



**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: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025**

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

**Submit to: [BCF-Reports@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com) including your project ref in the subject line.**

<b>Project reference</b>	DPLUS207
<b>Project title</b>	Empowering and preparing Cayman's Sister Islands to tackle invasive mammals
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Cayman Islands
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	RSPB
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Department of Environment (DoE), National Trust for the Cayman Islands (NTCI)
<b>Project Leader</b>	<i>Joe Jeffcoate</i>
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	<i>31 Oct 2025 HYR2</i>
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/CaymanSisterIslandsInvasiveSpecies/">https://www.facebook.com/CaymanSisterIslandsInvasiveSpecies/</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).**

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems (are your indicators still relevant, can you report against any Standard Indicators, do your assumptions still hold true?). The guidance can be found on the resources page of the relevant fund website.

The project continues to progress steadily, and a strong and collaborative partnership is maintained amongst the partners. An in-person mid-term review workshop took place in June 2025 to assess the project progress and identify key risks and lessons learnt so far (see section 2). During the session partners took time to celebrate success already achieved and identify what is on the horizon that still needs attention. A full summary will be shared in the next annual report.

Good progress is made to support responsible pet management across both islands with all pet cats registered on Little Cayman and a door-to-door campaign implemented by both DoE and NTCI to increase cat registrations on the Brac (**indicator 1.3**). This is focused on areas of expanded feral cat control (**indicator 4.1**) but there have not been many pet cats to register so

far. The partners have responded proactively, with support of the community, to a new cat arriving on Little Cayman and engagement is ongoing to desex and register this animal to maintain the cat-a-logue on Little Cayman.

The most significant progress is made with the implementation of indoor cat enclosure trials, with a trial plan compiled and participant agreements drafted and some enclosures being built (**indicator 1.4**). Though now underway, progress is slow as the costs of materials and labour needed to establish the enclosures is proving prohibitive (though this is all useful learnings) and it has been harder than expected to identify enough suitable participants. We expect to have these enclosures built by the end of the calendar year which is slightly behind schedule but should not impact the development of indoor enclosure guidelines being developed by end of project (**indicator 1.5**). There is currently no formal progress towards identifying a Little Cayman domestic cat management plan (**indicator 1.2**), though informal conversations are beginning and with the development of the eradication operational plan (which will be put to the community) further discussions regarding how the island wishes to manage pet cats, will begin.

The second phase of the non-target trials were completed in June/July, with little to no non-target interactions (**indicator 2.2**). Informed by these trials, new procedures were drafted for the control of feral cats in the Cayman Islands and subsequently signed off by the National Conservation Council in September. This is a crucial step in securing the legal feasibility to achieve eradication with multiple methods now available for use. In addition, the new procedures allow ongoing control to be implemented with euthanasia completed by DoE staff without the need for a vet, meaning an immediate reduction of logistical and fieldwork costs, but most importantly an improvement to the welfare standards, given transport in the cages can cause additional stress. The partners are working collaborative to include this change in project communications, ensuring the community and key stakeholders understand the changes to feral cat control operations.

The DoE have included the Alien Species Recovery Officer role into their recent budget proposal to ministry (**indicator 2.5**) as well as requesting funding for the future eradication on Little Cayman. If successful, this will be a significant step in securing the legacy of this project and contributing the project Impact statement.

In June, RSPB Senior Conservation Scientist, Lousie Soanes collaborated with DoE to begin developing a biodiversity monitoring plan for the eradication on Little Cayman (**indicator 2.3**) as well as assessing suitable areas for trials of the AI cameras for biosecurity purposes (**indicator 3.3**). These cameras are currently on order and Louise will also facilitate learnings from the D+ project in Anguilla (DPLUS210) when they arrive.

Further cat trapping efforts took place on Little Cayman in May, and subsequently with support of the Robinson Holdsworth Conservation Trust (RHCT) in June/July (**indicator 4.1**). There was a slight increase in trap capture rate (this is the first effort in 12 months), though not statistically significant and a total of 22 feral cats were removed across both the May and June/July efforts. The RHCT team recommended increasing trap effort to more than one year to keep pressure on the cat population as the partnership works towards the eradication. A further effort will take place in November 2025, and this will be the first in which the DoE can complete euthanasia in situ without a vet present.

**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.**

Partners held a mid-term review to identify successes, challenges and review risk for the project and capture lessons learned. Broadly speaking, partners felt the project to be on track, but with some notable challenges ahead and a lot of activities to complete in a relatively short timeframe if we are to secure our Outcome.

The indoor cat enclosure trials are taking longer than expected to implement, and identification of suitable participants has been a challenge despite a general interest in the concept amongst cat owners. Furthermore, there is a lack of construction expertise on the Sister Islands that are available to support with enclosure building. It was hoped that there would be more willingness for residents to volunteer time for this, but of course paid work and personal projects take precedent. We are trialling using budget to pay for construction from local business on the Brac. However, given this is a trial, these are all valuable lessons that will inform the indoor enclosure guidelines (**indicator 1.5**). Although the trials are now up and running, the delays have put pressure on other aspects of the project, such as biosecurity training for the key stakeholders on the Sister Islands. Currently, we do not expect to need to make significant budget or timetable changes but going forward there will likely be a further stretch to capacity in-territory.

There is notable forthcoming staff changes for the project. The project lead (Joe Jeffcoate) will be resigning from RSPB in Dec 2025 as well as the DoE lead, Fred Burton, retiring at this time too with potentially some recruitment delays as these posts are backfilled. The Alien Species Control Officer will also be taking paternity leave in 2026 and so the DoE will be at least 1 team member down as this crucial work is covered by the rest of the team putting pressure on project delivery timelines. The partnership is a strong one, with clear roles defined and the recent mid-term review has been timely to ensure roles and responsibilities are clear. That said, there may well be some delays in implementation in the final stages of Y2 given the changes and stretch to in-territory capacity and some work may need to be completed in Y3.

Results of the Brown Booby breeding season at the lighthouse trail on the Brac are positive in that fledgling success remains very high (**indicator 0.7**). Unfortunately, this is for a very low number of nests (4). As mentioned in AR1, the partnership is looking at other issues, such as disturbance, impacting the birds nesting attempts. The next breeding season will give some indication as to whether indicator 0.7 remains appropriate as it'll be the first since predator control began in 2022 and those fledglings may well return to the Brac to breed. The partnership will adjust the indicator as appropriate at that time, but a 25% annual increase in fledglings may not be achievable, unless other threats (disturbance) are addressed. This is not within the scope of this project, but the partnership is in discussions as to how best to address this with expertise and resources from RSPB made available to the partners.

**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
Formal Change Request submitted:	No
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	No
Change Request reference if known: N/A	

**4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2025 – 30 September 2025)**

Actual spend: [REDACTED]

**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)?**

No ☒ Estimated underspend: £

**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.

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 31<sup>st</sup> 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. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.**

NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.

**5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCFs management, monitoring, or financial procedures?**

Suspensions or allegations related to fraud and error concerns should be reported to [fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk](mailto:fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk)

N/A

**6. Project risk management**

**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.**

N/A

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

Yes ☐ 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](mailto:ODA.Safeguarding@defra.gov.uk)

N/A

**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.**

[Redacted content]

[REDACTED]	
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

## Checklist for submission

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