



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

Project reference	DPLUS077
Project title	Sustainable fishery management for St Helena's lobster populations
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	St Helena Island
Lead organisation	Marine Section, Environment and Natural Resources Directorate, St Helena Government
Partner(s)	CEFAS
Project leader	<i>Rhys Hobbs</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	<i>HYR2</i>
Project website/blog/social media etc.	http://www.sainthelena.gov.sh/marine-division/ https://www.facebook.com/sthelenaconservation/

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: *Capacity building, with ENRD staff trained in crustacean data collection methods and sampling techniques.*

The training in crustacean monitoring techniques for local staff and volunteers was due to be completed in Q1 of year 2. To date it has been completed with most members of local staff and all available local volunteers. One local member of staff was not able to complete their training yet as she is currently working on other projects but her training will be completed in January 2020. The training log is continuously being maintained and up to date with the proposed timescale.

Output 2: *Undertake research on existing lobster fishery practices, policies, legislation, biological and catch data.*

Research is ongoing, policies and legislation have been reviewed and recommendations have been submitted. Historical commercial catch data have been obtained from December 1998 to October 2018 and summarized. The collection of present lobster fisheries data is ongoing as interviews and questionnaires for the recreational fishing circles has only started. It is anticipated to be completed by January 2020. As soon as these data have been acquired the final report for this output will be finalised and presented. It was originally due in Q2 of year 2 but it is anticipated now to be completed by March 2020.

Output 3: *Population size, structure and growth of lobster species established.*

The mobile lobster pot network has now been established and data collection has started. Delays in the acquisition and delivery of the lobster pots were the reasons for the later start.

The tagging and measuring are ongoing and up to date with the proposed timeline. To date a total of 965 lobsters have been tagged and biometric data have been recorded from 1468 lobsters during the dive surveys and potting. With the start of the potting survey the collection of biometric data and tagging of the lobsters should increase and therefore the targets for the tagging should be reached earlier than planned.

The collection of gonad samples was originally due in Q3 & 4 of year 1 but has not been completed yet. It is planned to collect the gonad samples together with the egg samples for the fecundity study in January 2020 during the visit of the project officer and the visiting fisheries scientist. The gonad samples will then be sent to one of the listed project partners CEFAS, Weymouth for histology and analysis.

The preparation and integration of the biometric data into the EMD fisheries database is ongoing and on track.

Output 4: *Lobster abundance, habitat association and foraging ecology established.*

Diet and tissue samples were due to be collected during Q3 & Q4 of year 1 and Q1 of year 2. So far, the 20 tissue samples have been collected and sent to CEFAS for stable isotope analysis but the diet analysis has not started yet. In January 2020 the project officer and the visiting fisheries scientist will train local staff in diet collection and analysis who then will continue and complete the diet study by March 2020.

The mapping of key areas is on track. The proposed timeline for this output from Q3 in year 1 to Q1 in year 3. To date a total of 99 abundance and habitat survey dives have been completed in 10 months and the remaining 155 dives will be completed over the following 6-8 months. First maps with lobster abundance data have been produced identifying some key areas. Further maps will be produced when the data collection is completed.

Output 5: *Experimental acoustic telemetry technology trialled to monitoring lobster population movements.*

The proposed timeline for the installation of an array grid and deployment of acoustic tags was in Q2 and Q3 in year 1. The acquisition and delivery of the acoustic equipment has been delayed and arrived on the island in May 2019. The system has been thoroughly tested and the acoustic grid has been deployed in July 2019 and 25 acoustic tags have been attached to lobsters in August 2019. The system is running now and the first set of data will be downloaded in January 2020 and the final download will be in August 2020. This still allows data to be collected for 1 year for the project and will not impact the outputs.

Output 6: *Increase public awareness of the fisheries science research programme and its relevance to sustainable management practices.*

The tag reward scheme has been launched but not many returns have been received. A radio interview will be scheduled for November 2019 emphasizing the importance of the participation in this scheme. The tag reward scheme has also been published in the local newspaper and further publications are planned.

The Lobster project and its progress has been publicised continuously on Facebook and presented by a member of staff at the World Ocean Day Fair and on the Blue Belt Conference. Additionally, awareness has begun surrounding project concepts, such as lobster ecology, aimed at the younger generations. Educational material was produced and included in the island wide annual event 'Marine Awareness Week' which is targeted at children of school age and was conducted in April 2019.

Output 7 & 8 are not due until Q1 & 2 in year 3.

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 setup of the acoustic grid has taken longer than anticipated due to delays in shipping, difficulties in finding the most appropriate site for it and testing of the equipment. Despite the challenges, the acoustic grid has now been deployed and it will still be possible to collect data for a whole year.

Unexpected developments have been the loss of two key staff a key staff members from the project/Island.

Firstly Annalea Beard stepped down as project lead and resigned from St Helena Government (SHG). The new SHG Marine Conservation Officer, Rhys Hobbs was brought onto the project as project lead via the change request process in July 2019.

Secondly, the project officer (Ralf Bublitz) left St Helena in September 2019 suddenly due to personal circumstances. This has been extremely challenging for those remaining on island to make sure that the project has been able to continue to deliver in the interim. The project lead (Rhys Hobbs) has been working to develop a proposed solution and this will be submitted to Darwin as a change request in the first week of November 2019.

Although outlined in more detail in the change request Dplus077 would like continue the employment of Ralf Bublitz as a technical adviser to the project through a consultancy contract. Given the duration remaining on the project and the difficulty in re-recruiting it is hoped that this will lower the risk to the project delivery which would be associated with the loss of specialist knowledge.

Remi Bruneton, the current fieldwork support officer has currently been working full time (instead of part time) in an effort to maintain the project progress. It is anticipated that as part of the change request this can be made permanent, with Remi serving as a fieldwork coordinator to lead and coordinate the field work and assist with the data entry, mapping and laboratory work.

Ralf Bublitz as the technical adviser, in conjunction with the project lead (Rhys Hobbs) will still be responsible for the data analysis, the writing of publications, Darwin reports, monitoring programs and lobster management plans and management of the finances. It is planned (depending on the outcome of the change request) that the technical adviser will visit St Helena in January 2020 to complete the training of local staff and to collect gonad, diet and egg samples so as not to jeopardise the delivery of some of the Darwin reporting outputs.

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 (relatively new developments)
Formal change request submitted:	No (in draft, submission 1 st week Nov 2019)
Received confirmation of change acceptance	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?

None

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**