New Projects Webinar

Darwin Initiative, Darwin Plus and Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund

BIODIVERSITY CHALLENGE FUNDS

DARWIN INITIATIVE

ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE CHALLENGE FUND

DARWIN PLUS

NIRAS-LTS International

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Agenda

- Welcome
- Introduction to the schemes
- The role of the Biodiversity Challenge Funds Secretariat & key personnel
- Introduction to project financial & technical reporting
- Project communications
- Questions

Objectives

- To provide an introduction to the Biodiversity Challenge Funds (BCFs)
- To ‘meet’ the key BCF people and understand their roles
- To get an insight of the administration and reporting requirements under the BCFs

Poll

What is your history with the Biodiversity Challenge Funds (BCFs)?

- I have no history with the BCFs
- My organisation has had a BCF project before
- I have worked on a BCF project before
- I have led one or more BCF projects before

Poll

What sort of project do you work on? (you may select multiple options)

- Darwin Initiative Innovation
- Darwin Initiative Capability & Capacity
- Darwin Initiative Main
- Darwin Initiative Extra
- Darwin Plus Main
- Darwin Plus Fellowship
- IWT Challenge Fund (Evidence, Main or Extra)

Welcome & Congratulations!

Darwin Initiative Round 28

Darwin Initiative Main

- 388 applications received at Stage 1
- 76 applications invited to Stage 2
- 32 new main projects likely to be funded

Darwin Initiative Extra – 27 applications, 5 funded

Darwin Initiative Innovation – 31 applications, 10 funded

Darwin Initiative Capability & Capacity – 45 applications, 16 funded

Welcome & Congratulations!

Darwin Plus Round 10

Darwin Plus Main

- 47 applications received at Stage 1
- 23 applications invited to Stage 2
- 20 new main projects funded

Darwin Plus Fellowships – 5 applications, 4 funded

Welcome & Congratulations!

IWT Challenge Fund Round 8

- 106 applications received at Stage 1
- 44 applications invited to Stage 2
- 22 new projects funded (pending approval of caveats)

The Evolution of the Schemes

- Announced at Rio Earth Summit in 1992

- This year the Darwin Initiative celebrates its 30th anniversary!

- Overseas Territories Challenge Fund in 2009, evolving into Darwin Plus formally in 2012

- IWT Challenge Fund opened 2014 following the first London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade

- All three funds management together over their lifetime but since 2021 now collectively under the umbrella of the “Biodiversity Challenge Funds”

The Schemes

Darwin Initiative Innovation: Grants for testing new approaches and developing a stronger understanding of barriers to scaling.
Darwin Initiative Capability & Capacity: Grants to support the capability and capacity of national and local organisations in eligible countries to develop and deliver effective and successful poverty reduction-biodiversity conservation projects
Darwin Initiative Main: Grants to delivery biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction projects in developing countries.
Darwin Initiative Extra: Larger grants which demonstrate a clear scaling pathway, building on good evidence from smaller projects to scaling further

IWT Challenge Fund Evidence: Projects which gather evidence to design an intervention.
IWT Challenge Fund Main: Projects which tackle the illegal trade of fauna, flora and fungi.
IWT Challenge Fund Extra: Scaling projects which have already demonstrated success.

Darwin Plus Main: Environmental projects working in the UK Overseas Territories
Darwin Plus Fellowship: Build capacity within OTs through training opportunities for OT nationals or those with a relationship with an OT.

BCFs ‘Family’

Biodiversity Challenge Funds Secretariat (Defra)

