

Darwin Initiative Main Annual Report

To be completed with reference to the “Project Reporting Information Note”:
(<https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources-for-projects/information-notes-learning-notes-briefing-papers-and-reviews/>).

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum** of 20 pages in length, excluding annexes)

Submission Deadline: 30th April 2022

Darwin Initiative Project Information

Project reference	28-003
Project title	Resurrection Island: enterprise, conservation and development around the Aral Sea
Country/ies	Uzbekistan
Lead partner	Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology, University of Kent
Project partner(s)	Institute of Zoology of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences; Goscomtourism; The Pearl Group; GosComEcology; UzKorGaz; Saiga Conservation Alliance
Darwin grant value	£ 399,326.00
Start/end dates of project	01/09/2021 – 31/08/2024
Reporting period (e.g. Apr 2021 – Mar 2022) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2, 3)	Sep 2021 – Mar 2022 (Annual Report 1)
Project Leader name	Joseph Bull
Project website/blog/social media	tbd
Report author(s) and date	Joseph Bull, Elena Bykova, Olya Esipova, Shahzoda Alikhanova, Carlyn Samuel; 30 th April 2022

1. Project summary

Following Soviet-era irrigation for cotton, the Aral Sea region in Uzbekistan is ecologically and economically degraded – yet holds substantial cultural, biodiversity and industrial value. We will lay the foundation for designating Resurrection Island (in the middle of the former Aral Sea) as a Protected Area, while developing sustainable income streams (including tourism) enabling residents to benefit, and ensuring that industrial development results in ‘no net loss’ of biodiversity.

Biodiversity challenges include poaching of threatened wildlife species (e.g. saiga antelope), in part due to a lack of other livelihood options – our project seeks to both ensure greater protection for those species and to facilitate the creation of new opportunities for employment. Challenges also include clearance of desert and forest habitats for industrial activities (e.g. infrastructure construction, resource extraction), which we support mitigation of through ‘no net loss’ mechanisms.

The problems that are problem seeks to address are well established (as part of the body of research into the wider Aral Sea disaster), but we also performed scoping studies in advance of securing the project funding, to understand issues such as current unemployment levels in the Uzbek Aral region. There is an ongoing programme of research, carried out by organisations (including the IoZ and SCA, who are project partners) into the state of biodiversity in the Aral Sea region, which informed our project strategies.

The project region is located in the far west of Uzbekistan. The central focus is the Resurrection ('Vozrodeniya') peninsula (see Map) which would be the site of the newly proposed protected area. The focal point for sustainable alternative livelihood activities is the town of Muynak, and for 'no net loss' work with industry, is the extractive sector activities performed by UKG (another project partner).

2. Project stakeholders/ partners

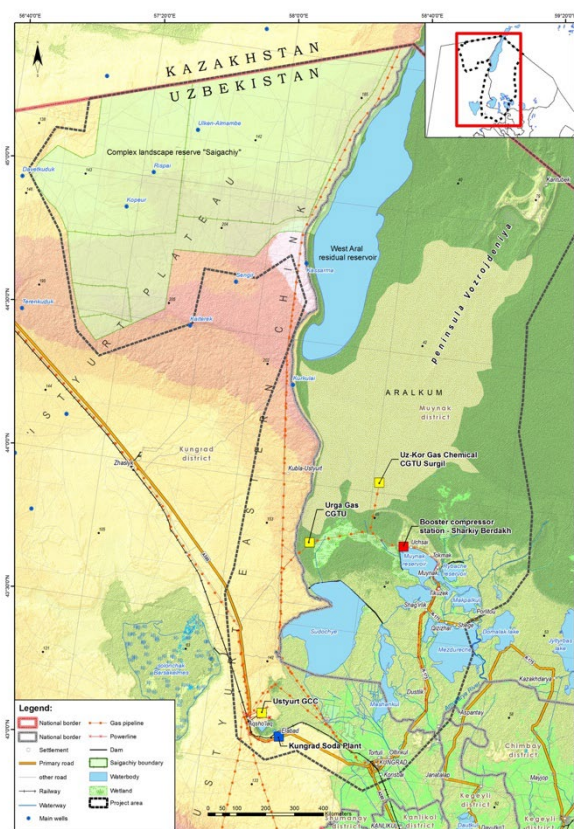
The lead organisation (DICE) has collaborated highly effectively with project partners in Uzbekistan over the last year. The project is based on considerable demand from the host country, and it was interaction between DICE/IoZ/SCA that led to the creation of the project in the first place. Expansion to include partners in GCT, TPG, GCE and UKG was based on heavy demand for the project initiatives from Uzbekistan – enhancing and diversifying the tourism offering is seen as a strategic priority for the host country; similarly, transport and extractive sector development are both seen as crucial.

