

# How to build a more robust & more collaborative LAG network



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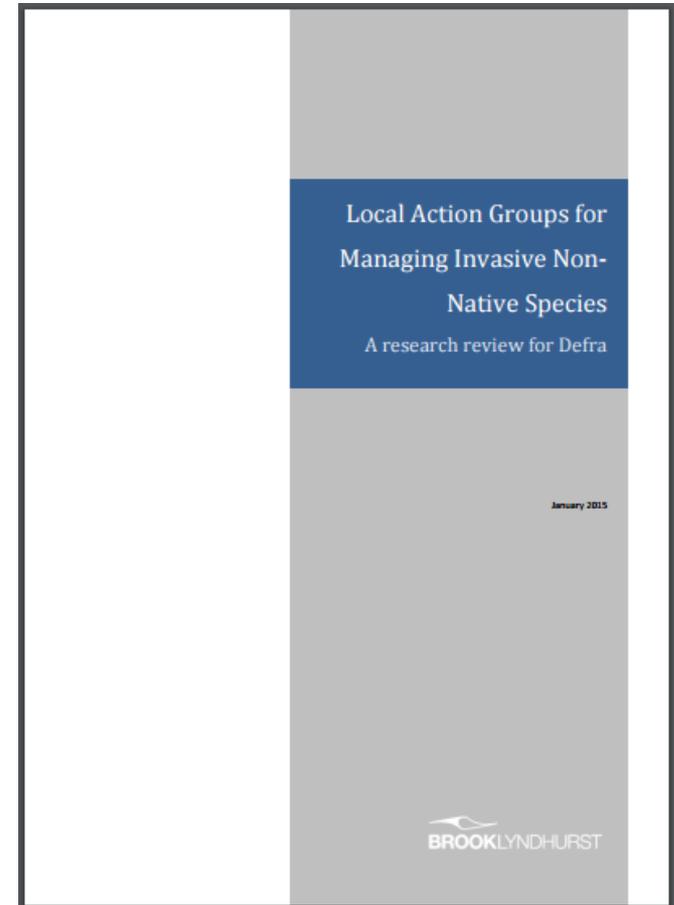
Animal &  
Plant Health  
Agency

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- 2) LAGs 'state of play' survey
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# Independent Review of LAGs

- Independent research to assess the outcomes from £1.5 million of Defra funding provided to 29 LAGs in England between 2011-2015.
- Research and writing up conducted over late 2014-early 2015.
- There were 259 specific objectives agreed between Defra and the LAGs, which vary in scope and scale.
- **4 out of 5** agreed objectives relate to mitigation, control and eradication.
- Only **1 out of 5** were related to prevention and early detection/rapid response.



# Headline figures

- **75,000 hours** of volunteer time contributed up to April 2014.
- Awareness raising activities reached '**at least thousands, if not tens of thousands of individuals**'.
- **2,500 volunteers** and others trained as a result of the Defra funding.
- LAGs levered approximately **£465,000** of additional funding and around **£350,000** of in-kind contributions.
- **34** species targeted by LAG, **23** of which are considered 'high impact' under the WFD.
- **INNS eradicated or severely reduced** at a large number of sites.

# Independent Review of LAGs

- A unique value of LAGs is their being genuinely local and independent which delivers a number of benefits over ‘top-down’ approaches to control and prevention. For example:
  - they can mobilise local resources (volunteers especially but also finance) that otherwise would not be focused on INNS;
  - they can target and tailor awareness raising in locally appropriate ways, and reach audiences that might otherwise be unaware (e.g. hyper-local interest groups);
  - they can build relationships with landowners that will continue beyond single control treatments;
  - and they can contribute to or be the focus for long term planning and the development of ‘soft’ organisational infrastructures to support a strategic approach to INNS locally.

# Key recommendations for LAGs

- 1) Work strategically wherever possible ie. ensure that the work of the LAG ties in and complements existing efforts of other organisations in the area.
- 2) Engage in local co-ordination
  - 1) Work with and coordinate existing volunteer groups
  - 2) Engage with local leisure 'interest' groups that can provide 'eyes on the ground'
- 3) Think about the future from the beginning.
- 4) Consider revenue opportunities from control work, corporate volunteering and, potentially, use of communication materials.
- 5) Consider best practice examples of using volunteer agreements.

