

Darwin Initiative Main/Post/D+ Project Half Year Report (due 31 October 2016)

Project Ref No	DPLUS048
Project Title	South Georgia Habitat Restoration Project: Post-Baiting Phase
Country(ies)/Territory(ies)	South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands
Lead Organisation	South Georgia Heritage Trust (SGHT)
Partner(s)	
Project Leader	Prof. Tony Martin
Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)	HYR1
Project website/ Twitter/ Blog/ Instagram etc	www.sght.org www.facebook.com/pages/South-Georgia-Heritage-Trust/107047869335869 https://twitter.com/SGHTcharitysite
Funder (DFID/Defra)	Defra

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

[At the outset of this report I should state, at the request of LTS (Eilidh Young), that the second element of the original proposal, the conference, was not funded under this grant and consequently there is no requirement for it to be reported upon here. However, the conference is going ahead and, for interest, planning for this event is briefly mentioned below.]

Post-baiting survey for any surviving rodents

Excellent progress has been made in preparing for fieldwork at the end of 2017, and nothing has slipped behind schedule. Further to consultations with the Government of the Territory (GSGSSI), agreement was reached whereby GSGSSI would provide some logistical support for the work (see 2a below), but this has not changed the basic shape of the project. The key developments have been as follows:

- Our first choice of yacht and experienced skipper have been booked, and a deposit paid.
- After a competitive bidding process, two excellent dog handlers and their three certified dogs have been contracted for the duration of the main charter expedition (see 2a below)
- The early-season charter will be aboard the Fishery Protection Vessel *Pharos SG*.
- An EIA for the dog work has been written and reviewed
- The Operational Plan has been written and reviewed
- The process of selecting survey sites with Government is underway
- A team for the fieldwork has been selected
- Fieldwork equipment is in place

Conference

Planning for the conference is on schedule, and international interest is as high as expected. Key development areas follow:

- Venue has been booked (Dalhousie Building, Univ of Dundee)
- Website has been set up (www.islandinvasives2017.com)
- Registration, Call for papers, Abstract submission and accommodation portal all launched
- Conference Advisory Group, Scientific Chair and Local Organiser appointed
- Keynote speakers selected and invited; all accepted.
- Professional conference organising company appointed for some elements
- Schedule of events agreed and advertised
- Sponsorship and under-writing commitments have been secured

2a. 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.

One significant change has been made to the project plan, and another is being considered, but both are elective and would bring benefits. The first and most important such change is that the search for surviving rodents will now be augmented by the use of specialist 'sniffer' dogs - trained to detect rodents. These dogs and their handlers/trainers are from New Zealand, where such dogs are commonly used for this purpose. They will greatly add robustness to the conclusion that South Georgia is now free of rodents, if indeed no evidence of them is discovered during the survey. The deployment and collection of inert devices will continue as originally planned.

A potential change is that the survey of a large chunk of land near the island's permanent base, the Barff Peninsula, may be carried out by a team based on land rather than on the charter boat. There would be two substantial advantages in this. Firstly, the Barff survey would then be less vulnerable to poor weather. Secondly, the ground-based work would be in addition to the boat-based survey, so survey effort would be increased. The cost of supporting a team on land is a small fraction of what would be needed if they were boat-based, so the additional cost would be modest and affordable.

No significant problems have yet been encountered.

We have requested consent from LTS International for a small change to the budget - a virement between budget lines to reflect likely expenditure.

2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

The logistical changes have not been discussed with LTS International, because the changes only augment what was originally planned, improve the quality of the project, have no impact on the Darwin Plus grant and do not affect the workplan, schedule, outputs etc.

Formal change request submitted:	Yes, for the budget virement.
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Received confirmation of change acceptance	Not yet.
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3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g., more than £5,000) underspend

in your budget for this year?

No

3b. If yes, then you need to 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 rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a rebudget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary.

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

No. Planning and preparations are moving ahead on schedule.

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with LTS International through a Change Request.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk . The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g., Subject: 22-035 Darwin Half Year Report**