The project had a soft kick-off in September 2021 when the PI visited all partners and key sites in Uzbekistan – meetings were held at that stage to ensure that all partners were involved from the start in project planning, monitoring and evaluation and decision making. Subsequently, DICE successfully hired an Uzbek national to the full time Research Assistant post on the project (based with the lead organisation), and this individual thus provides an excellent link between all project partners domestically and internationally. A formal project roundtable was then organised for mid-February 2022 – originally in person, but then held online due to a Covid-19 surge. Again, this was to ensure that all partners were involved in project planning and decision-making.

Another function of the February roundtable was to introduce the newly formed project Advisory Board. The purpose of the Advisory Board is to provide independent guidance to project partners on the governance, implementation, and reporting of the project; it is constituted of Uzbek and foreign individuals all with considerable relevant expertise, and again ensures meaningful and robust exchange on project deliverables across key partners and stakeholders.

In February 2022 a series of introductory meetings were held in Tashkent (head of the international department of the State Forestry Committee), Nukus (with representatives of Council of Ministers of the Republic of Karakalpakstan including Head and Leading Specialists of the Secretariat for Ecology and Development of the Aral Sea Region) and Muynak (with First Deputy of Hokim for Ecology; head of the department for Ecology of the State Ecology Committee of the Muynak region; Head of Uchsay; Chief Forester, Muynak Forestry; head of the youth agency of Muynak; and a tourism specialist).

Also worthy of note is new collaborator GIZ (the German Agency for International Cooperation) who are highly active in Uzbekistan, with country offices in Tashkent and Nukus. Though not officially a project partner, we have objectives that are closely aligned (in terms of promoting



tourism and mitigating industrial impacts), and so we are coordinating our projects closely to ensure capacity-building for alternative livelihoods is maximized.

Evidence: Project February Roundtable agenda/outputs; Advisory Board ToR; Project partner collaboration agreement.

3. Project progress

3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities

Output 1

Cultural and ecological tourism opportunities and constraints described via the market analysis carried out by GCT/TPG: report written in Russian and informally translated to English.

Social surveys carried out in Muynak, Mykoyan, and Uchsay, data collected by DICE/SCA and currently being analysed. Surveys reached <5% of the population of the towns (426 households); also performed group interviews.

Skills training programme under development: initial training sessions planned for residents enabling work as homestay hosts and tourism operators in the Aral Sea & Eastern Ustyurt. Training scheduled to take place in May 2022, based in Khiva (to show what more mature Uzbek tourism offerings can look like). Attendance tbd, but GCT has identified a list of participants. In addition, project team participated in training on eco-tourism “Capacity Building in Ecotourism in Karakalpakstan with special focus on Protected Areas”, 28th March –1st April 2022, organised under GIZ “Support to economic reforms and sustainable economic development in regions of Uzbekistan”. The training was held in Nukus and the Ustyurt plateau, and gave us a better understanding about perspectives for eco-tourism development, tour products and useful contacts with tour guides, tour operators and protected areas staff potentially be involved for tours organising and servicing.

Evidence: Market analysis report; Social survey data.

Output 2

Particularly rapid progress has been made against the activities associated with protected area designation. The key protected area documentation has been produced (IoZ/GCE/DICE), including a map proposing borders and different zones (see adjacent map). Other maps have been created capturing existing infrastructure. Presidential decree No.93 was signed in March 2022 confirming the establishment of the protected area (called “Aralkum national park”, covering ~1mn hectares). ‘Aralkum’ is on an advanced timeline to be established later in 2022.