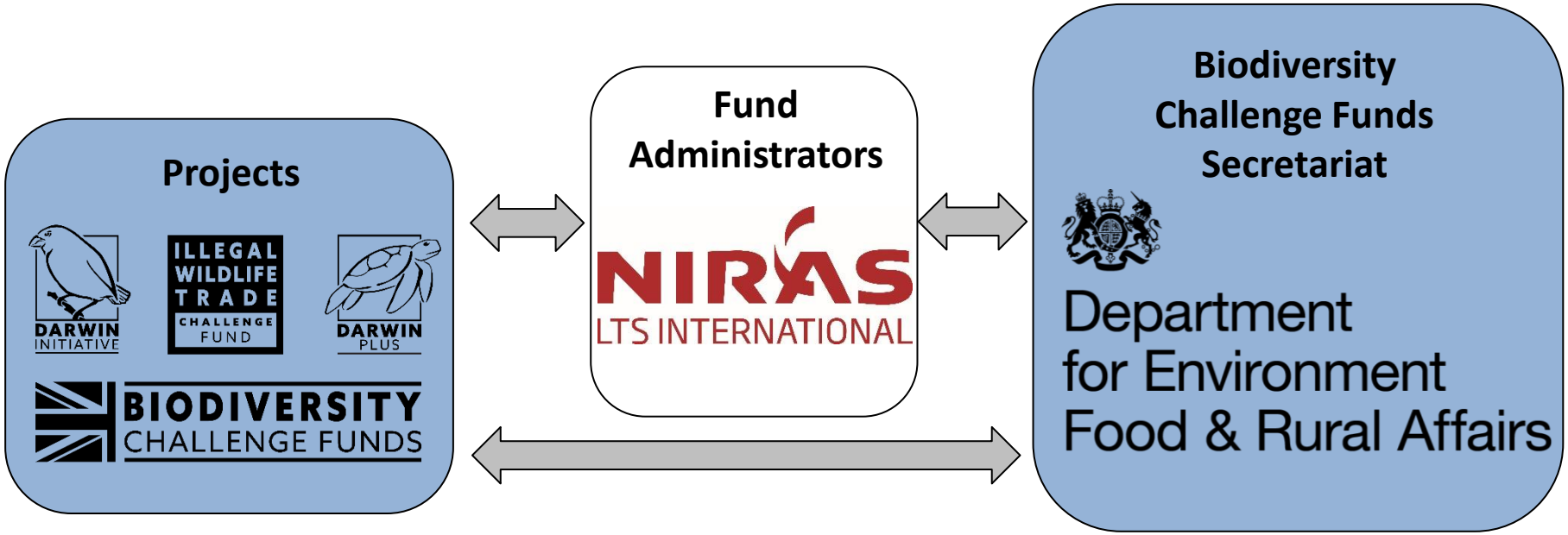
Fund Administrators (NIRAS-LTS International)

Darwin, D+ and IWTCF projects

Expert Groups:

- Darwin Expert Committee (DEC)
- Illegal Wildlife Trade Advisory Group (IWTAG)
- Darwin Plus Advisory Group (DPAG)

Who's Who?


Projects
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BIODIVERSITY CHALLENGE FUNDS
Fund Administrators
NIRAS
LTS INTERNATIONAL
Biodiversity Challenge Funds Secretariat
Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

BCF Secretariat

Doug Gibbs – Head of Biodiversity Challenge Funds

Ben Yexley – Darwin Initiative Lead – Biodiversity Challenge Funds

Serene Hargreaves – IWT Challenge Fund Lead – Biodiversity Challenge Funds

Elliott Miller – Darwin Plus and Biodiversity in the UK Overseas Territories

The role of the BCF Secretariat

- Overall management and strategy of the Biodiversity Challenge Funds: Darwin Initiative, IWT Challenge Fund and Darwin Plus
- Ministerial advice (PQs, correspondence, briefings)
- Management of NIRAS-LTS International Contract
- Support to the Expert Groups - DEC, DPAG, IWTAG
- Publicity and events – involving Ministers
- Engagement with overseas Posts

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Any questions?

Offer paperwork

- Package of materials
- Timing – may be longer if you have a caveat to address
- Return GAF and Supplier Form
- Timeline to claim payment

Terms and Conditions

- Are standard wording across Defra grants so only clearly justified changes will be reflected
- Confirms how the funds can be used e.g. no UK party political use
- Outlines the rights retained by Defra should grantees not follow requirements e.g. reclaiming of funds, eligibility of future applications
- Requirements re branding/communicating about your project
- Safeguarding

