

## Darwin Initiative Main: Annual Report

To be completed with reference to the “Project Reporting Information Note”:  
(<https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources-for-projects/information-notes-learning-notes-briefing-papers-and-reviews/> ).

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

**Submission Deadline: 30<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

**Submit to: [BCF-Reports@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com) including your project ref in the subject line**

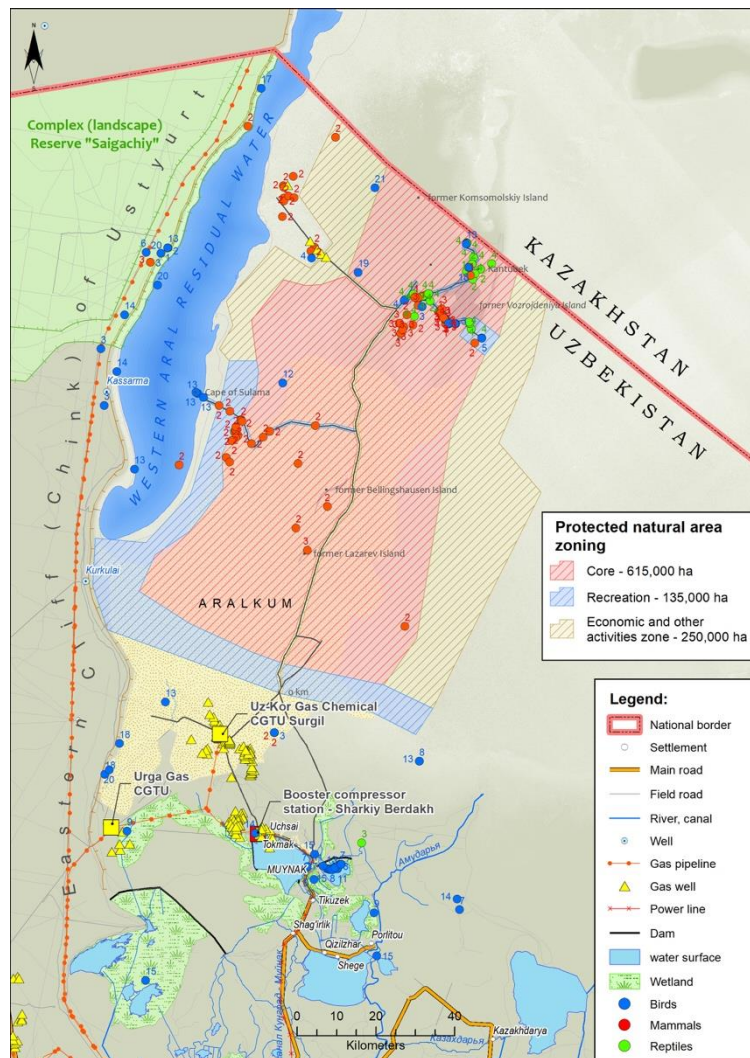
### Darwin Initiative Project Information

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Project reference   | 28-003   |
| Project title   | Resurrection Island: enterprise, conservation and development around the Aral Sea  |
| Country/ies   | Uzbekistan   |
| Lead Partner  | University of Oxford   |
| Project partner(s)  | Institute of Zoology of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences; Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Heritage (MTCH; replaces GCT in original proposal); The Pearl Group; Ministry of natural resources (MNR; replaces GCE in original proposal); UzKorGaz; Saiga Conservation Alliance |
| Darwin Initiative grant value   | £ 399,326.00   |
| Start/end dates of project  | 01/09/2021 – 31/08/2024  |
| Reporting period (e.g. Apr 2022 – Mar 2023) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2, 3) | Apr 2022 – May 2023 (Annual Report 2)  |
| Project Leader name   | Joseph Bull  |
| Project website/blog/social media   | <a href="http://www.resurrectionisland.web.ox.ac.uk">www.resurrectionisland.web.ox.ac.uk</a><br><a href="https://www.facebook.com/ResurrectionIslandProject">https://www.facebook.com/ResurrectionIslandProject</a>  |
| Report author(s) and date   | Joseph Bull, Elena Bykova, Shahzoda Alikhanova, Zebo Isakova<br>30 <sup>th</sup> April 2023  |

## 1. Project summary

Following Soviet-era irrigation for cotton, the Aral Sea region in Uzbekistan is ecologically and economically degraded – yet holds substantial cultural, biodiversity and industrial value. We will lay the foundation for designating Resurrection Island (in the middle of the former Aral Sea) as a Protected Area, while developing sustainable income streams (including tourism) enabling residents to benefit, and ensuring that industrial development results in ‘no net loss’ of biodiversity.

Biodiversity challenges include poaching of threatened wildlife species (e.g. saiga antelope), in part due to a lack of other livelihood options – our project seeks to both ensure greater protection for those species and to facilitate the creation of new opportunities for employment. Challenges also include clearance of desert and forest habitats for industrial activities (e.g. infrastructure construction, resource extraction), which we support mitigation of through ‘no net loss’ mechanisms.



The problems that are problem seeks to address are well established (as part of the body of research into the wider Aral Sea disaster), but we also performed scoping studies in advance of securing the project funding, to understand issues such as current unemployment levels in the Uzbek Aral region. There is an ongoing programme of research, carried out by organisations (including the IoZ and SCA, who are project partners) into the state of biodiversity in the Aral Sea region, which informed our project strategies.

The project region is located in the far west of Uzbekistan. The central focus is the Resurrection ('Vozrojdeniya') peninsula (see Map) which will be the site of a newly agreed protected area. The focal point for sustainable alternative livelihood activities is the town of Muynak, and for ‘no net loss’ work with industry, is extractive sector activities of UKG (another project partner) and others.

## 2. Project stakeholders/ partners

The lead organisation (previously DICE, and transferred to the University of Oxford halfway through the year along with the PI) has continued to collaborate effectively with project partners in Uzbekistan over the last year. The project team and some members of the advisory board held an in-person roundtable in Tashkent in September 2022, to report on progress to date and map out plans/project activities for the financial year ahead. This was to ensure that all partners remain involved in project planning and decision-making.

In September 2022 a series of project update meetings were held in Tashkent and Nukus with all official Darwin partners, as well as new collaborators established in the first year of the project (e.g. GIZ; the German Agency for International Cooperation), alongside the implementation of required project activities. Especially worthy of note is that meetings included representatives of Forestry Agency– managers of much of the land around Resurrection Island and consequently an important organization in relation to the delivery of the protected area (see Output 2). Individuals working with the Forestry Agency will now have an official role in the

Darwin project so we can work closely on establishing how to zone and implement the protected area on Resurrection Island.

Beyond the annual in person meeting, we have had regular (at least every month) catch up calls with project partners, to ensure ongoing interaction and collaboration. Key project partners from Uzbekistan (IoZ, MTCH, SCA) were also able to visit the UK in March 2023, during which a series of project meetings were held (and the partners also networked with colleagues on related projects).

Finally, we have continued to engage with the Uzbek embassy in London as a collaborating organisation: engaging with both they and the US Fish & Wildlife Service at an event on saiga conservation held in the University of Oxford, and also participating in an event on Earth Day at the embassy hosted by the British-Uzbek society – both in early 2023.

*Evidence:* Project September Roundtable agenda/outputs; Forestry Agency ToR.

### **3. Project progress**

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

##### Output 1

The social survey data collected previously has now been analysed and the relevant report written (Esipova et al.), it will be published through the project website in very short order. Additional social survey data collected as part of the same expeditions, and complementary to the above, has been analysed and a scientific manuscript written – this was submitted for peer review at a good journal, and a revision has been requested (*People & Nature*; Alikhanova et al.)

We have delivered further skills training: particularly focusing on those who seek to offer homestay accommodation, act as tour guides, and work as operators for visits to the project region. These training sessions were consequently provided by partners MTCH and TPG over the summer 2022 and spring 2023 – the outcomes are captured in the form of a full training report and participants list. Building on this training, we have commenced piloting homestays. Further activities include developing, mapping and now exploring a set of new tourism trails in the project region which take in multiple points of interest, for eventual inclusion in the pilots.

##### Output 2

An outline of the relevant process for designating a protected area in Uzbekistan was drafted, but will arguably not be necessary for the project now that we have made such progress and that the protected area has been created in law (the relevant Presidential decree will be made available through the project website).

Zoning analyses/maps for PA near completed. Connected with Forestry Agency to design management plans/budgets/etc. (Given both the accelerated process made towards designation of the protected area, but also the increasingly rapid development of the Aral region by the extractive sector, the project has put in a change request to move some budget from the lead organisation to a new budget line for collaboration/data exchange with Forestry Agency – this will greatly support efforts to zone and establish an effective management plan for the protected area). Note roundtable was planned for the 5th May 2023 (Tashkent) concerning zoning for the protected area.

As part of our efforts to survey the ecology of the region, we have updated reports on saiga antelope monitoring and poaching activities in and around Resurrection Island; these are published in the journal [Saiga News](#). We have also been monitoring additional species, as part of these ongoing ecological surveys (camera trapping, field surveys). Further ecological expeditions were completed (IoZ, MNR) to the Aral region and Resurrection Island in May/June and September 2022. These were performed to (a) carry out presence observations of animal and plant species, (b) record any potential disturbance to habitats and wildlife caused by economic development activities, in comparison to 2021 surveys, (c) collect the camera trap data and replace batteries. A qualitative report on findings has been written, and the data

collected are in the process of being analysed by the IoZ in collaboration with UoO to inform a cadastre for Karakalpakstan.