Field trips in September 2021 and February 2022 included additional biodiversity surveys (IoZ/DICE), exploration of 3 new locations for specific fauna including saigas, and installation of additional camera traps, totalling 9 working camera-traps. Identification of new saiga locations which importantly may include birthing sites suggest that the small Aral region population is currently stable. As a result of camera trapping surveys 10 species of animals have been recorded, including 6 mammals (red fox, Asian badger, Asian steppe cat, tolai hare, Severtzov’s Jerboa, Libyan jird), 2 reptiles (Steppe agama, Eastern four-lined ratsnake) and 2 birds (Pied wheatear and Great grey shrike). Currently camera traps re-installed and installed new cameras, In May 2022 the project team plan to revisit and check them. In addition globally threatened Imperial Eagle, nationally threatened Corsac fox, Caracal, Golden Eagle, Osprey, Flamingo and Glossy ibis are being monitored at Resurrection Island alongside saigas. Such species as Saiga, Wolf, Caracal, Asian steppe cat, Flamingo, Imperial Eagle, Golden Eagle, Eagle owl, Little owl are listed by CITES. It has been found that saigas move from one feeding area to another along the dried seabed, moving strictly along the furrows intended for planting desert vegetation as part of the Aral Sea bottom afforestation program. In February 2022, saigas were first discovered in the Western Aral. The track of a car apparently chasing saigas has been recorded in this area. A few kilometres from this area, gas wells of the Western Aral group started to work. Construction of a grader road has been observed as well. In addition, a tourist base is being built at Sulama bay that appears to have disturbed saigas and water birds.

In Vozrozhdeniye Island, the rarest communities for Uzbekistan *Calligonum aphyllum* + *Eromosporion aphyllum* and *Eromosporion aphyllum* + *Astragalus brachypus* communities were formed, the dominant of which is *Astragalus brachypus*, a species rare for Uzbekistan, not previously noted for flora Uzbekistan, shrub. In areas previously drained of water (on continental sands), along with such rare species as *Linaria dolichoceras* and *Chondrilla ambigua*, another rare species for Uzbekistan *Astragalus lehmannianus* grows, the last herbarium collection of which dates back to 1921.

The full-time project researcher based at DICE has begun technical research into possibilities for analyses of the project region based upon satellite imagery.

Evidence: Protected area map; Presidential decree No.93; Photos from biodiversity surveys; Camera trap images; Press articles about the project.

Output 3

In September 2021, training sessions on ‘no net loss’ were delivered (by DICE) to UKG at their Kyr Kyz site, as well as GCE in Nukus. Subsequently, DICE provided technical input to the UKG biodiversity action plan for the Ustyurt and East Aral region.

Further, the relevant section of the project to upgrade the A380 highway (past the southern edge of the Aral and on through the Ustyurt plateau) incorporates language of ‘no net less’ the initial general biodiversity action plan – this will form the basis of the detailed biodiversity action plan when the time comes for the project developer to complete that. Documents for both development projects also explore measures for supporting saiga conservation.

UKG and DICE/IoZ are collaborating to understand locations for extractive sector expansion in the Ustyurt and East Aral region (including new exploration areas), and incorporate these into zoning for the new Aralkum protected area.

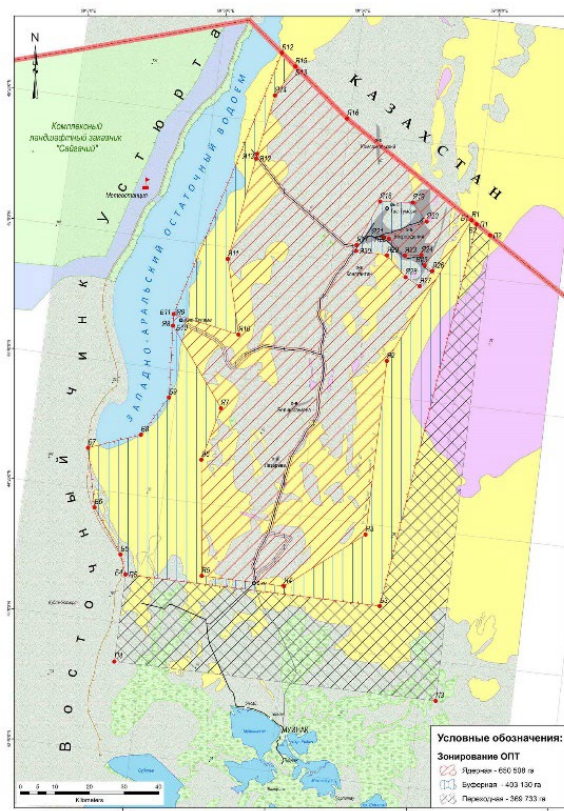
Evidence: Training materials (September 2021); Training register (UKG/GCE); Draft biodiversity action plans (UKG/A380).

