



## Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2014)

<b>Project Ref No.</b>	19-027
<b>Project Title</b>	Strengthening the world's largest Marine Protected Area: Chagos Archipelago
<b>Country(ies)</b>	British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	Bangor University
<b>Collaborator(s)</b>	University of Warwick, Zoological Society of London, FCO BIOT Administration
<b>Project Leader</b>	Dr John R Turner
<b>Report date and number (eg HYR3)</b>	HYR3
<b>Project website</b>	Chagos Environment Outreach Project: <a href="http://www.zsl.org/conservation/regions/africa/chagos-coral/chagos-community,1915,AR.html">http://www.zsl.org/conservation/regions/africa/chagos-coral/chagos-community,1915,AR.html</a> <a href="http://www.zsl.org/regions/uk-and-overseas-territories/chagos-archipelago">http://www.zsl.org/regions/uk-and-overseas-territories/chagos-archipelago</a> Scientific Expedition 2014: <a href="http://chagos-trust.org/2014-biot-expedition">http://chagos-trust.org/2014-biot-expedition</a> <a href="http://cctus.org/conservation-science/2014-expedition-scholar/2014-expedition-scholar-douglas-fenner-ph-d/2014-expedition-scholar-blog/">http://cctus.org/conservation-science/2014-expedition-scholar/2014-expedition-scholar-douglas-fenner-ph-d/2014-expedition-scholar-blog/</a> <a href="http://www.donahuelab.com/2014/03/chagos-here-i-come/">http://www.donahuelab.com/2014/03/chagos-here-i-come/</a>

**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 to end September).**

**1.7 Scientific research expeditions (3 x 1 month) during calmest weather periods, establishment of permanent monitoring sites and biodiversity assessment.**

Scientific Expedition 3 is planned for the period 16<sup>th</sup> March to 13<sup>th</sup> April 2015, to coincide with best weather window as revealed by an assessment of wind rose and wave height data, and availability of the BIOT *MV Pacific Marlin* patrol ship. The expedition will once again involve a team of 10 international scientists, a logistical support and communications officer, medical officer and a Chagossian bursary holder. The expedition will focus on: carbonate production and accretion rates; coral growth assessments; collection and processing of artificial reef matrices (ARMS); seaward reef fish biomass; vegetation mapping for island flora and fauna rehabilitation; and sea temperature monitoring. The sub projects will complete assessments for Objective 1 of the main project. Activity is on time.

**1.8 Data collation, analysis, archiving and input into relevant global biodiversity monitoring systems.**

Data analysis from Scientific Expeditions 1 (2013) and 2 (2014) is proceeding through the work of individual scientists and teams. Draft publications are beginning to appear, and a number of scientists from UK and USA are participating in a workshop on 4<sup>th</sup> December to review progress. A **Chagos Science Portal** is under development by Dr Elizabeth Widman (member, 2014 Scientific Expedition on behalf of all scientists) with additional funding from the Chagos Conservation Trust. This will be a comprehensive database for all Chagos data, centred on a

GIS with links into other international databases. Activity proceeds on time.

### **1.9 Development of Chagos/BIOT Management Plan incorporating BAPs and Impact mitigation recommendations.**

Project personnel contributed to the *BIOT Interim Conservation Management Framework*, published on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2014. This *interim* plan does not cover BAPs or impact mitigation recommendations as yet, but does present: a proposed framework; vision; natural values; the key stressors; priority areas for conservation and management; monitoring and evaluation; and a list of project actions. The plan is a 'live' working document held by BIOT, and will be updated on a regular basis as further knowledge is gained. The Activity proceeds on time.

