



# **Proceedings of the Fifth Stakeholder Forum on Non-native Species**

**Millennium Stadium, Cardiff**

**29th May, 2008**



## **Introduction**

The Fifth Stakeholder Forum on Non-native Species takes its direction from key recommendation 8 of the Working Group report of the Review of Non-native Species Policy – i.e. that stakeholders should be fully consulted and engaged in the development of invasive non-native species policies and action, through a mechanism such as a consultative Forum.

This year's Forum built upon the lessons from the Fourth Forum and used a mixture of talks and workshop sessions. The theme for the day was:

'Implementing action on the ground'

The Forum was designed to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to become actively involved in taking forward and optimally implementing the Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for GB as well as to inform stakeholders of progress made in the past year.

In particular, four workshops aimed to explore a wide range of views and ideas on taking forward four areas of the Strategy namely: Media and Communications, Surveillance – a central data repository, Facilitating Management Locally and Facilitating Rapid Response.

A question and answer session followed the workshops where delegates had the opportunity to question a panel of officials on non-native species issues.

80 people from a broad spectrum of organisations attended the Forum and a list of attendees is at the back of the proceedings.

## **PROGRAMME**

### **'Implementing action on the ground'**

#### **10:00 Registration and coffee**

10:30 Welcome and introduction (Stephen Hunter *Programme Board Chair* and Matthew Quinn *Welsh Assembly Government*)

10:40 Update on progress since the 2007 Forum (*Niall Moore – GB Non-native Species Secretariat*)

#### **Presentations**

10.55 European and CBD Progress (*Huw Thomas - Defra*)

11.15 Slipper limpets in the Menai Strait – rapid response, monitoring and codes of practice (*Clare Eno - CCW*)

11.35 Invasive species management on National Trust land (*Simon Ford*)

11:55 General discussion on the morning's talks

12:05 Introduction to the workshop sessions (*Niall Moore*)

**12:10 Lunch** (chance to mingle, view posters, visit the Millennium Stadium)

#### **13:00 – 14:45 Workshop sessions**

- 1) Media and Communications Strategy
- 2) Surveillance - taking forward a central data repository
- 3) Facilitating management locally - the use of local Fora
- 4) Facilitating Rapid Response

#### **14:45 Coffee break**

15:00 Panel session (Q&A)

15:50 Closing remarks/next steps (Stephen Hunter)

#### **16:00 Close**

## **Progress since the last Forum (May 2007 – May 2008)**

Niall Moore, Secretary to the GB Programme Board, outlined the main areas of progress since the 2007 Forum. These are summarised below:

- The Launch of the Invasive Non-native Species Framework Strategy on 28<sup>th</sup> May. This sets out a high-level framework providing a context for national, regional and local initiatives and details key actions required.
- The GB Risk Analysis Mechanism has now been set up and a total of 48 invasive non-native species are currently being risk assessed.
- The Risk Assessment Methodology is being further developed, in particular, a risk management module and species summary sheets.
- The Programme Board approved the establishment of a Central Data Repository in February 2008 and this is being taken forward by Defra.
- The Rapid Response Working Group was set up in February 2008 tasked with developing the concept with lead agencies, identifying relevant expertise and resources, scoping a general contingency plan and reporting back with its proposals to the Programme Board by December 2008.
- The Media and Communications Working Group was set up in March 2008. Its main aim is to draft by December 2008 a Media and Communications Strategy for the Programme Board's consideration. This includes identifying key target audiences and key messages, advising on a baseline survey of public attitudes, and helping draft Codes of Practice for key sectors.
- On the ground efforts to tackle non-native species continue to take place:
  - I. The Ruddy Duck eradication programme is on target with only 10% of the original population remaining.
  - II. Topmouth Gudgeon have successfully been eradicated from 7 crucial sites and work continues to eradicate it from the remaining 25 sites.
- The Non-native Species Secretariat website ([www.nonnativespecies.org](http://www.nonnativespecies.org)) has the new additions of a fully searchable research and management projects database, species information and new species alerts.