Financial Reporting Requirements

Current process

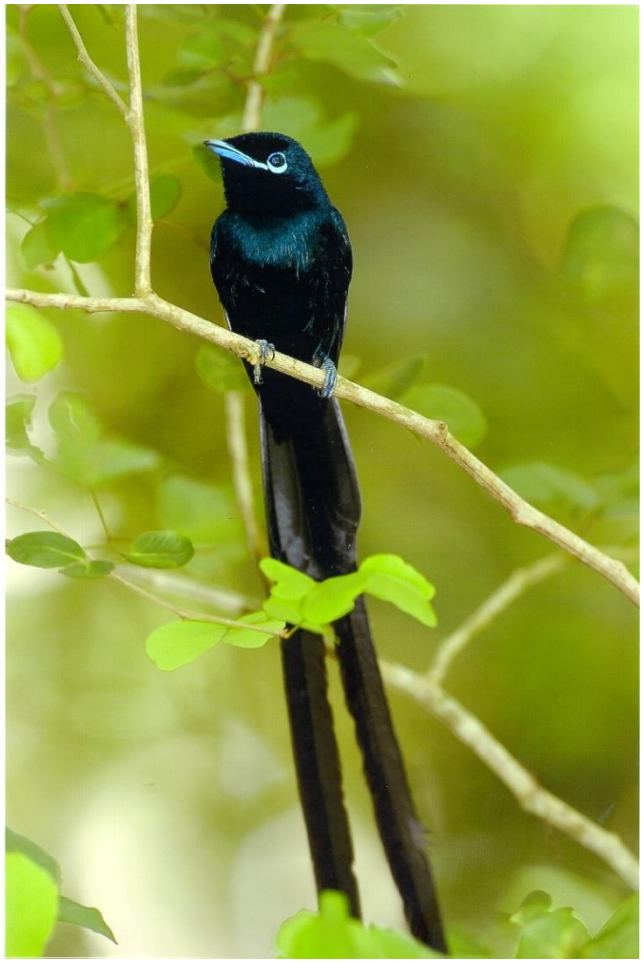
- Quarterly advance claims, but Q4 claim is based on actuals and in arrears
- Advanced Actuals for selected projects
- An audit at closure of project (annually for Extra projects)
- Defra retain the right to spot check

Claims conditions

- Quarters 1, 2 are advance claims linked to reporting and return of Annual Grant Acceptance Form
- Quarter 3 is a straight advance
- Quarter 4 Actual Claim is not an advance and is dependent on actual expenditure for the year and linked to submission of AR
- A retention is made from the final claim pending a satisfactory final report.

Claim Process

- Electronic claims with a clear signature
- NIRAS-LTS checks claim and that related reporting received
- Batched eligible claims for second approval
- Approved claims then processed
- You will be informed when to expect payment to your account



