



Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31st October 2021)

Project reference	DPLUS129
Project title	Understanding Ramsar wetland dynamics for marine conservation and environmental resilience
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Turks & Caicos Islands
Lead organisation	Environment Systems Ltd
Partner(s)	Turks and Caicos Government Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR); Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC); Marine Conservation Society (MCS); University of Exeter (UoE); Wavehill
Project leader	Katie Medcalf
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.envsys.co.uk/ramsar-wetlands/

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).

There has been an approximate six-week delay on all activities due to the delay in the grant award letter.

Output 1: Documentation, maps, and methods

Activity 1.1a i: 2010 and 2020 Habitat maps of TCI have been sourced from DECR. A dense time-series of Landsat satellite imagery from 2000 onwards have been downloaded and are being prepared for analysis. A crosswalk of all the nomenclatures of available habitat data is in preparation to allow for habitat comparison between the different habitat maps.

Activity 1.1a ii: The original creators of the 2000 habitat data have been contacted, and have agreed to provide any corresponding GIS datasets to the project. If these are insufficient, vectorised versions of high-resolution pdfs will be delineated manually.

Activity 1.1a iii: A dense time-series of Landsat, Sentinel-1 and Sentinel-2 satellite imagery have been downloaded and are being prepared for analysis.

Activity 1.1a iv: Efforts are underway to identify a suitable, local, boat captain to take the field survey team to/from the potentially treacherous embarkation zones. It is unlikely that the Wetland Officer recruit will be in place by the time the survey work takes place. Alternative arrangements are in progress to ensure that knowledge transfer is provided between the survey experts and DECR. The survey work is likely to take place in Q3.

Activity 1.1a v: A dense time-series of Sentinel-1 and Sentinel-2 has been downloaded and are being prepared for analysis. The most recent (2020) habitat map has been obtained. Planning is underway to explore how to describe potential change, and to survey these changes.

Activity 1.1a vi: A dense time-series of Sentinel-2 has been downloaded and are being prepared for analysis.

Activity 1.1b i: A dense time-series of Sentinel-1 and Sentinel-2 has been downloaded and are being prepared for analysis. Climate data in decadal timeframes is being collated for rainfall, wind, temperature and seasonality.

Activity 1.5 i: A project webpage has been established, and is being populated with relevant material. This will be continually updated as the project progresses. This will be launched in Q3.

Output 2: A monitoring intelligence dashboard enables users to view the latest in-situ and remotely sensed data in intuitive and interactive visualisations, on a single screen.

No progress on this output between July-September, as per the project timetable.

Output 3: Participants in the project develop the knowledge and skills necessary to effectivity use the project tools required.

Activity 3.1: A project webpage has been established, and will be populated with relevant material as the project progresses.

Activity 3.2: A job description has been written, due to be advertised by DECR. Required IT equipment, including laptop, external hard drive, and screens have been identified, and will be purchased imminently.

Activity 3.3: The public project kick off is in preparation and will be scheduled as soon as the Wetland Officer recruitment is complete.

Activity 3.4: Online training surgeries are in planning and will commence shortly.

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.

There was an unforeseen departmental split within the TCI government prior to the awarding of the grant, which has heavily impacted DECR. This has meant that resources (such as boats) which were previously available during the bid phases, are now either no longer available, or in dispute. The split has also reduced available DECR personnel, increasing the existing staff's day-to-day duties and decreasing their availability for DPLUS project work for the time being. This has meant delays in the project set-up and planning, such as the Wetland Officer recruitment. Potential risks to the project timetable and budget resulting from this have been identified, and mitigation measures are underway to minimise these impacts.

The proposed Wetland Fieldwork Expert will no longer be available throughout 2022. This has meant that their involvement is now time sensitive, and must be completed by Year 1 Q3. The training in wetland fieldwork methods was specifically for the new Wetland Officer recruit, who would then provide survey data throughout the project. Combined with the delays from the above departmental split, there is a risk that the Wetland Officer post may not be filled until after the Wetland Fieldwork Expert is unavailable.

The proposed contingency is for the Wetland Fieldwork Expert to train an available DECR staff member in November/December 2021, who will then train the new Wetland Officer recruit.

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.

There have been no issues with COVID-19 during these first two months of the project.

There may be potential impacts when it comes to organising the on-island workshops, especially in terms of travel, accommodation, and the risk of quarantine. This could influence the timetable if the workshops need to be pushed back into Year 2, and/or the budget if flight costs drastically increase, and extended hotel stays are required.

COVID-19 may also impact the time it takes for the new Wetland Officer to relocate to TCI (if required), start their role, and settle in to the work.

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

Formal change request submitted: Yes/No

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/No

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?

Not applicable

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. 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**