



Darwin Initiative Main/Post/D+ Project Half Year Report (due 31 October 2016)

Project Ref No	DPLUS034
Project Title	Akrotiri Marsh Restoration: a flagship wetland in the Cyprus SBAs
Country(ies)/Territory(ies)	CYPRUS
Lead Organisation	BirdLife Cyprus
Partner(s)	Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre and RSPB
Project Leader	<i>Dr. Foteini (Clairie) Papazoglou</i>
Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)	<i>31 October 2016, HYR2</i>
Project website/ Twitter/ Blog/ Instagram etc	Website: www.akrotirimarsh.org Facebook: www.facebook.com/akrotirimarsh
Funder (DFID/Defra)	<i>Defra</i>

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

Overall, the project has made significant progress over the last six months, and most of the scheduled activities for this reporting period have been completed or started. During this reporting period the project team has managed to pick up outstanding actions from the previous reporting period. There are a few deviations from the agreed timetable, mainly because the timing of specific activities had been reconsidered to match the timing of other relevant activities.

1.1. The **Site Plan** has been discussed during the Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting on 13 April 2016 and has been agreed.

1.2 Preparations for the **landscaping works, clearing reeds and dredging** are well underway and according to the agreed timetable. Works that include creation of suitable habitat for birds are planned to start on 10 October 2016.

1.3 Preparations for the **water management works** are well under way and according to the agreed timetable. Works are planned to start on 10 October and will continue till early November 2016. BirdLife Cyprus with the support of RSPB will be closely supervising the works of both activity 1.2 and 1.3.

1.4 The works for the erection of a permanent fence and sheds to enhance **grazing and management of the vegetation** have almost been completed. The completed sheds include livestock watering and feeding troughs. The fence will be completed around mid to end October (2016). The project has placed an order for the electric fence. Moreover, the project has started procedures to fund the purchase of cattle by locals. So far, 11 people from the village have stated interest in applying for funding. Also, the project organised an information event for graziers in collaboration with the Veterinary Services on 24 August to communicate to graziers, changes in grazing methods introduced by the project and also to help new and existing graziers understand their obligations and rights deriving from the Animal Welfare Law.

2.1 In May (2016), the project conducted an additional **topography survey** a bit earlier than foreseen. These additional topography data played a key role in deciding the desirable levels for the new created features according to the Site Plan.

2.2 From mid-March until end-June the project conducted bird surveys with volunteers from the UK and completed the **Productivity Study and Population Assessment for key bird species**, as foreseen.

2.3 The **grazing animal carrying capacity study** is currently being carried out and will be completed according to the foreseen timetable.

2.4 The **Study on Killifish** is currently being carried out and will be completed in end January 2017. The contractor has prepared a progress report for the study, showing initial results and informing on next activities.

2.5 The **Water Management Regime** will start being prepared a bit later than foreseen i.e. in Q3 (Y2). Currently data are being gathered that will provide important information for the water management of the site.

2.6 **Monitoring of key variables** on site is ongoing. BirdLife Cyprus with the help of RSPB has been gathering data on the site's hydrology with the use of water level loggers which will remain on site until 13 October (2016). The organisation also continued the systematic monthly bird counts for Akrotiri Marsh. The drone purchased in late September will provide important information on habitat changes throughout the project and beyond its end. The Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre (AEEC) has been monitoring water quality, water levels and plants present at the site. The AEEC identified new locations of rare plants, and even recorded new plants on site.

2.7 The write-up of the **Site Management Plan** will start in Q3 (Y2) and will be completed within the project's timeframe. Currently information is being collected.

2.8 There is a small delay in organising the **workshop in Cyprus**. As explained in our last report (Annual report), the aim of this workshop has been changed to make it more relevant and useful to the local community. Efforts have been made to invite relevant speakers to Cyprus, however the invitations to two specialists on grazing and livestock management have been turned down. The project continues to seek speakers and aims to organise the workshop in Q3 (Y2).