Further to the above, training for capacity building in monitoring has been delivered by project partners IoZ in closely linked work (specifically on camera trapping), as discussed [here](#).

Finally, detailed remote sensing analyses have commenced for natural resources (i.e., land use/land cover) and afforestation outcomes across the former Aral Sea and around Resurrection Island; the project research assistant is currently in the field ground-truthing these data to improve the analyses further.

### Output 3

An important contribution to date has been the provision of further comments on the UKG Biodiversity Action Plan covering activities in the Aral region. Industrial development activities in the region had been mapped at the project outset, however, the situation is changing rapidly (particularly in terms of extractive sector activity). As a result, UKG has carried out additional surveys of emerging sectoral activity in 2022, and has provided a report on their findings (spatial data on new activities are included in the map at the beginning of this report).

We are in the process of engaging with other key industrial actors active in the project region (e.g. SANEG, formerly Jizzakh Petroleum) about No Net Loss; representatives from SANEG are participating in our May 5<sup>th</sup> roundtable on protected area zoning to ensure coordination of nature protection and industrial activities on Resurrection Island. An article recently published in Saiga News also discusses some of the outcomes of our work on mitigating impacts and safeguarding biodiversity alongside the major upgrade of the A380 highway (see [here](#)).

To provide technical support on No Net Loss biodiversity measures, the UoK/UoO delivered multiple sessions on biodiversity impact evaluation and mitigation (including sessions on biodiversity action planning, and meeting biodiversity safeguards enforced by lenders including the Asian Development Bank) to a community of practice in Uzbekistan. The community of practice included representatives from project partners (IoZ, MNR, MTCH) as well as representatives of other important stakeholders (e.g. the Institute for Ecological Expertise, Kungrad Soda plant, Jizzakh Petroleum). Training delivered (in Sept 2022) to:

- Community of Practice in Tashkent, on NNL;
- Tourism sector in Tashkent, on biodiversity and tourism; and,
- UKG employees in Kyrk Kyz.

The relevant materials and supporting information were made available to participants afterwards, and further shared through the project website.

We have commenced engagement with Kazakh partners, to discuss scaling-up: ADCI, RSPB, ACBK, FZS. The training proposed for delivery by the project is planned online in 2023 and in-person early (~ February ) 2024. Further, there is a collaboration session planned for August 2023 in Barsa Kelmes between ACBK/IoZ for discussing transboundary collaboration.

## **3.2 Progress towards project Outputs**

Output 1: (“New small-scale local operators establish businesses based on regional cultural and ecological values, such that residents place increased value on sites of cultural and natural interest”). The baseline state (captured by the market report and social surveys) is that there was some small-scale activity from such businesses, but there were both opportunities and desire to expand considerably. Our project has provided training that has directly enabled potential new operators to set up (homestay providers, tour guides and operators) and begin piloting services. We have begun testing some new tourism products too (in the form of multi-destination tours, which support both emerging and established tourist attractions). Evidence: social survey report and manuscript; training materials, attendance, training reports; newly developed potential tourist routes (map), report on development of birdwatching opportunities.

Output 2: (“Resurrection Island on the way to becoming a fully resourced protected area”). Substantial progress continues to be made in relation to this output. The baseline state was



that there was no protected area – one (Aralkum) has since been signed into law by Presidential Decree, and we are in the process of finalising the relevant datasets, zoning, and developing management plans. The project team has delivered relevant training to those who will monitor the PA (e.g. camera trapping). We are collaborating with the Forestry Agency under the Ministry of Natural Resources – who are responsible for managing the land on which the PA is based – to draft a management plan (including responsibilities and budgets). Evidence: reports based on relevant ecological data/surveys; current draft zoning maps; ToR with Forestry Agency.

**Output 3:** (“Industry and government ensure wider biodiversity impacts of new development projects are effectively mitigated, as part of a broader sustainable development agenda”). As a baseline, there is currently no national regulation on specific inclusion of measures to fully mitigate biodiversity impacts of development, and so the requirement to do so on major projects only comes from implementing lender safeguards. We have worked with both our main corporate project partner (Uz-Kor Gas) and with some others (transport infrastructure projects, tourism industry), to explore the novel or enhanced inclusion of biodiversity impact mitigation measures in plans for implementing new or continuing development projects. At the same time, we have provided training to environmental professionals across the country on best practice in mitigating biodiversity impacts associated with these major projects. Evidence: technical comments on project documents; training materials, attendees, reports.

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

“Resurrection Island is on the path to protected status. New sustainable livelihood options have been piloted, aligning residents' wellbeing with biodiversity conservation. Regional industrial biodiversity impact mitigation practices have improved”.

Overall, we continue to make reasonable and timely progress towards the project Outcome. Our specific project deliverables across all 3 Outputs have broadly been completed on scheduled. But alongside this, we have made excellent progress in terms of supporting new livelihoods particularly around tourism (Output 1) and in facilitating the creation and establishment of the new protected area Aralkum (Output 2).

With regards to indicators for Output 1: we have implemented training and support to help establish new tourism service providers, which are being piloted across multiple households. We have also surveyed residents of relevant settlements, using that information to inform livelihoods pilots. As for indicators for Output 2: we are well on the way, with partners, to submitting the analyses and documentation to the relevant authorities concerning not only official creation but implementation of the Resurrection Island protected area, as part of a wider landscape-scale network of important cultural and ecological sites; the protected area was not created at project baseline. Monitoring the Resurrection Island-associated saiga antelope population seems to be increasing from baseline (of ~50 individuals) to currently about ~100. These indicators remain valid for the project objectives, with the possible exception of some of the specific documents originally planned to be created in relation to the protected area (a timeline is arguably not needed now, as progress has been more rapid than anticipated).

The project team continues to work increasingly closely with industrial and government partners towards Output 3, and deliver against the relevant indicators (e.g. training, biodiversity action planning), although in this respect we are also responding to a rapidly changing situation (e.g. new areas of gas exploration activities, and newly proposed energy projects – which we are seeking to engage with in a way that is consistent with the project as originally proposed).

So far, it is therefore still considered feasible that the project will achieve the Outcome by the end of the funding period.

### 3.4 Monitoring of assumptions

Assumption 1: any potential conflicts between protected area in the region and development priorities (e.g. resource extraction) can be effectively mitigated. Policy-makers are willing to engage with the project.

Comments: so far, this assumption certainly holds on the part of policymakers. We have established contact with the organisations involved in the new extractive sector exploration activities in the Aral region, and indeed some attended our project training on biodiversity. We are hoping this collaboration will continue, and consequently that any potential conflicts can be mitigated.

Assumption 2: Saiga antelope will not be extirpated from Uzbekistan, either through human activities or mass die-off. Saiga antelope will return to the area and rebound in population size if given the right support (including that the transboundary migratory pathway across Aral Sea bed remains open). Saiga population on Resurrection Island requires protection, and our project's activities will lead to that protection being given.

Comments: we continue to find evidence for saiga being present in the Aral region, and do not yet note any major declines in this localised population. Nonetheless, the increased human activity on the Island supports the contention that protection is needed for these resident saigas.

Assumption 3: Industrial private sector partners remain willing to engage on project work. Private sector development will continue, an appetite for biodiversity impact mitigation exists, and decisions can be made on a timescale that will allow meaningful progress on this over the timescale of the project.

Comments: these assumptions remain valid. Our private sector partners (UKG/TPG) continue to be actively engaged on the project, and tourism representatives were highly engaged with our private sector training programme in late 2022. We have established connections with the new extractive sector projects in the Aral region; this is extremely important for our project as it relates not only to Output 3, but also Output 2 (we need to consider mitigation measures for these activities in relation to zoning for the new protected area).

Assumption 4: Small local businesses existing or there is willingness to initiate them. People willing to engage with project. Market potentially exists for international eco-tourism to the region and purchase of crafts from the region. Uzbekistan remains economically and politically stable.

Comments: Based on the ongoing interest and participation in skills training, and the feedback from those, people remain willing to engage. That some international appetite for travel to the region exists is demonstrated partly by the fact a new Brand guide is being published for Karakalpakstan (the first in English language) – to which we contributed content based on the Darwin project work.

Assumption 5: Ustyurt residents willing to participate in repeated attitude surveys. Residents do not currently consider living biodiversity to have economic value (i.e., if they do already, then they are unlikely to place increasing value on biodiversity). Residents are positively disposed towards in-country researchers, and are willing to engage.

Comments: though these assumptions hold in terms of willingness to participate and engage, the social survey outcomes suggest a higher appreciation for the value of biodiversity than originally assumed. There is also an indication that residents consider biodiversity to have some economic value. This does not take away from the need (partially fulfilled by our project)

to provide options for capitalising on the economic value of those natural resources in a non-extractive way i.e. through eco-tourism initiatives.

Assumption 6: The Council of Ministers of Karakalpakstan remains keen to engage and implement our findings.

Comments: valid. Representatives joined the formal project roundtable in February 2022, and will join again in late 2023.

Assumption 7: MNR willing and able to step up protection before full designation in order to protect the saiga population. Poaching rates decline based on this enforcement and based on improved valuation by local residents of the biodiversity of the Island (therefore shifting social norms).

