



**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>	DPSTR001
<b>Project title</b>	Enabling effective biosecurity for the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Cayman, Montserrat, Turks and Caicos
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	RSPB
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Department of Agriculture, The Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands Department of Agriculture, Cayman Islands Government Department of Natural Resources, Ministry of Sustainability, Innovation, and the Environment: Economic Development, Investment and Commerce, The Government of Anguilla Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources & Climate Change, Government of Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture, Housing, Land and the Environment, Government of Montserrat UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH)
<b>Project Leader</b>	Jake Zarins Head of UK Overseas Territories, RSPB
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	HYR2
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	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).**

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.

Whilst a potentially significant component of this process (the political aspect) is outside of our control, progress towards outcome indicator 0.1 *“National biosecurity legislations have been tabled to decision makers or enacted in at least two OTs by end of project”* has been strong and we are on schedule against the project implementation plan.

Partners agreed a cross-territory work program and we appointed experienced regionally based consultants PAI (Public Administration International), to develop appropriate legislation in BVI and Anguilla. The work involves gap analysis/issues identification, stakeholder consultation, biosecurity policy development and drafting effective legislation. PAI is working under the direction of the local partners, and the timetables have been co-ordinated as far as possible with Government lifespan timetables (e.g. elections). Significant work has been done by local partners to ensure stakeholder consultation. The first of three stages of work in BVI has been completed and the first of two stages in Anguilla has begun.

The project is co-ordinating closely with DEFRA's GBNSS (Non-native Species Secretariat) to ensure work in Montserrat begun under their biosecurity project is completed in line with and, if necessary, supported by this project.

Progress towards outcome indicator 0.2 *“Biosecurity posts are funded and adopted into government staffing structures post-project and biosecurity trainings adopted into staff training plans”* has been slow but momentum is picking up. Reasons for the initial delay were outlined in AR1. Four (of the planned five) Biosecurity Officers have been appointed with only the appointment in TCI outstanding. Importantly all four already have experience in biosecurity or control of INNS and are from within the existing government or associated organisation. Two are already on permanent contracts in their funded biosecurity posts i.e. there is a commitment to retain them after the project ends, a key part of the project's legacy. As recommended in AR1R, we have begun advocacy around retaining these posts. The training programme discussed a little more against outcome indicator 0.4 (below) is being designed to be used not just across partners within the Caribbean UKOTs but in the wider Caribbean.

There has been progress towards outcome indicator 0.3 *“inter-territory biosecurity working group five-year post-project plan established and agreed by partners by end of project”* and this outcome indicator is on schedule. We have consulted both with partners and more widely, particularly with individuals who have previously been involved in working groups with a similar remit. Their experience has been built into the draft Terms of Reference and proposed structure for the group which will return to the partners at the next Steering Group meeting. This is a necessary step before this working group can form and draw up an effective five-year post-project plan.

Outcome indicator 0.4 *“that at least 25 (minimum 5 from each territory) in-territory government staff and key stakeholders indicate an increased knowledge of (i) effective at-border biosecurity (ii) priority species risks and, (iii) how to effectively respond to INNS by end of project”* is on schedule. CABI through their Caribbean office, has been contracted to develop a training programme for the Biosecurity Officers which will include materials and techniques to allow them to train others. Meetings have been held with wider groups of stakeholders in three of the Territories so far to build support for the inclusion of their staff in the biosecurity training. A workshop hosted by GBNSS in Tortola, BVI in January 2025 has provided an inspirational model for engaging staff in functions such as Customs and Immigration in biosecurity awareness and training. It seems highly likely that we will be able to exceed the target of 25 additional staff across the territories. The Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) has joined the project as a partner and will lead the work in horizon scanning and response planning for priority INNS from February onwards.

Overall assumptions made have held true, and risks have been managed as anticipated.

**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.**

The following notable issues have been encountered

1. Delays to recruitment of Biosecurity Officers

This issue has been relevant through the life of the project to date and was identified in AR1 and in a FCR submitted in December 2024. The project will be submitting a change request in October 2025 to request an extension to the project timetable by several months to allow these important posts to work their full term. The project total budget would remain unchanged.

2. Ports Assessment

CABi Caribbean carried out an assessment of the main international maritime ports of entry to each Territory (the foci of this project) to identify improvements to biosecurity with a focus on possible capital improvements. They came up with ca 125 recommendations for improvements or changes. Whilst around 40% were capital items applicable to the ports, the remainder were general and not capital items. We are currently shortlisting the capital items that can be realistically achieved within the timeframe of the project. This will be achieved by the end of 2025.

The non-capital recommendations are soft items involving leadership, accountability, training and awareness. The project has identified five cross-territory projects that would, if implemented effectively, go a long way to dealing with these issues. The project will approach Darwin through a change request in October 2025 to seek to transfer budget a portion of the capital budget to other categories to deliver these identified elements. There would be no overall budget change.

3. Inter-Territory Biosecurity Working Group Secretariat

Consultations with partners and individuals have identified that the single most important factor in ensuring that this group has longevity i.e. is successful and fulfils its proposed function as part of the legacy of the project is to have some form of permanent focussed Secretariat role. The project will be approaching Darwin to discuss (in the first instance) how we can use existing budget to support this.

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

Discussed with NIRAS:

Yes

Formal Change Request submitted:

Yes

Received confirmation of change acceptance:

Yes

Change Request reference if known: CR24 -137: CR25 - 019

**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.

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

Actual spend:

**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)?**

Yes ☒ 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?**

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

None

**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.**

Not applicable

**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.

Suspicious or allegations related to safeguarding concerns should be reported to [ODA.Safeguarding@defra.gov.uk](mailto:ODA.Safeguarding@defra.gov.uk)

**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.**

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**GESI**

The project was scored as meeting the GESI-sensitive standard at AR1 and no changes to this have occurred.

## 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?	N/a
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