

## **DPR9S2\1019**

### **Repelling the invader: turning the tide on Ascension's Mexican thorn**

Mexican thorn is the most damaging invasive species on Ascension. This project will take a strategic and integrated approach to controlling thorn on Ascension including rigorous assessment of further biocontrol and improved chemical and mechanical treatment. The project will ensure local capacity is built to deliver those most appropriate and cost-effective for Ascension. The outcome will be a step change in our ability to control Mexican thorn and result in a long-term contraction of its range and restoration of habitats.

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## Section 1 - Contact Details

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### PRIMARY APPLICANT DETAILS

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Name Diane  
Surname Baum  
Website ascension-island.gov.ac  
Tel (Work) [REDACTED]  
Email (Work) [REDACTED]  
Address [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

### GMS ORGANISATION

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Type	Organisation
Name	Ascension Island Government
Phone	[REDACTED]
Email	[REDACTED]
Website	[REDACTED]
Address	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

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## Section 2 - Title, Dates & Budget Summary

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### Q3a. Project title

Repelling the invader: turning the tide on Ascension's Mexican thorn

### Q3b. What was your Stage 1 reference number? e.g. DPR9S1\10008

DPR9S1\1051

### Q4. UKOT(s)

Which eligible UK Overseas Territory(ies) will your project be working in?

St Helena (ODA eligible), Ascension and Tristan da Cunha\* (ODA eligible)

\* if you have indicated a territory group with an asterisk, please give detail on which territories you are working on here:

Ascension

**Q4b. In addition to the UKOTs you have indicated, will your project directly benefit any other Territories or country(ies)?**

No

## Q5. Project dates

**Start date:**

01 September 2021

**End date:**

31 March 2024

**Duration (e.g. 2 years, 3 months):**

2 years, 7 months

## Q6. Budget summary

Year:	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total request
Darwin funding request (Apr - Mar)	£70,200.00	£59,515.00	£54,477.00	£0.00	<b>£</b> 184,192.00

**Q6a. Do you have proposed matched funding arrangements?**

Yes

**What matched funding arrangements are proposed?**

AIG – staff time, overheads, accommodation for project officer and visiting partners  
CABI – overheads provided in-kind

**Q6b. Proposed matched funding as % of total project cost (total cost is the Darwin request plus other funding required to run the project).**

## Section 3 - Project Summary and Conventions

### Q7. Summary of Project

Please provide a brief summary of your project, its aims, and the key activities you plan to undertake. Please note that if you are successful, this working may be used by Defra in communications e.g. as a short description of the project on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Please write this summary for a non-technical audience.

Mexican thorn is the most damaging invasive species on Ascension. This project will take a strategic and integrated approach to controlling thorn on Ascension including rigorous assessment of further biocontrol and improved chemical and mechanical treatment. The project will ensure local capacity is built to deliver those most appropriate and cost-effective for Ascension. The outcome will be a step change in our ability to control Mexican thorn and result in a long-term contraction of its range and restoration of habitats.

## Q8. Biodiversity Conventions, Treaties and Agreements

**Please detail how your project will contribute to the aims of the agreement(s) your project is targeting. What key OT Government priorities and themes will it address? You should refer to Articles or Programmes of Work here. You should also consider local, territory specific agreements and action plans here.**

The project will address Ascension's and the UK Government's commitments under Article 8 of the Convention on Biological Diversity to control alien species that threaten ecosystems, habitats or species. Mexican thorn is identified as a significant threat to Ascension populations of the endangered green turtles and the endemic and critically endangered Ascension Island spurge (*Euphorbia organoides*).

Green turtles are listed on Appendix 1 of the Convention on Migratory Species and this project will help to deliver Ascension's commitment to protect their habitat.

Mexican thorn is identified as a major threat in Ascension's National Biodiversity Action Plan. It is listed as a threat in six out of the fifteen terrestrial Species Action Plans (SAP) for native species on Ascension and the pressing need to control thorn is highlighted in a specific SAP for Mexican thorn, reflecting its widespread impacts on species, habitats and landscapes.

Mexican thorn is listed as a high priority non-native species in the Ascension Island Government's Biodiversity Strategy, which seeks to identify long-term, sustainable means of controlling invasive non-natives where they are available.

## Section 4 - Lead Organisation Summary

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### Q9. Lead organisation summary

**Has your organisation been awarded a Darwin Initiative award before (for the purposes of this question, being a partner does not count)?**

Yes

**If yes, please provide details of the most recent awards (up to 6 examples).**

Reference No	Project Leader	Title
DPLUS113	Dr Diane Baum	Climate Resilience and Conservation of Ascension Biodiversity
DPLUS096	Dr Diane Baum	Building Ascension's Biosecurity Capacity

DPLUS063	Dr Sam Weber	The Ascension Island Ocean Sanctuary
DPLUS047	Mike Haworth	Reduce, reuse, recycle – developing a waste management strategy for
DPLUS046	Dr Sam Weber	Tracking marine megafauna at Ascension Island
DPLUS021	Dr Nicola Weber	Ascension Island Marine Sustainability

**Have you provided the requested signed audited/independently examined accounts? If you select "yes" you will be able to upload these. Note that this is not required from Government Agencies.**

No

**If no, please provide details.**

Lead organisation is an OT Government so not required

## Section 5 - Project Partners

### Q10. Project Partners

**Please list all the partners involved (including the Lead Organisation) and explain their roles and responsibilities in the project. Describe the extent of their involvement at all stages, including project development.**

