

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(Due 31 October 2012)

Project Ref No	18-020
Project Title	Increasing Local Capacity to Conserve St. Helena's threatened native biodiversity
Country(ies)	St. Helena
UK Organisations	St Helena National Trust, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
Collaborator(s)	ANRD
Project Leader	<i>Jodie Mills</i>
Report date	<i>30th October 2011</i>
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	3
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 a Use of Strimmers Course, Pesticides Training Course, Manual Handling and Health and Safety Course to St Helena National Trust (SHNT). 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 December 2012 with follow up courses every 2 months 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.

1.2 Run training workshops for ANRD staff

The project team have been asked to deliver a chainsaw health and safety course to run to ANRD and SHNT staff which will also be available to the general public in January 2013.

1.3 Set up NVQ (now Diploma in Environmental Conservation)

The Diploma in Environmental Conservation is a real success and highlight of the project. Three more candidates completed the Diploma in July, one of which now works as the Trainee Project Manager for the project another has taken a job for Ascension Island Government as a Conservation Field Worker and the other has just had a baby (and was previously working on the Project as the Trainee Project Manager)but hopes to continue her new found love of conservation work when the time is right. We currently have a new round of 3 apprentices who started in September, one of which has shown such promise we hope to employ her on the Darwin Invertebrate Project. Only 1 member of staff from ANRD has taken up the qualification and is looking to finish very soon. Through the request and instigations of the Darwin Project one member of ANRD staff has become a trained NVQ Assessor.

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's 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 produced training materials covering the following topics:

- Rodent Control Methods
- Lone working policy
- Health and Safety policy
- Strimmer maintenance and use
- Abseiling Course Manual

2.1 Set up a site management steering committee

The committee has been running since the start of the project and meets quarterly again now we have a full compliment of staff. 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 Nikki Chapman (Manager of the Nature Conservation Division) and a member of her team and the project team. The project also has team meetings weekly, with a more detailed meeting 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 at the Millennium Forest
- Arum lily removal on High Peak using a range of experimental methods, uprooting, cutting and poisoning by injection with herbicides.
- Kikuyu grass removal and spraying at High Peak
- Fuchsia removal and spraying with herbicides
- Blue weed removal by hand pulling
- English aloe removal by digging out at Blue point
- Footpath weed eradication to prevent spreading to target area
- Gorse, flax, sedge, bilberry and cow grass removal at Blue Point compartment areas

2.3 Plant out Endemics

- 2025 endemic plants have been planted on the 3 target sites.
- Cuttings trials have also been carried out of the endemic black cabbage which have been unsuccessful
- Black cabbage seedlings have been taken off tree ferns and potted on in the nursery – these

have so far been successful.

- Fern spores have been collected from High Peak and propagated in the nursery. This will also be trialled at the Millennium Forest Nursery.
- 390 Black scale and 60 Brown Scale fern successfully transplanted
- She Cabbage seed trials carried out to test if seeds would germinate without being in the nursery – patch A: 51 (wet and shaded area) germinated out of 76 seeds but then got eaten by slugs and snails. Patch B: (drier with no shade) 2 out of 80 seeds germinated
- Night time monitoring to investigate what was eating Redwood and Lobelia.
- Root balling experiments carried out on the endemic Gumwood due to the requirement of removal of trees for a haul road for the airport
- Seeds collected and processed from target 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. The number of invasive plants removed and endemic plants planted also provides evidence for increased habitat quality. Exclusion zones have also been set up at High Peak to prevent any entry in this fragile habitat. An extensive rodent control project is also currently underway which will inform procedures for the next year and onwards.

2.5 Develop Site Management Plans

A 10 year restoration plan has been produced by the former Restoration Ecologist which is currently being updated by the current Restoration Ecologist.

2.6 Implement site management plans

As 2.5 above

2.7 Produce evidence base to support the designation of protected areas

The SHNT has recently commented on the Governments Sustainable Development Plan which incorporates actions for protected areas on the island with Blue Point included in the proposed Sandy Bay National Park and High Peak will in the proposed Peaks National Park.

2.8 Presentation to legislative council to support designation

Designation is now under the remit of the Government's Environmental Management Directorate and a BEST initiative bid that the Darwin Project gave comment on has been submitted.

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 (mainly Large Bellflower). This is also a target for the Conservation Section who lead on this issue.

3.1 Promote project to local population

The project has had news articles in the local paper over the last few months focussing on the Footprints Project and new Nature Trail at the Millennium Forest.

3.2 Set up a conservation volunteer programme

Due to an extremely wet winter the conservation task days have been postponed since July due to low numbers and site safety. Twice weekly donkey walks still take place however for locals and tourists which take in Projects demonstration site which is developing extremely well with wetland endemic plants. We aim to set up the volunteer programme again from January to September.

3.3 Practical conservation activities and talks held in Island schools

There has been 21 school sessions involving 246 of the islands school children which will inform the worksheets to be used in the Education Pack for the project. These sessions include:

- Food chains
- Habitats
- Plants and plant growth including pollination, germination, seed dispersal, parts of a plant and parts of a flower
- Endemic Bingo (matching photo's of endemic plants with their names devised by the Darwin team)
- Rootballing
- Tree planting
- Donkey walking
- Growing and planting endemic plants

The Footprints Project has also run 9 sessions (with 89 school children and 26 Young people) where students learn all about their Carbon Footprint and then produce a pledge on 2 foot tall footprint about how they aim to reduce their carbon footprint which is then put up around the trail for all to see. The trail leads to a viewing platform where the airport can be observed in its construction phase.

A new nature trail has also been opened as part of the project at the Millennium Forest for families to use at any time. The opening attracted 6 families to trial the trail in the half term holidays. Some good feedback was elicited and we hope to grow the nature trail over time.

The taster day for the project attracted 16 young people to come out on the practical conservation session.

3.4 Research and produce new schools education pack

The above activities are all carried out to trial worksheets found in the Education Pack and gain feedback from the schools teachers on their ease of use and suitability.

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. The project has produced a feedback form for any tourists that participate on a SHNT tour.

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

The Darwin team and SHNT staff participated on numerous workshops and gave feedback on the governments Sustainable Development Plan and Sustainable Economic Development Plan

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 donkey 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 was trialled with cruise ship tourists to plant endemics at Longwood House. The tourism department have just put up large posters to advertise SHNT tours to tourists and the project has produced a colourful document with all the tours available which is sent to the RMS St Helena every voyage. We are also currently discussing the possibility of producing leaflets to give out to tourists as they disembark the ship. BTCV conservation holidays and National Trust International Holidays have also been contacted to run conservation holidays on the island.

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 also use 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

See 2.1 above

5.2 Recruit Project Staff

The project has been thwarted by difficulties in recruiting suitable members of staff and the Restoration Ecologist has resigned finishing on the 21st November 2012.

5.3 Steering group meetings

See 2.1 above

5.4 Monitoring and evaluation by overseas partners

Our overseas partner Colin Clubbe from Kew visited the project in April 2012 and was very pleased with the projects achievements to date.

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.

The recent resignation of the Restoration Ecologist who will end his employment with us on the 21st November will require careful thought at the SHNT and a change request form will be completed in the next week or so.

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

As above.

Discussed with LTS: (month/yr)

Formal change request submitted: (month/yr)

Received confirmation of change acceptance (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: £5,000 (although this may depend on the staffing issues explained in 2 above)

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 second 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**