- Legislative changes include consultation on proposals to add up to 74 species to Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the proposed ban from sale of up to 28 species in England and Wales and 21 species in Scotland, all of which have been risk assessed.
- The Stakeholder Sounding Board containing 17 organisations has been set up for early consultation on policy matters.
- A Working Group for Wales was established in March 2008.

## **Presentations**

### **Abstracts of Talks**

#### **The National Trust's approach to the Control of Invasive Vegetation**

The National Trust owns over 280,000 ha of land across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Ownership ranges from mountains to downland, wetland, woodland and coast. The many country estates and gardens imported vast numbers of exotic species, which in some cases spread rapidly in to the wider countryside. Examples include vast areas of *Rhododendron ponticum* in Snowdonia; Brownsea Island and Quantocks; Holm oak on the Isle of Wight and Gloucestershire; Japanese knotweed in Cornwall and much of Wales; Cotoneaster on Portland and a variety of Mediterranean and South African exotics across southwest England and west Wales. Many lakes and water bodies have been affected by aquatic invasives such as *Azolla*, *Crassula helmsii* and parrot's feather with particular problems in the Lake District, Dorset and West Yorkshire. National Trust staff are well practised in a variety of invasive species control techniques, such as stump treatment, stem injection, grazing and mechanical clearance. Aquatic plants are the most difficult to manage, and are causing major difficulties. Invasive species remain one of the key issues for the National Trust and one that requires significant resources, specialist knowledge and manpower.

#### **Minimising future non-native introductions with mussel seed to Wales**

Although the UK possesses some of the (strongest) legislation for controlling the introduction of non-native species, the subsequent process of restricting movements for non-natives that have gained a foothold, is less robust. By consideration of a case study where the slipper limpet was inadvertently brought into the Menai Strait and Conwy Bay Special Area of Conservation (SAC), as an undetected passenger species in association with a movement of mussel seed, the issues associated with this weakness in the control system are examined. Decisions made on the preferred and

the most practicable courses of action are discussed along with implications of such an introduction to both the ecology of the site and the mussel industry. Initial and ongoing monitoring of the establishment and potential spread of this invasive species, including involvement of the public through media campaigns, and examination of historic records, is described. Proposals by the industry for voluntary codes to try and minimise the risk of future introductions are under consideration as a way of addressing the threat posed by potential invasive species that may be translocated with shellfish movements.

## Speaker profiles

### **Mr Simon Ford**

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Simon is the National Trust's Nature Conservation Advisor for Wessex (Dorset, Somerset, Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire). He started work for the National Trust in 1989 and was previously Property Manager for North Cornwall. Previously, he worked for Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks as well as Warwickshire Nature Conservation Trust, the Australian National Park Service and the Nature Conservancy Council. He is the lead for Invasive Species for the National Trust and carried out research into invasive vegetation control - notably Japanese knotweed. On a recent sabbatical, he looked at invasive species management in southern and Eastern Europe.

### **Dr Clare Eno**

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Dr Clare Eno is the Senior Fisheries Policy Officer for the Countryside Council for Wales and has worked for all the GB statutory nature conservation agencies. In 1997 while working for the Joint Nature Conservation Committee she authored a definitive review and directory of non-native marine species in British waters. At that time she represented the UK on a number of international working groups concerned with advising on marine non-natives (including under ICES, IMO and IUCN). Although she has a broad background in marine conservation and policy work, her current responsibility in relation to non-natives is from the perspective of those species potentially moved around in connection with sea fisheries and mariculture, primarily into and around Wales.

## **Workshops Reports**

### **1) Media and Communications Strategy**

Chair: Angela Robinson (Scottish Government)

#### **Background**

A Media and Communications Working Group was established under the auspices of the GB Non-native Species Programme Board in March 2008. The main task of the working group is to develop a draft Media and Communication Strategy to recommend to the Programme Board. We were looking for stakeholders to input into the development of the Media and Communications Strategy through this workshop.

