

Darwin Plus Main & Strategic: Final Report

Darwin Plus Project Information

Scheme (Main or Strategic)	Main
Project reference	DPLUS178
Project title	Inhabited Territory restoration: completing preparations for a rodent-free Pitcairn Islands
Territory(ies)	Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie & Oeno Islands
Lead Organisation	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Project partner(s)	Government of the Pitcairn Islands (Environmental, Conservation & Natural Resources Division)
Darwin Plus Grant value	£249,999
Start/end date of project	1 st June 2022 – 30 th June 2025
Project Leader name	Andy Schofield
Project website/Twitter/blog etc.	N/A
Report author(s) and date	Chloe Harrison and David Kinchin-Smith (RSPB), Michele Christian (Government of the Pitcairn Islands), 31 st July 2025

1 Project Summary

The Pitcairn Islands are an environmental hotspot, with assets including Henderson Island World Heritage Site, the world's third largest fully protected marine reserve and over 95 unique species. Introduced rodents have had major impacts on these remote island ecosystems, extirpating species from all four islands and driving several to extinction. Rodents currently remain on Pitcairn and Henderson Island. Henderson Island is consequently now at high risk of being placed on the official 'World Heritage Site in Danger' list. Rodents meanwhile have a significant impact on the Pitcairn community, with agricultural produce regularly eaten or soiled, home infrastructure (especially electricity wiring) damaged, and important eco-tourism assets, such as Pitcairn's seabird colonies, wiped out.

The Pitcairn community formally asked RSPB to complete the final exploratory/preparatory steps to enable rodent eradication on their inhabited island, with the goal of combining a Henderson and Pitcairn eradication operation and being the first inhabited Territory to become entirely rodent-free. This would enable Territory-wide ecosystem recovery of avifauna, invertebrate and plant communities. The Pitcairn Council included this commitment to work with RSPB on advancing both island restorations in their Pitcairn Islands MPA Management Plan 2021-2026.

A Pitcairn eradication feasibility study was completed in 2014 (updated in 2020). This concluded that eradication was technically feasible but identified several outstanding issues that need to be addressed before an eradication could proceed, which this project aims to deliver on. Continuous community consultation, pre-operational mapping and non-target species mitigation research will empower fully informed local decisions on whether to proceed with eradication delivery. The majority of the community of c.40 people must be prepared to accept the proposed methodology, and fully aware of all its requirements and consequences, if this eradication operation is to succeed.

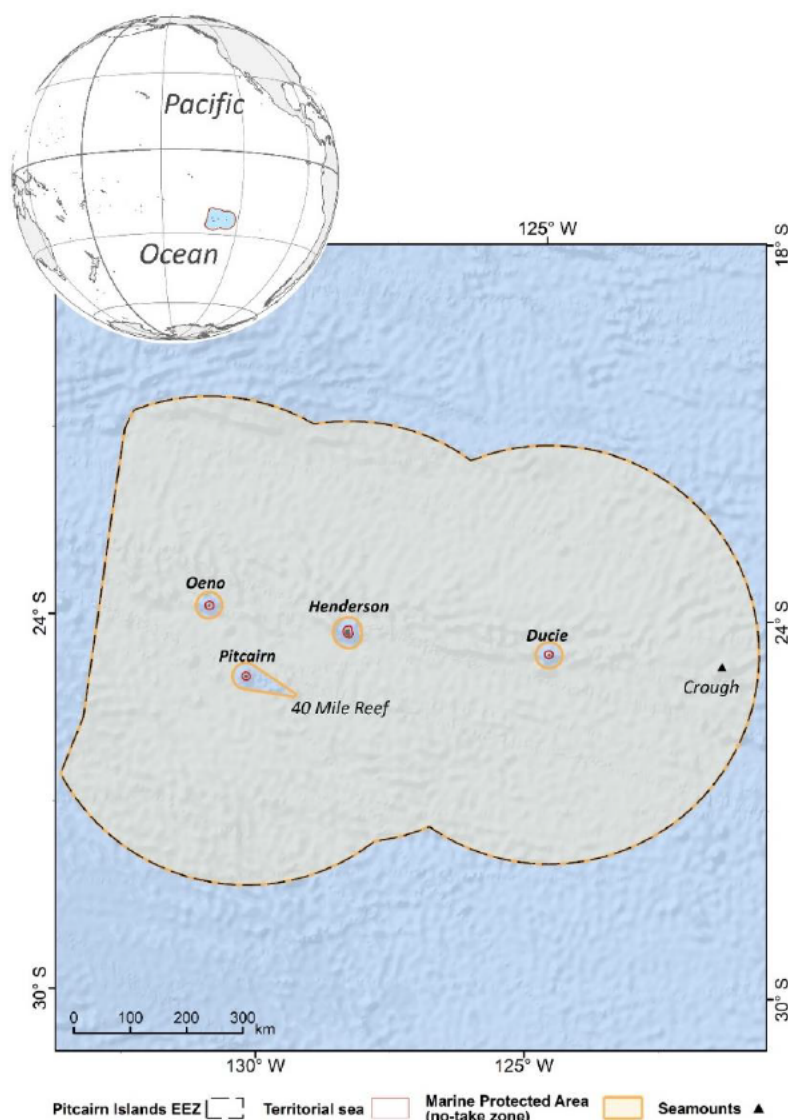


Figure 1. The Pitcairn Islands consist of four small islands located in the South Pacific Ocean between New Zealand and South America at a latitude of approximately 24 degrees south. This project is focused on Pitcairn and Henderson.

2 Project Partnerships

The partnership with the Government of the Pitcairn Islands arose from their formal request for support in completing the preparatory steps necessary for a rodent eradication on their inhabited island. The project planning and design was then directly informed by the expertise outlined in the 2020 Pitcairn eradication feasibility study, which identified outstanding issues needing to be addressed before an eradication could proceed. Pitcairn Government agreed that the majority of the Pitcairn community must be prepared to accept the proposed methodology and be fully aware of all its requirements and consequences for an eradication to be attempted.

Michele Christian, Head of Environmental, Conservation & Natural Resources Division during the project writes:

'Biosecurity is of great importance to the Pitcairn Islands because of our vulnerability to new invasive species. The presence of the Polynesian Rat on Henderson has taken an immense toll on the birdlife in comparison to our other outer islands that have no rats. It is vitally important that we restore bird populations and the only way to do this is with a rat eradication. The

community are supportive of a rat eradication for both Henderson and Pitcairn but obviously had concerns/questions needing to be addressed.'

The project team met on a weekly basis throughout the project to discuss progress. Although it was the primary responsibility of the RSPB to monitor and evaluate the project, Michele Christian and Pitcairn's Administrator joined monthly discussions to update on any news/issues on the island and to feed into the decision making/planning process. In the build up to the 2024 Pitcairn/Henderson expedition, this contact increased to fortnightly to ensure the complex logistics were planned successfully. The time difference (9 hours) could have made communication challenging, but flexibility at both ends, including a willingness to meet in out of work hours, overcame this barrier and strengthened relationships through this clear commitment to cause. Planning rodent eradications is a meticulous task requiring particular skillsets and high levels of specialist knowledge of the target eradication sites, and so another strength of the partnership with Pitcairn Government has been the ability to take advantage of their unique local knowledge and expertise. For example, many Pitkerners were directly involved in the 2024 expedition providing necessary manpower and performing specialist roles that without which, the expedition wouldn't have been able to go ahead.

Throughout the project, there has also been significant in-person contact. The Project Lead (Andy Schofield) has extensive experience of engaging with the Pitcairn community. Having previously lived on the island for three months, he has developed a strong working relationship with the islanders making him well-placed to lead on the community consultation work. Andy visited Pitcairn for ten days in Year 1 (January 2023) to engage with the community to shape the Community Impact Assessment. Year 2 (October 2023) saw a second visit to Pitcairn and a first to Henderson, allowing the community to ask more targeted questions and prompting the Pitcairn Administrator to comment on how impressed she had been by the level of community consultation from this project. In Year 3 (July/August 2024), a large expedition team was sent to Pitcairn and Henderson to complete final feasibility trials, with the Pitcairn team again engaging with the community. At the end of the project in Year 4 (April 2025), Andy Schofield returned to Pitcairn during an eleven-day visit to share with Pitkerners the Community Impact Assessment (**Annex 5.2**), summarise the project's findings and explain next steps. Such engagement has been critical to Pitkerners declaring themselves fully informed as to the implications of an eradication attempt, and supportive of moving forward.

The RSPB holds a long-standing relationship with Pitcairn Government of over 15 years independent of this project, which will continue beyond this project's completion. We are delighted that the Pitcairn community have confirmed they feel well informed about the implications of a proposed rodent eradication attempt on both Pitcairn and Henderson Islands, with Simon Young, the Major of Pitcairn, confirming Pitcairn's commitment to continue working together on the eradication project (**Annex 5.1**). We will therefore continue our partnership post-project, working towards making The Pitcairn Island group the first inhabited Territory to become entirely rodent-free.

3 Project Achievements

3.1 Outputs

Output 1 - Detailed community consultation achieves agreement on the eradications' operational approach and mitigation measures, plus ensures local understanding to achieve prior informed consent.

