



Image Credit: RECOFTC

INFORMATION NOTE

Project Reporting

Key Messages

- All projects that receive funding from the Biodiversity Challenge Funds are required to write reports.
- This information note is a guide to the different technical reporting requirements under each of the schemes.
- The specific reporting requirements for your project depend on the scheme it is funded under, as the templates and timing for the reports can vary.
- It is important to check the relevant website regularly as all templates are periodically updated. Please ensure that you are submitting your report using the latest available template covering the correct reporting period.
- Some reports such as the Annual and Final Reports are subject to independent reviews. The review templates can be found on the fund websites alongside the report templates. You might find it helpful to consider these when writing your own reports to help you understand how your reports will be assessed.
- The final section of this information note highlights what to do and what to avoid to help you produce strong reports for your project.



Image Credit: Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources - Anguilla

The Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund and Darwin Plus are UK government grant schemes, collectively known as the Biodiversity Challenge Funds.



The Darwin Initiative is a UK government grants scheme that helps conserve biodiversity and support the communities that live alongside it through locally led projects worldwide.



The Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund is a UK government grants scheme that provides support to innovative and scalable projects to reduce pressure on wildlife from illegal trade and, in doing so, reduce poverty in developing countries.



Darwin Plus is a UK government grants scheme that helps deliver long-term strategic outcomes for the unique biodiversity, the natural environment and improving resilience to climate change within the UK Overseas Territories.



Image Credit: BirdLife International

Reporting for Biodiversity Challenge Funds projects

This information note covers the reporting requirements for projects funded under the Biodiversity Challenge Funds (BCFs): Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund and Darwin Plus.

As a condition of receiving funding from the UK Government, all BCFs projects are required to write reports. Reports can broadly be categorised as technical or financial. This information note provides guidance on technical reporting only.

Further information on the financial reporting (or claim form) requirements for your project can be found in the relevant terms and conditions, finance guidance and claim form templates which can be found on the fund websites:

- [Darwin Initiative resources](#)
- [IWT Challenge Fund resources](#)
- [Darwin Plus resources](#)

The specific reporting requirements for your project depend on the scheme it is funded under, as the templates and timing for the reports can vary.

As well as covering key reporting requirements for all types of projects, this information note provides guidance on how to avoid common reporting mistakes and provide appropriate evidence.

The reporting templates for all projects can be found on the fund websites:

- [Darwin Initiative reporting templates](#)
- [IWT Challenge Fund reporting templates](#)
- [Darwin Plus reporting templates](#)

*There is a dedicated reporting mailbox should you have any questions:
BCF-Reports@niras.com*



Image Credit: TNC

Main, Extra, Strategic, Innovation, Capability & Capacity and Evidence project funding

Most projects supported by the BCFs follow the same reporting cycle (with the exception being Darwin Plus Local - the requirements for which are outlined later in this note).

This includes:

- Main projects (Darwin Initiative, IWT Challenge Fund and Darwin Plus)
- Extra projects (Darwin Initiative and IWT Challenge Fund)
- Strategic projects (Darwin Plus)
- Innovation and Capability & Capacity projects (Darwin Initiative)
- Evidence projects (IWT Challenge Fund)
- People & Skills (Darwin Plus) *previously called Fellowships*

These projects are required to produce reports twice annually (Half Year Report and Annual Report), as well as a report at the project end (Final Report). The Half Year and Annual Reports have **fixed dates annually regardless of your project start date**. The deadline for the Final Report will vary depending on your project end date.



Half Year Reports

Half Year Reports are submitted every year and outline the progress that a project has made since project start or since the last Annual Report update (covering period 1st April to 30th September).

If the project began less than 6 months ago, it is expected you report on the progress since the start date until the end of September.

Half Year Reports should be 2-3 pages in length and in your report you are asked to:

- **Outline progress** against the agreed project workplan (which you included with the application form).
- Give details of any **notable problems, unexpected developments and lessons learnt**.
- Highlight whether you expect any **significant underspend** in your budget.
- Raise any other issues related to the project, BCFs management or monitoring and financial procedures.

Report type	Half Year Report
Deadline	31 st October
Purpose	A brief update on project progress and provides an opportunity to raise any queries or issues.





Image Credit: Francesca Page

Annual Reports

Annual Reports are submitted every year and outline project progress between **1st April and 31st March** since project start (if the project started on or after 1st April) or since the last Annual Report (if the project started more than a year before). This may cover the same period as the previous Half Year Report, but the Annual Report is different because:

- More detail is required in the Annual Report compared to the Half Year Report.
- Annual Reports are subject to a desk-based review. Reviews provide an independent assessment of project progress for the period covered by the Annual Report (see page 7 for more information on the review process).

