



Darwin Initiative/D+ Project
Half Year Report
(due 31st October 2019)

Project reference	DPLUS096
Project title	Building Ascension Island's Biosecurity Capability
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha
Lead organisation	Ascension Island Government Conservation and Fisheries Department
Partner(s)	St Helena Agriculture and Natural Resources Division
Project leader	Diane Baum
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	31/10/2019 HYR1
Project website/blog/social media etc.	N/A

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).

Output 1

1.1 Create import health standards for fresh food, aggregate, plant materials and sea containers that are consistent with St Helena and international best practice (due for completion Y1 Q2)

Import Health Standards have been prepared for fresh produce, aggregate, plant material, containers and packaging material, live animals and vehicles. These have been based on those of St Helena but modified to reflect the different risk profiles of the territories such as the lack of an agriculture industry on Ascension. **Output completed.**

1.2 Incorporate health standards into new regulations (due for completion Y1 Q3)

The requirement for importers to comply with the Import Health Standards forms part of the draft Biosecurity Ordinance that is being drawn up and consulted on. **Output partially completed.**

1.3 Communicate health standards to importing organisations and create verification and reporting procedures (due for completion Y1 Q2)

Consultation on the Import Health Standards will begin in November 2019. Guidance documents and inspection and reporting templates have been prepared. **Output partially completed.**

1.4 One member of AIG staff travel to St Helena and UK to conduct inspection visits and communicate new import procedures with main importers (due for completion Y1 Q2)

Biosecurity Officer Vicky Knight visited one importer, a shipping agent and customs officials on St Helena and the main freight forwarding and shipping agent for Ascension in the UK in May and June 2019.

Output completed.

1.5 Communicate new biosecurity restrictions to SA Airlink for inclusion in passenger information and include biosecurity declaration in entry visa (due for completion Y1 Q1)

Information for inclusion in SA passenger information and text of declaration for entry visa has been drafted and but will not be included until legislation is in place. **Output partially completed.**

Output 2

2.1 Three AIG staff travel to St Helena to receive training in inspection techniques (due for completion Y1 Q1)

In May 2019 Vicky Knight, Karan Singh and Dee Baum travelled to St Helena to receive training from their established Biosecurity Team. We observed and participated in import inspections during the unloading of two cargo vessels. **Output completed.**

2.2 Trained AIG staff in turn train 6 staff on Ascension in inspection techniques (due for completion Y1 Q1)

This has not occurred yet as it became apparent that the techniques learnt in St Helena would need some adaptation for Ascension. We have been designing and testing an Ascension inspection model (see 2.3 below) and decided it would only be sensible to train further AIG staff in these methods once they are agreed. Training material is being developed and we intend to run classroom based courses in early January 2020 to allow practical testing of the inspection methods when the next cargo ship arrives in late January. Sadly the frequency of our ships is limited and this will cause some delay relative to the initial project timetable, but it is essential we carry out training in a 'real-world' situation. **Output not completed. Rescheduled for Y1 Q3.**

2.3 Inspection protocol designed and tested (due for completion Y1 Q2)

An inspection protocol has been designed and will be fully tested on the ship arriving in late November. The frequency of ships and aircraft arriving on the island means our opportunities for testing the protocols are constrained and this has delayed the completion of this output relative to the initial project timetable, but it will be completed by Q3 and still allow staff to be trained and begin implementing the protocol within the project period. **Output partially completed.**

2.4 Inspections carried out on all shipments (due for completion Y1 Q4)

This output was not intended to be carried out in this reporting period and we are still on schedule to begin full implementation of the inspection protocol by Y1Q3. However, through development of the inspection protocol and wider Biosecurity Strategy, it has become evident that inspection of all shipments would not be a good use of resources. Instead, pathway and consignment risk analysis has been carried out to design a strategy whereby the frequency of inspections will depend on the overall level of risk and will be modified in the future based on the incidents of threat interceptions as these data are collected.

Output not completed

2.5 Simulated incident exercise to test effectiveness of inspections (due for completion Y1 Q4)

This output was not due to be undertaken during this reporting period. It is being planned as part of the training programme delivered to AIG staff and will take place in Y1Q4. **Output not completed.**

Output 3

3.1 Purchase of container, equipment and pesticides (due for completion Y1 Q1)

Some surveillance monitoring equipment has been purchased, but the container, pesticide application equipment and pesticides have not been purchased yet. We received conflicting advice on the best purchases to make and potential changes to which pesticides are licenced for use in the EU and so wanted to undertake more research. We have now identified the products we wish to order and plan to have them delivered on the January ship. **Output not completed.**

3.2 Three members of AIG staff travel to St Helena to receive training and gain qualification in the safe use of pesticides (due for completion Y1 Q1)

The pesticide course on St Helena was cancelled meaning this could not be delivered as planned. One member of AIG staff travelled to the UK to receive training in pesticide application and pest management strategies. A further member of AIG staff will be trained in the use of pesticides in the UK in Y1Q4. The recruitment of a member of AIG staff who had an existing qualification in the safe use of pesticides means that AIG will have sufficient people trained to undertake this. **Output partially completed.**

3.3 Biosecurity incident plans created, tested through exercises then refined (due for completion Y1 Q4)

Biosecurity incident response plans have been prepared for the following scenarios:

- Detection of introduced vertebrate(s)
- Detection of introduced invertebrates
- Detection of introduced plants
- Detection of seeds in newly-arrived cargo
- Detection of unlicensed imports of soil, hay, straw or other material likely to harbour non-native species

These will be tested as part of the training programme delivered to AIG staff in Y1Q4. **Output partially completed.**

Output 4.