Any eradication attempts on Pitcairn and Henderson will impact and require the support of the Pitcairn community, so it is crucial Pitkerners fully understand what these impacts are before committing to an eradication operation. Community consultation through regular in-person visits, and the creation of a Community Impact Assessment (CIA), were therefore a key part of this project.

With engagement a priority, RSPB staff visited Pitcairn three times over the course of the project exclusively for community engagement visits, with several additional project staff

visits (such as during the 2024 research expedition) offering additional opportunities to interact with the community. This allowed for the continual development of a strong working relationship and trust with Pitcairn Government and the community and ensured that all the community received in-person engagement at least once. Engagement included community meetings, informal conversations with Pitkerners, and meeting with Island Council and Heads of Government Departments. Over the course of the project, there has been one-on-one engagement with 100% of island residents (**Indicator 1.2**).

A detailed Pitcairn Community Impact Assessment (CIA) was also developed over the course of the project and these engagement visits (**Indicator 1.1**). During a visit to Pitcairn in January 2023, the Community Engagement Lead (CEL) asked Pitkerners to share their key concerns and questions regarding an eradication attempt, so RSPB could directly address these. The feedback was collated to produce a consultation document, forming the basis of the CIA. During a follow-up visit in October 2023, having issued detailed responses (and mitigation where required) to all concerns, the CIA was shared and well received by the community, lending confidence to the chosen format. During the July/August 2024 expedition, we collected final data, allowing us during the final April 2025 CEL visit to share the finalised CIA document with the community and Island Council (**Annex 5.2**).

All 14 concerns raised were addressed in detail, each with a summary response table for a quick and accessible response, and an extended written response offering further explanatory detail for those wanting to understand the basis for our conclusions and advice. However, Pitcairn's questions did not touch on all potential community impacts, so we added an additional section 'additional considerations/ potential impacts relating to rodent eradication' to ensure full transparency with the community. The document covers all key topics and their mitigation in great depth – human health, water management, building access, fisheries, honey export certification, and domestic and feral animals. Taken in combination with the Avicultural Strategy (**Indicator 3.4, Annex 5.3**), the community therefore also received clear proposal papers on all non-target species mitigation (**Indicator 1.4**). Since the CIA also addressed the topics of the four bespoke Pitcairn eradication proposal papers (**Indicator 1.3**) in necessary depth, with Pitcairn's support, we presented our recommended approach to all four topics within the CIA to avoid duplication.

The CIA was shared with the whole community, including the Island Council, made available in print to all households, and presented during community meetings at each annual Pitcairn visit by RSPB engagement staff. Having expressed support for the CIA



Figure 2. Community Engagement Lead Andy Schofield (first on the left) taking questions from the community during his final April 2025 visit to Pitcairn (Credit – Melva Warren)

throughout the project, CEL Andy Schofield summarises the community's response to the final CIA - "Pitkerners felt fairly listened and responded to, and treated with respect, and as a result, were overwhelmingly supportive of continuing to work towards a potential eradication attempt".

The community engagement visits and CIA have been an overwhelming success - 100% of island residents have participated in follow-up discussions with an RSPB engagement lead over the course of the project, and the Pitcairn Mayor has issued a letter on behalf of the Pitcairn community writing to say the Pitcairn community feels fully informed of the implications of any future eradication attempts as a result of this project, and are supportive of us continuing to move towards this goal together (**Indicator 1.5, Annex 5.1**).

Output 2 - Mapping and condition assessment of built infrastructure and natural features fills outstanding knowledge gaps required to inform operational planning.

This project has successfully resolved all proposed outstanding knowledge gaps regarding built infrastructure and natural features on both Pitcairn and Henderson.

Using a search-grid system with satellite imagery, our GIS consultant has produced a map detailing the location of all coconuts on Henderson (**Indicator 2.1, Annex 5.4**). 1.816ha of dense coconut stands were identified on West and North back beaches, totalling approximately 500 trees, with an additional 63 lone coconuts identified in the island's interior, their locations consistent with a flight path taken specifically to drop and seed coconut trees several decades ago. The GIS consultant also completed a map illustrating the location of all built structures, domestic animal pens, and hives on Pitcairn (**Indicator 2.2, Annex 5.5**). This map was developed in conjunction with ground-truthed field data collected during the 2024 expedition, when every Pitkerner house was visited to record all associated built structures and to start putting together bespoke management plans for each household (**Annex 5.6**). Our consultant also went above and beyond the remit of the project to produce a baiting area map for Henderson (**Annex 5.7**), calculating figures including the area of the whole island (ha), of the coastal zones, and habitat types. This is key data, as different habitats/terrains will require a different baiting density.

In October 2023, and during the 2024 expedition, the team took photos of the domestic animal pens and waste management facilities on Pitcairn (**Indicator 2.3**). The waste management facilities are very well organised with recycling sorted into separate bins and non-recyclable waste burnt monthly. Animal pens vary in condition across the island, with some simply requiring shade netting around the edge and on the roof to keep livestock safe during an operation, with others requiring more work. However, during the 2024 expedition, unexpected results from the Pitcairn baiting trials revealed that a rodent eradication attempt of Pitcairn is not likely to succeed using the current most proven techniques, necessitating further research (See **Section 13**). We therefore have refrained from producing an official photographic report, as one made now will likely become outdated and will require repeating if and when a viable operational plan is developed for Pitcairn.

Lastly, the project has produced a Pitcairn Operational Feasibility Study (**Indicator 2.4, Annex 5.8**). The October 2023 visit provided our eradications expert consultant the opportunity to assess natural features and built structures on Pitcairn, with a return visit as part of a larger team in June-July 2024 used to assess outstanding questions relating to operational planning. While we have researched such questions regarding infrastructure and natural features (much of which is reported in the Pitcairn Community Impact Assessment, **Annex 5.2**), the unexpected results of the Pitcairn baiting trials necessitated the document to focus almost exclusively on this issue. This is because the trials have questioned the feasibility of a Pitcairn eradication, making all other operational planning redundant if the rats will not feed on the toxic bait. The document therefore explores the results of the trials in depth and outlines our suggested next steps to establish the feasibility of an eradication on Pitcairn.



Figure 3. (Left) A zoomed-in screenshot of the GIS project mapping all built structures on Pitcairn, with all structures outlined in red and named where appropriate. (Right) An aerial photograph of Henderson Island, highlighting several of its various zones – coastal cliffs, rocky zones, marsh, sparse vegetation, and denser vegetation further inland.

Output 3 - Potential non-target bird species are better understood, have more detailed risk assessments and, if necessary, have undergone successful trials of mitigation measures to inform operational planning.

A researcher visited Pitcairn Island from November to January 2023 and assessed the population size and feeding habits of the Endangered Pitcairn Reed Warbler (PRW). Surveys from 100 transects marked across the island gave an estimated population of 1,404 individuals, indicating that the population has remained stable for the last few decades, rather than declining as suspected in the 2020 IUCN Red List assessment. This study has therefore recommended that the species be downlisted from ‘Endangered’ to ‘Vulnerable’. This manuscript entitled ‘Population status of the endemic Pitcairn Reed Warbler on Pitcairn Island, South Pacific’ was accepted for publication in the journal *Bird Conservation International* in November 2023, and published online in January 2024 (**Indicator 3.1, Annex 5.9**).

During Pitcairn visits in Years 1 and 2, feeding trials were completed. The birds showed no interest in the bait. They were regularly seen feeding on insects during observations which may be a potential pathway for the birds to receive secondary poisoning from insects which have consumed bait, but the risk appears negligible. We therefore have updated the risk assessment to conclude that PRWs do not need to be taken into captivity, but further population surveys should go ahead before and after the eradication (**Indicator 3.2, Annex 5.3**). Under this conclusion, completing the rat carcass trials (**Indicator 3.2**) and methodology for the capture, holding and release of PRWs (**Indicator 3.3**) became redundant and were therefore not necessary to complete.

During the 2024 Henderson expedition, all four endemic land bird species were surveyed. The Henderson Rail has evidently recovered after the high mortality recorded during the previous 2011 rat eradication attempt, with the recovered population remaining reasonably stable since their last 2015 survey (**Indicator 3.5, Annex 5.10**). Given the Rail’s extreme susceptibility to toxic bait, we are working in partnership with Auckland Zoo, with the intention that they would lead the necessary Rail captive operation during an eradication attempt. This included a team from Auckland Zoo going to Henderson Island on the 2024 expedition as part of the wider eradication programme to scope out feasibility and trial capture and husbandry techniques.

It is vital that any future eradication attempts do not create a long-term threat for land bird species on Pitcairn and Henderson, not least because of their globally threatened and endemic status. Collating and evaluating all land bird assessments conducted throughout the project, we have therefore produced an Avicultural Strategy that summarises the current opinion within the Pitcairn and Henderson Restoration Project team about how to monitor and manage the land birds on Pitcairn and Henderson Islands before, during and after any attempted eradications (**Indicator 3.4, Annex 5.3**). As well as PRW and Henderson Rail (as above), the paper also includes recommendations for the Henderson Fruit-dove, Henderson Lorieet and Henderson

Reed-warbler, all of which show no compelling evidence of their populations being negatively affected by an eradication attempt. Given the importance of an avicultural strategy, this will remain a live document beyond the life of the project and will be adapted if any new data undermines current best practise and conclusions.



