

## Darwin Plus: Overseas Territories Environment and Climate Fund Annual Report

To be completed with reference to the "Project Reporting Information Note"  
(<https://dplus.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources/information-notes/>).

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum** of 20 pages in length, excluding annexes)

**Submission Deadline: 30<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

### Darwin Plus Project Information

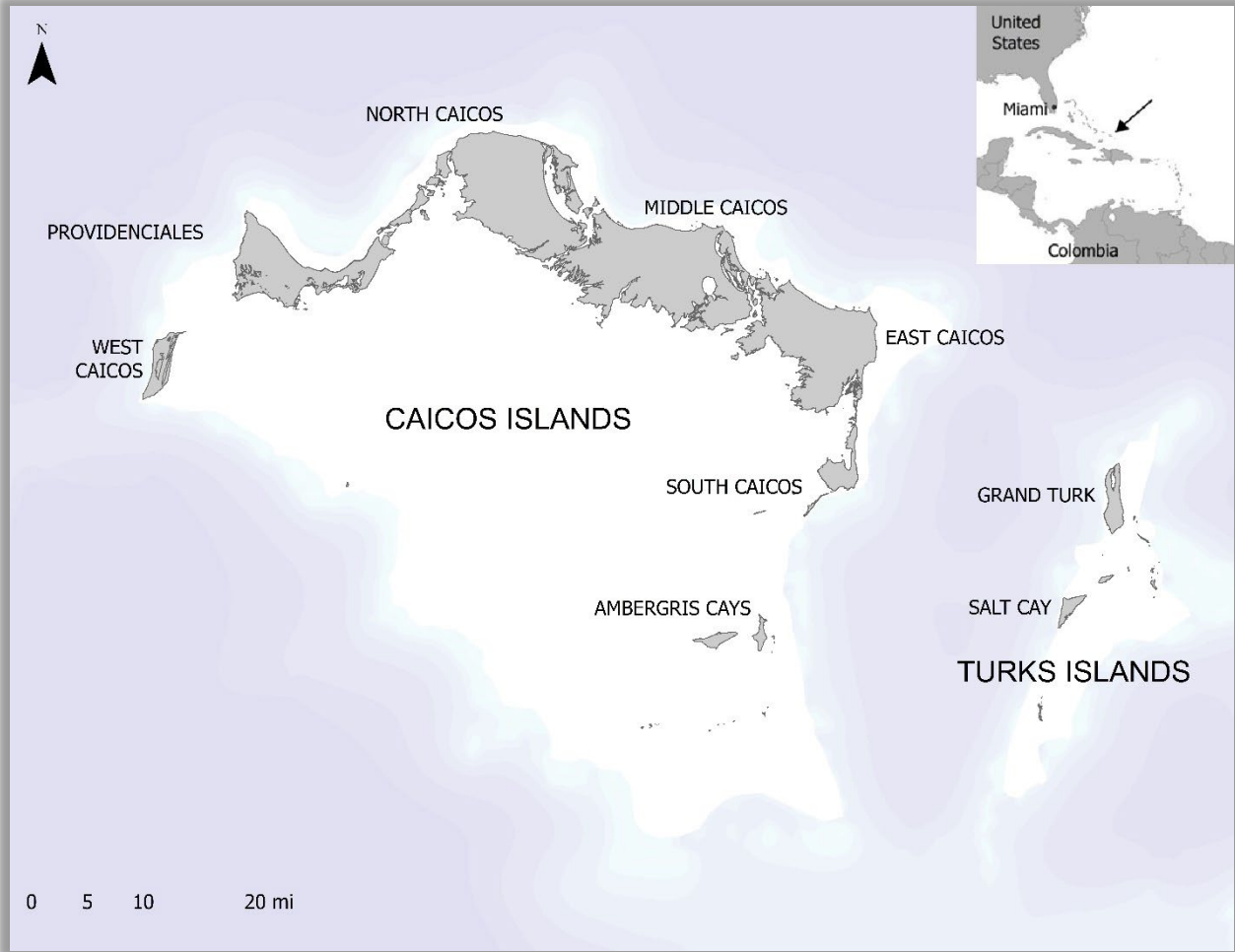
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|--|---|
| Project reference  | DPLUS153  |
| Project title  | Conserving tropical marine ecosystems in TCI through science-based fisheries management   |
| Territory(ies)   | Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)  |
| Lead partner   | South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI) / Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR)  |
| Project partner(s)   | Turks and Caicos Islands Government (TCIG), Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR), Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources Management (FMRM), Fish Ageing Services Ltd Pty (FAS), Ocean Environmental, Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)   |
| Darwin Plus grant value  | £344 905  |
| Start/end dates of project   | July 2021–December 2023   |
| Reporting period (e.g. Apr 2021-Mar 2022) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2) | July 2021–March 2022, Annual Report 1   |
| Project Leader name  | Tara Pelembe (SAERI) and Lormeka Williams (DECR). Ptoject Manager – Dr Edward Butler.   |
| Project website/blog/social media  | Website: <a href="https://www.south-atlantic-research.org/partners/dplus-153-conserving-tropical-marine-ecosystems-in-tci-through-science-based-fisheries-management/">https://www.south-atlantic-research.org/partners/dplus-153-conserving-tropical-marine-ecosystems-in-tci-through-science-based-fisheries-management/</a><br>Twitter: @SAERI_FI<br>Facebook: <a href="https://www.facebook.com/S4ERI/">https://www.facebook.com/S4ERI/</a> |
| Report author(s) and date  | Dr Edward Butler, April 30 <sup>th</sup> 2022   |

### 1. Project summary

Tropical marine ecosystems provide important goods and services to a vast collective of diverse stakeholders. Chiefly among these is the provision of food and livelihoods via fishing. However, the balance between maintaining sustainable tropical marine ecosystems and Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF) is delicate and needs to be actively monitored. Additionally, overfishing and the overexploitation of marine resources can threaten the livelihoods and food security of local communities. In order to promote sustainable SSF practices, data are required to inform robust evidence-based management. In the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI), insufficient fish landings and life history data is available to conduct basic fishery assessments. Thus, local capacity for fisheries research and management presents an important gap.