Comments: the assumption has been slightly negated by the remoteness and inaccessibility of the remnant saiga populations in the Aral, and by the accelerated timescale for protected status.

### **3.5 Impact: achievement of positive impact on biodiversity and poverty reduction**

The intended Impact cited on our original application was: “Sustainable economic development of the Aral region is being realised via collaboration between residents, government, and industry; positively transforming residents’ wellbeing, whilst protecting highly threatened Uzbek biodiversity”.

Our project is contributing towards higher level biodiversity conservation through both traditional approaches (support for protected area establishment covering a region featuring conservation priority wildlife species) and more contemporary approaches (bringing emerging best practice in biodiversity impact mitigation for economic development activities). The result is to seek to ensure that development in the Aral region proceeds in line with the relevant SDG (#15), and will help Uzbekistan contribute towards any efforts to meet the new post-2020 CBD Global Biodiversity Framework. *Evidence*: indispensable support from our project to the establishment of a new protected area, direct engagement with industry on biodiversity impacts mitigation in the Aral region.

The relevant mechanism for improving human wellbeing in the Aral region is not only large-scale development bringing improved infrastructure (in a way that is sensitive to potential biodiversity impacts), but also small-scale development of businesses built upon cultural and ecological values e.g. eco-tourism. These are central goals for our project. *Evidence*: the progress that we have made in supporting development of new eco-tourism goods and services, with positive feedback from participants.

## **4. Project support to the Conventions, Treaties or Agreements**

Our project includes, as a project partner, Mr Khalilulla Sherimbetov; who is a National Focal Point in Uzbekistan for the CBD. Mr Sherimbetov is additionally the lead National Focal Point in Uzbekistan for the CMS. He meets project partners regularly, and participated in the most recent project roundtable in September 2022.

CBD:

National biodiversity strategy for Uzbekistan’s under the CBD emphasises conserving and restoring biodiversity in the Aral Sea region; to which our project contributes directly. The CBD post-2020 framework has now been confirmed (the Global Biodiversity Framework), including target of protecting 30% of the Earth’s surface, and restoring 30% of the surface: our project seeks (through protection and restoration) to maintain the area and integrity of critical habitat on Resurrection Island through enhanced protection, consequently enabling an increase in the population of threatened flora and fauna, and thereby contributes directly towards achieving the GBF.

CITES & CMS:

Though our project activities are designed to conserve the biodiversity of Resurrection Island in general, we use the saiga antelope as both an umbrella species to represent that biodiversity and a charismatic flagship species to draw attention to it. The saiga is a conservation target under both CITES and the CMS. Saiga antelopes are listed on CITES Appendix II, as illegal international trade in saiga horn represents a threat to their survival. Our project aims to reduce saiga poaching, supporting the CITES aim to “ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival”.

CMS-CITES MoU. The saiga is the subject of a CMS-CITES MoU between all saiga antelope range states, since 2006. This project has already begun to support achievement of several priority actions under the MoU, specifically:

- 1.11 (“all saiga populations have appropriate investment”)
- 4.1-4.7 (Section 4 “Work with local people”)
- 6.1-6.6 (Section 6 “Habitat and environmental factors”)
- 7.1-7.2 (“Expand and enhance national protected area networks”, particularly “trans-frontier protected areas where appropriate”)
- 8.1-8.3, 8.5 (“Monitoring”).

## **5. Project support to poverty reduction**

The key component of our project focusing on reduction in poverty is that on alternative sustainable livelihoods. By piloting different livelihood opportunities, and providing training to those interested in taking up those opportunities, we hope to directly contribute towards (a) increased household/community income (b) opportunities that are more equitable by gender and (c) making up for a lack of training and skills in certain fields - in villages that are among the worst affected by the Aral Sea disaster (and where our social survey confirms unemployment to be exceptionally high, up to >65% of respondents). Expected beneficiaries are those with limited employment opportunities resident in the project region, especially in towns such as Muynak and Uchsay.

In the second year of the project our focus has been on using the data collected in year 1 (quantifying the baseline and understanding which potential livelihood options would be of greatest appeal to residents, via the social surveys and market analysis) to begin providing training sessions and piloting new tourism goods and services. We have completed multiple training sessions, and are continuing to work with promising providers to build capacity, as well as trialling new tourism routes with an emphasis on providing local employment.

As a concrete example of the type of outcome we are building towards: one of the participants of our training sessions – Venera Sadullayeva from Muynak district, Karakalpakstan, opened her own homestay business on April 10<sup>th</sup> of this year; it is hoped that this kind of entirely new business venture (building on existing skill sets and designed around the natural and cultural attractions of the region) can help address the massive unemployment and associated poverty in the project region.

## **6. Gender equality and social inclusion**

As a post-Soviet country, women are relatively well represented in the professions in Uzbekistan. However in rural areas women's opportunities are much more constrained and gender roles are more traditional.

Livelihoods: the social surveys completed so far have captured respondent attribute data, including information on gender. This will enable employment opportunities explored through this project's enterprise piloting component to be weighted strongly towards providing opportunities for women, contributing towards addressing any current inequities in opportunity in the Ustyurt. Our training sessions have attracted a set of attendees that are well-balanced by gender.



Recruitment: in recruiting the full-time researcher to the project, we actively sought to attract the most diverse set of candidates possible to application, and the best candidate at interview was female. Our core team is currently primarily female. In setting up the advisory board for the project, we have also ensured diversity wherever possible (the board is currently >50% female).

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| Please quantify the proportion of women on the Project Board <sup>1</sup> .  | <b>66% of the individuals on the Project Board are female.</b>               |
| Please quantify the proportion of project partners that are led by women, or which have a senior leadership team consisting of at least 50% women <sup>2</sup> . | <b>43% of the organisations which are project partners are led by women.</b> |

## 7. Monitoring and evaluation

M&E is carried out by all partners together, and has been integrated into project activities via social and ecological surveys, which were carried out during Y1 and Y2. Some analyses have been captured in project reports, others submitted for publication at peer-reviewed journals. Information is shared between partners via secure central shared files, curated by project coordinators.

Additional M&E activities specific to our project outputs include records of training delivered to UKG/MNR (no net loss biodiversity approaches). Our expected timeline for protected area designation (see Output 2) has changed considerably, meaning that we are revising the timeline now for monitoring purposes.

Ongoing progress monitoring will be supported by the explicit Theory of Change refined at the project roundtable in February 2022 (with critical milestones, roles and responsibilities and stakeholders mapped out). Progress against the Theory of Change and milestones is assessed on a regular basis by the project team during all-partner meetings; the last was in September 2022, which will be revisited in September 2023.

Our independent Advisory Group joined the project roundtable in September 2022, and has also fed into discussion in an ad-hoc way since (e.g. during in-person meetings in Oxford, UK in spring 2023). They will join the next roundtable in Nukus in September 2023.

## 8. Lessons learnt

The team structure was mentioned in the previous end-of-year report as an effective means for managing the project and working towards key objectives – it is expected that this will be maintained once transfer of the lead organisation role (along with the PI) from the University of Kent to University of Oxford is complete. Furthermore, fieldwork and training – which are both important parts of this project – have now returned essentially to pre-pandemic levels of activity, and are delivering outputs as planned at the project outset.

The aforementioned transfer process (from the University of Kent to Oxford) is currently the source of greatest challenges to project continuity. In repeating the project, we would likely plan for a much longer transfer process between lead institutions than we did (e.g. 6-12 months instead of 2-3) to accommodate the necessary levels of bureaucracy – this could have been accommodated e.g. by setting the expectation that the project would move across at the end of Y2, instead of at the halfway point of that year. It would also in retrospect have been useful to write a detailed internal project logistics report to share from one institution to the other, to anticipate interpretation of some of the idiosyncrasies of the institutional set up at the original

<sup>1</sup> A Project Board has overall authority for the project, is accountable for its success or failure, and supports the senior project manager to successfully deliver the project.

<sup>2</sup> Partners that have formal governance role in the project, and a formal relationship with the project that may involve staff costs and/or budget management responsibilities.

lead organisation by the new lead. These considerations will inform future management of this and similar projects.

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

Points raised in the last Annual Report, with responses:

*“Important sources of evidence have been cited, but the documents were not submitted with the Report; cited evidence and reports should be included with the next Annual Report”*

The evidence cited in the previous report was subsequently submitted to the Darwin Committee. Any additional evidence cited here will either accompany the report or be included on the project website.

*“Baselines are represented by the market survey and the state of ‘no protection’ afforded to the area; biodiversity surveys were carried out on two occasions, with further surveys to follow, but it is not clear if the former represent baseline studies as such”*

A good observation – but yes, the biodiversity surveys do represent project baselines, and will be used with regards to meeting project objectives.

*“The development of initial protected area documentation and a presidential decree that requires the establishment Aralkum NP is excellent news; the project states that this ‘may be achieved in the lifetime of the project’, but elsewhere suggests that it is on an advanced timeline to be established in 2022. This apparent contradiction should be clarified”*

Thank you for the request: to clarify, the protected area was indeed ‘created’ in 2022 by Presidential Decree, ahead of schedule, but the next steps have then been to confirm precise zoning for the protected area, and develop management plans and budget requirements. It is the latter that we hope will ‘now be completed in the lifetime of the project’. More generally, note that this is understood to be standard process for creating new protected areas in Uzbekistan.