Report type	Annual Report
Deadline	30 th April
Purpose	Details the progress against planned activities and achievements over the last year, with clear reference to the project's expected Outputs and Outcome and indicators in your logframe, with supporting evidence provided.

Annual Reports should be a maximum of 20 pages in length, excluding annexes. In your reports, you are asked to:

- Comment on the development and maintenance of **project partnerships**.
- Provide an overview of **project progress** over the last year, providing **evidence in support of any statements** within the body of the report or as supporting annexes.
- Monitor critical assumptions and risks to project implementation.
- Outline how your project is contributing to the various conventions, treaties or agreements supported by the Biodiversity Challenge Funds.
- Describe how your project is contributing to **gender equality and social inclusion** and a **reduction in poverty**.
- Include a tabular update of project progress against the **logframe**.
- Provide an **overview of budget spend** over the reporting period.



Image Credit: Nebat Auhura

Final Reports

Final Reports should be a maximum of 20 pages in length, excluding annexes. The Final Report should be standalone and cover the full project period – it should not rely on previous reporting. What is asked for in the Final Report is similar to what is asked for in the Annual Report, but the key differences are:

- A greater focus on achievements rather than progress to date.
- All projects are asked to report against “standard indicators” – but the specific measures vary depending on the fund your project is supported under (i.e. Darwin Initiative, IWT Challenge Fund or Darwin Plus).



Image Credit: Dahari

Report type	Final Report
Deadline	Typically with 3 months of end date (but can be under 3 months)
Purpose	Details project achievement over the full grant period, with clear reference to the project’s expected Outputs and Outcome and indicators in your logframe, with supporting evidence provided.

Depending on when the project finishes, the project may be required to provide an Annual Report in addition to a Final Report in its final year.

For example:

If the project ends on or before **30th April**, then the Final Report will be due within 3 months of project end and there would be no need to submit an Annual Report on 30th April of that year.

However, if the project ends in **May or June**, there are two options available:

1. The project can submit an Annual Report in April. They will then have 3 months from project end to submit a Final Report.
2. The project can forego completing an Annual Report in its final year and only complete a Final Report. However, this would be due by 31st July at the latest (i.e. less than 3 months after the project end date).

Image Credit: Vivek Menon

Final Report deadline

Like Annual Reports, Final Reports are subject to an independent desk-based review (see page 7).

Unlike the Half Year and Annual Reports, the Final Report does not have a fixed submission date: it is usually due within three months of the project end date, however this is dependent on where the project end date falls in relation to other fixed reporting dates.

