Darwin Plus Main & Strategic: Annual 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: 30th April 2025

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

Darwin Plus Project Information

Scheme (Main or Strategic)	Main
Project reference	DPLUS182
Project title	Habitat restoration and species re-introductions on four Falklands' island reserves
Territory(ies)	Falkland Islands
Lead Organisation	Falkland Conservation
Project partner(s)	
Darwin Plus grant value	£303,425.00
Start/end dates of project	01 April 2023 - 31 March 2026
Reporting period (e.g. Apr 2024-Mar 2025) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2)	Apr 2024 – Mar 2025 **Annual Report Year 2**
Project Leader name	Andrew Stanworth
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.facebook.com/FalklandsConservation
Report author(s) and date	Grant Munro (30/04/2025)

1. Project summary

Across the Falklands historical land-use practises and introduced rodents have led to habitat degradation, reductions in biodiversity and fragmented distributions for many species. Set-stocked or unmanaged grazing can lead to soil erosion and selective removal of certain plant species. Introduced rodents have locally extirpated populations of two of the three Falkland Island endemic bird species, Cobb's Wren and Tussacbird. The project aims to deliver management actions on four island reserves to reverse tussac and boxwood habitat loss and to reintroduce endemic native plant and bird species. Tussac planting will restore native habitat, improve biodiversity, stabilise eroding peatland, and conserve ecological function. Planting of threatened plants will expand the number of sites and protect against stochastic events. Reintroductions of an endemic bird species will maximise the conservation benefits from previous island rat eradications. At many sites birds have not returned after rodent eradications through natural dispersal due to the extended dispersal distances now required as a result of fragmented distributions and habitats. Direct intervention through translocation is now required to overcome these distances and better restore the native systems and species diversity.

Climate change exacerbates peatland instability and erosion, and impedes the natural recovery of tussac habitats upon which many bird species rely. Increased temperatures, increased wind and reduced / periodicity of rainfall is causing a drying of the Falklands landscape. This destabilises peatlands and prevents natural recovery of degraded tussac, especially if the peat dries and becomes hydrophobic. In

such conditions rather than the carbon sequestration associated with a healthy peatland ecosystem we risk the loss of accumulated peat through drying and erosion and thus increased carbon emissions that will add to the CO_2 carbon balance and climate change issue. Maintaining the peatland habitats and their carbon store is critical in combating global climate change, and local biodiversity, landscape health and livelihoods.

Tussac grass is a key Falkland habitat that when growing in a continuous cover can ameliorate its own growing environment and maintain soil moisture. Historically tussac has one of the fasted carbon accumulation rates of any habitat type surpassing both tropical and boreal forests. However once tussac vegetation is removed the friable tussac peat is highly susceptible to wind erosion and natural regeneration is impeded by the drying and baking of the exposed black surface. Direct intervention is required to reverse losses. Replanting of tussac tillers on bare exposed coastal peatland can stop erosion and potentially reverse carbon loss, restoring exposed peat to healthy tussac habitat with active carbon sequestration.

The timing and techniques of tussac planting are now well understood to achieve good success. This has been built up through past projects knowledge and volunteer planting. The current project attempts to scale this up in volume and encourage the establishment of a restoration economy. Bird translocations have not been attempted in the Falklands before and the project will act as a trial to establish best practise for capture, translocation and release that can be extended out to additional islands after completion of the project.

The main tussac restoration activities will occur on Pebble Islet to the north of West Falkland. It has not previously been possible to restore this relatively remote and inaccessible islet (156 km from Stanley) due to the logistics of access (involving flights, 4x4 vehicle and boat transfers that takes at least 2 days in good weather, but even longer if weather is unfavourable) and lack of accommodation on the islet suitable for winter working.

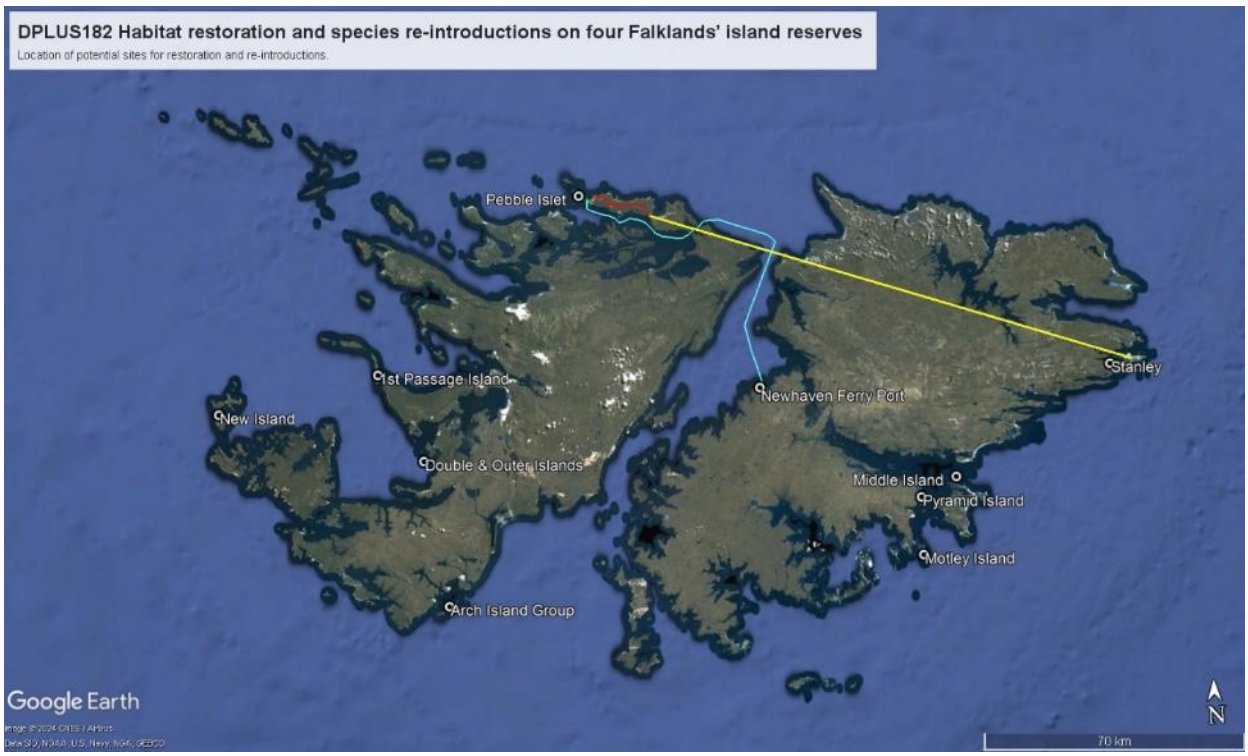


Figure 1: Location within the Falkland Islands of the main island sites for restoration and re-introductions. The plotted lines show the main access routes to Pebble Islet the main site for tussac restoration.

2. Project stakeholders/partners

The project does not have formal partners but has worked with a range of stakeholders and developed a number of collaborations.

One auxiliary aim of the project is to further develop a "conservation economy" where restoration skills, capacity and personnel are retained within the private sector, and where conservation and the environment are seen as a valid economic diversification within traditional agriculture. To scale-up restoration in a sustainable manner there is a need to establish a professional labour model, where tussac planting is as equally established as other seasonal contract work. A significant component of the outreach and collaboration has dealt with this matter.

With a number of restoration initiatives now ongoing liaison on planting dates allows planting work to be spread across the season, balancing available personnel to work volumes, and thus facilitating sustainable employment across a season.

Significant liaison has been undertaken with:

Pebble Island Farm (PIF): The adjoining landowners are critical to project success as they facilitate access to the islet and provide an airstrip, 4x4 vehicle transfers and zodiac storage. They have so far fully assisted with the project and provided support and expertise, and have been fully flexible with fieldwork plans that can change with the weather.

Workboat Services (WBS): Intensive liaison with WBS has been required to enable cargo delivery to the islet. The difficulty of delivery to the islet was recognised before the project commenced and communication began early. However in addition to the remote site and weather there were additional wider regulatory/contractual shipping issues that had not been recognised by Falklands Conservation. In working with WBS these issues have now been resolved and are applicable to wider projects.

Island LandCare (ILC): ILC have considerable local knowledge and expertise and also undertake their own restoration activities including rodent eradications, invasive species control and planting. Pooling of experience has given obvious gains in knowledge that highlights best working practice whilst avoiding known issues.

Falkland Islands Government (FIG): Seed and plant collection and the capture, handling and translocation of birds requires FIG permitting under current FIG wildlife legislation. This is not delegated to the Environment Department but must pass to the elected Executive Council and the Governor. FIG have facilitated the legal Section 9 for protected plant seed collection and protected bird translocations.

Furthermore, continued liaison and update of departments does occur within the general aim of mainstreaming restoration activities. This includes the Department of Agriculture (DoA) and Environment Department (EnvD). As outlined in the application the project contributes to a number of aims and targets within national plans and strategies.

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB): Synergy in capacity and funding was realised with the RSPB who facilitated the 3rd-party donation of tasked SkySat (50 cm resolution) satellite imagery from a 3rd party funder. This <1m resolution is more than sufficient for habitat mapping and saves the project the budgeted image purchase costs and the expensive alternative requirement for drone survey. Liaison is ongoing for the habitat analysis.

Volunteer from British Trust for Ornithology: Whilst not a formal partnership with the BTO at an organisational level, a strong working relationship has been established with a BTO certified UK bird-ringer and trainer, Will Miles, who both assisted in planning the wren translocation and then oversaw the translocation field activities and provided local training.

Atlantic Harvest: A strong mutual relationship has been established with Atlantic Harvest a new local horticultural business. Originally established for horticultural crops the business has diversified into growing on native plants for restoration. A partnership involving exchange of seed and expertise has occurred working to each's strengths. Falklands Conservation is best placed for seed collection whilst Atlantic Harvest has greater expertise in seed germination and growing on.

3. Project progress

3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities

The following highlighted activities were scheduled to occur over the first 2 years.

Output 1. "Pebble Islet habitats restored via a doubling of the area of native tussac grass and a halving of the area of bare-peat ground through boxwood planting."

Activity 1.1 Undertake baseline survey of Pebble Islet (PI) and produce PI digital GIS habitat map to inform restoration.

