

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

**Submission Deadline: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023**

<b>Project reference</b>	DPLUS192
<b>Project title</b>	<b>Delivering biodiversity and human well-being gains for Montserrat's sustainable development</b>
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Montserrat
<b>Lead partner</b>	UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum and Montserrat National Trust
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Montserrat National Trust (MNT), Government of Montserrat Ministry of Agriculture, Land, Housing and Environment, UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Species Recovery Trust
<b>Project leader</b>	Mrs Catherine Wensink
<b>Report date and number</b>	HYR1
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="http://www.ukotcf.org.uk">www.ukotcf.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.montserratnationaltrust.ms">www.montserratnationaltrust.ms</a> Montserrat National Trust Facebook page

**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 Project Team Building and Launch**

The Project Lead attended the NIRAS workshop session for new projects on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2023. On the same day a first full project team meeting took place via Zoom attended by 8 persons from 5 organisations and consultants involved in the project.

Project Team Leaders and Officers, Ms Delmaude Ryan, Catherine Wensink and Jodey Peyton are in regular contact via email and WhatsApp and have met every two-three weeks via Zoom to discuss various project management matters for each quarter under each WP (work package) e.g. stakeholder analysis, communications, consultations and framework for toolkit.

Montserrat National Trust work programmes have been developed and financial mechanisms put in place in place for efficient recording and reporting between MNT and UKOTCF. Partner organisations have made agreements, with due diligence protocols completed, as appropriate.

The project launch took place at the MNT on the 21st June 2023. It was attended by more than 30 persons including a group of Montserrat Community Colleague students, the Chief Physical Planner, Governor and Deputy Premier/Minister of Communications. It was recorded and streamed on MNT's Facebook page. A permanent post, with several presentations was made on MNT's Facebook social media platform: [https://fb.watch/nN\\_qMqxZpa/](https://fb.watch/nN_qMqxZpa/)

Several additional MNT staff have been recruited who will support the project delivery. A Senior Conservation Officer joined the MNT in May supported by an externally secured grant (John Ellerman Foundation a grant of £119,800 for three years). MSc ethnobiologist graduate, with an interest in the traditional knowledge of medicinal plants joined as Conservation Officer, Additional support for the garden and a young recruit are funded by the project and are working on plant propagation and general supporting duties (WP1d). Profiles for some are found in SOS

Montserrat newsletter (Page 20-22) with others to follow. In addition, a new Communications Officer is expected to join MNT from December who will support outreach for the project.

### **1.2 Biodiversity & Well-being Toolkit**

Outline chapters of the framework toolkit have been developed (WP1). A draft was shared with the team and approved by MNT. Draft Chapters include: Introduction; Global Biodiversity and links to Montserrat; Montserrat's Unique Biodiversity; Montserrat Community Input; Toolkit trials and wider significance for community; Montserrat Natural History Collections; Montserrat Culture & Human Well-being; Monitoring biodiversity on Montserrat; Biosecurity small-scale to big scale; Evaluating Toolkit; Toolkit Products; Biodiversity & well-being management options.

Plans for community consultations are underway (WP1a). Linked to this is the ethics review which has been drafted; although originally due Y1Q1&Q2, this ethics review will form part of a formal ethics review for a PhD student study with Exeter University & Jersey International Centre for Advanced Studies (JICAS); beneficial to the project as it uses institutional resources.

An MNT Medicinal Bush Plants Committee has been set up including 5 staff with highly knowledgeable nursery staff, senior managers and new young staff. The Committee has developed a short list of traditional medicinal plants (30+ species). Radio show held in August to facilitate involvement of community in the exercise. The list will be used for a publication.

### **1.3 MNT Youth & Education Programme**

The Project Lead met with Guernsey Ladies college to learn from island experience of the Young United Nations Global Alliance (YUNGA) Challenge Badges. The project will explore development of Biodiversity Badge (each badge is linked a Sustainable Development Goal). A website for Montserrat has been developed and a list of possible activities towards the badge have been developed: <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/yunga-montserrat/>. Project Co-lead [presented](#) at Inter-Island Environment Meeting (IIEM) in Sark, Channel Islands in September.

