey (Senior Technical Specialist, ZSL) and Tiffany Simpson (Director of Conservation and Fisheries, AIG).

[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.

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 considering the GESI context continuously, ensuring that we tackle unequal power dynamics within co-design, and foster inclusivity and equitable input in all our decision making processes. Our project team demonstrates gender equality, with a balanced representation of female scientists and coordination/management staff. ZSL secured approval from its internal Human Ethics Committee for the approaches taken in this project, please see Annex 35 for further information.

In project year 2, whilst completing system diagnosis on both islands, our team 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 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. The reality of this commitment has led to delays, which we have spoken to throughout all our reports and Change Requests. This process 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 removing barriers to engagement for these people. In community engagement undertaken in project years 1 and 2, 43% of the community engagement on St Helena has been with women. In project year 3, 60% of questionnaire respondents to a survey on perceptions of SUP-alternatives in supermarkets identified as female.

Whilst Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) was embedded throughout all our engagement in this project, we were unable to roll out effective grievance mechanism design on Ascension in this time. However, as noted previously, we adjusted our original intention to hold workshops on Ascension, instead to hold 1:1 meetings as the first consultation phase in response to key actor preferences, through which feedback could be provided. With limited resources and time constraints on the match-funded Ascension island element, we did not complete the community engagement however to address these gaps moving forward, Tobias Capel (AIG Coordinator) recommended a consultative approach for AIG to collaborate with key actors when taking any interventions forwards from our recommendations within the system map output. We did however launch formal grievance mechanisms on St Helena, whereby a partnership was established with the Ethics & Human Rights Commission Office, in which their team agreed to process incoming grievances for our project anonymously. We 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 (Annex 36). These mechanisms were advertised in the newspaper and set-up in shops accordingly.

Our team is committed to tackling 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. We also spent Feb-Mar 23 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. Feedback from Matthew Owen on participation in this Conference was wholly positive (Annex 37). 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 being met within the negotiations.

Through ongoing reflection and improvement, we remain committed to promoting equity and inclusion within our project activities. In Jul 24, ZSL worked 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 and Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialist, Lucy Archer with a view to driving institutional change at SHNT. All 24 SHNT staff members attended, and feedback from CEO Helena Bennet was very positive

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

(Annex 33): *"I am now armed with tools… to help revise policy and develop procedures to complete the current DPLUS176 project… and other projects undertaken by the Trust".*

5 Monitoring and evaluation

We appreciate the opportunities we have had to continually monitor, evaluate, learn and adaptively manage this fast-moving project. The monitoring and evaluation of the project has been a shared responsibility across the core project management team (AIG, SHNT and ZSL), with each partner focused on their primary project activities. Project team meetings have been held each week to monitor progress with deliverables, and evaluate the success of on-going project activities. Achievements have been measured by analysing both quantitative and qualitative data, which was collected throughout the project. MEL information has been stored across a shared Google Drive and Microsoft Teams (MS) site hosted by ZSL for access by the core project management team.

There have been a number of accepted change requests throughout the course of the project to work adaptively through various unforeseen circumstances, including staff changes and periods of absence within the team, as well as delays and amendments to intervention work following key actor consultations. This has resulted in a final logframe (approved Jun 24) containing some differences from the original. In project year three, a project extension was requested of three months, to accommodate delays experienced in actor consultations to determine which interventions to take forward on St Helena. Project year three change requests also allowed for movement of project funds between budget lines to cover consultancy costs, and to utilise underspend in project intervention work to enable ZSL staff to travel to St Helena to assist in essential project wrap-up meetings and activities. ZSL has led the submission of change requests, however project partners were integral in contributing to and reviewing the content of these. As noted in this report, due to changing hands, oversight of the wider logframe was not managed closely enough in year 3, which resulted in a late change request that was rejected. A learning here is that we needed to embed an additional system within the project management team, where our progress/findings against the logframe were regularly monitored and evaluated - so as to act more quickly on making official change requests. We have been grateful for the annual reviews provided against our reports, as these have helped us to re-evaluate and refine certain areas.

6 Lessons learnt

Over the duration of the project we have learnt that key in-person work between project partners has been vital to success. Visits to each island have taken place in all three project years, including redirecting ZSL travel funds to enable inter-island exchange visits between AIG and SHNT (in Jul 23 and Jan 24) which were a huge success in aligning approaches across the two territories, strengthening relationships between partners, and removing barriers to opportunities for SHNT's Project Coordinator, Matthew Owen, as the youngest member of the team and a representative of the local Saint community. Learning from the value of in-person working in years 1 and 2, ZSL staff adjusted plans to visit St Helena twice in the final year of the project: in Jul 24 to deliver FAIRER training to SHNT staff, and Mar 25 to assist with on-island project delivery and key actor engagement events. In this final visit, the partners were able to hold an invaluable "lessons learnt" meeting in person, to provide a foundation for future collaborative working (Annex 5).

