

Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus Half Year Report

Note: If there is any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website, please ensure you clearly highlight this.

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2022

Project reference	DPLUS114
Project title	Tropical Important Plant Areas and Important Plant Species of TCI
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)
Lead partner	Royal Botanic Gardens Kew
Partner(s)	Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR), Government of TCI
Project leader	<i>Stuart Cable</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	<i>31 October 2022; HYR1</i>
Project website/blog/social media	<i>@KewUKOTs #KewTCI Project website ideas under development</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).

After a 2-year, Defra-approved deferment to the project start due to the Covid-19 pandemic and major staff changes at Kew we successfully re-formulated the delivery project team (Defra-approved) and started the project on 1 April 2022. We officially launched the project in TCI with a workshop and the first period of joint fieldwork in TCI in May 2022. We have enjoyed a productive first 6 months and the project implementation plan is on track:

Output 1: Tropical Important Plant Areas (TIPAs) Geographic Information System (GIS) established:

1.1: Compile existing TCI data into project GIS: Project GIS established. 2020 TCI habitat map and 12m resolution digital terrain model obtained from JNCC and approved for project use and being incorporated into GIS. Spatial intern, Eloise Budd, hired at Kew for 1-year to work on project GIS with Kew's spatial analysis team.

1.2: Incorporate field data into project GIS: Workflow for incorporation of digital field data into project GIS developed. Initial field data being imported to test workflow.

Output 2: Capacity building to enable DECR to identify TIPAs:

1.1: Produce and agree Training and Evaluation Plan: Training and Evaluation Plan workbook compiled and agreed by project team. Plan updated with training details from May 2022 fieldwork. Workbook will be reviewed regularly by the Steering Group.

1.2 Training of DECR staff in TIPAs methodology, field data collection and survey techniques delivered by Kew specialists: Training in field data collection and survey methodology using mobile phones and the Survey 123 App delivered to 4 DECR staff (4 male) during May joint fieldtrip. DECR team putting training into practice by continuing field survey

programme. Data and specimen collections continuing. TCI WhatsApp Plant Group established as a platform for discussions, questions, and sharing of data and information.

Output 3: Data and sample collection to inform species threat assessments and phylogenomics:

3.1: Field surveys to gather species and habitat data and samples: Field data collection protocols agreed. Field survey programme started. Occurrence data points for target species collected during May joint fieldtrip at sites on Providenciales, North Caicos and Middle Caicos. DNA collections made from target *Agave* and *Encyclia* species for phylogenomic studies in year 2. Seed collection made from *Agave millspaughii*. DECR team completed survey of *Encyclia* at Muijin Harbour, Middle Caicos and Wild Cow Run, North Caicos. Survey comprised location data and collection of DNA and herbarium specimens. Joint planning complete for November fieldtrip to TCI by 2-person Kew team.

3.2: Collate available species occurrence data and digitise new records: All historical TCI species occurrence data compiled into GIS map and uploaded to mobile phones for cross-reference in the field. All new records are born digital using Survey 123 App and are uploaded to ArcGIS Online once connection to the internet is available so that data are continuously added to the project database. DECR team continuing to use Survey 123 App for data collection and uploading to ArcGIS Online. Data received at Kew and added into project GIS.

3.3: Undertake species threat assessments: Red Listing workflow established. Red Listing started with list of 118 potential Least Concern Species generated by the Least Concern Automated Tool (<https://spbachman.shinyapps.io/rapidLC/>). 40 draft assessments completed and ready for external review. Reviewers being approached.

Output 4: A network of Tropical Important Plant Areas (TIPAs) identified for TCI

4.1: Undertake workshop to engage stakeholders and launch project: Successful hybrid workshop and project launch held in TCI and online, 12-13 May 2022. 22 people attended workshop at the Department of Environment & Coastal Resources, and 6 people attended online from TCI, UK and USA. Workshop opened by DECR Permanent Secretary, Cherylann Jones. Workshop report completed. TCI public TV attended opening ceremony and broadcast material from the workshop, including interviews and parts of presentations (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CY2h9bsrKGE>)

4.2: Identify TCI TIPAs National Team members: Membership of the National TIPAs Team discussed during launch workshop and first Steering Group meeting. National Team membership and roles being finalised.

Output 5: Important Plants and Tropical Important Plant Areas of the TCI guide and interpretation produced for local use

5.1: Design & agree TCI TIPAs Brand: Design ideas for TCI TIPAs brand discussed during workshop and first Steering Group meeting. Main components of brand agreed (archipelago map, image of TCI endemic plant, plus acronym TCI TIPAs) Agreement on including *Encyclia* as the plant element of the logo. Final composition of the brand/logo agreed. Obtaining quotes for production of logo.

Output 6: Monitoring and Evaluation and project reporting

6.1 Produce Monitoring and Evaluation Plan: M&E Plan produced and being used to monitor project progress. M&E Plan regularly updated and discussed at Steering Group meetings.

6.2: Produce quarterly progress reports: Monthly full project team meetings instigated to monitor progress. Minutes and action points produced and circulated. Quarterly Progress reports (Y1Q2, Y1Q2) completed and reviewed by Steering Group.

6.3: Produce half-year and annual reports: Y1HYR1 produced (this document)

6.4: Undertake Steering Group meetings and produce minutes: Members of Steering Group identified. First quarterly Steering Group meeting held in TCI on 11/05/2022. Minutes produced, circulated, and agreed. Second quarterly Steering Group delayed due to lack of internet after Hurricane Fiona. Rearranged for Nov 2022.

2. 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.

TCI was hit by Hurricane Fiona in September 2022. DECR has good hurricane planning in place, and despite some local damage (flooding and felled trees), electricity and internet outages, the team in TCI are back up on their feet, and most infrastructure re-established. This has caused minor delays to on-going fieldwork, and the need to reschedule our second Steering Group meeting, but otherwise we see no real impact on project activities, timescales, or budgets.

The significant drop in the value of the pound against the US\$ together with the increase generally in prices on TCI for accommodation, food and petrol, as well as increased airfares is putting a strain on the budget. We are monitoring the situation closely and trying to ensure that we can complete all our planned activities within the original budget. Should the financial situation worsen, we will either have to revise the way we deliver some activities, or secure extra funds externally.

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

Discussed with NIRAS-LTS: Yes/No

Formal Change Request submitted: Yes/No

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/No

Change request reference if known:

4a. 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: £

4b. 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 re-budget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget 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.

5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

No

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response (including the submission of your risk register), or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response 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 NIRAS-LTS International through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to BCF-Reports@niras.com. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Half Year Report**