Figure 4. Two Pitcairn Reed-warbler chicks found in a nest during a population survey on Pitcairn (Credit – Nik Aspey)



Figure 5. A Henderson Rail photographed during the 2024 Henderson expedition (Credit – Mark Whiffin)

3.2 Outcome

Outcome - Community consultation, pre-operational mapping and non-target species mitigation research enables and empowers the Pitcairn community to make fully-informed decisions to proceed with rodent eradication operation delivery on Henderson & Pitcairn.

A revised Pitcairn Operational Feasibility Study (**Indicator 0.3, Annex 5.8, see Output 2**) is completed. This explains how the Pitcairn eradication is unlikely to succeed using the same operational approach as Henderson, a vital discovery that highlights the invaluable importance of feasibility work. Likewise, an Avicultural Strategy has been drawn up for both Pitcairn and Henderson, detailing a bespoke management and monitoring approach for all non-target land bird species should there be an eradication attempt (**Indicator 0.3, Annex 5.3, see Output 3**).

Given the question of the feasibility of a Pitcairn eradication until further research is conducted, we could not propose a viable operational plan for eradications on both Henderson and Pitcairn in good confidence to Pitkerners. It was therefore inappropriate to ask Pitcairn Island Council to decide whether to undertake these eradication operations without being able to offer a clear operational proposal (**Indicator 0.4**). However, during the final Pitcairn community engagement visit in April 2025, our Community Engagement Lead presented the finalised Pitcairn Community Impact Assessment (**Annex 5.2**) to the community and Island Council (**Indicator 0.2**). This was overwhelmingly positively received (see **Output 1**), resulting in the Pitcairn Mayor signing a letter of support on behalf of the whole Pitcairn community (**Indicator 0.1**). This letter affirms that Pitcairn feel well informed of the implications of both island eradication operations, and their desire to continue working together towards the eradications post-project.

3.3 Monitoring of assumptions

Outcome and Output level assumptions were monitored throughout the course of the project, with the Logframe (**Annex 2**) continually referenced in weekly meetings with the RSPB project team and monthly meetings with Pitcairn Government to ensure the project remained on track and to identify any risks to assumptions holding true ahead of time.

Except for one assumption, all held true. This assumption related to Output 1, 'Regular non-quarantine travel will be possible from Q3 Y1 onwards. The Government of the Pitcairn Islands has confirmed it intends to reopen the French Polynesia route in Q2 Y1.' This assumption largely held true, as the Pitcairn-Mangareva route did reopen when expected. However, due to a significant backlog of berth bookings caused by borders remaining closed for much of the pandemic, available berths were at a premium. There were therefore no viable options to get both the eradication expert and operation manager to Pitcairn in Year 1. We therefore submitted an approved change request in December 2022 to move travel funding into Year 2 instead. Berth availability eased and allowed the October 2023 visit to go ahead, with all other future visits on the project similarly occurring without issue.

4 Contribution to Darwin Plus Programme Objectives

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

The Pitcairn Islands are an environmental hotspot with a natural World Heritage Site (WHS), over 95 unique species and a vast marine reserve. The introduced rodents are devastating two of the islands' ecosystems, particularly endangering avifauna. They are also significantly impacting the community, with agricultural produce regularly eaten or soiled, home infrastructure (especially electricity wiring) damaged, and important eco-tourism assets, such as Pitcairn's seabird colonies, wiped out.

By completing community consultation, pre-operational mapping and non-target species mitigation research, this project has allowed the Pitcairn community to make a fully informed decision as to whether to continue working towards Pacific Rat eradication operations on Pitcairn and Henderson. The community has confirmed that they feel well informed and have pledged their continued support to eradicate this invasive species (**Annex 5.1**). This consent was the fundamental step to move towards the next steps of operational planning.

Should the eradication operations now go ahead and prove successful, it would enable Territory-wide ecosystem recovery of avifauna, invertebrate and plant communities, safeguarding unique and threatened species for the future. It will also protect the status of the WHS, and significantly improve the quality of life for Pitkerners. Removal of invasive species, with the subsequent recovery of native wildlife, will naturally improve climate resilience. This is very apparent on Oeno and Ducie, where their thriving seabird colonies are expected to be severely impacted by sea level rise in the next few decades. It is therefore critical that Henderson Island becomes rodent free to provide a haven for displaced seabirds in the future. The following environmental/climate outcomes and key priorities/agreements will be met:

- A target of the UK Government's 25-Year Environment Plan (2018) is "to prevent human induced extinction or loss of known threatened species in.....the Overseas Territories", with invasive species being a strategic priority in the UK Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy (2010).
- Convention on Migratory Species (CMS): The Endangered Henderson Petrel is a CMS Appendix 1-listed species. Removing invasive rats from the Pitcairn Islands is the key conservation management action for this CMS species.
- UNESCO World Heritage Convention: The 2017 UNESCO Conservation Outlook for Henderson Island World Heritage Site concluded 'Significant Concern' and that the current state and trend of values were 'High Concern' and 'Deteriorating' respectively. The Outlook notes that: "the key threat to the World Heritage values of Henderson Island continues to be rat predation and competition and its effects on avifauna, invertebrates, and the wider ecological processes of the island". Removing rodents is therefore the key action required to prevent Henderson Island being formally placed on the official 'World Heritage Site in Danger' list.
- Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework Target 6 to 'eliminate, minimize, reduce and or mitigate the impacts of invasives... especially in priority sites, such as islands'.

- Both Pitcairn and Henderson's Management Plans and Pitcairn's Environment Charter all have commitments to eradicating invasive species:
 - Pitcairn Islands MPA Management Plan 2021-2026, 'Objective 6.3: Non-native invasive rodent eradication and island restoration project supported by the Pitcairn Island community and progressed to a stage of operation for Henderson and Pitcairn Island'.
 - Pitcairn Environment Charter: Commitment 2 'attempt... eradication of invasive species'.
 - Pitcairn Islands Management Plan: Action 3.4.2 'eradicate non-native invasive species'.
 - Henderson Island Management Plan Goal D 'Control or eradicate those alien species established on the island which pose a threat to native wildlife'.
- Sustainable Development Goals: The project will also deliver against Sustainable Development Goals 11 (Sustainable Communities), 15 (Life on Land) and 17 (Partnerships).

4.2 Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

GESI Scale	Description	Put X where you think your project is on the scale
Not yet sensitive	The GESI context may have been considered but the project isn't quite meeting the requirements of a 'sensitive' approach	
Sensitive	The GESI context has been considered and project activities take this into account in their design and implementation. The project addresses basic needs and vulnerabilities of women and marginalised groups, and the project will not contribute to or create further inequalities.	
Empowering	The project has all the characteristics of a 'sensitive' approach whilst also increasing equal access to assets, resources and capabilities for women and marginalised groups	X
Transformative	The project has all the characteristics of an 'empowering' approach whilst also addressing unequal power relationships and seeking institutional and societal change	

We believe the project is 'Empowering' on the GESI scale.

The impacts of invasive species are non-discriminatory and impact everyone in the community equally. This project's progression towards an eradication attempt will therefore benefit all Pitkerners equally.

Community consultation was key to this project, as community support is critical to whether the proposed rodent eradications on both islands proceed. Decided effort was made to engage every member of the community. Engagement included both community meetings and one-on-one visits to every household, ensuring everyone had an opportunity to ask questions and voice concerns, including in more private forums. By planning an annual visit, it ensured that anyone who was off island during one visit/ unable to attend one community meeting received contact during at least one other visit. The in-person nature of the engagement was also critical, as many islanders, especially the older females, do not have internet access/digital skills. The letter of support from the Pitcairn Mayor (**Annex 5.1**) on behalf of the community serves as proof that all Pitkerners felt equally and appropriately engaged with.

On Pitcairn, males are more typically involved in practical tasks. For this project, the Year 3 trip to Henderson Island was a paid opportunity advertised to the whole community, with Pitkerners selected based upon their skills and experience. This led to a female Pitkerner, Sue, being employed to help run the Henderson camp. After the discovery of an abundance of highly

palatable and preferential alternative plant food sources on Pitcairn for the rats, we also commissioned (from alternate funding) a 12-month long fruiting plant phenology study to identify whether there is an alternative suitable operational window for a Pitcairn rodent eradication attempt. Both successful candidates were female.

The small Pitcairn community has strong levels of gender equality within official positions, with a female leader of the Environment, Conservation & Natural Resources (ECNR) Division (and former female Mayor) and female Administrator during the project. A new Administrator has now taken up the post as of July 2025, also female. The project has therefore primarily supported, and worked directly with, an all-female staff on Pitcairn.

RSPB has strict employment policies in place to ensure fair and non-discriminatory recruitment practices, and these are always followed for any roles to be filled. The CEO and Executive Director of Conservation are all roles currently held by women, helping to inform the RSPB's work in the Pitcairn Islands, the UK and globally.

5 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation were led by RSPB, with the Project Leader taking overall charge. They were supported by the wider project team, with the RSPB's UKOT Island Restorations Programme Manager providing critical scrutiny and oversight. He was best placed to provide this critical eye as he will have overall responsibility for the subsequent implementation of the eradications, and therefore needs to be personally satisfied that all feasibility and consent criteria have been suitably met.

