Darwin Plus:
Overseas Territories Environment and Climate Fund
Annual Report

To be completed with reference to the "Project Reporting Information Note"
(https://dplus.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources/information-notes/).

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum** of 20 pages in length, excluding annexes)

Submission Deadline: 30th April 2022

Darwin Plus Project Information

Project reference	DPLUS154
Project title	Sustainable management planning for St Helena's National Conservation Areas
Territory(ies)	St Helena
Lead partner	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
Project partner(s)	St Helena Government, SAERI (Falklands) Ltd (SFL)
Darwin Plus grant value	£344,345.00
Start/end dates of project	December 2021 / July 2024
Reporting period (e.g. Apr 2021-Mar 2022) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2)	December 2021 – March 2022, Annual Report 1.
Project Leader name	Amanda Gregory
Project website/blog/social media	Project website to be created later in the project. Social Media handles: @JNCC_UK, @SAERI_FI, @StHelenaGovt
Report author(s) and date	Dr Megan Tierney and Eve Englefield

1.   Project summary

St Helena Island (SHI) is one of the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) that lies in the South Atlantic Ocean. Its iconic, and highly endemic, biodiversity is of international importance. The Island's unique flora and fauna is now under pressure from the impacts of climate change, invasive species, introduced pests and diseases and land-use pressures associated with economic development. In recent years, the island has experienced significant loss of biodiversity resulting in an environment that is less resilient to pests and diseases and more prone to impacts from drought and other climate-related pressures. The water shortages, experienced during periods of drought, have caused food shortages, increasing the whole population's reliance on food imports. Further to this, the Covid-19 health crisis has led to a cessation in tourism-related income. This has highlighted the need to find more locally based solutions to support sustainable livelihoods.

The Island has 14 'nature' National Conservation Areas (NCA; Figure 1). These cover 38% of the island, helping to protect the 502 endemic and 38 globally threatened native species. However, the demands for development and land use change within the NCAs is increasing, exerting yet more pressure on the Island's biodiversity.

To fulfil the protected status conditions of the SHI Land Development Control Plan (2012-22), and gain legal protection, each NCA is required to have a Management Plan. Without the necessary Management Plans, the NCA's legal status can be challenged, potentially placing more pressures on land-use change

within the protected areas. Currently, only one of the fourteen NCAs – The Peaks (including Diana's Peak National Park) – has a Management Plan.

The '*Sustainable management planning for St Helena's National Conservation Areas*' (DPLUS154) project is an international collaboration lead by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and St Helena Government (SHG). The project was awarded Darwin Plus (DPLUS) funding in 2021 to undertake a 2.75-year project in SHI to address these issues. JNCC, SHG and SAERI Falklands Limited (SFL) will work in collaboration to develop sustainable-use NCA Management Plans for the remaining 13 NCAs of SHI. Alongside these, analytical tools and a monitoring framework for the NCAs to help conserve and restore biodiversity will also be developed. Further, through active engagement with local communities, businesses, and landowners, in and around the NCAs, the partnership will develop management options for sustainable land-use and identify opportunities for alternative livelihoods created within the NCAs and within the legal conditions.

This will be achieved through activities under the following four integrated Work Packages:

- **Work Package (WP1):** Reviewing and gathering evidence for Management Plans (including criteria, data collection and methodology for NCA assessment)
- **Work Package (WP2):** Training for SHG and St Helena National Trust (SHNT) on data collection and decision support tools
- **Work Package (WP3):** Modelling and assessment of Management Plans, including framework for monitoring effectiveness
- **Work Package (WP4):** Stakeholder engagement, including public consultation on NCA management options.