Conditions for Payment

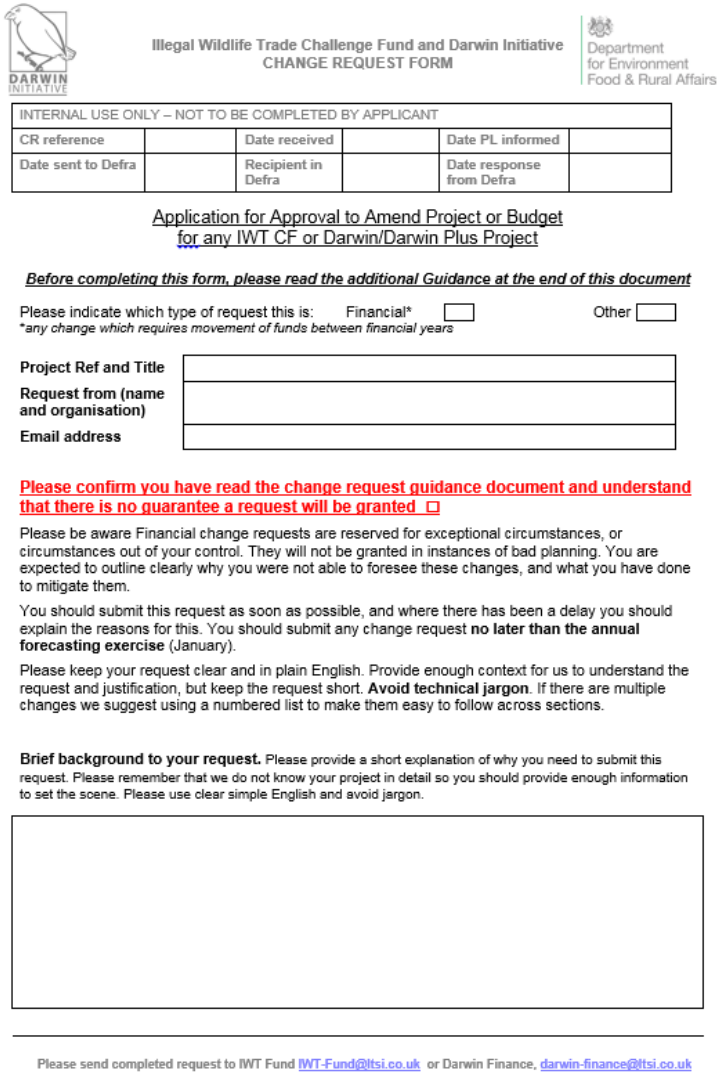
Claim	Deadline	Financial Evidence	Technical Evidence
FY Q1 1st April – 30th June Advance Claim	1st - 30th April	Year 1: Grant Acceptance Form From Year 2: Annual Grant Acceptance Form Advance Claim	n/a
FY Q2 1st July – 30th September Advance Claim	15th June – 31st July	Year 1: n/a From Year 2: Verified Q4 Actual Claim (from previous FY) even if no outstanding funds to claim	From Year 2: Annual Report Due by 30th April
FY Q3 1st October – 31st December Advance Claim	15th September – 31st October	n/a	From Year 2, prior year Annual Report Accepted
FY Q4 1st January – 31st March Actual Claim	31st May	Confirmation of Actual spend across the FY even if no outstanding funds to claim	Annual Report due by 30th April
Final Actual Claim, less retention	<3 months of project end	Verified Final Actual Claim	Final Report Received
Retention	<6 months of project end	Verified Audit Statement where required	Final Report Accepted

Change Requests

- Projects looking to make significant changes (both technical and financial) should submit a change request form
- This includes:
  - Re-budgets – carry-forwards not allowed
  - Virements – movement of money between budget lines
  - Changes to logical framework
  - Staff changes (senior technical staff) including CV
  - Timing changes (e.g. extensions)

Change Request Form

- KISS – clarity of request is important including clear justification
- Deadline for rebudgeting now stricter
- Previous requests noted
- Significant financial changes and implications
- January – March requests only under exceptional circumstances (e.g. natural disaster, military coup) and clearly justified.



Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund and Darwin Initiative
CHANGE REQUEST FORM

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

INTERNAL USE ONLY – NOT TO BE COMPLETED BY APPLICANT					
CR reference		Date received		Date PL informed	
Date sent to Defra		Recipient in Defra		Date response from Defra	

Application for Approval to Amend Project or Budget for any IWT CF or Darwin/Darwin Plus Project

Before completing this form, please read the additional Guidance at the end of this document

Please indicate which type of request this is: Financial* ☐ Other ☐
**any change which requires movement of funds between financial years*

Project Ref and Title	
Request from (name and organisation)	
Email address	

Please confirm you have read the change request guidance document and understand that there is no guarantee a request will be granted ☐

Please be aware Financial change requests are reserved for exceptional circumstances, or circumstances out of your control. They will not be granted in instances of bad planning. You are expected to outline clearly why you were not able to foresee these changes, and what you have done to mitigate them.

You should submit this request as soon as possible, and where there has been a delay you should explain the reasons for this. You should submit any change request **no later than the annual forecasting exercise** (January).

Please keep your request clear and in plain English. Provide enough context for us to understand the request and justification, but keep the request short. **Avoid technical jargon**. If there are multiple changes we suggest using a numbered list to make them easy to follow across sections.

Brief background to your request. Please provide a short explanation of why you need to submit this request. Please remember that we do not know your project in detail so you should provide enough information to set the scene. Please use clear simple English and avoid jargon.

