



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

Project reference	DPLUS111
Project title	Building Resilient, Participatory Management of Marine Biodiversity in Hurricane-prone BVI
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	British Virgin Islands
Lead organisation	Marine Conservation Society (MCS), UK
Partner(s)	Association of Reef Keepers (ARK), BVI: Co-lead partner Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DoAF), Government of the Virgin Islands. Ministry of Natural Resources, Labour and Immigration (MNRLI), Government of the Virgin Islands University of Exeter (UoE), UK.
Project leader	Dr Peter Richardson
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	<i>HYR1 – 28.10.20</i>
Project website/blog/social media	<i>http://www.bviark.org/</i>

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 in July 2020 (Q2) as requested (and agreed) in the Change Request dated 30.06.20. Inevitably rolling Covid-19 restrictions in the BVI have delayed some aspects of the work, in particular any field work involving the UK project partners. Nevertheless, since July we have initiated the following activities, this report up to the end of September 2020.

1.1 Y1Q2 – Detailed final project workplan and MoU, incorporating data sharing agreement, developed and signed off by all partner organisations – the workplan is in the form of an interactive action-tracker with risk register that all partners have access to, and the partnership agreement has been finalised and is with partners for signing. We have held minuted and regular project partner meetings to discuss and agree project actions in light of Covid-19.

1.2 Y1Q3 - At least 3 DoAF staff members trained in sampling protocol to monitor landed turtles through bespoke workshop and in-situ... - the protocols have been finalized and we await an opportunity when we can schedule in training workshops for the DoAF staff members.

2.1 Y1Q2 - Collate all historical and existing data into functioning national database and review to inform monitoring and turtle flipper tagging programme – historical publications have been, and continue to be, collated on a shared Google Drive, and ARK has accessed all historical data held by the MNRLI.

2.2 Y1Q2-Y3Q4 - Monthly boat-based turtle flipper-tagging surveys at 6 index foraging sites – all visited at least twice in one year – ARK has initiated these tagging trips, with 2 trips carried out so far, involving 3 turtle captures (up to end of Sept). One of these captures was of a juvenile green turtle with extensive fibropapillomatosis (tumours). The turtle was taken into care, assessed by Government vets with overseas expert advice, and is currently being held for treatment.

2.4 Y1Q2-Y3Q1 - Quarterly aerial surveys and ground-truthing of 5 index nesting sites – the first aerial surveys have been scheduled for October 2020.

4.1 Y1Q1-Y3Q4 - At least three press releases issued strategically in years 1, 2 and 3 to announce the project and solicit participation; encourage participation in the CVM; and announce the results – we have developed a communications strategy and the first press release was issued by the partners on the 30.06.20 (<https://bvi.gov.vg/media-centre/territory-benefit-turtle-conservation-grants>). In addition, a televised and online launch event was scheduled by the Virgin Islands Government for October 26th, with all project partners attending.

4.2 Y1Q1-Y3Q4 - Creation of posts for partners social media accounts, producing at least 1 post per month – The partners have produced some social media posts about the project, with the first in June and July (e.g. <https://www.facebook.com/ARKBVI/>), but these have increased in October as a result of increased project activity.

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.

No problems that were not Covid-19 related.

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.

The project field activities and stakeholder engagement activities have been delayed due to Covid-19 restrictions in British Virgin Islands, including earlier restrictions on boat traffic, restrictions on gatherings and ongoing restrictions at the borders. This has impacted all work involving the UK partners, and has delayed the in-water work and the training sessions.

While in-water work has eventually started after lifting of restrictions, other work is delayed. Given that the Virgin Islands Government has announced the opening of the borders, with strict conditions, in December 2020, we anticipate starting some of the UK partner work in the new year. We are keeping a watching brief on Covid-19 developments, and will notify Darwin if we anticipate further delays that impact the timing of forecasted spending.

An online launch event was scheduled in October to replace and face-to-face project introductions we had hoped for.

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? Possibly, still not sure – will know in January – depends on Covid restrictions.

Yes Estimated underspend: Possibly

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?

No issues to report. Our monitoring process has started with the first quarterly project partner meeting, and the development of a risk register led by Dr Chris Tuckett, MCS.

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**