#### **Main points raised**

The importance of training was stressed, particular for staff on key pathways, including professionals such as ecologists and house-builders. IEEM, RIBS, Landscape Institute, English Partnerships, Local Biodiversity Officers and National Park Staff were all suggested as needing training on invasive species issues. Training should be explicit in the ToRs of the Media and Communications working group and the subsequent strategy.

There were varied views on the suggested strategy strapline [Animals and plants have their place], many thinking it too vague as a stand-alone strapline and suggesting that it does not convey any level of threat to native species. Something along the lines of: 'Protect native biodiversity: keep animals and plants in their place' was suggested. In contrast, several people thought that the original strapline was appropriate – with the vague element encouraging further investigation by the public. Some warned about the danger of being jingoistic and xenophobic in relation to messages for the public.

The need for input from professional advertising people was stressed by some as was the concept of social marketing – getting particular groups to champion particular

messages. The use of Eco-schools for reaching schoolchildren was also to be encouraged with 'packs' for teachers being suggested as a good tool.

Branding was also encouraged (cf. Ireland) with the use of a logo on pens, stationary etc. There is a need for consistency of terms with the use of 'non-native' preferred to 'alien'. The use of good case studies (including economic costs) was encouraged, as was having a prioritised list of species (a most unwanted list).

### **Target audiences**

Targeting senior managers at key bodies by stressing monetary savings of early action 'Spend to Save'.

There was some discussion about how best to determine key target audiences and the general consensus was to focus on key pathways and species that present the greatest threat. Those associated with the following issues were agreed: Freshwater fish, Aquatic Plants, Vertebrates on islands and Habitat-altering plants. The stakeholders associated with these are shown below.

#### **Freshwater fish**

Anglers  
Fish stockists  
Fish farmers  
Fisheries managers  
The trade  
Tourist sector  
Land managers/owners  
(Angling press)

#### **Vertebrates on islands**

Island residents  
Tourists  
Ferry operators  
Farming/crafting representatives  
Schools  
(Local media)

#### **Aquatic Plants**

Anglers  
Recreational water users  
The trade (aquarists, plant, fish)  
Land managers/owners  
Gardeners  
Garden designers  
Landscape architects  
Professionals

#### **Habitat-altering plants**

Land managers/owners  
Gardeners  
Public bodies  
Transport interests  
Builders/developers

## **2) Surveillance – taking forward a Central Data Repository (CDR)**

Chair: Mark Hill (Biological Records Centre)

### **Background**

The GB Programme Board agreed to the establishment of a centralised data repository for non-native species distributions at its meeting in February 2008. This data repository will, subject to securing funding, be established over the next three years. The data will be stored on the NBN but accessed through the GB Secretariat's website which will have information on each species ecology, legislation covering it etc. We are also hoping to link the species account to relevant risk assessments, management information and ID information.

### **Species to concentrate on monitoring in the first instance**

- The CDR's scope would be GB only, to help deliver the GB Strategy.
- Initially focus on fully established species to quickly populate the repository with core information. The current situation will better enable us to distinguish new arrivals, and understanding how established species arrived will help target introduction pathways.
- Species present but not yet established (e.g. early arrivals/interceptions) would provide the most useful information for decision-making and rapid response.
- New arrival species with a real possibility of eradication should also be considered.
- Translocations of regionally non-native species (e.g. hedgehog on islands) should be included.
- The earliest arrival date should be carefully considered (DAISIE excludes species introduced before 1500 which, for GB, would exclude the black rat).

### **Species information required**

- Priority should be given to species posing the greatest threat.
- A layered info system, starting with a basic profile, could accommodate users requiring different degrees of technicality.