Please send completed request to IWT Fund IWT-Fund@ltsi.co.uk or Darwin Finance, darwin-finance@ltsi.co.uk

Any questions?
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Reporting & Accountability

- There are a number of requirements to ensure the high standard of projects is maintained
- These can be divided into:
  - Project technical reporting
  - Project financial reporting
- Broadly consistent process between schemes

Expectations of projects

- High **quality** and **scientific**
- **Collaborative**
- **Assist** countries to meet their objectives under the various biodiversity and environmental conventions

Technical Reporting

- Projects required to report twice per year for the duration of their grant:
  - Half Year reports
  - Annual reports
  - Final reports
- Project reports are posted on the website (minus contact details & financial details)

Darwin Plus Fellowships

Fellowships are required to submit:

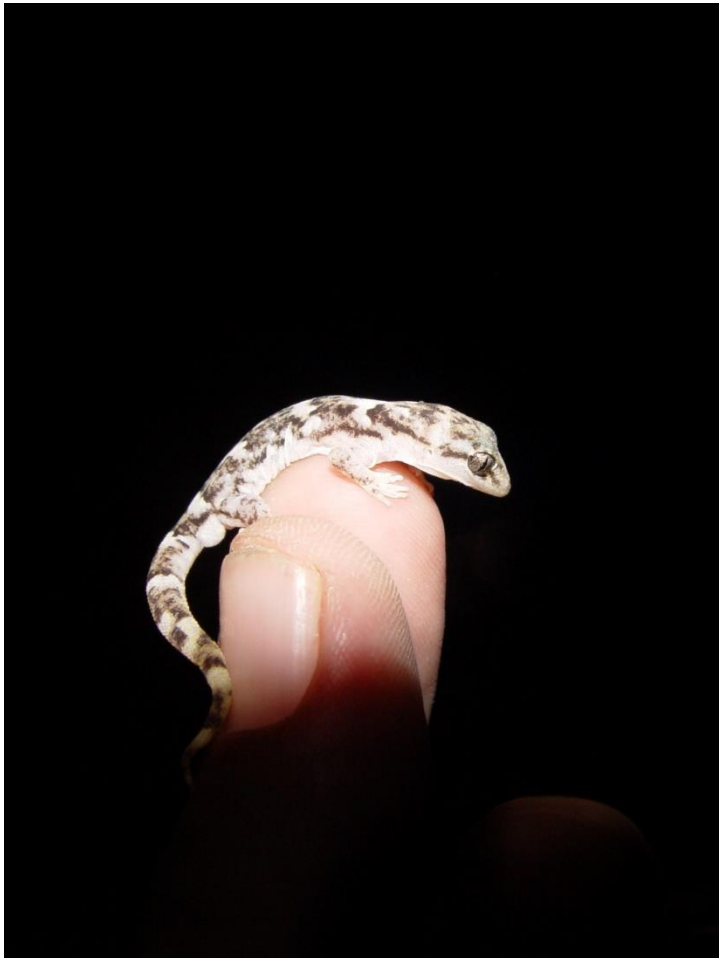
- Interim report
- Final report

Interim reports are submitted 1 month after the halfway point.

And final reports within 1 month of the end date.

Half Year Reports

- Provide a brief update on project progress
- Opportunity to discuss queries/issues (also available all year round)
- Submitted by **31st October** annually