2.9 Due to shortfall from recent changes in exchange rate, the project prioritised activities to save money without compromising the project's output and results. The result of this prioritisation was to cancel the **networking trips**. To compensate for the loss of benefits of this networking, under activity 2.8 the project aims to invite a speaker from abroad, who is involved in similar activities with this project and present examples of socioeconomic benefits from a Nature Reserve to a Community.

2.10 The **drone was purchased** in late Q2.

3.1 The activities for the **design and construction of the bird hides** are progressing as foreseen. The location and design of the hides has been agreed with project partners and stakeholders and the final architectural designs will be completed soon. As soon as the designs are finalised the project will submit an application for a building permit. The construction of the hides is estimated to start around mid-November.

3.2 The project has identified the type of **information signs** that are needed as well as the location for the road signs. We estimate that the signs will be erected on site during Q3 (Y2) as foreseen.

3.3 The activities for the **design and construction of the two walkways** that will channel visitors to the bird hides are well under way as foreseen. The works for the construction of the walkways are planned to start on 10 October (2016) together with the landscape and water management works.

3.4 Along the permanent fence five bays for parking space have been created. The works for surfacing one main parking will be carried out end October.

3.5 The collection of reeds for the **screening of the walkway to the observation hide** is planned to take place in early Q4, a few months later than foreseen. The project team has reconsidered the timing of this activity so that the screening is erected after the hide is in place to ensure that the location of the screening is set-up to the correctly and also so that the screening is not in the way of machinery that will be on site to build the hide. Reeds will be

used as a screening material.

3.6 This activity was implemented a bit earlier than foreseen, in June (2016). Eight people from Akrotiri village **collected sedges and rushes** from the Marsh during 4 days of June (16, 21, 23 & 28 June).

3.7 The **design and production of the ecotourism brochure** is proposed to be implemented in early Q4 (Y2) instead of Q3 (Y2) to allow time for the visitor facilities to be completed in order to include information and photographs of those in the brochure.

3.8 The **website** is updated on a regular basis. The comments received in the Annual Report (Y1) review have been adopted, i.e. increase of activity images and inclusion of narration on the socioeconomic benefits of the project. Moreover, a Facebook page has been created for the site.

3.9 The **project sticker and leaflet** continues to be distributed in a targeted manner. The **project logo** continues to be used in communication material and other material produced.

3.10 The second **awareness raising event** is proposed to take place in Q3 (Y2), instead of Q2 (Y2) as proposed in our Annual Report. This was considered as a more appropriate timing because the project would have made significant progress with the fence and the landscape and water management works to be presented during the event.

4.1 Activity completed by Q1 (Y1).

4.2 Activity completed by Q1 (Y1).

4.3 The **Project Steering Committee** held its third **meeting** as foreseen, in Q1 (Y2), (13 April) and the fourth meeting is planned to take place in Q3 (Y2), (14 October). In addition, the project team organised a meeting (14 September) with representatives from the Akrotiri Community Council and MERRAS Committee to provide details on project progress so far and inform on next actions.

4.4 The project leader has been closely monitoring **budget spending** and availability as the project progresses. Following Brexit, the project team has been reviewing the budget and making adjustments to minimise the shortfall caused by changes in the GBP exchange rate.

4.5 This activity is implemented as foreseen. No delays are foreseen.

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.

The fall of the GBP value as a consequence of the Brexit vote has affected the project's available funds. To cover this exchange-rate shortfall the RSPB has committed approximately €7500. Also, the project team proposes to cancel activity 2.9. This decision was the result of prioritising activities and deciding which activity would have the minimum impact on project outcome if cancelled. As explained under description of activity 2.9, to compensate for the loss of benefits of this networking, under activity 2.8 the project aims to invite a speaker from abroad, possibly Greece, who is involved in similar activities with this project and present examples of socioeconomic benefits from a Nature Reserve to a local community. We expect that this cancellation in combination with adjustments to activity 2.8 as proposed will not significantly affect the project outcome.

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 No Estimated underspend: £

3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project please submit a rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a rebudget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary.

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

No.

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**