3.2 Progress towards project Outputs

Output 1: (“new small-scale local operators establish businesses based on regional cultural and ecological values, such that residents place increased value on sites of cultural and natural interest”). Baseline condition captured in the market analysis report produced by GCT/TPG. No change recorded to date, although the aforementioned market analysis, alongside social surveys carried out by SCA, identify options to pilot new initiatives, and training sessions are scheduled for May 2022. It is considered likely that this output will be achieved by the end of the project.

Evidence = market analysis report, social survey data.

Output 2: (“Resurrection Island on the way to becoming a fully resourced protected area”). Baseline condition is that there is no protected status attached to the area; but the change in condition is that initial protected area documentation is now developed with a presidential decree (No.93) requiring the establishment of a protected area (“Aralkum” National Park) in 2022. This is a substantial step forward for protection in relation to the biodiversity of the Aral Sea region. It is considered possible that this output will be surpassed by the end of the project, and very likely it will be achieved.



Evidence = protected area documentation, zoning maps, text of Presidential decree.

Output 3: (“Industry and government ensure wider biodiversity impacts of new development projects are effectively mitigated, as part of a broader sustainable development agenda”). Baseline condition is that biodiversity is considered to some extent as part of new project developments, if mainly due to financial lender requirements. Change in condition is limited so far, but the project team have been working with both partner UKG and with external stakeholders to more robustly include biodiversity measures into gas extraction and transport infrastructure projects respectively. Crucially, the project team are now linked to larger scale sustainable development initiatives (especially the Integrated Roadmap for the Aral Sea). It is still considered likely that the output will be achieved by the end of the project.

Evidence = material and attendance for UKG training sessions, biodiversity action plans featuring biodiversity impact mitigation measures. Note that documents concerning the Integrated Roadmap for the Aral Sea are not yet in the public domain.

3.3 Progress towards the project Outcome

“Resurrection Island is on the path to protected status. New sustainable livelihood options have been piloted, aligning residents' wellbeing with biodiversity conservation. Regional industrial biodiversity impact mitigation practices have improved”.

Overall, as much progress has been made towards the project Outcome as might reasonably be expected, especially given that the first year was truncated (starting in September rather than July, due to the delay in awarding funding). More progress has been made than expected towards achieving protected area status for Resurrection Island. Expected progress has been made in carrying out baselines surveys and the market analysis, which will underpin efforts to pilot sustainable livelihood options. The first year of the project had few deliverables on supporting industrial biodiversity impact mitigation, but the project team continues to work with industrial and government partners towards that end, and the relevant indicators (on training, and biodiversity action planning) remain valid.

So far, it is therefore still considered feasible that the project will achieve the Outcome by the end of the funding period.

3.4 Monitoring of assumptions

Assumption 1: any potential conflicts between protected area in the region and development priorities (e.g. resource extraction) can be effectively mitigated. Policy-makers are willing to engage with the project.

Comments: so far, this assumption holds. New extractive sector exploration is taking place in the Aral region, which potentially overlaps with the proposed protected area. However, the fact that we are working with industrial partners who can collaborate – to ensure that existing and new areas for resource extraction align with the proposed protected area and associated activities – means that we believe any potential conflicts can be mitigated. It is certainly the case that policymakers are keen to engage with the project; this is not only made clear through the accelerated timetable for the project, but also the fact that the project was invited to present as part of the Uzbek delegation to the UNFCCC COP26.

Assumption 2: Saiga antelope will not be extirpated from Uzbekistan, either through human activities or mass die-off. Saiga antelope will return to the area and rebound in population size if given the right support (including that the transboundary migratory pathway across Aral sea bed remains open). Saiga population on Resurrection Island requires protection, and our project's activities will lead to that protection being given.

Comments: from project ecological survey work, we have evidence for saiga being present in the Aral region, in new areas far from transport infrastructure, which suggests they are safe for now. Nonetheless, the increased human activity on the island supports the contention that protection is needed for these resident saigas.

Assumption 3: Industrial private sector partners remain willing to engage on project work. Private sector development will continue, an appetite for biodiversity impact mitigation exists,

and decisions can be made on a timescale that will allow meaningful progress on this over the timescale of the project.