*“Residents have been identified for further skills training; the project could provide more detail on how these individuals were selected”*

\*\*\* A good question: the residents identified were selected during the canvassing of responses to both the market analysis and social survey works in Y1 of the project. Local partners implementing these studies were tasked with identifying possible candidates to participate, and then open further conversation with those individuals as appropriate. In addition, some of the individuals selected were recommended by the Ministry of Tourism of Karakalpakstan – from their existing network of individuals who had expressed interest in providing such services but capacity shortfalls had prevented this happening.

## 10. Risk Management

n/a.

## 11. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

n/a.

## 12. Sustainability and legacy

The project continues to receive attention from the media within Uzbekistan, for instance, see [here](#) (our delivery of lectures and establishment of collaboration agreements through the project with additional Uzbek partners). Linked events, such as the saiga conservation [event](#) which we attended in Oxford along with multiple project partners (visitors from Uzbekistan), provide further media attention to our project. This is in addition to the work we have begun to put into establishing an online presence in multiple languages through [social media](#) and our [project website](#).

Key elements of securing legacy from the project are currently: sustainability of livelihood interventions (now being piloted, with technical support and coaching); establishment of the new protected area (major progress being made); incorporation of NNL principles into major development projects (achieved for two, with more in progress); and, facilitation of a community of practice among environmental professionals in Uzbekistan (in progress). We continue to make substantive progress in all of these areas.

Finally, we are working hard to further secure the transboundary relationship with collaborators in Kazakhstan, as an element of leaving a legacy from the project – technical meetings planned in August 2023, online meetings late 2023, and workshops in early 2024.

### 13. Darwin Initiative identity

- What effort has the project made to publicise the Darwin Initiative, e.g. where did the project use the Darwin Initiative logo and promote funding opportunities or projects?
- How has the UK Government’s contribution to your project’s work been recognised?
- Was the Darwin Initiative funding recognised as a distinct project with a clear identity or did it form part of a larger programme?
- To what extent is there an understanding of the Darwin Initiative within in the host country and who is likely to be familiar with it?
- If you have a Twitter/Instagram/Flickr/Blog/YouTube etc. account is this effective and have you linked back to the Darwin Initiative/Biodiversity Challenge Funds and its social media channels?

The Darwin Initiative logo has been incorporated into all key project deliverables so far, particularly training associated with the project. Further, the publicity attached to the project to date (see Section 11 above) has clearly referenced the Darwin Initiative, promoting it widely within Uzbekistan. One example is the project website, flyer and one-pager (English, Russian, and Uzbek versions) created by the SCA and the RI project team and shared widely both domestically and where relevant internationally. The Darwin is clearly signposted wherever relevant – see [for instance](#) how we display it when delivering project activities with partners in person – including on the project website and Facebook page.

Though the project is part of multiple broader efforts to ensure recovery and sustainable development in the Aral Sea region, it has a distinct and clear identity – this will be further highlighted in the project website (as part of awareness raising and dissemination of project outputs).

### 14. Safeguarding

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Has your Safeguarding Policy been updated in the past 12 months?                             | <b>Yes (safeguarding policy will transfer from UoK to UoO)</b>                      |
| Have any concerns been investigated in the past 12 months                                    | <b>No</b>   |
| Does your project have a Safeguarding focal point?   | <b>No</b>   |
| Has the focal point attended any formal training in the last 12 months?                      | <b>n/a</b>  |
| What proportion (and number) of project staff have received formal training on Safeguarding? | <b>Past: 75% [9] (safeguarding session at last roundtable)<br/>Planned: 25% [3]</b> |

Has there been any lessons learnt or challenges on Safeguarding in the past 12 months?  
Please ensure no sensitive data is included within responses.

**No**

Does the project have any developments or activities planned around Safeguarding in the coming 12 months? If so please specify.

**Will include another session on safeguarding in the next roundtable, including update to Oxford policy.**

## 15. Project expenditure

Please expand and complete Table 1. If all receipts have not yet been received, please provide indicative figures and clearly mark them as Draft. The Actual claim form will be taken as the final accounting for funds.

**Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023)**

| Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report | 2022/23 Grant (£) | 2022/23 Total Darwin Costs (£) | Variance % | Comments (please explain significant variances) |
|---|-------------------|--------------------------------|------------|---|
| Staff costs (see below)                             |                   |                                |            |   |
| Consultancy costs                                   |                   |                                |            |   |
| Overhead Costs                                      |                   |                                |            |   |
| Travel and subsistence                              |                   |                                |            |   |
| Operating Costs                                     |                   |                                |            |   |
| Capital items (see below)                           |                   |                                |            |   |
| Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)                       |                   |                                |            |   |
| Others (see below)                                  |                   |                                |            |   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  |                   |                                |            |   |

Highlight any agreed changes to the budget and **fully** explain any variation in expenditure where this is +/- 10% of the budget. Have these changes been discussed with and approved by Darwin Initiative?

**Table 2: Project mobilising of matched funding during the reporting period (1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023)**

|   | Matched funding secured to date | Total matched funding expected by end of project |
|---|---------------------------------|--|
| Matched funding leveraged by the partners to deliver the project.   |                                 |  |
| Total additional finance mobilised by new activities building on evidence, best practices and project (£) |                                 |  |

**16. OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements or progress of your project so far (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes**

I agree for the Biodiversity Challenge Funds Secretariat to publish the content of this section (please leave this line in to indicate your agreement to use any material you provide here).

n/a

## Annex 1: Report of progress and achievements against logframe for Financial Year 2022-2023

| Project summary   | SMART Indicators  | Progress and Achievements April 2022 - March 2023   | Actions required/planned for next period   |
|---|---|---|--|
| <p><b>Impact</b></p> <p>Sustainable economic development of the Aral region is being realised via collaboration between residents, government, and industry; positively transforming residents' wellbeing, whilst protecting highly threatened Uzbek biodiversity</p>               |   | <p>Zoning (and associated surveys/ analyses) almost completed for the "Aralkum" protected area</p> <p>Extensive capacity building implemented on sustainable alternative livelihood options linked to biodiversity</p> <p>Multiple training sessions on biodiversity impact mitigation measures for industry</p>  |  |
| <p><b>Outcome</b></p> <p>Resurrection Island is on the path to protected status. New sustainable livelihood options have been piloted, aligning residents' wellbeing with biodiversity conservation. Regional industrial biodiversity impact mitigation practices have improved</p> | <p>0.1 Official documentation submitted to the relevant authorities and under consideration, by the end of Y3, concerning awarding protected area status to Resurrection Island (with designation targeted for 2025), as part of a wider landscape-scale network of important cultural and ecological sites</p> <p>0.2 Monitored Resurrection Island-associated saiga antelope population stable or increasing from a baseline of ~50 individuals, from 2021/22 onwards</p> <p>0.3 Two major economic development projects in the Ustyurt incorporate a 'no net loss or better for biodiversity' objective into biodiversity action plans</p> | <p>0.1 Protected area zoned and documentation prepared; Presidential decree No.93 confirms protected area is to be established</p> <p>0.2 Saiga antelope and other species surveys performed (May 2022, September 2022). Limited signs of poaching, and population appears to persist for now. Camera trap training provided to MNR staff.</p> <p>0.3 Connection established with SENEG (company undertaking new extractive sector activities on RI/Aral), and they joined our training sessions in September 2022.</p> | <p>Finalise zoning for new protected area, develop management plan and budget.</p> <p>Ongoing surveys (May and September 2023), and camera trapping. Quantitative population size analyses.</p> <p>Further input to biodiversity action planning for UzKorGaz. Seek to collaborate with SENEG on designing impact mitigation. Explore options to connect with new wind power</p> |



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|   | <p>0.4 Relevant local business development has been facilitated and novel livelihood opportunities focused on tourism and traditional craft production have been initiated (at least 4 distinct livelihood initiatives each piloted across multiple households by end Y3)</p> <p>0.5 Residents in Muynak and Kyrk Kyz report (through surveys of ~5% of the population of both towns) that they place a significantly increased value on regional biodiversity compared to Y1 baseline (Y3)</p> <p>0.6 Project outcomes incorporated in the regional strategy for Karakalpakstan Autonomous Region (end Y3)</p> <p>0.7 Landscape-level scale-up potential being realised through engagement with collaborators in Kazakhstan</p> | <p>0.4 Relevant candidates provided with training pilots commenced.</p> <p>0.5 Social surveys completed and data analysed. Report finished (published soon on website), and scientific paper submitted (in review).</p> <p>0.6 Regional government represented at project roundtable (September 2022)</p> <p>0.7 Meeting and training plans in motion for Kazakh partners, aiming for early 2024 in-person work</p>                                 | <p>development projects proposed in the region.</p> <p>Monitor pilot projects, trial new tourism routes, continue with training programme as necessary.</p> <p>Disseminate outcomes of first surveys e.g. through scientific paper when published, begin to plan for next year follow up surveys</p> <p>Seek closer engagement with Karakalpak regional government on developing 'no net loss' principles for inclusion in the strategy.</p> <p>Organise in-person meetings and training sessions in Kazakhstan in early 2024.</p> |
| <p><b>Output 1.</b></p> <p>New small-scale local operators establish businesses based on regional cultural and ecological values, such that residents place increased value on sites of cultural and natural interest</p> | <p>1.1 Cultural and ecological tourism opportunities and constraints, and market analysis, are described in a publicly available report (by end of Q2 Y2). Suggested business opportunities will be based partly on the results of Y1 social surveys (analysed and published), capturing approximately 5% of the population of the towns of Muynak and Kyrk Kyz (by end Y2)</p> <p>1.2 Skills training provided for at least 25 residents enabling work as tourism operators in the Aral Sea</p>   | <p>1.1 Market analysis report produced in Russian, available on project website. Y1 social surveys completed, and report finalised / separate scientific study is submitted and in review with a good journal. Will release both at the same time. Forthcoming report on the analysis of options for the birdwatching in the Aral Sea region.</p> <p>1.2 Multiple training sessions delivered in 2022/23, reports available on project website.</p> |  |