- Links and references would reduce the need to constantly update sections on evolving issues.
- Interceptions should be listed as part of inventory but not be spatially referenced because they are in transit.
- Need to distinguish whether a species is breeding, and whether plants are in gardens or protected areas.
- Information about impact of established species is important to give context and engage in issue.
- The NNS Risk Analysis process should feed into the CDR, and vice versa.

**Important sources of data on NNS distributions/interceptions that are currently under-utilised**

- RHS member records – data available since 1995.
- Interceptions of hitchhikers through horticultural trade.
- DAISIE, GISIN, EPPO interception and alert data.
- Commercial stakeholders such as timber importers and nurseries. RHS Plant Finder does not cover all plant nurseries and aquatic suppliers.
- Plant health record only listed species [new interceptions not included].
- Government needs to lead by example with data from trading standards, Animal Health, MoD, Defra family, local authorities.
- Farms – Animal Health and Welfare Strategy co-ordinates information, and FWAG is trying to start a project highlighting the invasiveness of farm species.
- Ecological consultants – potential to engage through IEEM or using code of conduct to solicit sharing of data?
- Water Boards.
- Fora or surveys such as the Avon Project.
- Botanic gardens are likely to first identify potential invasiveness and have a network, which could be tapped into, but will not have data immediately available.
- International model works well (examples of international organisation of biocontrol, which meets when issue is clearly apparent and countries at different stages of establishment share data and experience, *Ambrosia*, IUCN working group, GISP), however this tends to be at late stage of establishment.

- ICES marine website for NE Atlantic countries has good set of reports for many years.

### **Obstacles/concerns about data sharing and solutions**

- Engage data collectors by actively involving them at early stages.
- Education is important to encourage people to report species.
- Unwillingness to share data because fear consequences to the species - start with species whose impact is indisputable. Consider legislative requirement to report certain species.
- Costs to existing recording bodies to provide data more quickly and for different species. Small amount of funding (e.g. for temporary member of staff to collate data) will be strong motivator to small recording schemes.
- Need for clear data ownership and access agreements and to accommodate commercial sensitivity.
- Need to anticipate that Europe will request the data for its eventual data repository, and to build that capacity in from the start.

### **How to best engage local authority pest controllers, universities and members of the public in the monitoring process**

- Public should be engaged early as a useful source of local information and because they will want to contribute to and use the website - this must be considered/ built in from the outset.
- Collating and using data from the public can be inefficient: data verification is essential and need to limit requests of reports of specified species or periodic requests because the scale of response will be unmanageable.
- Need mechanisms for routing public reports of sightings to verifying bodies.
- Local authority pest controllers' data should already be fed into Local Record Centres. Implementing a central agreement for data sharing with all LRCs may be tricky, but simplified as only require NNS data.

### **3) Facilitating management locally – the use of local Fora**

Chairs: Ruth Waters (Natural England) and Jo Long (Scottish Environment Protection Agency)

#### **Background**

One of the key questions related to implementation of the GB Non-Native Species Strategy is how we optimally link action on the ground with the GB priorities in the strategy. In recent years a number of Fora have been set up to help co-ordinate control of invasive species – some very successfully. More recently Government Agencies have been investigating the use of Fora to help with the implementation of the Water Framework Directive.

#### **Some examples of good local Fora**

- Usk Giant Hogweed Eradication project. An initial enquiry to the EA led to the formation of a forum to deal with invasive species on the catchment. It includes the EA, CCW, National Park Authority and landowners and has been running for 2 years, always with good attendance at meetings. Actions arising include the training and leading of (mainly volunteer) sprayers by KWT staff.
- The approach used for the plant pest Sudden Oak Death, which is a big problem in Cornwall. It is of economic importance to the publicly accessible gardens, which developed a forum with help from Defra (who provided information and training) and are now taking a bottom up approach to working out how to deal with the issue.
- Tweed Invasives Project run through the Tweed Forum. Here the wide range of partners interested in tackling Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed have attracted Heritage Lottery Fund and SNH grants. The project has run for 8 years, at the end of which, in 2007, it was reported that no flowers of Giant Hogweed were present in the catchment. Since the start of this long-term project Fora have been initiated in Edinburgh and Lothians, Argyll, plus Highland region is about to start one up.
- Cornwall Knotweed Forum was set up with help from the West Country Rivers Trust and attracted Defra and EU funding.

