

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 2024

Please note all projects that were active before 1 October 2024 are required to complete a Half Year Report.

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

Project reference	DPSTR001
Project title	Enabling effective biosecurity for the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Anguilla, British Virgin Islands (BVI), Cayman Islands, Montserrat, Turks and Caicos (TCI)
Lead Organisation	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Partner(s)	<p>Department of Agriculture, The Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands</p> <p>Department of Agriculture, Cayman Islands Government</p> <p>Department of Natural Resources, Ministry of Sustainability, Innovation, and the Environment: Economic Development, Investment and Commerce, The Government of Anguilla</p> <p>Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources & Climate Change, Government of Virgin Islands</p> <p>Department of Agriculture, Housing, Land and the Environment, Government of Montserrat</p>
Project leader	Charlie Butt
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR1
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).

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your M&E 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.

All original indicators are still relevant. Authorisation to proceed with the project was received by undated letter March 2024 and partners informed immediately by email on 4th April. Of the five contracts required between RSPB and partner Governments to underpin the project, three (BVI, Anguilla and Montserrat) have now been signed by both parties and a fourth (Cayman) is imminent. The delaying issue has been bottlenecks within Government departments eg AG Chambers, due to large work programs and other priorities.

Progress has been made on Output 1 through close co-ordinating this project's work program with that of DEFRA's GBNNSS, particularly in Anguilla and Montserrat. Legislative Needs Assessments have already been carried out for these two countries and BVI. Whilst no formal meetings of partners to determine the relevant work program has been held, resource has been agreed and allocated and project staff will meet with partners in January to finalise this.

Progress has been made on Output 2 through the employment of one of five planned Biosecurity Officers (in Montserrat). Agreement has also been reached with partners that secondments are the preferred route as this will mean that learning will be retained within Departments/functions as part of the project legacy.

After discussion with NIRAS, the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) will be invited to become full partners in the project subject to approval of a Change Request to be submitted shortly. This will enable the development of the INNS horizon scanning exercise as a partnership rather than on a contractual basis. Territory partners believe this will strengthen the exercise.

Progress against Output 3 has been strongest with successful tendering and subsequent appointment of CABI Caribbean to carry out the Ports Assessment which will be completed on schedule by end Y1Q4. Work is due to start Nov 1st 2024.

Overall, whilst there has been some slippage in timetable due to both late approval for the project and some partner capacity issues in getting contracts approved and signed, there is no significant concern about outcome or outputs at this stage and all assumptions are holding broadly true. There is a budgetary impact from this delay - see section 5 below for our suggested way forward.

We are not in a position, yet, to report against any Standard Indicators.

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 participation of CEH in the project as a partner rather than a contractor was discussed during development of the project, including as part of the interview process between submission of the proposal and approval. In the end CEH was not included as a partner in the final submission. We have re-visited this decision alongside CEH and our Territory partners and concluded, after discussions with NIRAS, that there are advantages to CEH being a partner rather than a contractor. A change request to support this will be submitted by 1st November 2024. This will affect neither overall budget nor timetable for the project but, we believe, will positively affect how we all work together on the INNS horizon scanning exercise and associated activities.

The time taken in getting contracts between RSPB and Government partners signed has taken longer than expected though 60% are now signed. Given that this will likely have a knock-on impact on the employment of the Biosecurity Officers there will be a budgetary impact (underspend) this FY. A financial change request will be submitted in December 2024 with a proposal to deal with 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:

No

Change Request reference if known: *If you submitted a financial Change Request, you can find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome*

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024)

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 2025)?

Yes No

4c. If you expect and 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. 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 BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

Due to delays in signing contracts and inevitable consequent delays in appointing Biosecurity Officers there will be a Financial Change Request submitted in December to enable management of the underspend on salaries. Given that the appointment of Biosecurity Officers is a fundamental aspect of the project it is likely that a project extension will be proposed to enable the Officers to be employed for their full terms.

6. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent annual report. If your project was subject to an Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessment, please use this space to comment on any changes to international human rights risks, and to address any additional mitigations outlined in your offer letters. Please provide the comment and then your response. If you have already provided a response, please confirm when.

n/a

Checklist for submission

For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1st April 2024)	
Have you responded to any additional feedback (other than caveats) received in the letter you received to say your application was successful which requested response at HYR (including safeguarding points)? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	Yes
If not already submitted, have you attached your risk register ?	n/a
For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1st April 2024)	
Have you responded to feedback from your latest Annual Report Review ? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	n/a
For All Projects	
Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email.	Yes
Submit to BCFs-Report@niras.com .	Yes
Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	n/a
Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project ?	Yes
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	n/a