As well as supporting SHG to ensure legal adoption and local buy-in of the NCA's, the project will lay the foundation for effective governance of SHI's NCA and identify options for sustainable alternative livelihoods. This will serve to help protect and enhance the Island's unique biodiversity and improve resilience to future pressures.
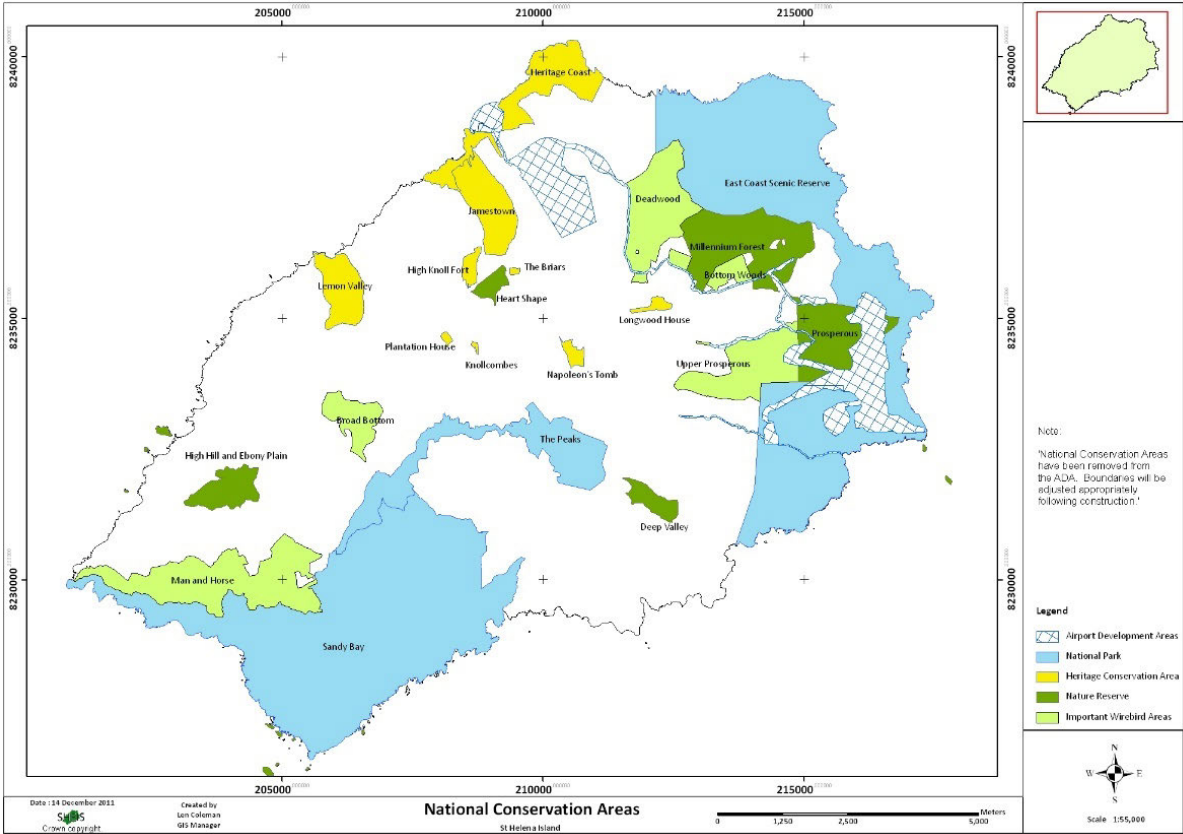

Figure 1. National Conservation Areas in Saint Helena. Source: St Helena's Government website (https://www.sainthelena.gov.sh/portfolios/environment-natural-resources-planning/environmental-management/national-conservation-areas/ ; accessed on 19 April 2022).

2. Project stakeholders/partners

Background to development of project partnerships and project conception

JNCC is the public body that advises UK Government, the devolved administrations and UKOTs on nature conservation. More specifically, JNCC has been working with SHG over a number of years on a range of environmental conservation and management projects. In 2019, SHG opened dialogue with JNCC to support the development of Management Plans to protect the legal status of SHI's NCA's. The DPLUS154 project is the result of discussions between JNCC and SHG Environment, Natural Resources and Planning Directorate (ENRPD), Infrastructure and Transport Directorate and Information and Technology Department, as well as with SFL, the latter also having worked closely with JNCC and SHG on environmental data management. The project will enable the legal protection of the NCA's and the associated species found within them.

DPLUS154 is led by JNCC and SHG, in partnership with SFL. All three partners have extensive project management experience within the context of UKOTs, and each bring unique expertise, covering terrestrial protected area management, environmental research, evidence-based decision making and leading public consultations. The project partners were involved with all aspects of project design, and together with relevant stakeholders have engaged and/or been kept informed of project progress during the reporting period as follows:

Project Partners

A Project Management Group (PMG), which is comprised of representatives from each of the project partners (JNCC, SHG, SFL) was established. An MoU and Terms of Reference (ToRs) were agreed for the PMG (**Annex 6a,b)** and state that the PMG will monitor and steer the project, ensuring it aligns with the project proposal, and that the project is delivered on time and within budget. The PMG will also consider and advise on the overall project management plan, including supporting documents such as the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, Risk Register and Issues Log (**Annex 6d**), and will review and approve all primary project outputs prior to external release. The PMG will also highlight synergies between this project and other, related projects which they may be involved with so as to align and maximise outputs of each.

Online (Microsoft TEAMS) start-up and progress meetings were held with the PMG in January 2022 and March 2022 (**Annex 6c**). Online meetings and/or email correspondence between PMG members were also used to discuss and prepare two Change Requests which were submitted, and subsequently approved by LTS/Defra, in December 2021 (reference number: CR21-097) and March 2022 (reference number: CR21-186). Minutes of the meetings were distributed to all PMG members.

Core Delivery Group

To support project delivery, a wider Core Delivery Group (CDG) has also been established. This consists of PMG representatives, additional staff members from project partner organisations, and key specialists from the St Helena National Trust (SHNT). The addition of SHNT to this group in particularly will allow more localised terrestrial expertise to be included throughout the management plan development. As the leading conservation organisation on SHI, SHNT, along with SHG, will also provide linkages to other conservation projects on the island. The CDG will advise on project activities and support with project troubleshooting as necessary. It is proposed that the CDG will meet monthly throughout the project, starting from May 2022. ToRs for the group are currently in development (**Annex 6f**).

