

Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus Half Year Report

Note: If there is any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website, please ensure you clearly highlight this.

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2022

Project reference	DPLUS119
Project title	Technical assistance programme for effective coastal-marine management in the TCI
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Turks & Caicos Islands (TCI)
Lead partner	Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)
Partner(s)	Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR), Turks & Caicos Islands Government (TCIG) South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI)
Project leader	Dr Megan Tierney
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	October 2022, HYR3
Project website/blog/social media	Project Website: https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/turks-caicos-islands-marine-coastal-management/#toc Social Media handles: @JNCC_UK, @TCIG_Press, @SAERI_FI, @Darwin_Defra

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).

This report outlines progress made against activities and deliverables of DPLUS119 scheduled for Q1 and Q2 of Year 3 (Y3) of the project (i.e. April – September 2022). Please note that we have used the revised Logframe and Implementation timetable which were approved through formal Change Requests in Year 2 (Y2) of the project.

Output 1. Natural Capital evidence base and tools are developed through a capacity building process with TCIG staff (WP1).

In this reporting period, Work Package 1 (WP1) has focussed on the following:

Sharing of Data Products (Activities 1.1 - 1.5)

- Activities 1.1 - 1.5 were completed and reported upon in Y1 and Y2 of the project, however as noted in the Y2 Annual Report (AR2), it was not possible at that time to share the data products as planned on the TCI Data Portal due to staff change-overs in DECR/SAERI. These issues were resolved in this reporting period, data sharing agreements agreed between all relevant organisations, and the WP1 data products produced to date uploaded to the [TCI Data Portal \(Indicators 1.1 – 1.3\)](#).

Refining Baseline Habitat Maps and Natural Capital Asset Register (Activities 1.6 – 1.7)

- **Activity 1.6** involved undertaking a data mining exercise of sources from EMODNET Caribbean, Defra, UKHO and other NGOs in attempt to find any new data layers to enhance the habitat map

produced under Activity 1.1. Unfortunately little additional data was found and therefore the latest versions of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) satellite maps and other mangrove layers were used to update and align the habitat maps for use in Work Package 2 (Condition/Vulnerability assessments) and Work Package 3 (Development of marine indicators).

- Through consultation amongst the Project Team, a decision was agreed that mangroves are considered a marine asset, and that the interior extent of mangroves would be considered within a marine Asset Service Matrix (ASM). As a result, mangroves have now been added to the Marine Habitat Map as a composite over several data layers, with confidence scores calculated (**Activity 1.6**).
- Using these updated habitat maps (Activity 1.6), the ASM tables produced as part of Activity 1.4 were updated to include mangroves and SCUBA activities as part of **Activity 1.7**. Some new or additional data which were also found were used to add/update relevant data points for other assets already in the ASM, and the corresponding report, maps and outputs (produced under Activities 1.1-1.5) have been updated accordingly (**Indicator 1.4 – 1.5**).

Decision Support Tool (Activity 1.8)

- While **Activity 1.8** is not due for completion until Y3Q4, it was agreed by the Project Team in early Y2Q1, that a formal change will be proposed to Activity 1.8 to better reflect current thinking and possibilities within the scope of the project.
- The proposed change will include allocation of resource in Activity 1.8 to bring together insights from WPs 1-3 and scope out a more integrated system for weighing up environmental management scenarios that combines the natural capital asset data (maps and registers) with ecosystem service supply with condition assessment logic chains and indicators.
- If the change is approved, the new Activity 1.8 will deliver a scope for follow-on work that will help best structure how the data products in this project could be better integrated and used to facilitate management considerations in marine areas of the TCIs.

Knowledge Exchange Programme (Activity 1.9)

- This activity is not due to commence until Y3Q3.

Output 2. Completed status assessments for marine/coastal habitats within TCI territorial waters based on best available evidence through a capacity building process with TCIG staff (WP2).

In this reporting period, Work Package 2 (WP2) has focussed on the following:

Sensitivity Assessment Updates and Report Finalisation (Activities 2.1 – 2.4)

- **Activities 2.1 – 2.4** were completed and reported upon in Y1 and Y2, however some additional data were acquired during this reporting round which was used to update the sensitivity assessments, including confidence scores and text descriptions. The report and assessments are undergoing final review and sign-off by the Project Management Group (PMG), following which they will be published on the project website (**Indicator 2.4**).

Vulnerability Assessments (Activity 2.5)

- The vulnerability assessments (**Activity 2.5**) have been completed for three coastal/marine habitats (seagrass, coral reefs, sand) using the habitat map, activities data and sensitivity information from Activities 2.3 and 2.4. The report and assessments are undergoing final review and sign-off by the PMG, following which they will be published on the project website and TCI Data Portal (**Indicator 2.5**).

Condition Assessments (Activity 2.6)

- The concluding results from the vulnerability assessment still need to be incorporated into the Asset Register prior to its upload onto the TCI data portal. This is planned to be completed by the end of Y3Q3.

