



**BIODIVERSITY
CHALLENGE FUNDS**



Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects

Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus

Half Year Report

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

If there is any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website, please ensure you clearly highlight this.

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2025

Please note all projects that were active before 1st October 2025 are required to complete a Half Year Report.

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

Project reference	DPLUS191
Project title	Enabling invasive plant eradication and long-term management in Tristan
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Tristan da Cunha
Lead Organisation	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Partner(s)	Conservation Department, Tristan Government Key Contractors: Indigena Biosecurity International, I-Rigging Solutions
Project Leader	Andy Schofield
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR3
Project website/blog/social media	N/A

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

Activities are only listed below if there has been an update in the last six months.

Output 1. All emergent New Zealand Flax plants eradicated from areas of known presence on Inaccessible Island World Heritage Site.

1.1.1 NZ Flax team are joined by a Tristanian with rope access experience during each field season

1.1.2 Tristanian flax team member receives training and attains 1000 rope hours during three field seasons needed to complete their IRATA Level 2 certification by project end

Unfortunately, Christiaan Gerber, who has been a key member of the Inaccessible team for the last four years, is unable to join the expedition this year because he has injured his hand. The team lead has recruited an experienced replacement, but Christiaan remains fully committed to the project and is keen to be part of the expedition in the final year. It is still possible for him to attain the 1000 hours required to complete his IRATA Level 2 certification but missing this season will make that more challenging. We are doing what we can to support Christiaan to be able to possibly get some rope hours in South Africa before he returns to Tristan, as well as renewing his IRATA Level 1 certification.

1.3.1 Experienced rope access team hired to travel to Inaccessible Island in Q3 of Years 1, 3 and 4 to carry out NZ Flax eradication work

The rope access team are ready to travel to Inaccessible for a third season of this project, having not been able to make it out to the island last year due to lack of vessel berths. We are therefore using the same yacht chartered in Year 1 to get the four-person team from Cape Town to Inaccessible, departing in late November 2025. With a year away from the island, the focus will be checking areas for re-growth, conducting drone surveys of the remaining infested areas and removing as much flax as possible in this penultimate year.

Output 2. Targeted Pōhutukawa control with tree coverage significantly reduced on Tristan.

2.1.3 Invasive plant specialist provides software, spreadsheet templates and training documents to Tristan Conservation Department (TCD) so all plant eradication work is recorded

Tristan Conservation Department (TCD) have been making great use of the Locus App to record the tracklogs of their Pōhutukawa removal work (see **Fig 1.** below). These maps, combined with photographs of cleared areas collected by the team, are really helping to give a clearer picture of how much remains, areas to re-check and planning for the project's remainder.

2.3.2 Tristanian project team carry out annual control of all accessible, emergent Pōhutukawa trees

Due to surveys in Year 1 showing the extent of Pōhutukawa on Tristan to be greater than initially thought, TCD recruited two members of the community to support with control work. This, combined with a more settled austral autumn and winter than expected, meant that the team have made more progress over the cooler months than expected, removing many of the trees from the settlement and surrounding area and some of the more infested areas from the base of the lava flow (see **Fig 1.** below). We are hopeful that more community members will be able to support TCD in this work, especially given the recent findings outlined below.

2.3.3 TCD check Year 1 and Year 2's previously cleared areas in Year 2 and Year 3 and record and re-treat any new Pōhutukawa seedlings found

Concerningly, TCD staff have discovered re-growth in many of the areas previously cleared. Initially, this was thought to be because of trees not being treated with herbicide within a few minutes of being cut, as per the species control SOP. However, once this change was made, re-growth continued to be recorded. The specialist from Indigena Biosecurity International (IBI) is aware of the situation and will be visiting Tristan to support the team later this year.