The system was a practical and helpful way to ensure the project remained on track and to monitor success. Through weekly meetings with the RSPB project team and monthly meetings with Pitcairn Government, the Logframe and project timetable were continually referenced to assess progress and identify issues/delays before they arose. When necessary, these meetings increased in frequency, such as in the build up to the two-month 2024 expedition to Pitcairn and Henderson when the RSPB project team met multiple times a week, and fortnightly with Pitcairn. The regularity of these meetings ensured that both partners were given the opportunity to feed into the M&E process, keeping one another updated with relevant information, and tackling any issues together. Pitcairn Island Council were also kept updated on any significant developments throughout the project, ensuring that the community were also kept informed of project progress outside of in-person engagement during island visits.

There have been two approved larger changes to project design:

- CR22-078, December 2022 – A visit to Pitcairn was planned for Q3 of Year 1 for the RSPB Community Engagement and Eradication Programme Development Leads, alongside the Eradication Operation Expert. However, due to the Pitcairn – Mangareva route only reopening in June 2022 because of Covid restrictions, there was a significant backlog of berth bookings which, quite rightly, were prioritised for Pitkerners and their family members, and only the Community Engagement Lead was able to travel. We transferred the Y1 underspend in the Travel & Subsistence category into Y2, when we rescheduled and completed the visits.
- December 2024 - We requested a short three-month extension to the project so that it would end on 30 June 2025 rather than 31 March 2025. The 2024 expedition to Pitcairn and Henderson Island raised several unexpected questions, necessitating additional time to discuss and interpret results so that the Community Engagement Lead could provide the Pitcairn community with the correct information to enable them to make an informed decision on future eradication attempts. The next available berths to Pitcairn fell at the end of March 2025, pushing the final community consultation visit into April outside of the original project timeline. In this same change request, we also edited two Logframe Indicators related to studies and mitigation measures for the Pitcairn Reed Warbler (PRW) (deleting Indicator 3.3 and removing 'rat carcass trials' from 3.2). The PRW is an endemic species we produced a risk assessment for to ensure the population is not harmed during a potential eradication attempt. The project already concluded the warbler is not at risk before completing all assessments, and so remaining avicultural activities

intended to help form this conclusion became redundant. At the request of the Darwin reviewers, these remain in the Logframe for visibility but are struck-through.

6 Lessons learnt

- Previous projects with Pitcairn have highlighted the need to minimise any additional workload for this tiny and under-resourced community, especially given the many competing demands on all individuals. Therefore, we tried to maximise on island support throughout this project and have very much been led by Pitcairn for what is an achievable level of involvement on their side. The frequency of monthly meetings (outside of island visits) worked well, enabling regular updates on project progress as well as an opportunity to feed into the decision-making process without demanding too much of Pitcairn's time. We had hoped that a team of Pitkerners would be able to join the 2024 expedition to Henderson Island to minimise the need for external expertise and provide opportunities to as many of the community as possible. Two-, three- and five-week options were offered. Several Pitkerners supported the set-up phase, but take-up was otherwise limited as competing responsibilities meant weeks away from Pitcairn was impractical, meaning more external support was required than expected. It is a valuable lesson in how to staff a future project should the proposed operation proceed, with a greater need for external support.
- The community consultation element of this project has been very successful with the Pitcairn community and the Administrator appreciating the regularity of in-person visits and documentation provided, particularly the Community Impact Assessment (**Annex 5.2**). We would recommend similar projects create a consultation document which is regularly updated and made available to the community to show that they have been listened to and efforts are made to answer questions and mitigate against concerns. We would also recommend that even if travel costs are high, regular in-person visits are more than justified by the payoff - communication is significantly more open and effective face-to-face, and the Pitcairn Administrator highlighted how making the effort to visit in person, and for extended rather than brief time periods, has conveyed a greater level of sincerity and investment in the project and the local community. Such transparency and time invested has engendered real support and trust from Pitcairn.
- It is critical when sending equipment to somewhere as remote as Pitcairn that the correct items arrive at the right time. We were fortunate to have contractors based in New Zealand who were able to visit the freight forwarding agent prior to equipment being shipped to ensure everything had arrived and to organise related kit. This visit highlighted that certain equipment we assumed had arrived hadn't, as well as having a clearer idea of the logistical burden of unloading the other side. We would recommend other projects, which have time-dependent essential equipment to get to remote places, to factor in a visit to the freight forwarder prior to shipment if feasible.
- It is unreasonable to expect things to move as quickly on Pitcairn (and in other small and isolated communities) as one might expect on the mainland. The slower pace is not out of a desire to prevent something from happening, but rather because of making sure that all the community hear any significant news before it is debated and resolved. Allowing this process is critical to project success, as well as providing as much on-island support as possible to ensure information is accurate, and concerns can be voiced.
- If your project's central focus is data collection, trials and feasibility assessments - expect the unexpected. If you are conducting a high volume of tests, it is likely that at least one will produce unexpected or problematic results – as has been the case in this project. Unexpected results in the Pitcairn rat bait choice trials required a delay in the RSPB's Community Engagement Lead Visit from Year 3 to Year 4 to allow sufficient time to analyse and consider the implications of the results. We also revoked the need for Pitcairn Island Council to decide whether to undertake eradication operations on Henderson and Pitcairn (Indicator 0.4), as it was inappropriate to ask them to make this decision while the feasibility of a Pitcairn eradication is being investigated further. It is therefore important to consider this uncertainty when writing the project Logframe (especially Outcome level indicators and assumptions), and important to be honest and

willing to appropriately adapt project design to account for any consequences of such findings.

7 Actions taken in response to Annual Report reviews

1. *The project focuses on the Pitcairn Reed Warbler and Henderson Rail: is there any risk of baiting to other endemic birds, such as Henderson Lorikeet, Henderson Fruit-dove, and Henderson Reed-warbler?*

The project takes the risk posed by an eradication attempt to all land birds very seriously and has conducted extensive research to create an Avicultural Strategy for both Pitcairn and Henderson, detailing monitoring and management plans for all land bird species (**Annex 5.3**). Without the conclusion that all remaining issues around all non-target bird species mitigation have been identified and can be addressed, an eradication attempt would not proceed. Our assessment is that there is no compelling evidence that the populations of Henderson Fruit-dove, Henderson Lorikeet and Henderson Reed-warbler are likely to be negatively affected. Therefore, currently we recommend there is no need to take them into captivity during the eradication attempt but monitoring these species population sizes pre- and post-eradication will provide useful information on any negative or positive impacts of the operation and help identify long-term population trends. Please see **Annex 5.3** for the full details and evidence. This is a live document, so although it is not expected, if any new information undermines this conclusion, our recommendations will change accordingly.

2. *The Biosecurity Report recommends replanting Tau and Miro; is this something that the project will consider in its recommendations in the coming year?*

Biosecurity is of critical importance to protecting the Pitcairn Islands' native biodiversity and will be vital to preventing any new or re-invasions of invasive species such as Polynesian Rats should an eradication attempt go ahead. However, this project is focused on assessing the feasibility of a potential Polynesian Rat eradication attempt on Pitcairn and Henderson rather than addressing recommendations in The Biosecurity Report. These are actions that must be initiated and led by Pitcairn Government, but at their request RSPB would support Pitcairn in this endeavour, with this having been a common way of working in our longstanding relationship.

3. *The reviewer believes that the Pacific Islands are currently free of HPAI, but will there be a contingency plan, should the disease be detected on the islands?*

So far there have not been any cases of H5 HPAI detected in the Pacific islands. There have been outbreaks of H7 HPAI in poultry in Australia and New Zealand, but this represents a separate sub-type and is unlikely to spread in the same way in wild birds/cause the same impacts as we have seen from the H5 strains. It is however fairly likely that H5 will reach the area at some stage, and there is nothing we can do to mitigate this other than accept and plan for it as a risk if an eradication is attempted. Confirmed detection involves getting samples to a specialist lab, which is not straightforward given Pitcairn and Henderson's accessibility, so we will need to set a threshold for suspected case to trigger a testing response.

If the disease is detected, we will follow a plan similar to our RSPB HPAI response plan already produced for another island eradication project (Gough). The crux of the response is that once HPAI is detected, you must stop handling any wild birds. This will be consequential for Henderson, where the operational plan has an insurance population of Henderson Rails being taken into temporary captivity, as they are highly susceptible to non-target poisoning. The captive operation will be run by Auckland Zoo, who are highly attuned to HPAI and biosecurity issues. However, if HPAI is confirmed or strongly suspected on Henderson, captive holding cannot proceed. The eradication operation would likely have to be aborted, as without the captive insurance population, we could risk causing a species extinction. The first step, which this project addressed, was to see if captive holding of the Rails was even viable (it is). The next step is to decide as a team how close to an eradication attempt we are comfortable aborting should HPAI become an issue.

4. *No match funding is reported in the budget table, although elsewhere in the report the project comments that ‘additional funding has been successfully raised to support a longer two-month visit to Henderson Island in June 2024’. It is not clear if this refers to new match funding, or funds reallocated from the Darwin budget through its approved change request.*

The additional funding raised to support a longer two-month visit to Henderson Island in June 2024 referred to new match funding from different funders:

- The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation US\$ [REDACTED]
- UK International Development from the UK Government £ [REDACTED]

8 Risk Management

The project did not need to make any significant adaptations to the project design to address changes to risk – all assumptions in our Logframe held true.