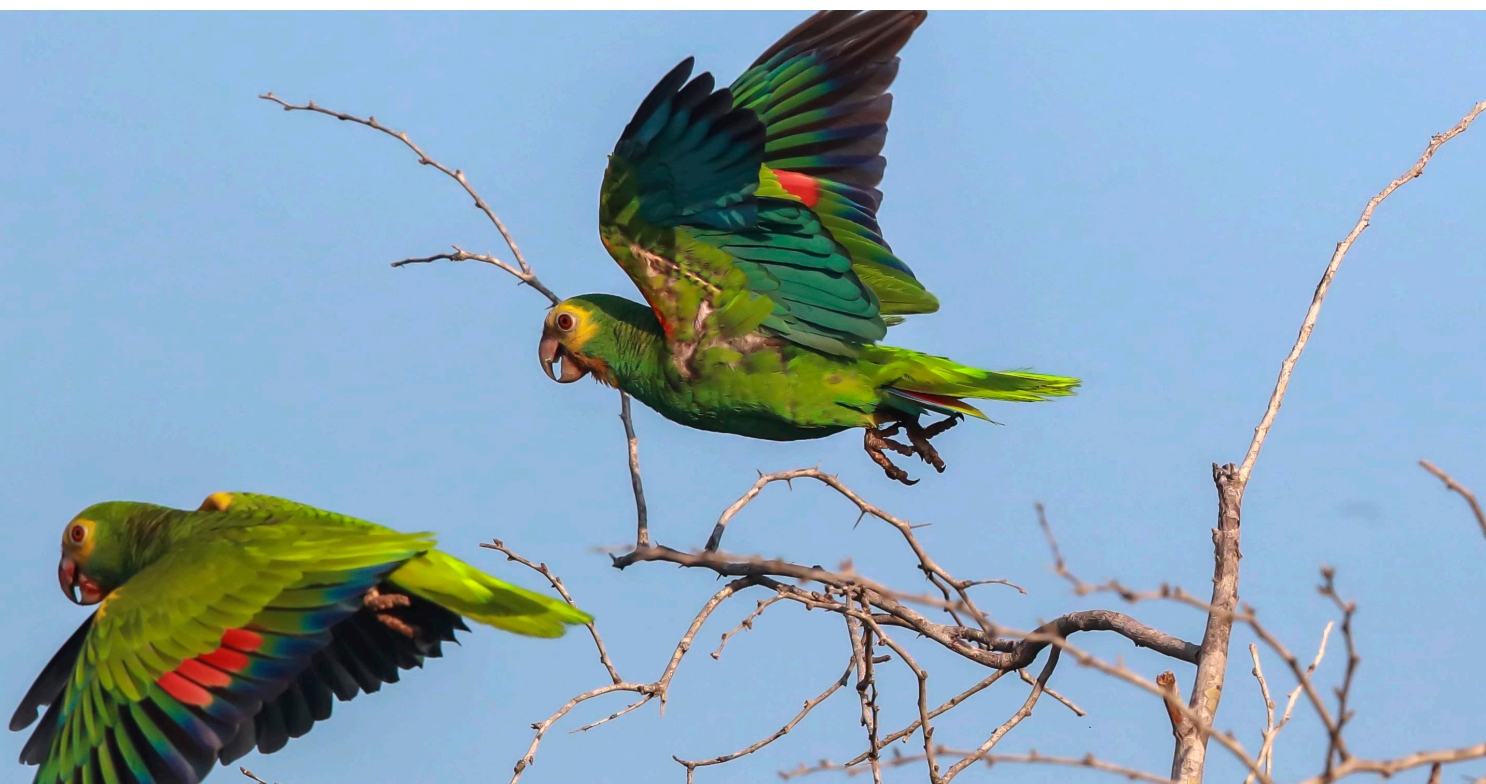




Image Credit: Peter Bucktrout

Darwin Plus Local: Final Report

Darwin Plus Local projects are only required to submit one report, once their project is complete. This should be submitted within one month of the agreed project end date. A Word version of the reporting form is available [online](#).

In-keeping with the approach to the application process, the reporting requirements for Darwin Plus Local are lighter touch. The report should be a maximum of 10 pages and provide:

- An overview of project activities.
- A description of any encountered setbacks or difficulties.
- Information on key achievements against what was outlined in the application form, including some evidence to support claims made in the report. This can include photos or other materials.

Report type	Darwin Plus Local Final Report
Deadline	Within one month of project end date
Purpose	Details project achievement

Darwin Plus Local projects are only required to submit one report.



Image Credit: S. Sarkis



Image Credit: Thomas Heller



Image Credit: Antje Steinfurth



Image Credit: Panthera

Project Report Reviews

Annual and Final Reports are subject to an independent desk-based review.

Reviewers refer to the report they are reviewing (Annual or Final) as well as your original application form (including the logframe, if this is requested at the application stage), as this forms part of your contract with Defra. In addition, they consider any agreed Change Requests for your project. They complete a review using a template and assess the progress your project has made, either to date (in the case of an Annual Report Review) or overall (in the case of a Final Report Review), providing an overall score.



Image Credit: Free the Bears

In order to score well, projects must:

- **Refer to the guiding notes under each question**, as these will help you understand what each section is looking for.
- Ensure you provide a clear narrative report in addition to a **tabular account of project progress against the logframe (if your project has a logframe)**.
- Answer all questions as best possible, ensuring you remind yourself what is included in your original application form (i.e. what you said you would do).
- Ensure any changes to your project compared to your original application form are clearly explained (or have approval via Change Request if needed).
- Ensure reporting is honest, with **frank assessment of lessons learned**, whilst remembering reports are published online.
- Provide **supporting evidence** with your report.
- Be mindful that project reports are published online. Personal information is redacted prior to upload, but it is helpful if you **clearly highlight any sensitive information that should not be made public**.

The next section will provide further information on these key considerations – what to do and what to avoid.

Ensure reporting is honest, with frank assessment of lessons learned, whilst remembering reports are published online.