Project Stakeholders

A key objective of the project is to raise stakeholder and public awareness about the need for sustainably managed NCAs in order to maximise stakeholder buy-in for the Management Plans. Direct interaction with other project stakeholders has been limited in this reporting period, primarily because the project is not yet at a stage where extensive input has been required. However, the CDG has identified potential members for the Stakeholder Group. A communications plan is also in development for identifying the different types of stakeholder groups, communication methods and identifying key communication dates

for project outputs. This plan should help to ensure there is effective outreach to and/or input received from all relevant stakeholders at key points of the project.

3. Project progress

3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities

Output 1: 13 NCA Management Plans, which include governance arrangements, submitted to SHG for adoption and legal endorsement (WP1)

Summary: Activity 1.1 commenced, and Activity 1.3 is complete. There have been some delays to the remaining Output 1 Activities (1.2, 1.4, 1.6, 1.7) that were due to commence in this reporting period.

Activity 1.1: Even though recruitment of the Data Collectors has been delayed (see Section 9) and hence collection and collation of historic and existing baseline data is yet to start in earnest, it was possible to use reallocated funds to purchase high resolution satellite data of SHI in this reporting round (**Annex 3a**). These datasets will provide important baseline data for the project and allow a greater understanding of current and future land-use changes. They will also help support other existing and future projects, including the ongoing RSPB and SHG Cloud Forest Management Plan NCA project (funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office [FCDO] Conflict, Stability and Security Fund [CSSF]).

Activity 1.3: A contract was agreed with and signed by SHNT (**Annex 3b**), who will provide expertise and training in invertebrate identification. The training will take place early in Year 2 (Y2) of the project, and SHNT will provide ongoing support to the project throughout its lifetime.

Activities 1.2, 1.4, 1.6, 1.7: Commencement of these activities were reliant on having either the Project Officer and/or Data Collectors in place. Unfortunately, as outlined in Section 9, there has been a delay in the recruitment process for the Project Officer and Data Collectors and so it has not been possible to progress these Activities as planned in this reporting round.

Activities 1.5, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 1.11: There was no planned work against these activities in this reporting period.

Output 2: Trained SHG/National Trust Officers able to manage, monitor, assess, report, intervene and undertake future reviews of Management Plans and determine the effectiveness of NCA sites (capacity, guidance and tools)

Summary: With the exception of Activities 2.2 and 2.4, all planned activities for this reporting round have commenced or been completed on schedule.

Activity 2.2: The two SHG individuals who will undertake the Train the Trainer Programme - so that the knowledge and skills developed as part of this project will be retained on-island for the future and can be extended to the wider SHI community – are yet to be identified. This will be done as soon as possible within Y2, so that the training programme can commence.

Activity 2.3. and 2.5: Led by SFL, the project partners developed a bespoke training programme for SHG staff and the wider SHI community on how maps and mapping tools could be used for planning and decision making (Activity 2.3). The programme was delivered (Activity 2.5) by SFL in March 2022 during a visit to SHI by SFLs Tara Pelembe and Jack Ingledew, in conjunction with SFLs SHI-based GIS officer Azra Gordy and SHGs GIS Team Leader Devlin Yon. Specific training sessions were held with SHG staff over the course of the visit. A training day, open to SHG and the wider community provided an overview to the DPLUS154 project and included sessions on GIS use (tailored for various skill-levels, beginners to intermediate), using QGIS, remote sensing, drone photogrammetry and techniques, and introduction to the SHI Data Portal – setup, access and use (agenda provided in **Annex 4a**). Approximately 30 people attended the training session (Figure 2). The training session also served to fulfil aspects of the EU funded MOVE ON project that SFL have been leading on with SHG. The MOVE ON project has been looking at mapping and assessing ecosystem services with a particular focus on bridging the gap between evidence and decision-making. Follow-up and additional

Activity 2.4: Commencement of this activity was reliant on having either the Project Officer and/or Data Collectors in place. Unfortunately, as outlined above and in Section 9, there has been a delay in the recruitment process so it has not been possible to progress this activity in this reporting round.

Activities 2.1, 2.6, 2.7 and 2.8: There was no planned work against these activities in this reporting period.

Figure 2. SHI Maps and Mapping Tools Training Day. Top Left: SHGs Derek Henry welcoming everyone to the event. Top Right: SHGs Isabel Peters introducing the DPLUS154 project. Bottom centre: Training day participants undertaking exercises.

Output 3: Modelling and testing management options for effective and sustainable Management Plans to achieve better nature conservation and socio-economic outcomes MPs

Summary: Activity 3.1 commenced but has not been completed as planned. There have been some delays to the remaining Output 3 Activity (3.2) that was due to commence in this reporting period.

