



Proceedings of the Ninth Stakeholder Forum on Non-native Species

**Conference Aston, Aston
Business School, Birmingham**

10 May 2012



Introduction

The GB Non-native Species Stakeholder Forum is designed to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to become actively involved in taking forward the GB Strategy, to celebrate progress made in the past year and to network with colleagues old and new working on non-native species issues across GB.

The morning session of this, the ninth Forum, consisted of a general update on developments in the previous twelve months as well as a number of presentations detailing some specific topics. Three afternoon workshops then explored views and ideas on the EU Strategy, Streamlining reporting of non-native species and Communicating the rationale for control. These workshops were followed by an open question and answer session where delegates had the opportunity to raise and discuss questions relating to non-native species. Posters were also presented.

83 attendees from a broad spectrum of organisations attended the Forum. A list of attendees can be found at the end of these Proceedings.

PROGRAMME

10:00 Registration and coffee

10:30 Welcome and introduction

- **Update on progress since 2011:** Niall Moore (GB Non-native Species Secretariat)

10:50 Presentations

- **EU Strategy:** Huw Thomas (Defra), Carrie Hume (Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust) and Jim Collins (Pet Care Trust)
- **Killer Shrimp and Biosecurity:** Andy Brown (Anglian Water)
- **Asian hornet:** Gay Marris (National Bee Unit, Fera)
- **EA NNS management:** Matt Brazier (Environment Agency)
- **Marine Strategy Framework Directive:** Kylie Bamford (Defra)

12:40 Introduction to the workshop sessions

12:50 Lunch

13:40 Workshop sessions: key areas for 2012-13

- **EU Strategy**
- **Streamlining reporting of NNS**
- **Communicating the rationale for control**

15:00 Refreshment break

15:30 Open session

15:50 Closing remarks/next steps

16:00 Close

Abstracts of Presentations

Update since the last Forum

Niall provided an update on the main developments in the 12 months since the last Forum in Edinburgh. Included in the update was progress with domestic legislative change, the EU IAS Strategy, *Be Plant Wise* and *Check Clean Dry* media campaigns, training working group, risk analyses, rapid responses and local action groups.

EU Strategy

Overview – Huw Thomas

Hitherto, policy development on invasive alien/non-native species in Europe has been driven by international agreements, primarily under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Bern Convention. However, national policy commitment across the EU has been variable resulting in a very uneven policy landscape and variable levels of action to tackle the issue. Against this patchy background, the European Commission has concluded that its EU IAS Strategy will need to take the form of a European Directive if it is to effectively deliver a more cohesive EU approach. This will be a major development that offers both pros and cons but in whatever shape or form if finally adopted, will very significantly change the complexion of activity on IAS. The Commission is now developing its proposals and aims to bring them forward later in 2012. This introduction outlined the expected main component parts of the Strategy and some of the implications for the future.

A Users Perspective – Jim Collins

No one doubts that invasive non-native species present problems to ecosystems and man's economic well-being and that the issue must be properly addressed. Nevertheless, most direct stakeholders whose activities stand to be impacted upon by legislation in this area believe that there is a tendency for hype and knee-jerk reactions amongst certain NGO's and INNS professionals and wish to see a more balanced, proportionate and scientific approach to legislative enactment. Jim outlined these concerns and reminded people of the economic and social benefits of horticulture and animal ownership and the trades that support such activities and that the precautionary principle is equally valid in support of these as it is to protecting ecosystems.

The Conservation NGO Perspective - Carrie Hume

This presentation outlined joint views from WWT, Plantlife and Birdlife/RSPB on the proposed Directive. It detailed what we hope it will contain, and what it needs to achieve.

The killer shrimp in Grafham water

The invasive shrimp, *Dikerogammarus villosus*, was first reported in the UK at Grafham Water on the 3rd September 2010. Andy Brown described the

ongoing management of biosecurity, by Anglian Water and their partners at the site, 20 months on.

The Asian hornet – risks and responses

The Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) is an aggressive predator of honey bees that has recently been found in mainland Europe. Gay summarised the findings of a Non Native Species Risk Assessment for this species and the key actions described in the newly-completed Response Plan for England and Wales.

EA NNS Management Team

The Environment Agency, as part of its strategic response to aquatic invasive non-native species, has recently established a Non-native Species Management Team (NSMT). Matt provided a brief overview of the team's work: their drivers, who they are, what they do, their priorities, tools and techniques, progress to date and future challenges.

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive

Kylie updated the Forum on progress with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive especially in relation to Descriptor 2 which deals with non-native species.