Comments: these assumptions remain valid. Our private sector partners (UKG/TPG) continue to be actively engaged on the project. Development is not only proceeding as expected in the region (e.g. plans to upgrade transport infrastructure), but also new extractive sector activities are emerging (e.g. resource exploration in new areas, the growing possibility of new extraction and processing infrastructure). At the same time, biodiversity impacts must be mitigated due to lender rules, and one of the key regional lenders (the Asian Development Bank) is in the process of revising and improving its environmental safeguards. A key issue will be the timescale for further implementation of related projects (including the A380 highway upgrade).

Assumption 4: Small local businesses existing or there is willingness to initiate them. People willing to engage with project. Market potentially exists for international eco-tourism to the region and purchase of crafts from the region. Uzbekistan remains economically and politically stable.

Comments: the market analysis makes clear that some relevant small businesses do exist, but also there is substantial potential and willingness to expand these. Certainly, based in interest in skills training and the responses from the social surveys, people remain willing to engage.

Assumption 5: Ustyurt residents willing to participate in repeated attitude surveys. Residents do not currently consider living biodiversity to have economic value (i.e. if they do already, then they are unlikely to place increasing value on biodiversity). Residents are positively disposed towards in-country researchers, and are willing to engage.

Comments: though these assumptions hold so far, in terms of willingness to participate and engage, initial indications from the social surveys suggest a higher appreciation for the value of biodiversity than assumed. However, these are early findings that have yet to be fully analysed, and furthermore this does not necessarily indicate that residents consider biodiversity to have economic value.

Assumption 6: Council of Ministers of Karakalpakstan remains keen to engage and implement our findings.

Comments: valid. Representatives joined the formal project roundtable in February 2022.

Assumption 7: GCE willing and able to step up protection before full designation in order to protect the saiga population. Poaching rates decline based on this enforcement and based on improved valuation by local residents of the biodiversity of the Island (therefore shifting social norms).

Comments: the assumption has been slightly negated by the remoteness and inaccessibility of the remnant saiga populations in the Aral, and by the accelerated timescale for protected status.

3.5 Impact: achievement of positive impact on biodiversity and poverty alleviation

The intended Impact cited on our original application was: “Sustainable economic development of the Aral region is being realised via collaboration between residents, government, and industry; positively transforming residents’ wellbeing, whilst protecting highly threatened Uzbek biodiversity”.

Our project is contributing towards higher level biodiversity conservation through both traditional approaches (support for protected area establishment covering a region featuring conservation priority wildlife species) and more contemporary approaches (bringing emerging best practice in biodiversity impact mitigation for economic development activities). The result is

to seek to ensure that development in the Aral region proceeds in line with the relevant SDG (#15).

The relevant mechanism for improving human wellbeing in the Aral region is not only large-scale development bringing improved infrastructure (in a way that is sensitive to potential biodiversity impacts), but also small-scale development of businesses built upon cultural and ecological values e.g. eco-tourism. These are central goals for our project.

4. Project support to the Conventions, Treaties or Agreements

Our project includes, as a project partner, Mr Khalilulla Sherimbetov; who is a National Focal Point in Uzbekistan for the CBD. Mr Sherimbetov is additionally the lead National Focal Point in Uzbekistan for the CMS. He meets project partners regularly, and participated in the project roundtable in February 2022.

CBD:

National biodiversity strategy for Uzbekistan's under the CBD emphasises conserving and restoring biodiversity in the Aral Sea region; to which our project contributes directly. Though the CBD post-2020 framework has yet to be confirmed, the current post-2020 draft text includes a Goal on ensuring 'net gain in the area, connectivity and integrity of natural systems'; our project seeks to maintain the area and integrity of critical habitat on Resurrection Island through enhanced protection, consequently enabling an increase in the population of threatened flora and fauna.

CITES & CMS:

Though our project activities are designed to conserve the biodiversity of Resurrection Island in general, we use the saiga antelope as both an umbrella species to represent that biodiversity and a charismatic flagship species to draw attention to it. The saiga is a conservation target under both CITES and the CMS. Saiga antelopes are listed on CITES Appendix II, as illegal international trade in saiga horn represents a threat to their survival. Our project aims to reduce saiga poaching, supporting the CITES aim to "ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival".

CMS-CITES MoU. The saiga is the subject of a CMS-CITES MoU between all saiga antelope range states, since 2006. This project has already begun to support achievement of several priority actions under the MoU, specifically:

- 1.11 ("all saiga populations have appropriate investment")
- 4.1-4.7 (Section 4 "Work with local people")
- 6.1-6.6 (Section 6 "Habitat and environmental factors")
- 7.1-7.2 ("Expand and enhance national protected area networks", particularly "trans-frontier protected areas where appropriate")
- 8.1-8.3, 8.5 ("Monitoring").

