

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(Due 31 October 2011)

Project Ref No	18-020
Project Title	Increasing Local Capacity to Conserve St. Helena's threatened native biodiversity
Country(ies)	St. Helena
UK Organisations	Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
Collaborator(s)	ANRD
Project Leader	<i>Jodie Mills</i>
Report date	<i>13th October 2011</i>
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	2
Project website	<i>www.nationaltrust.org.sh</i>

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project.

1.1 Promote training opportunities to key target groups

The project has run 2 pesticides training courses to the Agriculture and Natural Resources Department (ANRD) and St Helena National Trust (SHNT) staff and 2 Health and safety training courses. We are currently also writing an 'Endemics in your garden' course which we plan to run for the general public at the SHNT new Millennium Forest nursery in November with follow up courses every month next year. The project has also set up a monthly conservation (volunteer) task day which promotes training for islanders in areas such as invasive species control, tree planting, footpath maintenance and construction, which have proved popular at engaging a wide age range of volunteers. We are also currently working on a chainsaw health and safety course to run to ANRD and SHNT staff which will also be available to the general public. The project has taken on 12 donkeys to help carry endemic plants and remove weeds off the site. We have run a course on donkey and health care for our regular donkey walking volunteers, but also for all the islanders to try and encourage better care for the islands donkeys. This programme is managed in collaboration with the St Helena Society for the prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA). All the courses and training days are promoted via the local media and posters on the target sites.

1.2 Run training workshops for ANRD staff

As above

1.3 Set up NVQ (now Diploma in Environmental Conservation)

The project staff have worked hard to set up the Diploma in Environmental Conservation and are registered through the island's Adult Vocational and Educational Service. Two candidates who have completed the Diploma and are awaiting the External Verifiers approval in the UK and we currently have a new round of 3 apprentices and 3 ANRD staff who are working to complete the qualification in June 2012. We will be taking on another round of apprentices in September 2012 to complete in the final year of the project.

1.4 Run training programme for conservation apprentices.

The apprentices training programme runs 3 days per week and is run by the Conservation Training Officer and Project Manager with input and guidance from the Restoration Ecologist. The programme

follows the project's 10 year restoration plan with guidance from ANRD staff and the project steering group.

1.5 Run training workshops for the private sector/general public

See 1.1 above

1.6 Produce training materials

The project team have so far produced training materials covering the following topics:

- A guide to Endemic plants of St Helena
- Plant structure and science
- Safe use of pesticides
- Monitoring and maintaining Health and safety (including risk assessments)
- Global conservation
- Tools booklet
- Classification of animals

AVES have also provided the project with BTCV handbooks on: Drystone Walling, Fencing, Woodlands, and Footpaths.

2.1 Set up a site management steering committee

The committee has been running since the start of the project and tries to meet monthly if required. The steering group consists of: SHNT Director, Nurseries Officer at ANRD, Andrew Darlow (St Helena Nature Conservation Group, Manager of the Bastard Gumwood Recovery Project and SHNT council) and the project team. The project also has smaller team meetings monthly.

2.2 Control Invasives

Following the actions as prescribed in the Restoration Plan the following invasive work has been carried out:

- Ginger removal and shredding to produce compost for growing plants
- Arum lily removal on High Peak using a range of experimental methods, uprooting, cutting and poisoning by injection with herbicides.
- Kikuyu grass removal at High Peak via hand weeding
- Fuchsia spraying with herbicides
- Blue weed removal by hand pulling
- Flax removal by hand cutting
- English aloe removal by digging out at Blue point
- Footpath weed eradication to prevent spreading to target area

- Feather moss sprayed with herbicide

2.3 Plant out Endemics

1835 endemic plants have been planted on the 2 target sites. Seed and cuttings trials have also been carried out on the sites to experiment if the plants can grow without being propagated via the nursery. These trials have so far been unsuccessful but new methods including planting seeds in pots will be trialled at other points on the sites.

2.4 Monitor Habitat Quality

Some initial surveys using invertebrates as habitat quality indicators have been carried out on the Spiky Yellow Woodlouse at High Peak and a general invertebrate survey at Blue Point.

2.5 Develop Site Management Plans

A 10 year restoration plan has been produced by the Restoration Ecologist which is followed by all staff (sent to the Darwin Initiative with the end of year report 2010/2011). The plans are living documents that are constantly updated if and when required.

2.6 Implement site management plans

As 2.5 above

2.7 Produce evidence base to support the designation of protected areas

The SHNT is currently heavily involved in National Protected Areas planning and implementation for the Island's new Land Development Control Plan which incorporates the two target sites for the project. Blue Point will be included in the proposed Sandy Bay National Park. High Peak will be included in the proposed Peaks National Park. The plan is currently undergoing a rigorous consultation phase across the island.

2.8 Presentation to legislative council to support designation

This is not strictly in the Darwin projects remit, but members of the Darwin team have worked alongside other SHNT staff and external contractors on the designation of land use. The Darwin Project in partnership with the St Helena Nature Conservation Group has however made a presentation to the Legislative Council to change the National Flower to the endemic Ebony rather than the non-native arum lily. The Project Manager is also scheduled to update the Legislative Council on the Darwin Project in the next few months.