**This section should illustrate the capacity of partners to be involved in the project. Please provide Letters of Support for the Lead Organisation and each partner or explain why this has not been included.**

**N.B: There is a file upload button at the bottom of this page for the upload of a cover letter (if applicable) and all letters of support.**

**Lead Organisation name:** Ascension Island Government

**Website address:** [www.ascension.gov.ac](http://www.ascension.gov.ac)

**Details (including roles and responsibilities and capacity to engage with the project):**

The Ascension Island Government Conservation and Fisheries Directorate (AIGCFD) will take responsibility for overall project management, delivery and public engagement of the project. AIGCFD is a multidisciplinary team, with core programmes in turtle and seabird monitoring, invasive species management, botanical conservation, marine and fisheries research and management, amongst others. We have experience of managing large projects that work in partnership with external organisations and incorporate research, management and public engagement. This project will be delivered by existing AIGCFD staff as addressing climate change is a high priority in our workplans with support from partners, external consultants, a dedicated plant project officer, MSc students and interns to provide the necessary additional capacity to deliver this project. The Project Leader, Diane Baum, has extensive project management experience and AIG have a finance and procurement team who will assist with project budgeting and ordering.

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**Have you included a Letter of Support from this organisation?**  Yes

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**Have you provided a cover letter to address your Stage 1 feedback?**  Yes

**Do you have partners involved in the Project?**

Yes

**1. Partner Name:** Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI)

**Website address:** [www.cabi.org](http://www.cabi.org)

**Details (including roles and responsibilities and capacity to engage with the project):**


CABI will provide guidance to AIGCFD on the risk assessment process for a new biocontrol agent. CABI will be responsible for obtaining the biocontrol agent from South Africa and conduct the host range testing and build a parasitoid free culture at their quarantine facilities in the UK. If biocontrol is assessed to be a viable option, a CABI team will travel to Ascension to deliver the biocontrol agent and conduct training to AIGCFD in culture and release techniques and how to monitor establishment and impact. Norbert Maczey will be heading the CABI team with high level experience on biological control, including working on PRAs in the SAUKOTs. Corin Pratt, responsible for culturing agents in quarantine, has many years of experience of surveying and testing biological control agents.


Have you included a Letter of Support from this organisation?  Yes

Do you have more than one partner involved in the Project?


No


Please provide a cover letter responding to feedback received at Stage 1 if applicable and a combined PDF of all Letters of Support.


 [Darwin Plus 9 - Mexican thorn control -Letter r  
esponding to Stage 1 feedback](#)

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upport](#)

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## Section 6 - Project Staff

### Q11. Project Staff

Please identify the core staff on this project, their role and what % of their time they will be working on the project. Further information on who should be classified as core staff can be found in the guidance.

Please provide 1 page CVs for these staff, or a 1 page job description or Terms of Reference for roles yet to be filled. These should match the names and roles in the budget spreadsheet. If your team is larger than 12 people please review if they are core staff, or whether you can merge roles (e.g. 'admin and finance support') below, but provide a full table based on this template in the PDF of CVs you provide.

Name (First name, Surname)	Role	% time on project	1 page CV or job description attached?
Diane Baum	Project Leader	10	Checked
Vicky Knight	Project Coordinator	25	Checked
To be recruited	Project officer	100	Checked
Norbert Mazcey	CABI	20	Unchecked





Do you require more fields?

Yes

Name (First name, Surname)	Role	% time on project	1 page CV or job description attached?
Colin Pratt	Biocontrol scientist	20	Checked
Anita Kopera	Technician	5	Checked
<i>No Response</i>	<i>No Response</i>	0	Unchecked
<i>No Response</i>	<i>No Response</i>	0	Unchecked
<i>No Response</i>	<i>No Response</i>	0	Unchecked
<i>No Response</i>	<i>No Response</i>	0	Unchecked
<i>No Response</i>	<i>No Response</i>	0	Unchecked
<i>No Response</i>	<i>No Response</i>	0	Unchecked

**Please provide 1 page CVs (or job description if yet to be recruited) for the Project staff listed above as a combined PDF.**

**Ensure the file is named clearly, consistent with the named individual and role above.**

 Darwin R9 Mexican thorn CVs combined  
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**Have you attached all Project staff CVs?**

Yes

## Section 7 - Background & Methodology

### Q12. Problems the project is trying to address

**Please describe the problem your project is trying to address in terms of environment and climate issues in the UKOTs.**

**For example, what are the specific threats to the environment that the project will attempt to address? Why are they relevant, for whom? How did you identify these problems? How will your proposed project help?**

**Please cite the evidence you are using to support your assessment of the problem (references can be listed in your additional attached PDF document which can be uploaded at the bottom of the page).**

Mexican thorn (*Prosopis juliflora*) was intentionally introduced to Ascension Island in the late-1960s1 and



now forms impenetrable stands over large parts of the island. Its range is continuing to expand and current control efforts are labour intensive and therefore limited to protecting the most sensitive sites and important infrastructure<sup>2</sup>.

Mexican thorn on Ascension is a significant threat to the nesting beaches of green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*), breeding seabirds including sooty terns (*Oncychoprion fuscatus*) and the critically endangered Ascension Island spurge (*Euphorbia origanoides*)<sup>3</sup>. This can be through direct habitat encroachment or the harbouring of non-native pests, in particular introduced rodents. The rapid spread of Mexican thorn is altering the landscape character of large swathes of the island and having profound effects on hydrology, soil formation and microclimate, with unknown consequences for our poorly-studied endemic invertebrate fauna. It also threatens to obscure the volcanic nature of the island that was identified by the local community as capturing the 'essence' of Ascension<sup>4</sup>. It also hampers maintenance of infrastructure with significant costs attached to its removal.