#### **2.1 Organise & arrange preparation of a safe scientific storage facility in Diego Garcia, including purchase and installation of diving air compressor, safe storage of boats and engines, and scientific monitoring equipment.**

A high quality, air conditioned store has been prepared in the Royal Marines Workshops at Moody Brook, Diego Garcia. All scientific equipment was moved to the new facilities on 22<sup>nd</sup> September by the Royal Marines, under our instructions. A major advantage of the new store is that the boats can be maintained partially inflated and unfolded, which should lengthen their working life. The store is checked on a regular basis by Royal Marines personnel to ensure no environmental or pest damage. The boat engines, some medical kit and pyrotechnics (emergency flares) are stored on the *MV Pacific Marlin*. Replacement of worn and damaged equipment is being sought and will shortly be purchased for shipping to Diego Garcia via Singapore. Some further safety equipment will be purchased this year – specifically Emergency Personal Locator Beacons – to ensure that divers can be located by the support vessel should they ever get separated. The Deck laboratory has been fitted with a new weather proof door to secure the laboratory while at sea, and to prevent pest ingress while stored on land between expeditions. BIOT section have broadly accepted a policy for the sustainable management and future use of the equipment stored on Diego Garcia beyond the project, subject to some clarifications over insurance and liability which are currently being investigated. The Objective is met.

#### **3.1 Planning meetings with Chagossian Societies and Associations to organise workshops and activities to maximise engagement in outreach activities, including meetings with representatives in Mauritius and Seychelles.**

The Connect Chagos Outreach Team have established a good relationship with the Women's Welfare Group, Chagos Island Community Association, Chagos Youth Group and Chagos Refugee Group. There have been no further meetings over engagement of Mauritius/Seychelles since the scoping visit in March 2014 while we await FCO approval on further engagement, although we maintain active communications with the Chagossian communities in both Mauritius/Seychelles and there is great interest in environmental training. There are now 800 Facebook followers of the Outreach project 'Connect Chagos'. The activity proceeds on time.

#### **3.2 Events, activities and workshops for Chagossian communities in UK, Mauritius and Seychelles**

A community event was held at Tulleys Farm, Crawley in June 2014, attended by 150 Chagossians from both Manchester and Crawley communities. The event involved workshops and challenges to entertain all ages and to inspire some to join the summer's Environmental Training course. In addition, a series of 5 tailored sessions were held in the communities to engage young adults in future activities. The Environmental Training Course provided 10 modules over 8 weeks (climate change, habitat management, birds, marine, corals, bursaries, communications, a try dive, botany, and a wilderness weekend). Eight Chagos Ambassadors will graduate from the course this year at an awards ceremony on 14<sup>th</sup> November in Crawley), bringing the total trained to 32. A successful reunion event involving 23 former trainees was held on 24-25<sup>th</sup> October in Norwich in partnership with the RSPB. Activities in the UK continue

to be successful and on time.

### **3.3 Identification of Chagossian Darwin Fellows for specific training in conservation, and participation in Darwin project bursary and externally funded approved training in diving, survey and practical conservation techniques.**

Eight applications from Chagossians have been received for Darwin Bursaries for PADI diving certification; a diploma in work based environmental conservation; swimming lessons; chainsaw skills for habitat management; and organising their own community conservation events (one in Crawley, one in Manchester). These are currently under review. The Outreach Team shortlisted 5 Chagossians for expedition places and 2 of these were selected following interviews with Drs Turner, Koldewey, Letessier on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2014. (The expedition led by Tom Letessier is not a Darwin expedition, but one organised by ZSL/Bertarelli Foundation on the pelagic environment of BIOT).

### **3.4 Conservation skill training on approved courses for Darwin Fellows (x 6).**

These will be awarded in November (see above).

### **4.1 Planning meetings to organise a variety of public outreach and media events with supporting materials in UK, Diego Garcia and in Mauritius (inc .preparation)**

Prof Sheppard (University of Warwick and Chair, Chagos Conservation Trust), Victoria Picknell (Chagos Conservation Trust Communications), ZSL staff (Kirsty Richards, Dr Heather Koldewey & Rachel Jones) and Dr Turner (Bangor University) have been planning via e mail and skype, the Chagos Conservation Trust conference for 5<sup>th</sup> December at the Zoological Society of London. The conference will involve 9 presentations on results from the 2014 Scientific Expedition, a presentation from the once Darwin funded turtle project in Chagos, and a presentation from the Outreach Team. Further, a new video film produced by Jon Slayer from the Chagos 2014 expedition will be launched.

### **4.2 Events in UK (inc preparation)**

On 4<sup>th</sup> June, a CCT organised event for around 70 members and guests was held at the ZSL London Zoo aquarium. Dr Heather Koldewey gave a presentation on the 2014 Chagos expedition. This event also launched a live reef tank themed around Chagos in the aquarium, which includes graphics and information that engage the visiting public (1.3 million per year) as Chagos expedition scientists.

