



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office



Department
for International
Development



Darwin Plus: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2015)

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| Project Ref No | DPLUS034 |
| Project Title | Akrotiri Marsh Restoration: a flagship wetland in the Cyprus SBAs funded by Darwin Plus |
| Country(ies) | Cyprus |
| Lead Organisation | BirdLife Cyprus |
| Partner(s) | Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre and RSPB |
| Project Leader | <i>Dr. Foteini (Claire) Papazoglou</i> |
| Report date and number (e.g., HYR3) | <i>31 October 2015, HYR1</i> |
| Project website | www.akrotirimarsh.org |

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) 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) (max 500 words).

The project has noted significant progress and has been implemented following the proposed methodology to achieve expected outputs. There have been some deviations from the baseline timetable mainly due to issues of accessibility within the marsh which presents high water levels this year. Also the timing of some activities has been reconsidered to coincide with related activities.

1.1: An indicative Site plan which indicates the location of management features and visitor facilities has been agreed. However, as the project activities progressed we realised that production of a final Site plan would require knowledge of information that would be provided by actions planned later on, specifically the topography survey, the number of graziers, the grazing animal carrying capacity, consultation with stakeholders etc. Therefore, the final Site plan will be finalised at a later stage, i.e. Q2 of year 2.

1.2: Due to wet conditions in the marsh this year we focused works on clearing the outlet ditches that will allow draining of the site and making it possible to carry out landscaping works and dredging in year 2. This work is currently ongoing.

1.3: A part of the outlet ditches has been cleared out and water control structures will be placed during Q3. It was not possible to clear the full length of ditches due to extremely wet and soft ground conditions in the marsh along with a lack of availability of specialist machinery for working in such challengingly wet conditions.

1.4: We propose that this activity be moved forward to Q4 to cover the budget underspend.

Activities 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.7, 2.8, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 will be carried out according to the agreed timetable.

2.1: The topography survey will be completed in early November. The minor delay is because this work depended on activities of output 1.2 and 1.3.

2.2 & 2.6: These outputs are being carried out according to the agreed timetable.

2.9: Due to heavy workload the networking trip has been postponed for Q4 (year 1).

2.10: Most of the equipment was purchased in Q1. Some (camera, GPS and drone) still remain to be purchased in Q3 (Year 1).

3.4: The location of the parking is being discussed. The exact location depends on the location of the landscaping works and the observation tower. Therefore the creation of the parking and installation of bollards will be done at a later stage i.e. Q4 (year 1).

3.8: The website was launched on 20 October, with a minor delay of a few weeks www.akrotirimarsh.org.

3.9: The project logo was ready according to timetable. The project sticker is currently being printed and the leaflet is being prepared and is expected to be ready by mid-November.

3.10: We have reconsidered the timing for the first awareness raising event with the local community and plan to organise the event during November (2015) when more progress will have been made to demonstrate to the public.

Outputs 4.1-4.5: These outputs are being carried out according to the agreed baseline timetable.

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 (max 300 words).

Akrotiri Marsh has been under managed for several decades resulting in overexpansion of reeds and an almost impervious wall of reeds preventing access into the marsh. As a result, the ground conditions at Akrotiri Marsh were largely unknown. During activity 1.3 (clearing of ditches) we came across extremely wet/muddy ground which did not allow us to clear the whole length of the existing outlet ditches.

Works on site have been much more challenging than originally foreseen. The unknown conditions on site and need to wait for the full Site Plan did not allow the implementation of landscaping works which were planned to take place in two phases (Q2 and Q3 of year 1 and year 2).

Currently we are exploring options for managing the reeds. The impact of this unexpected development on budget is still unclear. These difficulties will not affect the timely completion of the project as these works can take place during year 2 (in autumn). The time until next autumn when it is suitable to carry out works on site is enough to allow us to plan ahead and conclude in the best options for managing the reeds and carry out activity 1.2. Also more information about the site will be available and this information will be used to conclude in the best management options given the circumstances. To compensate for the underspend in year 1 we plan to purchase the cattle for grazing in year 1. We expect to have more information on this in December after consultation with experts from the partner in the UK which will visit the area again and meet all partners.

2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

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| Discussed with LTS: | No |
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| Formal change request submitted: | No |
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| Received confirmation of change acceptance: | No |
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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 as it is unlikely that any requests to carry forward funds will be approved this year. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project and would like to talk to someone about the options available this year, please indicate below when you think you might be in a position to do this and what the reasons might be:

As explained in section 2a due to wet conditions and inaccessibility of the marsh, it was not possible to implement the landscaping works this year. This resulted in a budget underspend. To cover this underspend we propose to move forward other activities that could be implemented this year, i.e. activities 1.4, 2.3 and part of 3.2.

At this stage it is not possible to give more details on this as we are still waiting for the final topography survey which experts from RSPB will consult to produce proposals which then need to be discussed with project partners, the Project Steering Committee and other stakeholders.

Please note that this is a rough estimate of underspend. We expect that during December 2015 we will be in position to provide more details with more accurate calculations as we need more time to discuss with all project partners and stakeholders and consult experts in RSPB and to explore possibilities for avoiding significant underspend, i.e. implement other foreseen activities in year 1.

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

At the time of the proposal we focused our efforts and budget in clearing the reeds with mechanical ways. However, after closer assessment of the area and consultation with the experts in RSPB during their site visit in May 2015 it seems that the key management tool for the area which ensures sustainability and long-term results for two of the three key target bird species is managing reeds with grazing cattle rather than with machinery. At the moment, Akrotiri Marsh does not have enough grazing animals to maintain an open area free of reeds and efforts should be concentrated in providing more animals for the area. Reeds re-establish very quickly after removing them and effort is needed to limit their regrowth. Cattle are an efficient and effective way for keeping reeds under control through grazing and trampling, which destroys the reeds' root system. Therefore, we are considering reallocating part of the budget from activity 1.2 to activity 1.4. Currently, we don't have all the information on exact amounts we wish to re-allocate as this depends on negotiations with the cattle graziers and the availability of the cows on the Cyprus market. We expect that during December 2015 we will be in position to provide more details and if needed discuss these proposals with LTS International through a Change Request.

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 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g., Subject: DPLUSXXX Darwin Half Year Report**