Control of Mexican thorn is a high priority in the AIG NBAP and Biosecurity Strategy. Established mechanical and chemical methods of controlling Mexican thorn are currently used at localised sites on Ascension. However, these methods are resource-intensive and limited to a small number of very high priority sites. This puts native species and habitats at risk and even the current level of control is not sustainable within existing AIG capacity.

Past releases of biocontrol agents have slowed the spread of Mexican thorn, but not reduced cover. New tools, an integrated approach and strong public support are needed to address this pervasive problem.

## Q13. Methodology

**Describe the methods and approach you will use to achieve your intended Outcome and Impact. Provide information on:**

- How you have analysed historical and existing initiatives and are building on or taking work already done into account in project design. Please cite evidence where appropriate.
- The rationale for carrying out this work and a justification of your proposed methodology.
- How you will undertake the work (materials and methods).
- How you will manage the work (role and responsibilities, project management tools etc.)

**Please make sure you read the [Guidance Notes](#) before answering this question.**

**(This may be a repeat from Stage 1 but you may update or refine as necessary)**

The project builds on previous experience of biocontrol agents for Mexican thorn used on Ascension in the 1990s and from trials of chemical treatments carried out by AIGCFD since 2016. An important part of this project will be to draw on the techniques used successfully to control Mexican thorn in Australia and South Africa.

This project will apply the biocontrol risk assessment tools created for OTs through DPLUS074. Central to this will be awareness raising about risks and benefits to secure the support of the public and stakeholders.

DPLUS096 produced the Ascension Biosecurity Strategy and legislation, which provide the strategic justification for Mexican thorn control and the framework for licensing biocontrol releases.

Project management

AIGCFD will establish communication structures between partners, oversee all workstreams and take responsibility for M&E, reporting and budgeting.

#### Mexican thorn survey

To secure baseline data for future M&E activities AIGCFD will map the current extent of Mexican thorn using satellite and drone imagery with ground-truthing by AIGCFD and volunteers.

#### Risk assess biocontrol agent

The feasibility of introducing a new biocontrol agent *Evippe* sp. will be assessed by CABI and AIGCFD using the recently developed protocols. The assessment will build on existing host-range testing<sup>6</sup> and consider potential impacts on Ascension's native plants, native invertebrates and unintended impacts of thorn defoliation. Host range testing, including plants related to Ascension's endemics and valuable introduced species, will be conducted at CABI's quarantine facilities in the UK using *Evippe* collected from South Africa. DEFRA and FERA will provide an independent evaluation of the outcome of the risk assessment.

#### Assess best practice chemical and mechanical control methods

A Mexican thorn control expert will visit Ascension and assess the best methods of control and the priority areas to focus effort. This will include pesticide training to AIGCFD and employees from other organisations who undertake control activities to improve on current procedures and to ensure best practice is followed.

#### Public engagement

Public engagement will be central to this project allowing the potential outcomes of control methods as well as the biodiversity and economic impacts of thorn to be communicated to islanders. AIGCFD will lead on organising four public meetings, writing press and social media articles and dedicated meetings with Councillors and organisations throughout the project to explain its aims and results. Volunteer opportunities will be increased and energetically advertised to get more people actively involved in control activities.

#### Produce integrated control strategy


AIGCFD will produce an integrated strategy for thorn control. This will incorporate the results of other project workstreams and prioritise actions within available on-island capacity. A monitoring and evaluation plan to be carried out by AIGCFD will be designed to measure the effectiveness of the strategy.

#### Implement control strategy

If the risk assessment and public engagement strands indicate *Evippe* sp. is an appropriate control agent, facilities will be set up on Ascension and training provided to AIGCFD by CABI and St Helena ARND to create on-island culture capability. In addition, targeted and improved chemical and mechanical methods will be introduced by trained staff.

**If necessary, please provide supporting documentation e.g. maps, diagrams, and references etc., as a PDF using the File Upload below.**

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 [Darwin R9 Mexican thorn control - References](#)

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## Section 8 - Stakeholders and Beneficiaries

### Q14. Project Stakeholders

**Who are the stakeholders for this project and how have they been consulted (include local or host government support/engagement where relevant)? Briefly describe what support they will provide and how the project will engage with them.**

The most important stakeholders for this project are the Ascension Island community. Mexican thorn is now so widespread and dominant that changes in its management will result in a dramatic impact on the island's landscape that will be evident to everyone living there. We have discussed the project proposal with the elected members of the Island Council and will consult directly with the Ascension community through the public engagement strand of the project to ensure the project is understood and supported. There will be opportunities for people to become active participants in the project by volunteering to ground truth distribution maps and assist with treatment action.

Policy makers on Ascension Island, including the elected Council, Administrator and Governor of St Helena have already been engaged in the development of this proposal and are supportive of its aims given the impact the species is having on Ascension. They will determine whether new treatment methods are permitted on Ascension and what resources will be allocated to tackling this issue. The Project Leader will provide regular updates to these stakeholders through existing reporting channels within AIG.

Mexican thorn is controlled by other departments within AIG and private organisations responsible for maintaining other infrastructure on the island. Managers of these organisations have expressed interest in adopting more efficient treatment methods. We will share the results of trials carried out through this project and invite employees of these organisations to take part in the training that will be delivered.