Our project team has experienced multiple personnel changes over the course of the project, which resulted in infrequent logframe reviews at times, feedback regarding a safeguarding concern in AR2 was missed, and a change request was submitted too late. Within the project timeframe, SHNT's Project Manager changed hands, and their department was without a Head of Marine between Jul 23 - Dec 23. Meanwhile ZSL's original Project Lead and Project Coordinator moved onto roles elsewhere, and Shauna Young, replacement Project Lead, also went on maternity leave in Jun 24. Additionally, AIGCF's Director post also changed hands, whilst our lead contact within SHG went on secondment to another government department in Jun 24, with Karl Martin not in post as replacement until Sept. Both Darwin Plus, and our match-funder (John Ellerman Foundation), kindly granted project extensions as we still had a lot of work we wanted to achieve on each island, despite the delays caused by staff changes. These timelines and staff gaps have been managed as best as possible, however, due to the remote locations of both islands, timelines became prolonged when arranging replacements. This has spotlighted how ambitious our original activities and deliverables were, and the risks posed by a lack of continuity in personnel - which has proven to be a high risk in small island contexts. Key learnings here have been around having strong internal systems in place to ensure all staff remain on top of project management, as well as thorough, timely handovers between changing posts to ensure smooth transitions and transfer of knowledge. As one example, the team were delighted to bring AIG's Project Coordinator, Tobias Capel, over to St Helena to fill the open post of Project Manager on SHNT - a transition that proved to be particularly smooth given his existing relationship with the team and legacy knowledge of the project. Following the end of his tenure at SHNT, Tobias has since joined the team at ZSL in Apr 25 to continue working on final project deliverables from within ZSL. This has been an invaluable relationship and transfer of skills/knowledge as Tobias has supported each of the three key partners.

The project seabird and fish stomach studies, which have taken significantly more planning time than originally anticipated, have also provided a valuable learning experience when considering timelines for permits and logistics. The time required to obtain the necessary licences for the initial fieldwork was underestimated, as were the logistical challenges and permitting processes involved in transporting biological samples across international borders. These delays impacted the overall project timeline and highlighted the complexity of

conducting research in remote and highly regulated contexts. In future projects, we will ensure that adequate time is allocated to navigate regulatory and logistical requirements at both local and international levels, particularly when operating in isolated or overseas locations. Early engagement with relevant authorities and clear contingency planning will be prioritised to mitigate similar risks. Fortunately, the short project extension granted to complete final deliverables allowed for fish sample analysis at Nelson Mandela University, and bird sample analysis at Cefas, to commence in the final months of the project (publications are to follow).

As mentioned in previous reports, in Aug 23 there was a misunderstanding whereby SHG purchased additional recycling bins when other project partners had been waiting to finalise intervention selections before making any decisions around purchases. Here the team learnt there was a need for improved communications and better joint decision making processes between all project partners. To address this, communication with SHG increased in Year 3; both in-person with SHNT colleagues and with ZSL remotely. Karl Martin later joined the project team for SHG and engaged fully with project activities: assisting Matthew Owen and Tobias Capel with educational activities on St Helena. Partner relationships have remained strong throughout the final project year through clear and frequent communication.

As noted in all our reports to date, our commitment to embedding ZSL's FAIRER conservation approach significantly impacted our original timelines. The project team learnt that it takes significantly longer to deliver a project inclusively and equitably - and we did not factor in enough time to do this at first. However, we have been actively adapting to this learning; adjusting timelines and communicating these changes to BCF throughout the duration of the project. We are very pleased we made this adjustment, as it has delivered a better project with more community participation and buy-in to the purpose and outcomes, and given SHNT the confidence to apply a new conservation approach for co-designing and implementing future projects.

7 Actions taken in response to Annual Report reviews

We thank the reviewer for their comments in the feedback report provided following AR2. In response to various comments provided we have addressed responses throughout the body of this report. For clarity, these three headline comments to address in this final report have been signpbelow:

"The reviewer is unsure how "reduction in plastic items sent to recycling unit" under Output indicator 2.1 will be measured without the waste management baseline data; refill data from water fountains will be subject to intervention decisions (if not implemented); and so on. MoVs will therefore need to be adjusted according to updates to project plan made – including at least those under 2.1, if not also under 2.4 (draft and final policy documents)." - a change request was submitted in Dec 24 to amend the logframe: this was regrettably submitted late as our timelines were delayed and staff changes led to a drop in focus. The logframe amends were not accepted and as such we are reporting against the previously agreed logframe as discussed via email with BCF.

"More could be said on the project's planned exit strategy" - please see section 8 for detail.

"While the project is listed as transformative in terms of good community engagement and social inclusion, more could be said about how gender and other protected characteristics are recognised and disaggregated by the project in the project's Outputs; and how the GESI context is recognised and addressed in the context of each territory, as well as on the 'global stage" - covered in sections 3 & 4.2.

8 Sustainability and Legacy

On Ascension, matched funding from the John Ellerman Foundation concluded at the end of project year 2. 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. We have mitigated this and ensured consistency through the reinstatement of Tobias Capel, Project Manager in Ascension Island, as Project Manager within SHNT in St Helena for project year 3, following the end of his tenure within AIG.

