



## Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020)

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| <b>Project reference</b>                  | DPLUS 098  |
| <b>Project title</b>                      | Restoring and safeguarding wetlands of the Caribbean UKOTs   |
| <b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>        | Anguilla, Montserrat, Turks and Caicos Islands   |
| <b>Lead organisation</b>                  | Royal Society for the Protection of Birds  |
| <b>Partner(s)</b>                         | Anguilla National Trust, Montserrat National Trust, Turks and Caicos National Trust, Department of Coastal and Environmental Resources (DECR), Montserrat Government Department of Environment |
| <b>Project leader</b>                     | Mr. Charlie Butt   |
| <b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR2)</b> | HYR2 30 <sup>th</sup> October 2020   |
| <b>Project website/blog/social media</b>  | <a href="#">FB article on Wheeland cleanup</a> ; <a href="#">Facebook Live discussion re: Wheeland</a> ; <a href="#">Photography Competition</a> .   |

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

The Covid-19 global pandemic has hampered elements of the project yet the teams have largely been able to continue, where necessary adapting to different ways of working.

*Activities 1.1 -1.4:* 1.1,1.2 and 1.4 were completed in Yr 1 and 1.3 is ongoing at all project sites.

*Activity 1.5:* Mangrove has been planted at East End Pond Conservation Area and a viewing platform is currently being constructed. Salt harvesting activity held at Road Salt Pond IBA end of July 2020 (included a cultural heritage focus). Montserrat: meetings held with government in August to clarify land tenure status with respect to the proposed wetland creation. *TCI:* Plans for construction of viewing platform have advanced and contracts for a major clean-up of Wheeland are being finalised.

*Activity 1.6 Anguilla:* ANT met with the newly elected Minister for Natural Resources, regarding the project. ANT is proactively responding to threats to Road Salt Pond IBA from a mega-yacht marina and hotel and residential property development proposal. *Montserrat:* meetings held with Government regarding development plans and sand mining activity in the Belham Valley; site meetings held with the Chief Surveyor regarding land take and demarcation for mixed land use, including the wetland habitat. *TCI:* Trust engaged the Planning Department to request approval to construct viewing decks and signage to promote the value of Wheeland Pond wetland. TCI Crown Land Unit engaged regarding Wheeland Pond land ownership.

*Activity 2.1* was completed in Year 1 for all territories.

*Activity 2.2* completed in Year 1. Additional flood modelling studies, commissioned by the RSPB, are currently being concluded, which will assist with identifying habitat restoration opportunities and identify nature-based solutions to climate impacts.

*Activity 2.3* in Anguilla a viewing platform and boardwalk at East End Pond Conservation Area is under construction; in Montserrat, a wetland concept will be integrated with a proposed golf course design and in TCI; professional companies have been engaged to remove heavy debris

and construct a view point with an information board about Wheeland and the avifauna it supports.

*Activity 2.4 Anguilla:* East End Pond to be adopted by local youth group as community project from October 2020. ANT is postponing wetland restoration initiatives at Road Salt Pond pending outcome of community meetings to discuss the proposed marina development. *Montserrat:* Covid19 has prevented direct face to face engagement with sand miners and rehabilitation training. *TCI:* community outreach has mainly been virtual via social media and other means.

*Activity 3.1 Anguilla:* ANT has facilitated four public wetland excursions; a questionnaire has been prepared and disseminated to determine baseline wetland awareness and introduce wetlands concepts in Montserrat and; bird and site surveys conducted at Wheeland (TCI) in July and a photo competition with prizes was held to raise wetlands awareness: see here, here and here.

*Activity 3.2 Anguilla:* The ANT presented *Shovel Ready Nature-Based Solutions in the UK Overseas Territories: Anguilla* at the RSPB-organised nature-based solutions webinar on 16 September 2020 (86 attendees, including representatives from DEFRA and the UK House of Lords). *Montserrat:* Meetings held with Government Officials and MNT and RSPB have responded to the recent Belham Valley plan consultation, with its specific focus on sand mining. *TCI:* partners engaged government about wetlands value through the recent TCI spatial plan consultation; RSPB submitted a joint response with the Marine Conservation Society.

