

## 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: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024**

**Please note all projects that were active before 1 October 2024 are required to complete a Half Year Report.**

Submit to: [BCF-Reports@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com) including your project ref in the subject line.

<b>Project reference</b>	DPLUS182
<b>Project title</b>	Habitat restoration and species re-introductions on four Falklands' Island reserves
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Falkland Islands
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	Falkland Conservation
<b>Partner(s)</b>	N/A
<b>Project leader</b>	Andrew Stanworth
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	HYR2
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/FalklandsConservation">https://www.facebook.com/FalklandsConservation</a>

#### **1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed project implementation timetable.**

Although we are not looking for specific reporting against your indicators, please use this opportunity to consider the appropriateness of your M&E 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.

#### **Output 1.1: Baseline Survey.**

Draft satellite mapping has been performed; a number of queries have been raised to fine tune the AI algorithm (this will also make it applicable across additional sites) and some additional focused ground-truthing points will be taken upon the next visit to finalise the mapping. This will be completed in the current financial year without additional cost. Approximate mapping of priority bare areas for restoration has also been undertaken in GoogleEarth.

#### **Output 1.1: Adopted Management Plan.**

Two management plans for Pebble Islet and the adjacent Government Islet (that forms part of the same island group) have been completed. These comprised of a desk top study to collate information and baseline data and circulation to interested parties prior to gaining approval and final sign-off from Falkland Conservation trustees as the legal owners (copy in attached Appendix). These now qualify the sites as Private Protected Areas (under the IUCN criteria) and the plans have been submitted to the Falklands Islands Government as part of a process to officially recognise PPAs.

The opportunity was also taken to complete Management Plans for Middle Island and Motley Island, two additional Falklands Conservation owned islands that are also undergoing active restoration and are sites for re-introductions.

### **Output 1.2: Accommodation & Tussac Planting**

Landing of the building materials and supplies was finally accomplished on Pebble Islet coordinating with Workboat Services coastal shipping. The materials were ferried ashore from the anchored coastal shipping vessel in 5 loads by their landing-craft tender. The beach landing proved to be relatively straightforward in the end given the extensive coordination that had to take place before this point. Six metric tonnes of materials and supplies were transported by hand to the shanty location. The existing derelict shanty was made weatherproof so that field teams can now visit the island with a secure haven. This has been the road-block to progressing other programmed restoration work. The planned winter planting season had to be postponed, however can be conducted in March during late summer / early autumn once the ground begins to wet-up again after mid-summer, such that outputs and expenditure should fall in the same financial and reporting year.

### **Output 2.2: Production of Perennial Planting Stock**

Seed collections have been sown and germination has occurred with the first seedlings emerging. Final quantities are still to be confirmed as germination is ongoing (photographs in attached Appendix).

### **Output 3: Cobb's Wren Re-introductions**

A desktop review of both successful and unsuccessful small passerine bird translocations previously undertaken globally was completed along with an assessment of the current known biology of Cobb's Wren to inform on the capture techniques, translocation protocols, seasonal timing and likely success of Cobb's Wren translocations. This was circulated to local stakeholders with relevant experience and the Falkland Islands Government Environmental Department for comment prior to final drafting. This was used in partnership with the Falkland Islands Government to select the paired capture and release islands between which the translocations would take place. The decision was taken to conduct a smaller trial this year between Kidney Island and Top Island in Port William. These are FIG reserves close to Stanley for monitoring and subsequent outreach activities. If the initial trial is successful as proof of concept there is tacit agreement that larger island group may be undertaken the following year. The Section 9 application was submitted for the selected island pair along with the summarised key findings from the desk-top literature review. The Section 9 Order permitting the translocation was issued by Executive Council of the Falklands legislative assembly and the Governor on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

Logistical planning has commenced for the translocation. A UK BTO certified bird-ringer, licensed to conduct and provide training in bird-banding and mist-netting will visit the Falklands between 6<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> January to assist with the translocation.

### **Output 4: Outreach, Media and Engagement**

Media outputs on the shanty logistics are in-press

Project is aware that media engagement has been limited and concerted effort will be made over the summer as shanty is completed and translocations are undertaken to promote good news stories with the tangible outputs.

## **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 part of the underlying rationale for the project was the development of a "conservation economy" to establish employment opportunities and investment within the conservation sector to encourage contractors to recognise the sector as having secure opportunities, and thus increasing the number of people and resources available to tackle larger-scale projects. This was raised in the Yr1 review comments.

