



Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31st October 2021)

Project reference	28-003
Project title	Resurrection Island: enterprise, conservation and development around the Aral Sea
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Uzbekistan
Lead organisation	DICE, University of Kent
Partner(s)	Institute of Zoology of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences; Goscomtourism; The Pearl Group; GosComEcology; UzKorGaz; Saiga Conservation Alliance
Project leader	Dr Joseph Bull
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	29/10/2021, HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	n/a

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).

The project only commenced on the 1st September 2021 (due to the delay in confirming funding on this round of the Darwin Initiative). Therefore, here, we report progress against proposed activities for the first month in the project implementation timetable.

Output 1:

(1.1) Social surveys are being designed via collaboration between the relevant partners, and have now been scheduled (by project partner Olya Esipova) to take place in January – February 2022. Logistics are being organised.

(1.2a) Detailed research has been carried out into previous or proposed tourism market analyses for the project region. This further confirms that there has been little to date. Analyses have been proposed by GIZ (the German Development Agency), UNESCO, and the Karakalpak Ministry – all of these analyses are being designed to be complementary. Components of our market analysis will be carried out during January – February 2022 by Olya Esipova, and separate components by the full-time project researcher (personnel hire in process; see below). Finally: initial data collected on the current tourism market both from the Ministry of Tourism and from selected small-scale operators in Karakalpakstan.

Output 2:

(2.1b) Stakeholder consultation on RI protected area has commenced in earnest, including with individuals at GosComEcology. This has led to initial mapping of the key protected area zones, and discussion around logistical requirements (which will eventually form the basis of costings). A formal justification for the PA (Aralkum biosphere reserve) is now under preparation according to national criteria requirements.

(2.2) Timeline and organogram in discussion with key project partners.

(2.3a) J Bull, E Bykova and A Esipov performed a scoping survey for wildlife populations in new locations around RI, identifying a previously unrecorded population of ~50 saiga antelope to the east of RI.

(2.4) J Bull, E Bykova and A Esipov fixed 6 camera traps at locations on RI itself.

Output 3:

(3.1) A map of industrial activities in the wider Aral (including RI) has been created. The PI has reviewed the public domain grey literature for proposed development activities.

Additional:

- The recruitment process has been launched for the project research assistant, with interviews due to take place on the 1st November (individual planned to be in post December/January).
- Pilot training sessions (on NNL/NG) were carried out in September at GosComEcology and UzKorGaz, for a total of ~35 people. These will inform development of full training sessions in the second year of the project.

Response to points in funding letter:

- The full set of project partners is instrumental to realising project outcomes; the percentage time devoted to the project by each partner is the amount necessary to deliver outcomes, and committing additional time would be unfeasible in light of these individuals' other roles. The research assistant will work full time, and note also that the SCA is contributing substantial in-kind staff time.
- Though the saiga antelope is a focal species in general for some partners, and a flagship conservation species for the region, ecological surveys (and protected area documentation) will reflect the wider biodiversity of RI.
- The social surveys (to be implemented Jan/Feb 2022) will include a component on community participation in protected area development.
- The protected area designation will explicitly recognize migratory behaviour of saiga antelope from RI over the border into Kazakhstan (though the PA itself is not transboundary, we have collaborators over the border; and this is partly why the protected area will be designed to abut the national border).
- Though preventing poaching is not the focus of this project (efforts are being made to address it through other projects in the region), there is a component of anti-poaching activity that arises through our support of UzKorGaz' regional Biodiversity Action Planning.
- The socio-economic status of the local population in the two towns in the project region is known at a high level from pilot surveys (e.g. unemployment very high at ~40%), but a more detailed status will be assessed as part of the Jan/Feb 2022 social surveys

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months (for COVID-19 specific delays/problems, please use 2b). Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

The key challenge has been the delay in receiving notification of funding. As a result, the project start date was put back from the 1st July to the 1st September (via a formal change request), which will delay the entire project by 3 months. Further, the social surveys that were designed to take place by the end of 2021 will now be implemented at the start of 2022 (to avoid the winter holiday period).

Otherwise, no problems have been encountered so far – and it is envisioned that the project will stick to the proposed budget and timetable.

2b. Please outline any specific issues which your project has encountered as a result of COVID-19. Where you have adapted your project activities in response to the pandemic, please briefly outline how you have done so here. Explain what residual impact there may be on your project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Covid-19 has caused no specific issues for the project to date, and indeed the PI was able to travel to the project region in September.

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

Discussed with LTS: Yes

Formal change request submitted: Yes

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes

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

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

3b. If yes, then you need to 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 rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a rebudget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

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

n/a

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 DO NOT send these in the same email.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to 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 e.g. Subject: 25-001 Darwin Half Year Report**