One new risk occurred in the final project year not previously accounted for – Pitcairn Island experienced a confirmed outbreak of Dengue Fever close to our planned end of project in-person community engagement visit. While Pitkerners themselves were recovered and able to engage in the visit by its planned date, the potential health risk remained to the Community Engagement Lead (CEL) due to travel out. Fortunately, after careful assessment with relevant staff and consultants, the risk was deemed low enough and mitigation measures strong enough that the CEL was issued the green light to travel, provided they were comfortable with this. The CEL was comfortable with the risk level and completed the trip to Pitcairn (without contracting Dengue).

A risk assessment and register were not a requirement during this project's application process. However, the value in a risk register was recognised by the project team and started for this project regardless. The decision was made to capture risk and mitigation in meeting minutes instead of a formal risk register in Years 1 and 2 due to the increased frequency of meetings. Issues were therefore raised and acted upon swiftly, with all project partners feeding into the process. A risk register of sorts and extensive health and safety plan was developed for the two-month expedition in the final year of the project as there were numerous risks associated with such an expedition. For the project's final year, we used Darwin's Risk Register spreadsheet to capture arising issues (**Annex 5.11**). (Please note this spreadsheet only contains the issue register tab, as the full spreadsheet was not a required document to complete at the time of our application process).

9 Scalability and Durability

If an eradication is attempted and successful, the impact is huge - it will prevent species extinctions, support ecosystem-level restoration, and alleviate significant challenges (e.g. to infrastructure, subsistence agricultural and tourism) faced by Pitkerners. This project represented a vital step towards restoring the Pitcairn Islands as a rodent-free archipelago, looking to answer feasibility questions and gaining Pitcairn community support. The greatest legacies of this project have been the resulting Pitcairn community support for the eradication programme, and the wealth of vital research completed that will directly inform operational planning of any future eradication attempt.

Without the support and Prior Informed Consent of the Pitcairn community, eradication attempts on Pitcairn and Henderson will not be possible. With a fundamental focus on community engagement throughout, this project has succeeded in making the community feel fully informed as to the implications of future eradication attempts, and we now critically have their support to continue working towards an eradication post-project (**Annex 5.1**). Between the three in-person community visits (which included community consultations, and one-on-one engagement with all Pitkerners), regular meetings with Pitcairn Government, and providing paid opportunities for Pitkerners (such as supporting the Henderson Island 2024 expedition), the project has also enabled the development of stronger personal relationships and trust between

the RSPB and Pitkerners. These relationships will prove invaluable in enabling the success not only of a future eradication, but any other environmental projects we may wish to develop and work together on.

The project has also gathered vital operational planning information, including non-target species mitigation (**Annex 5.3**), mitigation measures on Pitcairn (water, in-shore fishing, domestic and feral animals) (**Annex 5.2**), and the completion of operational GIS mapping (e.g. coconut mapping on Henderson, and all built structures on Pitcairn) (**Annex 5.4, 5.5**). This information critically enables the eradication programme to begin to move from feasibility to the operational planning phase and will be instrumental in informing the operational design should an eradication proceed.

Irrespective of whether an eradication is attempted, the activities of this project will leave a valuable legacy. The Government now has access to up-to-date maps of all built and relevant natural infrastructure on Pitcairn, as well as coconut groves on Henderson Island. Community understanding of their iconic ‘Sparrow’ (local name for Pitcairn Reed Warbler) and Henderson’s endemic landbirds has also increased, with population estimates of all species. Pitkerners also have a detailed insight into the logistics of an aerial baiting operation on their island, should that happen at some point in the future. The global island eradication community is relatively small, and with operations so complex, the community continually communicates to improve best practise. The design and results of the scientific trials and the involvement of consultants with world-leading expertise, who also support other eradication projects, means lessons learned during this project are adding to the global pool of knowledge and will potentially contribute to the success of other eradications elsewhere.

Post-project, the key project staff are committed to continuing to work together to move forward the eradication operation, preserving key knowledge and working relationships. Core Pitcairn Government staff remain funded, and with RSPB staff time already matched funded under this project, they will continue to be supported either internally or by new external funding. RSPB is already engaging with funders to support the next stage in the eradication programme.

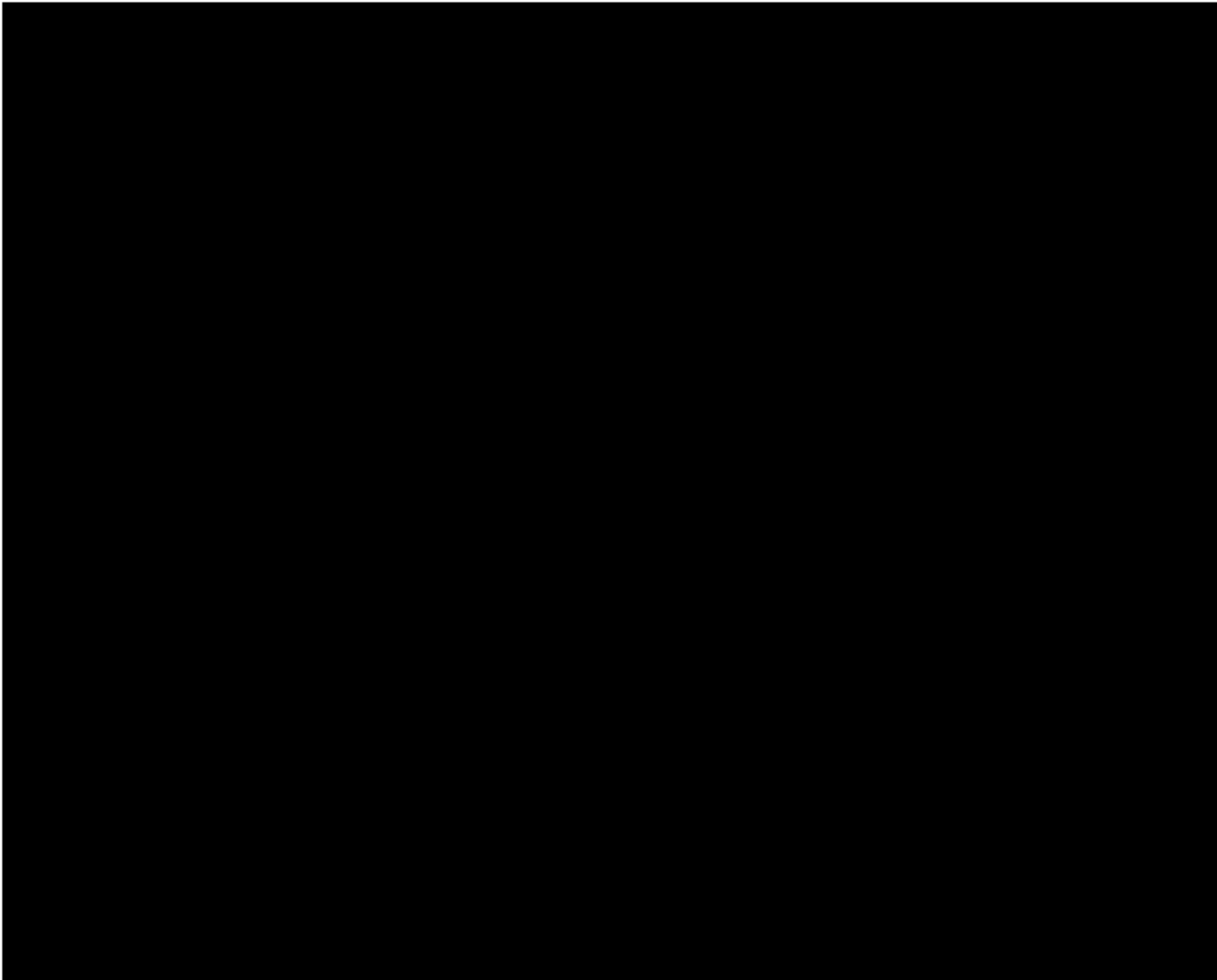
10 Darwin Plus Identity

The Darwin Initiative is positively regarded on Pitcairn with the benefits of previous Darwin projects witnessed first-hand. Indeed, Darwin are recognised as one of very few funders who directly support work on the island, and approximately 10% of the community have previously worked on a Darwin project. This project increase that participation, with at least 20% of Pitkerners being directly employed or involved (e.g. supporting the ECNR Division of Pitcairn Government directly, Pitkerners hired to work on the 2024 Pitcairn/Henderson expedition etc), and 100% being engaged throughout given the emphasis on community consultation. Following visits in all four project years by RSPB staff and eradication specialists, including holding Council and community meetings, all the community agrees that because of this Darwin-funded project, they feel well informed as to the implications of a future eradication (**Annex 5.1**). The project is known to be funded by Darwin within the community but is also seen as part of a wider programme of work focusing on controlling invasive species on the islands. Where possible, the Darwin logo has been used on project documentation including an acknowledgement in the PRW manuscript which is published and available online.



Figure 6. Four local Pitkerners photographed on Henderson Island after sailing the RSPB team across the technical reef approach to the island and helping unload six weeks' worth of expedition gear.