Speaker profiles

Niall Moore

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Niall Moore has been the head of the GB Non-native Species Secretariat since it was established in March 2006. The Secretariat is based at Fera (The Food and Environment Research Agency - an executive agency of Defra) in York but the Secretariat reports to the GB Programme Board that co-ordinates policy on non-native species issues for GB. Prior to this post Niall worked at CSL as team leader of the Conservation Management Team that led the Ruddy Duck and Hebridean Mink eradication programmes.

Huw Thomas

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Huw is Head of the Protected and Non-native Species Policy Team in Defra and is the lead policy contact to whom GB Secretariat reports. He has previously chaired the working group that developed the GB Strategy and the Rapid Response Working Group. He is a member of the IUCN Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG) and currently Co-Chair of the Bern Convention's Group of Experts on Invasive Alien Species (IAS). He is also the lead UK policy representative in the context of the European Commission's work to develop an EU Invasive Alien Species Strategy. He was the lead author of the paper on Early Warning & Rapid Response produced by the Commission's Working Group 2 and co-author on others. He also provides UK input on IAS issues to the Convention on Biological Diversity's work. He is Defra's member of the "Killer Shrimp" (*Dikerogammarus villosus*) national Task Group.

Jim Collins

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Jim has been Co-ordinator of the Sustainable Users Network (SUN) for the past 18 years which encompasses almost all the major plant and animal (growers, keepers and trader) organisations in the UK. He is also zoological advisor to a host of animal-related organisations nationally and internationally. He undertakes field work - especially rattlesnakes and hummingbirds - and maintains a diversified animal collection on his farm property.

Carrie Hume

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Carrie Hume is Head of Conservation Policy at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. She oversees the Trust's input on all issues that affect the conservation of wetlands and the species they contain.

Andy Brown

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Andy Brown is Anglian Water's Climate Change and Environmental Performance Manager. His team's remit includes developing policy and

strategy on climate change, biodiversity and environmental performance issues. They drive Anglian Water's climate change adaptation work, the delivery of their 10 year biodiversity action plan and the management of their 47 Sites of Special Scientific Interest. He took the lead in Anglian Water's response to the discovery of Killer Shrimp at Graham Water.

Gay Marris

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Gay is the Science Coordinator for the National Bee Unit (Fera). Her main research interests include non-native pest threats to UK honey bees. Gay has been involved in a number of risk assessments for exotic species e.g. Small hive beetle, *Tropilaelaps* mites & Asian hornets.

Matt Brazier

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Matt manages the Environment Agency's strategic operational response to aquatic invasive non-native species, and leads the Agency's Non-native Species Management Team (NSMT), delivering risk based rapid response eradications for a range of invasive species (specialising in fish) across England and Wales.

Kylie Bamford

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Kylie is a marine policy advisor for Defra, working on the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). Kylie leads the development of characteristics of Good Environmental Status (GES) and associated targets and indicators for Biodiversity (Descriptor 1), Non Indigenous Species (Descriptor 2), Commercial Fish (Descriptor 3), Food Webs (Descriptor 4) and Sea Floor Integrity (Descriptor 6). She chairs the NIS technical group within the Intersessional Correspondence Group on the Coordination of Biodiversity Assessment and Monitoring (COBAM) within Ospar, and is a member of the GB Programme Board.

Workshop reports

1. EU Strategy

Chairs: Huw Thomas (Defra) and Pete Robertson (Fera)

Background

The European Commission is in the process of developing a legislative instrument on IAS with a view to bringing forward its proposals in late 2012. The Commission is now looking to identify the processes that may be needed, the most cost-effective ways to deliver them, how to join up the various components, the balance between EU/MS decision-making and the level of legal compulsion likely to be necessary to ensure a consistent EU-wide baseline of protection against IAS. We have already had an informal consultation exercise with stakeholders in 2011 and 2012 but this workshop will allow us to further explore the likely implications of this EU legislation on sectors in GB.

Aim

To assess the views of UK stakeholders on any issues related to the EU IAS Legislation.

Discussion pointers

- The EU shares a large territory, many civil freedoms, a common legal framework and a single-market...it also therefore shares the IAS risks. Thinking about the key issues and likely component areas of the EU Strategy, the workshop will explore issues around:
 - the balance between controls -v- existing freedoms; and,
 - the balance between EU obligations -v- MS choice...by identifying and discussing the potential pros and cons of an IAS Directive.