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|   | <p>&amp; Eastern Ustyurt region (end of Y2)</p> <p>1.3 First tourists, engaged through project activities (and associated new operators) visit Resurrection Island itself (end of Y3). Overall target = during Y3, approximately double the average annual number of tourists to the Ustyurt between 2018-2020 (~3000 foreign, 7000 domestic) are recorded.</p> <p>1.4 At least 10 new households in the Ustyurt begin producing traditional crafts for sale (end Y3)</p> <p>1.5 At least 20 households in the region begin offering new homestay accommodation (end Y3)</p> <p>1.6 In surveys, residents report significantly higher evaluation of the social and economic value of regional biodiversity (Y3 compared to Y1).</p> | <p>1.3 n/a</p> <p>1.4 Households identified: two guesthouses are preparing to produce crafts, one of them has been granted a national certificate to do so. Further households identified.</p> <p>1.5 Training delivered, homestays being promoted and piloted (at least two already commenced, further in training).</p> <p>1.6. Y1 data collected, analysed. Preparing for Y3 survey.</p> |  |
| <p>Activity 1.1</p> <p>Social surveys performed to elicit resident livelihood preferences and attitudes to biodiversity, completed for ~5% of the population of Muynak and Kyrk Kyz</p>   | <p>Y1 surveys completed, Y3 in prep.</p>  | <p>Complete Y3 surveys.</p>   |  |
| <p>Activity 1.2a</p> <p>Quantitative market analysis carried out on the economic feasibility of different aspects of tourism expansion, accommodation provision, traditional craft, and other alternative livelihoods for the Ustyurt</p> | <p>Project report completed and made available</p>  | <p>n/a</p>  |  |
| <p>Activity 1.2b</p> <p>Develop the technological infrastructure necessary to promote tourism, craft products and homestays (i.e. web presence, online shopping capability)</p>   | <p>Creation of project website</p>  | <p>Establishment of shopping capability via existing social media platforms</p>   |  |

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| <p>Activity 1.3</p> <p>Skills training and coaching for at least 25 individuals to work in regional tourism as e.g. guides/operators/homestays</p>  |  | <p>Delivery of training sessions</p> <p>Continue supporting and monitoring those trained</p>  |
| <p>Activity 1.4</p> <p>Drawing upon surveys and market analysis, work with at least 10 households to agree a shortlist of traditional craft products that those households can begin to produce. Identify logistical routes for taking those products to market</p> | <p>During the most recent training sessions delivered by project partners in Muynak, the team started creating a list of craft makers based on post-event surveys</p>  | <p>Under discussion.</p>  |
| <p>Activity 1.5</p> <p>Identify and confirm a list of at least 20 Ustyurt households (with contacts) that will provide homestay accommodation to visitors, and provide coaching as part of agreeing the details of the homestay offer</p>                           | <p>Coaching in progress</p>  | <p>Continue to project end</p>  |
| <p>Activity 1.6</p> <p>Social surveys to assess changing attitudes to biodiversity and to sustainable livelihoods as a result of project activities</p>   | <p>Y1 surveys analysed and report/paper written, paper submitted</p>   | <p>Prep Y3 surveys</p>  |
| <p><b>Output 2.</b></p> <p>Resurrection Island on its way to becoming a fully resourced protected area</p>  | <p>2.1 By the end of Y1, production of a detailed timeline capturing all steps required to designate the Island as a PA, alongside a similarly documented organogram (designated roles and responsibilities for project partners and other stakeholders). Timeline / organogram to include all relevant activities undertaken during the remainder of project (Y2-Y3) and those to be taken afterwards by collaborators, up to PA designation expected in 2025/26.</p> <p>2.2 Production of the specific set of proposal documents (= 7 required 'Appendices' on protected area establishment: GIS map on borders and zones; Regulations on the state reserve; Staff; Borders description; Regulations on nuclear zone; Regulations on</p> | <p>2.1 Due to the creation of the Aralkum national park ahead of schedule, we have proceeded since to focus on surveying and zoning functional zones, and outlining management responsibilities. The former is almost complete, the latter will vary slightly as a result of recent changes in the organization of key government departments. There is no longer need for a detailed timeline etc. since the protected area is already designated, the focus instead is on zoning and implementation of the protected area.</p> <p>2.2 Final version of GIS map on borders and zones is now almost complete – it has required much work due to new areas of gas exploration. Relevant flora and fauna surveys have been carried out but will be ongoing. An accompanying map of natural gas exploration and report by Uzkorgaz is complete. Remaining activity is the roundtable in Tashkent in early May 2023, at which the team will correct the core zones in the maps according to information provided by SANEG</p> |

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|  | <p>buffer zone; and, Area of land plots provided for reserve) required to commence the formal application for protected area designation for Resurrection Island (end of Y2)</p> <p>2.3 Monitored saiga antelope population stable at ~50 animals (end Y3), on track to recover to &gt;100 animals in Uzbekistan from 2026</p> <p>2.4 Two additional threatened species which are listed by CITES (1 x animal, 1 x vascular plant) selected, by project partners, to monitor at Resurrection Island alongside saigas (start of Y1). Monitored populations of these two species also shown to be stable from Y1-Y3 (to test assumption that saigas provide a good umbrella species)</p> <p>2.5 Protection of the Island commenced, and evidence of poaching reduced from baseline (pre-project) levels, over the course of the project (Y1-Y3)</p> | <p>2.3 Saiga antelope population being monitored and size/distribution estimated. Current estimate is ~100 individuals</p> <p>2.4 As stated, globally threatened Imperial Eagle, Central Asian tortoise and, nationally threatened Caracal, Golden Eagle and Flamingo, species listed on CITES Asian steppe cat and Eagle owl as well as ecosystem significant Asian badger and Tolai hare, were all selected to be monitored at Resurrection Island alongside saigas. <i>Calligonum aphyllum</i> + <i>Eromosporton aphyllum</i> and <i>Eromosporton aphyllum</i> + <i>Astragalus brachypus</i> plant communities were selected for monitoring.</p> <p>2.5 Protected status implemented from 2022. Poaching being monitored, and currently low rates (article on this in Saiga News).</p> |  |
| <p>Activity 2.1a.</p> <p>Draft the set of documentation ('7 Appendices' listed in the log frame) legally required for the designation of a protected area in Uzbekistan, for Resurrection Island. Publish through our newly created central Darwin project website</p> | <p>Finalising with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry Agency (now one organisation) the functional zones and responsibilities for the PA.</p>   | <p>Finalise and publish through project website.</p>  |  |
| <p>Activity 2.1b.</p> <p>Through project stakeholder consultation, draft a medium-term management plan for a protected area on Resurrection Island and include estimated costings</p>  | <p>Finalising with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry Agency (now</p>   | <p>Finalise and publish through project website.</p>  |  |

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|   |   | one organisation) the responsibilities and budget for the PA.   |  |
| Activity 2.2.<br>Submit necessary documentation, and agree timeline plus organogram (with roles and responsibilities) for the process towards designation of the protected area               |   | Discussed, and increasingly considered that this may be unnecessary given the major progress made already in establishing the protected area  | Confirm with Darwin Initiative whether this is no longer necessary           |
| Activity 2.3a.<br>Flora and fauna field surveys of Resurrection Island, to map the distribution and abundance of multiple species, including saiga antelope and others (e.g. steppe tortoise) |   | Surveys carried out in May and September 2022   | Further surveys planned in May and September 2023                            |
| Activity 2.3b.<br>Satellite imagery analyses to determine habitat and land use trajectories on the Island over the course of the last two decades   |   | Research commenced. Established collaboration with the NewLife4Drylands EU project  | Analyses underway, including ground-truthing field trips in April-June 2023. |
| Activity 2.4.<br>Camera trapping surveys of Resurrection Island, to capture presence/absence of any other low density and potentially threatened species (e.g. goitered gazelle)              |   | Camera traps collecting data; also, training delivered to MNR staff on trapping   | Continue to capture and analyse large data set of camera trap images         |
| Activity 2.5.<br>Field surveys of poaching signs and social surveys on changing attitudes to poaching (amalgamated with activities 1.1, 1.6)  |   | Social surveys completed early 2022, data analysed. Ecological surveys check for signs of poaching  | Results from both surveys suggest low poaching rates                         |
| <b>Output 3.</b><br>Industry and government ensure wider biodiversity impacts of new development projects are effectively mitigated, as part of a broader sustainable development agenda      | 3.1 Two major ongoing development projects (UKG expansion activities, and the relevant section of the upgraded A380 highway) incorporate language of 'no net less or better for biodiversity' into action plans by end Y3<br><br>3.2 Detailed Biodiversity Action Plans for those developments designed and implemented to meet 'no net less or better' commitment, including measures to support | 3.1 Both projects currently incorporate language of 'no net loss' into their respective biodiversity actions plans.<br><br>3.2 Both projects currently incorporate commitment to 'no net loss' into their respective biodiversity actions plans, and contain measures targeted at saiga antelope. |  |