Activity 3.1: The CDG initiated discussions on the data standards and metadata protocols that will be used for this project. Further discussion will be had when the Project Officer is recruited, and agreement reached through further consultation with the CDG early in Y2.

Activity 3.2: Commencement of this activity was reliant on having either the Project Officer and/or Data Collectors in place. Unfortunately, as outlined above and in Section 9, there has been a delay in the recruitment process so it has not been possible to progress this activity in this reporting round.

Activities 3.3 – 3.8: There was no planned work against these activities in this reporting period.

Output 4: Stakeholder awareness and understanding of the benefits of sustainably managed NCAs to maximise stakeholder buy-in and engagement during development of the Management Plans

Summary: With the exception of Activity 4.4, all planned activities (4.1 – 4.3) for this reporting round have commenced but are yet to be completed. These activities were to be led by the Project Officer, but due to delays in the recruitment process (as outlined in Section 9), initial steps for Activities 4.1 – 4.3 were led by SFL while on-island in March 2022, with input from JNCC and SHG. This helped place the

project in a strong position for the Project Officer and Data Collectors to pick up and continue with these work streams when they come online (anticipated by the end of Y2Q1).

Activity 4.1: The CDG have started to identify relevant stakeholders and to draft the project Communication Plan. This activity will continue in Y2.

Activity 4.2: A Press Release to announce the launch of the project has been drafted (**Annex 5a**). Once signed-off by the PMG (early in Y2) it will be published through the Project Partner networks.

Activity 4.3: As noted in Section 2, the CDG has been established and will meet monthly (from May 2022). As part of their role, this group will identify the appropriate membership of the wider Stakeholder Group. Stakeholder Group meetings are expected to commence before the end of Y2Q1.

Activity 4.4: As the wider stakeholder network is still being developed (see Activity 4.1 and 4.3), this Activity has activity has been delayed until Y2.

Activities 4.5 – 4.10: There was no planned work against these activities in this reporting period.

Output 5: Project management, monitoring, and evaluation

Summary: With the exception of Activity 5.4, all planned activities for this reporting round have commenced or been completed on schedule.

Activity 5.1: As outlined in Section 2, the PMG has been established, ToRs agreed **(Annex 6b)**, and will meet regularly to monitor project progress (**Annex 6c**). An MoU between all Project Partners (JNCC, SHG and SFL) was developed, agreed and signed **(Annex 6a).**

Activity 5.2: As outlined in Section 2, a CDG has been established and will meet regularly to input on project activities. The CDG will be finalised through establishing ToRs early in Y2 (**Annex 6f**). One of the first tasks of the CDG will be to finish identifying and then helping to establish the wider Stakeholder Group.

Activity 5.3: Originally the Project Officer and Data Collectors were to be recruited in this reporting round, however as outlined in Section 9 this was not possible. A new date to have these positions recruited for and filled was agreed in the Change Request submitted in March 2022. The job descriptions for the Project Officer and Data Collectors have been finalised (**Annex 6e**) and will be advertised early in Y2 of the project. It is anticipated that the Project Officer and Data Collectors will be in place by the end of Y2Q1.

Activity 5.4: The development and agreement of the methodology for gender monitoring and evaluation has been delayed but will be completed as soon as possible in Y2. Some further information is included in Section 5.

Activity 5.5: A monitoring and evaluation plan, together with a project Risk Register and Issues Log has been developed for the project (**Annex 6d**). These are being updated regularly by the Project Leader and will be reviewed by the PMG at each PMG meeting.

Activities 5.6: There was no planned work against this activity in this reporting period.

3.2   Progress towards project Outputs

Output 1: 13 NCA Management Plans, which include governance arrangements, submitted to SHG for adoption and legal endorsement

Output 1 is progressing according to schedule and progress against the individual Indicators is outlined fully in the **Annex 1** logframe. At the start of the project, no Management Plans were in place for any of the 13 NCA's included in the project. The Management Plans and associated governance are not due for delivery until the end of the project, but some good progress on initial steps has been made through the establishment of official participation in the project from SHNT and the wider SHG staff (which will contribute towards Indicator 1.1) and the acquisition of satellite data for St Helena (which will contribute

towards Indicator 1.3). As a result of the delay in recruitment of the Project Officer and Data Collectors (see Section 9), there have been some delays in progressing planned activities (**see Section 3.1, Output 1**), but this is not expected to have an overall impact on the ability of the project to meet Output 1. Therefore, it is expected that Output 1 will be achieved within the project timeframe, and the current Indicators are still considered appropriate.