TCI is one of 14 United Kingdom Overseas Territories (UKOT) located 145 km north of Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic) and 925 km south-east of Miami (Figure 1). The easterly

occurring Turks Islands are separated from the Caicos Islands by a deep-water channel approximately 35km wide. The TCI population is 42,953 (2019), and the total area of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is 154,058 km<sup>2</sup>. Tourism is the main contributor to the TCI economy, followed by the offshore financial sector and fishing industry. TCI Fisheries are not only important financially, but also as an important part of local culture and a large contributor to employment, livelihood and food security. The TCI is also rich in biodiversity, and provides important ecosystem goods and services. In part, these are provided through the health of mangroves, coral reefs and seagrasses which are barriers to storm surge, and provide a vital disaster mitigation role.



**Figure 1:** The Turks and Caicos Islands

Despite the importance of the marine environment, TCI currently do not have the data available to inform fishery management. Through direct collaboration with local stakeholders and fishers, the project aims to address this via the improvement of local fisheries-related catch, effort and biological data in the TCI. The project also aims to develop local capacity to facilitate long-term science-driven fishery assessments regionally, through the provision of a state-of-the-art fisheries laboratory. Lastly, the project will work closely with local government to ensure that the fisheries research tools which are provided can be appropriately translated into management directives.

**2. Project stakeholders/partners**

Project Partners

All project partners were based on demand from the TCIG. The project was developed through a request from in territory co-lead DECR and DECR continue to be instrumental in implementing and steering the project. A Project Management Group (PMG) has been formulated, incorporating members of all project partner organisations. The PMG is tasked with steering the project and contributing towards high-level decision-making. The PMG has met three times during this reporting period to discuss project activities and has also finalised and

committed to a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan. In addition to this, project partners are currently finalising their commitments to specific roles and responsibilities which are outlined in a Terms of Reference (ToR) document. The project PMG meeting minutes and M&E plan are available from the [project webpage](#). Formal minutes are only available for the most recent meeting (March 2022), with meeting actions circulated via email for the initial two.

A new project partner – the TCIGs new department of Fisheries and Marine Resources Management (FMRM) has been added to the project and to the PMG. In the time between project proposal submission and implementation, there has been an (unforeseen) internal restructure within TCIG. As a result, the fisheries component of the DECR has been relocated into a separate government department – FMRM. The project is still aligned with the DECR through the location of the fisheries laboratory, pre-existing contractual agreements, and the office of the project co-leader – Lormeka Williams, DECR Director. Thus, the DECR has remained as the main TCIG partner. However, many of the main project outputs and the main project outcome fit directly into the FMRM mandate. Therefore, the FMRM will be directly involved in all aspects of the project delivery and has been invited to join the project as a main partner organisation.

SAERI and DECR have proactively engaged with FMRM since project start up, and one of the successes at this stage is the formal inclusion of FMRM as an active project partner. Aside from the divisional changes within TCIG, the project partner organisations are unchanged and there has been agreement and collaboration between all project partners.

One of the strengths of the project has been the allocation of the project manager (PM) in country, and nested within local TCIG. Additionally, both the project lead, SAERI deputy Director – Innovation, Tara Pelembe as well as SAERI Executive Director, Paul Brickle have visited TCI twice since the beginning of the project (once in Y1Q2 and once in Y1Q4). This has allowed for rapid reaction to changes in government structure and allows for proactive engagement with partners and stakeholders which has helped to foster and develop long term relationships.

### Project Stakeholders

Stakeholders lie at the core of this project. In collaboration with project partners Fish Ageing Services (FAS), DECR and FMRM, a two-week stakeholder engagement and biological data collection training programme of work was successfully undertaken in March 2022 (Figure 2). The schedule of the two-week period was developed through in-depth consultation with TCIG project partners (DECR & FMRM) and tailored to best engage fisher communities. This involved an initial project exposure trip to South Caicos, where there is a longstanding and culturally important fisher community and where project staff met and engaged with a multitude of fishers from across the island, fish processors from the main three fish processing plants and fisheries management staff. The trip also incorporated a community meeting to introduce the project, which was broadly advertised to the entire community of the island and attended by several important community members. Stakeholder engagements were invaluable in providing further direction for the project and for informing the successful planning of future engagements in Y2. The activities and results of the two-week period are detailed in a workshop report, which is available online at the [project webpage](#).

## **3. Project progress**

### **3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities**

#### **Output 1 – Stakeholders are meaningfully engaged in understanding the requirements for robust fisheries data and in the designation of landing sites.**

Fisheries data collection exposure and training (**Activity 1.1**) was successfully delivered in TCI on time and according to plan during March 2022 (Figure 2). This will form the basis for further stakeholder engagement which will be taking place throughout the project, beginning in Y2Q1. More details regarding the project exposure and training weeks can be found in the workshop report, which includes participant feedback, and is available [online](#) (**Activity 1.2**).



**Figure 1:** Project stakeholder engagement activities delivered during March 2022 on South Caicos.

**Output 2 – TCIG staff and fishers trained in data collection and fisheries data is well managed.**

The TCI training undertaken in March provided direct data collection training to local TCIG staff from the DECR and FMRM (Figure 3). Details regarding the training as well as participant feedback can be located from the training report, which is available on the [project webpage](#). The training and resultant workshop sessions also informed the creation of a data collection manual which has been designed to inform protocols, processes, and procedures for fisheries data collection both during the project and into the future. Version one of the data collection manual has been drafted and is available [online \(Activity 2.1\)](#). The data collection manual is intended to be an evolving document which will be updated regularly throughout the project, as and when new information becomes available.