Overview of all reporting requirements

Project type	Report	Deadline	Subject to independent review and scoring?
Main, Extra, Strategic, Innovation, C&C, People & Skills (previously Fellowships) and Evidence projects	Half Year Report	31 st October	N
	Annual Report	30 th April	Y
	Final Report	Within 3 months of end date (but can be under 3 months)	Y
Darwin Plus Local	Final Report	Within 1 month of end date	Y

Change requests:

Darwin Initiative, IWT Challenge Fund and Darwin Plus and projects are often operating in difficult environments, and sometimes changes need to be made to ensure success. We recognise that this can also require financial and/or administrative changes. The Change Request process exists to allow projects to adapt to changing and challenging circumstances.

Projects can request changes to their budgets, project staff, logframe or other elements of their project design. The requested change must be clearly justified, outlining how what you are proposing differs from the agreed project design, and be clear how your project would be impacted should the change not be agreed.

Further information on the types of amendments for which a Change Request is required can be found in the Change Request template itself (found under Resources on each fund's website) and in the Finance Guidance.

Image Credit: Andhy PS



Helpful hints and tips for clear reporting

Read your original application before you start

Your full application form (including your logframe and other supporting documentation) forms the contract between your project and Defra.

If you have made significant changes to your project (Outcome, Outputs, key personnel and/or budget) you should have agreed this with Defra via the Change Request process (see box on page 8). If you have made significant changes and have not had agreement for this please contact the BCFs team directly (at BCF-Finance@niras.com). Change Request forms can be found on under Resources on each funds website.

Use your logframe

If included at the application stage, we will evaluate your progress against your logical framework (or logframe). You should report against the indicators you proposed and evidence to support this should be presented in annexes. The narrative report should clearly explain the role the project played in affecting any observed and reported on change – for example, changes in knowledge, species abundance or environmental indicators.

Evidence is important

Try not to rely on 'because we said so' reporting. Wherever possible, support your statements with evidence and clearly link to this evidence in your reporting. Annexes should be named and/or clearly numbered, and you should select evidence carefully to support your reporting rather than sharing all project documents.

The evidence you use will likely vary depending on what you are demonstrating. Data triangulation, i.e. presenting evidence from multiple sources, may strengthen your claims. If possible, try to draw on independent evidence i.e. government statistics, material presented to other donor funders.

Evidence used to support statements of progress could include:

- Government documents
- Illustrative quotes from project beneficiaries / stakeholders
- Figures including graphs and tables
- Meeting minutes of Steering Committees workshops etc.
- Photos and/or videos
- Newspaper articles
- Maps
- Project authored reports and academic papers
- Independent authored reports

Examples of suitable reporting

In logframe:

Indicator in logframe	Progress in 24/25
Number of local people employed by the National park increases from 10 (2024 baseline) to 60 by 2028.	In 2024/25 a further 40 local people were employed taking the total to 50 in 2024/25. Annex 4 provides the updated Management Plan on which page 73 provides data on number of local people employed.

In body of report:

"The project provided jobs and enterprise training to 56 individuals in the project period. Follow up surveys from participants suggested that the training had directly contributed to 23 individuals securing paid employment on a casual basis and directly contributed to 5 individuals securing employment on a permanent basis. The training was for 10 days over a 2 month period and covered issues such as 'Customer Service skills', 'bookkeeping' and 'Computer use'. Annex 5 provides the training manual and Annex 6 provides the survey results."

What to do and what to avoid

What to do

1. **Provide evidence to demonstrate where claims come from**

"We are making good progress towards our goal, as demonstrated by data provided in table X."

"We carried out focus groups with local residents about their perceptions on local wildlife. We found that attitudes have improved since the project start. For example, one participant said **"I no longer feel scared walking to my field"**.

2. **Move beyond reporting on outputs and focus on what has changed as a result of your project**

"The workshop provided X community members with knowledge about sustainable pest management. Evidence from a follow-up survey indicated that chemical pesticide use has declined by 50%, which is expected to have positive impacts in local biodiversity (FAO, 2013). Crop yields for previously affected crops have increased by between 10-30%; thus, demonstrating a contribution to poverty reduction."