Output 2: Trained SHG/National Trust Officers able to manage, monitor, assess, report, intervene and undertake future reviews of Management Plans and determine the effectiveness of NCA sites (capacity, guidance and tools)

A steady start has been made against Output 2 – see full details of progress against each Indicator is outlined in the **Annex 1** logframe. It is expected that by the end of the project, all relevant SHG and SHNT staff will have the ability to implement and review NCA Management Plans. Most of the work required to meet this Output will occur during Y2 and Y3, but a basic introduction to GIS has already been provided to SHG and SHNT staff (**see Section 3.1, Output 2 and Annex 4**). It is expected that Output 2 will be achieved within the project timeframe, and the current Indicators are still considered appropriate.

Output 3: Modelling and testing management options for effective and sustainable Management Plans to achieve better nature conservation and socio-economic outcomes

Minor work was planned in this reporting round for this Output. The work which was planned and associated with Indicator 3.1 has been delayed but should be completed in Y2 – see full details of progress against each Indicator outlined in the **Annex 1** log frame and **Section 3.1** (Activity 3.1). It is expected that Output 3 will still be achieved within the project timeframe, and the current Indicators are still considered appropriate.

Output 4: Stakeholder awareness and understanding of the benefits of sustainably managed NCAs to maximise stakeholder buy-in and engagement during development of the Management Plans

Assessing whether the project is meeting Output 4 will occur throughout the project lifetime. The primary activity in this reporting round was to identify stakeholders and start to develop a stakeholder communications and engagement plan. Progress against these has been made, but slower than anticipated – see full details of progress against each Indicator in the **Annex 1** log frame and **Section 3.1 Output 4 and Annex 5**. Despite this, it is expected that Output 4 will be achieved within the project timeframe, and the current Indicators are still considered appropriate.

Output 5: Project management, monitoring, and evaluation

Progress against Output 5 has been mixed - see full details of progress against each Indicator outlined in the **Annex 1** logframe. This Output is primarily focussed on project management and monitoring. The PMG has been established and project management documents have been developed and implemented (see **Section 3.1, Output 5 and Annex 6**). Work associated with Indictors 5.1 and 5.2 are ongoing throughout the project. Work against Indicators 5.3 and 5.4 has been delayed – further details on this are outlined in Section 9. Work against Indicator 5.5 was not expected to start during this reporting period. It is expected that Output 5 will be achieved within the project timeframe, and the current Indicators are still considered appropriate.

3.3   Progress towards the project Outcome

The stated outcome for this project is '*Community supported management plans to support the long-term sustainable improvement of St Helena's 13 National Conservation Areas presented to SHG for adoption and legal endorsement*'.

Despite some challenges, the project has made a good start towards achieving this outcome in this first reporting period. A range of preliminary work by the Project Partners has been conducted to lay down the foundations for the main project work to begin in Y2, and evidence cited in **Section 3.1 (all Outputs) as well as Annexes 3 – 6** shows progression against this.

In this first reporting period, work has primarily focussed on project management, putting in good governance to see the project through to its completion, looking at the data already gathered to evidence the biodiversity of the NCAs on SHI and the first of the training programmes – see evidence cited in **Section 3.1 and Annexes 3 – 6**. The establishment of the CDG is a first step towards SHG working with relevant stakeholders and generating the buy-in which will be necessary to ensure uptake and adoption of the Management Plans (Outcome Indicator 0.1 and 0.2). Further work against these and remaining Outcomes (0.3 and 0.4) will occur during Y2 and Y3. At this early stage of the project all Outcome indicators are still considered appropriate, and we anticipate that the project will be able to achieve the stated Outcome by the end of the project (July 2024).

3.4   Monitoring of assumptions

A number of important Risks and Assumptions were identified for this project and included in the project logframe (see **Annex 2**). At its inception, the project team developed a risk register, as well as an issues log, to monitor critical conditions for project success. The register allows monitoring of the original risks and assumptions, as well as the addition of new risks and assumptions. Unless otherwise noted below, all identified risks and assumptions remain true. Also noted are any actions taken to manage assumptions relevant to this reporting period.

Assumption 5.1. Project partners are committed to attending meetings

Comments: While this remains true, the reduced capacity within SHG as a result of the overlap with the CSSF-supported RSPB/SHG Cloud Forest project meant that fewer meetings were able to be held in the early stages of the project. The mitigations to this were outlined in the Change Request submitted in and subsequently approved in March 2022 (reference number: CR21-186). It is not expected that there will be continuing issues because of this overlap in the next reporting round.

Assumption 5.3. A suitable on-island Project Officer can be appointed in a timely manner

Comments: The reduced capacity within SHG referred to under Assumption 5.1 also impacted on the ability to recruit the Project Officer (and Data Collectors) within original time-frames. The project partners have shown considerable innovation and flexibility to progress as many of the scheduled activities for this reporting round without the Project Officer or Data Collectors in place. However, this is a short-term mitigation strategy, and it will be important to prioritise the recruitment of a suitable candidate for the Project Officer, followed by the Data Collectors, at the start of Y2 to ensure activities can continue according to the project timeline.