An island management plan and habitat map represents the baseline condition of Pebble Islet prior to the project commencing. This will allow management objectives to be tracked and subsequent changes and improvements in vegetation cover to be monitored by future imagery updates.

Habitat mapping can be undertaken by *either* orthomosaic drone survey *or* by satellite imagery. Budgeting was set at a level sufficient for either one, but not both, to be completed. Satellite imagery was selected for three reasons. Firstly, pixel resolution was considered sufficient for habitat mapping. Secondly, specifically tasked 50cm resolution SkySat imagery was offered to the project for free by a 3rd party funder. Finally, it was considered that flying an extensive survey grid by drone across the 500 ha of Pebble Islet would be extremely weather dependent and not feasible given the weather-window wind limits of the drone models available..Previous habitat-scale mapping in the Falkland Islands has been conducted on 10mx10m pixels so the SkySat 50x50cm resolution obtained for the project is more than sufficient for accurate habitat monitoring.

Ground truthing of the imagery has been completed. Initially 35 survey data points were completed, subsequently an additional 82 GPS waypoints have recently been taken with associated focal notes on habitat during a plant survey of the Islet. This data was collected in March 2025 and has not yet been fully analysed. The data has been forwarded to a GIS consultant and mapping analysis is ongoing.

Activity 1.2 Construct simple weather-proof sleeping shelter for x6 people on PI to allow effective, safe, winter-season planting

The Pebble Islet restoration site is on a difficult to access remote islet and basic accommodation that is safe, windproof, and warm is required before extended planting over the winter season can occur. This will mitigate risks of adverse weather in terms of daily exposure with a warm place for planters to return to. It will also provide security during any weather delays that might enforce a longer stay on the islet. It is not intended to construct a full house but a basic "mountain-hut".

All materials have been sourced and delivered to the Islet and Phase 1 of the construction has been completed. This entailed restoration of an existing derelict structure to make it waterproof, draughtproof and level again. This provides basic 1-room accommodation for 4 people in two bunk-beds and the base from which further work can be completed. Phase 2 will include an additional new lean-to extension that will increase accommodation to 6 people and provide a heating source.

Figure 2: The existing shanty was derelict with a missing door, collapsed ceilings and an open roof on the windward side. Turkey vultures were living inside. The structure has been repaired, re-roofed and now provides dry and draught-free sleeping for 4 people.

This work was completed "in-house" by the organisation. As previously detailed it was not possible to secure a building contractor as initially envisaged. With both full construction orders and full FI employment, no building company or handyman was prepared to tender for a "turn-key" build in a remote location.

The shipping of materials to the island was also more complicated than initially envisaged. Discussion had been undertaken even before the project was submitted but neither party had fully appreciated the practical difficulties in logistics and weather. The legal and practical issues were finally resolved and the materials delivered in September 2024.

Both building and shipping represents the potential gulf between "expressions of interest" actual confirmation, and final execution by those in the field. It can be easy to say "yes, we'd be interested in that" without obligation, but to then pull back when the practical issues are realised, especially when more lucrative opportunities and easier alternatives are available in a territory with full employment.

Activity 1.3: Four 2-week winter tussac-tiller planting trips of 6 people to PI. Tillers harvested and transported by quad for planting. Planting information recorded.

The project targets were based upon two trips of 6 people planting for 10 days with 4 days for travel and weather downtime included, giving a total trip duration of two weeks per trip (14 day trips). Two trips would be conducted annually, with 2 trips concluded in the current year and 2 trips in the last year, giving the project total of 4 trips.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to conduct the 2 full trips this year and only 1 truncated trip was feasible, providing a total of 12 person-days of planting by 3 people. This work was conducted in March. The perimeter of all planting areas was walked by GPS and tallies taken of tillers. However due to the back-loading of the work in March and subsequent fieldwork this has not yet been plotted and analysed

Planting is highly seasonal. It is not recommended to plant through the summer months as the ground is too dry for establishment. Planting is conducted in winter as the ground is wet and the tops of the plant are dormant reducing evapotranspiration load. This allows the transplant's or tiller's root-soil contact to be fully established and also for the roots to grow (soil maintains warmth for longer allowing roots to grow through the winter when tops may be dormant) before the spring plant shoots emerge and dry summer winds commence. Planting can only recommence in March in wetter years or in April if the season is drier.

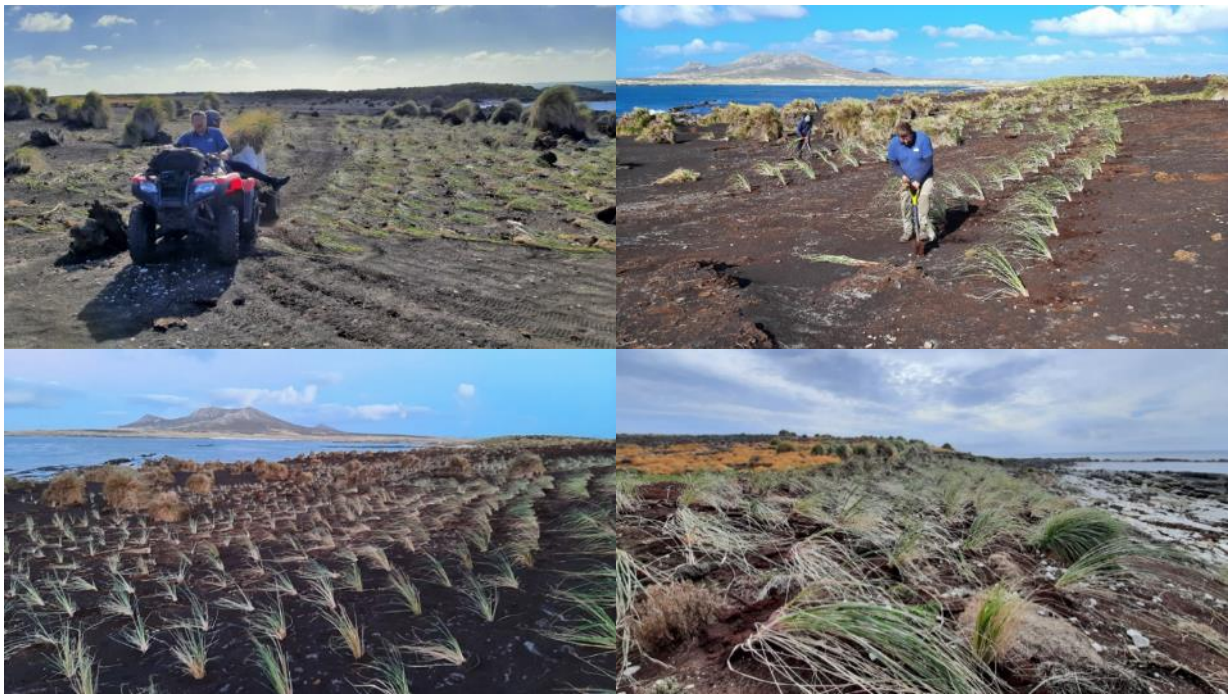


Figure 3: Whilst below target tussac planting on Pebble Islet has now commenced.

This is a result of several reasons:

1. The logistics of getting people to Pebble Islet with the additional vagaries of Falkland weather means that more transit days have to be allowed for or trips cancelled if logistics do not all align.

2. Delays in the delivery and repair of the shanty meant that accommodation was not available on the islet until March 2025. This missed the main winter planting season and left only a month at the start of

the autumn planting season in March (that coincides with the main commercial fishing season which absorbs most available casual labour).

3. Falklands Conservation (along with others) has advocated and promoted a "conservation economy" to sustain land restoration activities and protect against erosion in a drying climate. An ancillary aim of the current project was to scale up restoration so as to establish a legacy pool of planters. Whilst extremely positive, these efforts, along with additional funding and support from national and international bodies, have led to a number of concurrent ongoing initiatives. There are now 7 other current planting initiatives being undertaken in the Falklands, some of which are in more accessible locations with on-site housing competing for the same available personnel resources. Given that there is almost no unemployment in the Falklands this makes finding planters prepared to go to a remote site with only basic facilities more difficult. This is to be celebrated in the long-term given the estimated 5000 ha of eroded tussac ground to be tackled in the Falklands but in the short-term has given recruitment shortfalls.

Given the shortfall in planting accomplished this year and the inability to carry the associated labour, travel and subsistence costs of the planting teams forward it is considered that the overall planting targets of the project cannot now be achieved within the current framework. Each year stands alone and subsequent individual year targets should not be impacted, however a "Request for Change" application will be submitted to detail the changes.

Activity 1.4 Establish native plant nursery to grow-on bare-root boxwood transplants.

A small native nursery to grow-on boxwood seedlings has been established in Stanley utilising up-cycled cube containers. A two-year rotating system has now been established which will provide an ongoing production of c. 1000 bare-root transplants / year, with approximately 200+seedlings produced per tank.

Four beds, sown in September 2023, are ready for harvesting this winter with 550 plants already harvested and planted. These harvested beds will now be re-sown this winter.

An additional 5 beds were sown a year later, and the seedlings will be ready for planting in the forthcoming Spring / Autumn planting season.

By alternating the sowing and harvesting between the two sets of beds this will allow for an annual production of transplants grown on a 2 year rotating cycle.

Figure 4: The beds on the left germinated this summer and will be ready for the next autumn planting season, whilst the beds on the right are ready and have been harvested for the current planting season producing the god quality bare-root transplants shown on the right.

Furthermore, the majority of the rare plant germination and growing on has been contracted out to Atlantic Harvest.

Activity 1.5 Plant boxwood bare-root transplants to coincide with winter tussac planting periods.

550 bare-root transplants of native boxwood (*Hebe elliptica*) have been planted. GPS extents of coastal planting have been recorded but due to recent completion of fieldwork these have not yet been plotted. There are more than sufficient seedlings within the established nursery to complete the planting targets.

Output 2. Four new, sustainable offshore island populations each of two globally threatened endemic plants; Falklands rock-cress and hairy daisy, are established.

Activity 2.1 Collection of Falkland rock-cress seed from Middle Island and hairy daisy seed from Motley Island using visits already scheduled for other concurrent work.

