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# **Proceedings of the Non-native Species Local Action Group Workshop**

**Held on 15-16 February 2022**

**Via Teams**

## **Programme**

On 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> February 2022 the GB Non-native Species Secretariat organised the 13th Local Action Group Workshop, funded by Defra. The workshop was held via Teams and we had 73 attendees.

### **Day 1**

Welcome (Niall Moore, GBNNSS)

Defra update (Joe Payne, Defra)

The GB Strategy refresh

### **BREAKOUT SESSION A: Supporting Local Action Groups**

Introduction to breakout session (Niall Moore, GBNNSS)

The North East Biosecurity Group regional approach to INNS monitoring, control and prevention. (Jenny Dowden, Tyne Rivers Trust)

Wales Resilient Ecological Network – Invasive Species Toolkit (Jess Minett, WaREN)

Invasive plant control by the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative – showing success on a site by site basis (Calum Sinclair, SISI)

### **Breakout into virtual rooms**

Ideas for how the LAG coordinator can help support LAGs in England, Scotland and Wales

Key points to feedback from each group

### **Local Action Group Presentations**

Alien Scenarios survey on invasive species management (Wayne Dawson, Durham University)

An outline of the Naturally Native project (Kelly Hollings, Naturally Native)

Control of Gaultheria shallon (Catherine Chatters, New Forest Non-Native Plants Project)

River Barle signal crayfish project (Nicky Green, Crayfish ecologist/researcher)

Working with local authorities to help embed INNS biosecurity practices (Alison Dunn, University of Leeds)

Close

## **Day 2**

Welcome (Olaf Booy, GBNNSS)

### **BREAKOUT SESSION B: Drop in sessions**

Breakout into virtual rooms:

- Room 1: Legislation
- Room 2: Non-native Species Inspectorate
- Room 3: Awareness Raising and Comms
- Room 4: Plant management

General discussion

### **Local Action Group Presentations**

Moscow INNS group (Marina Shaikina)

Thames pilot project on floating pennywort (Ben Francis, British Canoeing)

Floating pennywort and its impact on still water fishing (Ian Doyle, Angling Trust)

Update on our giant hogweed programme (Jennifer Gant and Chloe Lawrence, Tees Rivers Trust)

Practical measures for marine biosecurity management in a port (Lisa Reilly, Peel Ports)

INNS and outs across North Wales: projects, pilots & progress (North Wales Wildlife Trust INNS Team)

Updates on biocontrol initiatives for GB (Sonal Varia, CABI)

Implementing biosecurity across Yorkshire Water: operations, progress and next steps (Steph Bradbeer / Rachel Naden, Yorkshire Water)

Final comments and close

## **BREAKOUT SESSION A: Supporting Local Action Groups**

In 2015, the Animal and Plant Health Agency employed a Local Action Group (LAG) Coordinator to help support LAGs and collaboration between them. A large part of the coordinator's role was to develop a proposal for a LIFE project (RAPID LIFE). Later the role focused on management of the RAPID LIFE project, which has now finished.

APHA has further funding for a part time LAG Coordinator (50% of a fulltime post). **We are looking for feedback from LAGs on what the coordinator could do to help support them.** This will be used to help develop the job description for the LAG coordinator.

Below are some suggestions for activities the coordinator could carry out:

- Assisting LAGs in developing funding bids
- Coordination of action across landowners (e.g. in association with ELM)
- Support with updating / implementing RIMPs
- Developing good practice guidance

Other ideas from the APEM report on the GB Strategy

- Increasing coordination between LAGs and INNS experts
- Catchment scale coordination (potentially linking with Country Working Groups or the INNS inspectorate)
- Maintaining a database of INNS management projects to record LAG efforts and achievements

To discuss ideas for how the LAG coordinator can help support LAGs in England, Scotland and Wales.

### **Group 1**

#### **Helping local action groups in developing funding bids**

Coordinator to talk to funders about what their priorities are (e.g. sites, species) and how projects could be tailored to meet funding. Coordinator talk to LAGs to understand who is applying for what funding and how we can be strategic about funding bids for pots of money. Example are WaREN who are acting as a coordinating hub for groups across Wales, groups can ask if funding bids have been submitted for different pots of money. Create a hub for knowing what funding there is too, often difficult to identify specific funding for INNS.

