

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	DPR10S2\1004 DPLUS169
Project title	New Island: completing preparatory steps for restoration against invasive mammals.
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Falkland Islands
Lead partner	Falklands Conservation
Partner(s)	RSPB, Falkland Islands Government
Project leader	<i>Andrew Stanworth</i>
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	25/10/2022 HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	www.facebook.com/nirestoration www.twitter.com/niresotration www.falklandsconservation.com/newislandrestoration

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).

1.1 RSPB have sourced satellite imagery, processing is yet to be done but is on track to be complete by the end of Q4 as timetabled.

1.2 & 1.3 Bait availability and degradation trials have been completed during a visit to New Island with support from RSPB, FIG and [REDACTED].

2.1 Without being able to land machinery on New Island (see 2.2) and on advice from Island Landcare, we are using chemical control, rather than mechanical removal of the gorse. Once sprayed, the gorse will die and dry out, eventually breaking down into a mulch. The breakdown of the gorse will take longer than the project's timeframe (or than mechanical removal), but it will achieve the goal of removing harbourage areas for target species in time for a future eradication attempt. Herbicides and spraying equipment have been sourced to begin removal of gorse around the settlement and outliers on New Island.

2.2 No track infrastructure work has yet been completed due to logistical constraints of getting heavy plant to New Island during winter, and undertaking this work while the ground is wet and boggy. We aim for work to commence late summer/autumn which is later than expected (it was due end of Q2).

2.3 White-chinned petrel colony will be surveyed and monitoring deployed in November, in the meantime we are acquiring shipping quotes for targeted cat control equipment to be shipped from Australia. This is on schedule.

2.4 Biosecurity plan for New Island is being prepared. Biosecurity practices have already been enhanced to safeguard the new risk (to the South Atlantic) of HPAI. This is on schedule.

2.5 Genetic sample collection has begun. We are working with [REDACTED] to partner with her project to share tissue samples for genetic and pathogen testing. This is on schedule.

3.1 Create a clear rationale for captive holding Striated caracaras - Experts advised against captive holding striated caracara as a primary mitigation method due to the scale, risk and complexity of this mitigation method. We are exploring other mitigation techniques such as diversionary and supplementary feeding, aversion training and island refuge. 3.1 is on schedule.

3.2 A survey of striated caracaras was undertaken in September. Bird numbers, distribution, behaviour and age classes were recorded. This survey did not include the offshore islands within the New Island group. This work is on schedule.

3.3 interactions of striated caracara with non-toxic bait were conducted in June. After an initial period of avoiding the bait, after 3 or 4 days SCs were observed eating and ingesting the bait, thus confirming suspicions that SC's are at risk from primary poisoning. This output was completed on schedule.

3.4 We are speaking with aviculturists to explore island refuge method, which uses a rodent-free offshore island as a safe refuge, and clipping of flight feathers to keep the striated caracaras semi-captive on the island.

3.5 An assessment of advanced knockdown on rabbits is ongoing and on track within the project timetable.

In summary, all outputs are progressing well and according to schedule, with the following exceptions:

On expert advice, we have opted to use chemical, rather than chemical removal of gorse (2.1). Track repair work has been delayed, due to unavoidable logistical constraints (2.2) we still aim to get this work done within the financial year. Based on our research and expert advice, we intend to explore aviculture in a broader sense, using semi-captive island refuge methods, and other non-target impact mitigation techniques.

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.

Due to logistics and weather constraints, it has not been possible to undertake the track repair works during winter. We still hope to undertake this work on the shoulder of the tourism season, but this element has been more challenging than anticipated.

Aviculturists and eradication experts have cautioned against the use of aviculture as a primary mitigation method, and advised that we first explore other mitigation options. We have identified suitable alternative methods, but this is a slight diversion from the original plan. We now seek to trial alternative mitigation methods such as diversionary feeding, aversion training and island refuge. We don't anticipate that this will affect the budget, as many of these methods will still require aviculture and veterinary supervision, and we aim to deliver these trials within the original project timetable.

As yet, HPAI has not arrived in the Falkland Islands, but we are cognoscente that there is a real risk it could. Should HPAI arrive, it could impact on our fieldwork and plans to trial mitigation techniques with striated caracara.

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:	No
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?

No.

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**