

12 Information Exchange and Integration

- 12.1 There is a large volume of work being carried out on invasive non-native species across a range of sectors within Britain and effective overall information exchange presents a challenge. The dissemination of best practice among practitioners is necessary both to ensure the efficient use of resources and to ensure that lessons learned in one area or circumstance are beneficial elsewhere. In addition it will be important to ensure that research as described in Chapter 11 is widely disseminated. Synergies between this Strategy and other strategies relating to the Plant Health Service and wildlife disease surveillance should also be pursued and strengthened, as well as any with initiatives on illegal imports and human health.
- 12.2 On the international aspect, this Strategy takes account of the European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species (Genovesi and Shine, 2003^{iv}). Through appropriate contacts and representatives, there is also UK participation in for example, the Bern Convention's relevant Experts Group, discussions with the European Commission on an EU Strategy, development of international biodiversity indicators, invasive alien species deliberations of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the work of the invasive alien species panel of the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation (EPPO). The GB Secretariat also maintains close links with the all-Ireland non-native species initiative.
- 12.3 Keeping up to date with best practice abroad is important to maintaining the best mechanisms for combating invasive non-native species in Britain. Furthermore, as a global problem, links with other global networks and initiatives such as the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP) and the World Conservation Union's Invasive Species Specialist Group (IUCN ISSG) are also important. Best practice developed in the UK might also be used to help initiatives on invasive non-native species overseas such as contributing to target 10 of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (management plans in place for at least 100 major alien species that threaten plants, plant communities and associated habitats and ecosystems).
- 12.4 There are a number of strategies, existing or planned, with which this Strategy will share a relationship, some of the key ones are outlined in Annex 5.

Information Exchange and Integration

Objective

To ensure the GB non-native species mechanism keeps up to date with invasive non-native species developments domestically and engages with developments internationally.

Key actions

We will:

Key Action 12.1

maintain links with other relevant Government initiatives and strategies within GB through policy representation;

Key Action 12.2

engage with and share information with all-Ireland initiatives on invasive non-native species;

Key Action 12.3

ensure that the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies are kept informed of GB developments;

Key Action 12.4

maintain contact with colleagues dealing with invasive non-native species policy issues in other European Member States and encourage consistent representation of issues of concern to GB/UK;

Key Action 12.5

engage with global/international initiatives on invasive non-native species; and,

Key Action 12.6

through the work of the GB non-native species mechanism in driving a coherent strategic approach, help regional or local fora that seek to disseminate best practice and promote evidence-based action on invasive non-native species.

Relationship with the Biodiversity Action Planning process

The UK Biodiversity Action Planning process (UKBAP) was set up in response to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1992. 391 Species Action Plans (SAPs) covering 475 separate species and 45 Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) were prepared between 1995 and 1999 for priority species and habitats. Targets for these species and habitats were originally set at the UK level. The publication of revised targets in November 2006 disaggregated these to country level for the first time. Following a 3-year review of the priority list, involving over 500 experts, a revised UK Priority Species and Habitats list was approved by ministers of all four UK administrations and published in August 2007. This new list contains 1149 species and 65 habitats.

The operation of UKBAP over the past 15 years has resulted in significant gains in terms of biodiversity conservation, but delivery of actions under SAPs and HAPs alone will not be sufficient if we are to achieve the 2010 EU biodiversity target of halting the loss and reversing the decline in biodiversity. Consideration is now being given to development of delivery mechanisms which would benefit particular habitats, or groups of habitats, at a landscape/ecosystem scale for the benefit of multiple species, whilst recognising that some species may still require targeted action. This approach is reflected in "Conserving Biodiversity – The UK Approach" published in October 2007. This document is a strategic statement which recognises the strengths of partnerships and sets a framework with the flexibility to tackle issues at the most appropriate spatial scale. The threat from invasive species is acknowledged within the document as a cross-cutting issue that we must address.

In addition, responsibility for biodiversity conservation has been devolved to the country administrations. Individual countries have their own biodiversity strategies which set out a vision and approach for each geographic area.

Invasive species can impact on anything from a single or small number of native species to entire habitats, and from a localised area to a widespread one. The focus of action to address invasive species might therefore be variously placed within a national approach to tackling invasive species, within more locally targeted invasive species or broader biodiversity action plans or also in a particular HAP or SAP, and the approach taken will need to take account of these mechanisms. These mechanisms also offer a further vehicle through which to highlight the issue of invasive non-native species.

Reflecting the importance of the topic, the Biodiversity Indicators in Your Pocket publication (<http://www.jncc.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=3921>) includes an indicator (currently under development) for invasive species within focal area 3, Threats to Biodiversity.