- Bristol City Council Living Rivers Project has a strategy to deal with invasives. Following a public meeting to decide if/how to start a forum – this is now being taken forward in the form of a Bristol and Avon forum.
- The coordinated response devised to deal with Goats in Snowdonia due to the need to manage public perceptions of goats and the potentially controversial actions needed to control them.

### **How to best facilitate the establishment of Fora**

- The most successful Fora are thought to arise from a bottom up approach – where local people have an interest or concern there is more likely to be active involvement in the work of a forum.
- National organisations may be more able to bring all the local interested parties together.
- GB secretariat could consider areas where there are not yet Fora and encourage local ownership/recognition of need for action on invasive species to facilitate setting up of new Fora.
- Public understanding of the issues need to be improved so national communication about the socio-economic impacts of invasive species would help, and about the need for prevention etc. to motivate local people into action in their area.
- WFD Area Advisory Groups and Local Biodiversity Partnerships already bring partners together.
- Rivers Trusts provide a good route to funding.

### **How to spread best practice between Fora**

- Information: ideally the GB secretariat website could provide a one stop shop for information. This could include: a regular digest of updates on what's going on across GB; details of Fora and their area of interest; a catalogue of case studies/copies of management plans and their successes/lessons learned (on the website or via links to the Fora websites); links to best practice guidance that is validated/peer reviewed.

- Funding: need to be able to make links to impacts of invasive species on all interests (not only biodiversity, but also flood management etc and the socio-economic impacts) to open them up to a wider range funding opportunities. GB secretariat could provide a central point for Fora to identify appropriate funding streams for their work, including links to relevant agri-environment and forestry grant schemes.
- Opportunities to share experiences: GB secretariat could facilitate a gathering (free, annual?) of people involved in Fora, particularly practical work. Many Fora are successful primarily due to individual personalities driving projects forward, so opportunities to talk about successes and lessons learned could help inspire Fora at stages when they are struggling to make progress. An 'invasive species week' was suggested as an annual focus for funding/action.
- Communication campaigns: best run at a national level to help facilitate and inform consistency in local guidance delivered by Fora.

#### **Potential leading groups/organisations for Fora**

- Although it was agreed that Fora should generally be driven by a bottom up requirement for invasive species management plans/action, benefits of being coordinated by national organisations such as the EA, SEPA, SNH, NE or CCW include connections with Fora in other parts of the country and link to the latest methods, research, legislation etc., and also helps them to engage with national organisations/industries.
- The local stakeholders are however generally better placed and more likely to have the manpower to actually undertake practical work (provided they are adequately resourced).
- Local authorities have a key role through development planning etc, but there needs to be consistency across authorities in their requirements of developers.
- Organisations, which have the Water Framework Directive as a primary legislative driver, may have to comply with this legislation, and have the mechanisms in place to set up groups of partners, but they still rely on the good will of partners to get the work done.

### **Spatial organisation of Fora**

- Catchment-based Fora for aquatic/riparian species. Association of Rivers Trusts (England and Wales) and RAFTS (Scotland) can provide coordination for catchment based Fora.
- Regionally organised Fora for terrestrial species.
- Regional organisation for coastal/marine (near shore) species.

## 4) Facilitating Rapid Response

Chair: Huw Thomas (Defra)

### Background

A GB Rapid Response Working Group was established under the auspices of the Programme Board in February 2008. The main task of the working group is to explore how best we can instigate effective and timely rapid responses and to make recommendations to the GB Non-native Species Programme Board on the best way forward. We were looking for views from stakeholders on how best to implement rapid responses.