**Figure 3:** Otolith and biological data collection training was delivered to members of TCIG's DECR and FMRM on Providenciales in March 2022.

### **Output 3 – Fisheries Science laboratory fully equipped, and staff fully trained**

During face-face visit to TCI in Y1Q2, Dr Paul Brickle and Tara Pelembe visited the new lab building in DECR offices, and discussed the layout, equipment purchases etc. DECR is purchasing equipment for the laboratory as well for other analytical purposes, and therefore it was important to ensure that the purchases and equipment were complementary and made best use of the full resource available.

At present, a dedicated space has been prepared to house the fisheries laboratory and a number of the equipment items have been installed and are available for use. However, there have been several delays with regards to the procurement and shipping of fisheries equipment for installation in the laboratory, although all equipment has been purchased well ahead of time (**Activity 3.1**). Unfortunately, delays in the lead in times from suppliers have meant that a number of key equipment items have yet to arrive on island. TCIG had agreed to purchase some of the capital equipment originally budgeted for in this project, as part of their lab refurbishment activities. This meant that some of the laboratory equipment was subject to TCIG procurement processes which have resulted in a delay. The equipment is expected to arrive in May 2022.

As a contingency plan, which would allow for training of TCIG staff in Y1Q4 and data collection to begin on time in Y2Q1, additional equipment was purchased directly by SAERI, including an additional otolith saw and blades, as well as necessary basic consumables and equipment. Unfortunately, additional delays due to a COVID-19 outbreak in the USA in February 2022 meant that the arrival of the additional saw has also been delayed to the end of April 2022. As of April 27 2022, the additional saw and blades have arrived on island and are being cleared by customs. Consumables and much of the equipment is available at the laboratory and has facilitated data collection as planned (Figure 4). Additional laboratory items which are required for the processing of fisheries data, including the microtome, will be installed in Y2Q1, as they become available.



**Figure 4:** Fisheries data collection equipment in the DECR fisheries laboratory.

**Output 4 – Stock assessments of priority species undertaken.**

No activities related with this Output have taken place during this reporting period.

**Output 5 – Project Management structure, monitoring and evaluation and communication tools established**

Most project activities related with project management have been completed on time (**Activities 5.2–5.5**). As evidence of this, the minutes from the most recent quarterly PMG meeting held in March as well as a copy of the project M&E plan are available via the [project webpage](#), which is up-to-date.

The only changes have been with regard to the recruitment and hiring of the PM and Project Officer (PO) (**Activity 5.1**), which was directly impacted by the delayed receipt of funds for the project which were only obtained in November 2021. This change was communicated with Darwin and approved in a change request in December 2021 (CR1). Both posts have been filled in the final quarter of Y1 and the PM contract will extend to January 2024 and the PO to March 2024.

The hiring of the PO was also impacted by a lack of availability of suitably qualified local candidates in the TCI. Originally, the job description for the PO role required a Master's degree. However, following discussion amongst the PMG, a decision was made to reduce the educational requirement to allow for the hiring of a local employee. It was felt that the employment of a local candidate would be critical towards the success of the project, due to their understanding of the local fisher communities, and the ease with which the role and expertise could be retained after the project. As the employment was directed through TCIG, this also meant that the salary for the position was reduced in line with internal TCIG salary grading. This budget was reallocated via a change request in March (CR2). A suitable candidate was hired in March and is currently in office on a three-month probationary basis, to allow for the assessment of their specific suitability to the requirements of the project.

**3.2 Progress towards project Outputs**

Output 1 – Stakeholders are meaningfully engaged in understanding the requirements for robust fisheries data and in the designation of landing sites.

Progress with regards to this Output have only recently begun, since the arrival of the PM in the TCI in late February. As mentioned previously, the activities related with the two-week project exposure and biological data collection workshop will feed directly into this outcome and have formed the basis for further stakeholder engagement in year 2 (workshop report available [online](#)) (**Indicator 1.1**). Some progress has been made towards the designation of landing sites and sites on Providenciales, North and Middle Caicos have been identified (Table 1) (**Indicator 1.2**). These, along with further sites across the other islands, will be discussed during dedicated workshop events held in early June 2022. The indicators for this outcome are still appropriate and will be assessed in Year 2.

**Table 1** List of the currently identified landing sites on Providenciales. Sites are listed in order of perceived importance, with corresponding times of high-usage.