Throughout the project, we have been actively mitigating the risk of this loss of momentum 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 10), covering the suggested opportunities for action and establishing who should be responsible for taking each one forward. This fed into the creation of an executive summary document (in prep), with clear recommendations for specific groups and departments, which is soon to be circulated. The summary document was designed for a new audience to pick up; to contain the necessary evidence to back-up our recommendations; and pass the baton onto the right people alongside clear calls-to-action to sustain this work on Ascension. Already, our recommendations for sustained wildlife and shoreline monitoring approaches have been 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 with relevant parties. Many of the recommendations have been incorporated within the Ascension Island Cross Government Sustainability

Strategy to ensure that positive changes are taken forward across the whole island in alignment with the One Island Vision. As mentioned in Activity 2.2, AIG was successful in securing a small amount of funding from the FCDO IP Challenge Funds to purchase 10 water fountains for AIG workplaces in Georgetown, to reduce SUP water bottles in the workplace. These are due to be installed in summer 2025. If there is positive uptake, AIG have commented that additional funds could be sought to purchase water fountains for public spaces.

Similar to Ascension, the approach on St Helena has been to ensure 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, and has resulted in the implementation of interventions more tailored to the needs of the island. As noted earlier, the adoption of our recommendations by SHG ENRP in Jun 25 will ensure the legacy of this work. Retailers have also reached out in Jul 25 to secure more of the trial SUP replacements supplied under this project, which is a good indication of continued impact. The introduction of grievance mechanisms at the end of Y2, to align with the commencement of community engagement processes, was also key to ensure transparent methods of hearing from the community, and we adapted deliverables in year 3 based on any feedback received across engagement processes undertaken. The inclusive social approach adopted in the project is anticipated to ensure lasting impact and influence public policies on island, with the final project year having seen a focus on embedding our findings and recommendations within government policy, to ensure the legacy of this work is sustained beyond Mar 25. Wildlife impact studies will also be submitted to peer-reviewed journals in due course, with open access a priority, to offer wider-reaching benefits of the project's scientific research.

Project partner relationships have strengthened during the course of this project; as a result partners are now looking into options for future funding for ongoing project work on marine plastic pollution.

9 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 project online, including through social media platforms such as Instagram, with BCF accounts tagged wherever possible (please see some recent examples of social posts in Annex 38). Communications around the project have been 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. The team is currently updating the content of the webpage to reflect the project finishing - we'd be happy to reach out and reshare this link once the updates have been approved by ZSL's internal communications team next month.

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 public engagement via radio and newspapers regarding our Darwin Plus project, including in project year 3, 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. Furthermore, a high percentage of conservation projects undertaken in St Helena and Ascension Island are Darwin Plus funded (59 in St Helena and 19 in Ascension to date), so there is likely to be a heightened awareness more generally as a result in the general population.

10 Risk Management

The project has maintained a risk register throughout (Annex 39); however, the project has recently experienced unforeseen delays to the microplastic analysis of seabird and fish digestive tract samples (Output 3.3), which did not appear on our project risk register and therefore has been adaptively managed. The time required to obtain the necessary licences for the initial fieldwork was underestimated, as were the logistical challenges and permitting processes involved in transporting biological samples across international borders. These delays impacted the overall project timeline and highlighted the complexity of conducting research in remote and highly regulated contexts. This delay was mitigated against by a Mar 25 change request to BCF requesting final payment of this partner be moved into the fourth project year (extension) to allow for enough time to complete this work once shipments go ahead. This delay therefore did not result in any significant adaptations to project design.

11 Safeguarding

[redacted]

12 Finance and administration

12.1 Project expenditure

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2024/25 Grant (£)	2024/25 Total actual Darwin Plus Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs	[redacted]			
Consultancy costs				
Overhead Costs				
Travel and subsistence				
Operating Costs				
Capital items				
Others				

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2024/25 Grant (£)	2024/25 Total actual Darwin Plus Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
TOTAL	£197,095.00	£196,896.43	**0.1%**	

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2025/26 Grant (£)	2025/26 Total actual Darwin Plus Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs	[redacted]			
Consultancy costs				
Overhead Costs				
Travel and subsistence				
Operating Costs				
Capital items				
Others (Publication fees, audit)				
TOTAL	£31,889.00	£30,995.18	-2.8%	

Staff employed (Name and position) - 2024/25	Cost (£)
Neil Thorp, Head of Marine Conservation, SHNT	[redacted]
Tobias Capel Marine Plastic Project Manager, SHNT	
Matthew Owen Marine Plastic Project Officer, SHNT	
Shauna Young, Marine Project Manager, ZSL	
Jessica Vagg, Marine Project Manager, ZSL	
Surshti Patel, Senior Technical Advisor, ZSL	
Matthew Gollock, Senior Programme Manager, ZSL	
Rebecca Austin Marine Project Manager, ZSL	
Imogen Fanning, Sustainable Business and Finance Officer, ZSL	
Hannah Hughes, Marine Projects Officer, ZSL	
Karl Martin, Environmental Officer Risk Management, SHG	
Terri Clingham, Environmental Officer Risk Management, SHG	
Kenickie Andrews, Marine Ecology Project Manager, SHNT	
TOTAL	

