



Darwin Initiative/D+ Project Half Year Report (due 31st October 2019)

| | |
|---|--|
| Project reference | DPLUS059 |
| Project title | Establishment of the national framework for invasive plant management |
| Country(ies)/territory(ies) | St. Helena, South Atlantic Ocean |
| Lead organisation | Environment, Natural Resources and Planning Directorate, St Helena Government |
| Partner(s) | St Helena National Trust |
| Project leader | Darren Duncan |
| Report date and number (e.g. HYR3) | April to September 2019 HYR3 |
| Project website/blog/social media etc. | Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/WeedbustersStHelena/?view_public_for=772940983037161 |

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).

Since 1st April 2019, the project has progressed well. With the key species control trials completed and the majority of project outputs being finalised, the focus for the past six months has been on training, capacity building and improved awareness about Invasive Plants (IP).

Some of the key activities listed against the project outputs over the past six months include:

1. Strategic leadership for invasive plant management is evident at the national level

- Following workshop held on St Helena from 18 to the 22nd of March 2019, collaboration with other UKOTs, CABI and another DPLUS project (**Improving biosecurity in the SAUKOTs through Pest Risk Assessments PRA**) has been ongoing. This includes two conference calls discussing feedback on the workshop and planning the next PRA workshop. The results from the workshop is already being incorporated in the Invasive Plant Management Framework (IPMF).
- On the 12th of September 2019 the IP team hosted a workshop on the structure, layout and contents of the IPMF. Twenty five people attended the workshop.
- Pathway analysis document has been developed by IPSO with contributions from relevant stakeholders. This analysis document has been developed to be utilised by all relevant sectors to aid with the decision making process when developing controls plans.

2. Community, industry, Government and land managers engaged in Invasive Plant Management

- One of the key outputs of the project is to increase the number of people holding a certificate in the safe use of pesticides. From the 11th to the 25th of May 2019 Dr Graham Harding visited the island. During his visit he provided IP management and pesticide use training for 17 people over 7 days. In addition Dr Harding consulted on several key species control options and presented at two occasions.

- During Dr Harding's visit to the island additional training opportunities were discussed. The Invasive Plant Support Officer James Fantom showed a lot of potential and it was decided that he and the island would benefit from sending him for training and an exposure visit to South Africa. James Fantom spent two weeks in South Africa getting certified as a Pest Control Operator (PCO).
- In May 2019 the IP team organised an Invasive Plant Species Awareness Week. Activities and events included a press release with an IP quiz and word search and radio discussions. On the 17th of May, the final day of the IPSAW an awareness event was held. The theme of the event was 'Utilising Invasive Plant Species'. The terrestrial conservation officer demonstrated how to use flax plants for composting, a representative of the public showed how to weave flax and drums were made from bamboo for anyone to play with. Dr Harding, James Fantom and the Invasive Plant Specialist (IPS) also gave presentations. The event was attended by 30 people including the some members of the St Helena Nature Conservation Group, the public and SHNT.
- On two occasions the IPS was invited to present at the monthly Environment and Natural Resources Committee meetings. On the 24th of April the IPS gave a project update and on the 30th of August an overview of the IPMF framework.

3. Strengthened local capacity to manage priority invasive plants

- All the control trials of the five key IP species have been completed. The results from the trails are now being analysed and incorporated into the sector specific annual work plans.
- The IP team has started doing on-site training for farmers, the forestry sector and roads sector. The training is based on the trial results and lesson learnt over the past two years.
- In addition the project has coordinated between the agricultural sector, pasture syndicates and the SHNT wirebird conservation team to test new control methods for a pasture weed called Bull grass. The trials include using quad bikes fitted with herbicide sprayers and a topper/mover. These trials will continue post project.

4. Improved knowledge for invasive plant management strategies and tactics

- During May 2019 two member from the Ascension government (Biosecurity and Conservation) visited St Helena. Their time on island was spent learning about biosecurity and managing IP species. Several site visits were conducted and Dr Harding consulted them regarding a well-known invader called Mexican thorn that is a major invader in South Africa and Ascension. This has open up the possibility for future collaboration between South Africa and Ascension Island.
- The project Facebook page is still providing information regarding evens such as the awareness week, updates on the project and collaboration between the island and other UKOTs.
- As one of the key outputs, best practice guidelines are currently being developed. These are based on the results of the species trials and the pesticide training. The guides will form part of the IPMF and will be available to the public as printed copies.
- In collaboration with the Overseas Territories Project Manager (GB Non-native Species Secretariat) the project has created a list based on the Horizon Scanning workshop held in November 2019 and experience from the island of potential high risk species. The list is divided into 2 categories. The first is species currently present on the island, but has not become invasive yet and the second on high risk species that could potentially be introduced to the island. These list, called 'high risk species watch lists' aims to aid biosecurity and relevant sectors to monitor any possibly introductions or spread of these species.

5. Nationally significant invasive plant species under innovative and cost-effective management.

- As part of designing restoration initiatives, the IP team investigated the possibilities of utilising the remaining plant material after clearing a dense population of wild mango Wild mango (*Schinus terebinthifolius*). Following consultations, site visits and soil testing with the newly appointed agronomist, SHNT and the agricultural sector, a chipper was brought in to reduce the volume of smaller branches of the dead trees to be used in composting. Larger branches and stumps were used to test the feasibility of using wild mango to make

charcoal. These test revealed that wild mango is definitely suitable for making relatively high grade charcoal. Since the test, many people on the island have tested the charcoal with good results. The making of charcoal instead of importing can potentially be a business opportunity to be explored post project.

- During November a 'Farmers day' will be hosted by IP team to share information and control techniques to the farmers, public and agriculture sector.

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.

- In 2018 a Change Request (CR1) was granted to DPLUS059 to extend the project to the end of September 2019. To allow the Invasive Plant Species team employed by our partner organisation St Helena National Trust (SHNT) to continue work, we extended our original service provision contract to the end of September. This enabled the team to finalise the control trials on five key Invasive Plants (IP) and complete final follow-up work.
- By the end of August 2019 there was approximately £20,000 underspend. Another CR was submitted to utilise underspend. The CR extension was granted until March 2020.

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

Formal change request submitted: Yes

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes

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.

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. Additionally, if you were funded under R25 and asked to provide further information by your first half year report, please attach your response as a separate 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 DO NOT send these in the same email.**

Please send your **completed report** by email to 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: 25-035 Darwin Half Year Report**