11 Safeguarding



12 Finance and administration

12.1 Project expenditure

2024/25 – These figures are all subject to the final audit

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				
Consultancy costs				
Overhead Costs				
Travel and subsistence				
Operating Costs				
Capital items				
Others				
TOTAL	£104,618	£104,618.00		

Staff employed (Name and position)	Cost (£)
David Kinchin-Smith (Project Manager)	
Chloe Harrison (Project Officer)	
Sophie Thomas (Global Islands Impact Officer)	
Daniel Potter (Finance Officer)	
Michele Christian (Pitcairn Conservation Lead)	
Sue O'Keefe (Avicultural Assistant)	
Paul Warren (Avicultural Assistant)	
TOTAL	£30,852.86

Consultancy – description and breakdown of costs	Consultancy – cost (£)
Consultancy payment to Pete McClelland, eradication planning services for Pitcairn and Henderson	
Consultancy fee for George Lemann, contract involved in the Henderson expedition, testing eradication techniques	
Consultancy fee for Steffen Oppel, 6th July to 9th August 2024. Part of the Henderson expedition, conducting bird surveys, analysing data and assisting with Henderson rail capture	
Consultancy fee for Tom Clarke, contractor involved in the Henderson expedition, testing eradication techniques	
Consultancy charges for Nik Aspey, part of Henderson fieldwork team	
Second consultancy payment to Pete McClelland, eradication planning services for Pitcairn and Henderson	
Invoice 1 for 24/25 GIS work on the project, for Katie Milne	
Invoice 2 for 24/25 GIS work on the project, for Katie Milne	
TOTAL	£35,555.94

Capital items – description	Capital items – cost (£)
TOTAL	£0.00

Other costs – description	Other costs – cost (£)
DataGarrison satellite station, satellite plus subscription and rain gauge. Equipment to be used as part of Pitcairn / Henderson expedition	
Skewers, consumables for use on Pitcairn and Henderson	
30x cat collars, to be used as part of Henderson expedition	
2x reems of office paper	
1 litre ethanol	
Hand sanitiser from Pitcairn health clinic, for use by fieldwork team during time on island	
Working boots, bump hat, and batteries to be used in camera. Consumables for project fieldwork	
Avicultural consumables from Auckland Zoo necessary for the Pitcairn / Henderson project fieldwork	

TOTAL	
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2025/26 - These figures are all subject to the final audit

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				
Consultancy costs				
Overhead Costs				
Travel and subsistence				
Operating Costs				
Capital items				
Others				
TOTAL	£5,000	4,996.34		

Staff employed (Name and position)	Cost (£)
Chloe Harrison (Project Officer)	
David Kinchin-Smith (Project Manager)	
TOTAL	

Consultancy – description and breakdown of costs	Consultancy – cost (£)
TOTAL	£0.00

Capital items – description	Capital items – cost (£)
TOTAL	£0.00

Other costs – description	Other costs – cost (£)
Audit costs	
TOTAL	

12.2 Additional funds or in-kind contributions secured

Matched funding leveraged by the partners to deliver the project	Total (£)
RSPB – Match staff time plus overhead	
TOTAL	

Total additional finance mobilised for new activities occurring outside of the project, building on evidence, best practices and the project	Total (£)
The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	
UK International Development from the UK Government	
TOTAL	

12.3 Value for Money

Rodent eradications are highly complex projects that require extensive pre-operational planning to maximise their chances of success. This project has comprehensively researched and addressed the significant knowledge gaps on Pitcairn and Henderson and gained the support and trust of the Pitcairn community, without which an eradication attempt will not be possible. This project therefore represents great value for money, as it has successfully enabled the eradication programme to begin to move forward from the feasibility to pre-operational planning phase.

The results of the bait preference trials undertaken on Pitcairn in July and August 2024 revealed that any rodent eradication attempt on Pitcairn Island would have a very low chance of success if undertaken at the same time as the preferred operational window for Henderson (July and August), as there appears to be an abundance of highly palatable and preferential alternative plant food sources at such a time. The findings from the trial are surprising and we are extremely grateful that Darwin funding has enabled us to identify this. Without this extensive fact-finding and preparatory work, it is possible that significant investment would have occurred to carry out an eradication attempt that would have carried a low likelihood of success.

The benefits of a successful Polynesian rat eradication are huge, and represent incredible value for money, having a permanent and transformative impact on the local environment, biodiversity and community. On Henderson, an eradication will eliminate the cause of species extinctions of globally important avifauna and protect the currently threatened World Heritage Site status of the island. On inhabited Pitcairn, it will remove the permanent public health risk, prevent the significant damage to the subsistence agriculture on which the islanders heavily depend, and eliminate the ongoing financial strains associated with damage to domestic infrastructure and recurring control (rat poisoning) costs. A successful eradication will also protect Pitcairn's seabird colonies, both of great environmental value, and a huge tourism asset for the island.

The RSPB has worked closely with Pitcairn for over a decade so was able to design an effective project budget based on first-hand experience of working there. The largest budgetary allocations have been staff costs (both internal, and external consultants), and travel expenses. The complexity of planning eradications and the need to complete feasibility studies to a rigorous scientific standard necessitated staff with specialist skill sets and world-leading eradication expertise, justifying this budgetary allocation. Staff costs were also matched in kind to 90% of the value requested from BCF, and the New Zealand eradication experts and avicultural / veterinarian expertise were contracted at a competitive rate based off prior working relationships. Travel to Pitcairn is always extremely expensive (boat passage costs over £2k, and UK-Tahiti-Mangareva flights are roughly the same). We minimised the number of trips to Pitcairn as far as possible, but the only way to conduct a genuine and iterative community consultation and ensure fully informed consent was through face-to-face discussion. Indeed, Michele Christian (Pitcairn Project Lead, and Government of the Pitcairn Islands Environmental, Conservation & Natural Resources Division Manager during the project) stressed throughout project development the need for the community to be able to have repeated face-to-face conversation. That these visits have succeeded in making the Pitcairn community feel fully informed and supportive of the eradication programme (**Annex 5.1**) clearly justify the cost and show the visits to represent excellent value of money.

The project also received considerable match funding (£42,967.56 leveraged by project partners for this project, and £285,100 of additional from external funders to fund work related to the wider eradication programme). The RSPB is committed to delivering the eradication operations, ensuring long-term post-project impact.

13 Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

Pitcairn Findings – Additional Context

All project activities were designed to test and inform a safe and effective rodent eradication plan for Henderson and Pitcairn. The results would then enable the Pitcairn community to make a fully informed decision on whether to proceed with the joint operation, by project end.

However, the results of the bait preference trials undertaken on Pitcairn in July and August 2024 show that any rodent eradication attempt on Pitcairn Island would have a very low chance of success if undertaken at the same time as the preferred operational window for Henderson (July and August), as there appears to be an abundance of highly palatable and preferential alternative plant food sources at such a time. We therefore were unable to present a viable operational eradication plan for Pitcairn Island to the Pitcairn community within this project's lifespan (this was not the case for Henderson). Further feasibility work will still produce this, but on an alternate timeline.

The findings from the trial were surprising and we are grateful that Darwin funding enabled us to identify for Pitcairn that the presence of abundant and preferred alternative natural food challenges operational efficacy. Without this extensive fact-finding and preparatory work, it is possible that significant investment would have occurred to carry out an eradication attempt that would have carried a low likelihood of success.

In response, we commissioned (from alternative funding) a 12-month long fruiting plant phenology study on Pitcairn to identify whether there is an alternative suitable operational window for a rodent eradication attempt, and if so, when it would be. We will also likely continue to test alternative bait modifications (e.g. guava flavoured) in 2026 to see if there is a more attractive rodent bait. The community is fully informed of these findings and their implications, and supportive of the RSPB continuing to work towards finalising viable operational plans for eradications on Pitcairn and Henderson.



Figure 7. Pacific Rat moving over bait preference trial on Pitcairn (without taking bait or investigating piles); red arrows point to four bait piles.

14 **OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements of your project (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes.**

I agree for the Biodiversity Challenge Funds to edit and use the following for various promotional purposes.

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

Project summary	Progress and achievements
Impact <p>The Pitcairn Island group is free of introduced rodents, enabling native wildlife and habitat recovery, safeguarding rodent-free islands and benefitting community agriculture, infrastructure & eco-tourism assets.</p>	<p>The completion of vital operational feasibility and planning research will inform the design and delivery of any future eradication attempts, which the project has secured full support from the Pitcairn community to proceed working towards. This project therefore has succeeded in moving the eradication programme from a theoretical and research phase towards a delivery phase, a crucial step change to enabling rodent eradications on Pitcairn and Henderson and the significant biodiversity and habitat restoration benefits this will bring.</p>
Outcome <p>Community consultation, pre-operational mapping and non-target species mitigation research enables and empowers the Pitcairn community to make fully-informed decisions to proceed with rodent eradication operation delivery on Henderson & Pitcairn.</p>	<p>See Section 3.2, Annex 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.7, 5.8</p> <p>Non-target species mitigation research and pre-operational mapping is complete, with the creation of operational maps, an Avicultural strategy, the Pitcairn Operational Feasibility Study and the Pitcairn Community Assessment to summarise findings and present to the Pitcairn community. 100% of Pitkerners were engaged with during the project, who have confirmed they give their full support to proceed working towards and feel fully informed as to the impacts of a future eradication operation.</p>
Outcome indicator 0.1 <p>By project end, over 95% of resident Pitcairn Islanders indicate via questionnaire that they feel well informed about the implications of both island eradication operations.</p>	<p>See Section 3.2, Annex 5.1</p> <p>The Pitcairn Mayor has issued a letter on behalf of all Pitkerners declaring all to feel well informed, and supportive of continuing to work together towards eradications on Pitcairn and Henderson.</p>
Outcome indicator 0.2 <p>By project end, the Pitcairn Island Council will have taken decisions on all 4 thematic areas outlined in the operational approach proposal papers.</p>	<p>See Section 3.2, Annex 5.1, 5.2</p> <p>The Community Engagement Lead shared the finalised Pitcairn Community Impact Assessment (which included all 4 thematic areas) with Island Council during the final April 2025 Pitcairn visit, resulting in a signed letter from the Pitcairn Mayor advocating for Pitcairn's support of continuing to work towards an eradication operation.</p>
Outcome indicator 0.3 <p>By end of Y3, a revised operational feasibility study (Pitcairn) and updated avicultural strategy (Henderson) confirm outstanding issues are addressed and that eradications can proceed with the chosen approaches.</p>	<p>See Section 3.2, Annex 5.3, Annex 5.8</p> <p>A revised Pitcairn Operational Feasibility Study and Avicultural Strategy (for both Pitcairn and Henderson) have been created, addressing outstanding issues and outlining the next steps going forward.</p>