Staff employed (Name and position) - 2025/26	Cost (£)
Jessica Vagg, Marine Project Manager, ZSL	[redacted]
Surshti Patel, Senior Technical Advisor, ZSL	
Matthew Gollock, Senior Programme Manager, ZSL	
Rebecca Austin Marine Project Manager, ZSL	

Imogen Fanning, Sustainable Business and Finance Officer, ZSL	[redacted]
Tobias Capel, Project Manager, ZSL	
TOTAL	

Consultancy – description and breakdown of costs - 2024/25:	**Consultancy – cost (£)**
UrbanIsland were hired as project consultants to deliver the 2025 "Waste Management Options Assessment" report in project year 3 as part of intervention work on St Helena (Annex 17).	[redacted]
TOTAL	

Other items – description	**Other items – cost (£)**
2024/25: Other costs predominantly covered the purchase and shipping of samples of SUP items for the showcase workshop with retailers in St Helena as part of intervention work in project year 3. Following this workshop, retailers were given the samples to trail for efficacy i their stores. Other costs also covered the costs for designs and printing on island, and purchase of items for educational work with primary schools in project year 3: including items to supplement lessons, and prizes for children who entered the competition to design a new recycling superhero for St Helena.	£6,005.45
2025/26: ZSL internal project audit fees	[redacted]
TOTAL	

12.2 Additional funds or in-kind contributions secured

Matched funding leveraged by the partners to deliver the project	**Total(£)**
2024/25: Bertarelli Foundation, Ascension Island Government, St Helena Government, St Helena National Trust	[redacted]
2025/26: N/A	
TOTAL	

Total additional finance mobilised for new activities occurring outside of the project, building on evidence, best practices and the project	**Total (£)**
TOTAL	**£0**

12.3 Value for Money

Seven possible interventions were identified for St Helena to reduce the impact of SUPs following extensive community engagement, which highlighted barriers and opportunities to change. Discussions were also held with the SHG (Senior Leadership Team and Legislative Council) to determine which interventions would have the backing of local government. As a result, the interventions carried forward and implemented were those determined to result in the most impact within the project timeframe, thus ensuring value for money. This inclusive engagement and consultation process also resulted in a difference to interventions initially expected to be undertaken as part of the project, which would not have resulted in value for money: For example, an installation of public water fountains would likely not have resulted in a reduction of plastic bottle use, due to public perceptions of tap water as being unpalatable and untrustworthy. Instead, it was identified that this issue needs to be addressed with more dedicated systemic behaviour change before infrastructure projects can succeed, which fell outside of the timeframe and scope of this project. Throughout the timeframe, partners have utilised procurement processes and followed guidance to ensure value for money is sought in, for example, identifying sub-contractors for project work such as the 2025 waste options assessment report (Annex 17). We have always strived to ensure local sub-contractors are utilised where this is possible: ensuring the project contributes to the local economy and project funds are kept within the UKOTs in which the project is based. Where expertise required isn't as readily available locally, only then have we sought contractors external to the UKOTs.

13 Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

Following the end of island activity in Mar 25, ZSL were delighted to welcome Tobias Capel into his new role at ZSL in April 2025, after an excellent track record managing the project from Ascension (AIG) and St Helena (SHNT) previously. Tobias brings a wealth of knowledge to ZSL and great legacy relationships from having worked with both island partners. In Jun 25 Tobias Capel (AIG, SHNT, ZSL) and Rebecca Austin (ZSL) attended the One Ocean Science Congress in Nice, where they presented a poster of the project's major outputs (Annex 40). The Congress was attended by over 2000 science and policy experts, many of whom were involved in marine plastic-related research. Many connections were made with individuals and organisations that could potentially aid in future work on St Helena and Ascension Islands.

Annex 1 Report of progress and achievements against logframe for the life of the project

Project summary	Progress and achievements
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.	Through an inclusive and equitable co-design approach, this project has worked together with the island communities of Ascension and St Helena to identify and pilot community-driven, locally appropriate, interventions for reducing plastic pollution and its impacts on the marine environment. Resulting recommendations have been adopted by the local government, laying the foundations for wide scale impact in the mid - and long - term future. This project has also pioneered a a new Plastics Pollution Network, prioritising diverse accessibility for small island voices, and working to overcome barriers to participation in global decision making forums such as the UN Global Plastics Treaty negotiations.
Outcome Island stakeholders identify interventions to address SUP, improving waste management efficiency in St Helena and Ascension, contributing to ocean conservation, benefitting the marine environment and key wildlife species by 2025.	
Outcome indicator 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.	Options for establishing baseline plastic waste data on both islands were explored, however these methods were deemed unscalable (see **Section 3.1, Activity 1.3**). Instead we conducted an import audit of key SUP 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. Similarly, for St Helena, the 30% reduction was not achieved for similar reasons, with the addition of logistical and legal complexities around ownership of fountains and water supply. Other intervention work was successfully pursued, eg. policy recommendations which were accepted for adoption by SHG in Jun 25, which we are confident will contribute towards meeting these indicators in the near future (**Section 3.1, Activities 2.7 & 2.8**).
Outcome indicator 0.2 Negative interactions (entanglement/entrapment/ingestion) between plastic pollution and three priority taxa identified by Q2 Yr3 with recommendations for mitigation by Q4 Yr3	Monitoring was completed for plastic interactions with brown boobies (Annex 24) and green turtles on Ascension Island (see **Section 3.1, Activity 3.5 & 3.6**), with fish and seabird stomach analysis commencing in year 3 with preliminary results achieved for St Helena and Ascension by project end (Annex 25). Entanglements were also recorded ad-hoc on Ascension throughout. Results from wildlife studies have already been feeding into management plan updates on Ascension. Delays to St Helena studies has meant results were not yet ready to feed into mitigation recommendations, but this will be taken forwards once the analysis is completed.
Outcome indicator 0.3 Plastic pollution pathways and hotspots identified, and possible mitigation actions are published and disseminated to relevant stakeholders, including businesses (products, shipping) and countries by Q4 Yr3.	Following regular monitoring activities the composition and sources of plastic pollution are now well understood for both islands. Plastic pollution pathways have been described for Ascension Island in a system map (Annex 10), and cigarette bins were installed at 7 sites on Ascension Island which showed some success. On St Helena, shoreline monitoring identified an intervention as experimenting with new bin infrastructure at Rupert's Bay beach

