

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

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

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2022

Project reference	DPLUS159
Project title	Growing hope – a blueprint for saving Ascension’s endemic plants
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Ascension Island
Lead partner	Ascension Island Government
Partner(s)	None
Project leader	Diane Baum
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	n/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).

This project began on 1st July 2022. A recruitment round for the key role of Project Coordinator was undertaken in July 2022 and Dr Phil Lambdon was identified as the standout candidate. Unfortunately, as described below, Dr Lambdon has not yet been able to take up the post on Ascension.

The Project Coordinator will lead all of the activities in the project and so this delay has prevented any meaningful progress against the implementation timetable. A change request has been submitted to request extra time to complete all of the planned project activities.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

A medical issue has prevented the Project Coordinator taking up their post on Ascension as planned. Ascension has a strict policy requiring all new recruits to pass a medical examination. Delays in obtaining test results caused by the NHS backlog have so far prevented this clearance for the Project Coordinator. AIG have now found the funds to pay for a private referral to speed up the process.

The Project Coordinator is responsible for leading all of the project activities and so this has caused a significant delay in delivering the project timetable. A change request has been submitted requesting a 6 month extension to the project and a shift in budget into later financial years to allow for this delay in starting the project.

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

Discussed with NIRAS-LTS:	No
Formal Change Request submitted:	Yes
Received confirmation of change acceptance	No
Change request reference if known:	

4a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No Estimated underspend:

4b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a re-budget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

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

None

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response (including the submission of your risk register), or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with NIRAS-LTS International through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.****

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