



## Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022)

<b>Project reference</b>	DPLUS 147
<b>Project title</b>	Collaborative approach to managing coral disease in UK Overseas Territories
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands
<b>Lead organisation</b>	JNCC
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Turks and Caicos Islands - Department of Environment and Coastal Resources, British Virgin Islands - Ministry of Natural Resources, Labour and Immigration, Cayman Islands' Government Department of Environment, Nature2
<b>Project leader</b>	<i>Alexandra Cunha, JNCC</i>
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	<i>HYR2</i>
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/collaborative-coral-reef-working-group">https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/collaborative-coral-reef-working-group</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).**

DPLUS147 is a 2.75year project which commenced in July 2022. This half-yearly report therefore outlines progress made to date on activities that were scheduled for Y2 Q1, Q2, Q3 (April-October 2022). Progress against delivery for each project output can be summarised as follows:

**Output 1. Collaborative partnership to optimise the treatment and management of Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) established**

- The name of the group changed from CCRWG to C-COT (Coral Conservation for the Overseas Territories).
- C-COT has now a visual identity and external branding. In July 2022, C-COT formally approved the logo design and is using it in report design for outputs. A banner with the logo was created and used in the face-to-face workshop.
- The C-COT group meetings have been joined by members in attendance from Darwin+ Overseas Territories (OT) partner governments (Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands and the Virgin Island Government), additional non-partner Darwin+ OT governments (Bermuda, Anguilla and Montserrat), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), dive operators and other key stakeholders.
- Members have now signed copies of a partnership agreement outlining the purpose and intent of the C-COT.
- A face-to-face workshop took place from the 8 to the 12 August 2022 in the Cayman Islands. There were 30 participants representing the partners from different OTs which participated in 4 technical sessions and 2 underwater coral treatment sessions.

- JNCC and other project partners attended key regional meetings relating to SCTLTD and coral reef conservation in the region and have fed in key agenda items into the group, including: the USA's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's SCTLTD Caribbean Cooperation Team and Disease Advisory Committee and the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF).
- JNCC delivered 16 C-COT Newsletters since the 1st April 2022; together with the monthly meetings these are the privileged way of communicating and keeping partners engaged.
- A provisional date for the 2<sup>nd</sup> in person workshop in Y3 has been agreed with the project management group (June 2023).

### **Output 2. Optimised treatment and management of SCTLTD using best available scientific evidence and expertise**

- Funds to support partners with treatment and management activities are being transferred to partners following scheduling defined in signed MoAs.
- Project partner, Dr Greta Aeby, is reviewing data from fieldwork and advising the partner OTs (BVI, TCI and Cayman), on next steps to refine fieldwork and improve data collection. Results from the trials will be shared with management.
- Partner OTs were trained through both classroom and field-based sessions on the development and application of probiotics treatment with Dr Ushijima (UNCW) and Kelly Pitts (Smithsonian Marine Station). They were also trained on developing coral disease and bleaching response plans and survey design data analysis by Dr Greta Aeby, and photogrammetry monitoring and analysis by Will Greene (Perry Institute of Marine Science), during the workshop in Cayman. Many of these techniques are now being implemented by the partner OTs in the field to support their SCTLTD response.
- UK OT partners have started to plan, and trial in the field, different approaches to SCTLTD management, including probiotics which is an emerging new treatment option and that the treatment strategy being drafted will support decisions around the next steps.
- Work has been progressing alongside for all six Caribbean and Western Atlantic UKOTs for SCTLTD management through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) project, 'Implementing Coral Reef Action Plans for the UK Overseas Territories Coral Reef Initiative', including the participation in the face-to-face workshop.

### **Output 3. Creation of Reef Resilience Model Framework to support the long-term management of coral reefs**

- The project team started a literature review of coral reef resilience models and is working closely with the other Darwin Plus and CSSF projects mentioned above. A workshop on the topic is planned for 15 December 2022.

### **Output 4. Project management, monitoring and evaluation**

- The C-COT Project Management Group (PMG) have been joined by members in attendance from Darwin+ Overseas Territories (OT) partner governments (Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands and the Virgin Island Government) and additional non-partner Darwin+ OT governments (Bermuda, Anguilla and Montserrat). The PMG have been meeting every quarter in HY2 on the following dates: 21 June 2022; 20 September 2022 (this was an interim meeting of one hour only to check on action progress); and 11 October 2022. Next one is planned for the 24 January.
- The new project management and maternity cover for Bryony Meakins (Dr. Alexandra Cunha) started on post on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August.

**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.**

**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.**

One of the project partners Dr. Kalli de Meyer, was due to Chair workshop in Year 2 (Cayman Workshop) but due to Covid couldn't participate. Dr. Alexandra Cunha stepped in partner's lieu.

**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 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.**

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

N/A

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**