During September, the project team have been individually consulted by KPMG who are undertaking the feasibility study on Chagossian resettlement on behalf of BIOT Section FCO.

Also, Prof Sheppard and Dr Turner were part of a 3 person team who attended The Chagos Islands (British Indian Ocean Territory) All-Party Parliamentary Group meeting at the House of Commons on 15<sup>th</sup> October to answer questions from parliamentarians.

Two additional underwater video sequences have been made available through You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyh92GhS6qc> (63 views since 21 Aug 2014) and a shorter version here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqcc1cBKV6o> (34 views since 6 Sept 2014).

A Chagos conference is planned for 5<sup>th</sup> December 2014 at Zoological Society of London, Regents Park (as above), together with scientific workshop on 4<sup>th</sup> December, and followed by Reef Conservation UK meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

### **4.3 Diego Garcia Event (inc preparation)**

We have offered an evening of talks on Diego Garcia at the end of the 2015 expedition, and await confirmation/acceptance from the British Representative.

#### **4.4 Event in Mauritius (inc. preparation)**

BIOT Section continue to advise against such an activity at the current time, due to the ongoing Arbitral Tribunal. However, links in Mauritius were developed during the scoping visit in March, and this might yet inspire an in country event to which we can support remotely.

#### **4.5 Presentation of results at national and international scientific conferences (RCUK, ESRS, ICCM, ISRS) and publication in peer reviewed journals.**

Dr Turner presented a talk entitled *Darwin Initiative to Strengthen the World's Largest Marine Protected Area* at the *International Marine Conservation Congress in Glasgow, 14<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> August 2014, Making Marine Conservation Matter* and Dr Heather Koldewey (ZSL) gave a plenary talk '*An overview of building hope and innovation in marine conservation*' which featured several ZSL Darwin projects including Chagos. The CCT *Chagos Conference* has been planned for 5<sup>th</sup> December to precede the *Reef Conservation UK conference* on 6<sup>th</sup> December at the same venue, and hence all Chagos talks will be given on the first of the two days of meetings.

#### **4.6 Project final Chagos MPA workshop UK (inc. preparation).**

Due to the final expedition ending on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2015, and because funds are available until the end of the financial year only, the workshop is planned for the 4<sup>th</sup> December, at ZSL the day before the Chagos Conference.

#### **X.X Darwin half yearly interim and annual/final report (s).**

Submitted.

#### **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.**

There have been no notable problems or unexpected developments.

Professor Charles Sheppard has become Chairman of the Chagos Conservation Trust.

Kirsty Richards has replaced Rebecca Short (who has taken up a PhD) as the Marine and Freshwater Programme Coordinator at ZSL and her duties involve project co-partner administration on behalf of ZSL and delivery of the 'Connect Chagos' project.

Two further expeditions utilising the *MV Pacific Marlin* have been planned prior to our 2015 March-April expedition, as part of the expansion of scientific endeavour in BIOT, as proposed at the *Workshop on Monitoring Megafauna in the Chagos Reserve* hosted by the Bertarelli Foundation and Zoological Society of London at the Bertarelli Campus in Geneva between 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of October 2013. The first, led by ZSL focuses on the pelagic environment and the second is to deploy the *Catlin Seaview* camera system (essentially an underwater version of *Google Streetview*), which will produce valuable output for both science and outreach. We are working in association with both teams. The risk is that because more sea time is being devoted to science rather than enforcement patrols at this time of year, there is a greater possibility of an expedition being disturbed by an enforcement operation during an expedition.

#### **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:	No
Formal change request submitted:	No
Received confirmation of change acceptance	No

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

Yes  No  Estimated underspend: £N/a

**3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully as it is unlikely that any requests to carry forward funds will be approved this year.** 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 and would like to talk to someone about the options available this year, please indicate below when you think you might be in a position to do this and what the reasons might be:

N/a

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

Due to vessel and personnel availability, the final expedition will slightly overrun the end of the grant. We will ensure that all major costs will already have been met before the end of the grant but some small expense claims from some personnel will be made immediately on return. However, we will ensure that these are included in the final financial claim by end April 2015.

**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.**