



Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (Due 31st October 2020)

Project reference	DPLUS104
Project title	Conserving St Helena's endemic invertebrates through invasive invertebrate control
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha
Lead organisation	St Helena National Trust
Partner(s)	St Helena Government (SHG), IUCN Mid Atlantic Island Invertebrate Specialist Group (MAISG) c/o Species Recovery Trust, Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI), Buglife
Project leader	Mike Jervis
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	Weekly update of the project on social media, (https://www.facebook.com/Buglives) Updates on the St Helena National trust website. (http://www.trust.org.sh/shnt-conservation-programmes/natural-heritage/invertebrates/)

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 project started on 8th June 2020, due to the effect of coronavirus which delayed the selection and announcement of the successful projects. The Trust received our success letter for this project in May 2020.

A steering group for the project was formed which consist of representatives from our partners: CABI, IUCN Mid Atlantic Island Invertebrate Specialist Group (MAISG), St Helena Government (SHG) departments (Environment, Natural Resources & Planning Directorate (ENRP) which includes: Environmental Management Division (EMD) and Agricultural and Natural Resources Division (ANRD) and Buglife. Terms of reference for the group have been produced and agreed on.

To date there have been 3 steering group meetings held in which the following has been discussed:

- project delivery and issues,
- contributing to and signing off research plans
- Progressing monitoring plans and citizen science.
- A risk register and indicator tracker for the project have both been composed and will be regularly reviewed by the steering group.

Two project field assistants (Daryl Joshua and Christy-Jo Scipio) were recruited and started employment on the project in September 2020. They are now undergoing in-house training on invertebrates (e.g. monitoring and identification etc.) and familiarising themselves with the project deliverables. We have also collaborated provided the opportunity with our partners in SHG departments to provide them with the opportunity to undertake biosecurity and pest

control training learning skills an gaining knowledge on how and why the protection of our borders from foreign and potentially invasive invertebrates are important.

Good progress has been made on Output 1, Activity 1.1 has been completed with research plans produced for the *Vespula vulgaris*, *Pheidole megacephala*, *Linepithema humile* (2 ant species) and *Miomantis caffra* with support from the steering group members and international control specialists (Professor Michael Samways, Dr Richard Toft, Dr Bob Brown etc.). Progress has also been made on activities 1.2 to 1.5 with workshop ideas being formulated, monitoring methods identified and trial phase ideas discussed. Bait for *Vespula vulgaris* and *Pheidole megacephala* have been identified, the purchasing of the baits are being explored however we have encountered some difficulties with shipping which this needs to be well planned. The wasp bait is a protein based bait therefore it must be frozen at all times; at the moment there is a high risk that the bait could be left out and go off. We are investigating using a substitute of a poison solution that has the same active ingredient as vespex without the protein base, which will then be mixed protein (e.g. tuna).

The Environment and Natural Resources committee (ENRC) supports the project and will provide a license to import and use the bait.

Output 2 cannot be initiated until Output 1 has been completed.

In regards to Output 3 the training needs for St Helena's invasive invertebrates and the possible opportunities have been discussed by the steering group. CABI are taking a lead on developing a training programme and MAISG will be carrying out a revision of the invasive elements of the Invertebrate Conservation Strategy.

On Output 4 expertise from CEH, Buglife and the University of Gloucestershire in a 'citizen-science' sub-group are helping to formulate citizen science and outreach elements of the project and progress has been made on activities 4.1 to 4.3. A baseline on invasive invertebrate knowledge has been compiled and a public stall is being arranged at the Jamestown market, through which we plan to engage with the public by informing and gathering their views on the aims of the project. Two newspaper articles have been written and published to announce the project and provide an overview on the projects aims, shortly 2 additional newspaper articles to be published on the proposed the target species.

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 late starting of the project has had a significant impact on the timetable of the project, as many activities (e.g. 1.1) are moving forward quickly so as not to cause any further delays. As a direct result of the projects shortened first year we have modified the projects timetable to enable completion of Year 1 activities on time.

The late receipt of funds for both Q1 and Q2 has been challenging, as it has delayed many of the projects essential start-up activities such as the organisation of project consultation workshops, investigating and procuring control baits and procurement of daily working equipment (e.g. laptops) for staff working. However, we are still hopeful to be able to deliver these elements in relation to project timescales despite delays but contingency times (particularly for bait procurement) are now very tight. LTS were made aware of the impact of funding delays but we are not yet at a stage where a change request is necessary.

In regards to the budget there will be an underspend on the international travel which we will submit a financial change request to transfer this money from Yr. 1 to Yr. 2 due to effect of covid-19. Due to late start of the project international procurement and field work has been delayed which we will submit a financial change request to transfer this money from Yr. 1 to Yr.2.

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:	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?

Funding delays has caused a big impact on the project where, we have been unable to purchase any equipment or materials, postpones events and full staff salaries weren't issued until the Trust received the claims for Q1 and 2.

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. 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**