

GB Non-Native Species Pathway Action Plan: Zoos

Scope

Reducing the risk posed by pathways of introduction and spread is a key way of tackling INNS. The GB INNS Strategy calls for the development of Pathway Action Plans (PAP) and they are also a requirement of the EU IAS Regulation. This Pathway Action Plan is the first of a series of plans intended to address pathways of introduction or spread of non-native species in Great Britain. The plan outlines the general policy and approaches as well as deliverables by government and other actors in relation to this issue.

This Plan is for zoos, which include establishments such as wildlife parks, aquaria, falconry centres, reptile houses, butterfly collections and farm parks keeping non-domesticated species.

This plan was prepared by a working group (the Zoos PAP Working Group) reporting to the GB Non-native Species Programme Board (see Annex 1 for membership).

Rationale

Whilst the majority of zoos have a good record of preventing escapes and recapturing any escaped animals, there are still incidents of escapes as well as cases of animals that are allowed to move freely in and out of captivity, some of them capable of establishing populations and becoming invasive. This area is covered by two main pieces of legislation – The Zoo Licensing Act 1981 (ZLA) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA). Whilst zoo inspections and recording of escapes are already mandatory under the ZLA, this plan sets out additional actions that should help to minimise the risk of non-native species becoming established in the wild. In addition to the legislation, there is also a European Code of Practice for Zoos and Aquaria that has been developed by the Bern Convention.

The Zoos PAP Working Group has agreed guidance for zoos in England and Wales (Annex 2) and suggested amendments to the Scottish Non-Native Species Action Group's guidance for establishments in Scotland (Annex 3). The Zoos PAP working group has also amended the Bern Convention code of practice to tailor it to the needs of GB (Annex 4). Its primary output, however, has been to agree a series of measures to raise awareness among key actors in this sector and strengthen existing mechanisms, such as ensuring that escapes are dealt with as required by the ZLA. These actions are outlined below and they form the main body of the action plan.

Zoos also have a statutory role in both education and conservation and many are active in the conservation of species affected by invasive species. Some are already helping to raise awareness of the importance of the issue of invasive species amongst their visitors. Our aim is that this role will grow.

Aims and objectives

The overall aim of the PAP is to reduce the risk of the establishment of potentially invasive non-native species posed by escapes from zoos.

Specific objectives are to:

- raise awareness of the issue amongst zoos;
- ensure that zoo animals which have access outside the zoo are not allowed to remain outwith the zoo habitually;
- ensure plans are in place in all facilities to recover all escapes – not just those that pose a danger to the public;
- improve GB-wide capacity for responding to the initial stages of establishment from escapes from animal collections in conjunction with the rapid response working group;
- ensure effective mechanisms are in place to report promptly any escapes of species that could establish in the wild to Government;
- raise awareness of the importance of the issue of escapes amongst zoo inspectors, local authorities, Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and the Police to ensure this issue is addressed robustly;
- review the recording of information on escapes by zoos and investigate possible ways to collate this information centrally;
- make greater use of zoos to help raise public awareness of the invasive species issue amongst their visitors.

Actions

Action 1

The three governments and their agencies will ensure that the agreed guidance plus the GB Code of Practice is circulated to all zoos:

In Scotland – SNH (in conjunction with the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland) will write to or visit zoos to explain the context and implications of the guidance.

In England and Wales – the guidance will be sent to all zoos by APHA.

Action 2

The agreed guidance and a covering letter will be sent to all Local Authorities.

In Scotland – SNH will circulate this to Local Authority contacts including the network of Scottish Environmental Health Officers.

In England and Wales – APHA will circulate to Local Authority contacts.

Action 3

Defra will send the guidance plus the GB Code of Practice to the British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers and Attractions Limited (BALPPA) and the National Farm Attractions Network (NFAN).

Action 4

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Biaza will help raise the level of awareness by inviting talks at its AGM and Regional meetings and publicising the guidance and GB Code of Practice online and in their magazine as appropriate.

Action 5

APHA will circulate the agreed guidance to all zoo inspectors with the commissioning letter prior to every visit.

Action 6

NNSS will set up a task and finish group to review the recording of escapes by zoos and make recommendations on ways in which this information might be reported and collated centrally.

Action 7

The Zoos Expert Committee will redraft the Guidance for secretary of state-appointed zoo inspectors to:

- more explicitly address the issue of the types of exhibits which may contravene WCA, where animals have uncontrolled access outside the zoo, (e.g. free-flying birds, prairie dogs etc.).
- ensure that it is explicit that the requirements relating to escapes in paragraphs 8.29 – 8.40 of the Secretary of State's Standards of Modern Zoo Practice apply to non-native animals as well as those that pose a risk to public safety.

Action 8

Defra/NNSS will liaise with the National Wildlife Crime Unit to agree on how best to provide advice to zoo inspectors, zoo licensing authorities, NRW, SNH, NE and Wildlife Crime Liaison Officers on gathering and sharing intelligence on contraventions of the WCA and the range of options for dealing with these.

Action 9

APHA will request zoo inspectors to report all incidences (back to them) of exhibits with animals that have uncontrolled access outside the zoo.

Action 10

Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage and Natural Resources Wales will maintain a reporting line for escapes for species capable of becoming established.

Action 11

NNSS will work with BIAZA and non-BIAZA zoos to raise awareness of the issue of invasive species among their visitors.

Action 12

NNSS will ensure that the rapid response working group includes the aims of this PAP within its remit including by assessing what knowledge, expertise and resources exist to deal with establishing populations of escaped zoo animals.

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Monitoring and updating

The working group will be re-convened annually to assess progress with achieving the actions. The group will consider all relevant information including the following:

- Number of reported escapes (to the reporting lines).
- Feedback from zoo inspections.
- Feedback from individual zoos and via BIAZA.

Annex 1 Working Group members

NNSS (Chair)	Niall Moore
BIAZA	Kirsten Pullen
Zoos Expert Committee	Anna Meredith
Defra	Jane Withey
Defra	Craig Lee
Welsh Government	Sian Smith
Welsh Government	Kathleen Carroll
Scottish Government	Catherine Murdoch
Natural England	Adrian Jowitt
Scottish Natural Heritage	Stan Whitaker
Natural Resources Wales	Liz Howe

Annex 2: Agreed Zoos Guidance (on escapes etc.) for E+W

Annex 3: Zoos Guidance (on escapes etc.) for Scotland

Annex 4: GB Code of Practice for Zoos.