| Location – Providenciales       | Lat.       | Long.       | Hot to cold zones | Time Stamps for zones |
|---------------------------------|------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Ventian rd                      | 21.7585785 | -72.1839165 | 1                 | Weekends 14:00–15:00  |
| Five Cay/Sony Plant             | 21.7545361 | -72.2623818 | 2                 | 17:00                 |
| Copper Jack Bay                 | 21.7581184 | -72.226561  | 3                 | 15:00                 |
| Copper Jack Bay 2               | 21.7628946 | -72.2300819 | 3                 | 15:00                 |
| Five Cay opp church             | 21.7653374 | -72.2567451 | 4                 | 18:00                 |
| Five Cay canal                  | 21.7689769 | -72.2501534 | 4                 | 18:00                 |
| Brodie Fritz area Five Cay      | 21.7603379 | -72.2610236 | 4                 | 18:00                 |
| Pablo area five cay             | 21.766355  | -72.2548059 | 4                 | 18:00                 |
| end of sand piper ln            | 21.7670533 | -72.2528617 | 4                 |                       |
| Silly Creek                     | 21.7542164 | -72.2989748 | 5                 | 14:00                 |
| Blue Hills opp prophercy church | 21.8015583 | -72.2700613 | 6                 | 15:00–16:00           |
| South Banks Bay                 | 21.7614037 | -72.2228894 | 7                 | 12:00–16:00           |
| Froggies Beach                  | 21.8208434 | -72.2849206 | 8                 | 15:00                 |
| Technology Dr                   | 21.8067052 | -72.1384965 | 9                 |                       |
| Long bay ship yard              | 21.7627754 | -72.1739763 | 10                |                       |
| Heaven down rock 1              | 21.8142433 | -72.1407352 | 11                |                       |
| Heaven down rock 2              | 21.8142433 | -72.1407352 | 11                |                       |
| Canal opp heaven down           | 21.8134373 | -72.1408773 | 12                |                       |
| Niki Beach                      | 21.8162884 | -72.1477825 | 12                |                       |
| Blue heaven dock                | 21.8183657 | -72.1472777 | 12                |                       |
| Leeward canal opp BHD           | 21.8220993 | -72.151565  | 12                |                       |
| Dock direct yard                | 21.7410579 | -72.271187  | 13                | 16:30–17:00           |
| Split Rock dfrop off            | 21.7494409 | -72.3476706 | 14                | 15:30–16:00           |
| Turtle Cove Marina              |            |             |                   | 12:00                 |

### Output 2 – TCIG staff and fishers trained in data collection and fisheries data is well managed.

The recent biological data collection training was directly aimed at addressing this outcome by improving TCIG capacity to collect and analyse fisheries data. The formal training period was largely successful, and participants provided positive feedback which indicated that they had benefited from the exercise (**Indicator 2.2**). This indicator wasn't entirely appropriate however, as it required an improved understanding of 10 or more participants, while only six attended the workshop. It was felt that the training could have potentially benefitted a larger number of participants. However, many prospective attendees were unavailable during the time particularly given the close proximity of the workshop period to financial year-end. Additional training sessions are likely to be beneficial, particularly once data collection begins. The presentations and workshop exercises are all now prepared which will make for ease of facilitation. The workshop report, which includes participant feedback, is available [online](#).

The training and dedicated workshop session also informed the drafting of a data collection manual. This was completed and made available [online](#) within the designated time period (**Indicator 2.1**). As mentioned previously, the data collection manual will form an evolving document which is updated regularly throughout the project, as and when new information becomes available. Thus, the initial draft available online specifically refers to relevant information required at present and will be built upon moving forward.

### Output 3 – Fisheries Science laboratory fully equipped, and staff fully trained

As mentioned in section 3.1, a number of delays with regard to the procurement and delivery of fisheries equipment has delayed the completion of the fisheries laboratory (**Indicator 3.1**). As such, the use of the equipment by TCIG staff has also been delayed and is not possible at present. Despite this, more than five staff have received training (**Indicator 3.2**) and will be able to operate the equipment once it becomes available. Additionally, off-island workshop

facilitators from FAS and SAERI will be available to deliver further training during additional trips to TCI and/or virtually as and when required. The report detailing the training received by workshop participants is available [online](#).

#### Output 4 – Stock assessments of priority species undertaken.

As mentioned in section 4.1, this specific outcome will be addressed later in the project once data is available to inform basic stock assessments.

#### Output 5 – Project Management structure, monitoring and evaluation and communication tools established

Progress towards Output 5 has been good, with all current indicators comfortably achieved. As mentioned previously in section 3.1, the employment of the PM and PO were impacted by the late arrival of project funding which meant that both roles were filled in Y1Q4 (**Indicator 5.1**). This impacted the project initially resulting in a number of project activities being moved to March 2022, to allow for the PM and PO to be available on TCI. However, most activities have been highly successful and have gone ahead on time and according to budget. Thus, accepting for indicators **3.1 and 3.2**, the project is currently back on schedule.

Apart from this, all indicators related with the project management structure, M&E plan and communication tools have been achieved (**Indicators 5.2–5.5**). PMG meetings have taken place quarterly and the minutes can be located from the [project webpage](#). Similarly, a copy of the project M&E plan is available [online](#).

### **3.3 Progress towards the project Outcome**

The stated Outcome for this project is: *‘Improved landings and life history data, data management enshrined within TCIG processes, and its importance understood by the fishing community leading to a significant improvement in sustainable fisheries management’*

Progress made towards the project Outcome is mostly on track thus far. At present, there is no reason to suggest that the project is unlikely to achieve the desired Outcomes set out during the project proposal.

Already, activities have contributed towards most Outcomes in some manner. The success of the workshops undertaken in March have already laid the foundation for further stakeholder engagements and will likely promote stakeholder buy-in. This buy-in will be invaluable in reaching stakeholder communities and allowing for meaningful engagements which lead to real learning and acceptance of concepts (**Outcome Indicator 0.1**).

Similarly, direct workshop sessions have helped to mould data collection protocols and procedures which have been incorporated into the data collection manual. Although these protocols will likely be manipulated further throughout the project, they create a good starting point and will allow for data collection to begin. As the project progresses, the protocols and procedures will be refined before being adopted and implemented by TCIG to promote effective fisheries management (**Outcome Indicator 0.2**).

The fisheries laboratory will likely be completed within the next quarter and can begin processing fisheries data (**Outcome Indicator 0.3**).

**Outcome Indicator 0.4** is related with stock assessment and reliant on the data which will be collected throughout the project. Data collection is due to begin in May, and the achievement of this outcome is expected.

### **3.4 Monitoring of assumptions**

Output 1 – Stakeholders are meaningfully engaged in understanding the requirements for robust fisheries data and in the designation of landing sites.