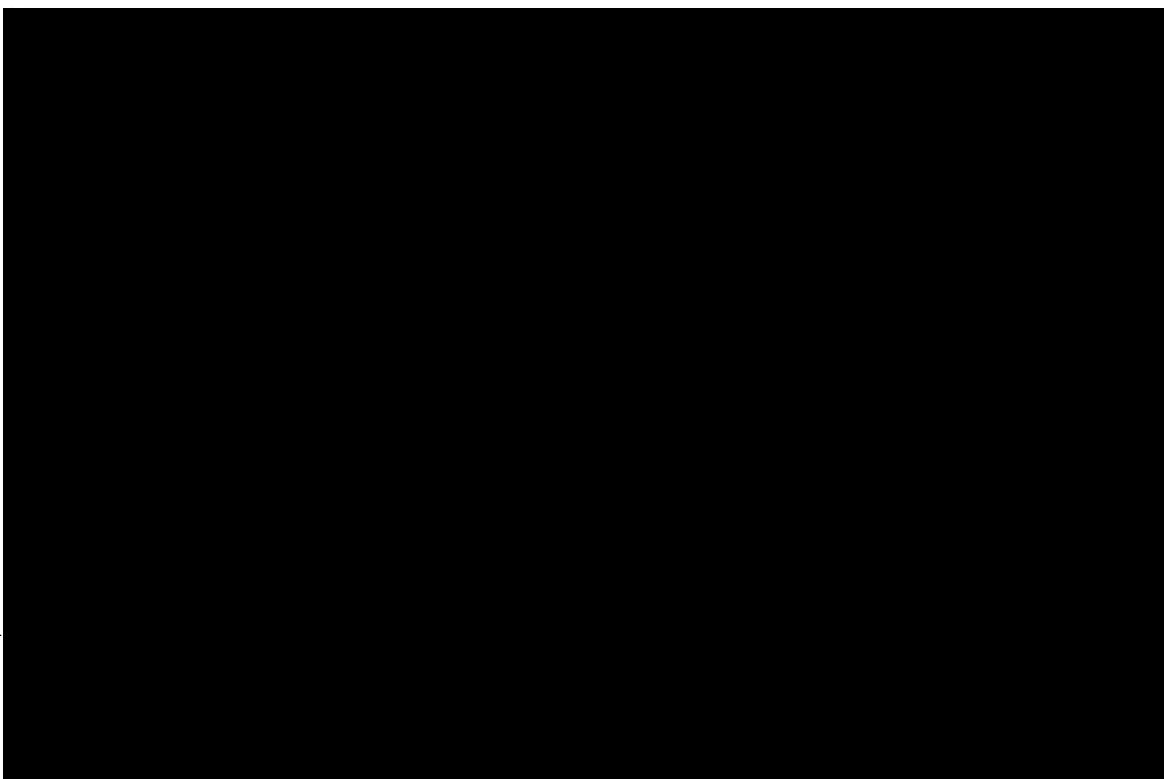


Fig 1. A map of the settlement on Tristan and the surrounding area, showing Pōhutukawa survey points and control tracklogs recorded by Tristan Conservation Department staff since November 2024

Output 3. All emergent self-sown Monterey Pine eradicated from Tristan.

No updates since previous annual report.

Output 4. Baseline knowledge and community understanding of existing priority invasive plant species improved through surveys, mapping and F2F discussion.

4.1.2 Invasive plant specialist writes 'Invasive Plant Strategy' by project end to provide guidance to Conservation Department for future seedbank control of priority species

The specialist from IBI has written a draft Invasive Plant Strategy for Tristan, informed by the visit to the island by their colleague in 2023. This Strategy will be finalised during the specialist's visit to Tristan in November-December 2025, when they will be able to reassess the remainder of the alien plant species, review control work carried out by TCD and provide further training.

4.3.1 Invasive plant specialist and community engagement lead host meeting for the community and introduce the Invasive Plant Strategy in Year 3

Due to continued vessel berth pressure, the community engagement lead is currently on Tristan and the specialist from IBI isn't visiting until November. As such, the community meeting to introduce the new strategy won't happen until towards the end of the latter visit, in partnership with a representative from TCD.

Activities – 4.5.1, 4.5.2 and 4.6.1 – related to invasive plant specialist visit in Nov/Dec 2025

A plan for the trip in Nov-Dec 2025 has been made with the specialist from IBI, in consultation with TCD. Deliverables from this trip will be reported in the annual report.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Re-growth of Pōhutukawa and losing the Tristanian member of the Inaccessible NZ Flax team for this season have already been mentioned above, with a plan in place for both.

The Project Officer left the RSPB in August 2025, with coordination of the project moving over to the Project Manager. The Project Manager is moving to a new role in the RSPB in mid-October 2025. A replacement has been recruited but they are unable to start until early November. The Project Manager will give some time to get the new person up to speed on the project when they are in post, so there will be minimal disruption to project activities and timetable. There are likely to be some small budgetary implications which will be updated in the annual report.

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

Discussed with NIRAS:	No, but if the potential problem in Question 2 is not resolved we will contact NIRAS to discuss.
Formal Change Request submitted:	Yes – submitted on 24/09/25
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	No – waiting on response
Change Request reference if known: <i>If you submitted a financial Change Request, you can find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome</i>	

Guidance for Section 4: The information you provide in this section will be used by Defra to review the financial status of projects. This review will identify projects at random for spot checks on financial management and will include requests for evidence of the actual spend information provided below. Please ensure the figures you provide are as accurate as possible and that you have the evidence to support it. You do not need to provide it now.

<p>4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2025 – 30 September 2025)</p> <p>Actual spend: [REDACTED]</p>
<p>4b. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this financial year (ending 31 March 2026)?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Estimated underspend: [REDACTED]</p>
<p>4c. If you expect an underspend, then you should consider your project budget needs carefully. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.</p> <p>If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a re-budget Change Request as soon as possible, and not later than 31st December. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes to your project if necessary.</p> <p>Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.</p> <p>NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.</p>
<p>5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCFs management, monitoring, or financial procedures?</p> <p>Suspensions or allegations related to fraud and error concerns should be reported to fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk</p> <p>NA</p>
<p>6. Project risk management</p> <p>6a. If your project has an Overseas Security and Justice assessment, please provide an update on any related risks, and any special conditions in your award paperwork if relevant for your project.</p>

NA

6b. Have any concerns or allegations relating to sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment been reported in the past 6 months?

No

If yes, please provide further information, ensuring no sensitive data is included within responses.

Suspensions or allegations related to safeguarding concerns should be reported to ODA.Safeguarding@defra.gov.uk

NA

7. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent Annual Report. As a reminder, all projects that were scored as 'Not Yet Sensitive' in the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) assessment of their latest Annual Report should demonstrate how they are meeting the minimum GESI-Sensitive standard.

Feedback requested in 2026 Annual Report

Checklist for submission

Have you responded to feedback from your latest Annual Report Review ? You should respond in section 6, and annexe other requested materials as appropriate.	
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	
Submit to BCF-Reports@niras.com	
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	