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|   | <p>saiga antelope conservation (end Y3)</p> <p>3.3 Training in 'no net less or better' approaches delivered to at least 50 Uzbek professionals and materials made available to industry and government (Y1/2)</p> <p>3.4 Biodiversity goals for industrial developments linked with other efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goals at the Regional and National government levels (project end)</p> <p>3.5 Training and materials regarding biodiversity impact mitigation towards 'no net loss or better' given in Kazakhstan (Y1) and landscape-level sustainable development plans under consideration (Y3).</p> | <p>3.3 'No net loss' training delivered to professionals at UKG, MNR, and a wider group of professionals including those representing the Ustyurt soda plant, SANEG, and State Committee of Highways under the Ministry of Transport (September 2022), in total 21 people were trained, note in addition to 34 from the previous year (total = 55). Materials translated into Russian, and shared with these stakeholders.</p> <p>3.4 n/a</p> <p>3.5 Training for Kazakh colleagues delayed, planned for late 2023/early 2024</p> |  |
| <p>Activity 3.1.</p> <p>Building on the high level (i.e. coarse resolution) mapping exercise performed via the separate Whitley Award project, and via stakeholder consultation (MNR, UKG and A380), create a detailed map and description of current and planned infrastructure development in the Ustyurt and Aral region</p>                                   | <p>Building on original maps, new report into activities created</p>   | <p>Incorporate any further development plans into mapping (e.g. wind power proposals)</p>   |  |
| <p>Activity 3.2.</p> <p>Review any current development case study project documentation including action plans relating to environmental impacts, and (drawing upon good international practice and project team technical expertise) propose a set of biodiversity impacts mitigation measures for inclusion – guided by a 'no net loss or better' principle</p> | <p>Current project documentation reviewed (UKG and A380) and measures proposed</p>   | <p>Ongoing work to further revise biodiversity action plans</p>   |  |
| <p>Activity 3.3a.</p> <p>Identify a community of practice of at least 50 Uzbek environmental consultants, planners and impact assessors (including those who are seeking to enter this field)</p>   | <p>In progress</p>   | <p>In progress</p>  |  |
| <p>Activity 3.3b.</p>   |  |   |  |



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| Develop and provide training on biodiversity impact mitigation to this community of practice, illustrated using the case studies (see 3.2)   | Training materials developed, and delivered to further groups of professionals (MNR, UKG, additional organisations including tourism sector) | Working meetings to further consolidate community of practice   |
| Activity 3.3c.<br>On our Darwin project website, include a page with information on those individuals trained in good practice biodiversity impact mitigation and available to consult on future development projects in Uzbekistan, for dissemination to the projects team's professional network of international consultants advising on Uzbek developments | Website created and published  | Include substantial additional materials on website, keep up to date                                  |
| Activity 3.4.<br>Technical input on the inclusion of 'no net loss' principles into the Karakalpak regional development strategy (see Letter of Support from the Karakalpak Council of Ministers)   | In progress. Representatives attended the project roundtable (September 2022)  | Review regional strategy in detail, draw up recommendations for inclusion of 'no net loss' principles |
| Activity 3.5a.<br>Provide training to biodiversity impact mitigation practitioners in Kazakhstan   | n/a Although individuals representing Kazakh partners included in project advisory board   | Due in Y3   |
| Activity 3.5b.<br>Workshop with ADCI collaborators on planning for transboundary scale-up of landscape-level sustainable development plans (including tourism, ecological connectedness, livelihood enhancement for residents, industrial biodiversity impact mitigation)  | n/a Although individuals representing Kazakh partners included in project advisory board   | Due in Y3   |

## Annex 2: Project’s full current logframe as presented in the application form (unless changes have been agreed)

| Project Summary  | Measurable Indicators  | Means of Verification  | Important Assumptions  |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p><b>Impact:</b> Sustainable economic development of the Aral region is being realised via collaboration between residents, government, and industry; positively transforming residents’ wellbeing, whilst protecting highly threatened Uzbek biodiversity.</p>               |  |  |  |
| <p><b>Outcome:</b> Resurrection Island is on the path to protected status. New sustainable livelihood options have been piloted, aligning residents’ wellbeing with biodiversity conservation. Regional industrial biodiversity impact mitigation practices have improved.</p> | <p>0.1 Official documentation submitted to the relevant authorities and under consideration, by the end of Y3, concerning awarding protected area status to Resurrection Island (with designation targeted for 2025), as part of a wider landscape-scale network of important cultural and ecological sites</p> <p>0.2 Monitored Resurrection Island-associated saiga antelope population stable or increasing from a baseline of ~50 individuals, from 2021/22 onwards</p> <p>0.3 Two major economic development projects in the Ustyurt incorporate a ‘no net loss or better for biodiversity’ objective into biodiversity action plans</p> <p>0.4 Relevant local business development has been facilitated and novel livelihood opportunities focused on tourism and traditional craft production have been initiated (at least 4</p> | <p>0.1 Protected area proposal documentation including justification, management plan and species/habitat distribution maps, made publicly available via project website</p> <p>0.2 Longitudinal saiga antelope monitoring data, published through reports in the SCA newsletter and in peer-reviewed analyses</p> <p>0.3 Stated in relevant project documentation (Biodiversity Action Plans) and on individual corporate partner project websites</p> <p>0.4 Contact database of individuals, register of relevant operators (at least 55 total), new websites to promote these goods/services to international markets, and photographs of pilot activities in action (published in the grey literature by project partners)</p> <p>0.5 Repeated social surveys of resident perspectives on biodiversity, data trends</p> | <p>Any potential conflicts between protected area in the region and development priorities (e.g. resource extraction) can be effectively mitigated. Policy-makers are willing to engage with the project. These assumptions all hold on the basis of discussion with relevant parties (see Letter of Support).</p> <p>Saiga antelope will not be extirpated from Uzbekistan, either through human activities or mass die-off. Saiga antelope will return to the area and rebound in population size if given the right support (including that the transboundary migratory pathway across Aral sea bed remains open). Saiga population on Resurrection Island requires protection, and our project’s activities will lead to that protection being given. All of the above are consistent with findings from our previous research in the region.</p> <p>Industrial private sector partners remain willing to engage on project work. Private sector development will continue, an appetite for biodiversity impact mitigation exists,</p> |

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|  | <p>distinct livelihood initiatives each piloted across multiple households by end Y3)</p> <p>0.5 Residents in Muynak and Kyrk Kyz report (through surveys of ~5% of the population of both towns) that they place a significantly increased value on regional biodiversity compared to Y1 baseline (Y3)</p> <p>0.6 Project outcomes incorporated in the regional strategy for Karakalpakstan Autonomous Region (end Y3)</p> <p>0.7 Landscape-level scale-up potential being realised through engagement with collaborators in Kazakhstan</p> | <p>analysed and results published in the peer-reviewed scientific literature (at least 2 articles in review/in press by Y3)</p> <p>0.6 Mention of biodiversity impact mitigation for industry (towards 'no net loss') and sustainable nature-based tourism in the Regional Strategy (by end Y3)</p> <p>0.7 Training given in biodiversity impact mitigation in Kazakhstan (Y1/2), documentation of planning for transboundary protection and livelihood scale-up taking place between project team and ADCI (Y3)</p> | <p>and decisions can be made on a timescale that will allow meaningful progress on this over the timescale of the project. Private sector partners have already committed to the proposed project, so we are sure these assumptions will hold.</p> <p>Small local businesses existing or there is willingness to initiate them. People willing to engage with project. Market potentially exists for international eco-tourism to the region and purchase of crafts from the region. Uzbekistan remains economically and politically stable. One local operator has already come on board as a project partner, and our pilot surveys, previous projects and discussions with stakeholders indicate a strong willingness to engage.</p> <p>Ustyurt residents willing to participate in repeated attitude surveys. Residents do not currently consider living biodiversity to have economic value (i.e. if they do already, then they are unlikely to place <i>increasing</i> value on biodiversity). Residents are positively disposed towards in-country researchers, and are willing to engage. All of the above are consistent with findings in the 2020 pilot surveys and with partners' due to their long engagement in the region.</p> |
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|  |  |  | <p>Council of Ministers of Karakalpakstan remains keen to engage and implement our findings.</p> <p>There is willingness and potential to scale-up project to transboundary level; this is expressed in ADCI's Letter of Support.</p>   |
| <p><b>Outputs:</b></p> <p><b>1. New small-scale local operators establish businesses based on regional cultural and ecological values, such that residents place increased value on sites of cultural and natural interest</b></p> | <p>1.1 Cultural and ecological tourism opportunities and constraints, and market analysis, are described in a publicly available report (by end of Q2 Y2). Suggested business opportunities will be based partly on the results of Y1 social surveys (analysed and published), capturing approximately 5% of the population of the towns of Muynak and Kyrk Kyz (by end Y2)</p> <p>1.2 Skills training provided for at least 25 residents enabling work as tourism operators in the Aral Sea &amp; Eastern Ustyurt region (end of Y2)</p> <p>1.3 First tourists, engaged through project activities (and associated new operators) visit Resurrection Island itself (end of Y3). Overall target = during Y3, approximately double the average annual number of tourists to the Ustyurt between</p> | <p>1.1 Specific market report (published document) into the feasibility and opportunities for tourism and traditional crafts in the Aral region provided to MTCH and published on the Darwin project website (Y2); survey analyses published in the peer-reviewed literature (Y3)</p> <p>1.2 Training materials, certified attendance, operator documentation, photographs of training in action – all included on operator project websites and an article in SCA newsletter (Y3)</p> <p>1.3 Photographs of first tourist trips to the Island published on operator websites and by the Uzbek Tourism Ambassador, and a story on the trips included in SCA newsletter as well as publicised through project team social media channels (Y3)</p> <p>1.4 A list of participating households and individuals, along with</p> | <p>Small scale tourism operators existing or in development. People willing to engage with project. Assumptions confirmed in 2020 pilot studies, and one such operator (MOO) already engaged.</p> <p>Market potentially exists for domestic and international tourism to the region. Sufficient market exists for Uzbek-produced small-scale cultural crafts. Evidence in both cases provided via previous projects and the pilot surveys, and through discussions with MTCH (Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Heritage) and Uzbek Tourism Ambassador,</p> <p>Uzbekistan remains economically and politically stable. The country has essentially been stable since the fall of the Soviet Union and has recently been liberalising.</p> <p>Aral Sea and Eastern Ustyurt region residents willing to participate in repeated attitude surveys. Residents do not currently consider living</p> |