Knowledge Exchange Programme (Activity 2.7)

- The virtual knowledge exchange programme is now being scheduled to take place in Y3Q4.

Output 3. Marine indicators to monitor changes to coastal/marine natural capital enabling progressive adoption of a monitoring programme developed through a capacity building process with TCIG staff (WP3).

In this reporting period, Work Package 3 (WP3) has focused on the following:

Indicator Development – Phase 1 and 2 (Activities 3.3 – 3.4).

- As part of WP3, marine indicators which can be used to monitor and assess changes in coastal and marine natural capital are being developed through separate Phases.
- The process for development of the Phase 1 indicator (seagrass extent and condition) was reported upon in Y2 of the project (**Activity 3.3**). In this reporting period the Phase 1 indicator report has been finalised and is in the process of being signed off by the PMG, following which it will be published on the project webpage (**Indicator 3.3**). The report includes information on the indicator approach and how the indicator would be run in theory. The indicator approach has been piloted using available data from TCI. A limitation to being able to develop a full indicator at this stage has been data availability. As such, the report provides information on what additional data could feed into the indicator and how the indicator could be further developed should more data become available.
- Phase 2 of indicator development commenced in Y3Q1 (**Activity 3.4**) and is progressing well, although some additional time will be required to fully develop the indicator. Indicator approaches being considered for development include ‘abrasion on sandy habitats’ or ‘condition of coral reefs’. To date, a rationale for developing the indicator, background information, ideas for the indicator approach, caveats and considerations and potential data sources for the indicator have been compiled. The next steps to be carried out in Y3Q3 and Q4 will be to agree on which option to take forward and then develop the indicator approach, including running a pilot study.

Information Management Plan (Activity 3.6)

- The first phase of indicator development has looked at data required to feed into the indicator, including that from direct monitoring. It has also looked at the data types required for the indicator. This information, plus that from Phase 2 development, will help to develop the information management plan for management of data to inform indicators and future monitoring recommendations which is due for completion in Y3Q4 of the project.

Indicator Validation Workshop (Activity 3.5) the Knowledge Exchange Programme (Activity 3.7):

- These activities are not due to commence until Y3Q3 and Y3Q4, respectively.

Output 4. Building TCIG staff capacity in natural capital approaches and raising awareness through community engagement and communications (WP4).

In this reporting period, Work Package 4 (WP4) has focused on the following:

Planned Capacity Building Programme (Activity 4.1) and Stakeholder and community engagement events (Activity 4.2 and 4.3)

- As reported in AR2, the decision was taken to execute the WP-specific Knowledge Exchange (KE) Programmes through virtual means throughout the remaining life of the project, and one in-territory event showcasing all elements on the project in Y4Q1 (**Activity 4.1**). Some initial planning for the WP-specific KE programmes has taken place during this reporting period, with execution planned for Y3Q4.

- Planning for separate on-island community engagement events is due to commence in Y3Q3, with the stakeholder/community engagement and communications strategies to be updated (**Activity 4.2 and 4.3**), and events being run during Y3Q4 and Y4Q1 (**Activity 4.4**).

Communication and Project Updates (Activity 4.5 and 4.6)

- The WP-specific webpages were finalised and went live in Y3Q1 (Figure 1). These have been updated as needed, and can be accessed from the landing page of the project: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/turks-caicos-islands-marine-coastal-management/>.
- As noted under Output 1, guidelines and agreements for sharing and uploading DPLUS119 data products on the TCI Data Portal were finalised in Y3Q1. This has involved ensuring that, as well as any TCIG requirements, JNCC and Defra data sharing agreements would also be met before data is uploaded to the portal. The WP1 data products have now been uploaded, and with these guidelines now in place, subsequent DPLUS119 data products should be uploaded to the Data Portal in a timely manner.