Activity 2.2 Sowing and growing of perennial planting stock of Falkland rock-cress and hairy daisy, and making of seed bombs

Activity 2.3 Planting of perennial planting stock along with trial of seed-bombs into prepared seed-bed at selected sites on 4 separate new islands (including PI

Activity 2.4 Return visit to planting locations during flowering season to record plant survival and establishment and to monitor success of seeding trial

Section 9 Order

In order to collect seed from listed protected plant species it is necessary to have a Section 9 Licence exempting the seed collection from the provisions of the *Conservation of Wildlife and Nature Ordinance (1999)*.

A Section 9 Order was applied for through the Environment Department and referred to Executive Council and the Governor for decision. The resultant issued licence provides permission for the outputs of the project.

Falkland Rockcress (*Phlebolobium maclovianum)* (Endemic. Scarce. IUCN Red List, *Endangered*; FI Red List, *Endangered*; FI Legal Protection, *Yes*).

Seed has been collected from 2 sites in the first year and 1 site in the second year.

The 1st-year seed has been germinated and grown on by both Atlantic Harvest and Falklands Conservation. The resultant plants were split with some plants retained as a seed-source in cultivation for future years with the remainder planted out.

The 2nd year seed will be germinated this winter/spring and grown on for planting out at the end.

X20 Rockcress transplant plants were plated out at 3 locations on Pebble Islet. A small quantity of seed was sown at 1 site on Pebble Islet as a trial. GPS locations of planted stock have been taken.

Figure 5: Rockcress has been planted out at 3 sites on Pebble Islet.

Sufficient further plants are in cultivation to meet project targets for planting out.

Hairy Daisy (*Erigeron incertus*) (Endemic. Scarce. IUCN Red List, *Endangered*; FI Red List, *Endangered*; FI Legal Protection, *Yes*)

Unfortunately, it was not possible to collect Hairy Daisy seed and the available stored seed that was sown was found to be non-viable with no germination. Collections will be made in the final year.

Fuegian Saxifrage (*Saxifraga magellanica*) (Native. Very Rare. IUCN Red List, *n/a*; FI Red List, *Critically Endangered*; FI Legal Protection, *Yes*)

Known from only 2 locations in grazed paddocks the populations are at significant risk from stochastic events. Seed was collected in the first year and sown and grown on in the 2nd year (southern hemisphere

growing seasons). The species is however slow germinating and slow growing and transplants were not of a sufficient size to plant out within a single year growing season. The transplants will be planted out next year once of a sufficient size.

Yellow lady's-slipper (*Calceolaria biflora*) (Native. Very Rare. IUCN Red List, n/a; FI Red List, Critically Endangered; FI Legal Protection, Yes)

No known populations now exist in the wild and collection was made from a single plant in a garden. Seed was collected in the first year and sown and grown on in the 2nd year (southern hemisphere growing seasons).

X2 Yellow lady's slipper plants were planted out on Pebble Islet (now the only known plants in the wild) and GPS locations of planted stock have been taken. The remainder of the grown-on transplants were retained to flower and multiply the available seed. Additional plants can be planted out in the final year following seed collection.

Sea plantain (*Plantago maritima*) (Native. Very Rare. IUCN Red List, n/a; FI Red List, Critically Endangered; FI Legal Protection, No)

Seed was collected in the first year, grown on in the second year and planted out at the end of the growing season.

X20 Sea Plantain transplants planted at 2 sites on Pebble Islet. GPS locations of planted stock have been taken.

Figure 6: Sea Plantain transplants planted out amongst maritime rock on Pebble Islet.

Yellow maiden (*Sisyrinchium chilense*) (Native. Scarce. IUCN Red List, n/a; FI Red List, Least Concern; FI Legal Protection Nationally Legally Protected, Yes; Endemic, No)

This species is scarce and legally protected although is sufficiently widespread to not be considered at risk. Seed collections have been made in both years and direct sowing out has occurred on Pebble Islet at 1 site.

Transplants have also been grown on and will be planted out.

Output 3: Two new sustainable offshore island populations of endemic Cobb's wren and tussacbird are established on rat-free Double and Outer islands

3.1 Donor site survey, mist-net capture (Cobb's wren and tussacbird) with banding, measurements and sex-identification

3.2 Transfer to release islands - Double Island (9ha) and Outer Island (20ha).

3.3 Return visit to both donor and release islands to conduct bird counts to confirm no significant impact to donor island and survival and establishment on release island.

Section 9 Order

In order to comply with the provisions of the *Conservation of Wildlife and Nature Ordinance (1999)* a Section 9 Order was required. This can only be granted by the Executive Council and the Governor.

Cobb's Wren Desk-Top Study & Section 9 Application

In order to facilitate the decision-making process and granting of the order a full desk-top study of the known species biology and distribution was undertaken alongside a review of international attempts at wren translocations, most notably in New Zealand.

Capture and translocations of species can be contentious. In order to facilitate the legal permission to carry out the operation full consultation with the FIG Environmental Department was conducted. A range of donor-recipient island pairs were proposed in the desk-top study. The decision was taken by FIG to support the translocation of Cobb's Wren from Kidney Island to Top Island. This island pair requires just a short translocation (minimising time in captivity) and is part of an FIG managed National Nature Reserve and Important Bird Area. Being close to Stanley the sites can be easily monitored and used for educational outreach visits and are equivalent to the originally proposed island pair.

Furthermore, the decision was taken to just focus on Cobb's Wren in the trial as the smaller species with a more limited natural dispersal potential.

Following this consultation and support from the Environmental Department the application was approved by ExCo and the Governor.

Kidney Island Census of Cobb's Wren

A coastal count of Cobb's Wren on Kidney Island was undertaken in advance of the translocation to determine a sustainable level of extraction. This would represent a conservative estimate of population as not all birds would be counted and no inland breeding territories would be counted.

A total of 97 Cobb's Wrens were observed, allowing for a maximum capture and translocation of 19 individuals based upon a maximum extraction of 20% of the donor population.

Translocation of Cobb's Wren from Kidney Island to Top Island

The capture and translocation of Cobb's Wren took place in January 2025 overseen by a visiting UK BTO bird-bander and instructor. Capture was undertaken with mist nets and all captured birds were ringed for subsequent identification during follow-up survey on the recipient island.

Figure 7: Release of a ringed Cobb's Wren juvenile on Top Island from its transport box.

Seven Cobb's Wren were captured and moved, comprising of 2 adult females and 5 juveniles (unsexed). Feather samples were taken for subsequent sexing on the juveniles.

No animal welfare issues were observed during capture, translocation or release and all captured birds were successfully released in good condition. All non-traget bycatch species were released from the mist-nets without harm.

The persistence of ringed birds will be monitored in subsequent years.

An independent appraisal of the operation was undertaken by the BTO Instructor with guidelines and recommendations for potential future translocations.

Output 4. Improved information on the benefits of ecological restoration and restoration techniques shared with community members through media and engagement (employing equal opportunity and 'do no harm' approaches).

Activity 4.1 Dissemination of information from project via local media, including radio, press, TV and social media.

Media outreach was conducted for the stand-out field activities as the most effective outreach materials are undertaken with visual images in a mixed media format to reinforce words and text.

Cobb's Wren Translocation:

Social media:

3 posts shared across 3 platforms (Facebook, X and Instagram) detailing the actual translocation along with the preparations prior to the translocation. One post on Pebble Islet Construction on X.

Series of 6 posts on X on Pebble Islet on preparation and construction prior to restoration

Press: Single article in Penguin News (only weekly national newspaper) on the success of the translocation. Second article bridges year end.

Penguin News May 2, 2023 Page 9

Above: Home for the month, circled shanty with Marble Mountain on Pebble Island beyond. Inset: Prior to the visit the shanty was leaking, missing a door and turkey vultures were nesting inside. The timber piles were rotted, and the shanty had a distinct list to leeward. All pics Falklands Conservation.

Restoration of Pebble Islet

FALKLANDS Conservation's Terrestrial Lead, Grant Munro, recently spent a month on Pebble Islet, carrying out the first full exploration and survey of this newly acquired site. Falklands Conservation say his time on the ground has allowed them to set clear management objectives and make a start on restoration work.

FC takes up the story:

Pebble Islet, lying just off the western tip of Pebble Island, has recently come under the conservation management of Falklands Conservation. This summer marked the first time we've been able to fully explore the islet, set management objectives, and start restoration work.

Pebble Islet, along with Government Island, was purchased from the Dean Brothers in 2022 with funding support from the John Ellerman Foundation. At 500 hectares and five kilometres long, it's larger than many islands here, but remains distinguished as an "islet" thanks to its close proximity—just under 300 metres across Hughes Pass—from Pebble Island's Marble Mountain.

The Islet runs south-east to north-west, with low-lying terrain that barely reaches 20 metres above sea level. It's dotted with shallow ponds and seasonal wetlands. The north coast is open and exposed, favoured by Sooty Shearwaters, while the southern shores offer shallow tidal reefs and lagoons where coastal waders and waterfowl are abundant. Pebble Islet forms part of the internationally recognised Pebble Island Group Important Bird and Biodiversity Area, especially noted for its waterfowl.

However, the islet isn't pristine. Historical grazing by cattle, sheep, and horses has left its mark. Horses in particular were kept here until the last one died around 2001. Since then, the island has been ungrazed for over 20 years. It's fascinating to see which areas have naturally recovered and which remain degraded.

In places where tussac grass was heavily removed, natural recovery has been slow. The dry, exposed peat is hostile to tussac seedlings, and soil loss continues. However, there are signs of hope: in spots where tussac hops remained close together, natural regeneration is underway. Even in areas where the soil has been thin, stones are helping to trap seeds and shelter small plants.

Along the south coast, native bluegrass is recolonising old dune fields, stabilising the once-mobile sands.

This summer's work focused on surveying the land and beginning habitat mapping. We also made a small but symbolic start on restoration, with the first ever planting of tussac tillers along the north coast. Once the old shanty is repaired, allowing easier access and longer stays, this work will be expanded.

Alongside tussac, we planted small clusters of rare native plants grown from seed, including Falklands rock-cress, sea plantain, and yellow lady's slipper—potentially the only ones now growing in the wild.

The islet has a rat population but no mice. Although it would be wonderful to clear Pebble Islet of rats, eradication isn't feasible for now. The swim distance to Pebble Island is just 280 metres, and rats here have been known to swim up to a kilometre, making re-invasion likely. However, advances in smart trap and bait technology mean that rat control options could improve, so this will be reviewed periodically.