5. Project support to poverty reduction

The key component of our project focusing on reduction in poverty is that on alternative sustainable livelihoods. By piloting different livelihood opportunities, and providing training to those interested in taking up those opportunities, we hope to directly contribute towards (a) increased household/community income (b) opportunities that are more equitable by gender and (c) making up for a lack of training and skills in certain fields - in villages that are among the worst affected by the Aral Sea disaster (and where our social survey confirms unemployment to be exceptionally high, potentially >65% of respondents). Expected beneficiaries are those with limited employment opportunities resident in the project region, especially in towns such as Muynak and Uchsay.

In the first year of the project (again, which was actually less than a full year due to the start date) our focus has been on quantifying the baseline and understanding which potential livelihood options would be of greatest appeal to residents (via the social surveys and market analysis); training and pilots will begin in Y2 of the project.

6. Consideration of gender equality issues

As a post-Soviet country, women are relatively well represented in the professions in Uzbekistan. However in rural areas women's opportunities are much more constrained and gender roles are more traditional.

Livelihoods: the social surveys completed so far have captured respondent attribute data, including information on gender. This will enable employment opportunities explored through this project's enterprise piloting component to be weighted strongly towards providing opportunities for women, contributing towards addressing any current inequities in opportunity in the Ustyurt.

Recruitment: in recruiting the full-time researcher to the project, we actively sought to attract the most diverse set of candidates possible to application, and the best candidate at interview was female. Our core team is currently primarily female. In setting up the advisory board for the project, we have also ensured diversity wherever possible (the board is currently >50% female).

7. Monitoring and evaluation

M&E is carried out by all partners together, and has been integrated into project activities via social and ecological surveys, which were carried out during Y1. Analyses have yet to be published, but data are currently being analysed. Information is shared between partners via secure central shared files, curated by project coordinators.

Additional M&E activities specific to our project outputs include records of training delivered to UKG/GCE (no net loss biodiversity approaches). Our expected timeline for protected area designation (see Output 2) has changed considerably, meaning that we are revising the timeline now for monitoring purposes.

Ongoing progress monitoring will be supported by the explicit Theory of Change refined at the project roundtable in February 2022 (with critical milestones, roles and responsibilities and stakeholders mapped out). Progress against the Theory of Change and milestones will be assessed on a regular basis by the project team during all-partner meetings; the next is due in September 2022.

The now formed independent Advisory Group will meet annually to monitor progress (based on project documentation and in-person discussions) and suggest improvements; again, the next meeting will take place in September 2022.

8. Lessons learnt

So far, the team structure (multiple autonomous partners in Uzbekistan, collaborating with and coordinated by a central team of one Uzbek and one UK organisation; IoZ and DICE) has provided an effective means for managing the project and working towards key objectives. Considerable efforts have been made to conduct fieldwork despite ongoing challenges from Covid-19, and the result has been a number of successful expeditions to collect primary data which inform project outputs.

Key lessons learned so far are around contracts and finance for project partners. For most organisational partners, this was the first involvement in a Darwin Initiative project with a UK institution, and as a result there have been teething problems in terms of setting up contracts and financial transfers – in future projects, there will be a greater focus on designated formal sessions to set up contracts with partners (ideally in person) as soon as funding is awarded, before the project itself commences. Admittedly, the whole process was somewhat complicated in this case both by requirements to work remotely at first (due to Covid-19) and the uncertainty around start dates (due to delays in awarding funding).

9. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)

n/a.

10. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

n/a.

11. Sustainability and legacy

The project has received considerable attention; the awarding of the project was reported widely in national media, thanks in no small part to the efforts of the Uzbek diplomatic service (particularly the Uzbek embassy in London) and the joint press release they issued with the lead organisation. Further, project members were invited to present on the work at the UNFCCC COP26 in Glasgow on behalf of the Uzbek delegation, raising the profile further. The project is also now contributing towards the UN Integrated Roadmap for the Aral Sea.

The project will support capacity building through: (1) alternative livelihoods and (2) corporate engagement for biodiversity impact mitigation. Training on the latter has already commenced (initial sessions in September 2021; DICE), and on the former is scheduled from May 2022 (GCT/TPG).

