

Project Update April 2025

Rufford I.D.: 41832-1

Project Title: Hidden barriers to conservation: Addressing social acceptability to enhance effective management of the Galapagos Marine Reserve

Update: We began project implementation in April 2024. To date, we have successfully completed in-person surveys with over 740 respondents, including both Galapagos residents and visitors. In addition, we have conducted dozens of in-depth interviews and focus groups. Our findings include participants' perceptions of biodiversity conservation threats, attitudes (i.e., social acceptability) toward key policies such as adjustments to entry fees to the Galapagos National Park and Marine Reserve, and preferences for how collected funds should be allocated. Reaching this number of surveys has been challenging, but it has been possible thanks to the willingness of the community to participate in these discussions, which they consider of highly importance. The survey design was developed with input from local residents and authorities to ensure the information collected is relevant for policymaking. Preliminary analysis of the data has been shared with authorities and stakeholders through a Policy Brief titled "Adjustment of Entry Fees – Tourist Attitudes and Perceptions," publicly available at Heriot-Watt University AEF Working Papers: <https://aefresearch.site.hw.ac.uk/working-papers/> A scientific article is currently in progress; a first version has been presented at three conferences: the Edinburgh Business School Postgraduate (EBS PGR) Conference 2024, the Scottish Graduate Programme in Economics (SGPE) 2025, and the Latin American Association of Environmental and Resource Economists (LAERE) Congress 2025. These presentations generated valuable feedback to refine our interpretation of the results and their policy implications. We are currently conducting a second wave of surveys, which will offer insights into how residents' and tourists' attitudes and preferences have evolved following eight months of implementing an adjustment to entry fees to protected areas—a policy change that had been delayed for six years. Results from this second data collection will complement our previous findings and policy implications. We aim to complete this final phase by May, with the final report to be submitted by late June.