This has had mixed success. It has been successful in the production of planting stock with the expansion of a private nursery to produce planting stock for restoration, re-introductions and ex-situ conservation. Results for build logistics and planting has been less successful with it difficult to attract or secure contractors, several expressions of interest have failed to result in uptake. This is compounded by the small population of the Falklands, lack of unemployment and current housing build shortage – all of which fully takes up the potential pool of casual work-force. Ultimately this could be taken in-house but this would detract from the wider intangible aims of the project to develop a conservation economy.

This in combination with the logistical difficulties to land the stores and materials on Pebble Islet has led to the build and planting being behind where it ideally would be. The materials have now been successfully landed and a repeat visit is planned in November to complete the build. Negotiations are ongoing to complete the current years plantings in March. This should keep all expected outputs and expenditure in the current year as forecast.

**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
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Formal Change Request submitted:	No
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Received confirmation of change acceptance:	No
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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*

**4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024)**

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 2025)?**

Yes  No

**4c. If you expect and 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. 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.**

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

No

**6. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent annual report.**

*Q: Be more precise with your species nomenclature – adding accepted scientific names upon first mention of species in the report and also clarifying whether the conservation status is against island or global conservation criteria? For example, you mention that Fuegian saxifrage is Critically Endangered but the reviewer was not able to find Fuegian saxifrage on the IUCN Redlist website and therefore assumes that its Critically Endangered status is an island assessment. This is different to the two targeted species Falkland Rock-cress *Phlebotobium maclovianum* and Hairy Daisy - *Erigeron incertus* – which are both globally Endangered.*

Noted and greater care will be taken in the future to define species names and differentiate between global and national status. The IUCN listings for global plants are perhaps less advanced than they are for mammals and birds. Many Falkland Island native and endemic species remain unassessed by the IUCN. The species that

have been assessed were done through a previous OTEP (Overseas Territories Environmental Programme – a forerunner to Darwin+). To better prioritise national conservation efforts and to update the legislative list of legally protected plant species a national assessment for all Falkland Island native plant species was undertaken in 2012 incorporating the new plant survey effort undertaken between 2007 - 2011. This assessed the threat of national extinction for all native, endemic and near-endemic taxa following IUCN protocols and criteria. For endemic taxa, this would also equate to the global threat category if an IUCN assessment was undertaken. The number of assessed and listed species under the global IUCN and National FI Red List are presented in the Table below.

#### Falkland Islands Flora: Summary of Assessed Species Numbers

	Number of Species	
	Native Species	180
Endemic Species	14	
Introduced Non-Native Species	>250	
	IUCN Red List	Falklands Red List
Critically Endangered (CR)	1	13
Endangered (E)	5	16
Vulnerable (V)	0	11
Near-threatened (NT)	1	3
Least Concern (LC)	7	134
Data Deficient (DD)		4
Not Assessed / Not Applicable (na)	169	2

[Based on data from past UK funding of OTEP 'Falkland Islands Plants Conservation Project' (2007-09); OTEP 'Falkland Islands Native Plants Programme' (2009-11); and DEFRA 'Early intervention and control of invasive plants in the Falkland Islands' (2011-2013)]

As regards the species mentioned:

#### **Falkland Rock-cress (*Phlebotobium maclovianum*)** - Endemic

IUCN: EN (B2ab(iii))

FI Red List: EN (B2ab(iii))

*P. maclovianum* is a national endemic of the Falkland Islands. The population of *P. maclovianum* is severely fragmented across the archipelago with most subpopulations consisting of only a few individuals. Subpopulations occur away from direct grazing and generally consist of less than 20 individuals either on offshore ungrazed islands or within natural stock enclosures such as rockfalls and inland rock. This species was reported as 'abundant on the sea coast' by Hooker (1847), one of the early botanists to visit the Falklands but is now considered scarce. This provides indirect evidence of a significant population reduction. There is evidence that grazing has caused the inferred decline and most extant sub-populations are severely fragmented, small and restricted to areas free of livestock. There are currently estimated to be fewer than 1000 individuals in the total population. [Additional surveys of offshore islands has discovered some additional populations since this assessment]

#### **Hairy Daisy (*Erigeron incertus*)** - Endemic

IUCN: EN (B2ab(iii))

FI Red List: EN (B2ab(iii))

*E. incertus* is a national endemic. The population of *E. incertus* is severely fragmented across the archipelago with most subpopulations consisting of only a few individuals. *E. incertus* appears vulnerable to grazing pressure and this may be inferred to have a continued negative impact on the extent and habitat available for colonization. A national endemic to the Falkland Islands, at present the total number of individual 'clumps' of *E. incertus* is estimated at fewer than 1,000. The majority of subpopulations consist of less than 10 'clumps' with only three subpopulations currently known to include over 100.