## **Q15. Institutional Capacity**

**Describe the lead organisation's capacity (and that of partner organisations where relevant) to deliver the project.**

AIGCFD is the government body responsible for developing local biodiversity policy and delivering commitments under domestic legislation and multinational agreements. It is based on Ascension and employs 16 members of staff with expertise in marine and terrestrial biology who carry out almost all conservation activity undertaken on the island. Over the past five years it has successfully completed externally-funded projects with a value in excess of £1million, including the recent Darwin-funded Building Biosecurity Capacity on Ascension project (DPLUS096), which has led to the introduction of new biosecurity controls and legislation on Ascension. Importantly, AIGCFD have local knowledge and have built strong relationships on the island, which will aid in the public engagement strand of the project.

CABI scientists have considerable experience in conducting research linked to invasion ecology, biological control of invasives and Risk Assessments for the introduction of biological control agents. CABI has collaborated on, and managed many DFID and DEFRA funded projects in the management of invasive species. We have also extensive experience of leading successful and sustainable biocontrol interventions in the UKOTs, including previous work on Prosopis on Ascension, on invasive scale insects on St Helena and Tristan, and earwig control in the Falkland Islands. The organisation has also a long history of capacity building through participatory approaches. CABI's latest reports show the wide range of activities carried out, specialising in the control of invasives. (<https://www.cabi.org/about-cabi/annual-reviews-and-financials/>, <https://www.cabi.org/Uploads/CABI/about-us/Science%20report%20and%20strategy/Annual%20science%20report%202018.pdf>)

## **Q16. Project beneficiaries**

**Who will your project benefit? You should consider the direct benefits as a result of your project as well as the broader indirect benefits which may come about as a result of your project achieving its Outputs and Outcome. The measurement of any benefits should be included in your project logframe.**

The project will benefit the protected species and habitats on Ascension that are threatened by Mexican thorn. These include the endemic Ascension frigatebird, the endangered green turtle and the critically endangered Ascension spurge.

The Ascension Island Community will benefit as the reduced spread of Mexican thorn helps to safeguard the landscape character of the island. They have the opportunity to be involved in decision making about the future management of their island through the evidence-based participatory approach adopted by this project.

AIGCFD will be empowered as a result of this project by the development of more efficient and effective means of tackling Mexican thorn. It will provide hope to conservation professionals that non-native species can be managed and reassurance that they are employing global best practice techniques.

Policy makers on Ascension will benefit from the opportunity to work with international experts and evaluate the results of treatment trials to arrive at locally-appropriate solutions.

Other organisations controlling Mexican thorn on Ascension will benefit from training and advice so that they use resources more effectively and in a coordinated way to deliver greater impact and better value for money.

## **Section 9 - Gender and Change Expected**

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### **Q17. Gender (optional)**

**How is your project working to reduce inequality between persons of different gender? At the very least, you should be able to provide reassurance that your proposed work is not increasing inequality. Have you analysed the context in which you are working to see how gender and other aspects of social inclusion might interact with the work you are proposing?**

The impact of Mexican thorn affects everyone living on Ascension and so the problem is shared by all genders. The current make-up of the AIGCFD is 82% female, meaning that if this project went ahead it would see women taking a leading role in finding solutions. This is an important step on an island where two thirds of the population and a high proportion of senior managers are male.

### **Q18. Change expected**

**Detail the expected changed this work will deliver. You should identify what will change and who will benefit a) in short-term (i.e. during the life of the project) and b) in the long-term (after the project has ended). Please describe the changes for the environment and, where relevant, for people in the OTs, and how they are linked.**

Short-term

This project will bring effective Mexican thorn control within the existing resources of AIGCFD and ensure public support for the strategy adopted. Eradication is not achievable for this species and so some form of ongoing effort will be required to limit its impacts. Through this project the best-practice methods developed in other countries will be made available to Ascension ensuring the on-island resources devoted to this task achieve control over a much wider area with greater benefit.

At present it feels as though Ascension is struggling against an unstoppable onslaught of invasive species. There are currently no feasible means to tackle many of these such as rats and guava. This project will energise AIGCFD staff and volunteers by demonstrating that through harnessing international expertise and using an integrated, multi-faceted strategy, the tide can be turned and Mexican thorn successfully controlled.

The risk assessment process undertaken for the biocontrol agent will provide the newly-created Ascension Biosecurity Team with their first experience of conducting such assessments under the expert guidance of CABI.

Long-term:

The final control strategy will have been extensively consulted on providing confidence to AIGCFD staff and the public that the best possible means are being used. This will encourage long-term support from the community and organisations on the island and help to recruit and sustain volunteer participation in thorn control.

An established new biocontrol agent working in tandem with improved chemical and mechanical control measures offer the prospect of effective Mexican thorn control with significantly more cost-effective and long-lasting sustainable impacts around protected areas. In turn this will deny introduced invertebrate and mammalian pest species the cover they require to spread into uncolonised parts of the island and so decrease the overall pressure of non-native species on high value conservation sites allowing the recovery of endemic species.

## Q19. Pathway to change

**Please outline your project's expected pathway to change. This should be an overview of the overall project logic and outline how you expect your Outputs to contribute towards you overall Outcome, and, longer term, your expected Impact.**

This project would allow Ascension to engage with experts in Australia, South Africa and the UK where significant resources have already been directed towards finding effective treatments to control Mexican thorn. The suitability of these methods for Ascension will be rigorously assessed and the most promising combined to produce the first integrated control strategy for the island. This considered, strategic approach will set measurable goals for progress and give practitioners on the island confidence that they are using the best possible methods.