The national biodiversity strategies can be found at the following links:

England:

"Working with the grain of nature: a biodiversity strategy for England"
<http://defraweb/wildlife-countryside/biodiversity/biostrat/index.htm>

Scotland:

"Scotland's Biodiversity: It's in Your Hands – A strategy for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in Scotland"
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/05/19366/37239>

Wales:

“The Wales Biodiversity Framework”

This document has been created by the Wales Biodiversity Partnership (WBP) as a first-step guide to:

- identifying the key practical, policy and legislative drivers for protecting and enhancing biodiversity in Wales;
- outlining the mechanisms for promoting positive action;
- explaining the roles and remit of those responsible for delivering biodiversity action; and,
- providing links to the tools and information to help maintain and improve biodiversity in Wales.

<http://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/english/Library/default.aspx?pid=1>

Plant Health Strategy

The 2003 non-native species policy review recognised that some of the measures necessary to prevent, control or eradicate non-native species were already in place in the plant health sector. In particular, the risk assessment techniques developed by the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation were seen as open to adaptation in order to apply more widely to non-native species.

In 2005, a Plant Health Strategy for England was adopted following wide consultation, and this recognised the threat posed by plant pests to the natural environment, both through direct and indirect damage.

The Plant Health Strategy noted that in the course of inspections of imports plant health inspectors discover organisms that may be potentially illegal under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It recognised the need to clarify responsibilities in these circumstances and this will be taken forward as part of the implementation of the Invasive Non-native Species Framework Strategy and the consideration of possible legislative changes.

Because plant pests and diseases that come under the remit of the Plant Health Services in Great Britain are themselves non-native species, this aspect of prevention of entry, control and eradication of harmful non-native species is therefore already well covered. Implementation of the Plant Health Strategy therefore contributes directly to the overall aims of this Strategy.

GB Animal Health and Welfare Strategy

The Animal Health and Welfare Strategy is concerned with kept animals – animals which are, for one reason or another, under human control. This includes all farmed livestock; cats, dogs and other animals kept as companions or in zoos, and also the hatching and rearing of fish and shellfish for food or ornamental trade.

The Strategy aims to “develop a new partnership in which we can make a lasting and continuous improvement to the health and welfare of kept animals while protecting society, the economy, and the environment from the effect of animal diseases”.

Key Related Strategies

Under the direction of the Strategy, Government is working with industry and other stakeholders, in particular, to improve the way we monitor, assess and manage threats to the health of kept animals (and, from that, public health).

Non-native species are a potential threat to kept animals because of the exotic diseases they might bring into the country, or because, once they become established, they might act as a reservoir or vector of diseases for kept animals.

Risk analysis and horizon scanning is used to undertake assessments of disease threats. This is considered against the reasons for government intervention and a proportionate and appropriate response is actioned.

England Wildlife Health Strategy

The Wildlife Health Strategy will aim to ensure that the disease status of wildlife is considered and balanced with society's interests and responsibilities, including human health, economic activity, biodiversity, the health and welfare of kept animals, and the need for a responsible approach to human/wildlife interactions. It will also develop a proportionate, risk-based approach to wildlife health surveillance and management and, where appropriate, direct interventions. The implementation of the Strategy will ensure that the natural asset base is maintained and protected.

Key areas of the Strategy will focus on managing disease surveillance in wildlife, protecting from incursion of new diseases into UK wildlife, and consideration of the impacts of wildlife disease on biodiversity and conservation.

Whilst the Wildlife Health Strategy will concentrate on pathogens and the Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy will concentrate on whole animals, there will clearly be important linkages where for example, a non-native species is the vector for a wildlife disease but is not having a detrimental ecological impact through its own physiological behaviour.

There will be a degree of common interest therefore in risk analysis and horizon scanning in respect of non-native species, surveillance and monitoring and possibly in capacity and procedures for rapid response. However, the chain of command as regards any interventions will be different and we will look to develop this relationship as the two strategies mature and are implemented.

Environment Agency draft Strategy – “Restoring the balance”

This document sets out the Environment Agency's proposed contribution to the Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for GB. It highlights the need for rapid response when invasive non-native species are first detected and a risk-based, sustainable approach for managing those species that are feasible to contain or control. The role of the Environment Agency is described in terms of its legal responsibilities, species of concern, management action and advisory activities. Local and regional partnerships to deal with problems, share knowledge and implement good practice are advocated to maximise the chances of successful outcomes.