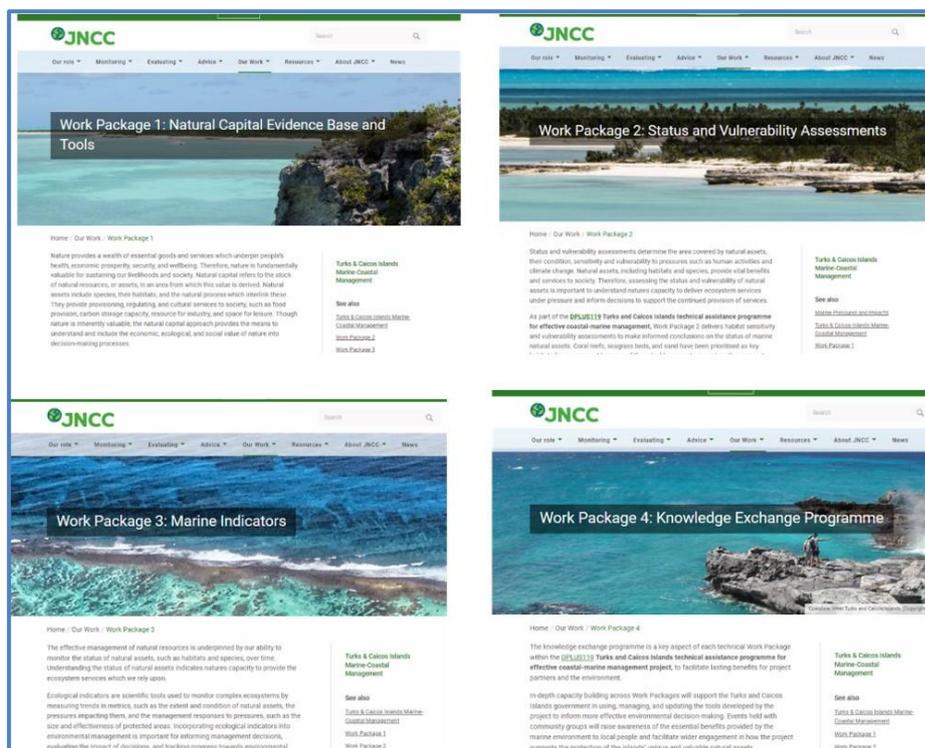


Figure 1. Screenshots of new project webpages for Work Packages 1 – 4 published on the JNCC website early Y3Q1.

Knowledge Exchange Event (Activity 4.7)

- This activity is not due to commence until Y4Q1.

Output 5. Project management, reporting and IT (WP5).

In this reporting period, Work Package 5 (WP5) has focussed on the following:

Project Management (Activities 5.1 – 5.5 and 5.7)

- **Activity 5.1** was reported upon in Y1.
- **Activities 5.2 – 5.4** are related to general project management and are ongoing throughout the project. It has not been possible to hold a PMG meeting in this reporting period, but updates and any relevant decisions that needed to be made by the PMG have been done successfully via email communications. And as can be seen from summary under each Output above, there has been good progress on the majority of aspects of the project.

- The DPLUS Annual Report for Y2 of the project was shared with the PMG and submitted in May 2022. The report will be available on the DPLUS website: <https://dplus.darwininitiative.org.uk/project/DPLUS119/>.

Environmental Data Management (Activities 5.5 and 5.6)

- The scoping exercise to determine TCIG data storage and management requirements (**Activity 5.5**) and then commencement of installing required hardware/software together with relevant training (**Activity 5.6**) were due to start in this reporting round (Y3Q1 and Y3Q2, respectively).
- However due to some unforeseen capacity limitations within the JNCC team leading on these activities, together with the DECR Data Manager post not yet being fulfilled, these activities have been delayed.
- However, if timeframes can be adjusted, which will be submitted via a formal Change Request, overall impact on the project should be minimal as other elements of the project are not directly reliant on these being completed by a certain date. Further, the DECR Data Manager Post is currently being advertised and so it is anticipated that the new post-holder will soon be able to also provide input into these activities.

2. 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.

Project progress has been relatively steady during this reporting round, however it is worth noting that there has been some impact on DECR staff capabilities to engage fully with the project in recent weeks due to hurricane Fiona which passed through the TCIs in September 2022. This resulted in some operational disruption and government officers being re-tasked to assist with national recovery.

It is also worth noting that the recent increase in the incidence of gun violence on TCI, particularly in Providenciales, may impact on future in-territory events (e.g. stakeholder/community events) being planned as part of the project in either Y3Q4 or Y4Q1. If deemed unsafe, it may be necessary review where and how these events can be undertaken on-island, but at the same time trying to ensure the objectives of the project are achieved. It is anticipated that JNCC and SAERI staff will travel to the TCIs to join DECR in delivering the final KE event towards the end of Y4Q1; however, if, at the time, the situation is deemed unsafe, directives from organisation executives may not permit travel. The situation as a whole will be monitored by the PMG and action taken accordingly.

The above two points are likely to have minimal direct impact on the budget and timetable of activities, however, while most activities under Outputs 1-3 are progressing well, some are taking longer to complete than originally anticipated. Therefore, it may be necessary to adjust the timetable and budget accordingly. A formal Change Request outlining these amendments will be submitted by the end of November 2022 for consideration by DPLUS.

3. Have any of these issues been discussed with NIRAS-LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with NIRAS-LTS:	Yes/No
Formal Change Request submitted:	Yes/No – but plan to submit by end-Nov 2022
Received confirmation of change acceptance	Yes/No N/A
Change request reference if known:	N/A

4a. 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: ████████

4b. 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 re-budget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget 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.**

5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

No

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response (including the submission of your risk register), or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response 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 NIRAS-LTS International through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to BCF-Reports@niras.com. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Half Year Report**