



# DARWIN INITIATIVE

## Reviewing Guidance Notes for Reviewers



### ***What is required?***

The Review Templates for Annual and Final report reviews (available at [http://darwin.defra.gov.uk/resources/reporting/review\\_guidelines/](http://darwin.defra.gov.uk/resources/reporting/review_guidelines/)) include bullets outlining the kind of issues we think may be relevant in this section and are provided for assistance only. Not all the points will be relevant and you may have other queries/concerns that you wish to raise.

### **Important: Before you begin the review please consider the following:**

- **Conflict of Interest:** Please do not accept a report to review if you have any involvement in the actual project or if you believe you have any other conflict of interest. If in doubt, please contact Eilidh Young to discuss this **before you begin** the review. The definition of an 'Interest' is understood to include:
  1. The institution which employs you
  2. Any other reason that you consider or others might consider may conflict with the requirement for impartiality, to the extent that your objectivity will be impaired eg
    - Being a member of a Board of Management or Trustee of an organisation;
    - Being a consultant to the organisation;
    - A close association with an individual involved in a project eg
      - through personal connection;
      - current or recent professional collaboration; or
      - current or recent teaching at an advanced (post-graduate) level
    - a close relative being employed by an organisation or involved in any of the above ways.
- **When you receive the report and associated documentation, please check that it appears to be complete. If you find the information supplied insufficient** to carry out a review, please contact me **before** you start the work. The project will then be asked to either send any missing documentation or resubmit the report.
- Please look at the **Reporting Guidance for Project Leaders** ([http://darwin.defra.gov.uk/resources/reporting/annual\\_report/](http://darwin.defra.gov.uk/resources/reporting/annual_report/)) before completing your review to ensure you know what information projects are asked to provide in their reports.

### **Format:**

1. Your review should be 3 - 4 A4 pages long, using Arial 11 and should be presented in flowing paragraphs, on numbered pages and with numbered headings as per the template for the Annual Report Review or Final Report Review (as appropriate). The numbered headings in the templates relate to the relevant section within the Annual and Final project reports for ease of cross-reference.
2. Each section should address the issues and queries raised (bullet points) under each section heading unless they are not relevant to this project. **Please do not re-state these queries** within your report (ie delete them).

## Publications:

1. You are not required to comment in great detail on any publications or other support material included. However, it should inform your overall review and reference should be made to the material and could cover appropriateness of format, presentation etc.

## Submission:

1. The submission deadline is **4 weeks from commissioning** unless agreed otherwise. Please note that compliance with this deadline is crucial. LTS has an obligation to ensure that project teams receive timely feedback on their reports, which should enable them to take action on any points identified. **If you have any difficulties meeting the deadline please contact Eilidh well in advance of the deadline** to discuss a solution rather than waiting until your review is overdue.
2. Send your review by email to Eilidh at [Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk](mailto:Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk)
3. You must return all hard copy material to Eilidh Young, Darwin Projects, LTS International, Pentlands Science Park, Bush Loan, Penicuik EH26 0PL. **This must be done as soon as possible, since this material will be required for other work undertaken throughout the year.**

## The Review process:

LTS undertakes a review of all Annual and Final reports (Main projects, Post projects and Darwin Fellowships) on behalf of Defra. Please ensure that project implementation and management are covered in your review as well as technical issues. You should also bring to our attention any concerns you may have from your review, regarding the project's finances.

1. We endeavour to submit a project report to a reviewer within 2 weeks of receipt of the document and all supporting material. You then have a maximum of 4 weeks to prepare and submit the review and return hard copy material. We then make all efforts to return the review to the Project Leader within 2 weeks of receipt of the full review and we recommend that the review is also shared with local partners and the project team. Project leaders are advised to expect completed reviews within 2 months of submission. **As noted above, LTS's delivery of its contract to Defra hinges on keeping as close as possible to this deadline and you are requested to support these timescales.**
2. You are asked to indicate where there are any issues arising from the review that require an immediate response or whether it is appropriate for Project Leaders to include a reply with their next half year or annual report. The response will then be made available to you for the next annual report (and not normally before).
3. LTS aims to use the same reviewer for annual reports throughout the project's lifetime, although it is recognised that this is not always possible or appropriate. Final reports are commissioned to a different reviewer to provide an additional insight to the project and because the final review is seeking a different summary of the work: the annual review focuses on project design and management while the final review looks at the outcomes, impact and legacy of the project.
4. Please give consideration to the tone of your review: it should be constructive and positive, even if there are particular issues that need to be addressed. Please also remember the implications of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (see below) and use appropriate language.

## ***Use of reports and reviews***

In order to learn from the experiences of Darwin projects and to be able to report more fully on what the Darwin Initiative has achieved since it started, the Darwin Secretariat commissions some discrete pieces of work from LTS each year. These currently include:

**Mid-Term reviews** – of current projects, identified under the criteria published on the website, and with the aim of supporting the project and learning lessons for the Initiative.

**Evaluations of Closed Projects** – these are a mixture of desk based reviews and visits to project locations to seek information on the impact and legacy of Darwin projects.

**Thematic Evaluations** – focusing on a specific theme and analysing how the Darwin Initiative has contributed to it and what lessons can be learnt from projects which have worked/are working in these areas.

These types of work are very helpful in raising awareness of project achievements and supporting the ongoing work of the Initiative and clearly involve the use of project reports and reviews. As far as possible, we will inform project leaders in advance if their projects fall into any of these areas of work.

Defra has invested in a programme of work designed to increase the global accessibility and value of information relating to projects funded by the Initiative. The resulting 'Darwin Information Project' delivered a new website for the Initiative, where one of the most important features is the ability for users to download electronic copies of the main documents relating to a project. The key aim of this project was to ensure that the huge amount of useful information that has built up over the lifetime of the Darwin Initiative is made available to the public. This includes application forms, project reports and copies of major outputs that are available electronically.

At present, there is no intention to include project reviews: they will still be treated confidentially and will not be published or passed to third parties without your explicit consent. All project reviews are currently passed to Defra and the project leader without any identifying details. If Defra decides in future to make reviews more widely available, you will be informed of any changes and have the opportunity to comment before they take place.

**Note on FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – information held by public authorities (including reviews):** The FOIA came fully into force on 1 January 2005 and provides a right of access to information held by public authorities, subject to certain exemptions. Whilst this has no immediate implications for the reviewing process, please bear in mind that under the FOIA any review including associated correspondence may have to be released by Defra upon request unless qualified for exemption from disclosure. Defra will decide this on a case by case basis and will consult project leaders/reviewers before releasing reviews. We will continue our stated policy of keeping reviewers names anonymous, but have to make you aware of the possibility that the release of names could be requested. If you have justifiable concerns about your name being released, then an exemption might apply.

**Eilidh Young**

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