



Darwin D+ Project Half Year Report (due 31 October 2016)

Project Ref No	DPLUS030
Project Title	Building systems and capacity to monitor and conserve BVI's flora
Territory	British Virgin Islands
Lead Organisation	Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (Kew)
Partner(s)	National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands (NPTVI)
Project Leader	<i>Dr Martin A. Hamilton</i>
Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)	<i>HYR2</i>
Project website/ Twitter/ Blog/ Instagram etc	NPTVI Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/NPTVI/); Storify (https://storify.com/KewUKOTs/building-systems-and)
Funder (DFID/Defra)	N/A

PLEASE NOTE: A supporting document referred to in this report as Annex 1 has been uploaded to an FTP site as a single zip file that can be downloaded from [here](#).

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

The project successfully held major activities in April and June 2016 (see Annex 1) that engaged all project collaborators and further activities occurred in September 2016 (see Annex 1) that involved Kew and NPTVI. The April activities included field visits, training, planning meetings and conference attendance. A presentation was provided by NPTVI staff members Nancy Pascoe (Deputy Director) and Natasha Harrigan (Nursery Manager) about the project at the NatureServe Biodiversity Without Boundaries 2016 Conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Staff from all project collaborators were represented at the conference which included the first formal meeting of the Puerto Rican Bank Plant Conservation Task force since 2012 (Output 1, Indicator 1.3). The meeting included discussions about establishing a formal steering group and areas of collaboration (e.g. Red Listing, fund raising) to ensure sustainability into the future. Staff from Kew (Dr M.A. Hamilton and Sara Barrios) and NPTVI (Lynda Varlack (Director), Nancy Pascoe and Natasha Harrigan) visited Puerto Rican protected areas with local collaborators to observe and discuss management and monitoring strategies employed. These collaborative visits have greatly assisted the development of the BVI Conservation Strategy (Output 3) and are supporting the project outcome, particularly indicator 0.2. Natasha Harrigan received further training in field data and specimen collection as well as Brahms software training during further digitisation of the SJ herbarium to provide botanical data (Output 4).

Activities in June brought the project partners and international collaborators together in BVI for planning/steering group meetings, field activities and training sessions. Besides the main project partners (Kew UKOTs team & NPTVI) and collaborators (USFWS, DRNA & USFWS), new international collaborators were engaged to provide further capacity building (Output 1). Andrew Gdaniec from the Gibraltar Botanic Garden and Miranda Janatka from Kew's Horticulture Department joined the project team to provide specialised horticultural training for NPTVI staff alongside Marcella Corcoran of the Kew UKOTs team. NPTVI staff member, Natasha Harrigan, demonstrated a good understanding of the training received in year one and is successfully using the field data collection protocol and the BVI Botanical database (Output 4). Natasha and several other NPTVI staff were provided specialist training in difficult to cultivate plant watering and propagation techniques as well pest and disease (P&D) monitoring

and treatment. NPTVI staff worked alongside professional horticulturists to gain knowledge and experience in nursery management, including hygiene and biosecurity, plant records, plant cultivation and plant display. Overall, training in BVI provided the opportunity for more NPTVI staff to get involved in the project, receive field training in plant identification and monitoring and receive specialised training in nursery management and propagation.

Five National Parks (NPs) in BVI were visited (Sage Mountain, Shark Bay, Prickly Pear, Gorda Peak & Great Tobago) to undertake survey, monitoring and collecting (Output 3) as part of the NPTVI staff capacity building (Output 1). Visits to the NPs by the project partners also enabled further discussions about management practices in relation to Puerto Rican protected areas visited by NPTVI staff in year one and April 2016. Field activities undertaken across the BVI resulted in several new records (country, island and/or protected area) and these have been incorporated into Kew and NPTVI databases (Output 4) to enable further monitoring activities (Output 3).

New material for the *ex-situ* conservation collections was secured (Output 2) in Q1/Q2 of 2016-17 despite continued periods of drought and plant stress. Of particular note are the collections of BVI native cacti and threatened species that were successfully collected and brought into cultivation for the first time. The cacti species are of significance due to the many exotic pests and diseases that are attacking and decimating their populations across the Caribbean. Securing the BVI populations of these species in *ex-situ* conservation collections is a direct result of the capacity building and international collaboration (Output 1) that this project has enabled. Several BVI threatened plant species were secured using the protocols developed by the project (Output 3) for the first time or from new locations directly contributing to Output 2.

The September 2016 activities involved Kew and NPTVI staff and included field visits, training, planning meetings and targeted collecting for the *ex-situ* collections. Of particular note were the first seed collection of the Virgin Islands endemic *Calyptrothrix thomasi* and the development of collaborations with Fort Worth Zoo to devise a conservation and monitoring programme for BVI endemic and threatened flora and fauna on the island of Anegada. Using the horticultural skills acquired during year one and Q1 of 2016-17, Natasha Harrigan has been able to undertake a new programme of research in collaboration with Kew and Fort Worth Zoo to study the potential effects of iguana gut passage on the native flora.

The project continues to go from strength to strength with all partners continuing to work closely together. Continuing to harness international and regional expertise will further strengthen local capacity and develop the botanical collections, resources and data systems in BVI to enable long-term plant conservation and habitat management. For further information and evidence, see **Annex 1: DPLUS030 Storify compilation April-October 2016**.

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Due to an unforeseen personal matter, NPTVI staff member, Natasha Harrigan, was unable to travel to Kew for a planned training visit in August 2016. The short notice and the nature of the issue meant that the trip has been postponed until Q4 of 2016-17. This should have a minimal impact on the overall project timetable and is not expected to impact the project budget. The issue has meant that seed collections were not made of at least one target species (*Maytenus buxifolia*). Collection of seed from the species may not be possible during the life of the project and will require asexual propagation of the species to meet Output 2, Indicator 2.2. The steering group will closely monitor the issue and necessary steps will be taken to ensure the project is not adversely impacted by the changes to the training dates. Climatic conditions in BVI have continued to cause problems for the project to collect seed of target species. Nothing can be done to change this issue, but the project team are actively collecting asexual propagation material of the target species and monitoring for seed production.

2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?	
Discussed with LTS:	No
Formal change request submitted:	No
Received confirmation of change acceptance	No

3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g., more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?	
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Estimated underspend: £
3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully.	

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?
None at this time.

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any **planned** modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also** be raised with LTS International through a Change Request.

Please send your **completed report by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk . The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g., Subject: 22-035 Darwin Half Year Report**