Spending time on Pebble Islet this summer was a real privilege. It's a place of striking contrasts, with rich bluegrass habitats, teeming colonies of Magellanic penguins, and Elephant seals crowding the northern beaches. Seeing natural regeneration slowly taking hold—with bluegrass, tussac, wavy-hair grass, and brown rush returning to eroded areas—offers real hope.

Thanks to the early groundwork laid this summer, we now have a clear plan to accelerate habitat restoration and tackle invasive plant species. With care and commitment, Pebble Islet's natural resilience can be given the boost it needs to thrive once again.

Work involved jacking up the shanty to level it and replace the wooden piles; re-roofing the windward side to make wind and waterproof whilst replacing the wall-plate at the same time (below left); and cleaning up the insides making it more liveable with stove and bunks (left). Materials were landed from Workboat Services Concordia Bay earlier in the summer to repair the existing shanty and give a lean-to extension so that in the future up to 6 people can visit the islet in winter to undertake tussac planting (below right). The trip was an opportunity to plant the first tillers on the islet to assist recovery (bottom). Works were overseen by the resident Clerk of Works (inset left).

Penguin News, February 14, 2023 Page 7

Above: Volunteers all kitted up ahead of landing on Kidney Island. While ringing the Cobb's wrens, the welfare of the birds is always taken into consideration. Trained bird ringers ensure that minimal stressed is caused Cobb's wren is released from transportation box Below: FC team on Top Island preparing to release birds. Cobb's wren rests on rock. Volunteers making the most of the day on Top Island

First trial translocation of the Cobb's wren between two islands

FALKLANDS Conservation recently undertook the first trial translocation of Cobb's wren between two islands.

Cobb's wren is an endemic bird species, meaning that it only occurs in the Falklands and nowhere else in the world. However, its distribution around the Islands is now much reduced and highly fragmented since the first arrival of rats and mice with early seafarers. It is now limited to just offshore rat and mouse-free islands that are often widely separated from each other.

Since 2001, a program of island rat eradications has been conducted by Island Land Care, Falklands Conservation, SAFER and several other passionate landowners with the aim of improving our native island ecosystems and increasing the area of habitat suitable for Cobb's wrens.

A total of 65 islands that have been cleared of rats remain rat-free in 2024. Whilst significant conservation gains have been made, with rebounding passerine and coastal bird populations up to four times higher than before, many have not been repopulated by Cobb's wren due to the extended distance birds would have to fly to arrive from the nearest remnant populations.

In many cases, birds must first fly over mainland areas with rats and cats, and some islands with Cobb's wren are over 60km from the nearest other rodent-free island. As such it is considered that the potential benefits from rat eradications are not being fully achieved without the successful recolonisation by Cobb's wren back into its former habitat where it once thrived.

With assisted reintroduction, birds are caught on one island and carefully transported to another. This movement mimics the natural dispersal of juveniles in autumn but can occur over a greater distance than they would fly and ensures birds arrive in a safe rat-free environment with high quality coastal habitat - rather than just disperse to the mainland where they would perish. It also ensures that they arrive in sufficient numbers to establish breeding pairs that will give a sustainable population.

The current work was a trial to prove the concept and establish the best way to capture and move birds to minimise any stress. Two sites close to Stanley were chosen so that the sites can be monitored for both success and any temporary impacts.

Kidney Island, at the entrance to Berkeley Sound, is a rodent-free near pristine tussac island and a National Nature Reserve with a healthy population of Cobb's wren and acted as the donor island.

Top Island in Port William was cleared of rats 24 years ago in 2001. Several recent visits by Falklands Conservation, Island LandCare and Greenhounds (as recently as June 2024) had not seen any birds, indicating that in all this time Cobb's wren had failed to re-establish by natural dispersal from Kidney Island, the nearest population, just seven km away. Top Island was subsequently selected as the release site and could give a potential gain of at least 25 pairs based on average coastal densities elsewhere.

The first step was a walked survey of the Kidney Island shoreline to establish a baseline count and determine how many birds could be sustainably trapped and moved. In total, 97 Cobb's wren were counted which would be a significant underestimate as not all the island was surveyed. From the known survival and breeding success of wren species, this determined that up to 20 birds could be extracted without impacting the donor population in the long-term.

In the end, we were conservative and caught just seven juvenile birds. Birds were trapped, measured and ringed and individually placed in their own specially built transfer box with bedding, food and water. Once a sufficient number of birds had been caught, the boxes were transferred across to Top Island for release. This meant that no birds were held for longer than four hours (with the average at two hours 20 minutes). The birds also had time to explore their new surroundings on Top Island, feed and shelter before dark.

The translocation was a success with seven birds moved, and all happily exited the boxes on Top Island, looking right, left and right again before flitting away to the nearest tussac bog with no ill effects. The released birds, all with rings, will be monitored with repeat visits.

We would like to have said that we had moved the first Cobb's Wren to be on Top Island in 25 years but amazingly as we released the last of our translocated birds a single un-ringed juvenile was observed, possibly attracted by the calls of our new arrivals. This prompted a full intensive survey of the island a few days later.

Ten additional birds were found after a full day walking the coastline and interior tussac, including a clear family group of adult and juveniles. It seems that at least one pair had been on the island before - but had been there at such a low density that they had remained unnoticed during previous visits and only become more noticeable after this year's broods had fledged and numbers multiplied. Nevertheless, our additions will still assist in building up the population and increase genetic diversity and it is great that Top Island has an increasingly viable Cobb's wren population.

Now that the concept and techniques have been proven, it is hoped in the future that such re-introductions can now be undertaken to some of the larger island groups that have been cleared, such as the Arch Islands that were successfully cleared of rats in 2008 by Island LandCare. In such cases, birds could be reintroduced to one island in the group and as numbers build, they would then move and recolonise the others in the group naturally. This "seeding" of a population gives a multiplying conservation gain for the initial effort. If extended to the main island groups cleared of rats, it could give at least an additional 1,557 ha of habitat and 76 km of coastline for Cobb's wren, perhaps up to a 20% increase in their population and occurrence.

We want to thank everyone that helped, Will Miles who came down as a volunteer from the UK to provide instruction in handling and ringing, Sulivan Shipping for the launch, the various helpers who assisted and Darwin Plus who provide UK Government funding for the project.

Falklands Conservation

Figure 8: Extracts from the Penguin News, the weekly national newspaper, detailing coverage of the project.

Membership: Falklands Conservation Newsletter article.

A Membership magazine article, a Penguin News article and several social media posts have been prepared for release following the Pebble Islet construction work, survey, and planting on Pebble Islet. However as this fieldwork was undertaken in March the media releases fall within final reporting year.

General outreach on restoration and land management, encompassing but not specific to the project, has been undertaken with community talks on restoration and land-management with presentations given at Falklands Conservation AGM (26 members and community attendees), Farmers' Week (80 farmer and land-owner attendees), Peaty Pals community group (25 community attendees) and a Rural Business Association Workshop on Land Restoration Set-Aside. These encompass FC members, local community, farmers, and landowners.

Activity 4.2 Engagement in project activities by community members.

Whilst activities on Pebble Islet have been logistically problematic this has not been due to lack of buy-in from adjoining island landowners who have been supportive of the project. Logistical support has been provided by all 3 adjacent landowners both with personnel transit and provisioning. Furthermore, a new marine-based tourist initiative has assisted with vessel transport.

Four community members have directly assisted with works on Pebble Islet. This has so far been male biased without any female participation. However, this is a result of the chance factor of availability not and not through any shortfall in diversity, equality and inclusion efforts by the project or organisation. A recent parallel 4-day volunteer planting initiative on Middle Island had an overall 57% female ratio of participants and 69% ratio of volunteer participants.

During the Cobb's Wren work greater equity was observed with 33% female attendance during survey (2 of 6) and 38% female during translocation (3 of 8).

A junior Watch Group visit will be made to the native nursery to assist with cultivation of transplants.

It is considered that plans are in place to meet the target indicators of community engagement.

3.2 Progress towards project Outputs

Progress towards project Outputs

Output 1. "Pebble Islet habitats restored via a doubling of the area of native tussac grass and a halving of the area of bare-peat ground through boxwood planting."

Whilst planting has commenced on Pebble Islet this amounted to 12 planting days, which is only 10% of the annual target of 120 days (2 visits x 6 people x 10 days). This is a combination of the knock on effect of delays in landing building materials to repair and build a shelter on the island and the difficulty in recruiting personnel within a labour market with minimal to no unemployment. Since the unspent finances to meet personnel employment, travel and subsistence cannot be carried forward into the final year these second year targets cannot now be met nor made up in the final year.

As 2-years of planting was to be spread between the second and third years the best that may now be hoped for is to meet the third year targets - which relate to half of the overall project total.

A request for change will be submitted to adjust targets and finances.

The completed planting was conducted in March and the perimeter of the planted area plotted by GPS. The area detail has not yet been plotted or calculated due to extended fieldwork.

Whilst it is thus unlikely that targets for tussac will not be met the targets for boxwood should be achieved. 550 transplants have been planted with at least the same number of transplants available to be planted. This will surpass the target of 1000 planted boxwood plants.

Output 2. Four new, sustainable offshore island populations each of two globally threatened endemic plants; Falklands rock-cress and hairy daisy, are established.

Section 9 permission has been granted for the collection of seed and propagation of the protected plant species.

X20 Falkland Rock-cress plants have been planted on Pebble Islet across 3 separate sites. Sufficient planting stock has been grown to allow additional planting on Middle Island, Motley Island and Pyramid Island (Marked with sticks. Photos and GPS positions recorded).

X20 Sea Plantain plants have been planted on Pebble Islet across 2 separate sites (Marked with stones. Photos and GPS positions recorded).

X2 Yellow Lady's Slipper plants have been planted on Pebble Islet at 1 site (Marked with stick. Photo and GPS position recorded). Additional planting stock will be available.

Fuegian Saxifrage transplants have been grown but are not yet of sufficient size to plant out.

Yellow Maiden seed has been sown on Pebble Islet. Additional transplants have been grown on but are not yet of sufficient size to plant out.