<p>Outcome indicator 0.4</p> <p>By project end, Pitcairn Island Council make a final decision on whether to undertake (funding-dependent) eradication operations on Henderson & Pitcairn.</p>	<p>See Section 3.2, Section 13, Annex 5.1</p> <p>Given the questions surrounding the feasibility of a Pitcairn eradication, it was not appropriate to ask Pitcairn Island Council to make a final decision on undertaking the eradications. However, Pitcairn have given their full support to continuing to work together towards such operations.</p>
<p>Output 1 - Detailed community consultation achieves agreement on the eradications' operational approach and mitigation measures, plus ensures local understanding to achieve prior informed consent.</p>	
<p>Output indicator 1.1</p> <p>By end of Q1 Y2, a detailed 'Pitcairn Community Impact Assessment', covering human health, water management, domestic animals, building access, fisheries and honey export certification, is prepared to inform consultation discussions.</p>	<p>See Section 3.1, Annex 5.2</p> <p>The Pitcairn Community Impact Assessment was produced by Q1 Y2, addressing all concerns raised by Pitkerners during Y1. We kept this as a live document until the project's end to provide the most up to date responses and allow for further questions to be raised. The final document was presented to Island Council and the Pitcairn community during the final community engagement visit in April 2025 and was very positively received.</p>
<p>Output indicator 1.2</p> <p>By end of Q3 Y2, a RSPB engagement lead, and an eradication operation expert will have completed initial face-to-face consultations regarding Henderson & Pitcairn with Island Council, Heads of Government Departments and at least 50% of island residents.</p>	<p>See Section 3.1</p> <p>Across two trips to Pitcairn (January and October 2023), by the end of Q3 Y2 project staff engaged in F2F discussions with every resident, Council and Head of Government Department, with more than 50% of the community engaged with (and over 50% of the community attending the October visit meeting alone).</p>
<p>Output indicator 1.3</p> <p>By end of Y3, four bespoke Pitcairn eradication proposal papers on i) domestic animal mitigation and long-term management, ii) feral animal management, iii) water mitigation and management and iv) inshore fisheries mitigation and management prepared and submitted in-person to Island Council and community by RSPB community engagement lead.</p>	<p>See Section 3.1, Annex 5.2</p> <p>Bespoke responses to all four proposal papers were prepared and submitted in-person to Island Council and the community during the final April 2025 engagement visit. These responses were included within the Community Impact Assessment, which already addressed the topics to the necessary depth, rather than as independent papers to avoid duplication of effort.</p>
<p>Output indicator 1.4</p> <p>By end of Y3, a proposal paper on non-target species mitigation prepared and submitted to both Island Council and community.</p>	<p>See Section 3.1, Annex 5.2, Annex 5.3</p> <p>All non-target species have been addressed - non-target domestic and feral animal mitigation is covered in the Community Impact Assessment, and avicultural mitigation is answered in the Avicultural Strategy. These two documents were</p>

	submitted to Island Council and community, rather than an additional independent non-target species paper, to avoid duplication.
Output indicator 1.5 Over 95% of island residents have participated in follow-up face-to-face consultations with a RSPB engagement lead in both Y2 and Y4, including discussion regarding the updated feasibility study in Y4.	See Section 3.1, Annex 5.1 100% of island residents have participated in follow-up face-to-face discussions during community engagement visits in Y2 and Y4, resulting in the Pitcairn Mayor producing a signed letter declaring the Pitcairn community to feel fully informed as to the implications of a future eradication attempt.
Output 2 - Mapping and condition assessment of built infrastructure and natural features fills outstanding knowledge gaps required to inform operational planning.	
Output indicator 2.1 By end of Y3, accurate maps illustrating the location of all coconuts on Henderson, are created, ground-truthed and shared.	See Section 3.1, Annex 5.4 Using a combination of grid-searching Henderson satellite imagery and GPS locations taken of coconut trees from expeditions (2014 and 2024), a map of all coconuts on Henderson has been successfully produced.
Output indicator 2.2 By end of Y3, accurate maps illustrating the location of all built structures, domestic animal pens, and hives on Pitcairn are created, ground-truthed and shared.	See Section 3.1, Annex 5.5 A GIS map has been completed illustrating the location of all built structures, domestic animal pens and hives on Pitcairn, ground-truthed using field data collected during the 2023 trip and the 2024 expedition.
Output indicator 2.3 By end of Y3, a photographic report demonstrating condition of domestic animal pens and the waste management facilities on Pitcairn is created.	See Section 3.1, Section 13 Photos were taken of relevant structures, but a finalised photographic report has not been produced yet, as the unexpected results of the baiting trials on Pitcairn will require this task to be repeated at a later date, and therefore a redundant effort to complete now.
Output indicator 2.4 By end of Y3, an updated Pitcairn feasibility study concludes that any remaining issues around built infrastructure and natural features have been identified and can be addressed.	See Section 3.1, Section 13, Annex 5.8 An updated Pitcairn feasibility study is completed but focuses on the conclusions and implications of the Pitcairn baiting trials, the results of which have called into question the feasibility of a Pitcairn eradication (at least if using the same operational method and timing as Henderson).
Output 3 - Potential non-target bird species are better understood, have more detailed risk assessments and, if necessary, have undergone successful trials of mitigation measures to inform operational planning.	
Output indicator 3.1	See Section 3.1, Annex 5.9

By end of Q3 Y2, a population estimate and feeding habit assessment of the Endangered Pitcairn Reed Warbler has been completed and submitted to a peer-reviewed journal.	Population and feeding habit assessments were completed in 2022/23, with the results accepted for publication in the journal Bird Conservation International and published in January 2024.
Output indicator 3.2 By end of Q3 Y2, a non-toxic blue bait and rat carcass trial has informed an updated risk assessment for the Pitcairn Reed Warbler.	See Section 3.1, Annex 5.3 Feeding trials completed in Years 1 and 2 concluded that due to lack of interest in the bait, and minimal secondary pathway risk, Pitcairn Reed Warblers are not at risk from an eradication operation and do not need to be taken into captivity.
Output indicator 3.3 By end of Q3 Y3, the methodology for successfully capturing, holding and releasing Pitcairn Reed Warblers has been established through physical trials and taught to local Government staff.	See Section 3.1 Given the conclusion that Pitcairn Reed Warblers do not need to be taken into captivity during an eradication operation, this indicator became redundant and was removed from the Logframe in an approved change request.
Output indicator 3.4 By end of Y3, an updated Pitcairn feasibility study concludes that all remaining issues around non-target bird species mitigation have been identified and can be addressed.	See Section 3.1, Annex 5.3 An Avicultural Strategy is completed and outlines the impact risk level of an eradication attempt for all non-target bird species on both Pitcairn and Henderson, and any necessary mitigation or management recommendations. This is a live document that will be adjusted post-project if new data necessitates altering our current conclusions.
Output indicator 3.5 By end of Y3, the population status of the Henderson Rail has been re-assessed to inform an updated avicultural strategy.	See Section 3.1, Annex 5.10 The Henderson Rail population was re-assessed during the 2024 Henderson expedition, concluding the population to have recovered since it's high mortality rate in the 2011 eradication attempt. Given the rail's susceptibility to toxic bait, a captive holding population will be necessary in any future eradication attempt.