Public support will be crucial to the success of any control strategy. The experience of communities in Australia and South Africa who have seen the effects of different control measures will be used alongside data on the current and future impacts of Mexican thorn on Ascension to produce a range of future scenarios. These will be presented and discussed at public meetings to enable an informed decision about future control efforts to be made by the island community as a whole.

The combination of a clear strategy, improved treatment tools and a strong public engagement campaign will galvanise effort across the island and make reversing the spread of this aggressive invasive species an achievable, shared goal.

## Q20. Exit strategy

**State how the project will reach a stable and sustainable end point, and explain how the outcomes will**

**be sustained, either through a continuation of activities, funding and support from other sources or because the activities will be mainstreamed in to “business as usual”. Where individuals receive advanced training, for example, what will happen should that individual leave?**

This project has been designed by AIGCFD to tackle one of the most significant threats to biodiversity and produce outputs tailored to Ascension’s specific needs. The improved methods for treating Mexican thorn will be enthusiastically incorporated into existing workplans as they will replace current less efficient means of delivering what is already recognised as a priority action.

Biocontrol is a low-input control method that, if successful, becomes self-sustaining. If biocontrol is identified as a suitable tool for Ascension and initiated as part of this project, then the expectation is that one or two releases of the agent will be required in the short-term to establish a wild population of Evippe with no further need for external rearing or management. Only, if establishment fails initially further releases can be considered. However, the resource required to deliver this will still be low relative to existing control methods.

The public consultation and robust risk assessment and testing incorporated into this project will ensure there is broad support for the measures across decision makers and the public, helping firmly to embed the new methods. It will also provide a model for community engagement in land management issues that can be used in the future.

## Section 10 - Funding and Budget

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### Q21. Budget

**Please complete the appropriate Excel spreadsheet, which provides the Budget for this application. Some of the questions earlier and below refer to the information in this spreadsheet. Note that there are different templates for projects requesting over and under £100,000 from the Darwin Plus budget.**





- [R9 D+ Budget form for projects under £100,000](#)
- [R9 D+ Budget form for projects over £100,000](#)

**Please refer to the [Finance Guidance for Darwin/IWT](#) for more information.**

**N.B: Please state all costs by financial year (1 April to 31 March) and in GBP. Darwin Plus cannot agree any increase in grants once awarded.**

**Budgets submitted in other currencies will not be accepted. Use current prices – and include anticipated inflation, as appropriate, up to 3% per annum. The Darwin Initiative cannot agree any increase in grants once awarded.**

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 [Darwin-plus-round9-budget - Mexican thorn Financial](#)  
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## Q22. Funding

### Q22a. Is this a new initiative or a development of existing work (funded through any source)?

New initiative

#### Please provide details:

Integrated and coordinated control of Mexican thorn would be a new initiative for Ascension.

AIGCFD currently carries out Mexican thorn control using hand cutting by staff and volunteer groups. It is resource intensive and limited to high priority areas within nature reserves. It is funded through the AIGCFD central budget.

Other private organisations responsible for specific infrastructure on Ascension, such as the military bases and water pipelines, cut Mexican thorn around these sites on a regular basis. This is funded through their internal budgets.

### Q22b. Are you aware of any other individuals/organisations/projects carrying out or applying for funding for similar work?

No

## Q23. Co-financing

### Are you proposing co-financing?

Yes

#### Q23a. Secured

**Provide details of all funding successfully levered (and identified in the Budget) towards the costs of the project, including any income from other public bodies, private sponsorship, donations, trusts, fees or trading activity, as well as any your own organisation(s) will be committing.**

(See [Finance for Darwin/IWT](#) and [Guidance Notes](#))

Donor organisation	Amount	Currency code	Comments
Ascension Island Government	██████	GBP	In kind staff, overheads, line management, office, accommodation and M&E costs
CABI	██████	<i>No Response</i>	Reduction of overheads
<i>No Response</i>	0	<i>No Response</i>	<i>No Response</i>
<i>No Response</i>	0	<i>No Response</i>	<i>No Response</i>

#### Q23b. Unsecured

**Provide details of any matched funding where an application has been submitted, or that you intend applying for during the course of the project. This could include matched funding from the private sector, charitable organisations or other public sector schemes. This should also include any additional funds required where a donor has not yet been identified.**

<b>Date applied for</b>	<b>Donor organisation</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Currency code</b>	<b>Comments</b>
No Response	No Response	0	No Response	No Response
No Response	No Response	0	No Response	No Response
No Response	No Response	0	No Response	No Response
No Response	No Response	0	No Response	No Response

**Do you require more fields?**

No

## Section 11 - Finance

### Q24. Financial Controls

**Please demonstrate your capacity to manage the level of funds you are requesting. Who is responsible for managing the funds? What experience do they have? What arrangements are in place for auditing expenditure?**

Grant payments will be administered through Ascension Island Government's bank account, with project expenditures tracked by the AIG Finance Department. AIG has a fully dedicated financial accounting and management team. The Government currently manages capital and reserves of £17 million. The Finance and Conservation Departments have jointly managed many biodiversity conservation projects, large and small, over the last 10 years, including those funded by RSPB, OTEP, Blue Marine Foundation and the Darwin Initiative. AIG's main accounts are subject to an annual, independent financial audit and a specific audit would be undertaken for this project.