It has not yet been possible to obtain viable seed of hairy daisy. Old, stored seed proved to be no longer viable, although a second attempt will be made with different seed pretreatments. Final efforts will be made to collect fresh seed during the short seeding window but this will likely mean that plants will not be planted out or established at the official end of the project.

Output 3. Two new sustainable offshore island populations of endemic Cobb's wren and tussacbird are established on rat-free Double and Outer islands.

The initial trial translocation of Cobb's Wren between Kidney Island and Top Island has been conducted. This does not correspond to the original named islands but was selected by FIG and matches similar criteria of being a protected island site under conservation management that has been cleared of rats (2001) but not been recolonised by Cobb's wren). The islands are owned and managed by FIG together with the Kidney Island National Nature Reserve and Important Bird Area and are of similar land area.

In liaison with FIG the decision was taken to prioritise Cobb's Wren over Tussacbird. Tussacbird can disperse over larger distances and can on occasion persist in very low numbers in the presence of rats and mice which Cobb's wren cannot. It was believed that the cost benefit of Cobb's Wren reintroductions would be greater in the first place to establish protocols.

Subject to necessary permissions a second Cobb's Wren translocation will be completed to a second larger island group in the 3rd year. This will make two reintroductions of Cobb's Wren rather than one reintroduction of Cobb's Wren and Tussacbird.

Persistence of ringed re-introduced birds will be confirmed by re-survey.

Output 4. Improved information on the benefits of ecological restoration and restoration techniques shared with community members through media and engagement (employing equal opportunity and 'do no harm' approaches).

Officer attendance has been conducted at a workshop held by the Rural Business Association and 2 presentations were given targeting the rural business and land-owner sector. This is part of a wider Land Recovery Programme that has been lobbied for and is now being advanced through an FIG consultation.

Outreach materials and project reports will be disseminated.

As detailed in section 3.1 above on project activities (4.2 & 4.2), generalised outreach has occurred on restoration and specific project outreach will commence when on the ground deliverables are met.

No impediment to meeting outputs is foreseen.

3.3 Progress towards the project Outcome

Progress towards the project Outcome

Outcome: Restored native island habitats and newly established endemic bird and plant populations increase biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and resilience to climate change and invasive species, and inform on restoration benefits and methodologies.

4 new native (and 1 endemic) plant species have been planted out on Pebble Islet increasing the biodiversity and Cobb's wren have been introduced to one island.

Significant tussac areas have not yet been planted although a start has been made. Tussac is important for carbon sequestration, climate resilience and erosion control.

3.4 Monitoring of assumptions

Monitoring of assumptions

The original assumptions remain valid.

The benefits of habitat restoration have been proven in a range of studies that have monitored and compared plant diversity, and bird and invertebrate density, in a range of habitat types and in the presence/absence of introduced invasive species and grazing. This was most recently conducted in the Darwin Peatlands Project. There is full confidence that improving the quality and extent of tussac habitat on bare peat and reintroducing endemic species to areas free of rodents will have the desired outcome benefits.

The original guidelines and safeguards for the re-introduction of Cobb's Wren were successfully followed and resulted in no observed impacts on the translocated birds with all birds released without injury or welfare issues.

It was recognised that the logistics of operating on Pebble Islet would be difficult at the outset. This has proven to be true. A combination of factors have made visit planning harder than initially anticipated. A work-visit or landing of materials entails several factors aligning, mostly outwith the control of the project such as shipping schedules, personnel availability, accommodation and transit on neighbouring islands, and weather) and if one does not occur the trip cannot occur.

This has been compounded by personnel availability. There is a limited pool of people who wish to work on a remote island in basic accommodation and with other parallel planting initiatives in more amenable locations and for shorter durations (commenced since the project was originally proposed) creates further competition for personnel. This is added to the general low availability of seasonal informal workers in a territory that not only has low/no unemployment but were people may work multiple jobs. The project must compete with seasonal fisheries transhipments, building construction, road construction, tourism and the normal seasonal agricultural tasks. Whilst an ancillary aim was to develop restoration as a legitimate sector the disparity between demand and availability means personnel can be selective.

Planting due to these personnel issues and the delay in shelter construction means that only 10% of second year planting targets were achieved resulting in an associated underspend. It is still hoped that third year targets can be achieved.

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

Increased expertise and capacity in Cobb's wren re-introductions is applicable across over 60 islands eradicated of rats many of which are geographically and genetically isolated from remaining remnant wren populations. Increased sites will safeguard against local stochastic events and any isolated future island rat invasions and ultimately assisting to defragment bird populations. This supports longer-term FIG biodiversity aims in protecting biodiversity, encouraging restoration, and recovery from invasive species impacts.

Tussac planting not only assists in restoration of eroding ground and the recovery of a key native habitat but assists in tackling global climate change by preventing the loss of peatlands and in the longterm should reverse losses with renewed carbon sequestration.

Whilst there have currently been personnel issues the project should still increase expertise and knowledge of restoration techniques within the community and assist in developing a conservation economy.

5. 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.	X
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	
Transformative	The project has all the characteristics of an 'empowering' approach whilst also addressing unequal power relationships and seeking institutional and societal change	

The project has neither furthered nor hindered gender equality and social inclusion. Participation has been open to all and is sensitive to the needs of underrepresented groups and any specific criteria within a field trip to allow their inclusion. However, work has been constrained to specific dates and no application has been received from under represented groups. This is to an extent a factor of chance. In a parallel volunteer planting initiative undertaken as 4 consecutive day-trips of 12 people gender parity was well represented with female participant forming the majority of the volunteers (an overall 57% female ratio of participants in terms of person-days and 69% ratio of volunteer participants in terms of unique participants). This demonstrates that there is no organisational exclusion or bias against gender. Falklands Conservation (FC) currently employs 7 female and 5 male staff. The organisation's CEO is female. There are no specific barriers to gender equity in the organisation and consequently for the proposed project activities.

The Cobb's Wren translocation work had a higher female participation with 5 female volunteers

Given that work on Pebble Islet can only be completed in minimum blocks of two weeks (transit to Pebble Islet will take 4 days irrespective of whether a person spends 2 days or 2 weeks on the islet, shorter durations means that transit is a larger component and thus to increase efficiency, reduce the relative transit time, and allow for weather contingencies trips are planned for 2 weeks) may mean that there is some deterrent to those with families.

Conservation has extant policies and procedures on Field-working, Leave Policy (including maternity and paternity leave), Safeguarding, Employee Code of Conduct, Harassment and Bullying, and Whistleblowing; all of which also provide components towards ensuring that the organisation is an equal opportunities employer and that the Project activities will actively adhere to gender equity and 'do no harm' principles.

6. Monitoring and evaluation

The logical framework has been used as the basis of monitoring review and evaluation and is considered alongside the timetable template at each internal quarterly review.

The logical framework is formulated so that project activities feed to outputs, outcome and impact with quantitative SMART indicators and means of verification at each level. supplied in Annex 1 & Annex 2).

Real-time ongoing monitoring is hampered by significant works being planned within March and thus back-end loaded within a year. Forecasting at the half year review point or before Christmas time would still assume that work could be completed, however if any issues do then arise during March then there is no time to rectify before the end of the year. However due to planting seasons such work cannot be brought forward into the summer.

Difficulties have been encountered with labour recruitment for tussac planting. This is felt to be a combination of the general shortage of labour within the Falklands, the basic conditions, and the remote location that both necessitates longer work durations to minimise transit time and leads to uncertainty on arrival and departure dates due to weather dependence. The longer work duration periods may limit availability of people that have a range of other responsibilities and cannot take such a long-time away. Shorter durations will be investigated but it must also be accepted that this will likely cost more both for travel costs (more visits required if shorter) and efficiency (paid travel time will increase as a proportion of the stay length).

7. Lessons learnt

Difficulties have been encountered with labour recruitment for tussac planting. This is felt to be a combination of the general shortage of labour within the Falklands, the basic conditions, and the remote location that both necessitates longer work durations to minimise transit time and leads to uncertainty on arrival and departure dates due to weather dependence. The longer work duration periods may limit availability of people that have a range of other responsibilities and cannot take such a long-time away. Shorter durations will be investigated but it must also be accepted that this will likely cost more both for travel costs (more visits required if shorter) and efficiency (paid travel time will increase as a proportion of the stay length). If adopted targets and/or budget may require to be finetuned.

Given the inability to secure labour for tussac planting a change request will be undertaken prior to the 6-month review period.

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

A full response to previous review comments was provided during the 6-month review. The review was considered to be fair and the response provided clarifications.

9. Risk Management

The risks associated to a remote working environment and securing labour in a tight labour market had previously been identified. Either one would probably have been manageable, for example if the planting site was nearer and could support short trips of a few days in good weather windows labour would be easier to secure (as it has been for parallel voluntary planting trips of 12 people over 4 days that have been fully subscribed). However, the two acting in synergy has realised the risk.

Whilst the risk does not need modified renewed efforts to secure labour are required with some consideration as to timing and or duration of visits may improve recruitment.

10. Scalability and durability

If restoration across the Falkland Islands is to be scaled up to a significant and meaningful scale to tackle the estimated 5,000 ha of degraded bare peat already extant then a sustainable restoration economy will need to be established. This includes the provision of transplant stock, labour and a mainstreaming of funding.

Working within the project and at a wider scale significant gains have been made. Atlantic Harvest now have a significant production of transplants, and Falklands Islands Government now funds and supports restoration planting through its Environmental Studies Budget small grants whilst the Department of Agriculture is currently conducting a public consultation on a major agricultural land restoration programme. There are now several parallel planting initiatives. This growth in programmes has perhaps grown at a faster rate than the available labour as people may be slower to identify and change into a new sector, especially if rates may not fully match for-profit sectors.