	barbecue areas, to see if this would reduce the amount of litter in the area (see **Section 3.1, Activity 2.4**). Bottle ID work preliminary results are also available (Annex 20), and results of all studies have been presented to project partners.
Outcome indicator 0.4 Three locally-led, plastic reduction interventions trialled, informed by the systems diagnosis (including one inclusive and sustainable business model/financial mechanism), with methods and impact communicated to other UKOTs Q4 Yr3.	In project year 3, following extensive community engagement, key actor consultations and system diagnosis work on St Helena, it was determined that the following interventions would be taken forward (see **Section 3.1, Activity 2.5)**: 1) Run a pilot scheme to introduce non-plastic or sustainable alternatives for target SUP items with cooperative retailers on St Helena (Annex 14). 2) Perform a bin infrastructure experiment in Rupert's Bay to promote accessibility to waste disposal and help identify the barriers influencing littering around the BBQ areas (Annex 32). 3) Work with partners at the St Helena Government (SHG) Environmental Risk Management (ERM) section to conduct an updated options assessment for recyclable materials (Annex 17). The methods and results of intervention work undertaken on St Helena were communicated to other UKOTs in March 2025 through online meetings of the UKOTs and CDs Plastic Pollution Network.
Outcome indicator 0.5 New policy on SUP reduction in St Helena is developed and adopted/implemented.	Recommendations from the updated 2025 "St Helena Waste Management and Recycling Options Assessment" (Annex 17) are in the process of being adopted into the St Helena Government's EMD portfolio. Further recommendations regarding tax legislation on imported items were developed by the policy team and presented to SHG in the third year of the project as a Strategic Action Plan (Annex 19), which is also now in the process of being formally adopted (see **Section 3.1, Activity 2.7 & 2.8)**.
Outcome indicator 0.6 UKOTs Plastic Pollution Network is established and actively engaged in the UN Global Plastics Treaty process – on-going until Q4 Y3.	Throughout the course of this project, the UKOTs and CDs Plastic Pollution Network has met four times. Representatives from Defra, who are actively involved in the UK Global Plastics Treaty process, were invited and attended the meetings: providing updates on negotiations to attendees. This has also allowed for questions to be asked and feedback provided from Network members to Defra colleagues. The newly finalised Terms of Reference (Annex 26) for the group ensure the future of the Network and this relationship (see **Section 3.1, Activity 4.1, 4.1 & 4.3**).
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.	
Output indicator 1.1 Existing system diagnosis and social insight methods are tailored to context for use in Q2 Yr1.	This was completed in year 1. Together the project team adapted methodologies to be locally appropriate for Ascension and St Helena, and co-developed tailored community engagement plans (See **Section 3.1, Activity 1.1**).
Output indicator 1.2	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,