### Q25. Financial Management Risk

**This question considers the financial risks to the project. Explain how you have considered the risks and threats that may be relevant to the successful financial delivery of this project. This includes risks such as fraud or bribery, but may also include the risk of fluctuating foreign exchange and internal financial processes such as storage of financial data.**

Ascension Island Government financial statements are audited annually which involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements sufficient to give reasonable assurance that



the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. This includes an assessment of: whether the accounting policies are appropriate to Ascension Island Government's circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed; the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made; and the overall presentation of the financial statements. In addition, the auditors read all the financial and non-financial information in the Introduction to identify material inconsistencies with the audited financial statements and to identify any information that is apparently materially incorrect based on, or materially inconsistent with, the knowledge acquired by them in the course of performing the audit.

All externally funded projects are also managed under Ascension Island Government's financial regulations including the contract regulations for procuring, or tendering for works or goods, and the accounting officer is responsible for ensuring these regulations are followed.

## Q26. Balance of budget spend

**Explain the thinking behind your budget in terms of where funds will be spent. What benefits will the Territory see from your budget? What level of the award to you expect will be spent locally? Please explain the decisions behind any funding that will not be spent locally and how those costs are important for the project.**

A large part of the budget will be used to employ a project officer based on Ascension to build capacity within the territory. This will be essential to provide extra support to AIGCFD to deliver the project actions around method testing and public engagement. Having a project officer on Ascension for the duration of the project will allow them to build local relationships and gain the trust of the community.

A considerable proportion of the budget will be used to bring expertise in biocontrol and treatment techniques used in South Africa to Ascension. This is essential since there is no such expertise to draw on within Ascension. Travel and subsistence costs are high, but it is essential for experts to visit the island so they understand the island and to give policy makers and the public on Ascension the opportunity to question them. It will also develop the network of experts with direct knowledge of Ascension.

Risk assessment of the Evippe biocontrol agent accounts for a large proportion of the partner costs. This is the most promising technique that will be trialed through the project and a robust risk assessment is needed to ensure safety and secure public support.

## Q27. Capital Items

**If you plan to purchase capital items with Darwin Plus funding, please indicate what you anticipate will happen to the items following project end. If you are requesting more than 10% capital costs, please provide your justification here.**

Capital items will account for only ████ of the project expenditure. All items purchased will be retained on Ascension by AIGCFD to continue Mexican thorn control beyond the end of the project. Specifically:

Materials to construct biocontrol culture facilities will continue to be used and maintained by AIGCFD staff to allow for any future rearing and release. The materials are inexpensive and widely available so can be replaced from AIGCFD core budgets as required.

The rugged laptop will be used by AIGCFD to map Mexican thorn and monitor the long-term impact of the project.

Hand tools will be used by volunteer parties during and after completion of the project.

## Q28. Value for Money

**Please describe why you consider your application to be good value for money including justification of why the measures you will adopt will secure value for money.**

The major costs involved in this project are salary or consultancy costs and travel and subsistence, reflecting the need for external expertise and additional capacity to evaluate new control methods and provide training for people on Ascension to implement them. Salaries have been calculated on institutional pay scales commensurate with the level of experience required and are therefore in-line with local and national norms. A considerable amount of staff time (£ [REDACTED]) has been provided in kind by AIGCFD to deliver this project demonstrating the importance placed on this issue.

Travel and subsistence costs are high because it is difficult to access Ascension. Most meetings between the partners will be conducted remotely, but it is essential that experts working on this project visit Ascension to understand its particular circumstances and provide the Ascension public and policy makers with the opportunity to pose questions and explore the issue. The T&S costs have been calculated based on current airfare prices. If repairs to Ascension's runway are completed within the project timespan, then it is possible that T&S cost could be significantly reduced due to the resumption of direct flights between Ascension and the UK. However, it seemed sensible to take a precautionary approach and use current prices for budgeting purposes.

Long term, the investment in the development of a sustainable control strategy for Mexican thorn will result in significant savings by reducing the costs for ongoing control of this species to safeguard the very high intrinsic value of the biodiversity on Ascension.

## Q29. Outputs of the project and Open Access

**All outputs from Darwin Plus projects should be made available on-line and free to users whenever possible. Please outline how you will achieve this and detail any specific costs you are seeking from Darwin Plus to fund this.**

AIGCFD already operates an open access data management policy and will ensure that all outputs are made accessible online through the AIGCFD website and publicised through AIGCFD social media. Open access to data and the products of research is also a general policy of CABI. AIGCFD is part of a SAERI-hosted information network where data from the South Atlantic OTs can be easily discovered and accessed online by external users (<http://www.south-atlantic-research.org/ims-gis>). All data from this project will be documented within this online metadata system.

This will include reports, leaflets, training materials, photographs, films and other outputs from the project will be free access, and available in digital form where possible and appropriate on the Darwin, AIGCFD, and CABI websites. All data gathered and analysed during the project will be made available in digitised format. The data will also be included as an annex to the final project report, subsequently becoming accessible through the Darwin Initiative website. Social media accounts from AIGCFD and CABI will be used to promote photographs and stories arising.