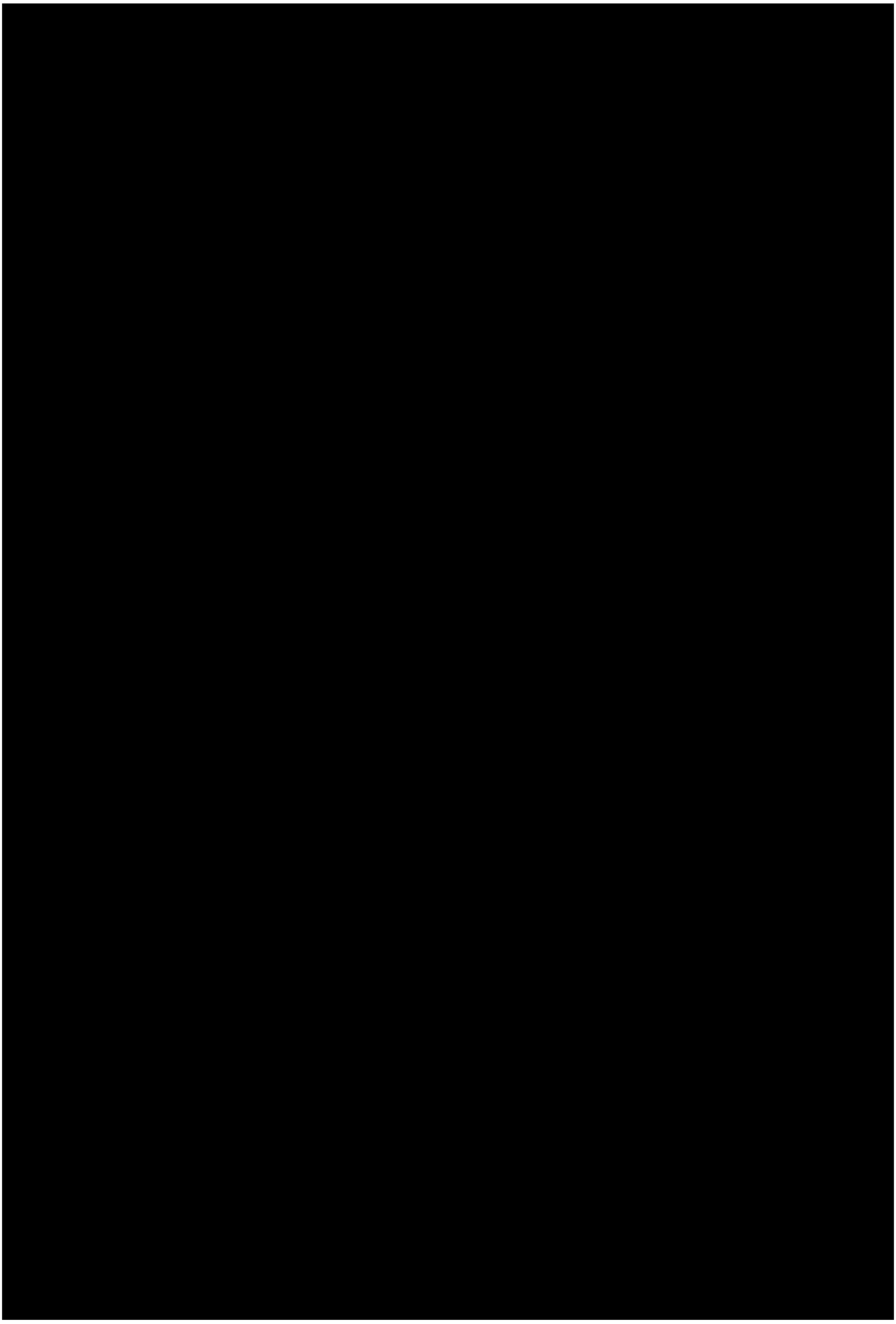
However, these initiatives and the recognised and adopted needs for restoration with Falklands Conservations own Island Management Plans means that the expertise and gains from the project will be carried forward in a rolling programme of restoration.

11. Darwin Plus identity

Darwin Plus and Darwin Plus Local both have a high profile in the Falkland Islands with the majority of people involved within land management, conservation and research in the Falkland Islands fully aware of the extent that Darwin has assisted in environmental management, policy, planning and work. Darwin Local has further advanced this recognition with the Department of Agriculture, Environment Department and Falklands Conservation highlighting the scheme eligibility widely amongst farmers, landowners, smaller organisations, and individuals. The outreach of previous projects and social media has also expanded this audience to include all that have an appreciation and interest in the environment and wildlife.

Where work has been conducted as a direct part of a Darwin assisted programme credit is acknowledged and the appropriate Darwin logo used. In social media posts the funding organisation is tagged .

12. Safeguarding



13. Project expenditure

[redacted]

Current Year's Costs	Agreed Annual Budget (£)	Total Actual BCFs Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain any variance)
Staff costs (from separate tab)	[redacted]			
Consultancy Costs				
Overhead Costs				
Travel and subsistence				
Operating Costs				
Capital items (from separate tab)				
Others (from separate tab)				
Audit costs				
			Claimed So Far	Claim for this period*	Surrender/ Overclaim
Total	[redacted]				
	A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
I confirm that any balance of funds is surrendered back to Defra				Yes - Surrender confirmed	

The majority of the underspend was for scheduled tussac planting output that was not achieved i.e. less work was completed therefore less pro-rata labour and travel was invoiced and charged. The full details are given below relating the asterisked note numbers in the table.

[1]. Travel & Subsistence. There was an underspend in travel and subsistence as only one planting/work trip to the islet could be undertaken rather than the two planting trips as scheduled.

[1]. Operating Costs. Likewise, the majority of the operating underspend was as a result of the inability to recruit a full compliment of tussac planters for two visits and thus the lack of a labour bill pro-rata.

The underspend in capital items was a result of a number of factors including materials being donated to the project and the timing of year-end.

[2]. Within the Cobb's wren translocation programme the 21 individual transport boxes were converted from DOC rat-trap boxes donated by the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. Furthermore, the volunteer BTO ringer brought their own mist nets and so did not need to be purchased.

[3]. An allocation had been made for finishing items and short-fall materials for the Pebble Islet shanty. These could only be known once works had been completed. Since the work was only completed in late-March and the return was delayed for a week due to a cancelled ferry this meant that project staff only returned to the office in May and therefore to late to raise any material orders/invoices within the financial year period.

[4]. An allocation had been made for accounting services but has not been raised by the accountancy and auditing contractor.

Table 2: Project mobilised or matched funding during the reporting period (1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025)

	Secured to date	Expected by end of project	Sources
Matched funding leveraged by the partners to deliver the project (£)	[redacted]		FIG Matched Funding Grant In-kind support from Falklands Conservation
Total additional finance mobilised for new activities occurring outside of the project, building on evidence, best practices and the project (£)	Detailed below		Detailed below

A number of programmes and funding sources are partially a result of the advocacy, lobbying and expertise from Falklands Conservation that the project permits:

Georgia Seafoods Middle Island Restoration (FI). c[redacted]An annual volunteer tussac planting trip has been organised to Middle Island. This is supported by Georgia Seafoods who meet all launch costs equivalent to approximately[redacted] The trip conducts 4 days of restoration works on Middle island with 12 volunteers each day (a total of 48 volunteer days).

John Ellerman Foundation (UK). c. [redacted] A UK foundation that has assisted with studies and survey for National Park designation and set-aside for land restoration. [redacted]

Springcreek Foundation (USA). c[redacted]A US charity that through Falklands Conservation provides small grant funding for land restoration programmes,

Falkland Islands Government Environmental Studies Budget (FI). This has been extended to restoration projects and tussac planting applications from land-owners and land-managers.

Falkland Islands Government Department of Agriculture (FI). Following initial advocacy and preparatory studies by Falklands Conservation alongside the Rural Business Association the Dept of Agriculture is currently conducting a public consultation on a national Land Recovery Programme that may include set-aside and restoration of degraded land.

14. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

As previously detailed the project has encountered problems with recruitment of labour. We will continue to work on remedying this over the final year including looking at feasibility of more visits of a shorter duration in order to execute the works. This may not be as efficient or cost effective but could improve the availability of personnel if they do not have to commit to an extended time and the shorter duration may better fit with availability windows.

[redacted]

[redacted]

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

The first successful translocation of the endemic Cobb's Wren to new habitat opened up by previous island rat eradications is certainly a good news story. The Cobb's Wren is an endemic species that now has a remnant fragmented distribution due to the impacts of invasive rodents. Cobb's Wren cannot survive in the presence of either rats or cats and in the past its distribution was severely eroded. More recently rat eradications of outlying islands, many of which eradications were funded by UK Government sources, have again opened up new locations for the species to recolonize but as a small bird with limited flight capacity for long range dispersal it has been unable to naturally benefit. The current project has allowed for the first assisted translocation of Cobb's Wren to a newly rat free island. It will provide the best practise, expertise and resources to undertake further reintroductions to many of the 60 islands around the Falklands that have been cleared increasing the national population and genetic connectivity of the species.

I am happy to provide text for an article and illustrative photographs however to avoid any further delays in report submission I shall complete this at a later date.

File Type (Image / Video / Graphic)	File Name or File Location	Caption including description, country and credit	Social media accounts and websites to be tagged (leave blank if none)	Consent of subjects received (delete as necessary)
				Yes / No

Annex 1: Report of progress and achievements against logframe for Financial Year 2024-2025

Report of progress and achievements against logframe for Financial Year 2023-2024

Project summary	Progress - April 2023 - March 2024	Actions for next period
Impact **Improved conservation status of the Falkland Islands' native habitats, faunal and floral biodiversity with resultant improvement in ecosystem functioning and carbon sequestration of coastal peatlands.**	Cobb's wrens have been translocated to a rat-free island. This represents a first return to a site from which Cobb's wren was extirpated c. 200 years ago by the arrival of man and rats, and almost 25 years since the island was cleared of rats. Tussac and boxwood planting has been initiated to recover and protect coastal tussac peatlands on Pebble Island with the longterm aim of once again establishing healthy tussac habitat and carbon sequestration as the stands establish. Three rare plant species have been planted out to increase the number of sites of rare plants with restricted distributions. This will increase the resilience of the plant species to stochastic events. These actions together provide an improved conservation condition, initially at localised sites with the potential for further expansion.	[redacted]
Outcome **Restored native island habitats and newly-established endemic bird and plant populations increase biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and resilience to climate change and invasive species, and inform on restoration benefits and methodologies.**		
Outcome indicator 0.1 Area of tussac habitat on Pebble Islet (PI) increases by 24ha and length of boxwood planted coastline increases by 4km by YR3.	12 days of tussac planting effort. GPS mapping and photographs (the indicator verifications) of planted areas have been undertaken but due to only recent completion of fieldwork this has not yet been plotted. 550 Boxwood transplants have been planted out. Positions have been taken. 117 habitat waypoints have been taken to ground-truth satellite imagery and allow habitat mapping of the Islet.	Tussac and boxwood planting will continue. Re-assessment and review of planting visits to be conducted to determine if recruitment numbers for planting can be improved.