4.1 Devise surveillance monitoring strategy to capture high risk species identified in horizon scanning project (due for completion Y1 Q3)

A surveillance monitoring strategy has been prepared covering the five highest risk species identified during a horizon scanning exercise. This involves the use of baited traps aimed specifically at ant species, pitfall traps for other crawling insects, mosquito trapping and the trial of pheromone traps for fruit fly species. **Output completed.**

4.2 Deploy traps at five locations on island to cover points of entry and different habitat types. Begin monthly checks (due for completion Y1 Q4)

Traps deployed at five locations including all sites where containers are unloaded on the island. Monthly checks are underway with results stored in a dedicated database. **Output completed and ongoing.**

4.3 Review and strengthen existing sample preparation protocols and relationship with FERA to ensure ongoing identification of specimens (due for completion Y1 Q2)

New techniques for pinning and preserving invertebrates are being used on Ascension to create a reference collection on island. We have also successfully used a compound microscope to take magnified digital images for species identification. Ongoing support from FERA or other UK-based organisations is dependent on funding from the UK Government, but we are exploring other institutions that may be able to provide a commercial identification service. **Output partially completed.**

Output 5

5.1 Creation of leaflets and signs be available at entry ports, online and provided to all visa and import applicants (due for completion Y1 Q2)

The text and artwork for leaflets and banners have been prepared but not yet printed. A dedicated biosecurity page is being created for the new AIG website and this will contain links to all relevant documents and guidance for importers and visitors to Ascension. This will go live in Y1Q3. **Output partially completed.**

5.2 Meetings with island employers and open public meetings (due for completion Y1 Q3)

Initial meetings with the military and civilian employing organisations on the island to discuss the

introduction of the new biosecurity system and its practical implications have taken place. More detailed discussions and wider consultation with the public was delayed by the Council election and the need to gain renewed backing for the policy direction. Public meetings and further detailed consultation with employing organisations will be held in Y1Q3. **Output partially completed.**

5.3 Dedicated biosecurity themed activities with school and community groups and focus on biosecurity at AIGCFD visitor centre and event stalls (due for completion Y1 Q4)

Biosecurity-themed games that illustrate the need for early detection and response to non-native threats have been created and successfully played with children at the Ascension school and by Cubs and Scouts completing their Environment Badge. A biosecurity display has been produced to form the main part of the Conservation stall at the Christmas Fayre. **Output partially completed**

5.4 Recruit and train volunteers to be vigilant for new introductions (due for completion Y1 Q4)

Two volunteers have been trained and assist with the surveillance monitoring. Bespoke training events with walking groups and diving clubs are planned in Y1 Q4. **Output partially completed.**

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.

The training visit to St Helena was extremely helpful and allowed us to observe and participate in an established biosecurity system in a territory with similar import pathways to our own. However, during the trip it became clear that the differences between Ascension and St Helena in terms of staff resource and their focus on protecting an agriculture industry (that we do not have) meant that there would be a greater need to adapt the St Helena inspection system to suit Ascension than expected. We have now completed that exercise and created a specific Inspection Procedures document for Ascension, but this has led to knock on delays for some training and implementation outputs (Outputs 2.2 and 2.3). The low frequency of ships arriving on Ascension also means opportunities to train and implement the protocols are limited. However, we have completed all the groundwork for these activities and will be able to complete them within the project timetable.

The significant implications of introducing a new biosecurity system meant it needed to be discussed with the new Island Council and so publication of the overall strategy needed to be postponed until after the Council elections in late September 2019. This has caused some delay to consultation and awareness raising activities as an agreed strategy was needed as the foundation for these. We have conducted initial consultation and awareness raising activities looking at the general threat posed by non-native species and the type of system Ascension is likely to introduce, but now have Council backing to begin a detailed consultation exercise based on the strategy. This has caused a slight delay to some of the consultation and publicity outputs (1.3, 1.5) but we are confident these can still be delivered by Y1Q4.

The planned safe use of pesticide training planned on St Helena had to be rescheduled and this meant AIG staff were unable to participate. We instead looked for training in the UK and one member of AIG staff has now received training in the safe use of pesticides and a wider suite of pest management skills for the control on high risk species introductions to Ascension. We have also managed to combine further training in the UK for a member of staff who will be there on annual leave in Y1Q4. As a result, within the same initial budget, we will be able to train two members of staff in pesticide use and have one member of staff with broader pest management skills. This combined with the recruitment of a person with existing pesticide

qualifications means we will achieve the same capacity within AIG as initially planned.

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

Discussed with LTS: No

Formal change request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance No

3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g., more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

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

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. Additionally, if you were funded under R25 and asked to provide further information by your first half year report, please attach your response as a separate 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 DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to 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: 25-035 Darwin Half Year Report**