**Assumption 1.1:** Stakeholders trust is built enough for them to meaningfully engage in the process.

This assumption is still relevant and important towards project success.

**Assumption 1.2:** Covid-19 impacts do not place restrictions on national and international travel.



From an international standpoint, this assumption has become less important now that the PM and PO have been recruited and are presently on TCI. However, national restrictions on travel would still maintain large implications for project outcomes and would prevent project staff from engaging with communities and stakeholders, particularly on other islands.

#### Output 2 – TCIG staff and fishers trained in data collection and fisheries data is well managed.

**Assumption 2.1:** DECR personnel open to data collection training and going forward routinely follow protocols and manuals in terms of data collection. DECR continue to utilise the database to input data.

This assumption is still relevant and true. However, the wording needs to be altered to accommodate for all TCIG project partner staff (DECR & FMRM). Additionally, the split of the two departments now requires that there is a high level of collaboration between both government entities, as an additional assumption. This has been addressed through the drafting and acceptance of a number of agreements amongst project partner groups. In particular, the project ToR outline the commitments of both departments towards collaboration and the achievement of project goals and is currently being finalised and agreed to.

**Revised Assumption 2.1:** *DECR and FMRM personnel open to data collection training and going forward routinely follow protocols and manuals in terms of data collection. DECR and FMRM continue to utilise the database to input data.*

**Additional Assumption:** *The DECR and FMRM share resources and collaborate where appropriate, to ensure the effective management of fisheries resources.*

Moreover, it has been identified that the success of the project is directly reliant upon TCIG contributions towards staffing to facilitate data collection. The dedicated project staff (PM and PO) do not have the capacity to collect all of the data required by the project. Thus, strong input from TCIG departments (DECR and FMRM) are required for project success. This has been discussed amongst the PMG and TCIG departments and the latter has assured us that they are committed to providing staffing for data collection, which will be outlined in the PMG ToR.

**Additional Assumption:** *TCIG provide direct support for data collection through the provision of data collectors.*

**Assumption 2.2:** Covid-19 impacts do not place restrictions on national and international travel.

As mentioned previously, this assumption has become less important now that the PM and PO have been recruited and are presently on TCI. However, national restrictions may still impact fisher ability to fish regularly, which would impact data collection. It may also restrict the movement of data collectors within the TCI.

#### Output 3 – Fisheries Science laboratory fully equipped, and staff fully trained

**Assumption 3.1:** Modern fisheries laboratory meets the needs of TCI initially and then services other UKOTs in the Caribbean.

There is no foreseen change to this assumption.

**Assumption 3.2:** Covid-19 impacts do not delay the purchase of equipment.

Covid-19 has impacted the shipping of certain equipment and is currently influencing the functioning of the laboratory. Thus, this is a relevant and important risk. However, most equipment should arrive early in year 2, whereafter this risk will be eliminated.

**Assumption 3.3:** Covid-19 impacts do not place restrictions on national and international travel.

Same as for Assumptions 1.2 and 2.2.

**Additional Assumption:** *TCIG procurement processes do not unnecessarily slow the arrival of equipment required for the fisheries laboratory*

Some of the delays in laboratory equipment were due to slow procurement processes which were an unforeseen risk. As mentioned previously, additional equipment was purchased directly by SAERI to account for this and the TCIG procured equipment should arrive in May, after which this will no longer impact the project.

#### Output 4 – Stock assessments of priority species undertaken.

**Assumption 4.1:** Rigorous routine stock assessments house within DECR’s fisheries section.

As mentioned previously, this Assumption should be altered as the stock assessment will now be housed within the FMRM and informed via the functioning of the fisheries laboratory.

**Revised Assumption 4.1:** *Rigorous routine stock assessments housed within FMRM.*

*The DECR and FMRM share resources and collaborate where appropriate, to ensure the effective management of fisheries resources.*

**Assumption 4.2:** Covid-19 impacts do not place restrictions on national and international travel.

Same as for Assumptions 1.2 and 2.2.

**Assumption 4.3:** Appropriate data available for stock assessments

The availability of data is a relevant and appropriate assumption which will rely on successful and consistent data collection. There is no change to this assumption.

#### Output 5 – Project Management structure, monitoring and evaluation and communication tools established

**Assumption 5.1:** Recruitment results in appropriate candidates being appointed and available on island within given timeframe.

As mentioned previously, recruitment was delayed due to late payment of project funds. However, candidates have now been appointed. Both the PM and PO are recently employed and are currently fulfilling probationary periods – therefore this assumption is still relevant, in the case that they are found to be inappropriate.

**Assumption 5.2:** Continued resource from project partners available to engage with the project for its duration.

There have been no issues with project partner commitments to resources thus far. However, this risk remains present going forward.

**Assumption 5.3:** Covid-19 impacts do not place restrictions on national and international travel.

Same as for Assumptions 1.2 and 2.2.

## **4. Project support to environmental and/or climate outcomes in the UKOTs**

As described in the project proposal, the project contributes to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Aichi Targets 4 (Natural Resources); 6 (Sustainable fisheries); and 10 (Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems). It also contributes to fulfilling commitments under the UK Government’s 2012 white paper (Chapter 13) and Defra’s 25-year environment plan. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 61(2) requires the coastal state to ‘take into account the best scientific evidence available to it’ in determining conservation and management measures.’ TCI Vision 2040 outlines 5 sustainable development goals, that underpin the (draft) National Physical Sustainable Development Plan (NPSPD) both Vision 2040 and the NPSPD require sustainable resource management. A TCI Environment Strategy (ES) is being developed and this project will contribute to the ES vision and to the mission of the DECR of which a sustainable fishing industry is a core element “To ensure sustainable utilization of the natural resources of the Turks and Caicos Islands, and to protect and promote biodiversity and economic prosperity through a sustainable fishing industry and environmentally sustainable development, a protected areas system and improved maritime affairs”.