2.9 Carry out species status evaluation to update the IUCN red list

A baseline survey of some of the Darwin Project sites has been undertaken. This information will be used, together with evidence from ANRD Environment Conservation Section (site surveys and Species Recovery Action Plans) and the SNCG field work for the OTEP Guide book to the flora (higher plants, pteridophytes, bryophytes and lichens) to update the Red List assessments for those rare and threatened plant species at the Darwin Project sites

3.1 Promote project to local population

The project has a weekly slot in the local newspaper called 'Saints and Sinners' where an endemic species (the saints) are put against the invasive species (sinners). The articles include not only plants but also invertebrates and are run in partnership with Buglife in the UK. The project also regularly has news articles in the local paper and adverts for the conservation days.

3.2 Set up a conservation volunteer programme

A monthly conservation programme has been set up by the team which is mainly run on the target sites, but also on other sites to enable the volunteers to get an insight on all aspects of conservation work on the island. This is sometimes run in partnership with the SNCG and the volunteers are always rewarded with a BBQ or a pot of the local plo!

3.3 Practical conservation activities and talks held in Island schools

There has been 29 sessions currently held involving 448 of the islands school children. These sessions include:

- Bughunts
- Global warming talk and activity
- Endemic game (matching photo's of endemic plants with their names devised by the Darwin team)
- Making spiky yellow woodlice and trees
- Weeding ginger site and mulching
- Arum lily removal
- Donkey walking
- Growing and planting endemic plants

3.4 Research and produce new schools education pack

The Project Manager has written an education strategy and is currently visiting all the islands schools to talk to the teachers about how an education pack could be best used on the island. All the activities highlighted in section 3.3 have also been as run as research into what works on the island.

4.1 Carry out a tourism survey

The Project Manager has met with the Executive of Tourism and an agreement was made that questions relating to conservation would be added to the current tourism survey and the results passed onto the project.

4.2 Analyse tourism survey to inform destination management plan

This is also under current discussion with the tourism department and surveys for the last 4 years have been given to the project to analyse

4.3 Produce a destination management plan for natural areas

As above

4.4 Provide information to the environmental economic evaluation process

As 4.2. As part of the LDCP review process the St Helena Government Advisor on Protected Areas is contracted to review the social, economic and environmental benefits of Protected Areas on St Helena. Members of the Darwin team are working alongside other SHNT staff and the NPA Advisor to support this review. **4.5 Create new promotional materials for tourism**

Posters have been created for all the work taking place on the target sites with contact details for tourists to get involved. Posters have also been created for donkeys walks which take place every Wednesday and Saturday and go past one of the target sites where people are informed of the endemic plants that have been planted. A new eco-tour is currently being discussed with tourism to plant an endemic tree at Longwood House and Napoleons' tomb for tourists, incorporating also the SHNT's Gumwood tree planting scheme at the Millenium Forest. Another eco-tour is to be trialled next week where tourists will walk a donkey, plant an endemic tree and have a picnic. The Project Manager has also been in touch with BTCV conservation holidays and is currently writing a proposal to them.

4.6 Set up a demonstration site with public access and interpretation

An area along the roadside of High Peak has been set up as a demonstration site where ginger has been cleared and endemic plants planted. Temporary interpretation has also been added which we hope to make permanent in the final year with match funding from the Tourism department. We will also be using the site as an educational resource for the schools and incorporate it for use into the educational packs.

4.7 set up a new eco tour

See 4.5 above

5.1 Project steering group set up

The project steering group has been running since the start of the project and meets quarterly. The steering group consists of: Colin Clubbe from RBG Kew (Head, training and UK overseas territories), SHNT Director, Director of ANRD, Nurseries Officer at ANRD, Andrew Darlow (St Helena Nature Conservation Group, Manager of the Bastard Gumwood Recovery Project and SHNT council) and the project team.

5.2 Recruit Project Staff

We are currently in the process of recruiting 2 new staff for the project as the current staff have resigned. Please see change request form 3 and 4 for further information

5.3 Steering group meetings

See 5.1 above

5.4 Monitoring and evaluation by overseas partners

The Project Manger has regular contact with the RBG Kew and a visit by our overseas partner is planned for March 2012

5.5 Dissemination of project results

This is done through steering group meetings and reports, the final project results will be disseminated at the end of the project in September 2013.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments 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.

Changes in staffing has caused some problems (please see Change request form 3 and 4 for further details) but we are confident that a recent recruitment drive has produced some excellent new employees that will enable to project to excel over the next 2 years.

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

The changes are currently under discussions with LTS and DEFRA.

Discussed with LTS: **yes, in September 2011 (month/yr)**

Formal change request submitted: **yes, in October 2011 (month/yr)**

Received confirmation of change acceptance **no (month/yr)**

3. Do you expect to have any significant (eg more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes

If yes, and you wish to request a carry forward of funds, this should be done as soon as possible. It would help Defra manage Darwin funds more efficiently if you could give an indication of how much you expect this request might be for.

Estimated carry forward request: **£8,500**

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

Many thanks to Eilidh Young for all her help and support over the first year of the project.

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan or budget should not be discussed in this report but raised with LTS International directly.

Please send your **completed form by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk . The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message eg Subject: 17-075 Darwin Half Year Report**