4.   Project support to environmental and/or climate outcomes in the UKOTs

SHG has a range of policies and strategies in place, or in development, which strive to achieve good environmental management and where their implementation will be enhanced by increased knowledge and tools provided by this project. Of most importance to this project, DPLUS154 will deliver Management Plans for each of 13 identified NCAs. Provision and adoption of these Management Plans are a mandatory requirement under the SHG Land Development Control Plan (2012-22) to complete the full legal designation of an NCA. Legal designation will serve to strengthen the protection of SHI's unique flora and fauna, which account for the majority of the UK's endemic species. The project will also contribute to helping SHG meet the ten commitments under the SHG Environment Charter.

Project outcomes will also support UK policy objectives within the UK Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy (UKOTBS) and the 25 Year Environmental Plan (25YEP). Strategic priorities under the UKOTBS include providing UK Government support to: 1) enable data collection on the location and status of biodiversity interests and the human activities affecting biodiversity to inform the preparation of policies and management plans (including baseline survey and subsequent monitoring); and 2) develop tools to value ecosystem services to inform sustainable development policies and practices. By improving knowledge on baseline biodiversity, developing tools that can help assess natural capital, including indicator development, this project will also contribute to the following key policy areas of the 25YEP: Using and managing land sustainably and Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes.

The Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) has been extended to SHI and this project will contribute to achieving the following CBD Aichi Targets:

- Aichi Target 1 (Enhanced awareness of biodiversity value and steps to conserve and use it sustainably). This will be through raising the awareness across SHI of the drivers of biodiversity loss , identifying ways to reduce the key threats of habitat loss and disturbance, and highlighting the increased benefits from alternative livelihoods, thereby providing resilience from a healthy natural environment.
- Aichi Target 11 (Protected areas increased and improved). This will be through confirming management and legal status of SHIs 13 terrestrial NCAs that cover 38% of SHIs landmass via stakeholder developed, and agreed Management Plans for each NCA. Analytical tools to review effectiveness of Management Plans and support alternative management options will also be developed.

In this reporting round, the DPLUS154 project has initiated collation of baseline evidence and data required for the NCA Management Plans, and started to identify and provide training to the key stakeholders which will need to be engaged to take their development and implementation forward (**see Section 3.1 Output 1, 2 and 4** and **evidence in Annex 3 and 5**).

5.   OPTIONAL: Consideration of gender equality issues

Gender inclusion data will be collected within every part of the project to establish if there are differences of roles between genders. This will include, those working within Government and direct stakeholders and in the wider consultation process. The project will promote gender equality where possible and ensure equal opportunities to participate in consultation. The recruitment, selection and hiring processes of the Project Officer and Data Collectors will be guided by gender equality principles. In line with Indicator 5.4 (linked to Activities 4.9 and 5.4), gender disaggregation was scheduled to be designed into the project methodology by Y1Q4. However, due to the delays previously outlined above, and in Section 9, this has been delayed. However, it will be completed as soon as possible in Y2. All other Indicators relating to gender equality remain relevant and achievable within their scheduled timelines.

6.   Monitoring and evaluation

Three tools have been developed for the project which are used by the PMG to effectively monitor and govern the project: a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, Risk Register, and Issues Log (**Annex 6d**). The PMG (JNCC, SHG, SFL) is jointly responsible for monitoring and steering the project, ensuring it aligns with the project proposal, and that the project is delivered on time and within budget. The PMG will review and approve all primary project outputs prior to external release. There have been no major changes or additions to the M&E Plan, Risk Register or Issues Log during the reporting period.

Project Indicators and Outputs are listed within the project logframe (**Annex 2**) and support the monitoring and evaluation of the project. Timeframes have been amended (through two approved Change Requests) for some indicators in the logframe because of delays in project start date and subsequent challenges presented by overlapping commitments by some key staff in SHG, but the indicators and outputs themselves have remined the same. Progress towards the stated Outcome and Outputs can be clearly cross-referenced with the relevant indicators. As most of the indicators relate to specific markers of progress or end products, they are relatively easy to measure – e.g., number of people trained, creation of reports or databases, results from before and after surveys to gauge levels of increased capacity.

7.   Lessons learnt

In this first reporting period, the following aspects have been of benefit to the project, and would be recommended approaches for other projects where relevant:

- *In-territory Partner*: Having SHG as a lead partner on the project has proved invaluable for: i) ensuring the direction of the project and the outputs will be of true value and relevance to SHI; and ii) identifying and engaging with relevant on-island stakeholders to establish the CDG which

will be critical for helping to also ensure outputs are relevant and engendering buy-in amongst wider stakeholders.

- *Working with known partners*: The strong, established relationships between all project partners (JNCC, SHG, SFL) has resulted in good cooperation and ensured that a high level of enthusiasm for project has been maintained.

- *Adaptability and flexibility*: Project Partners have also shown adaptability and flexibility in the face of some of the unforeseen challenges imposed by the delayed start date to the project. In particular, SFL were able to pick up and carry out a number of additional tasks while they had staff on SHI to ensure that as much of the scheduled activities could be started or completed as possible.

