



Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

(due 31 October 2014)

Project Ref No	20-005
Project Title	Creating Community Forests to Enhance Biodiversity and Provide Educational Activities
Country(ies)	St Helena
Lead Organisation	St Helena National Trust (SHNT)
Collaborator(s)	Environmental Management Division (EMD); Education Directorate; Enterprise St Helena (ESH); Tourism Directorate; New Horizons; Civil Society Support; Royal Botanic Gardens Kew (RBGK); Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Project Leader	Jeremy Harris
Report date and number (eg HYR3)	April 2014 – Sept 2014 (HYR1)
Project website	http://www.nationaltrust.org.sh/shnt-conservation-programmes/natural-heritage/community-forests-project/

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

Output 1: MRes on the carbon sequestration potential of St Helena endemic tree species

Shayla Ellick has completed the first phase of her fieldwork with the on-island guidance of Alan Gray (Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, UK). She left for her semester at York University on 18/9/14.

Output 2: Setting up a Forest School Programme on St Helena

Martina Peters and Sheena Isaac have completed the UK element of their Forest Schools Leadership training, and are now organising the completion of the course, which includes six teaching sessions with pupils. Whilst in the UK they worked with both Kew and RSPB.

The refurbishment of Blue Hill School as the FS base is nearing completion, with further work on drawing together a new ownership/maintenance agreement between St Helena Government (SHG), Education and New Horizons.

Output 3 – NVQ Level 2 work-based Diploma in Environmental Conservation

Two young Saints have signed up for the Diploma and start on 16/10/14. A new collaboration with EMD has been agreed, whereby the apprentices train and work for three/four days a week with CFP and one/two days with the government conservation department.

The block from City & Guilds UK on the St Helena Conservation Diploma has been lifted.

Joyce Duncan (NVQ Coordinator) has agreed to train Jason as a new NVQ Assessor, starting in Nov 2014.

Output 4 – Three Community Forests actively and sustainably managed: Millennium Forest, High Peak and Blue Point; training at RBG Kew for CFP Nursery Officer

Both Millennium Forest (MF) and High Peak (HP) have seen considerable work including the planting of endemic trees and plants (MF: 2016; HP: 1009), large increases in rabbit-fenced areas, extended waste-water irrigation, and continued clearance of invasive plants. Blue Point has seen less activity (total planted: 252) as CFP decides how to progress with this difficult site (see below).

Baseline surveys of the sites have continued and are nearing completion.

SHNT's Wirebird team have been consulted during a site visit to MF and a plan for wirebird habitat work has been agreed.

A long-term volunteer has completely re-organised and improved CFP's seed collection, recording and storage system.

A new path has been completed to the HP restoration site, allowing greatly improved public access to the site.

CFP has also held community events at five different public and school sites, at which 581 endemics have been planted, almost all by children.

Total planted for the period: **3858**.

Output 5 – Establishing sustainable social enterprise and supporting social enterprises through developing sustainable forest products

Ecotours have been carried out at MF, often including tree planting. There has also been a corporate team-building day run by Bank of St Helena for all its staff, providing educational opportunities and some fund-raising.

'Community Volunteer Days' have been a regular event on the first Saturday of each month. Turnout has ranged from 6-19 people at MF and HP, and nearly 60 (including children) for our planting of a new mini-forest at a Harford primary school. We have also had three sessions at Pilling primary, so that all the pupils planted an endemic in their new mini-forest.

Jonthan Hall (RSPB) visited SH from 26/2/14 until 13/3/14, bringing much advice and help for CFP and SHNT.

Further Community Engagement

'Conservation Enrichment Studies' is still hosted monthly by CFP at the secondary school.

We continue to offer a place for a young man to carry out his Community Service, and have also taken on a young man with learning disabilities as a volunteer one or two days a week. Two secondary school students completed their 4 and 6 week work experience with us.

The project has provided the accommodation for two long-term volunteers during this period, one from Canada (3 months) and one from France (Cynthia – also 3 months until she was appointed CFP Coordinator). They have brought a huge amount of energy, expertise and enthusiasm to the work.

CFP has either organised or participated in several events: Earth Day Composting Quest 22/4/14; St Helena Day Parade float with the theme island biodiversity 21/5/14; Mountain Bike Competition at Millennium Forest 20/9/14.

2a. 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.

During this period the original Project Manager, Katrine Herian, had to return to the UK on 8/4/14 due to family bereavement. Because of this situation she made the decision to resign on 10/6/14. Jason Curtis, the Project Coordinator, was promoted to this post in July. Also, at the end of June, Belinda Thomas (Nursery Officer) handed in her resignation as she had been offered a post with the Landscape and Ecology Mitigation Programme (LEMP) for the new airport. She left the post on 31/7/14. Martina was training in the UK for most of June and July. During this period of instability an enormous effort has been put into minimising disruption. Existing project staff and volunteers deserve a huge amount of credit for their flexibility and commitment in dealing with the transitions. Cynthia Llas, a long-term volunteer, has stepped into the breach with gusto. Jason has deftly taken on all of the PM roles and responsibilities, while also continuing to play an essential role in the day-to-day running of the project. A face-to-face handover of the PM role was not possible. Jason's ownership of the role has not therefore been without challenge although he has shown great tenacity and commitment as well as instinctive management abilities. While some project deliverables may have been slightly delayed, the transitions have provided the opportunity for a refocussing of the project which is bearing much fruit.

Much work has gone into recruiting the two vacant posts. Long-term volunteer Cynthia Llas is the new Project Coordinator, officially starting work on 7/10/14, although covering the role for several weeks before that date. Brianna Yon is the new Nursery Officer, and started work on 23/9/14.

Budget released during staff transitions is being used to secure additional support at Millennium Forest to increase our capacity to produce plants for sale (Output 5) and to help achieve the ambitious aim of 10 hectares of restored habitat at the Forest (Output 4).

Blue Point (BP) has many challenges to habitat restoration. It is somewhat isolated, eroded and exposed. Only a minority of the sites planted by the previous project (18-020) have shown enough successful growth to warrant further investment of time and energy. Added to this, in less than a year the galvanised mesh fences have disintegrated in the salt-laden winds, and feral sheep have caused extensive damage, often breaching the fences which were originally designed for rabbit exclusion only. Finally, BP will never be a true 'community forest' in the sense that its remoteness, extreme weather and difficult terrain make any volunteer involvement, with the exception of those with significant experience, challenging. A change request is being considered to suggest other more suitable sites for community forests.

A number of additional change requests are being developed. These will be submitted together for consideration.

2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with LTS: No

Formal change request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance No

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

Yes No Estimated underspend: £9300

3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully as it is unlikely that any requests to carry forward funds will be approved this year. 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 and would like to talk to someone about the options available this year, please indicate below when you think you might be in a position to do this and what the reasons might be:

These changes to the budget will be requested as part of the collective change request.

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

No

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 can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with LTS International through a Change Request.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to Eilidh Young at Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk . The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message eg Subject: 20-035 Darwin Half Year Report**