

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	DPlus125
Project title	Protecting Anguilla's biodiversity by building capacity in invasive plant management
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Anguilla
Lead partner	Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Government of Anguilla
Partner(s)	GB Non-native Species Secretariat; University of Durham, UK
Project leader	Rhon Connor
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022 (project months 7–12) HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	

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).

Output 1. Baseline knowledge on existing priority invasive plant species improved through surveys and mapping, and Territory database created.

Output 1 covers the main initial activities of the project and is where most progress has been made.

1.1. During and following a training workshop on plant survey techniques (April 2022) an initial set of maps and records was created of potential target species for eradication, using several software tools including iNaturalist, Google Forms and Google Maps. A map of potential sites for target species, including several identified during the workshop, can be found [here](#). A map of sites surveyed during and after the workshop can be found [here](#). To view survey details for a site, please click on the map pins. A link to the bespoke iNaturalist collection project for this DPlus project can be found [here](#). The surveys were conducted using a Google Forms form, which can be found [here](#) (a gmail account is required for access to this). Since establishing these initial maps, the Project Lead and Project Assistant have continued to carry out further survey work for target species throughout the main island, recording plant distribution by GPS.

1.2. A 4-day training workshop on plant survey techniques was carried out under the auspices of DNR in the facilities of Anguilla's Dept of Information Technology and E-Commerce Services (DITES) during the week of 18 April, led by W. Dawson (Durham University). Subjects covered included:

- the use of GPS for marking plant distributions and for survey tracking,
- uploading potential sites and actual records to Google Maps and Google Forms
- use of iNaturalist for contributing and identifying records, including photographs
- making maps in R
- systematic search for target plants, using a grid of uploaded equidistant waypoints

Daily field trips were used to practise, test and refine the techniques taught, and for training in target species identification. Please use the link [here](#) to access the Workshop Materials. The presentation slides for the workshop are a pdf file that can be accessed [here](#).

1.4 Materials (including publications on the flora of Anguilla and recent plant survey reports) were compiled as a basis for constructing an Introduced and Invasive Plants Database.

Output 2. Local capacity built through “learning by doing”, with the delivery of large-scale management interventions to eradicate invasive plant species.

2.1 The first of a series of training events was held, covering plant identification and survey (described more fully above).

Other activities under this Output are scheduled for later in the project.

Output 3. Key stakeholders (community members, hoteliers, Government and land managers) are actively engaged in early detection and removal of invasive plants.

3.1 Community engagement was begun at the April training workshop, described above. The workshop also established the basic tools (software, maps, apps etc: links given above) for citizen science contributions to invasive plant detection. During subsequent survey and mapping activities, stakeholders and the general public have been engaged to ascertain the location of targeted species and to raise their awareness of the threats posed by the target species to the Anguilla environment, agriculture, animal and human health.

Output 4. Lessons learned are consolidated into a long-term invasive plant management strategy, which is shared with other UKOTs in the region.

Activities under this output are scheduled for later in the project, although preliminary discussions regarding biosecurity protocols (Indicator 4.2) have already begun among partners and stakeholders.

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.

Staffing. The project has been severely delayed, largely owing to difficulties recruiting to the key position of Invasive Species Specialist, probably because of a combination of the high level of technical skills required, a small global pool of people with those skills (particularly plant eradication), challenges related to moving to Anguilla for 2–3 years and limitations on the terms and conditions of the post. This role (technical lead on the project) has been advertised four times, each time a suitable candidate was selected, and each time that person withdrew. In consequence, the temporary project consultant, initially hired to fill gaps and assist with staff recruitment, has continued to fulfil this role throughout this reporting period. Discussions were undertaken to explore different options for filling the project team leader role and it was decided to seek a project manager rather than a technical specialist. One potential candidate was identified, but sadly that person died during the recruitment process. At the close of this reporting period, the search for a project manager was continuing. Depending on the outcome of this, technical support measures will be designed as appropriate. A lesson might be to ensure that missing skills be supplied by expertise of TAG members, but in this case the TAG cannot completely replace this position, since none of its members resides in Anguilla. A partial solution is to use the project TAG to support a less technically specialised project manager, and recruitment to the latter position was in progress at the end of this reporting period.

Selection of plant species as eradication targets. The prioritisation process used in a pre-project workshop resulted in a list of potential target species, most of which were assessed during the April–May visit of the Project Consultant as not meeting accepted criteria as feasible eradication targets, for various reasons including misidentifications, the importance of their use by the local community, effective seed dispersal mechanisms, wide distribution etc. A new, more limited selection of potential eradication target species was selected and mapping activities have since focused on those.

Matching DPlus and Govt of Anguilla (GoA) financial systems. There were various delays to paying project staff owing mainly to the novelty of employing project-linked staff within the GoA system, combined with cash-flow difficulties. These have now been resolved.

Training workshop. The workshop held in April 2022, primarily intended as training in plant survey techniques, succeeded perhaps beyond expectations in that it provided an opportunity for project participants from the UK and Anguilla to meet face to face in formal and informal settings, leading to the formation of personal friendships across organisations that can only benefit the project. Despite the availability of e-communications for meetings and planning, the value of an in-person event in being able to draw in unforeseen participants and allow everyone to get to know and understand each other's background and points of view cannot be overstated. In the present case, the visit also provided the first opportunity for outside partners to review the situation of invasive plants in Anguilla and thereby make informed recommendations and contributions to the project's plans.

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

Formal Change Request submitted: Yes

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes

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?

A further change request will be submitted shortly, to take account of the above issues.

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**