Pg. 63 of full Report.

# Limitations of the Independent Review

- Only LAGs that had been funded by Defra were included in the review.
- Within that group the research was mostly restricted to Defra funded activities (although other activities were discussed) - this means it does not communicate the full breadth and volume of LAG activities.

## **BUT**

- It is still really useful, and highlights the good value that LAGs provided to Defra in helping to meet WFD targets.

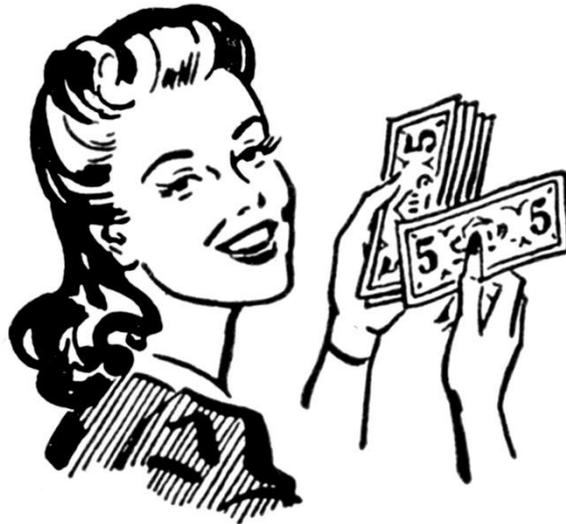
# LAGs 'state of play' survey

- Online survey was open June-August 2015.
- 10 questions covering:
  - The financial 'health' of the LAG network;
  - Whether the types of activities undertaken by LAGs in the past differ from their future priorities;
  - The current level of co-operation and collaboration across the LAG network.
- Survey was sent out to all LAGs on the GBNNSS distribution list.
- 30 complete responses (2 incomplete)



# Funding

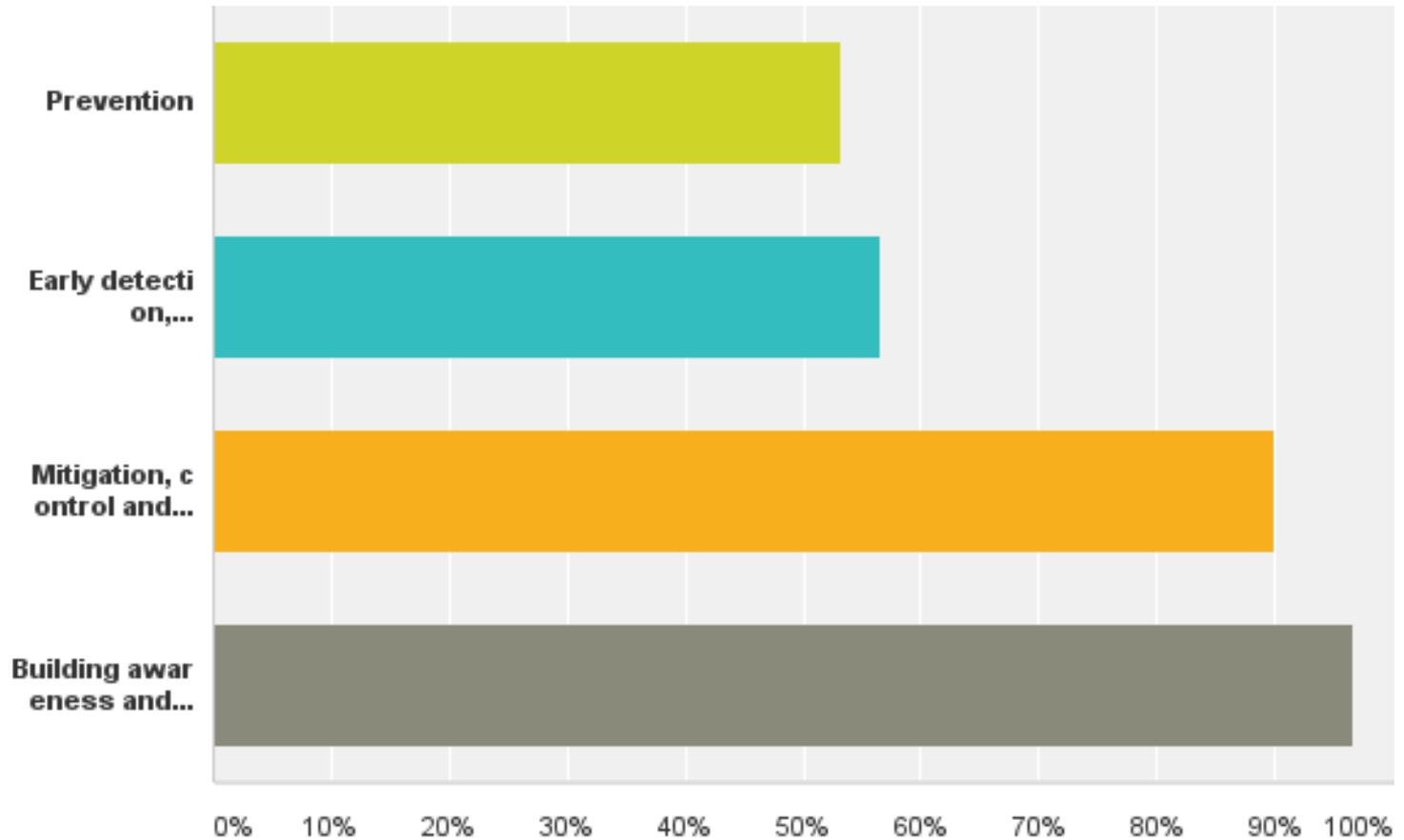
- **50%** of LAGs had never received funding from Defra (**36%** when you remove Scotland and Wales)
- **83%** had received funding from sources other than Defra, with **17%** not requiring funding to operate