#### **Fuegian saxifrage (*Saxifraga magellanica*)** - Native

IUCN: LC

FI Red List: CR (D1)

"*Saxifraga magellanica* has recently (2011) been relocated at a single site on East Falkland and is currently only known from this single population of fewer than 50 individuals. There is evidence of mortality within the population caused by drought. Increased drought periods may therefore be a risk to this species in the future, along with coastal erosion. It is likely that the distribution of this species has retracted owing to grazing as it is clearly restricted to a livestock-free section of coastal cliff. [A second

population of just several plants has been found on the edge of a waterfall within a grazed paddock in Hill Cove Mountains – this does not change the assessment]

**Yellow Lady's Slipper (*Calceolaria biflora*) - Native**

IUCN: LC

FI Red List: CR (B1ab(i,ii,iii,iv,v) + D

*C. biflora* is currently only known from one historic herbarium record (Valentin, 1911), one doubted observation and one word-of-mouth location where it now appears to have died out. It may now be extinct from the wild. It is likely that the major threat to this species is grazing as is the case for the endemic Lady's Slipper *C. fothergillii*. If still extant the most recently recorded location of this species is at risk of continued decline in numbers and available habitat. Based on our current knowledge there are likely to be under 50 individuals in the total remaining population [The current project's seedlings are derived from the last known seed collection]

Many species within the Falklands now have distributions that are determined by grazing pressure (i.e. the threatened species above and others like Snake Plant *Nassauvia serpens*) or threatened by drying landscapes and ponds (Californian Club Rush *Schoenoplectus californicus*). It is felt that any opportunities to extend species range and introduce new populations to ungrazed offshore islands through this project or others should be undertaken.

References:

Broughton, D.A. and McAdam, J.H. (2002) A Red Data List for the Falkland Islands vascular flora. Oryx 36: 279-287  
Upson (2012). Updated Red List for the Vascular Plants of the Falkland Islands. Report to the Falkland Islands Government. Falklands Conservation.

Upson, R. (2012). Identification Guide to Nationally Threatened Vascular Plants of the Falkland Islands. Unpublished report to the Falkland Islands Government. Falklands Conservation.

Upson R and Lewis R. (2014) Updated vascular plant checklist and atlas for the Falkland Islands. Report to Falklands Conservation . 2014; 225 pp.

Heller T, Upson R, Lewis R, Clubbe C. (2019) Field Guide to the Plants of the Falkland Islands. Edited by Clubbe C. Published by Kew Botanic Gardens. ISBN 978 1 84246 675 9

**Q: How will the failure to collect seeds of one of the target species - Hairy Daisy - affect the project and Output 2? The report suggest that you may be replacing this species with the Fuegian saxifrage. Can you clarify this?**

The intention will still be to undertake seed collection of Hairy Daisy (*Erigeron incertus*) in the current year with closer monitoring of populations and more landowners involved to ensure collection can be made at the right time. Last year timings of island visits to known populations did not coincide with seeding, early season visits were too early and during late season visits the plants had already passed and withered. Successful seed collection in late summer this year would still allow planting stock to be grown on in the final year of the project and planted out, although due to the delay the persistence of the new population may not be able to be verified and reported on prior to the end of the project. There is also the possibility of growing on transplant seedlings from recently secured old seed but the germination potential is likely to be very low and therefore this is not being relied upon.

The current project entails visits to un-grazed islands and any opportunity to opportunistically include additional plant species, that are currently limited or threatened by grazing or drying, is considered beneficial. Established new populations on these protected sites is to be encouraged. It is hoped that this would be additional to Hairy daisy.

**Q: The project is trying to develop a paid workforce to undertake habitat restoration – can you give a little more detail about this market and who is willing to pay for these services post-project.**

This is considered to be more at the strategic impact level, whilst the project will contribute to it, it is not fully within the control of the project to deliver.

