



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

Project reference	DPLUS082
Project title	Conserving Falklands' whale populations: addressing data deficiencies for informed management
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Falkland Islands
Lead organisation	Falklands Conservation
Partner(s)	British Antarctic Survey, University of California Santa Cruz, Sea Mammal Research Unit, Shallow Marine Surveys Group, New England Aquarium, Ketos Ecology, Happy Whale, Fundación MERI
Project leader	Andrew Stanworth
Report date and number	HYR2
Project social media	https://www.facebook.com/FalklandsWhale

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).

The period April to September 2019 comprises Quarters 1 and 2 in Year 2 of our Darwin Plus Implementation Timetable. Below we list the Activities that were scheduled for this period, and the progress made against them.

Output 1.1 (FC Publications): Articles on the Darwin whale project were published in the May 2019 issue of the FC magazine and the July 2019 issue of the FC newsletter.

Output 1.2 (FC digital media): Numerous articles posted on the project dedicated Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/FalklandsWhale>) over this period, which currently (as of 14 October 2019) has 1,027 followers.

Output 1.3 (Local Media): A Penguin News article was published on 19 July 2019 outlining the volunteer training event held on 6 July 2019 (part-funded by Darwin).

Output 1.5 (Presentations and school visits): Planning for these events has occurred. A public talk is planned for February and a school visit prior to project completion.

Output 1.7 (Steering group establishment and meetings): A project steering group meeting was held via Skype on 19 September 2019. An update document was also distributed.

Output 1.8 (Meeting decision makers): A project update was provided to Falklands' MLAs during a meeting in Stanley on 19 June 2019.

Output 1.9 (Stakeholder engagement): An update document was distributed to all stakeholders during September 2019.

Outputs 1.10 and 1.12 (Outreach and training through fieldwork trips): Four community volunteers assisted on boat surveys between April and August. A community outreach training event was held in July.

Output 1.11 (Training event): Although not originally scheduled for this period, a cetacean training event was held for 21 members of the general public on 6 July 2019.

Output 1.13 (Equipment inventory and availability): An inventory was produced at the end of the

first field season in August 2019. Additional equipment is being ordered for the 2020 season.

Output 1.14 (Volunteer database maintenance): New volunteers continued to be added to the database set up during the first part of the project.

Outputs 2.1 and 3.2 (Acoustic and boat data to address data gaps): Continuous acoustic data were collected throughout this period and the first batch of data shipped to Sal Cerchio to commence analysis. Twenty-six boat surveys were completed between April and August 2019.

Output 3.4 (Processing and storage of faecal samples): Seven faecal samples were collected from sei whales between April and May (after which time they departed the Islands).

Output 3.5 (Photo-id catalogues, matching and quality-control): On completion of the field season in mid-August, the remainder of the period was spent beginning the photo-ID cataloguing and developing QC protocols. This work will continue into the next Quarter.

Output 3.7 (Analysis of boat survey effort and sightings data in GIS): On completion of the field season in mid-August, quality-control and initial mapping was carried out.

Output 3.8 (Analysis of TDR tag data and reporting): Analysis is underway and preliminary results are available.

Output 4.4 (Visits to download/maintain "SoundTrap" devices): Acoustic deployments and recoveries continued to schedule over this period, with a few logistical amendments (see 2a).

Output 4.5 (Acoustic data analysis and reporting): The initial data were shipped to the acoustic analyst after a slight delay (see 2a). Analysis is underway. The first report is due in February.

Output 5.1 (Collection of biopsy samples): A total of one sei whale sample and 50 southern right whale samples were collected via biopsy during this period.

Output 5.2 (Processing and storage of tissue samples): All samples were processed, documented and stored in freezers until they can be shipped for analysis.

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 main challenges that the project encountered this period was related to: (1) the acoustic component of the work; and (2) weather and logistics limiting the number of boat surveys that could be completed at Falkland Sound. These resulted in two separate change requests to Darwin, both of which were approved:

May 2019 Change Request: A significant accidental breakage of critical equipment occurred during the first recovery of the acoustic devices in April 2019. This specialised equipment needed to be purchased and shipped from Canada before the third acoustic device could be recovered (and to facilitate all subsequent recoveries). Not replacing this equipment would therefore have terminated the entire acoustic component of the project.

June 2019 Change Request: During the May acoustic deployments, there were indications that the battery lifespan on the acoustic releases may be lower than anticipated (perhaps due to the cold water temperatures). Consequently, we needed to order a full extra spare set from Canada for future use, which has to be shipped due to the flights not permitting lithium batteries. Additionally, in response to the lower amount of boat survey effort accomplished than expected in Falkland Sound during 2019 (due to weather and logistical factors), the purchase of an extra acoustic release was approved by Darwin so that we could deploy a fourth SoundTrap in Falkland Sound from October 2019 and try to collect a supplementary dataset on whales in that region over the second season.

Both of those Change Requests resulted in reallocation of funding *within* the financial year (because of under spend on the Falkland Sound boat surveys due to weather constraints), and should not affect overall budget or require movement of funding between years.

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 (May 2019 and June 2019)

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. 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. 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**