Funding issues across country boundaries, most of the time is spent reporting rather than action. Coordinator could join up across countries funding coordination to free up LAG time on the group.

Help with funding, especially multiyear funding. Lobby funding bodies to ensure multiple years of budget and difficult funding needs (e.g. INNS monitoring).

Can't invent funding sources would need to work with groups to find out what funding they utilise in their patch.

#### **Coordination of action across landowners**

Can take a lot of time to contact landowners, sometimes difficult to identify. Yorkshire Wildlife Trust have a good system for contacting and recording contact with. Have we missed an opportunity to use the LAG coordinator to deliver a pilot scheme for ELMS? Clare Watson suggested that landscape

scale pilots are occurring and local nature recoveries are being planned so we may have missed the boat. Concern that costing for farmers will not be realistic and will not be strategic, assistance for LAGs to access ELMS and support farmers. Must ensure that if they support coordination of landowners in must cross country boundaries as ELMS is for England.

LAG coordinator could look at which LAGs are linked to facilitation funds to get extra funding for things like training. Facilitation funds are DEFRA funded, a colleague is funded for X days per week and has to sign up farmers to fund the fund to discuss different topics relevant to certain areas (e.g. lowland, uplands). Required to deliver X amount of workshops per year. Funding comes round yearly and there are different themes for the funds (e.g. water quality/ pollution).

### **Update and or implement RIMPs**

Assess how useful they are before investing more money in them.

SE area was too big an area, look into this.

Regional management plans weren't appropriate for Wye Valley, needs to be of catchment scale.

### **Developing good practice guidance**

Personally of benefit to the Angling Trust as there is so much expertise out there. Can be used to ensure we are all consistent in our approach and advancing and learning from each other. Need to be tailored to different environments. The work with Floating Pennywort partnership has gained a lot of information, need to synthesis and publish.

Very useful to bring in further learning at an international level.

Reviewed to bring in new evidence that is coming from LAG projects, CABI, scientific research.

Performance of management, e.g. ongoing maintenance transition from contractors to volunteers.

Dissemination on the GBNNSS website, ensure resource section is up to date and easy to filter through, could we tag resources to allow filtering to be easier?

### **Coordinate LAG and experts**

Star chamber of experts, how do we coordinate this, need an innovative way to make that work on the ground.

Link experts into production of best practice management.

Expert directory, put themselves forward and could be contacted, host on GBNNSS website.

### **Catchment scale working groups**

Support to link up groups within a catchment, good awareness of what work is going on to make it more strategic. Knowing who the main players, landowners in an area can be difficult to establish but essential for action. This will also facilitate coordination with landowners.

Constantly dealing with communities who are impacted by upstream populations outside of our remit. Need a voice to lobby outside of the area to support management, LAG coordinator to identify gaps in areas without action or provide some sort of link to other INNS management groups.

Get more organisations involved, e.g. rivers trusts are not very involved as a LAG.

Multitude of small conservation groups (e.g. Upper Teasdale who are interested through U3A), advised on where to report, manage, how to feed in to wider projects and generate action.

Maintaining a database of INNS management projects.

Use INNS Mapper redevelopment to understand the scale of INNS management projects ongoing.

Update the LAG map on GBNSS.

Provide resources and help to make LAGs autonomous. There is a concern that ALL of this may overburden a coordinator. Find that this is what is happening to the WaREN group and that's for 2 people in Wales. Need to facilitate local action groups to communicate between themselves and others within minimal intervention.

Reinvigorate the old routes for sharing (e.g. Facebook group/ forum/ LAG contacts on GBNSS).

## **Group 2**

The group supported the LAG coordinator being a full-time post and noted that the coordinator should focus on activities that are strategic and at a national level (e.g. LAGs can carry out tasks like developing good practice themselves).

### **Suggested duties:**

Communicate with funders to get across the need for longer term funding cycles for management work (so LAGs can spend less time putting together smaller funding bids).

Help new LAGs and get them working in a coordinated way – be the central contact.  
Work with local authorities to encourage them to work with (and fund) LAGs. Funding opportunity under Biodiversity Net Gain Funding.

Help facilitate training for LAGs, recommend courses etc that LAGs may need.

Maintain and update LAG toolkit.

Encourage and support LAGs to record and share:

Management work on INNS mapper and in the NNSS projects database.