There have also been some lessons learnt from the challenges encountered, and which would be taken into consideration for future proposals. Due to limited staff in SHG, the delayed start to the project (detailed in CR21-097 and Section 9) caused the project start up activities to coincide with another major project in SHI (CSSF Cloud Forest). The work associated with the Cloud Forest project meant that the core SHG project team were not available to undertake the start-up activities when DPLUS154 came online. As SHG are one of the main partners in this project, this had a knock-on effect to the timing, location, and delivery of project activities, as well as the timing of the funds required to support activities in each year of the project (detailed in CR21-186 and Section 9). Although this overlap was not predictable, and is not anticipated to impact on the overall outcomes of the project, it has provided a point of learning for the project team. In the future, more directed conversations across each of the partner organisations may be able to identify possible clashes or overlaps in required capacity between projects. It also, highlights the importance of cross-project collaboration and remaining adaptable to changing project activities to work around similar unforeseen circumstances.

8. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)

N/A – this is the first Annual Report for this project.

9. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

As noted in other sections of this report, DPLUS154 has faced a number of challenges which has impacted on progress in its first year of operation. The 2.75-y project was due to commence in July 2021, however due to the announcement of awards not being made until mid-August 2021, it was not possible to start the project until December 2021. This delay meant the availability of project staff had changed in both the UK and SHI. Although some activities have commenced, a coinciding project within SHG (CSSF Cloud Forest) has pulled significant SHG staff time away from the start-up activities of DPLUS154. This has had a knock-on effect on the timing, location, and delivery of project, as well as the timing of the funds required to support activities in each financial year of the project.

As each challenge arose, the Project Partners re-considered the project plan and budget, modifying it so that there would be some continued progress in Y1, the overall success of the project would not be compromised, and that the SHI community would continue to get maximum overall benefit from the project outputs. The modifications were captured in two Change Requests which were submitted and subsequently approved in December 2021 (reference number: CR21-097) and March 2022 (reference number: CR21-186).

The greatest risk to the project in terms of staying on track is the now crucial recruitment of the Project Officers and Data Collectors. In this reporting round, the Project Partners have shown considerable innovation and adaptability to keep things moving, either by taking on some of the tasks the Project Officers or Data Collectors would have done, or achieving similar end-points through alternative means. However, as all Project Partners have limited human resource, this is not a viable long-term strategy for the project.

The Project Partners are working closely together to expedite recruitment of the Project Officer and Data Collectors (job descriptions have been finalised and will shortly be advertised – see **Annex 6e**). Once these

project staff are onboard, it is anticipated that project momentum will increase substantially and that the project will be able to stay on track according to the new plan which was approved in March 2022.

10.   Sustainability and legacy

The project has been promoted through the training activities held in March on SHI by SFL (introductory presentations). Once the CDG has identified the wider stakeholder network, wider promotion of the project will occur, along with a press release launching the project. There has already been some informal media interest in the project, and it is hoped that the communications plan and expected stakeholder engagement will continue to increase interest and capacity resulting from the project.

There are currently no foreseen changes to the planned exit strategy, and therefore project outcomes will still be sustained in the long term through:

- Trained SHI-based personnel (minimum 15), with skills spread across SHG/SHNT, to implement and review management options in all the NCAs, and in sufficient number to build on-island resilience.
- At least two SHG individuals undergoing Train-the-Trainer programmes to enable future on-island training of relevant management tools.
- A continued collaborative partnership working between SHG and key stakeholders, to deliver the management of other NCAs, as determined through the project.
- Continued use, by SHG/Stakeholders of the NCA database, models, decision support tools and effectiveness framework to support on-going sustainable management of the NCAs.
- Local communities/stakeholders actively adopting sustainable land-use activities driven by their understanding of the role and value of biodiversity.
- SHNT committing to ongoing management of the Heart-Shaped Waterfall and Millennium Forest NCAs, as well as continued partnerships with SHG for the five Important Wirebird Areas.

In addition to this, JNCC's UKOT programme provides long-term support to the Territories. In parallel with the work of DPLUS154, JNCC continues to build GIS capacity in SHI. They are also working with the Territories, including SHI to develop long-term condition monitoring programmes based on the UK Government's 25YEP framework.

11.   Darwin identity

There is a good understanding of the Darwin Initiative within SHI, with a range of projects having been funded by it over the years.

The project was publicised as a Darwin Initiative project when an introduction to the project was given at the SFL training day held in March 2022 (see **Section 3.1 Output 2**). A public launch of the project is anticipated through a press release early in Y2 of the project. This will be a joint release from all Project Partners. It will include the Darwin Initiative logo and acknowledgement of the funding and support received from Darwin (**Annex 5a**).