Project summary	Progress - April 2023 - March 2024	Actions for next period
Outcome indicator 0.2 New populations of Cobb's wren and tussacbird established on Double and Outer islands by YR3.	7 Cobb's Wren (5 juvenile, 2 female) translocated from Kidney Island to Top Island, both FIG owned reserves. This is equivalent in island size, conservation importance and management security to the previously nominated Double & Outer.	Application for an additional Section 9 translocation permit to a larger island group. If awarded a second translocation of Cobb's Wren will occur increasing the Vobb's wren translocations to two (rather than a Tussacbird translocation)
Outcome indicator 0.3 Number of sustainable sub-populations of Falklands rockcress and hairy daisy increased by 4 new island sites by Yr3.	x20 Rockcress planted on Pebble Islet at 3 locations. x20 Sea Plantain planted on Pebble Islet at 2 locations x2 Yellow Lady's Slipper planted on Pebble Islet at 1 location. Additional nursery planting stock held for additional planting out including Yellow Pale Maiden and Fuegian Saxifrage. Difficulty with sourcing Hairy Daisy seed but efforts will continue.	Sufficient panting stock is held to meet targets and additional planting out will be completed once transplants are fully grown-on Slow germination and growth of some transplants meant that plants were not of sufficient size to plant out this year and required a further 6-month grow on.
Outcome indicator 0.4 Evaluations of developed restoration approaches are shared with the community up to end YR3.	General talks on restoration and sustainable land-management have been given but are not specific to the project. Reports on Cobb's Wren translocation shared with FIG Environmental Committee and Island LandCare but encompassed components of it to promote restoration and lobby for improved mainstreaming of restoration activities by government, island businesses and the community.	Full final outputs from the project will be shared with FIG, local conservation NGOs and other interested parties.
Output 1 **Pebble Islet habitats restored via a doubling of the area of native tussac grass and a halving of the area of bare-peat ground through boxwood planting.**		
Output indicator 1.1 1.1 Survey data and drone images collected to inform restoration planning and monitoring of PI in Yr1.		Final mapping output will be confirmed with consultant.

Project summary	Progress - April 2023 - March 2024	Actions for next period
	117 habitat waypoints have been taken to ground-truth satellite imagery and allow habitat mapping of the Islet. Mapping currently being undertaken by consultant.	
Output indicator 1.2 1.2 Simple weather-proof sleeping shelter for x6 people constructed on PI to allow necessary winter-season planting by end Yr1.	A full building survey assessment of a current shanty structure was undertaken and determined that it was feasible to renovate the existing historical structure with an addition of a lean-to extension that would give the same accommodation capacity. This has been conducted with the structure now stable and weatherproof and will provide the base for further works to be completed.	Additional works will be undertaken but the shanty is now weatherproof.
Output indicator 1.3 1.3 24ha of tussac planted on PI using 100,000 tussac tillers by Yr3.(i.e. 12ha p.a. in Yr 2 & 3)	12 days of tussac planting effort. GPS mapping and photographs (the indicator verifications) of planted areas have been undertaken but due to only recent completion of fieldwork this has not yet been plotted. No area calculation can be given but effort calculation was c. 10% 550 Boxwood transplants have been planted out. Positions have been taken.Tussac planting was not scheduled in Yr1. Planting will commence in Yr2 once accommodation established.	Tussac planting will commence subsequent to shanty construction.
Output indicator 1.4 1.4 Native plant nursery established to provide grow-on bare-root boxwood transplants	Native nursery established in Stanley. 550 transplants delivered and utilised for restoration. >1,000 transplants will be available for next season, with a rolling production of native boxwood transplants year on year after project completion.	Continued production of native boxwood seedling transplants in Stanley. Construction of second nursery on New Island.
Output indicator 1.5 1.5 1000 bare-root boxwood transplants planted along 4km of coastline on PI by Yr3	550 transplants delivered and utilised for restoration. Planting positions have been GPS'ed and coastline diastances will be measured. >1,000 transplants will be available for next season	Planting on grown-on bare-root transplants will continue.
Output 2. **Four new, sustainable offshore island populations each of two globally threatened endemic plants; Falklands rock-cress and hairy daisy, are established.**		

Project summary	Progress - April 2023 - March 2024	Actions for next period
Output indicator 2.1. 2.1 At least 200 collected each of Falkland rock-cress and hairy daisy seed in Q4 of YR1/ Q2 of YR2.	Seed collection of; Falkland rockcress (*Phlebolobium maclovianum*) Endemic Fuegian saxifrage (*Saxifraga magellanica*) - Native Yellow maiden (*Sisyrinchium chilense*) - Native Fuegian couch (*Elymus magellanicus*) - Native Snake Plant (*Nassauvia serpens*) - Endemic Hairy daisy (*Erigeron incertus*) Endemic could not be collected. A final attempt and specific island visit will be made in the final year. Plant separation may be considered.	Current nursery stock for the named species is sufficient to meet targets. Hairy daisy will require additional attention to secure.
Output indicator 2.2 2.2 Perennial planting stock of Falklands rock-cress and hairy daisy produced by native plant nursery during Oct. through March 2023/24 and 2024/25.	Planting stock is held for Rockcress sufficient to meet targets. Collections of Hairy daisy are still required	Full nursery stock to be planted out.
Output indicator 2.3. 2.3 Populations of both Falklands rock-cress and hairy daisy, each comprising of at least 25 plants, established on 4 new islands by Yr3.	x20 Rockcress planted on Pebble Islet at 3 locations. x20 Sea Plantain planted on Pebble Islet at 2 locations x2 Yellow Lady's Slipper planted on Pebble Islet at 1 location.	Additional planting out at separate island sites.
Output indicator 2.4. 2.4 Each new endemic plant population demonstrates reproductive capability by end YR3.	Repeat visits to those transplants planted out in current Yr2 to ascertain persistence, flowering and seeding or rhizome spread. Persistence of those planted in final year cannot be given but transplant planting success and season end survival can be noted.	Repeat visits to those transplants planted out in current Yr2 to ascertain persistence.
Output 3. **Two new sustainable offshore island populations of endemic Cobb's wren and tussacbird are established on rat-free Double and Outer islands.**		
Output indicator 3.1. 3.1 Donor sites are selected and at least 20 individual Cobb's wren and tussacbird have been captured, ringed and measured	7 Cobb's wren captured ringed and measured and transported to 1 new island site.	
Output indicator 3.2.		

Project summary	Progress - April 2023 - March 2024	Actions for next period
3.2 Release of at least 10 of each Cobb's wren and tussacbird on Double island and Outer Island in Q4 YR2.	7 Cobb's wren transported and successfully released on Top Island without harm.	Discussion will be held with FIG and permission will be sought for a second translocation.
Output indicator 3.3. 3.3 Un-ringed juvenile Cobb's wren and tussacbird observed one year after re-introduction to Double and Outer Islands by end Yr3		Survey for persistence of ringed birds between seasons.
Output 4. **Improved information on the benefits of ecological restoration and restoration techniques shared with community members through media and engagement (employing equal opportunity and 'do no harm' approaches).**		
Output indicator 4.1 4.1 Information on the project provided annually through media outlets (YR 1-3), comprising at least 2 Wool Press articles, 2 Penguin News articles and 2 TV and radio slots; over 3 years at least 10 social media post per annum	Media posts and articles have been shared. x3 Post x3 sites (Facebook, Instagram & X) x6 Posts (Series of 6 posts) on X x2 Penquin News Articles x1 Membership News letter	Additional media releases. News release and articles have been prepared for social media and print from the recently completed March fieldwork on Pebble Islet.
Output indicator 4.2 4.2 Engagement in project activities by community members includes at least 5 land-owners and 5 women involved in planting activities (as proportion of 20 total planters) and at least 20 members Junior WatchGroup involved in endangered plant cultivation by end Yr3.	No female participation has yet been recorded in planting. X5 Females participated in Cobb's Wren translocation Activities are open to all and opportunities have been offered but visit timings have not coincided with availability. Nursery visit has been conducted.	
Output indicator 4.3 4.3 Knowledge product containing summarised planting productivity, restoration costs and success, logistical and employment challenges, and restoration benefits in the context of carbon sequestration (Yr3)	No action. Yr 3 final summary report.	To be analysed and drafted at completion of the planting works and completed within the Project End report and disseminated.

Annex 2: Project's full current logframe as presented in the application form

Project Summary	SMART Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
Impact: Improved conservation status of the Falkland Islands' native habitats, faunal and floral biodiversity with resultant improvement in ecosystem functioning and carbon sequestration of coastal peatlands.			
Outcome: Restored native island habitats and newly-established endemic bird and plant populations increase biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and resilience to climate change and invasive species, and inform on restoration benefits and methodologies.	**0.1** Area of tussac habitat on Pebble Islet (PI) increases by 24ha and length of boxwood planted coastline increases by 4km by YR3. **0.2** New populations of Cobb's wren and tussacbird established on Double and Outer islands by YR3. **0.3** Number of sustainable sub-populations of Falklands rockcress and hairy daisy increased by 4 new island sites by Yr3. **0.4** Evaluations of developed restoration approaches are shared with the community up to end YR3.	**0.1** GPS generated polygons of new habitat areas. Photographs of new areas and survey records from start and end of the project. PI management plan. **0.2** Confirmation of presence, persistence and breeding on donor and recipient island. **0.3** GPS locations of planted sub-populations. Photographs of plants *in-situ*. Surveys to confirm survival through presence, persistence and seed-set on donor and recipient islands. **0.4** Media articles and attendance lists for project activities.	Increased biodiversity, carbon sequestration and improved resilience to climate change and invasive species will result from habitat restoration and species introductions. *A larger area of native habitat combined with management action will increase breeding and foraging options for a wide range of Falkland native species.* *Tussac grass habitat has one of the highest peat production rates globally with above ground carbon storage equivalent to temperate forest (Evans et al 2020)* *Increasing the population size and number of breeding sites of endemic birds and plants should reduce the population level impacts of invasive species colonisations at individual island sites.* *More healthy and robust habitats and species populations are commonly held to be more resilient to climate change* Project legacy is maintained *Long-term security of restoration and introductions will be provided by utilising sites owned by Falklands Conservation and managed as nature reserves.*

