



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

Project Ref No	DPLUS 043
Project Title	Consolidating local capacity for sustainable restoration and monitoring of Protected Areas in the Virgin Islands (UK)
Country(ies)/Territory(ies)	British Virgin Islands (BVI)
Lead Organisation	National Parks Trust for the Virgin Islands (NPTVI)
Partner(s)	Jost van Dykes Preservation Society (JVDPS)
Project Leader	Lynda Varlack
Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)	31 ST October 2016, HYR 1
Project website/ Twitter/ Blog/ Instagram etc	Facebook: National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands Facebook: Jost Van Dykes Preservation Society
Funder (DFID/Defra)	DEFRA

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).

Output 1.1: Complete goat eradication on 4 islands, deploying feeding stations, game cameras to assess numbers and radio collared Judas goats.

Goat eradication continued as part of the NPTVI led activities for this project, with a focus on Great and Little Tobago National Parks. Delays in the issuance of NPTVI's firearms permit by the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force (RVIPF) meant that field work could not start until July 2016, compared to the March 2016 date set in the project timeline. As of this report date 33 goats have been culled at Great and Little Tobago National Parks. The remaining goats are becoming gun-shy and so radio tracking a judas goat will be implemented in the next quarter.

Goat eradication has not started yet at Green Cay or Prickly Pear National Park. (See 2a)

Output 2: Control of rats on Green Cay and the Seal Dogs

Output 2.1: Rodent control project steering committee established with quarterly meeting schedule set

This will be established by November 30, 2016.

Output 2.2: Site visit to Green Cay and Seal Dogs with A24 technical expert from Puerto Rico

Technical experts, Hector Ruiz and Jose Vargas of HR Reefscaping, Puerto Rico visited the BVI from 12th – 14th September 2016 to meet with local stakeholders and visit the two islands where rat control will take place under this project.

A stakeholder meeting was held on 12th September 2016, at which Mr. Ruiz and Mr. Vargas gave a presentation on their experience of using A24 rat traps on Maria Langa, an offshore cay in Puerto Rico. BVI stakeholders included representatives from the Department of Conservation and Fisheries, Department of Agriculture, Environmental Health Department, NPTVI, JVDPS and a private pest removal consultant.

On 13th September 2016 site visits were conducted to Green Cay and the Seal Dogs, with NPTVI and JVDPS representatives accompanying Mr. Ruiz and Mr. Vargas in the field. This provided an opportunity for the Puerto Rico consultants to assess the terrain and vegetation, in order to provide recommendations for the operational plan to JVDPS, who is the lead agency on this project activity.

Output 2.3: Operational plan for the control of rats from Green Cay and the Seal Dogs developed

JVDPS has drafted operational plans for both Seal Dogs and Green Cay Islands and has shared with partners at HR Reefscaping, who are providing feedback.

Output 2.4: Control of black rats on Green Cay and Seal Dogs with A24 traps and broadifacoum in bait stations implemented

Seal Dog Islands have been divided into a 30 meter grid to demarcate locations for bait stations/A24s. A field team led by JVDPS trialled uptake of bait by rodents to determine total Broadifacoum needs. Two 5-day periods of laying bait in stations separated by a 3 week interval were implemented. Pending plan approval from consultants at HR Reefscaping, a 50 meter grid for A24s on both Seal Dogs and Green Cay will be implemented with hand broadcast of bait in places where A24s cannot be placed.

Output 2.5: Project steering group meeting to review progress of activities and effectiveness of monitoring regime

NPTVI and JVDPS met monthly to discuss overall project progress, and the formal project steering committee will begin meeting in the next quarter as equipment purchases will have been made and implementation of rat control activities will have taken place.

The steering committee will meet quarterly and be comprised of representatives from NPTVI, JVDPS, HR Reefscaping, and UK seabird expert and past project partner Dr. Louise Soanes.

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.

Output 1: Progress on the goat eradication activities has been delayed by the influence of members of the community in Jost Van Dyke, which neighbours Great Tobago National Park, on the political directorate. There have been a few outspoken people who object to the eradication of the goats as they are a sporadic food source in the BVI. NPTVI met with the Minister responsible for Natural Resources and Labour (MNRL), Dr. the Hon. Kedrick Pickering on 31st May and 3rd October 2016 to discuss the impact of feral goats on vegetation and nesting bird habitat within these national parks and he is in support of the activities. The Government of the Virgin Islands recognised the need for the goat removal but requested more sensitisation of the public, in terms of why this feral animal removal was required for biodiversity conservation.

In light of this community outreach aspect the Permanent Secretary of MNRL, Mr. Ronald Smith-Berkeley requested from NPTVI that he be able to inform Dr. the Hon. Kedrick Pickering at the onset of goat eradication activities at Prickly Pear National Park and Green Cay. Feedback from MNRL is still pending as of this report date, therefore goat eradication activities at these two locations have not yet begun.

Due to the location of these two islands and their close proximity to other islands with high tourist traffic, it is only possible to conduct the eradication activities in the tourism off-season, hence the proposed project timeframe of May through October. If the window for this activity is not possible in 2016 it will begin in May 2017.

Output 2: There were continued delays experienced in receiving the funding from DEFRA and this meant that the equipment needed for rat control could not be purchased as of this report date. The A24 rat traps will be purchased in the next quarter from Good Nature, a company located in New Zealand, as they are the sole distributors for this rat trap. Shipping will be via FedEx so the distance will not be an issue in terms of length of time for delivery.

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:	Yes/No
Formal change request submitted:	Yes/No
Received confirmation of change acceptance	Yes/No n/a

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?

BREXIT has impacted the project budget due to the drastic change in the currency exchange rate. NPTVI will continue to monitor project expenses and make recommendations for reallocations as needed.

For instance, there is a budget line under staff costs for firearms supervision as RVIPF had required that NPTVI be accompanied by a RVIPF Officer when using the Tikka rifles, and the cost of this RVIPF Officer must be paid by NPTVI. However these rifles will no longer be used, as the exemption was not approved and only the shotgun is now permitted for use by NPTVI. There is not a requirement for a RVIPF Officer to accompany the NPTVI staff when using the shotgun so there will be a saving in this staff cost and the budgeted money could be applied towards equipment instead.

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**