## Section 12 - Safeguarding

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## Q30. Safeguarding

Projects funded through Darwin Plus must fully protect vulnerable people all of the time, wherever they work. In order to provide assurance of this, projects are required to have appropriate safeguarding policies in place. Please confirm the lead organisation has the following policies in place and that these are available on request:





We have a safeguarding policy, which includes a statement of our commitment to safeguarding and a zero tolerance statement on bullying, harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse	Checked
We have attached a copy of our safeguarding policy to this application	Checked
We keep a detailed register of safeguarding issues raised and how they were dealt with	Checked
We have clear investigation and disciplinary procedures to use when allegations and complaints are made, and have clear processes in place for when a disclosure is made	Checked
We share our safeguarding policy with downstream partners	Checked
We have a whistle-blowing policy which protects whistle-blowers from reprisals and includes clear processes for dealing with concerns raised	Checked
We have a Code of Conduct in place for staff and volunteers that sets out clear expectations of behaviors - inside and outside of the work place - and make clear what will happen in the event of non-compliance or breach of these standards	Checked





**Please outline how you will implement your policies in practice and ensure that downstream partners apply the same standards as the lead organisation.**

All members of AIGCFD and partner organisation staff working on the project will be required to read AIG's Safeguarding Policy and state they are aware of procedures for raising issues or making a complaint. Volunteers working on the project will have to sign AIGCFD's Volunteer Agreement that sets out the standards of behavior expected of volunteers and the commitment AIGCFD will provide to support them. It also explains the mechanism through which volunteers can raise any issues confidentially with AIG's HR department or social worker.

Young people will be encouraged to take part in volunteering through this project. This will be primarily done through established youth groups and we will ensure their safeguarding requirements as well as AIG's Child Safeguarding Policy are followed. Advice will be sought from the AIG social worker about whether any additional safeguarding measures are needed for particular volunteer groups or tasks.

**Please upload the Lead Organisation's Safeguarding Policy as a PDF**

 [Doc 099 Code of Management - July 2014](#)  
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 pdf 323.94 KB

 [AI Child Protection procedures 2015 final \(June 2015\)](#)  
 29/01/2021  
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# Section 13 - Logical Framework

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## Q31. Logical Framework


Darwin Plus projects will be required to monitor (and report against) their progress towards their expected Outputs and Outcome. This section sets out the expected Outputs and Outcome of your project, how you expect to measure progress against these and how we can verify this.

- [Stage 2 Logframe Template](#)


Please complete your full logframe in the separate Word template and upload as a PDF using the file upload below. Copy your Impact, Outcome and Output statements and your activities below - these should be the same as in your uploaded logframe.

### Please upload your logframe as a PDF document.

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 [Darwin R9 Mexican thorn control - Logframe](#)

 31/01/2021

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 pdf 225.6 KB

### Impact:

The spread of Mexican thorn on Ascension will be initially slowed and then reversed, making effective control possible and allowing the habitats of endemic species to be protected in perpetuity.

### Outcome:

An integrated approach to Mexican thorn control implemented on Ascension that uses all appropriate techniques, has strong public support and is sustainable within current resource availability

### Project Outputs

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#### Output 1:

Risk assess the use of Evippe sp. as a biocontrol agent on Ascension following CABI risk assessment protocol

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#### Output 2:

Best practice methods of chemical and mechanical control identified and people on Ascension trained to undertake these techniques.

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#### Output 3:

Improved public understanding of the impact of Mexican thorn on Ascension and shared ownership of the solutions

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#### Output 4:

Integrated control strategy for Mexican thorn on Ascension

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#### Output 5:

Control strategy actions delivered as part of AIGCFD workplans and best practice methods used by all organisations controlling thorn on Ascension

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## Do you require more Output fields?

It is advised to have less than 6 Outputs since this level of detail can be provided at the Activity level.

No

## Activities

**Each activity is numbered according to the Output that it will contribute towards, for example 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 are contributing to Output 1.**

- 1.1 Use aerial imagery and AIGCFD drone to map the distribution of Mexican thorn across 3000ha of suitable habitat on Ascension. Train volunteers to ground truth results over at least 10% of the survey area.
- 1.2 Based on the results of Evippe releases in Australia, create maps showing potential impact of Evippe on Ascension.
- 1.3 Transport five endemic and valued plant species from Ascension and Evippe from culture sites in South Africa to CABI's UK quarantine facilities to provide Ascension-specific host range testing to supplement Evippe testing already carried out.
- 1.4 Conduct full risk assessment of Evippe as a biocontrol agent on Ascension using PRA method developed through DPLUS074 and following advice on the scope of the assessment form DEFRA.
- 1.5 Seek independent evaluation of risk assessment process from FERA and DEFRA. Address any concerns FERA and DEFRA have and provide final recommendations on the use of Evippe on Ascension.
- 2.1 Carry out desk based review of potential chemical and mechanical methods of Mexican thorn control including evidence of efficacy, resource requirement and applicability to Ascension. Recommend most appropriate methods for Ascension.
- 2.2 Deliver training courses on Ascension for employees from AIGCFD and other organisations and volunteers. Training to cover methods recommended in review and result in qualification in herbicide application.
- 2.3 Design and conduct trials of recommended treatment methods on Ascension comparing the results and resource input of each method and control sites.
- 3.1 Organise four public meetings to introduce the project and outline control options. Produce written material to support meetings and encourage involvement
- 3.2 Create articles for the local press and social media to publicise and describe project. Use as a platform to seek views of the community and recruit volunteers.
- 4.1 Produce Integrated Mexican thorn Control Plan
- 4.2 Produce Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
- 5.1 If biocontrol recommended, construct Evippe culturing facilities on Ascension
- 5.2 Import Evippe form South Africa and culture on Ascension with support from CABI
- 5.3 Release Evippe on Ascension with support from CABI
- 5.4 Monitor presence of Evippe in the wild and impact on Mexican thorn following the protocols established in the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy
- 5.5. AIGCFD and other Ascension organisations carry out Mexican thorn control using new methods
- 5.6 Organise and deliver volunteer control activities using new treatment methods

## Section 14 - Implementation Timetable

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### **Q32. Provide a project implementation timetable that shows the key milestones in project activities**





**Provide a project implementation timetable that shows the key milestones in project activities. Complete the Excel spreadsheet template as appropriate to describe the intended workplan for your**

project.