Project Summary	SMART Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
Outputs: 1. Pebble Islet habitats restored via a doubling of the area of native tussac grass and a halving of the area of bare-peat ground through boxwood planting.	1.1 Survey data and drone images collected to inform restoration planning and monitoring of PI in Yr1. 1.2 Simple weather-proof sleeping shelter for x6 people constructed on PI to allow necessary winter-season planting by end Yr1. 1.3 24ha of tussac planted on PI using 100,000 tussac tillers by Yr3. 1.4 Native plant nursery established to provide grow-on bare-root boxwood transplants 1.5 1000 bare-root boxwood transplants planted along 4km of coastline on PI by Yr3	1.1 Survey report published detailing survey data. Stand-alone habitat map produced for PI Meta-data submitted to National SAERI-GIS data centre. 1.2 External and internal photographs of completed construction. Photographs of shelter in use. 1.3 GPS survey track of daily planted area boundaries mapped to provide planted area polygons. Individual planting logs maintained giving daily planted tiller counts per person. Plot counts to estimate 12-month plant survival rate for 1st three planting periods. Metadata provided to SAERI GIS data center and restoration database managed by Island LandCare 1.4 Photographs of native plant nursery. 1.5 GPS survey track of outer boundary of planted areas walked on ground to give planted area polygons. Planting logs maintained giving daily planted transplant counts per person. Counts to estimate 12-month plant survival. Metadata provided to SAERI GIS data center and restoration database managed by Island LandCare	Access to skilled surveyors and survey techniques *Falklands Conservation has staff and associated volunteers that are sufficiently experienced to carry out the required survey work. Access to satellite imagery has been confirmed and availability of GIS technician provisionally confirmed* Field workers can be resident on PI during planting to overcome huge logistical and cost challenges, and risk management for a remote island location. *PI is a remote location only accessible by boat. Weather is highly variable and boat trips are frequently cancelled. Planting occurs in winter months to avoid dry periods which reduce success rates. Boat availability, weather and location mean that it would simply not be possible to undertake effective day trips. The construction of a simple weather-proof sleeping shelter for x6 people through the project is critical for restoration efforts on PI and upholds the above assumption.* *FC have sought advice on approaches and costings for a simple weather-proof sleeping shelter for x6 people and there has been interest expressed by local tradespeople in achieving this output should the project go ahead. There is risk in this element of the project but a combination of current engagement and FC established contacts and relationship should facilitate delivery.*

Project Summary	SMART Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
			Sufficient planting resource is available. *Recruitment aided by previous good community engagement with pool of experienced planters. Winter planting avoids peak summer tourism and farming workloads allowing employment of rural / agricultural residents in off-season downtime. Paid planting employment will encourage participation and allow longer time periods than volunteers can generally provide. Tussac planting techniques and success rates established by previous projects.*
2. Four new, sustainable offshore island populations each of two globally threatened endemic plants; Falklands rock-cress and hairy daisy, are established.	2.1 At least 200 collected each of Falkland rock-cress and hairy daisy seed in Q4 of YR1/ Q2 of YR2. 2.2 Perennial planting stock of Falklands rock-cress and hairy daisy produced by native plant nursery during Oct. through March 2023/24 and 2024/25. 2.3 Populations of both Falklands rock-cress and hairy daisy, each comprising of at least 25 plants, established on 4 new islands by Yr3. 2.4 Each new endemic plant population demonstrates reproductive capability by end YR3.	2.1 Photographs of seed collection 2.2 Photographs of planting stock 2.3 Survey report detailing locations of new populations with photo-evidence and GPS position. 2.4 Survey report detailing the counts of mature plants reaching seed-set by end of project	Seed availability is sufficient to establish new population *The donor sites will have to be selected during the project in order to ensure that sufficient plants are viable in that season for seed collection. However, populations of rock-cress on FC owned Middle Island and hairy daisy on FC owned Motley Island are likely. It may be necessary to collect across a number of sites.* Permits required to collect protected species under Conservation legislation are granted. *FIG are supportive of application and will assist in licensing and ensuring full safeguards in place.*
3. Two new sustainable offshore island populations of endemic Cobb's wren and tussacbird are established on rat-free Double and Outer islands.	3.1 Donor sites are selected and at least 20 individual Cobb's wren and tussacbird have been captured, ringed and measured	3.1 Photographs of individuals and ringing records and measurements.	Capture from donor population and establishment of new population is sustainable and can be monitored. *A population survey of the donor site will establish its suitability and no more than 10% or 20 birds would be taken. Sex*

Project Summary	SMART Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
	3.2 Release of at least 10 of each Cobb's wren and tussacbird on Double island and Outer Island in Q4 YR2. 3.3 Un-ringed juvenile Cobb's wren and tussacbird observed one year after re-introduction to Double and Outer Islands by end Yr3	3.2 Photographs of releases along with GPS locations of release 3.3 Survey report detailing a count of ringed birds, an estimate of survival, identifies any displaying males and juveniles, and records band numbers re-sighted, on both Double and Outer islands. Photos provided where possible	*ratios in wrens can be skewed towards male birds, however collection of 20 birds should give a good chance to ensure representation of both sexes. There are no data on Cobb's wren morphometrics and sexual dimorphism and sex could only be confirmed post release.* *Cobb's wren and tussacbird are recorded persisting in very small isolated populations on remote islands. Ringed Cobb's wren have been re-sighted and recorded living up to 6 years later providing confidence that ringed birds survive and can be surveyed.* Permits required to capture, handle and translocate protected species under Conservation legislation are granted. *FIG are supportive of application and will assist in licensing and ensuring full safeguards in place.* *Donor islands selected to ensure <24 hrs from capture to release transfer times to avoid aviculture and stress. Juveniles caught to not impact breeding pair numbers. Capture limited to 20 birds or <10% population.* *Rat-free status confirmed prior to release by rodent detector dog.*
4. Improved information on the benefits of ecological restoration and restoration techniques shared with community members through media and engagement (employing equal opportunity and 'do no harm' approaches).	4.1 Information on the project provided annually through media outlets (YR 1-3), comprising at least 2 Wool Press articles, 2 Penguin News articles and 2 TV and radio slots; over 3 years at least 10 social media post per annum	4.1 Catalogue and copy of TV/radio interviews, newspaper articles, FC magazine article and social media posts. Social media posts interaction & engagement data	Information has good reach within the community. *FC have an established social media profile and good relationships with local print, radio and tv media to disseminate project information, along with its own*

Project Summary	SMART Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
	4.2 Engagement in project activities by community members includes at least 5 land-owners and 5 women involved in planting activities (as proportion of 20 total planters) and at least 20 members Junior WatchGroup involved in endangered plant cultivation by end Yr3. 4.3 Knowledge product containing summarised planting productivity, restoration costs and success, logistical and employment challenges, and restoration benefits in the context of carbon sequestration (Yr3)	4.2 Participation and employment logs. ` 4.3 Published report on restoration logistics, costs and carbon sequestration.	*membership magazines, newsletters and volunteer database.*

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. Each activity should start on a new line and be no more than approximately 25 words.)

1.1 Undertake baseline survey of Pebble Islet (PI) and produce PI digital GIS habitat map to inform restoration
1.2 Construct simple weather-proof sleeping shelter for x6 people on PI to allow effective, safe, winter-season planting
1.3 Four 2-week winter tussac-tiller planting trips of 6 people to PI. Tillers harvested and transported by quad for planting. Planting information recorded.
1.4 Establish native plant nursery to grow-on bare-root boxwood transplants
1.5 Plant boxwood bare-root transplants to coincide with winter tussac planting periods on PI.
2.1 Collection of Falkland rock-cress seed from Middle Island and hairy daisy seed from Motley Island using visits already scheduled for other concurrent work.
2.2 Sowing and growing of perennial planting stock of Falkland rock-cress and hairy daisy, and making of seed bombs.
2.3 Planting of perennial planting stock along with trial of seed-bombs into prepared seed-bed at selected sites on 4 separate new islands (including PI).
2.4 Return visit to planting locations during flowering season to record plant survival and establishment and to monitor success of seeding trial.
3.1 Donor site survey, mist-net capture (Cobb's wren and tussacbird) with banding, measurements and sex-identification
3.2 Transfer to release islands - Double Island (9ha) and Outer Island (20ha).
3.3 Return visit to both donor and release islands to conduct bird counts to confirm no significant impact to donor island and survival and establishment on release island.
4.1 Dissemination of information from project via local media, including radio, press, TV and social media.
4.2 Engagement in project activities by community members.
4.3 Collation of outreach metrics for project activities detailing personnel involved, public contact and engagement levels by community / stakeholder constituency, gender and age. Report publication.

Table 1 Project Standard Indicators

Table 1 Project Standard Indicators

DPLUS Indicator number	Name of indicator	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total to date	Total planned during the project
DPLUS-D04	Stabilised/ improved species population (relative abundance/ distribution) within the project area.	Number New Populations % Increase in Number Populations	Species	0	4			
DPLUS-D12	Area of degraded or converted ecosystems that are under active restoration	Planted Area	Species	0	? To be determined			24 ha
DPLUS-C12	Social Media presence	Facebook Posts Number / Year	Likes, Shares & Engagement	0	15 Social Media 2 Printed Press Media 1 Membership News Letter			10 p.a.

Table 2 Publications

Title	Type (e.g. journals, best practice manual, blog post, online videos, podcasts, 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)

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, scheme, 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 consider the best way to submit. One zipped file, or a download option, is recommended. We can work with most online options and will be in touch if we have a problem accessing material. If unsure, please discuss with BCF-Reports@niras.com about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the Subject line.	
Have you included means of verification? You should not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	
Have you provided an updated risk register? If you have an existing risk register you should provide an updated version alongside your report. If your project was funded prior to this being a requirement, you are encourage to develop a risk register.	
If you are submitting photos for publicity purposes, do these meet the outlined requirements (see section 15)?	
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	