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.	and from three of the four major retailers that import SUP items to Ascension. Extensive community engagement activities also gleaned further essential information to advise the resulting system map (Annex 10) and ongoing work. See **Section 3.1, Activity 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 & 1.5.**
Output indicator 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 Yr3.	Systems diagnosis was completed for St Helena following extended timelines for community engagement in project year 2. Barriers and opportunities for change were summarised and presented to key actors on St Helena in year 3 (Annex 41), following which a selection of interventions to take forward, including educational work, in the remaining project timeframe were determined (see **Section 3.1, Activity 1.6**).
Output 2. Pilot interventions to address prevalence of the most problematic SUP items are monitored, completed, and evaluated with new policy proposed for SUP reduction in St Helena.	
Output indicator 2.1. Spreading awareness about SUPs and encouraging sustainable habits within local schools; providing students with valuable knowledge and tools to tackle the issue of plastic waste in their community in support of achieving a 30% reduction in island plastic waste items by Q4 Yr3**.**	In year 3, SHG ERM and SHNT collaborated on delivering a "design competition" for school children across St Helena to produce a "recycling superhero" for the island. In total 52 children participated and a graphic was created from the three winning designs, which will be showcased on waste collection vehicles and future communications (Annex 13). SHG and SHNT staff also delivered four Waste Management and Sustainability Lessons to Key Stage 2 pupils in all primary schools on St Helena between January and February 2025, reaching a total of 80 children (Annex 13) (see **Section 3.1, Activity 2.1**).
Output indicator 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.	Given the complexity of the perceptions regarding drinking water on St Helena, and following extensive public and government consultation, SUP water bottle reduction interventions were deemed unfeasible within this project's remaining capacity (See **Section 3.1, Activity 2.2**). Other interventions were instead taken forward to take steps towards reduction of SUP use on St Helena in the final months of the project (**Section 3.1, Activity 2.4 & 2.5**).
Output indicator 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.	The intervention "Run a pilot scheme to introduce non-plastic or sustainable alternatives for target SUP items with cooperative retailers on St Helena", involved working with key retailers on St Helena which included: (1) a report exploring the current alternatives on the market for SUP products that the retailers either sell or use and (2) an evaluation of the economic feasibility of switching to the alternative products (Annex 14), as well as (3) market research within the shops to gather customer input on their views of SUP's and evaluate their willingness to pay for SUP alternatives (Annex 16). Retailers are now trialling alternative items in their stores for efficacy to determine future actions (see **Section 3.1, Activity 2.4, 2.5 & 2.6**).

Output indicator 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.	Recommendations from the updated 2025 "St Helena Waste Management and Recycling Options Assessment" (Annex 17) are in the process of being adopted into the St Helena Government's EMD portfolio. Further recommendations regarding tax legislation on imported items were developed by the policy team and presented to SHG in the third year of the project as a Strategic Action Plan (Annex 19), which is also now in the process of being formally adopted (see **Section 3.1, Activity 2.7 & 2.8)**.
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.	
Output indicator 3.1. Beach clean data consolidated (Q2 Yr1) and monitoring strategy developed for 2 key priority sites on St Helena and 4 on Ascension Island (Q4 Yr1). Documentation of wildlife/plastic interactions consolidated (Q3 Yr3).	In Year 1 AIG, SHNT and ZSL together co-designed each island's on-going shoreline monitoring strategies, with technical advice from our international academic partners. Following pilots, ongoing monitoring plans were finalised for Ascension (Annex 21) and St Helena, with shoreline monitoring continuing regularly on both islands at the same sites since. Data were analysed by an MSc student who provided consolidated results of the prevalence, composition and re-accumulation of debris in the surveyed areas (Annex 23) (see **Section 3.1, Activity 3.1, 3.3 & 3.4**).
Output indicator 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.	In summer 2022, an MSc student completed a biodiversity threat assessment of plastic pollution in Ascension and St Helena using literature available on vulnerability, hazard risk and species exposure risk to plastic (Annex 22). Constanza presented her findings to partners, offering an understanding of previous work that had taken place across both islands and identifying the species most at risk to inform our wildlife monitoring strategies (see **Section 3.1, Activity 3.2**).
Output indicator 3.3. Systematic documentation of presence and type of plastics in green turtle and brown booby nests through photographic and collection documentation; stomachs of seabird and inshore fish; and ad hoc entanglement of marine species on both St Helena and Ascension by Q4 Yr3.	On Ascension, prevalence and composition of plastic debris on fresh tracks and cover-ups during routine activity monitoring, and the prevalence and composition of plastic debris within the egg chambers of green turtle nests during excavations of nests were investigated. A study to quantify the prevalence and composition of plastics in brown booby nests on Ascension was also conducted (Annex 24). Seabird and fish stomach analysis work by Cefas and Nelson Mandela University has gleaned preliminary results, with the aim to publish findings (Annex 25) (see **Section 3.1, Activity 3.5 & 3.6**).
Output indicator 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.	SUP bottles and lids were collected on Ascension, and St Helena during the shoreline monitoring efforts. From these, manufacture countries of origin, average and median ages of items were determined. Preliminary results were presented to project partners in June 2025 (Annex 20), and future work incorporating Global Fishing Watch data and particle tracking modelling is intended to publish results in peer-reviewed journals (see **Section 3.1, Activity 3.7**)