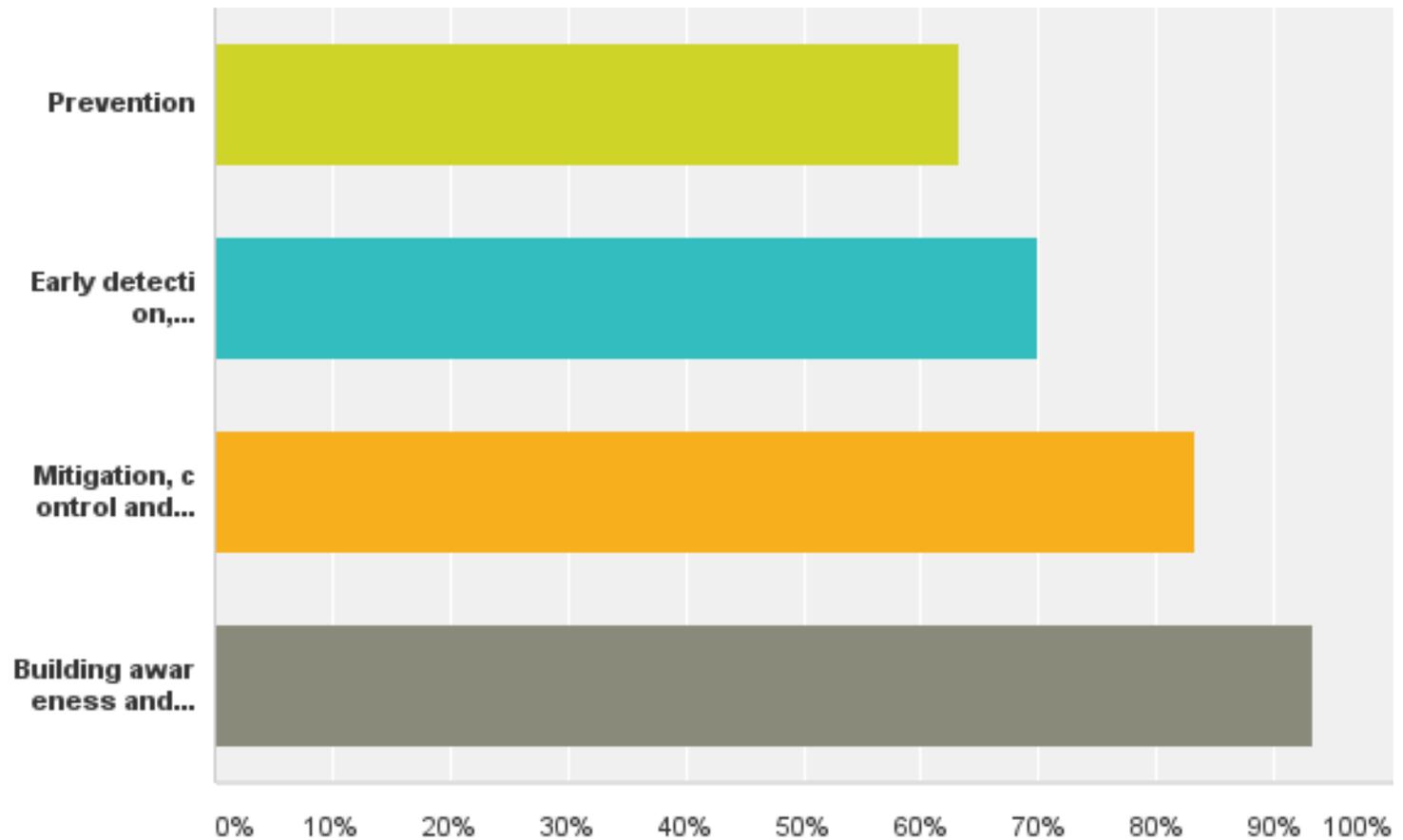
# Funding

- LAGs have secured funding from a wide range of sources, including:
  - Defra
  - Environment Agency
  - Natural England
  - Local authorities
  - National Park authorities
  - Heritage Lottery Fund
  - Interreg
  - Landfill tax
  - Private sector

