

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2013)

Project Ref No	DPLUS011
Project Title	Ile Vache marine restoration project
Country(ies)	British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)
Lead Organisation	Chagos Conservation Trust
Collaborator(s)	UK FCO; The RSPB; Royal Botanic Gardens Kew; University of Warwick
Project Leader	<i>Peter Carr</i>
Report date and number (eg HYR3)	<i>October 2013, HY1</i>
Project website	<i>N/A</i>

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up).

The end date for this project has changed to 31st March 2015, as agreed with LTS International in the change request process (email dated 22/4/13). Thus, most of the activities outlined in the project implementation timetable in the original application for this project have not yet begun. However, output 1.1 has almost been completed: the professional rat eradication expert has been identified and has agreed to do the work (he will be contracted as per output 1.1 in due course). Also, output 1.2 is ongoing as required: continued technical liaison between the PI Peter Carr, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, RSPB and the identified rat expert.

The other progress that has been made in this project is in regard to a reconnaissance trip of Ile Vache Marine by the rat eradication expert, provisionally scheduled for January 2014. The dates and logistics for this reconnaissance trip have almost been confirmed with all the relevant parties: the expert; his guide for the trip (Jon Slayer); and the BIOT administration.

This reconnaissance trip was not in the original application for this project as it was not anticipated to be necessary. This was because the Project Leader, Peter Carr, was based in BIOT, and if he had remained so would have been able to provide the required data and information to the expert. Unexpectedly, Peter Carr's contract of employment was not renewed by the new incoming Base Operating Service Contractor in BIOT. This eventuality was identified as a risk in the original application, with a low likelihood of it happening. Unfortunately, the contingency plan of Peter Carr's deputy undertaking the activities instead did not work, as her employment contract was also not renewed.

It is not envisaged that the extra costs related to this reconnaissance trip will increase the overall budget for this project as the rat eradication expert has advised that some of the activities and therefore costs originally planned (principally linked to vegetation management) will not be required as the island is very small. All of the operational details will be clear after the reconnaissance trip scheduled for January 2014.

All of this information has been discussed on the telephone with LTS International and is included in a change request form submitted simultaneously with this half year report.

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments 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.

1. The Project Leader, Peter Carr, no longer being based in BIOT means that a reconnaissance trip is now needed (as above). The extra cost of this should be more than covered by the budget savings described in point 2 below.
2. As in section 1 above, the rat expert has provisionally suggested that some of the activities and therefore costs originally planned will not be required.
3. As per the successful change request process with LTS International in April 2013, the project end-date and spread of the budget over two financial years has changed since the original application. This was because the rat expert and the rodenticide suppliers advised that it may not be feasible to have everything in place to undertake the intensive month long eradication phase of the project at a time in 2013 that coincided favourably with the schedule of the BIOT Patrol Vessel. This project is reliant on the use of this British Government owned ship, which is used to enforce against illegal fishing in BIOT. The quietest time of the year for illegal fishing in BIOT is August and in liaison with the BIOT authorities, August 2014 has been agreed for the eradication phase.
4. The military airbridge between Singapore and Diego Garcia in BIOT is currently closed to civilians. This is an unprecedented situation which may be resolved in coming months. An alternative flight exists through Bahrain which may prove administratively slower to make arrangements, but is planned to be used for the scheduled January 2014 reconnaissance trip, and if necessary the eradication phase in August 2014. The costs of travelling via Bahrain appear to be almost identical to those originally budgeted for via Singapore. The normal routes for freight shipped via Singapore is unaffected, so other than routes for personnel the rat eradication project is not affected. Logistics will be as planned with all supplies being shipped to BIOT on the monthly resupply ship.

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 (1, 2, 3)	No (4)
Formal change request submitted:	Yes (1, 2, 3)	No (4)
Received confirmation of change acceptance	Yes (3)	No (1, 2, 4)

3a. Do you expect to have any significant (eg more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No

3b. If yes, and you wish to request a carryforward of funds, this should be done as soon as possible through the formal Change Request process. However, it would help Defra manage Darwin funds more efficiently if you could give an indication now of how much you expect this request might be for.

Estimated carryforward request: £6,715

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

There has been significant interest expressed in this project from contacts in the environmental sector. The anticipated success of this rat eradication project would be expected to lead to further much-needed eradication projects on other islands in BIOT (approximately 45 out of the 55 islands are infested with rats).

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 or budget should not be discussed in this report but raised with LTS International through a Change Request.

Please send your **completed report by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk . The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message eg Subject: 17-075 Darwin Half Year Report**