### Criteria for a lead/coordinating agency

- A lead agency should respond and coordinate from a single point to give the quickest response, but does not necessarily need to be the provider of funds.
- Risk management (addressing what should be done) does not answer the question of *who* should do the work. This could possibly be added to the GB Non-native Risk Analysis Panel's (NNRAP) brief.
- Could the lead agency drop everything else to respond when needed? (The JNCC's approach to marine pollution incidents is an example where this happens).
- A lead agency needs access to resources.
- Is a separate lead agency required for marine, terrestrial and freshwater habitats/species? Or can one deal with them all?
- A competent authority would need to be identified if a legislative route was followed.
- Obstacles to responding quickly need to be considered thoroughly – seasonality, landowners, equipment and resources.

### How to best resource rapid responses

- Upfront levies (at EU level) could support invasive species management.
- The Government alone is unlikely to be able to provide sufficient funding, other bodies will be needed to ensure enough resource.

- Given the importance of a timely response, the limit of ability to cope within one's own area and identifying when outside help is required needs to be recognised.
- Resources are a limiting factor therefore a certain number of species, which are known to be particularly dangerous, must be focused on. It must be realised that not everything can be tackled.

### **Available resources for rapid responses**

- Stakeholders could be a potential resource, e.g. engaging the mussel operators in the Menai Straits.
- The National Trust regions share staff and equipment. It will also be important to think beyond the boundaries of one's own land and where necessary, work together and with adjacent landowners.
- A volunteer register could be used such as the one used by Defra for disease outbreaks, which could help draw on specific expertise or capacity such as gamekeepers.

### **The role of non-government organisations in rapid responses**

- NGOs can act in detection and surveillance of invasive species, but would like guidance on species identification.
- Local invasive species Fora could be a resource for elements of rapid response.
- It could be made an obligation to remove identified invasive species. There may be issues with this – e.g. practicality of enforcement, compliance monitoring could be difficult, removal needs to be done in a safe fashion and at times may require special authorisations. Obligation to *report* may be a better option.
- Public understanding is particularly important where action needs to be taken before the species becomes a big problem. Especially in more sensitive cases, managing the response to such decisions by Government would be significantly facilitated with stakeholder input/support.
- Stakeholders may want to see trade awareness and education as an important aspect of a lead agencies work.

- Communications between the Government and industry/NGOs is important – using the correct approach to explain the situation and presenting a solution is important, but it may be useful to back this up with legislation. There is a need to find the most effective way to spread information and promote good standards.

### **How to best support rapid response on a local level**

- By keeping people informed and compensated where appropriate will keep up local motivation.
- Wildlife Trusts/BTCV may be a useful way of communicating and tackling local issues.
- Communicating more directly with key individuals rather than through large organisations to tackle rapid response issues may be easier as administrative issues relating to funding/guidelines/procedures etc. may be more cumbersome within large organisations.

### **Creation of a rapid response plan**

- Currently an ad-hoc arrangement is used to deal with situations requiring a rapid response. A feasibility study needs to be carried out.
- Examples of contingency plans can be learnt from - Oil spill contingency plans (crisis management at national and Welsh level).
- Mock exercises in rapid response to test potential contingency plans may be useful.
- The response needs to be adapted to the scenario. A generic plan would be useful, with species/scenario specific plans where more information is known.
- Criteria are needed for initial screening including what action will trigger the response process.
- A flowchart may be useful in deciding upon a suitable response. Particular species could have a pre-agreed response. It may be necessary to identify potential threats to the country for this.

### **Duration of rapid responses**

- The point where rapid response ends and long-term management begins needs to be considered.
- When the case is a re-occurring long-term case versus a new (or potential) problem, different strategies may be required.

