

**Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects
Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus
Half Year Report**

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2022

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| Project reference | DPLUS160 |
| Project title | Multi-Purpose Soil Survey: informing environmental management and climate change mitigation |
| Country(ies)/territory(ies) | British Virgin Islands |
| Lead partner | University of Portsmouth, UK |
| Partner(s) | BVI Government: Department of Disaster Management; Land Survey; Agriculture & Fisheries; Environmental Health; Town & Country Planning; and the Ministry of Natural Resources, Labour & Migration. Also: BVI National Parks Trust; and the H. Lavetty Stout Community College. |
| Project leader | Prof. Richard Teeuw, University of Portsmouth |
| Report date and number | 31 October, 2022; HYR1 |
| Project website/blog/social media | https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100087320503724 |

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 first six months of the project have gone quite well, with many activities implemented as per schedule, despite the official project notification not being received until June 2022.

However, with estimated 6-week purchase and delivery times (from the UK to the BVI) for our soil analysis equipment, the project start in the BVI **has had to be postponed** until the end of the Caribbean hurricane season (July-November), following FCDO risk guidelines for travellers. Consequently, the project start date in the BVI was postponed from June/July 2022 to October/November 2022. A Change Request Form was submitted about this issue on June 26th 2022 – and accepted.

1.1 BVI Soil Lab established, during Q4 of 2022

- This is going well: the main analytical equipment arrived in the BVI at the end of October 2022, with Prof Teeuw arriving on October 28th to supervise the establishment of the soil laboratory, which is hosted within the Lavitty Stout Community College, Tortola, during November.

1.2. Soil survey, sampling and Soil Lab analyses, from Q4 of 2022 to Q3 of 2023

- The project is on track to fulfil these tasks on schedule.

1.3. Soil inventory, GIS database and maps, from Q3 of 2022 to Q4 of 2023

- This is going well, with the 0.5m-pixel Lidar Digital Elevation Model (DEM), provided by the BVI Land Survey Department, now converted to a more manageable 5m-pixel DEM. Using ArcGIS and QGIS with DEM and the BVI digital Geology map, along with rainfall and temperature data, a BVI Geodiversity map has been produced, which will guide the soil survey.

2.1. Workshop: soil survey and sampling, Q4 of 2022
and
2.5. Training workshops: uptake & application, Q4 of 2022
- On track: the first phase of training (soil survey and sampling methods), led by Prof Teeuw, will be during November 2022;

3.4. Press releases on project findings, Q3 of 2022
- on track: a Press Briefing, by the BVI Department of Disaster Management, about the start of the BVI soil survey and training part of the project, was released on October 27th 2022.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt 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.

Unfortunately the official project notification not being received until June 2022, with final details of the log frame only agreed in August 2022. With estimated 6-week equipment purchase and delivery times (from the UK to the BVI) for our soil analysis equipment, the project start in the BVI has **had to be postponed** until the end of the Caribbean hurricane season (July-November), following FCDO risk guidelines for travellers. Consequently the project start date in the BVI, had to be postponed from June/July to October/November 2022. A Change Request Form was submitted about this issue on June 26th 2022 – and accepted.

Nb. That decision to postpone the first BVI visit was well-founded, given that Hurricane Fiona came close to severely impacting the BVI in September 2022.

We have been having monthly Zoom meetings to plan activities, with weekly meetings since September 2022.

Budget: the delay with this first part of the project does not have any financial impacts.

Timetable of activities: despite the postponed start, the schedule of training will be completed on time. The first phase of training (soil survey and sampling methods), led by Prof Teeuw, will be during November 2022; with the second phase of training (soil laboratory analyses) in January 2023; and with the third phase in June 2023 (soil biodiversity and soil GIS).

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

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| Discussed with NIRAS-LTS: | Yes |
| Formal Change Request submitted: | Yes - on 23.6.2022 |
| Received confirmation of change acceptance | Yes |

Change request reference if known:

4a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

No Estimated underspend: £

4b. 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 re-budget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no

guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget 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.**

5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

n/a

If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response (including the submission of your risk register), or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response 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 NIRAS-LTS International through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to BCF-Reports@niras.com. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Half Year Report**