Good practice info more widely (e.g. through Conservation Management). Could include information / resources in LAG toolkit to do this.

### **Other useful points**

- The group did not support updating the RIMPs until LAGs need these.
- The WaREN

## **BREAKOUT SESSION B: Drop in Sessions**

In this breakout session, chairs were placed in each of the virtual rooms where open discussions took place. The LAG's were free to move from one virtual room to another.

- Room 1: Legislation**  
(Leasa Fielding, Welsh Government, Olivia Eusden, Defra and Joe Payne, Defra)
- Room 2: Non-native Species Inspectorate** (Iain Henderson, APHA)
- Room 3: Awareness raising and Comms** (Lucy Cornwell, GB NNSS)
- Room 4: Plant management** (e.g. balsam, hogweed, floating pennywort, etc)  
(Trevor Renals, Environment Agency)

## **FEEDBACK**

Attendees: 73

Returned number of feedback forms: 13

### **Are you directly involved in a local action project on non-native species?**

Yes 12                      No 1

### **Do you think the workshop was a worthwhile exercise? If yes please state which parts were most useful and if no, please suggest improvements.**

Yes 12                      No 0                      Yes and No 1

- Enjoyed the breakout session about the LAG coordinator. This was very useful to understand the role and discuss ideas.
- Breakout sessions on day 2 were a great way to ask questions and jump between topics.
- I really valued the update from CABI re research into potential methods of biological control.
- It is always so interesting to hear about the work of other local action groups and there was a varied selection of topics. Good that you manage to fit so many into the programme.
- I think it's great that you involve participants (rather than relying on GBNNSS staff) in chairing discussion groups, being the scribe and giving feedback as it helps generate a sense of shared responsibility and makes people feel 'valued'.
- Sharing methods and creating contacts with people who can share knowledge and being able to communicate with the secretariat.
- A good variety of presentations. Those showing practical works on the ground were most useful. The breakout session re. Plant Management was excellent and well hosted. Overall a great LAG workshop and well done to the GBNNSS for organising.

- As somebody who attended the workshop to find out more about the work that LAGs are involved in, I found the two days a very good insight with some interesting presentations and so for me these were the most useful. For the interactive sessions there was ample time for anyone who wanted questions answered to ask.
- Always good to hear about successful projects.
- This is one of the best workshops I have been to - very well done for your hard work in organising this event.
- It's good to hear of new methodology and approaches from other action groups. It's important that we should feel we belong to a community and share experiences and learn from each other. I also appreciated the news of other non-native issues from other regions as a kind of horizon of what may be expected in the future.

### **What would be your preference for a future LAG's workshop?**

Face to face	5
Blended (online and face to face)	7
Online	3
Unsure	1
Any of the above	1

Covid may well still dictate what happens in the future, that said a mixed approach is probably the best. Internet meetings are also priceless, eg. the opportunity to talk to a Russian group re how they tackled GHW was well worth the experience and truly brings home the fact that NNIS are indeed a global issue.

### **Do you have any other suggestions for the LAG co-ordinator role:**

- Gateway to training.
- Promotion of a catchment based approach.
- Publicity.
- News updates on horizon species and new methodology.
- Promotion of work done by LAGS into the public domain and to other action groups.
- Bolstering LAG numbers.
- Would be great to regularly share data, success stories and lessons learned between LAGs.
- I think it's important that the role of the LAG co-ordinator genuinely provides 'added value' to the work that LAGs are already doing. Although I recognise that the LAGs co-ordinator will probably need to obtain information from local action groups (to enable the co-ordinator to gain an 'over-view' of the local situation) care must be taken to ensure that LAGs aren't expected to spend a disproportionate amount of their time providing information to the LAG co-ordinator. I would endorse the suggestions made during the workshop for the LAG co-ordinator to investigate potential new sources of funding for LAGs; presumably this would



need to be done at a strategic level, for example, exploring how the new environmental land management schemes might contribute towards funding. There is clearly potential for a LAG co-ordinator to help to co-ordinate funding for LAGs which are working across country boundaries, for example of the Welsh/English border.

- Have 2 posts covering England & Scotland and Wales & Northern Island or Eng & Wales and Scotland & NI

### **Other feedback**

It would be lovely to have another one of these workshops on a smaller scale halfway through the year to see how the various LAGS are progressing and to continue sharing ideas.