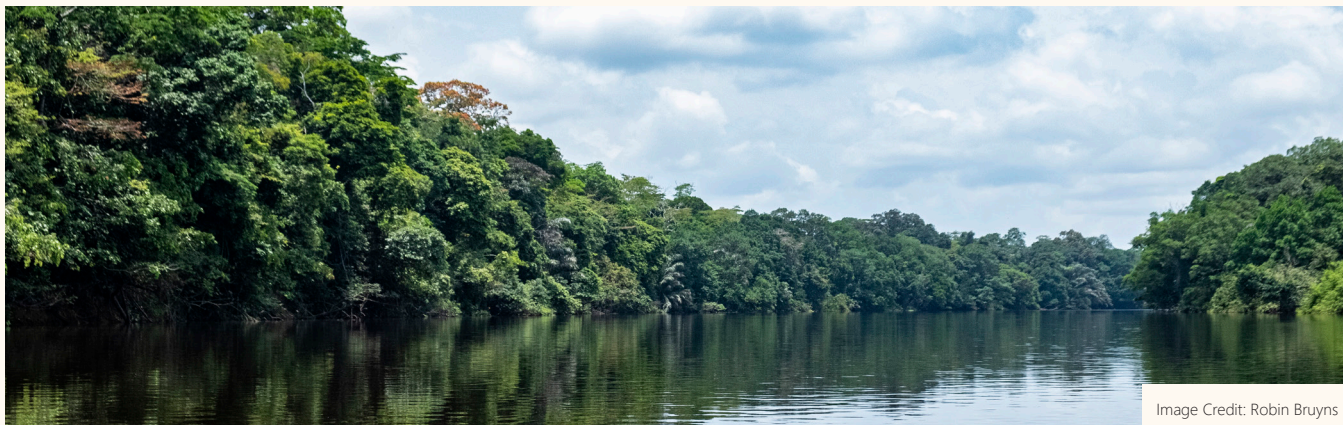


Image Credit: Robin Bruyns

What to avoid

As well as it being important to bear in mind what you should do - but it is equally important to consider what you **should not** do in your reporting.

1. **Writing general statements without evidence**

"We are making good progress."

"We believe this is true."

"We think that progress is adequate."

2. **Only listing activity outputs without reference to the outcome of the work**

- Number of workshops
- Number of plans created
- Number of maps generated

This may all be necessary first steps in securing change, but unless you follow up and present evidence of the effect this activity has had, then your statement of impact remains unsupported.

3. **Talking about poverty as being only a monetary issue**

Poverty is multi-dimensional with people moving in and out of poverty. What affects people's poverty status will change. Projects often assume that the only way to measure poverty reduction is through reporting on monetary measures. However, projects should also include non-monetary measures and outline how the project has contributed to the wider components of wellbeing such as health and nutrition, literacy, and governance.

A project can contribute to poverty reduction in several ways and may directly and/or indirectly benefit local communities. In both the Annual and Final Reports, it is important to outline:

- How the project is contributing/contributed to improved human development and wellbeing.
- Who the beneficiaries are and how many are receiving/received benefits as a result of your project.
- Whether the benefits provided are direct or indirect, and how they are being measured.

Project reports should provide clear evidence on how the project has contributed to poverty reduction.

Additional information on poverty reduction in the context of biodiversity conservation projects can be found in the Poverty Information Notes for the [Darwin Initiative](#) and the [IWT Challenge Fund](#).

4. **Inadequately addressing gender**

The International Development (Gender Equality Act) came into force in May 2014, ensuring that gender equality is an explicit objective in UK Government funded projects, including all Biodiversity Challenge Funds projects. All projects should be able to demonstrate, where relevant, their contribution to gender equality and social inclusion.



Image Credit: Bristol, Clifton and West of England Zoological Society

Summary of Key Messages

This information note has been developed to help Biodiversity Challenge Funds projects understand the reporting requirements under each scheme and act as a guide on how to avoid common reporting mistakes and provide appropriate evidence.

We want to support projects in their reporting and encourage the use of the advice and tips included in this information note.

Image Credit: Isaac Mbroh



This learning note was produced by NIRAS, fund managers for the Biodiversity Challenge Funds.

For more information on the Darwin Initiative see

darwininitiative.org.uk

For more information on the IWT Challenge Fund see

iwt.challengefund.org.uk

For more information on Darwin Plus see

darwinplus.org.uk

Top tips:

- Ensure you provide a clear narrative report in addition to a tabular account of project progress against the logframe.
- Provide supporting evidence with your report, ensuring that any statements of progress are clearly supported by relevant evidence.
- Read your original application and current logframe before writing your report, ensuring that any significant changes to the Outcome, Outputs, key personnel and the budget have been approved via the formal Change Request process.
- Use your logframe - project progress is evaluated against the logframe, we encourage projects to clearly report against the proposed indicators.
- Please check the relevant fund websites prior to submitting your report to ensure that you are using the latest version of the template and the correct one for your project.