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

Half Year Report

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 2-3 pages** in length.

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 2025

Please note all projects that were active before 1st October 2025 are required to complete a Half Year Report.

Submit to: BCF-Reports@niras.com including your project ref in the subject line.

Project reference	DPLUS174
Project title	A cross-UKOT camera network to enhance marine predator conservation
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	British Antarctic Territory, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Montserrat, Ascension Island, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands
Lead Organisation	Oxford Brookes University
Partner(s)	Ascension Island Government
	Antarctic Research Trust (Falklands)
	British Antarctic Survey (Antarctica)
	Gibraltar Botanic Gardens
	Montserrat National Trust and Government of Montserrat Department of the Environment
	SGSSI Government
Project Leader	Tom Hart
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR4
Project website/blog/social media	http://polarsentinels.org/

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed project implementation timetable (if your project started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end of September).

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems (are your indicators still relevant, can you report against any Standard Indicators, do your assumptions still hold true?). The guidance can be found on the resources page of the relevant fund website.

Impact. Establish a cost-effective, near real-time marine monitoring system across 6 UK Overseas Territories that directly informs policy decisions and improves conservation outcomes by May 2027

- Attend a South Georgia workshop to provide expertise on the strategy for whole island monitoring in the next 10 years to boost local conservation.

Outcome. Produce a field-to-policymaker evidence pipeline enabling UKOT governments and stakeholders to obtain near-real time evidence (local and regional) on marine population trends and reduce monitoring cost

- We are working on this, the prototype is apparently working, we have given the consultant data to demonstrate it to partners.

Output 1. Marine species health index guidelines established to support the development of partners conservation priorities and UKOTs conservation policy

- We have one paper on this published, have done a lot of the coding for it with Falklands Conservation and we are currently asking for feedback from other UKOTs.

Output 2. Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool modified, re-development and tested for new taxa for data processing to speed up access to evidence made accessible in the time frame of the project

- We now have a working AI platform, named countGD, developed in partnership with Niki Amini Naieni and Prof Andrew Zisserman which allows near instantaneous counts from drone survey images which has worked on all species we have tested in on.

Output 3. Online open access web portal to fill critical knowledge gaps in UKOT and improve policymakers access to marine health research evidence

- Portal should be available by end of project, and some improvements have already been discussed to better match policymakers' needs and accessibility.

Output 4. Establish a cross-UKOTs network aimed at facilitating knowledge exchange, cross-training and lowering barriers to marine predator conservation

- Presenting at the UKOTCF annual conference on the 15th of October to introduce the project as a pilot to transfer knowledge on remote technology monitoring and teasing a workshop to launch a cross-training UKOTCF working group on the use of technology for remote wildlife monitoring.

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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.

None

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

Discussed with NIRAS:	No
Formal Change Request submitted:	No
Received confirmation of change acceptance:	Yes/ No

Change Request reference if known: *If you submitted a financial Change Request, you can find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome*

Guidance for Section 4: The information you provide in this section will be used by Defra to review the financial status of projects. This review will identify projects at random for spot checks on financial management and will include requests for evidence of the actual spend information provided below. Please ensure the figures you provide are as accurate as possible and that you have the evidence to support it. You do not need to provide it now.

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2025 – 30 September 2025)

Actual spend: £ ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉

4b. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this financial year (ending 31 March 2026)?

Yes ☐ **No** ☒ Estimated underspend: £

4c. If you expect an underspend, then you should 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, and not later than 31st December. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes to your project if necessary. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.

Not applicable

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

Suspicions or allegations related to fraud and error concerns should be reported to fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk

None

6. Project risk management

6a. If your project has an Overseas Security and Justice assessment, please provide an update on any related risks, and any special conditions in your award paperwork if relevant for your project.

Not applicable

7. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent Annual Report. As a reminder, all projects that were scored as 'Not Yet Sensitive' in the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) assessment of their latest Annual Report should demonstrate how they are meeting the minimum GESI-Sensitive standard.

Following feedback provided on our Annual Report, please note that both the Project leader and the Project Coordinator for this project receive mandatory safeguarding training from Oxford Brookes University. We are now working on better integration of SEAH risks and policy in our global risk assessment, please note that often the policies are in place but were maybe not clearly indicated.

The Hart Fieldwork Handbook including the following policies regarding SEAH risks (see annexes attached to this report):
- Mental Health and Wellness in the Field
- Polar Emergency plan – Vessel base travel
- Don't panic
- Competencies and selection criteria
- BS8848 Self-assessment
- Global risk assessment particularly Conduct in Fieldwork, Contingency, Incident and Emergency Planning, Conduct of Others on Fieldwork, Incident Reporting

Additionally, the relevant Oxford Brookes University's policies include:
Relevant Oxford Brookes University's policies include:
- Equality, diversity and inclusion policy
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing
- Anti-harassment Policy and Reporting
- Whistleblowing
- Conduct and Probity
- Fraud, Corruption and Other Irregularities Affecting the University
- Research Integrity Resources

Other relevant policy includes the Zooniverse User Agreement and Privacy Policy and their youth privacy advice for our citizen science project.

Checklist for submission

Have you responded to **feedback from your latest Annual Report Review?** You should respond in section 6, and annexe other requested materials as appropriate.	X
Have you reported against the most **up to date information for your project?**	X
Have you **clearly highlighted any confidential information** within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	X
Include your **project reference** in the subject line of submission email.	X
Submit to **BCF-Reports@niras.com**	X
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	X