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|  | <p>2018-2020 (~3000 foreign, 7000 domestic) are recorded.</p> <p>1.4 At least 10 new households in the Ustyurt begin producing traditional crafts for sale (end Y3)</p> <p>1.5 At least 20 households in the region begin offering new homestay accommodation (end Y3)</p> <p>1.6 In surveys, residents report significantly higher evaluation of the social and economic value of regional biodiversity (Y3 compared to Y1).</p>                                      | <p>photographs of sample products for sale, retained by the project team. Selected participant vignettes published online in designated website, along with a full list of products available for purchase (Y3)</p> <p>1.5 List of participating households provided through designated website, availability to book homestays online (Y3)</p> <p>1.6 Repeated surveys of resident perspectives on biodiversity, trends analysed and results published in the peer-reviewed literature (combined with 1.1 above), end Y3.</p> | <p>biodiversity to have economic value (i.e. if they do already, then they are unlikely to place <i>increasing</i> value on biodiversity). Residents have a good perception of researchers. These assumptions are all supported by the 2020 pilot studies and long-term previous engagement.</p>  |
| <p><b>2. Resurrection Island on the way to becoming a fully resourced protected area</b></p> | <p>2.6 By the end of Y1, production of a detailed timeline capturing all steps required to designate the Island as a PA, alongside a similarly documented organogram (designated roles and responsibilities for project partners and other stakeholders). Timeline / organogram to include all relevant activities undertaken during the remainder of project (Y2-Y3) and those to be taken afterwards by collaborators, up to PA designation expected in 2025/26.</p> | <p>2.1 Documented protected area designation timeline and organogram made publicly available through central project website</p> <p>2.2 All protected area proposal documents made available via central project website</p> <p>2.3 Saiga antelope monitoring data, published through SCA and in the peer-reviewed literature (as part of the broader Resurrection Island ecological surveys, and published separately to the social survey findings)</p>  | <p>Conflicts between protected area in the region and development priorities (e.g. resource extraction) can be effectively mitigated. Policy-makers remain willing to engage with the project. This is borne out by our discussions with the relevant authorities, and Letter of Support.</p> <p>Saiga antelopes act as an effective and representative umbrella species for the broader biodiversity of the Ustyurt and Aral region (<b>note:</b> this assumption will be partly tested via indicator 2.4).</p> <p>Saiga antelopes not extirpated from the Ustyurt, either through human</p> |

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|  | <p>2.7 Production of the specific set of proposal documents (= 7 required 'Appendices' on protected area establishment: GIS map on borders and zones; Regulations on the state reserve; Staff; Borders description; Regulations on nuclear zone; Regulations on buffer zone; and, Area of land plots provided for reserve) required to commence the formal application for protected area designation for Resurrection Island (end of Y2)</p> <p>2.8 Monitored saiga antelope population stable at ~50 animals (end Y3), on track to recover to &gt;100 animals in Uzbekistan from 2026</p> <p>2.9 Two additional threatened species which are listed by CITES (1 x animal, 1 x vascular plant) selected, by project partners, to monitor at Resurrection Island alongside saigas (start of Y1). Monitored populations of these two species also shown to be stable from Y1-Y3 (to test assumption that saigas provide a good umbrella species)</p> <p>2.10 Protection of the Island commenced, and evidence of poaching reduced from baseline</p> | <p>2.4 Additional species monitoring data, published through SCA and in the peer-reviewed literature (as part of the broader Resurrection Island ecological surveys, and published separately to the social survey findings) (in review/in press by end Y3)</p> <p>2.5 Annual reports to project team by MNR of activities by their rangers and inspection teams on the Island and surrounding areas; reports of poaching signs, interceptions and any arrests from MNR rangers; SCA independent surveys of poaching signs and social survey results published as internal documents and in peer-reviewed paper (Y1,Y3).</p> | <p>activities or mass die-off. Saiga antelope will return to the area and rebound in population size if given the right support (including that migratory pathway remains open). This is evidenced by recent (last 2 years) camera trap footage of saigas in this area.</p> <p>Saiga population recently observed by IoZ ecologists on Resurrection Island requires protection, and creation of a protected area will offer that protection.</p> <p>MNR willing and able to step up protection before full designation in order to protect the saiga population. Poaching rates decline based on this enforcement and based on improved valuation by local residents of the biodiversity of the Island (therefore shifting social norms). Assumption seems likely to hold because MNR are committed to this project and already have the authority to arrest potential poachers in the area (political will has not been there up until now; indications are that this project would galvanise them). SCA's experience with local residents has been positive and indications are that poaching would decline if alternative opportunities became available and if enforcement were put in place.</p> |
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|  | (pre-project) levels, over the course of the project (Y1-Y3)   |  |  |
| <b>3. Industry and government ensure wider biodiversity impacts of new development projects are effectively mitigated, as part of a broader sustainable development agenda</b> | <p>3.1 Two major ongoing development projects (UKG expansion activities, and the relevant section of the upgraded A380 highway) incorporate language of 'no net less or better for biodiversity' into action plans by end Y3</p> <p>3.2 Detailed Biodiversity Action Plans for those developments designed and implemented to meet 'no net less or better' commitment, including measures to support saiga antelope conservation (end Y3)</p> <p>3.3 Training in 'no net less or better' approaches delivered to at least 50 Uzbek professionals and materials made available to industry and government (Y1/2)</p> <p>3.4 Biodiversity goals for industrial developments linked with other efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goals at the Regional and National government levels (project end)</p> <p>3.5 Training and materials regarding biodiversity impact mitigation towards 'no net loss or better' given in Kazakhstan (Y1) and landscape-level sustainable</p> | <p>3.1 Stated in relevant corporate project documentation (Biodiversity Action Plans) which is searchable in the public domain. Independent review of measures developed by member of the IUCN thematic group on Impact Mitigation and Ecological Compensation), and case study included on the 'Conservation Hierarchy' website.</p> <p>3.2 Stated in relevant case study project Biodiversity Action Plans, with specific mention of concrete (quantitative and timebound) measures for promoting saiga conservation</p> <p>3.3 The set of training materials developed for this purpose, the list of attendees at training sessions. Exit survey of attendees to judge their perceived utility of the training.</p> <p>3.4 Biodiversity conservation activities framed in relation to part of SDG 15 ('Life on Land') in case study project documentation and in regional and national government strategic documents</p> | <p>Industrial private sector partners remain willing to engage on project work. Private sector development will continue, an appetite for biodiversity impact mitigation exists, and decisions can be made on a timescale that will allow meaningful progress on this over the timescale of the project.</p> <p>Uzbek and Kazakh government officials, environmental consultants and planners remain keen to engage on no net less or better approaches, and will attend training sessions. Based on previous training sessions (given by PI and organised by UNDP in 2013) there is a strong unfulfilled appetite for this capacity-building.</p> |

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|  | development plans under consideration (Y3). | 3.5 The set of training materials developed for this purpose, the list of attendees at training sessions. Exit survey of attendees to judge their perceived utility of the training. |  |
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**Activities** (each activity is numbered according to the output that it will contribute towards, for example 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 are contributing to Output 1)

**Output 1: Local businesses established based on cultural and ecological values**

1.1 Social surveys performed to elicit resident livelihood preferences and attitudes to biodiversity, completed for ~5% of the population of Muynak and Kyrk Kyz

1.2a Quantitative market analysis carried out on the economic feasibility of different aspects of tourism expansion, accommodation provision, traditional craft, and other alternative livelihoods for the Ustyurt

1.2b Develop the technological infrastructure necessary to promote tourism, craft products and homestays (i.e. web presence, online shopping capability)

1.3 Skills training and coaching for at least 25 individuals to work in regional tourism as e.g. guides/operators

1.4 Drawing upon surveys and market analysis, work with at least 10 households to agree a shortlist of traditional craft products that those households can begin to produce. Identify logistical routes for taking those products to market

1.5 Identify and confirm a list of at least 20 Ustyurt households (with contacts) that will provide homestay accommodation to visitors, and provide coaching as part of agreeing the details of the homestay offer

1.6. Social surveys to assess changing attitudes to biodiversity and to sustainable livelihoods as a result of project activities

**Output 2: Resurrection Island on its way to becoming a fully resourced protected area**

2.1a Draft the set of documentation ('7 Appendices' listed in the log frame) legally required for the designation of a protected area in Uzbekistan, for Resurrection Island. Publish through our newly created central Darwin project website

2.1b Through project stakeholder consultation, draft a medium-term management plan for a protected area on Resurrection Island and include estimated costings

2.2 Submit necessary documentation, and agree timeline plus organogram (with roles and responsibilities) for the process towards designation of the protected area.