*Activity 3.3 Anguilla:* The ANT is currently organising a restoration activity day at East End Pond Conservation Area with Anguilla insurance companies as the target audience/participants. *Montserrat:* At least three (3) stakeholder meetings convened during the reporting period: including Montserrat Tourist Board and a local developer, Mr. Dwayne Hixon. Outline concept for Mr Hixon's golf course and beach bar shared with the project team. *TCI:* International Coastline Clean-Up Day provided an opportunity for the team to partner with KimCha Village business along with volunteers and staff to remove trash – seven large bags - from the coastline area associated with Wheeland Pond.

*Activity 3.4 Anguilla:* The ANT is working with a local school Sixth Form Biology class on a wetlands restoration study to be launched in October 2020 and will compare growth and survival of mangrove species (red, black, white) under different conditions within the EEPKA. Results will inform restoration methodologies both within the EEPKA and other Anguillan wetlands. *Montserrat:* DOE staff actively involved in engaging schools and the public on shorebirds and wetlands. *TCI:* To celebrate Youth Day, students from local schools and a local college acted as 'citizen scientists' for the afternoon conducting bird identification exercises followed by birdwatching.

*Activity 3.5 RSPB* commissioned TCI-based environmental consultancy to develop targeted materials and encourage online civil society participation in the spatial plan consultation.

*Activity 4.1* Completed in YR1 and ongoing since.

*Activity 4.2* Completed in YR1 for each Territory.

*Activity 4.3 Montserrat:* MNT working with RSPB provided feedback/input on the proposed modification of the Belham Valley Local Area Plan. See also 3.5 above.

*Activity 4.4* a cross Territory virtual meeting is to be held on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2020 to facilitate sharing of experiences, challenges and approaches to wetlands management.

**2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months (for Covid-19 specific delays/problems, please use 2b). Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.**

**Anguilla:** In June 2020, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with a developer for the construction of a mega-yacht marina for Road Salt Pond IBA (located in the Sandy Ground

community). The MOU calls for an environmental impact assessment. Most members of the Sandy Ground community do not support the project although support for the marina has been voiced within other communities across the island. The ANT has decided not to engage in any restoration activities for the time being with efforts instead likely focusing on advocacy and community engagement and support. RSPB has and continues to offer support in addition to the resources available under Darwin+. **Montserrat Lessons Learnt:** Momentum on this project was impacted by the change in administration and there were some fundamental policy directives surrounding land tenure issues that were needed to assist with implementation – early identification of these issues and dialogue at the appropriate levels needed to support smooth transition and project administration. **Turks and Caicos:** Limited organisational capacity remains a challenge for both TCI partners. One way in which wetland bird ID capacity in TCNT has been addressed is through a closer link with the DECR's in-house ecology expert via WhatsApp and other channels. As DECR cannot actively get to the project site due to Covid19 and other pressures, TCNT are leading on the wetland bird monitoring with mentoring and assistance from the DECR. RSPB continues to provide partner to partner strengthening support and guidance.

**2b. Please outline any specific issues which your project has encountered as a result of Covid-19. Where you have adapted your project activities in response to the pandemic, please briefly outline how you have done so here. Explain what residual impact there may be on your project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.**

**Anguilla:** No significant impact on project so far.

**Montserrat:** Stakeholder engagement activities have been delayed; arrangements are being made to hold meetings virtually using the Zoom platform. Schools were closed as a result of COVID-19 and this affect the education outreach activities which were scheduled for Q1 YR2. No increase in budget expected however spending has been protracted as a result of the postponement of some activities. No face to face engagement with sand miners and training in rehabilitation by the specialist consultant has been possible due to travel restrictions.

**TCI:** Significant impact recorded on project due to measures implemented by government to curb spread of Covid-19. No inter-island travel permitted, this prevents DECR expert ecologist travelling to Providenciales where Wheeland is situated. Local travel restrictions have limited movement of personnel between islands and within communities. Schools were closed as a result of COVID-19 and this has affected the education outreach activities. Efforts are being made to cover public outreach components via social media platforms (i.e. Facebook)

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

Discussed with LTS: Yes

Formal change request submitted: Yes

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes

**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. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.**

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

*Montserrat team feedback:* No, save and except, that we take this opportunity to express our gratitude for the technical assistance and financial support provide to Montserrat under this project.

**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 DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to [Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk](mailto: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: 25-001 Darwin Half Year Report**