### **Considerations for prioritising rapid responses**

- How easy it is to respond.
- How much resources are available (surveillance versus eradication).
- When is it too late for a rapid response?
- Is more work on predicting invasive species coming into GB important? (This may be more practical for species, which are progressively spreading through/from Europe for example, but more challenging for random invasions from Africa/South America etc).
- In the case of low cost / small / easy to tackle cases need to avoid the risk assessment process causing delay or use a fast track approach to reduce delays to the response.

## **Panel session**

A panel consisting of Stephen Hunter (interim PB Chair), Niall Moore (NNS Secretariat) Angela Robinson (Scottish Government) and Huw Thomas (Defra) answered questions from the floor.

Paul Walton (RSPB) noted that there are more globally threatened bird species in the UK Overseas Territories (OTs) than in the whole of Europe, and asked why the OTs were omitted from the Strategy and what will be done to deal with non-native species issues in the OTs. Huw responded that the Strategy takes forward the 2003 policy review, which was done on a GB basis. The Programme Board had discussed the issue of whether the OTs should be included in its scope and its views were conveyed to the Strategy Working Group. The Strategy makes a commitment to keep the OTs informed of developments in GB, and some outputs such as the risk analysis mechanism may be exportable or provide a basis for systems in the OTs. Defra provides financial assistance through the Darwin initiative, and JNCC provides scientific advice, however the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has overall responsibility for the Government's relationship with the OTs and it would be helpful for any concerns to be conveyed to the FCO. Stephen Hunter committed to write to the FCO in his capacity as Programme Board Chair, raising this as an issue of grave concern.

Nicola Randall (Harper Adams University College) has obtained 3 years' funding to investigate the use of systematic review as a tool for invasive species surveillance and control. She asked people to contact her if they are interested in becoming stakeholders for this project, which would include consultation on which data to include in the reviews, providing feedback on drafts and interpretation of data (Email: [nrandall@harper-adams.ac.uk](mailto:nrandall@harper-adams.ac.uk), Tel: 01952 815347).

In the absence of further questions, Steve Hunter asked for a straw poll on the usefulness of the Forum, after five years. The response was overwhelmingly positive. As the two most recent Fora have been held in Scotland and Wales, the next will

probably be in England. Stephen asked for a show of hands for those preferring a London venue rather than a York venue. Support was equally divided.

Tony Dickerson (RHS) noted that users of plant material were poorly represented at the Forum and asked what could be done to encourage trade bodies to attend. Niall Moore noted that trade bodies are invited but that other sectors are more responsive. David Gilchrist (HTA) commented that there is a communications and resource issue. Steve Hunter noted that there are other opportunities for trade representation such as through the Stakeholder Sounding Board and working groups.

Tracy Edwards (JNCC) commented that it is very helpful to see the considerable progress achieved even on an annual basis. She added that the Fora are not repetitive, are very informative, and provide a very useful networking opportunity.

## **Feedback from attendees**

Feedback forms were given to all attendees in the welcome packs and 29 people responded. All those who responded considered the Forum a worthwhile activity. Comments included 'a good opportunity to meet people and catch up' and 'important for progress updates and stakeholder network opportunities'.

The format was well received, in particular people commented that the variety of talks was good and the mix of talks and workshops worked well. It was commented that the amount of time for workshops was 'well chosen' and 'better than last year', but there was a suggestion that there could be longer intervals for interacting. Two people commented that the workshops could be better organised or more focused. There were a few suggestions to include a short summary of the workshops at the beginning of the panel session.

Feedback on the work of the Secretariat over the last year was very positive with comments including 'very good', 'excellent', 'making good progress', and 'excellent progress'. A few people commented how pleased they were that the strategy had been launched and another commented that the NNSS website was clear and useful.

Three people suggested that the Forum should be held every two years with one of those commenting that there was a 'broad consensus' for the Forum to be held 'every other year rather than annually'. When asked where attendees would like the next Forum to be held, there was an even number of people suggesting York and London, with other suggestions being Birmingham, central England and Cumbria. The venue and catering was considered good to excellent.

## **Acknowledgements**

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