

## Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020)

<b>Project reference</b>	DPLUS084
<b>Project title</b>	Identifying and conserving resilient habitats in the British Virgin Islands
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	British Virgin Islands
<b>Lead organisation</b>	Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
<b>Partner(s)</b>	National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands (NPTVI), Fort Worth Zoo (FWZ)
<b>Project leader</b>	Dr Martin Hamilton
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)</b>	HYR2, October 2020
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="https://www.kew.org/science/our-science/projects/resilient-habitats-bvis">https://www.kew.org/science/our-science/projects/resilient-habitats-bvis</a> ; Twitter @KewUKOTs #kewbvi; Facebook <a href="https://www.facebook.com/NPTVI/">https://www.facebook.com/NPTVI/</a>

**1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed project implementation timetable (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end September).**

The last 6 months of the project has been dominated by disruption caused by the Covid19 pandemic, details given below in section 2b.

During the time that project activities have been possible, progress has been made in the following areas:

Output 1.2. Genetic analyses of *Z. thomsonianum*. Work in preparation for the genetic analyses of *Zanthoxylum* samples assembled to date was undertaken, involving organising samples and cleaning data.

Output 4.3. Training evaluation and Steering Group review. The project Steering Group were able to meet (online) on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 2020, during which updates to the recorded training activities were reviewed and agreed for the Monitoring and Evaluation Workbook.

Output 5.2. AR1 Produced. The project's first Annual Report was written during April 2020, with input from the entire project team.

Output 5.3. Undertake Steering Group meetings and produce minutes. In addition to conducting the review of training activities, the Steering Group were able to discuss progress against project milestones, plans for training and fieldwork, and possible impacts of the Covid19 pandemic.

**2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months (for Covid-19 specific delays/problems, please use 2b). Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.**

All matters of note relate to Covid-19 disruption, detailed below.

**2b. Please outline any specific issues which your project has encountered as a result of Covid-19. Where you have adapted your project activities in response to the pandemic, please briefly outline how you have done so here. Explain what residual impact there may be on your project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.**

The project has seen significant disruption because of Covid19 in the months since submitting AR1 in April 2020.

At RBG Kew, the entire project team (except for Steering Group chair Dr Colin Clubbe, and Co-Investigator Dr Juan Viruel) were furloughed from the beginning of May to the end of August, under the UK Government's Job Retention Scheme. Staff returned to work on 50% hours during September; however, project activities were only focused on administrative tasks and reporting.

At the National Parks Trust, staff have had working patterns disrupted because of successive lockdowns and curfews in the British Virgin Islands. This has impacted care for *ex-situ* collections at J.R. O'Neal Botanic Gardens and the ability to undertake field work.

At Fort Worth Zoo, staff have spent much of the last six months working from home and unable to travel.

International travel by Kew staff remains suspended while FCDO guidance advises against all but essential travel, and visitors to the British Virgin Islands are subject to strict quarantine measures on arrival. Such disruption has effectively meant that all project activities have been suspended for four months, and much reduced for the other two months (April and September). To date, planned fieldwork for June 2020 has been cancelled, which was to have included a prolonged period of data collection by two visiting MSc students. Likewise, a planned data processing and analysis visit and training event at Kew in August, with participation by NPT and FWZ staff has had to be cancelled. Much uncertainty remains over the extent of disruption over the next six months, with restrictions to international travel likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

The project leader has been in communication with LTS International to discuss possible responses to this disruption, and a Steering Group meeting has been held to make recommendations on what changes to the project implementation is needed. Since most of the project staff have been working reduced hours/days or fully furloughed for much of 2020-21 financial year, the project steering group has recommended a 12-month project pause due to Covid-19. We are actively working to rescope the timeline and budget with potentially the total year 2 budget not being spent due to Covid-19. A change request is being prepared with guidance from LTS for the 31 December 2020 deadline.

**2c. 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
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Formal change request submitted:	Yes/No
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Received confirmation of change acceptance	Yes/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.** 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. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.**

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

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 DO NOT send these in the same email.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to [Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk](mailto: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: 25-001 Darwin Half Year Report**