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: The Pitcairn Island group is free of introduced rodents, enabling native wildlife and habitat recovery, safeguarding rodent-free islands and benefitting community agriculture, infrastructure & eco-tourism assets.			
Outcome: Community consultation, pre-operational mapping and non-target species mitigation research enables and empowers the Pitcairn community to make fully-informed decisions to proceed with rodent eradication operation delivery on Henderson & Pitcairn.	0.1 By project end, over 95% of resident Pitcairn Islanders indicate via questionnaire that they feel well informed about the implications of both island eradication operations. 0.2 By project end, the Pitcairn Island Council will have taken decisions on all 4 thematic areas outlined in the operational approach proposal papers. 0.3 By end of Y3, a revised operational feasibility study (Pitcairn) and updated avicultural strategy (Henderson) confirm outstanding issues are addressed and that eradications can proceed with the chosen approaches. 0.4 By project end, Pitcairn Island Council make a final decision on whether to undertake (funding-dependent) eradication operations on Henderson & Pitcairn.	0.1 Consultation reports; questionnaire; quarterly updates to Island Council. 0.2 Proposal papers; Council meeting minutes; quarterly updates to Island Council. 0.3 Finalised feasibility study; updated avicultural strategy. 0.4 Finalised feasibility studies; Council meeting minutes; quarterly updates to Island Council.	Assumption: Good faith engagement with the consultations and proposal discussions will occur. This should hold because Pitcairn Natural Resources Division have asked for this project to proceed and, alongside the Pitcairn Island Council, were consulted during project development. Both entities have longstanding personal and professional relationships with the RSPB and the project leader, who has worked with Pitcairn for over 6 years, including living on-island for 3 months.
Output 1 Detailed community consultation achieves agreement on the eradications' operational approach and mitigation measures, plus ensures local understanding to achieve prior informed consent.	1.1 By end of Q1 Y2, a detailed 'Pitcairn Community Impact Assessment', covering human health, water management, domestic animals, building access, fisheries and honey export certification, is prepared to inform consultation discussions. 1.2 By end of Q3 Y2, a RSPB engagement lead, and an eradication operation expert will have completed	1.1 Community Impact Assessment reports; quarterly updates to Island Council. 1.2 Council minutes; Trip reports; Signed receipts of discussion; quarterly updates to Island Council. 1.3. Proposal papers; quarterly updates to Island Council.	Assumption: A world-class eradication expert will be able to be hired to visit the Territory. Mitigation: RSPB already has strong relationships with a number of world-leading New Zealand practitioners and has discussed this role in principle with them.

	<p>initial face-to-face consultations regarding Henderson & Pitcairn with Island Council, Heads of Government Departments and at least 50% of island residents.</p> <p>1.3 By end of Y3, four bespoke Pitcairn eradication proposal papers on i) domestic animal mitigation and long-term management, ii) feral animal management, iii) water mitigation and management and iv) inshore fisheries mitigation and management prepared and submitted in-person to Island Council and community by RSPB community engagement lead.</p> <p>1.4 By end of Y3, a proposal paper on non-target species mitigation prepared and submitted to both Island Council and community.</p> <p>1.5 Over 95% of island residents have participated in follow-up face-to-face consultations with a RSPB engagement lead in both Y2 and Y4, including discussion regarding the updated feasibility study in Y4.</p>	<p>1.4 Non-target species mitigation decision paper; quarterly updates to Island Council.</p> <p>1.5 Trip reports; Signed receipts of discussion; quarterly updates to Island Council.</p>	<p>Assumption: Regular non-quarantine travel will be possible from Q3 Y1 onwards. The Government of the Pitcairn Islands has confirmed it intends to reopen the French Polynesia route in Q2 Y1.</p> <p>Assumption: Island residents will be willing to engage in consultation discussions.</p> <p>Mitigation: RSPB has very strong community relations and is conducting this project in partnership with the Government of the Pitcairn Islands.</p>
<p>Output 2</p> <p>Mapping and condition assessment of built infrastructure and natural features fills outstanding knowledge gaps required to inform operational planning.</p>	<p>2.1 By end of Y3, accurate maps illustrating the location of all coconuts on Henderson, are created, ground-truthed and shared.</p> <p>2.2 By end of Y3, accurate maps illustrating the location of all built structures, domestic animal pens, and</p>	<p>2.1 Ground-truthed maps. Henderson trip report.</p> <p>2.2 Ground-truthed maps. Pitcairn trip report.</p> <p>2.3 Photo report.</p> <p>2.4 Updated Pitcairn feasibility study.</p>	<p>Assumption: GIS expert is able to access all areas of relevance to complete accurate mapping.</p> <p>Mitigation: This will be completed in partnership with local Government Departments.</p>

	<p>hives on Pitcairn are created, ground-truthed and shared.</p> <p>2.3 By end of Y3, a photographic report demonstrating condition of domestic animal pens and the waste management facilities on Pitcairn is created.</p> <p>2.4 By end of Y3, an updated Pitcairn feasibility study concludes that any remaining issues around built infrastructure, and natural features have been identified and can be addressed.</p>		
<p>Output 3</p> <p>Potential non-target bird species are better understood, have more detailed risk assessments and, if necessary, have undergone successful trials of mitigation measures to inform operational planning.</p>	<p>3.1 By end of Q3 Y2, a population estimate and feeding habit assessment of the Endangered Pitcairn Reed Warbler has been completed and submitted to a peer-reviewed journal.</p> <p>3.2 By end of Q3 Y2, a non-toxic blue bait and rat carcass trial has informed an updated risk assessment for the Pitcairn Reed Warbler.</p> <p>3.3 By end of Q3 Y3, the methodology for successfully capturing, holding and releasing Pitcairn Reed Warblers has been established through physical trials and taught to local Government staff.</p> <p>3.4 By end of Y3, an updated Pitcairn feasibility study concludes that all remaining issues around non-target bird species mitigation have been identified and can be addressed.</p>	<p>3.1 Field report; journal paper submission.</p> <p>3.2 Trial report; updated feasibility study.</p> <p>3.3 Aviculturist and veterinarian trip reports; captive-holding guidelines for Pitcairn Reed Warblers.</p> <p>3.4 Updated feasibility study.</p> <p>3.5 Updated avicultural strategy for Henderson eradication</p>	<p>Assumption: Whilst the very closely related Henderson Island Reed Warbler was unaffected by a baiting operation on Henderson, the Pitcairn Reed Warbler lives in a heavily modified ecosystem and there are some reports of dead individuals being found after the 1997/98 eradication attempt. A detailed and separate assessment is therefore required to accurately assess its non-target potential.</p>

	3.5 By end of Y3, the population status of the Henderson rail has been re-assessed to inform an updated avicultural strategy.		
Activities 1.1 Community Impact Assessments written for Pitcairn island community. 1.2 RSPB engagement lead and an eradication operation expert complete initial face-to-face consultations with Island Council & community. 1.3 Four bespoke Pitcairn eradication proposal papers written and submitted in-person to Island Council for consideration. 1.4 Pitcairn Reed Warbler mitigation proposal written and submitted to Island Council for consideration. 1.5 In-depth face-to-face follow-up consultations undertaken by RSPB community engagement lead. 2.1 Mapping of coconuts on Henderson is undertaken and ground-truthed. 2.2 Mapping of built structures, domestic animal pens and hives on Pitcairn is undertaken. 2.3 Photographic survey of domestic animal pens and waste management facilities on Pitcairn undertaken. 2.4 All built infrastructure and natural feature issues re-assessed as part of an updated final feasibility study. 3.1 Surveys of Pitcairn Reed Warblers provide a population estimate and feeding habit assessment, with the results written up for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. 3.2 Pitcairn Reed Warbler feeding trials with non-toxic blue bait and rat carcasses conducted and used to inform an updated risk assessment. 3.3 Avicultural holding trials of Pitcairn Reed Warblers take place on Pitcairn in partnership with local Government staff. 3.4 All Pitcairn Reed Warbler mitigation needs and issues are re-assessed as part of an updated final feasibility study. 3.5 Surveys of Henderson rail provide a population status estimate and are used to inform the writing of an updated Henderson avicultural strategy.			

NB. Part of Indicator 3.2, Indicator 3.3 and Activity 3.3 are presented with a strike-through, as they were made redundant when Pitcairn Reed Warblers were concluded to not be at risk from an eradication operation. They were consequently removed from the Logframe in an approved December 2024 Change Request, but our reviewer suggested still presenting them in Logframe in this way, so the original and adjusted plan was clear.

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-B02	Number of new/improved species management plans available and endorsed	Number	Feasibility study (non-target species mitigation)	0	0	1	1	1
DPLUS-B05	Number of people with increased participation in local communities / local management organisations (i.e., participation in Governance/citizen engagement)	People	Pitcairn community	0	0	40 (100% of adult community)	40 (100% of adult community)	c. 35-40 (95% of adult community)
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	Pitcairn Reed Warbler (population, productivity) Henderson Rail (population)	1	0	1	2	2
DPLUS-C17	Number of unique papers submitted to peer reviewed journals	Number	Pitcairn Reed Warbler population status	0	0	1	1	1

NB. In our previous annual report, we also reported DPLUS-A01 'Number of people from key national and local stakeholders completing structured and relevant training'. This was to represent the training of local Pitcairn Government staff in the methodology for successful capture, holding and release of Pitcairn Reed Warblers (PRW). However, the project concluded that PRWs are not at risk from an eradication operation, making their capture and release unnecessary, and therefore this training became redundant and was not completed.

Table 2 Publications

Title	Type (e.g. journals, manual, CDs)	Detail (authors, year)	Gender of Lead Author	Nationality of Lead Author	Publishers (name, city)	Available from (e.g. weblink or publisher if not available online)
Population status of the endemic Pitcairn Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus vaughani</i> on Pitcairn Island, South Pacific*	Journal	Steffen Oppel, Robert Eisler, Nik Aspey (2024)	Male	German	Bird Conservation International, Cambridge	Population status of the endemic Pitcairn Reed Warbler Acrocephalus vaughani on Pitcairn Island, South Pacific Bird Conservation International Cambridge Core