In terms of developing and maintaining the technological infrastructure (e.g. web presence) to sell products and services to both domestic and international clients, this was discussed in depth at the project roundtable in February 2022. As a result, the project is (a) currently exploring the best options for creating a designated project website, and (b) considering as suggested to set up pages on existing social media platforms.

A key element of securing legacy from the original project plan was ensuring that the proposed protected area went ahead as outlined by project partners; however, if the timescale really is shorted so dramatically (see again the relevant Presidential decree) then it may be that this will be achieved within the project lifetime. The challenge then will be ensuring sustainable resourcing mechanisms are likely to be in place for the implementation of the protected area; although IoZ and GCE have considerable experience in this regard (protected area implementation).

Biodiversity impact mitigation measures will be incorporated into project planning by our corporate partner UKG, and reflected in regional development strategies. The project has already advised on considerable refinements to (and implementation of) the Biodiversity Action Plan for UKG in the project region.

Finally, a forthcoming component of training to be delivered under the project has been determined as a series of 'train the trainers' sessions, to ensure that an appreciation and understanding of best practice biodiversity impact mitigation is built into practice by partners UKG, GCT and TPG; and that those individuals can then cascade best practice to others in the respective organisations.

12. Darwin identity

The Darwin Initiative logo has been incorporated into all key project deliverables so far, particularly training associated with the project. Further, the publicity attached to the project to date (see Section 11 above) has clearly referenced the Darwin Initiative, promoting it widely within Uzbekistan. One example is the project website and flyer (English and Russian versions) created by the SCA and shared widely both domestically and where relevant internationally.

Though the project is part of multiple broader efforts to ensure recovery and sustainable development in the Aral Sea region, it has a distinct and clear identity – this will be further highlighted in the project website, which is under development (as part of awareness raising and dissemination of project outputs).

13. Impact of COVID-19 on project delivery

Covid-19 directly impacted our project in preventing the project roundtable (February 2022) from being held in person. This was obviously sub-optimal, but we were able to make some progress via an online version of the roundtable instead.

The indirect impacts of the pandemic were greater: various project team members and their personal and professional networks have of course contracted Covid-19, which has led to delays in finishing relevant activities. Examples include administrative staff at the lead organisation responsible for the project going on long-term sick leave – linked to the pandemic – with little capacity to cover them (again due to the pandemic), delaying processing of project

documentation (e.g. contracts and invoices). One response we will take to this is to explore the possibility of advancing components of budget going forward, so that project-related cashflow is not interrupted.

However, so far we do not necessarily expect any longer-term delays to the project; contingent on how travel for tourism recovers following the pandemic. Project partners follow all relevant national guidelines linked to Covid-19 when travelling for project activities (domestically or internationally).

14. Safeguarding

Please tick this box if any safeguarding or human rights violations have occurred during this financial year.

If you have ticked the box, please ensure these are reported to ODA.safeguarding@defra.gov.uk as indicated in the T&Cs.

We have followed the lead organisation’s Safeguarding Policy in the implementation of the project, and no violations have occurred during the financial year. Also of relevance is that we have applied for and received ethical clearance from the lead organisation before performing social surveys, as part of project activities under Output 1.

15. Project expenditure

Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022)

Note: the information below is to be completed in the coming weeks, and will follow separately; processing these data have been delayed due to the impacts of the pandemic on the lead organisations’ administrative team.

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2021/22 Grant (£)	2021/22 Total Darwin Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs (see below)				
Consultancy costs				
Overhead Costs				
Travel and subsistence				
Operating Costs				
Capital items (see below)				
Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)				
Others (see below)				
TOTAL				

16. **OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements of your project during the reporting period (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes**

I agree for the Darwin Initiative Secretariat to publish the content of this section (please leave this line in to indicate your agreement to use any material you provide here). n/a

Checklist for submission

	Check
Different reporting templates have different questions, and it is important you use the correct one. Have you checked you have used the correct template (checking fund, type of report (i.e. Annual or Final), and year) and deleted the blue guidance text before submission?	✓
Is the report less than 10MB? If so, please email to Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk putting the project number in the Subject line.	✓
Is your report more than 10MB? If so, please discuss with Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the Subject line.	-
Have you included means of verification? You should not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	
Do you have hard copies of material you need to submit with the report? If so, please make this clear in the covering email and ensure all material is marked with the project number. However, we would expect that most material will now be electronic.	✓
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	✓
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	tbd
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	