The Falklands has approximately 5000 ha of bare eroding tussac peat, Over the last 20 years using predominantly volunteer labour c. 70 ha has been replanted. At this rate it would take 1,500 years (15 centuries) to recover the bare tussac ground we already have, for less any new losses due to climate change, fire or grazing (and without considering any of our additional inland erosional areas). Whilst not undervaluing volunteers who are a key resource and important also for advocacy and outreach, if we are to make significant inroads into these large areas then the past model of volunteers and day trips needs to be scaled up into professional work, much like tree-planting or sheep-shearing.

The Falklands has a small work-force and minimal unemployment. To secure seasonal workers there must be some level of certainty from season to season or else they will be employed in other sectors and be unavailable.

This is an additive impact, a number of initiatives have contributed, FIG has supported a number of small to mid-sized replanting initiatives through the Environmental Studies Budget with at least 6 sites utilising labour over the last 2 years. Falklands Conservation has worked with a third-party funder to facilitate and

establish a Small Grants Scheme open to land-owners. Presently 3 landowners are undertaking restoration planting.

Advocacy is also progressing with the Falkland Islands Government for a nationwide land recovery program / set-aside scheme for restoration. If adopted at a nationwide scale this would significantly contribute to a conservation economy.

The current Darwin program assists in such mainstreaming advocacy and provides experience and costings to assess the viability of such schemes.

**Q: More effort could have been made to talk about the project within your outreach activities in Year 1.**

Greater efforts will be made with positive good news stories over the coming summer and scheduled to include Cobb’s Wren re-introductions, seed collections and planting of threatened plants and tussac with accompanying photos. It is accepted that media targets were initially below expectations. This was partly a perception that initial outputs were largely preparatory and that these outputs without accompanying in-the-field photos for attention might have lower interest.

**Q: Clearer communication with key service providers could have avoided some of the transport delays the project encountered (Lesson learned - section 7). Lessons should be learned so that these issues do not repeat themselves going forward and perhaps especially for the yet to be started Output 3.**

This is true and is recognised, but it should also be recognised that there were additional compounding factors out-with our control that also contributed and were not fully expected by either ourselves or the service provider. This was right-down to the individual relative confidence of the ship captains. There is a tendency during initial discussions with 3<sup>rd</sup> parties for them to assure or profess that things may be possible prior to themselves having fully thought through the logistics and implications. Initial discussions may have under-estimated issues.

**Q: Please revise your risk register – e.g. for reassessing the risk of not collecting seeds of target species and adding the risk of fire given its increased probability and impact (section 7).**

The risk analysis will be updated within the submitted “Biodiversity Challenge Funds Risk Register” rather than Section 7 of the original application.

In respect of seed collection: As long as seed collection is made this season then germination, seedling production and planting out of transplants should still be possible in the final year. Only final confirmation of the population persistence may be lacking.

In respect of fire this is an ongoing risk that would jeopardise not only the current project (restoration plantings, reintroduced plants and birds) but the whole ecological function of the specific islands, the peat, the habitats and the fauna and flora that relies upon them. Falklands Conservation has prepared fire-plans for each of our island sites and a recently completed Darwin Local grant has provided basic fire-fighting equipment (as recommended by DEFRA-funded trainers) and LANTRA wildfire training to staff. Despite this due to the remote nature of many sites rapid reaction may not always be possible and response may focus on mop-up operations in the aftermath to save peat soils from secondary burns. Preparation and fore-planning has been conducted but the risk cannot be fully removed.

### Checklist for submission

<b>For New Projects (i.e. starting after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024)</b>	
Have you <b>responded to any additional feedback</b> (other than caveats) received in the letter you received to say your application was successful which requested response at HYR (including safeguarding points)? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	Yes
If not already submitted, have you attached your <b>risk register</b> ?	Yes
<b>For Existing Projects (i.e. started before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024)</b>	
Have you responded to <b>feedback from your latest Annual Report Review</b> ? You should respond in section 6, annexes other requested materials as appropriate.	Yes
<b>For All Projects</b>	
Include your <b>project reference</b> in the subject line of submission email.	Yes
Submit to <a href="mailto:BCFs-Report@niras.com">BCFs-Report@niras.com</a> .	

Have you <b>clearly highlighted any confidential information</b> within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website?	Yes
Have you reported against the most <b>up to date information for your project</b> ?	Yes
Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report.	Yes