The TCIG Fisheries Mission Statement is “To protect and improve the fisheries through the effective management of fish stocks to promote economic prosperity”, and this project will make an important contribution to the effective management of TCI’s fish stocks.

Related legislation includes the Fisheries Limits Ordinance (December 2014) and the Fisheries Protection Ordinance (March 2018). The former mandates a fisheries plan (clause 30) that includes assessments of the present state of each fishery. The improved on-the ground data

collection and subsequent stock assessments to be undertaken by this project will make an important contribution to the assessments of new fished species (currently the only stock assessment that has been reliable is that undertaken for the spiny lobster).

TCIG is a member of the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) and one of the activities under this project will be the sharing of updated stock assessments and fisheries data with CRFM as required.

## 5. OPTIONAL: Consideration of gender equality issues

## 6. Monitoring and evaluation

A Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan has recently been developed and agreed to by the PMG and is available on the [project webpage](#). The M&E plan outlines the indicators and activities which will be taking place throughout the project and provides a means to track their progress and completion. For each project activity, a verifiable indicator is provided, and it is outlined how the indicator will be evidence, where the evidence is to be stored, who is responsible for assessing it, how often it will be measured, and what resources are required to achieve it. The indicators have been specifically designed to demonstrate alignment of the project to the project Outcomes

As the M&E plan has only recently been drafted and agreed upon, no changes have been made to it during the reporting period. The project is governed through an established PMG which is representative of all project partner organisations. The project partners work well together and regularly meet to discuss and steer the project. The PM provides updates to the PMG in quarterly meetings regarding the logframe deliverables, progress to the M&E plan as well as on the budget. The PMG uses Google Drive to share documents amongst each other when required. Progress tracking according to the M&E is facilitated through the platform Monday.com, which all PMG members are in the process of gaining access to (Figure 5).

| Project Deliverables                   | Owner | Subitems | Status         | Priority | Timeline                  | Date         |
|--|-------|----------|----------------|----------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Training - Biological data collection  |       | 4        | On track       | High     | Mar 1 - Apr 30            | Mar 31       |
| Data collection manual                 |       |          | Working on it  |          | Apr 17 - 30               | Mar 31       |
| Fisheries laboratory                   |       |          | In Progress    |          | Apr 1 - 30                | Mar 31       |
| Data collection sheets                 |       |          | Working on it  |          | Apr 17 - May 6            | May 6        |
| Identify landing sites (5 per island)  |       | 4        | Planned        |          | Apr 4 - Jun 30            | Jun 30       |
| Workshop - Fisher engagement and la... |       | 4        | Working on it  | High     | Apr 1 - Jun 30            | Jun 30       |
| Fisheries app                          |       |          | Needs atten... | High     | May 11, '22 - Jul 22, '23 | Sep 30       |
| Business case for regional services    |       |          |                |          | Mar 1, '23 - Mar 31, '23  | Mar 31, 2023 |
| Age and growth studies (4 spp.)        |       |          |                |          | May 11, '22 - Jun 30, '23 | Jun 30, 2023 |
| Training - Stock assessment            |       |          |                |          | Apr 1, '23 - Jun 30, '23  | Jun 30, 2023 |
| Fisheries spatial data sets (5 spp.)   |       |          |                |          | May 12, '22 - Sep 30, '23 | Sep 30, 2023 |
| Reproductive assessments (4 spp.)      |       |          |                |          | May 11, '22 - Sep 30, '23 | Sep 30, 2023 |
| Stock assessments - 2 spp.             |       |          |                |          | May 11, '22 - Jun 9, '23  | Sep 30, 2023 |
| Landings data (4 spp.)                 |       |          |                |          | May 11, '22 - Jan 1, '24  | Dec 31, 2023 |

| Project administration            | Owner | Subitems | Status      | Priority | Timeline | Date   |
|-----------------------------------|-------|----------|-------------|----------|----------|--------|
| Recruit PM and PO                 |       |          | Done        | High     | ✓ -      | Mar 31 |
| Quarterly PMG meetings            |       | 7        | On track    | Medium   | -        |        |
| Create and update project webpage |       | 1        | Done        | High     | ✓ -      |        |
| Monitoring and Evaluation         |       | 3        | On track    | High     | -        |        |
| Terms of Reference                |       | 3        | In Progress | High     | -        |        |
| DPlus reports                     |       | 3        | In Progress |          | -        |        |

**Figure 5:** Example of the DPlus 153 main workboard on the playform Monday.com, which will be used for tracking project progress as part of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan

It is the PMG’s responsibility to deliver the project on time and within budget and to also review the quality of the outputs. Engagement and involvement of stakeholders ensures that the outcome delivered through the product actually meets stakeholder requirements. The indicators

of achievements provide the evidence produced by each activity (e.g. reports, documents, participant feedback forms). Section 3 outlines how the activities feed into the project outputs and outcomes.

## **7. Lessons learnt**

What has worked very well is the nesting of the PM in the TCIG DECR which has allowed for direct and regular contact with project partners. This has also allowed for an appreciation of local nuance with regards to processes and procedures, which are often important in the implementation of new science regionally. In addition, territory to territory skill share (Falklands to TCI) has worked well. The Falkland Islands have a wealth of experience and knowledge when it comes to fisheries which has successfully informed project design and implementation. The established relationship between project partners and particularly with TCIG and the DECR, has made project start up quicker and easier, and also fostered the potential for further territory to territory work and collaboration.