# Past activities



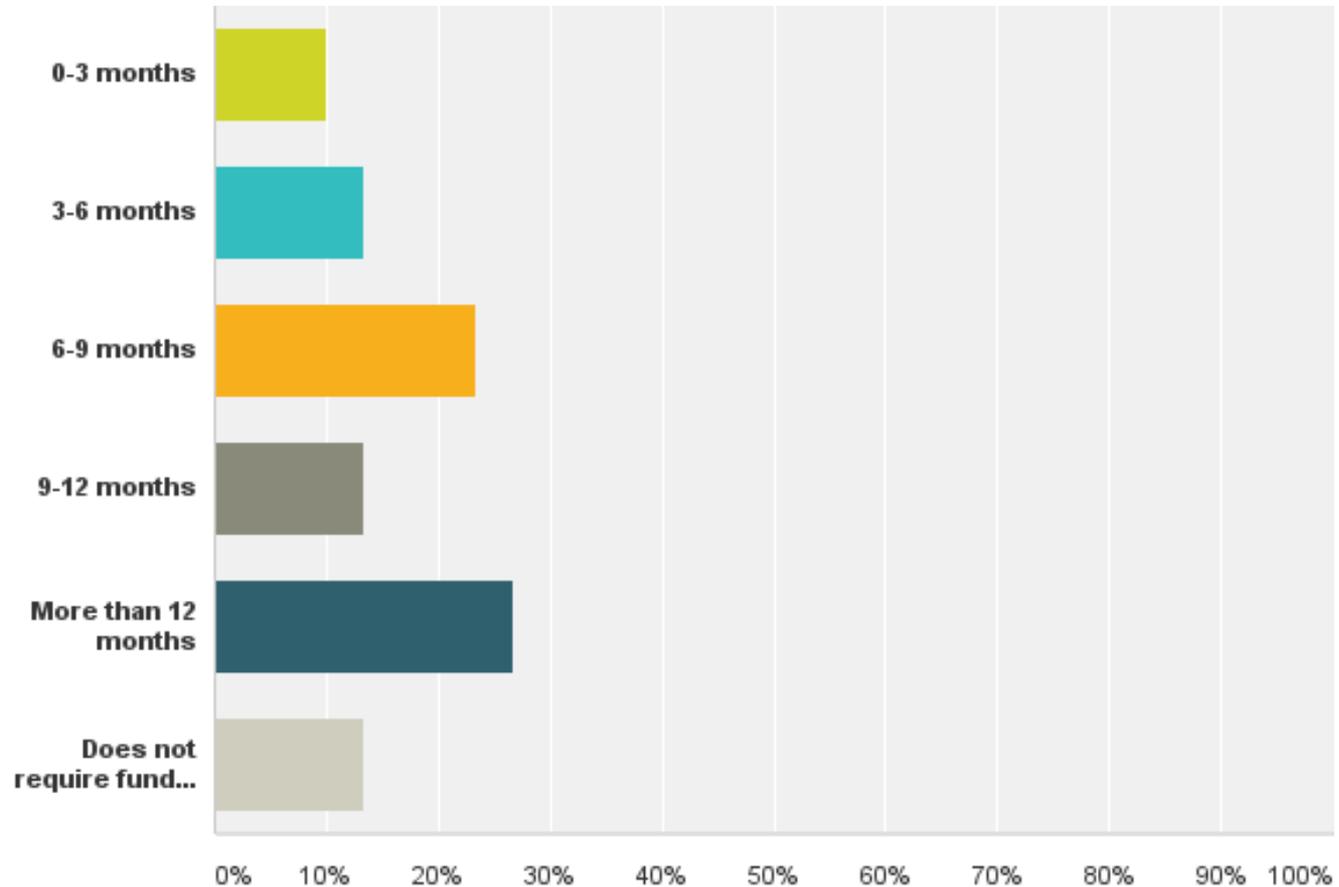
# Anticipated future activities



# Future plans

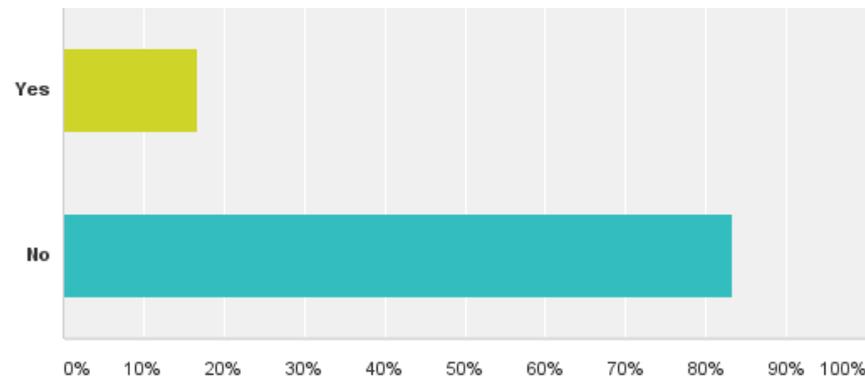
- **60%** of LAGs bidding for funding in the near future
- **33%** awaiting to hear the outcome of bids already submitted
- **BUT** only 40% had sufficient funding to continue beyond the next 12 months, with 23% not having funding to continue beyond the next 6 months
  - 67% of this group at most risk had received Defra funding over the last 4 years

# Future plans



# Collaboration

- All LAGs have at least some awareness of the activities of other LAGs
- **78%** report to be somewhat aware or very aware of the activities of the other LAGs
- **BUT** only **17%** of LAGs has worked collaboratively with other LAGs



# How do we build a more robust LAG network?

- LAGs have played an important role in facilitating effective management of INNS across GB
- LAGs are uniquely well-placed to bridge the gap between national-level initiatives and key local stakeholders
- LAGs supported delivery of a number of key actions in the last GB INNS Strategy, and are featured more prominently in the latest version of the Strategy
- Key Action 5.6 is to 'improve ways of supporting strategic local action' – LAGs can play a role in helping Government to deliver this

## Co-ordinating local action

Getting co-ordinated action on a large scale is vital when tackling established non-native species, and there have been several initiatives that have helped greatly with this. The RAFTS (Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland) biosecurity project has ensured co-ordinated action on invasive non-native species across much of Scotland, developing catchment-scale biosecurity plans that mirror the GB INNS Strategy in approach.

In England, Defra has provided £1.5 million over 4 years to support Local Action Groups (LAGs) tackling invasive species. Not only have these action groups controlled common species such as Himalayan balsam but they have also tackled a total of 15 species of plants and animals, put in place prevention and early detection mechanisms, instigated training, and supported awareness raising including through promoting the 'Be Plant Wise' and 'Check, Clean, Dry' campaigns. Some have even carried out research and others have joined forces with other groups from overseas to secure EU funding.

Volunteer involvement has been extremely important in the success of LAGs and they, as well as other groups carrying out local action, put in an estimated 130,000 hours of volunteer effort in 2012.



