



## Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021)

<b>Project reference</b>	DPLUS 147
<b>Project title</b>	Collaborative approach to managing coral disease in UK Overseas Territories
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands
<b>Lead organisation</b>	JNCC
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Turks and Caicos Islands - Department of Environment and Coastal Resources, British Virgin Islands - Ministry of Natural Resources, Labour and Immigration, Cayman Islands' Government Department of Environment, Nature2
<b>Project leader</b>	<i>Bryony Meakins, JNCC</i>
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	<i>HYR1</i>
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/collaborative-coral-reef-working-group">https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/collaborative-coral-reef-working-group</a> (to go live soon)

**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).**

DPLUS147 is a 2.75 year project which commenced in July 2022. This half-yearly report therefore outlines progress made to date on activities that were scheduled for Y1Q2 (July-September). Progress against delivery for each project output can be summarised as follows:

**Output 1. Collaborative partnership to optimise the treatment and management of Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) established**

- The Collaborative Coral Reef Working Group (CCRWG) has formally been established and met four times since the Darwin+ project launch at the end of July. The CCRWG has been joined by members in attendance from Darwin+ Overseas Territories (OT) partner governments (Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands and the Virgin Island Government), additional non-partner Darwin+ OT governments (Bermuda, Anguilla and Montserrat), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), dive operators and other key stakeholders.
- Members have verbally agreed and will shortly provide signed copies of a partnership agreement, that outlines the purpose and intent of the CCRWG.
- JNCC and other project partners attend key regional meetings relating to SCTLD and coral reef conservation in the region and have fed in key agenda items into the group, including: the USA's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's SCTLD Caribbean Cooperation Team and Disease Advisory Committee and the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF).

- On-island project officers have been named in Memoranda of Agreements (MoAs) with each OT partner. The MoAs are drafted, and as of September 2021, were in the final stages of negotiation prior to signing.

**Output 2. Optimised treatment and management of SCTL D using best available scientific evidence and expertise**

- The project team have drafted a descriptive *SCTL D baseline status report*. This document will be signed off at the next Project Management Group (PMG) meeting.
- A first draft of a *Collaborative SCTL D treatment strategy* has been written and will be presented to the CCRWG at the next meeting in early November. The strategy will provide OTs with clear options and links to resources for all currently available treatment options.
- Funds to support partners with treatment and management activities are ready to be transferred upon finalisation of the MoAs with each partner (see above).
- UK OT partners have started to plan and trial different approaches to SCTL D management, including probiotics which an emerging new treatment option and that the treatment strategy being drafted will support decisions around the next steps.
- Alongside the *Collaborative SCTL D treatment strategy*, discussions have started that will inform the groups' *Adaptive Management Plan* (due in Y3) including how to work coral restoration into the groups wider disease management plan, should it be required.
- Work has been planned alongside additional funding for all six Caribbean and Western Atlantic UKOTs for SCTL D management through the CSSF funded project, 'Implementing Coral Reef Action Plans for the UK Overseas Territories Coral Reef Initiative'.

**Output 3. Creation of Reef Resilience Model Framework to support the long-term management of coral reefs**

- The project team has started a literature review of coral reef resilience models and is working closely with the other Darwin Plus and CSSF projects mentioned above.

**Output 4. Project management, monitoring and evaluation**

- A Project Management Group was established in August 2021 to work alongside the CCRWG in project delivery.

**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.**

**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.**

When the proposal was submitted, we planned a workshop to be held in Y1 in the Cayman Islands focussed on disease treatment. Due to borders only just re-opening for travel into the Cayman Islands, and on-going quarantine requirements in other OTs, planning around the workshop has been delayed. Uncertainties remain around logistics and practicality of hosting the workshop in Y1. While final agreement has not been reached, it is likely that project partners will put in a change request to move this workshop and start planning for this workshop to take place in FY 22/23. This will be discussed and agreed at the next Project Management Group meeting. The underspend below covers this workshop.

**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/No

Formal change request submitted: Yes/No

Received confirmation of change acceptance Yes/No

**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](mailto: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**