2.3a Flora and fauna field surveys of Resurrection Island, to map the distribution and abundance of multiple species, including saiga antelope and others (e.g. steppe tortoise)

2.3b Satellite imagery analyses to determine habitat and land use trajectories on the Island over the course of the last two decades

2.4 Camera trapping surveys of Resurrection Island, to capture presence/absence of any other low density and potentially threatened species (e.g. goitered gazelle)

2.5. Field surveys of poaching signs and social surveys on changing attitudes to poaching (amalgamated with activities 1.1, 1.6)

**Output 3: Industry ensures wider biodiversity impacts of new development projects are effectively mitigated**

- 3.1 Building on the high level (i.e. coarse resolution) mapping exercise performed via the separate Whitley Award project, and via stakeholder consultation (MNR, UKG and A380), create a detailed map and description of current and planned infrastructure development in the Ustyurt and Aral region
- 3.2 Review any current development case study project documentation including action plans relating to environmental impacts, and (drawing upon good international practice and project team technical expertise) propose a set of biodiversity impacts mitigation measures for inclusion – guided by a ‘no net loss or better’ principle
- 3.3a Identify a community of practice of at least 50 Uzbek environmental consultants, planners and impact assessors (including those who are seeking to enter this field)
- 3.3b Develop and provide training on biodiversity impact mitigation to this community of practice, illustrated using the case studies (see 3.2)
- 3.3c On our Darwin project website, include a page with information on those individuals trained in good practice biodiversity impact mitigation and available to consult on future development projects in Uzbekistan, for dissemination to the projects team’s professional network of international consultants advising on Uzbek developments
- 3.4 Technical input on the inclusion of ‘no net loss’ principles into the Karakalpak regional development strategy (see Letter of Support from the Karakalpak Council of Ministers)
- 3.5a Provide training to biodiversity impact mitigation practitioners in Kazakhstan
- 3.5b Workshop with ADCI collaborators on planning for transboundary scale-up of landscape-level sustainable development plans (including tourism, ecological connectedness, livelihood enhancement for residents, industrial biodiversity impact mitigation)

## Annex 3: Standard Indicators

| Code No. | Description  | Gender of people (if relevant) | Nationality of people (if relevant)       | Year 1 Total | Year 2 Total | Year 3 Total | Total to date | Total planned during the project |
|----------|--|--------------------------------|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| 6A       | Training on implementation of NNL biodiversity approaches  | ~50% M/F                       | Primarily Uzbek                           | 34           | 128          |              |               |                                  |
| 7        | Training on implementation of NNL biodiversity approaches. Lectures, handouts, slides, further reading materials | ~50% M/F                       | Primarily Uzbek                           | 4            | 4            |              |               |                                  |
| 9        | Biodiversity Action Plans  | n/a                            | n/a                                       | 2            | 2            |              |               |                                  |
| 11b      | Results of research activities (natural and social sciences)   | Primarily F                    | Primarily Uzbek nationals as lead authors | 0            | 2            |              |               | 3                                |
| 14A      | Annual project roundtable for wider stakeholders   | n/a                            | n/a                                       | 1            | 1            |              |               | 3                                |
| 14B      | Presenting scientific outcomes at international conservation conferences   | Primarily F                    | Primarily Uzbek nationals as lead authors | 0            | 1            |              |               | 3                                |
| 20       | Field research equipment (camera traps, laptops, tents, sleeping bags)   | n/a                            | n/a                                       | tbd          | tbd          |              |               | tbd                              |
| 23       | In-kind support and co-funding (SCA, UoK, now UoO)   | n/a                            | n/a                                       | tbd          | tbd          |              |               | 255286                           |

**Table 2 Publications**

| Title                 | Type<br>(e.g. journals, manual, CDs) | Detail<br>(authors, year) | Gender of Lead Author | Nationality of Lead Author | Publishers<br>(name, city) | Available from<br>(e.g. weblink or publisher if not available online) |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| SCA RI project flyer* | Flyer                                | IoZ, SCA, DICE (2021)     | F                     | Uzbek and UK               | SCA, UK                    | <a href="#">Weblink</a>   |
| Project one-pager     | One-pager                            | RI                        |                       | Uzbek and UK               | UK                         | <a href="#">Weblink</a>   |

|  |  |                                |   |       |  |                      |
|--|--|--------------------------------|---|-------|--|----------------------|
| Market analyses report                                     |  | B. Mammetova, N. Shaabasova    | F | Uzbek |  |                      |
| Social survey report                                       |  | O. Esipova                     | F | Uzbek |  |                      |
| Other project reports?                                     | Report on birdwatching development;<br>Report on flora, RI | T. Abduraupov<br>H. Shomuradov | M | Uzbek |  |                      |
| NbS  | Research paper   | S. Alikhanova                  | F | Uzbek |  | <a href="#">Link</a> |
| Social survey with respect to natural resources management | Research paper   | S. Alikhanova                  | F | Uzbek |  | TBC                  |

**Table 1 Project Standard Indicators**

| DI Indicator number | Name of indicator using original wording                     | Name of Indicator after adjusting wording to align with DI Standard Indicators                                    | Units  | Disaggregation | Year 1 Total | Year 2 Total | Year 3 Total | Total to date | Total planned during the project |
|---------------------|--|---|--------|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| E.g. DI-A01         | E.g. People who attended training on CBD Reporting Standards | E.g. Number of officials from national Department of Environment who attended training on CBD Reporting Standards | People | Men            | 20           |              |              | 20            | 60                               |
| E.g. DI-C17         | E.g. Articles published by members of the project team       | E.g. Number of unique papers published in peer reviewed journals  | Number | None           | 1            | 1            |              | 1             | 4                                |
|                     |  |   |        |                |              |              |              |               |                                  |
|                     |  |   |        |                |              |              |              |               |                                  |

In addition to reporting any information on publications under relevant standard indicators, in Table 2, provide full details of all publications and material produced over the last year that can be publicly accessed, e.g. title, name of publisher, contact details, cost. Mark with an asterisk (\*) all publications and other material that you have included with this report.

**Table 2 Publications**

| Title   | Type<br>(e.g. journals, manual, CDs) | Detail<br>(authors, year)   | Gender of Lead Author | Nationality of Lead Author | Publishers<br>(name, city)                                 | Available from<br>(e.g. weblink or publisher if not available online) |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|-----------------------|----------------------------|--|---|
| Review of Nature-based Solutions in Dryland Ecosystems: the Aral Sea Case Study | Research paper                       | Shahzoda Alikhanova & Joseph William Bull   | F                     | Uzbek                      | Springer Nature (Environmental Management journal, online) | <a href="#">Weblink</a>   |
| Will a new national park help preserve the isolated Aral saiga population?      | Saiga News e bulletin                | Bykova, E. A., Shomuradov, Kh. F., Esipov, A. V., Sherimbetov, Kh. S, 2022/2023, issue 28 | F                     | Uzbek                      | SCA, International   | weblink   |



| <b>Title</b>                                  | <b>Type</b><br>(e.g. journals, manual, CDs)  | <b>Detail</b><br>(authors, year)                         | <b>Gender of Lead Author</b> | <b>Nationality of Lead Author</b> | <b>Publishers</b><br>(name, city)          | <b>Available from</b><br>(e.g. weblink or publisher if not available online) |
|---|--|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|
|   |  |  |                              |                                   |  |  |
| Mammals of the islands of the former Aral Sea | Proceedings of international XI Congress of the Theriological Society at the Russian Academy of Sciences "Mammals in a Changing World: Actual Problems of Theriology". March 14–18, 2022 | Bykova E.A., Esipov A.V., Gritsyna M.A., Abduraupov T.V. | F                            | Uzbek                             | Institute of Ecology and Evolution, Moscow | Russian Academy of Sciences  |

## Annex 4: Onwards – supplementary material (optional but encouraged as evidence of project achievement)

We have now begun to upload documented evidence of project achievements directly to the project website, available at: [www.resurrectionisland.web.ox.ac.uk](http://www.resurrectionisland.web.ox.ac.uk)

### 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? | ✓     |
| <b>Is the report less than 10MB?</b> If so, please email to <a href="mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com">BCF-Reports@niras.com</a> putting the project number in the Subject line.  |       |
| <b>Is your report more than 10MB?</b> If so, please discuss with <a href="mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com">BCF-Reports@niras.com</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.   |       |
| <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.                             | ✓     |
| If you are submitting photos for publicity purposes, do these meet the outlined requirements (see section 16)?  | ✓     |
| Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors  | ✓     |
| Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?   |       |
| Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.  |       |