A delay in the receipt of project funds created a backlog in project spending, activities and deliverables. This meant that the PM only took up post with two months available to acquire all the equipment and plan and deliver the biological data collection workshop. Delays with immigration documentation required by TCIG (South African Police Clearance Certificate), further delayed the arrival of the PM to late February 2022. This meant that the PM arrived on site with only one month remaining before the end of Y1. Similarly, delays in the appointment of the PO, mentioned earlier in section 3.1, also provided lessons learnt. Lastly, delays in lead-in times have resulted in delays in the arrival of equipment. This has been due to the slow process of internal TCIG procurement processes, and supplier-related delays due to COVID-19.

Overall, the lessons learnt have been to better understand the in-country job applicant landscape and ensure that job descriptions are formulated to enable in country applicants (without compromising delivery), which best enable training, growth and long term, post project sustainability. All projects operating in remote locations where the acquisition of equipment and the immigration of project staff is a lengthy process should allow longer lead-in times of up to several months to ensure that equipment and staff are available on time. The timely delivery of project funding is also important for allowing appropriately long lead-in times.

## **8. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)**

Not applicable.

## **9. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere**

One comment which is relevant to this section would be a slight change with regards to the budget and equipment. These changes have already been approved in the most recent change request but are reiterated here. Additional funding which was made available due to the decision to hire a local employee for the fulfilment of the PO role (eliminated relocation costs etc.) allowed for the reallocation of underspend from staff costs. Through input from local project partners, DECR and FMRM, it was decided that a vehicle would be a necessary requirement to facilitate data collection across the island of Providenciales and will be purchased in year 2.

## **10. Sustainability and legacy**

As mentioned previously, the project is still in the initial phases and has only been fully operational for a few months. However, the project has been promoted through the delivery of the workshop events and several social media posts and a local press release and there is already some evidence of improved interest and capacity locally. Particularly, the project exposure events held on South Caicos involved engagement with fisher communities and led to the promotion of project goals. Biological data collection training has contributed towards the capacity of local TCIG departments to successfully undertake fisheries research. More information is available via the workshop report, which is available via the [project webpage](#).

A major step toward building a sustained legacy of the project has been through the decision to hire a local employee through the DECR rather than bring in an additional international

researcher. Not only does this decision make it easier for TCIG to retain the position following the project, but it also ensures that the capacity built directly through the learning process involved with project implementation is retained in-country. Socially, the local appointment of the PO is also likely to benefit the project and its legacy through public perception, particularly amongst stakeholder communities, and serves as a commitment of the project towards local development.

## 11. Darwin identity

The Darwin Initiative funding was recognised in every communication and public engagement opportunity. The logo was displayed in presentations and advertisements; the Darwin Initiative was recognised in press articles and the funding through the UK government was explained in presentations and meetings with stakeholders. Darwin Plus was recognised as a distinct project in all verbal communication and the DPlus 153 project number was advertised on all communications and outputs. Darwin Plus is widely recognised amongst TCIG due to continued support of numerous projects in the TCI. Additionally, a number of stakeholders have also been familiar with the organisation via exposure to previous projects.

The logo was displayed in the following outreach:


- The provisioned fisheries laboratory will have the Darwin logo displayed on the door.
- Presentations given at two stakeholder events (16 March to the School for Field Studies and 17 March at a fisher community meeting, both in South Caicos) and the TCIG training workshop (21–25 March at the DECR, Providenciales). Presentation title slides are presented in Figure 6.
- Advertisement for the community meeting event on South Caicos, TCI on 17 March 2022 (Figure 7).
- The biological data collection workshop programme (Figure 7).

The Darwin Initiative was mentioned in the following outreach:




- Several Facebook posts and Twitter tweets in which the Darwin Initiative was tagged. Examples are presented in Figure 9. SAERI currently has 2,134 followers of Facebook and 2,938 followers on Twitter.
- A single public press release was released by the press office of the TCI Ministry of Tourism, Environment, Heritage, Maritime and Gaming and was distributed to the TCI government press office and the media. A copy of the press release can be found in Annex 3.



**Figure 6:** Example displaying the presentation of the Darwin logo on the title slide of presentations given at stakeholder engagement events.



**Ministry of Tourism, Environment, Heritage & Culture**  
**Maritime and Shipping Department, South Dock Road #176**  
**Providenciales, Turks and Caicos Islands**  
**British West Indies**  
 Tel: (649)338-4179, 338/4171 Email: [hwilson@gov.tc](mailto:hwilson@gov.tc)

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**Fisheries Research Session**

**Date:** Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2022

**Time:** 5.30pm

**Venue:** District Commissioner's Office

**Background and Context**

DECR and FMRM are working with the South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI) on a 2.5-year project to better understand the finfish populations on TCI. This, the first project stakeholder event, is being held on South Caicos, where there is a wealth of fisheries knowledge and expertise. A second event will be held next week in Providenciales

**Aim**






Engage key stakeholders across South Caicos in plans for finfish fisheries research & development across the TCI

**Agenda**

- Introduction to new finfish fisheries research goals for TCI
- Seek engagement and feedback from key fisheries stakeholders – gain thoughts and advice about the fishery, historical stock status, potential threats to the fishery and areas for fisheries development in the TCI

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Turks & Caicos Islands Maritime and Shipping Department  
 1-649-338-4171 or 1-649-338-4179 or by email [HWilson@gov.tc](mailto:HWilson@gov.tc)

**DPLUS 153 Conserving tropical marine ecosystems in TCI through science-based fisheries management**

**Fisheries Data collection and analysis training Programme**

**Dates:** Monday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2022  
**Location:** DECR Offices – Providenciales.