'Biosplash' organised in collaboration with the Montserrat Children's Society took place in August; As part of this they carried out the islands second bioblitz event. 89 species were recorded at Old Road Bay: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/biodiversity-of-montserrat-d74f33fd-6145-4b47-aa12-ae6870d80113>. Prizes for winners in 3 groups were announced on the radio: ([https://soundcloud.com/user-987002611/national-trust-heritage-show-august-22-2023?si=133a133a20ee41238087879d6977bd82&utm\\_source=clipboard&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=social\\_sharing](https://soundcloud.com/user-987002611/national-trust-heritage-show-august-22-2023?si=133a133a20ee41238087879d6977bd82&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing)). Backpacks donated by [Lefrik](#) (a [1% for the Planet](#) company) made from recycled materials were awarded to the winners.

In addition, links between the Youth Leadership Team at the Montserrat Secondary School and schools on the Isle of Man are being explored to facilitate mutual learning opportunities.

### **1.4 Biological Collections & Information**

The National Museum of Montserrat, managed by MNT, started a recruitment process in August for a museum curator to develop and manage collections in the museum. The curator is expected to work closely with the project on the biological collections.

### **1.5 MNT Botanic Garden Development**

As reported under DPLUS155 (Y2HYR), the MNT team with UKOTCF was able to secure some technical advice from UKOTCF Council Member (and CEO of the Manx Wildlife Trust) Leigh Morris to conduct some training in horticulture. This took place in May 2023. One output of this was a trail for cultivating the endemic plant known as 'pribby' (*Ronalletia buxifolia*). This is important as it will be needed to supply during toolkit trialling as pribby grows well in a variety of conditions. The work included helping new MNT Conservation Officers set up tests and implement improved propagation methods. Equipment for this was obtained and delivered. As reported in DPLUS155, MNT have now joined as member of Botanic Gardens Conservation International. This will help provide networking and sharing of experience across the world.

### **1.6 Communications and Reporting**

A stakeholder analysis has been completed for the project. This has identified 47 individual stakeholder groups, which can be categorised into the following groups of stakeholders: Government of Montserrat; Montserrat NGOs; Education; Montserrat Private Sector; Media & Press; Other Montserrat groups; Other (International) NGOs & Institutions; UK Government. With this, a Communications Plan has been drafted in order to ensure that messages are communicated to each group in an appropriate way.

A dedicated webpage for project has been set up on the UKOTCF website which will be mirrored on the new MNT website, under development.

MNT Heritage Radio show (held every Tuesday) held a dedicated show in August outlining medicinal plants aspects of the project in relation to which plants are important. The show is available here: [https://soundcloud.com/user-987002611/montserrat-national-trust-heritage-show?si=dcea5626475741d2a56f589192e9ee3e&utm\\_source=clipboard&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=social\\_sharing](https://soundcloud.com/user-987002611/montserrat-national-trust-heritage-show?si=dcea5626475741d2a56f589192e9ee3e&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing)

Saving Our Special Nature of Montserrat issue 15 was drafted and then circulated to around 200 persons on island and online available from: [ukotcf.org.uk](http://ukotcf.org.uk).

**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.**

Several changes in personnel have taken place since the application. MNT's Communications Officer departed but suitable replacement is expected to start in December. Until then MNT&UKOTCF are covering communications. Rebecca Machin from Leeds Museum & Galleries started a new role at the RSPCA. Jodey Peyton has left UKCEH and is working as an independent contractor. Both are committed to delivering the project These changes are noted in the project risk register and no impact to the project, or budget are currently foreseen

**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 **No**

Change request reference if known:

**4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023)**

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 2024)?**

Yes  No  Estimated underspend: £

**4c. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully.**

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

No