Output indicator 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.	As noted in previous reports, the team did not progress this activity for various logistical reasons. However, in response to this project on Ascension, additional beach cleans were performed to encourage local awareness, beach cleaning stations were sourced to be installed on beach nature reserves, and surveys led to the successful completion of the Darwin Local project DPL0010 which allowed installation of cigarette butt bins. On St Helena, on occasion through a capacity building initiative between marine teams, SHG marine staff have also supported SHNT with monitoring efforts. (see **Section 3.1, Activity 3.8**).
Output indicator 3.6. Recommendations for mitigation developed for wildlife by Q4 Yr3 for integration into Conservation Management Plans.	Wildlife study results on Ascension have already fed into development of nature reserve management plans: identifying litter as a threat to wildlife, and have contributed to the AIG Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. MPA management plans for both islands are being renewed after the lifespan of the project, with existing plans spanning to 2027 in St Helena, and 2026 in Ascension. Results will feed into these when appropriate (see **Section 3.1, Activity 3.9**).
Output 4. Opportunities for international action and scaling for reducing marine plastic pollution are explored and developed with other UKOTs.	
Output indicator 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 OTs (Q4 Yr1).	The project team formed a Plastic Pollution Network with representatives from across seventeen different UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, and met four times over the project timeframe. A Terms of Reference document was co-developed by Network members, confirming intentions and areas of work, and ensuring the group's longevity (Annex 26) (see **Section 3.1, Activity 4.1**)
Output indicator 4.2. UKOTs representatives feed into international workshops, to surface needs from the OTs and feed language into a joint position statement for the UN Global Plastics Treaty (Q3 Y2).	ZSL hosted two workshops in September 2023 to work through priority focus areas for the treaty with UKOTs partners present (see Annex 28), which resulted in the creation of our Joint Position Statement (Annex 29). This was presented to Defra's lead negotiating team, with further outputs produced and presented by the Network following this initial action (see **Section 3.1, Activity 4.2 & 4.4**)
Output indicator 4.3. UKOTs representatives continue engaging with the UN Global Plastics Treaty process, contributing to collaborative outputs to drive global commitments that reduce impacts on local communities and wildlife (on going until Q4 Y3).	Shauna Young (ZSL) also attended INC2 in Paris, May 2023, to understand what role this project team may be able to play in strengthening the outcome of negotiations. Representatives from the Defra Global Plastics Treaty negotiation team have also been invited to, and attended, meetings of the UKOTs and CDs Plastic Pollution Network: providing updates on progress of the negotiations, and offering an opportunity for questions and feedback from members of the group (see **Section 3.1, Activity 4.3**).

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: Island stakeholders 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.** Volume of SUP through retail, sales and procurement figures for SUP items.	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.
	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.** 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. Plastic pollution pathways and hotspots identified, and possible mitigation actions are published and disseminated to relevant stakeholders, including businesses (products, shipping) and countries by Q4 Yr3.	**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. 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.** Systems change map produced, M&E reports of pilot interventions, strategy report, behaviour change surveys.	
	0.5. New policy on SUP reduction in St Helena is developed and adopted /implemented.	**0.5.** New policy on SUP reduction for St Helena .	
	0.6. UKOTs Plastic Pollution Network is actively engaged in the UN Global Plastics Treaty process – on-going until Q4 Y3.	**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. Workshops held to feed into joint position statement and other outputs related to engagement with the UN Global Plastics Treaty. UK Lead Negotiating team attends network meetings to provide updates.	

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 Q2 Yr1.	**1.1.** Methods and tools developed.	Data available from retail outlets, existing reports, and surveyed stakeholders accurately captures volumes and movement of SUPs. Beyond SUP water bottles, additional priority intervention points and practical alternatives can be identified. Stakeholders are willing to engage with a feasibility assessment review.
	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.** Audit of SUP usage undertaken consolidating existing strategic reports, materials and other sources. Stakeholder groups identified and interviews conducted. System analysed and 'systems map' produced. MSc thesis produced (Plymouth).	
	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 Q4Y2, with feasibility assessment required completed and reviewed with stakeholders through workshops by Q2 Y3.	**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 stakeholders from other UKOT projects e.g., BIOT. Report and strategy produced for trial interventions.	
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.** Spreading awareness about SUPs and encouraging sustainable habits within local schools; providing students with valuable knowledge and tools to tackle the issue of plastic waste in their community in support of achieving a 30% reduction in island plastic waste items by Q4 Yr3**.**	**2.1.** Campaign materials and outreach plan developed and implemented.. Feedback from school students and staff on engagement activities. Reduction in plastic items sent to island recycling unit.	Planning process approves installation of public drinking fountains. 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
	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.** 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. 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.	**2.3.** Attendance sheets, training materials and sustainable business model report.	
	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.** Draft policy document, consultation responses, consultation report and recommendations, final policy document, statement on policy adoption by SHG.	

			solutions identified through BIOT Darwin and #OneLess London replicable in St Helena.
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.** Beach clean data consolidated (Q2 Yr1) and monitoring strategy developed for 2 key priority sites on St Helena and 4 on Ascension 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 MSc thesis 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).	Access to beaches is possible. Beach clean volunteers have access to Internet/mobile data for data uploads.
	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.	**3.2.** 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. Systematic documentation of presence and type of plastics in green turtle and brown booby nests through photographic and collection documentation; stomachs of seabird and inshore fish; and ad hoc entanglement of marine species on both St Helena and Ascension by Q4 Yr3.	**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. 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.** Database of bottle/bottle lids and source countries.	
	3.5. Beach clean best practice guidelines developed (ZSL, SHNT), and being used by SHNT and AIG staff by Q1 Yr2, and followed by 100% of volunteer teams supporting shoreline monitoring by Q4 Yr3.	**3.5.** Beach clean best practice guidelines for St Helena and Ascension published, based on existing BIOT guidelines.	
	3.6. Mitigation strategy developed for wildlife and integrated into Conservation Management Plans by Q4 Yr3.	**3.6.** Mitigation strategy actions in Marine Management Plans for St Helena and Ascension.	
Output 4	**4.1.** Established Plastic Pollution Steering Group that sits across UKOTS, shares knowledge and best practice on plastic	**4.1.** Establishment of UKOTs Plastic Pollution Steering Group with communication system and frequency in	Stakeholders are willing to participate in workshops