**Day 1.**

| Date and Time                                      | Topic  | Presenter                                |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Monday 21<sup>st</sup> March - Introduction</b> |  |  |
| 11:00 - 12:00                                      | Housekeeping   | Dr Ed Butler                             |
|  | Welcome on behalf of DECR and SAERI  | Dir Lormela Williams and Dr Paul Brickie |
|  | Prayer   |  |
|  | Introduction and overview of the day   | Dr Ed Butler                             |
|  | Round table introductions  | All                                      |
|  | Icebreaker   | Dr Ed Butler                             |
|  | Introductory Talk – Introduction to the project and science-based fisheries management   | Dr Paul Brickie                          |
| 12:00 - 13:00                                      | Lunch Break – lunch provided   |  |
| 13:00 - 14:15                                      | Talk – Fisheries management for small-scale fisheries<br>Group discussion  | Dr Ed Butler                             |
| 14:15 - 14:30                                      | Afternoon Break – refreshments provided.   |  |
| 14:30 - 16:00                                      | Workshop session – Landings data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Importance of landings data</li> <li>- Current situation for TCI finfish</li> <li>- Where are the gaps?</li> <li>- Developing a way forward</li> </ul> | Dr Paul Brickie                          |

**Figure 7:** Examples illustrating the presentation of the Darwin logo on the community meeting advertisement (left) and the biological data collection training programme (right).



Figure 8: Examples of Facebook and Twitter posts and how the Darwin Initiative is referenced.

12. Impact of COVID-19 on project delivery

Fortunately, COVID-19 has had only minor impacts on the delivery of the project thus far. This was primarily via its effect on a single equipment supplier timeline. Here, an additional otolith saw, which was ordered well within the timeframe required for delivery ahead of the biological data collection workshop, was delayed due to a COVID-19 outbreak in the USA. Unfortunately, this meant that the saw was not available for the training in March and training related with otolith processing had to be adapted to accommodate for this. Workshop facilitators dealt with this by altering the practical techniques used during the workshop. For example, otoliths could not be sectioned without the saw, but other processing techniques, such as otolith grinding, were demonstrated. Additionally, theoretical content was still delivered, with the use of informative instructional videos. Since then, the saw has arrived on TCI and the delay has not impacted any other aspects related to project delivery. No further delays are anticipated.

Stakeholder and project partner meetings have largely been able to take place in person amongst on TCI, with virtual participation by international members and those on other islands. Health and safety precautions have been adhered to, in line with the policies of TCIG.

It is unlikely that project outcomes or impacts will directly assist with the response to COVID-19 or reduce the risk of future pandemics. COVID-19 has undoubtedly shaped the workplace globally. However, in the context of this project, direct engagement, particularly with project stakeholders, is strongly favoured where there is a reduced or minimal risk to participants.

### 13. Safeguarding

Please tick this box if any safeguarding violations have occurred during this financial year.

If you have ticked the box, please ensure these are reported to [ODA.safeguarding@defra.gov.uk](mailto:ODA.safeguarding@defra.gov.uk) as indicated in the T&Cs.

SAERI has a comprehensive safeguarding policy that formally outlines policy principles and responsibilities within the organisation and includes a designated safeguarding officer (DSO). SAERI incorporates safeguarding as part of its organisational induction procedures for all new employees and, as a result, the PM is conversant with all our policies including this one. SAERI has an existing MOU with DECR for the employment of project staff which ensures duty of care to SAERI DPLUS staff in TCI.

In preparing the project, SAERI has sent a copy of its safeguarding policy to all project partners and adherence to these policies forms part of the PMG ToR. Once the ToR have been agreed upon by all partner organisations, safeguarding will be a core PMG quarterly meeting agenda item.

All project activities which have taken place thus far and have involved stakeholder communities have adhered to the safeguarding policy. As part of our upcoming stakeholder engagement, key elements of the relevant policies will be brought to the attention of stakeholders through a standardised introduction to the project. DECR co-leader and project staff members on island for project duration will help to ensure that any in-country issues or concerns should be brought to the early attention of the PMG.

### 14. Project expenditure

**Table 2: Project expenditure during the reporting period (1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022)**

| Project spend (indicative) in this financial year | 2021/22 D+ Grant (£) | 2021/22 Total actual D+ Costs (£) | Variance % | Comments (please explain significant variances)  |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|--|
| Staff costs                                       | ██████               | ██████                            | ██████     |  |
| Consultancy costs                                 | ██████               | ██████                            | ██████     |  |
| Overhead Costs                                    | ██████               | ██████                            | ██████     |  |
| Travel and subsistence                            | ██████               | ██████                            | ██████     |  |
| Operating Costs                                   | ██████               | ██████                            | ██████     | Attendance for the biological data collection workshops was lower than expected and therefore there was an underspend. The high % variance (>██████) is partly because of the low total value of this budget-line. |
| Capital items                                     | ██████               | ██████                            | ██████     |  |
| Others (Please specify)                           | ██████               | ██████                            | ██████     |  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                      | ██████               | ██████                            | ██████     |  |



## Checklist for submission

|   | Check |
|---|-------|
| Different reporting templates have different questions, and it is important you use the correct one. Have you checked you have used the <b>correct template</b> (checking fund, type of report (i.e. Annual or Final), and year) and <b>deleted the blue guidance text</b> before submission? | x     |
| <b>Is the report less than 10MB?</b> If so, please email to <a href="mailto:Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk">Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk</a> putting the project number in the Subject line.  | x     |
| <b>Is your report more than 10MB?</b> If so, please discuss with <a href="mailto:Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk">Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk</a> about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the Subject line.   |       |
| <b>Have you included means of verification?</b> You should not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.   | x     |
| <b>Do you have hard copies of material you need to submit with the report?</b> If so, please make this clear in the covering email and ensure all material is marked with the project number. However, we would expect that most material will now be electronic.                             | n/a   |
| Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors  | x     |
| Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?   | x     |
| Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.  |       |