*Local Action Groups carrying out management of invasive species in Britain.*

# How do we build a more robust LAG network?

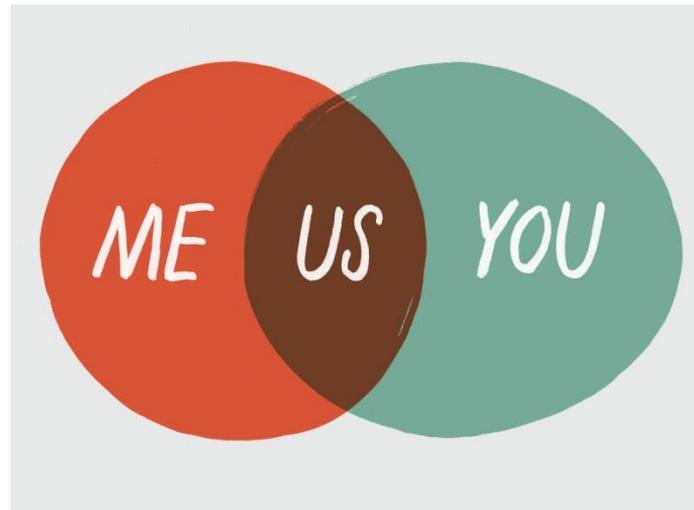
- LAGs are bidding for funding, and many have been successful
- There is a good understanding amongst LAGs of the need for a variety of funding sources
- LAGs have refocused their work, broadly mirroring shifts in Government priorities

# How do we build a more robust LAG network?

- The current funding environment remains challenging, with diminishing funding available from Government (both local and national)
- The fact that LAGs do not have complete national coverage (at a GB or England level) limits their ability to deliver some work programmes
- Collaboration across the network remains low despite awareness of other LAGs activities being high
  - Why is this? Is there a culture of competition rather than collaboration?
  - There are examples of collaborative working in the network, and the benefits it can bring

# How do we build a more robust LAG network?

- I believe that a more cooperative LAG network is a more robust LAG network
- To help achieve this future nationally administered funding should incentivise collaborative working between LAGs



# Could a LIFE project help build this more robust and collaborative network?

- I have been working with Defra (Matt Ashton & Angela Taylor) and Bristol Zoo we have been working on a LIFE project which aims to encourage LAGs to work in this more collaborative way whilst delivering high priority work
- Bristol Zoo have offered to help write the proposal (thanks!)



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

# Project development

- Originally aiming to submit a proposal in September 2015 – it quickly became apparent that this was unrealistic!
- Logical Framework Workshop held in July 2015
- The outputs of this Workshop have been used to develop our project
- We have also ensured that we align the project with:
  - Government priorities
  - The EU Regulation
  - The priorities of LAGs and stakeholders
  - LIFE priorities!