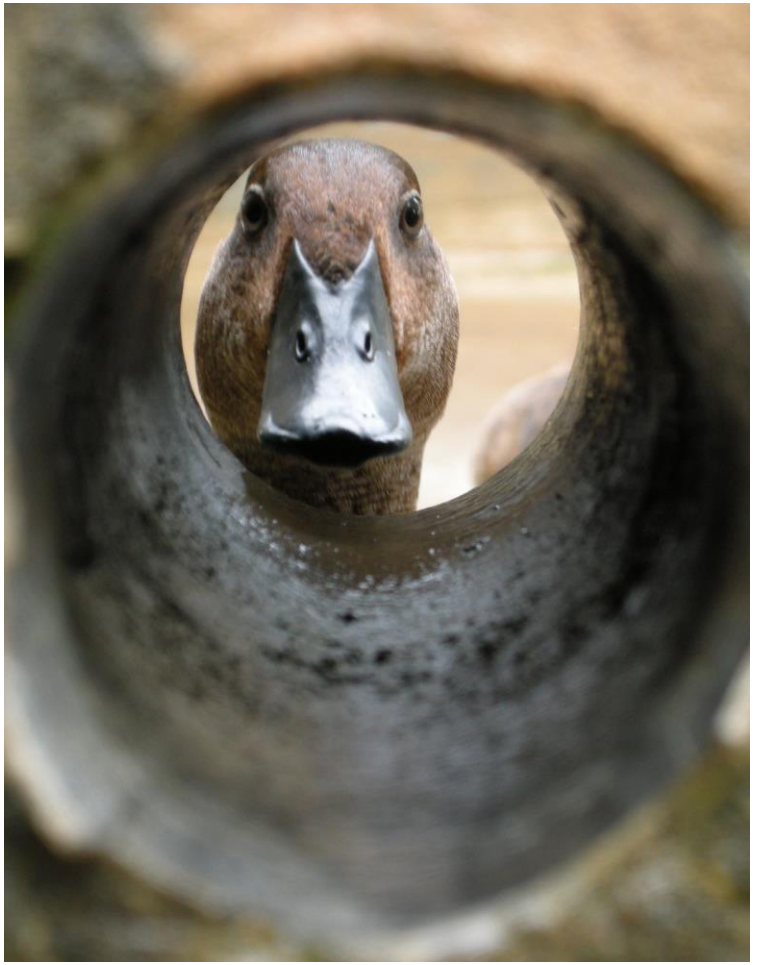


Annual Reports

- To detail progress against planned activities, Outputs & Outcome
- Good use of indicators & evidence (means of verification) reduces reporting burden
- Due **30th April** annually

Final Reports

- Provide information on the *overall* success of the project against its proposed outcome, outputs and activities
- Good use of indicators and evidence (means of verification) reduces reporting burden



Poll

How is the pace of this webinar?

- Far too slow
- A bit slow
- About right
- A bit fast
- Far too fast

Reducing the reporting burden

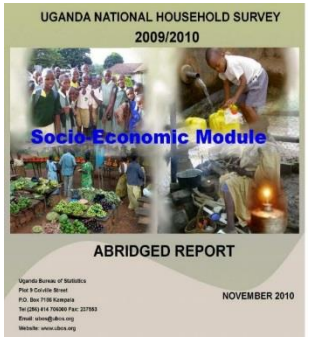
- Report against original application unless changes have been made to logframe
- Significant changes to logframe/design need to be approved
- More tips can be found in the information note here.

Indicators

- Indicators are what will be measured to show progress and outcome
- Should be SMART:

Means of Verification

- Should be submitted in reporting as verification of progress
- Reduces onerous narrative reporting
- In-Report
  - Use of secondary data
  - Illustrative quotes
  - Figures
- Additional Documents
  - Meeting minutes of Committee approving plans
  - Letter formally accepting management plans from Department of Environment
  - Photos



Reporting Evidence – Do's

- Report clearly and concisely
- Make sure you are reporting against the latest (and approved) version of your logframe
- Involve project partners where possible
- We encourage projects to report on what has changed and to provide evidence of these changes
- Ensure that you check the correct BCF website prior to submitting your report to ensure that you **are using the latest version of the template** – reporting templates are updated annually
- Ensure evidence submitted is clearly labelled and sign-posted

Reporting Evidence – Do's

- **Provide evidence to demonstrate where claims come from**, for example:

"We are making good progress towards our goal, as demonstrated by data provided in table x"

"Focus groups with local residents about ….. we believe this to be true because [insert quote as evidence]"

- **Move beyond reporting on outputs** - include evidence on what has changed

"The workshop provided X community members with knowledge about sustainable pest management. Evidence from a follow-up survey indicated that chemical pesticide use has declined by 50%, which is expected to have positive impacts in local biodiversity (FAO, 2013). Crop yields for previously affected crops have increased by between 10-30%; thus demonstrating a contribution to poverty alleviation."

Reporting Evidence – Don’ts

- Write general statements without evidence, for example:

  “we are making good progress”

  “we believe this is true”

  “we think that this progress is adequate”

- Only list activity outputs e.g. no. of workshops, plans, maps.

- Forget about higher level outcomes and impacts – what has changed and how in terms of biodiversity conservation or poverty reduction?