International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, and the Ballast Water Management Strategy for North West Europe

The 2003 Defra review report noted that one of the main marine pathways for introduction of non-native species is that of ships' ballast water and the exchanges of water that are necessary to ensure safe operation of ships.

Significant work is being undertaken on minimising or removing the risk of introducing non-native species to receiving waters through ballast water discharges by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). The International Conference on Ballast Water Management for Ships held in February 2004 adopted the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ship's Ballast Water and Sediments, (the 2004 Ballast Water Management Convention). This requires that discharge of ballast water shall be conducted only through Ballast Water Management in accordance with the provisions of the Annex to the Convention. The IMO has also developed a series of guidelines to support this Convention, such as guidance for designating ballast water exchange areas, ballast water reception facilities and guidelines on management and emergency situations. The Convention has stimulated the development of a range of technologies and management systems that will reduce the risk of non-indigenous species invasion through ballast water. The IMO Convention measures are expected to come into force in 2009 and to be implemented through to 2016.

Through the involvement of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, the UK Government will maintain its involvement in the work being done under the IMO and will continue to play a leading role in the development of an interim Ballast Water Management Strategy for North West Europe. This is being developed in cooperation with other countries in the OSPAR Region and will align with and foreshadow the relevant IMO developments. Phase 2 of the development of this Strategy is under way and will address a range of issues including risk assessment, management options, use of bioprovinces as management units, information gathering and a notification procedure for biological emergencies. It is also expected that the hull-fouling pathway will also be considered by the IMO in due course.

EC Water Framework Directive

Invasive alien species are not specifically mentioned in the text of the EC Water Framework Directive (WFD). However, both Annex II and Annex V indicate that they do need to be assessed, both as environmental 'pressures' and because they undermine 'naturalness', a key principle of the WFD. There are several important tasks that need to be undertaken if the problems of alien species are to be tackled effectively using WFD mechanisms. For example, ecological monitoring methods are needed that can track the presence and impact of invasive species; action plans are needed for alien species management within WFD programmes of measures; and agreement is needed on how alien species should affect the classification of ecological status. This last point is especially urgent in view of the work now under way to publish the first river basin management plans in 2009. In the UK this issue has been debated at length and a proposal has been put to the UK Technical Advisory Group for consideration. If implemented, this procedure would be used to modify classifications of water bodies at high and good status according to the presence and/or impact of certain alien species known to cause serious harm to native species and habitats.

The fact that the WFD is a European directive means that an EU position is needed on the way that the Directive deals with alien species issues. The European Commission's ECOSTAT group is beginning to examine these matters, including the use of alien species in ecological status classification, and the way that WFD 'programmes of measures' might be used to address some of the problems.

The Invasive Non-native Species Framework Strategy for GB, while not referring specifically to the Water Framework Directive, sets out a series of strategic aims that should be part of WFD implementation. These include prevention, early detection, mitigation, and building awareness. It is hoped that where non-native species are causing a lowering of the ecological status of water bodies under the WFD, such measures will be used to address the issues at a catchment level through a partnership of the relevant bodies.

Key Related Strategies

Scottish Natural Heritage Species Action Framework

The Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) Species Action Framework (January, 2007) sets out a framework for the management of species in Scotland and provides a list of species for which clear, targeted action over the next five years could make the most difference to biodiversity. Four situations where species management may be appropriate to achieve biodiversity aims are described. These are: species conservation, invasive non-native species, conflicts of interest involving native species, and the sustainable use of species. The invasive non-native species included in the document are those species that are already established in Scotland and that are assessed as presenting the greatest risk to biodiversity of high conservation value.

Actions on the listed invasive non-native species may include control of individuals to reduce their population or limit their spread, or efforts to modify the human activity contributing to their spread (through enactment or enforcement of legislation, voluntary agreements or through education and promotion of codes of practice). Implementation of this Framework therefore contributes to the wider Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for GB.

The Species Action Framework explains that, as it is costly and very difficult to control or eradicate invasive non-native species once they are established, efforts should focus on preventing the arrival and establishment of those non-native species likely to become damaging. However, as it is not possible to predict with certainty the species that will arrive and establish themselves in Scotland, the Species Action Framework does not specify potential future invasive non-native species. Instead SNH will work with the Scottish Working Group on Invasive Non-Native Species (and through the GB Programme Board) on preventative action. The GB Strategy on non-native species will help to provide a clear sense of direction and a framework within which future priorities can be agreed.

“The Environment Strategy for Wales”

The Environment Strategy for Wales recognises the importance of the environment and explains how the challenges facing it will be tackled over the next 20 years.

http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/epq/Environment_strategy_for_wales/About_the_strategy/?lang=en