# LIFE priorities

## ***Nature and Biodiversity priority area***

### ***Biodiversity thematic priority***

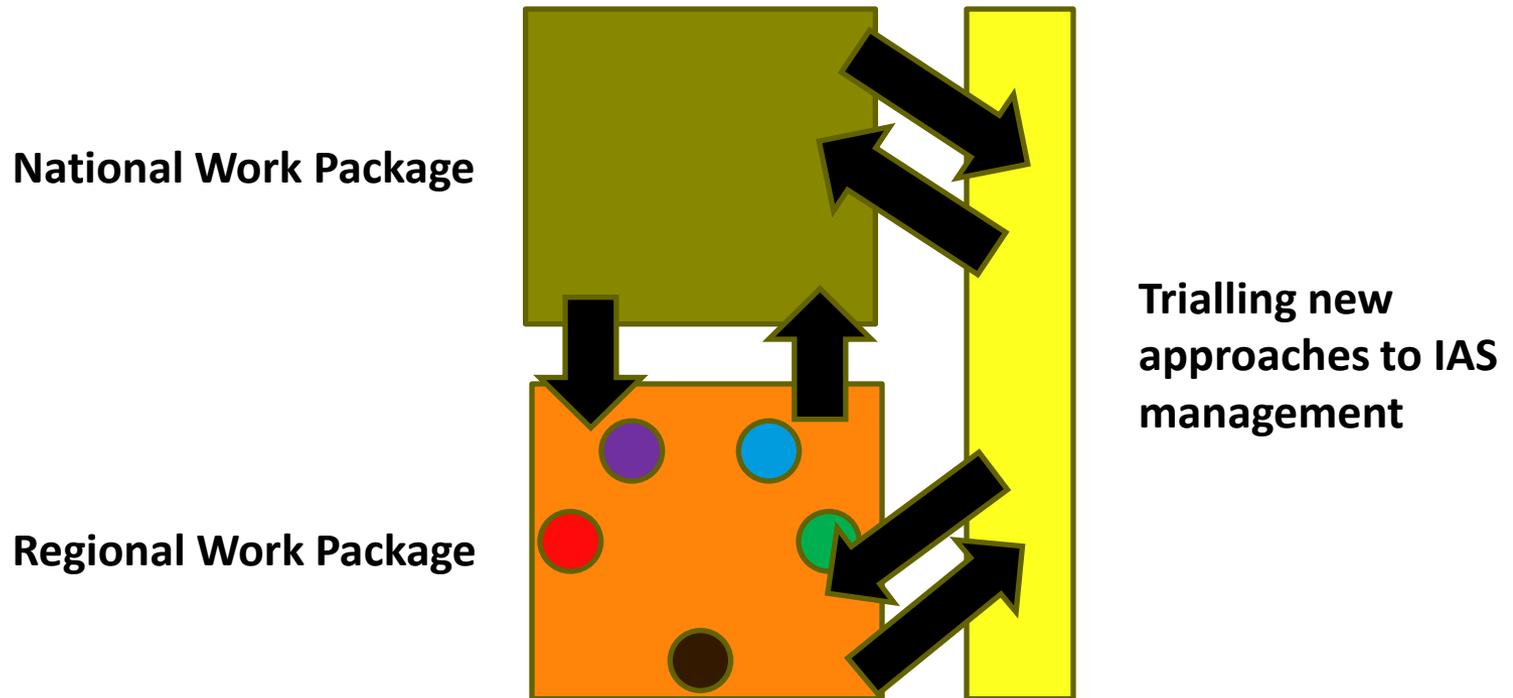
#### *Project topic:*

Projects implementing actions targeting **Invasive Alien Species** (under Target 5 of the Biodiversity Strategy or in view of contributing to reaching the level of protection set out in descriptor 2 — Non-indigenous species of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive ( 1 )) through actions testing and applying approaches aimed at:

- (a) preventing the introduction of invasive alien species, in particular by tackling pathways of unintentional introduction,
- (b) establishing an early warning and rapid response system, and
- (c) eradicating or controlling established invasive alien species on an appropriate spatial scale.

These projects shall address with their actions the three steps (prevention; early warning and rapid response; eradication/control) in a comprehensive framework, or, where one of the steps has already been addressed, their actions shall at least be clearly situated in a broader framework that links all three steps. They should be set up to improve existing — or introduce new — technical, administrative or legal frameworks on the relevant level; they should aim at preventing the broader establishment of IAS within the EU.

# Project concept



# Project concept

## 1) National Work Package

- Carry out the administration of the project and the manage contracts with delivery partners
- Produce Regional INNS Management Toolkit (RIMT), which will include:
  - Templates and guidance to produce Regional INNS Management Plan;
  - Training packages;
  - Awareness raising materials;
  - Best practice guidance.

# Project concept

## 2) Regional Work Package

Each Regional Action Area will:

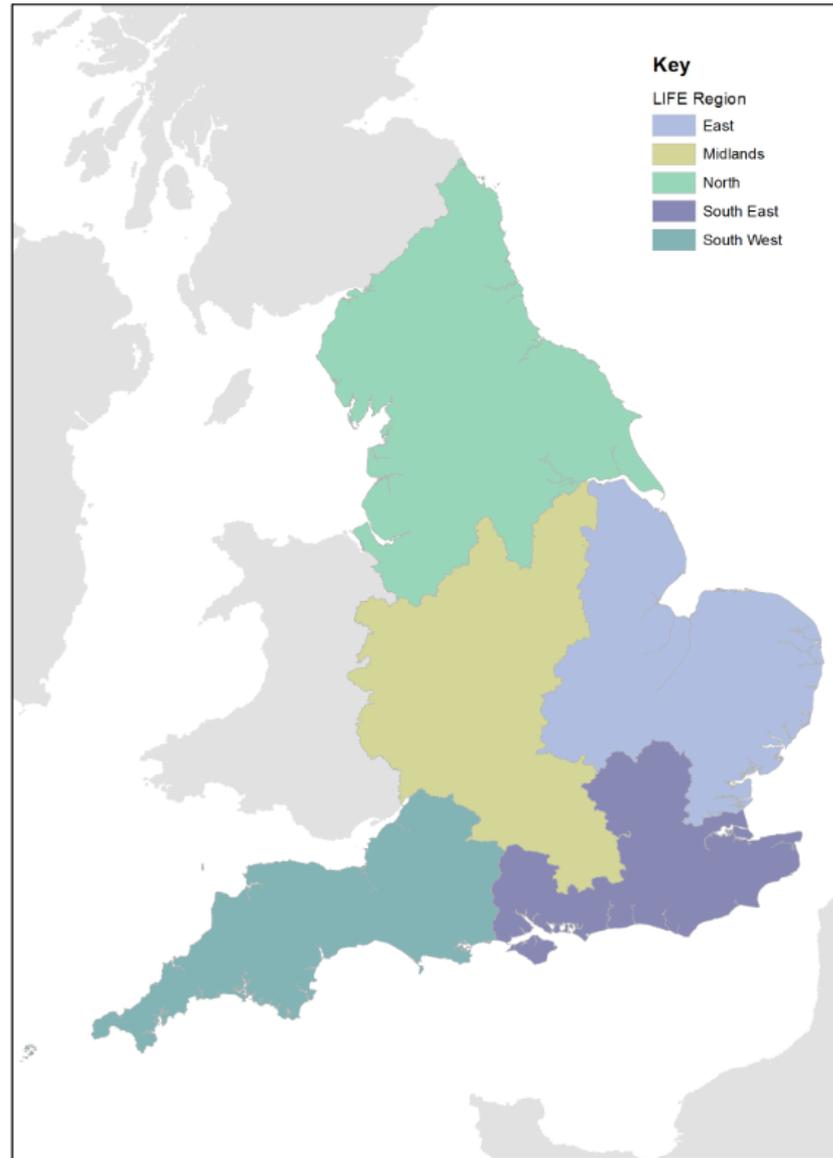
- Produce a Regional INNS Management Plan (RIMP), utilising the templates and guidance generated as a part of the National Work Package;
- Minimise pathways of introduction and spread for INNS by working with specific priority stakeholder groups as identified in the production of the RIMPs and promoting GB-level campaigns (such as Check, Clean, Dry) through a range of activities (training workshops, events, posters etc.);
- Increase capacity of stakeholders in their region to detect and report novel IAS early and support rapid responses, utilising the contingency plans currently being written at a GB-level and the training materials produced as a part of the National Work Package;
- Improve local practitioners' knowledge of best practice methodologies for the management of IAS, utilising training materials and best practice guidance produced as part of the National Work Package.

# Project concept

## **3) Trialling new approaches to INNS management**

Regional Action Areas established in the previous Work Package will act as a new framework to roll out and embed novel national level research programmes to develop cost-efficient and sustainable long term management methodologies resulting in the reduction and eradication of IAS (ie. biological control and potentially others...)

## Proposed Regions for LIFE Project



# Feedback so far

- Concept Note submitted to UK LIFE Group in November, with positive feedback received in Jan 2016:
  - This project fits well within the chosen thematic priority and topic area. It would build upon and complement the existing frameworks that are in place within England. Its central purpose is to bridge the gap between high-level strategies (such as the recently published GB Non-native Species Strategy) and action on the ground at a local level.
  - It also fits with the new EU IAS Regulation and work on IAS identified in Target 5 of the EU Biodiversity Strategy.
  - It is a topical subject and one of the priority areas in the 2015 Guidelines for Applicants – Biodiversity topic 2.
  - The concept note has relevant activities aimed at targeting the root of the IAS problem.

# For discussion...

- Do you agree with the approach we are proposing for the LIFE bid?
- Do you agree that more collaborative working across the LAG network will bring the anticipated benefits?
- What else can we do to help build a more robust network?

# Breakout session!



# Thank you for listening!

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