Risk Management

- Risk management is a central component to effective project management.
- **New requirement:** we are now asking for more evidence that projects are assessing their risks.
- In your application forms, many of you needed to submit an assessment and mitigations for 6 key risks.
- As noted in your feedback letters, some of you have been asked to **submit a full risk assessment with your half year report** if you haven't already done so. The template is available on the fund website (same template for all projects – but level of detail should be proportionate to project scale and risk).

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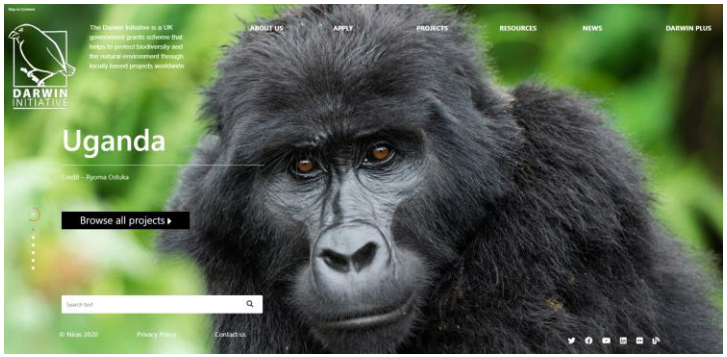
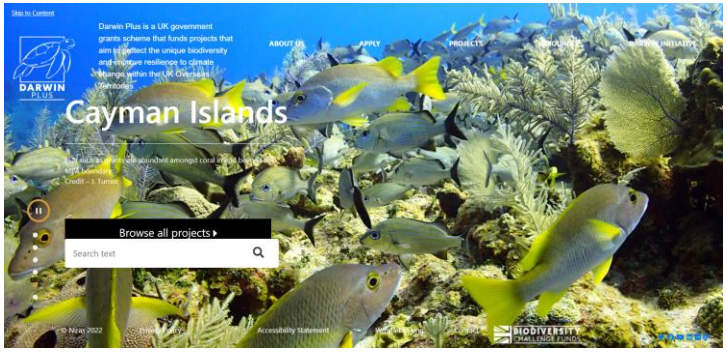
Promoting your project

Allow us to reintroduce ourselves.

Websites

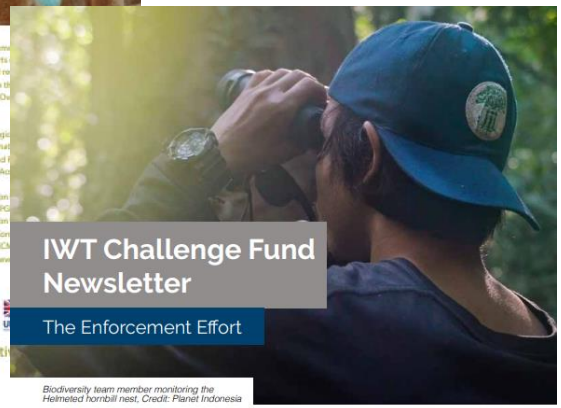
- Darwin Initiative Website: https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/
- IWT Challenge Fund Website: https://iwt.challengefund.org.uk/
- Darwin Plus Website: https://dplus.darwininitiative.org.uk/
- First stop for all technical and admin **resources** for **BCF projects** – including claim forms, reporting forms, and change request template
- Platform for our various **publications** – including newsletters, information notes, and workshop proceedings





Newsletter

- themed around a particular topic
- 1 page A4 articles or less
- Use images to grab attention
- Distributed widely via e-mail, Twitter and internally in Defra
- Reliant on good images and good stories



BCF-Comms@niras.com

Social Media

@Darwin_Defra

@IWTCF

Tweet us your project updates and tag us in relevant articles!

@DarwinInitiative

Follow us on our other social media platforms

Engagement opportunities

- Newsletter articles
- Case studies
  - 30th Anniversary
- Workshops/webinars
- Project spotlights on social media
- Conferences

Logos

Maintaining a high profile for BCF helps maintain Government funding:

- Projects should use the fund specific logo as well as the UK AID logo if they can
- Logos are available on the “Resources” tab of the websites

Framing your project

It is important to consider how your project may be perceived by others

Explaining your project to non-technical audiences is becoming more important

The virtual workshop session on communications will look at these issues in more detail

Thanks for listening!