Within the PMG and CDG, the project is referred to by the Darwin Project Code (DPLUS154), ensuring that the Darwin identity is always at the forefront when the project is discussed. As the project progresses, the Darwin Initiative logo and acknowledgement of the funding received will be included on any material that is promoting the work of the project (e.g. meeting agendas/minutes, reports, social media, presentations etc).

12.   Impact of COVID-19 on project delivery

Covid restrictions on SHI have remained in place, requiring a 10-day quarantine period for all individuals arriving on the island. The number of flights were also reduced at the beginning of 2022 (although these have since increased again). At the project planning stage, there were plans for the quarantine period to be reduced in December 2021 and for more regular flights; therefore time and budget were built into the original project plan for JNCC staff to visit SHI in Y1 of the project. As a consequence of the ongoing restrictions, which meant more time and budget would have been required to cover the associated quarantine costs and longer time on the island, JNCC staff were not able to travel to SHI. The project team

were able to mitigate this, with SFL agreeing to carry out additional activities during a scheduled trip to SHI for the MOVE ON project (see **Section 3.1, Output 2**).

The project was developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore project activities were designed to be carried out by the on-island team as much as possible, or adaptable to the new ways of (remote) working adopted over the past two years. As such, it is unlikely that there will continue to be ongoing issues because of the pandemic once SHI's travel and quarantine restrictions are lifted or reduced.

13.   Safeguarding

Please tick this box if any safeguarding violations have occurred during this financial year.   ☐

If you have ticked the box, please ensure these are reported to ODA.safeguarding@defra.gov.uk as indicated in the T&Cs.

As the lead partner, JNCC is committed to creating a safe environment for all staff and those with whom we work. For JNCC, safeguarding means protecting its staff and communities from potential harm from encountering anyone working for, or with us, or from our activities/programmes of work. JNCC's primary safeguarding objective is to do no harm, and we take a zero-tolerance approach to anyone who contravenes our policies.

Safeguarding is a specific risk in the JNCC organisational risk register. JNCC's safeguarding policy makes clear the JNCC policy applies to all partners and contractors. For this project, the partners MoU: a) incorporate JNCC's Safeguarding Policy or otherwise implement reasonable due diligence and monitoring procedures of its sub-awards consistent with JNCC's Policy; b) include appropriate language requiring contracting entities/individuals, and their employees/volunteers to abide with a Code of Conduct that reflects standards of JNCC's Policy; and c) expressly state that the failure of those entities/individuals to take preventive measures against sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse and child abuse, to investigate and report allegations in a timely manner, or to take corrective actions when breaches have occurred, shall constitute grounds for JNCC to terminate such agreements.

14. Project expenditure

Table 1: Project expenditure <u>during the reporting period</u> (1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022)

Project spend (indicative) in this financial year	2021/22 D+ Grant (£)	2021/22 Total actual D+ Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs	■	■	▌	
Consultancy costs	■	■	■	Funds allocated to cover PMG meeting attendance by SHG not required in Y1.
Overhead Costs	▌	■	■	Overheads had not be included in revised budget, but savings on other budget lines, enabled these to be accounted for.
Travel and subsistence	■	■	▌	
Operating Costs	■	■	■	Not all planned workshops were able to be held, and so operating costs associated with these were less than anticipated.
Capital items	■	▌	■	These funds were for a laptop for the Project Officer, but due to delay in recruitment of the PO, this was not purchased.
Others (Please specify)	■	■	■	This relates to purchase of SHI satellite date. The actual cost was lower than estimated.
TOTAL	■	■		

The D+ Grant figures in Table 1 (Column 2) are those which were approved in the Change Request submitted in March 2022. In this Change Request, the total grant for the 2021-22 FY was reduced from ▇▇ (original) to ▇▇ . The difference of ▇▇ is to be moved to the 2022-23 FY. There was also movement between budget lines and the amounts being allocated to each partner which reflected the need to replan staff time and tasks to be undertaken by each due to the delay in recruitment of the Project Officer.

15. OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements of your project during the reporting period (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes

We have opted not to complete this section for this reporting round.

List of Annexes:
- Annex 1: Report of progress and achievements against Logical Framework for Financial Year 2021-22
- Annex 2: Project's current logframe
- Annex 3: Evidence for progress against Output 1
- Annex 4: Evidence for progress against Output 2

- Annex 5: Evidence for progress against Output 4
- Annex 6: Evidence for progress against Output 5

Checklist for submission

	Check
Different reporting templates have different questions, and it is important you use the correct one. Have you checked you have used the **correct template** (checking fund, type of report (i.e. Annual or Final), and year) and **deleted the blue guidance text** before submission?	✓
Is the report less than 10MB? If so, please email to Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk putting the project number in the Subject line.	✓
Is your report more than 10MB? If so, please discuss with Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the Subject line.	✗
Have you included means of verification? You should not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	✓
Do you have hard copies of material you need to submit with the report? If so, please make this clear in the covering email and ensure all material is marked with the project number. However, we would expect that most material will now be electronic.	✗
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	✓
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	✓
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	