Opportunities for international action and scaling for reducing marine plastic pollution are explored and developed with other UKOTs.	pollution interventions, and meets twice per year to scale impact across OTs (Q4 Yr1).	place. Workshop report and recommendations for action.	UKOTs are willing to join the Steering Group and participate in 2x yearly meetings/workshops.
	4.2. UKOTs representatives feed into international workshops, to surface needs from the OTs and feed language into a joint position statement for the UN Global Plastics Treaty (Q3 Y2).	**4.2.** Workshop miro board produced, and joint statement finalised, meetings hosted online, and learnings shared with necessary contacts.	
	4.3. UKOTs representatives continue engaging with the UN Global Plastics Treaty process, contributing to collaborative outputs to drive global commitments that reduce impacts on local communities and wildlife (on going until Q4 Y3).	**4.3.** UKOTs Plastic Pollution Network meeting notes maintained, and collaborative outputs finalised, hosted online, and shared with necessary contacts.	

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 stakeholders (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 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 stakeholders through workshops by Q2 Yr2 (ZSL/SHNT)

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 and launch campaign materials for spreading awareness about SUPs and encouraging sustainable habits; providing people with valuable knowledge and tools to tackle the issue of plastic waste in their community 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 Collaborate with stakeholders to pilot 2 other interventions for reducing SUP, aligned with St Helena's SEDP as identified in output 1 (ZSL/SHNT/SHG)
2.4 Conduct before and after behaviour change surveys and analyse waste management reports to monitor change Q2 Yr2 and Q3 Yr4 (ZSL/SHNT/SHG/AIG)
2.5 Identify and launch 1 sustainable business model with the local community. Provide training sessions (Q1 yr2) and monthly monitoring.
2.6 Monitor and evaluate all interventions in St Helena and. Consolidate final recommendations made for a plastic waste reduction strategy in St Helena by Q4 Yr4 (ZSL/SHNT/SHG).
2.7 Develop and consult on policy for reducing SUP in St Helena (SHG/SHNT/ZSL) Q 2 yr 2 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.

3.3 Produce prioritised vulnerability list of species with associated priority list of most damaging plastic type and interaction by Q1 Yr2(ZSL/Exeter/SHNT).
3.4 Implement robust sampling strategy for shore litter in St Helena (fortnightly), and use to characterise litter composition and identify plastic hotspot sites (SHNT/ZSL).
3.5 Implement robust sampling strategy for shore litter in Ascension (quarterly), and use to characterise litter composition and identify plastic hotspot sites (Exeter MSc student/AIG/ZSL).
3.6 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).
3.7 Quantify plastics in bird nests, stomachs of opportunistically collected seabird and turtle carcasses, game fish guts and 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 (, Exeter)
3.8 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
3,9 Create (ZSL/SHNT/AIG) and begin using beach clean best-practise guidelines for organised beach cleans with SHNT and AIG staff and local volunteers (SHNT/SHG/AIG).

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

4.1 Identify stakeholders 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).
4.2 Host workshops to identify specific needs and requests from the UKOTs network from the UN Global Plastics Treaty, to inform the production of a Joint Position Statement (Q3 Y2).
4.3 Host workshops to identify specific needs and requests from the UKOTs network from the UN Global Plastics Treaty, to inform the production of a Joint Position Statement (Q3 Y2).
4.4 Provide updates to the UKOTs Plastic Pollution Network on the treaty negotiations, drawing on contacts within the UK government's lead negotiating team (on going until Q4 Y3).
4.5 Produce further collaborative outputs as required to feed into the UN Global Plastics Treaty process (on going until Q4 Y3).

Annex 3 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 achieved	Total planned
DPLUS-A03	Number of local/national organisations with improved capability and capacity as a result of the project.	Organisations			10		54 (total number of organisations engaged in our UKOTs Network)	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	People	Gender; Age Group; Stakeholder group:		2 (AIG Coordinator, exchange visit to St Helena in July 23 - Male, Age Group 25-30; SHNT Coordinator, exchange visit to Ascension Jan 24 - Male, Age Group 18-25)	2 (SHNT Coordinator Male, Age Group 18-25, and Director Female Age Group 26-50, visit to UN Ocean Conference Apr 24)	4	2

DPLUS -B04	Number of new/improved sustainable enterprises/ community benefits management plans available and endorsed*.	Number					0 (see Section 3.2, output 0.4)	1
DPLUS -B01	Number of new/improved habitat management plans available and endorsed	Number				3	3 (see Activity 2.9).	1
DPLUS -D03	Number of policies with biodiversity provisions that have been enacted or amended.	Number				1	1 (see Section 3.2, output 0.5)	2

Table 2 Publications

As mentioned throughout this report, we have multiple publications in draft and will be glad to share these in due course.

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. All supporting material should be submitted in a way that can be accessed and downloaded as one complete package.	
If you are submitting photos for publicity purposes, **do these meet the outlined requirements (see section 14)?**	
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.	
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.	