## Implementation Timetable Template

Please add/remove columns to reflect the length of your project. For each activity (add/remove rows as appropriate) indicate the number of months it will last, and fill/shade only the quarters in which an activity will be carried out.

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 [darwin-plus-round9-imp-timetable Mexican th  
orn](#)  
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## Section 15 - Monitoring and Evaluation

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### Q33. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)



Describe, referring to the Indicators above, how the progress of the project will be monitored and evaluated, making reference to who is responsible for the project's M&E.

Darwin Initiative projects are expected to be adaptive and you should detail how the monitoring and evaluation will feed into the delivery of the project including its management. M&E is expected to be built into the project and not an 'add' on. It is as important to measure for negative impacts as it is for positive impact. Additionally, please indicate an approximate budget and level of effort (person days) to be spent on M&E (see [Finance Guidance for Darwin/IWT](#)).

The creation of an M&E framework based on the logframe and timetable included in this application will be a high priority at the beginning of the project. The AIGCFD project lead will be responsible for drawing up this framework and overall management of the M&E process with input from project partners on specific work packages.

M&E of project progress will be carried out quarterly to assess progress against specific activities shown in the project timetable. Where important milestones are missed, all relevant project partners will agree actions to regain the original timetable and prevent other outputs being delayed as a consequence.

An adaptive approach will be taken whereby actions that are failing to produce the required outputs and outcomes will be reviewed and revised during virtual meetings of the project partners.

<b>Total project budget for M&amp;E in GBP (this may include Staff, Travel and Subsistence costs)</b>	£ 
<b>Number of days planned for M&amp;E</b>	18.00
<b>Percentage of total project budget set aside for M&amp;E (%)</b>	

## Section 16 - Certification

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### Certification

**On behalf of the**

company

**of**

Ascension Island Government

**I apply for a grant of**

£184,191.00

**I certify that, to the best of our knowledge and belief, the statements made by us in this application are true and the information provided is correct. I am aware that this application form will form the basis of the project schedule should this application be successful.**

(This form should be signed by an individual authorised by the applicant institution to submit applications and sign contracts on their behalf.)

- I have enclosed CVs for project key project personnel, letters of support, budget and project implementation timetable (uploaded at appropriate points in application).
- Our last two sets of signed audited/independently verified accounts and annual report are also enclosed.

Checked





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**Name** Diane Elizabeth Baum

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**Position in the organisation** Director of Conservation and Fisheries

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**Signature (please upload e-signature)**  [Diane Baum signature](#)  
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**Date** 29 January 2021

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## Section 17 - Submission Checklist

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### Checklist for submission

Check

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I have read the <b>Guidance documents, including the “Guidance Notes for Applicants” and “Finance Guidance”.</b>	Checked
I have read, and can meet, the <b>current Terms and Conditions for this fund.</b>	Checked
I have provided <b>actual start and end dates for this proposed project.</b>	Checked
I have provided a <b>budget based on UK government financial years i.e. 1 April – 31 March and in GBP.</b>	Checked
I have checked that the <b>budget is complete, correctly adds up and I have included the correct final total at the start of the application.</b>	Checked
The application has been signed by a <b>suitably authorised individual (clear electronic or scanned signatures are acceptable).</b>	Checked
I have attached my completed <b>logframe and timeline as a PDF using the templates provided.</b>	Checked
I have included a <b>1 page CV or job description for all the Project staff identified at Question 11, including the Project Leader, or provided an explanation of why not.</b>	Checked
I have included a <b>letter of support from the Lead Organisation and main partner organisation(s) identified at Question 10, or an explanation of why not.</b>	Checked
I have included a <b>cover letter from the Lead Organisation, outlining how any feedback at Stage 1 has been addressed where relevant.</b>	Checked
I have included a <b>signed copy of the last 2 years annual report and accounts for the Lead Organisation, or provided an explanation if not.</b>	Checked
I have checked the <b>Darwin Plus website immediately prior to submission to ensure there are no late updates.</b>	Checked
I have read and understood the <b>Privacy Notice on GOV.UK.</b>	Checked

**We would like to keep in touch!**

**Please check this box if you would be happy for the lead applicant (Flexi-Grant Account Holder) and project leader (if different) to be added to our mailing list. Through our mailing list we share updates on upcoming and current application rounds under the Darwin Initiative, Darwin Plus and our sister grant scheme, the IWT Challenge Fund. We also provide occasional updates on other UK Government activities related to biodiversity conservation and share our quarterly project newsletter. You are free to unsubscribe at any time.**

Checked

**Data protection and use of personal data**

Information supplied in this application form, including personal data, will be used by Defra as set out in the latest copy of the Privacy Notice for Darwin, Darwin Plus and the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund available [here](#). This Privacy Notice must be provided to all individuals whose personal data is supplied in the application form. Some information, but not personal data, may be used when publicising the Darwin Initiative including project details (usually title, lead organisation, location, and total grant value) on the GOV.UK and other websites.



Information relating to the project or its results may also be released on request, including under the 2004 Environmental Information Regulations and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. However, Defra will not permit any unwarranted breach of confidentiality nor will we act in contravention of our obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679).