Conclusions and key points raised:

- Current activities in support of the planned EU Directive on Invasive Non-Native Species were summarised;
- Discussion was offered up around three dimensions – Opportunities -v- Challenges; Regulatory -v- Voluntary approaches and the balance between EU Obligations -v- MS Decisions;
- A key opportunity was the chance to produce unified EU level playing-field of actions and national capabilities;
- Challenges flagged included the costs of compliance and implementation and how these should be funded;
- There was specific discussion about the formulation of any common prohibition on release into the environment and the challenges of drafting a perfect provision;
- Coordination with the requirements of other directives was important to avoid duplication etc;

- It was generally agreed that a regulatory approach would promote compliance but risked inefficient use of resources if applied extensively to pathways;
- There was an important need to take burdens on relevant industry sectors into account; noting that a voluntary approach favoured engagement from stakeholders;
- EU obligations needed to ensure cost sharing for multinational issues, however, MS decision making was far more flexible to support a risk-based approach which could also encompass the geographic complexity of the issue;
- Lastly there was some discussion around the key UK Governmental lines taken so far; recognising that at this stage these are inevitably high level objectives. However, an emphasis on proportionality of measures relative to risks and an evidence-based approach to legislative measures was supported.

2. Streamlining reporting of INNS

Chairs: Helen Roy (CEH) and Trevor Renals (EA)

Background

The past 3 years have seen the establishment of the Non-native Species Information Portal (NNSIP) to assist with the monitoring and surveillance of non-native species across GB. A second phase of this work has just been commissioned by Defra (taking investment in the NNSIP up to around £1 million over 9 years) and one of its key aims is to speed up reporting of species for which we need distribution information quickly. Examples of these species are those for which we have contingency plans (to eradicate them should they turn up) such as Asian hornet or ones where rapid response is occurring (e.g. water primrose), or species where we are developing action plans (floating pennywort). The EU will also shortly be proposing legislation on IAS and surveillance and early warning is likely to be an important component of this.

Aim

To seek views from stakeholders on how we can best speed up the reporting of information on species of high importance.

Discussion pointers

- What species should we survey most intensively (and why)?
- How do we best speed up the reporting process for key species of INNS?
- How do we best provide feedback to data contributors?
- How we can optimise reporting of key species by the public?

Conclusions and key points raised:

- There is a need for an easily accessible on-line recording facility that can be used by stakeholders to record (almost) any non-native species. iRecord has the potential to fulfil this requirement either directly or delivered through an existing relevant website. iRecord is a validation and verification interface to Indicia and will be linked to the NBN Gateway providing the functionality of allowing users to fast track data onto the NBN Gateway. There are other systems that have desirable features such as Living Record but these do not offer the community approach of iRecord and Indicia.
- Feedback to the recording community is essential - recorders need to be able to see their dot on the map, or at least be clear what has happened to their record. There was general agreement that distribution maps should not only highlight the presence of a species but also have the capacity to display absent or eradicated species. Recorders need to know the value of the data they collect to the data users including policy-makers and conservation bodies.
- There was general support and enthusiasm for recording apps.
- There was a suggestion that an automatic alert system could be developed in the GB-NNSIP that flags when a species appears to be entering an 'invasive mode' (i.e. the number of records begins to rapidly increase).

- It was highlighted that with the rapid development of recording technology, there is a need for an overview document describing the major systems.
- Important to ensure that Local Record Centres (LRCs) aren't overlooked, whilst ensuring that all data eventually arrives at the NBN. Need to ensure records of ALERT species are fast-tracked into NBN and on to those organisations tasked with management responses.
- Need to acknowledge recorders and promote case histories in which data has been used to generate outcomes.

3. Communicating the rationale for control

Chairs: Nick Turner (Defra) and Stan Whitaker (SNH)

Background

Lethal control of some non-native species, especially higher vertebrates like birds and mammals can be an emotive issue. In recent years there have been significant issues related to the potential culling of a number of species including ruddy duck, eagle owl and monk parakeet. However, this is not a new phenomenon – in the past there has also been significant controversy related to culling goats in Wales, Hedgehogs in the Western Isles and even rats on Lundy.

In contrast, public attitudes research conducted in 2009 (for England) showed that the public were generally not averse to killing non-native species provided there was evidence of their negative impact. This generates a significant conundrum as by the time one has demonstrated a negative impact it is usually too late to eradicate the species.

Aim

To explore the issues (using examples from the media) surrounding attitudes towards the lethal control of non-native vertebrates.

Discussion pointers

- What are people's principal values and motivations for not wanting to see animals come to any harm?
- Awareness raising – how do we best keep the public and/or key stakeholders on side for control or eradication, especially of vertebrates?
- Do we need to be more proactive in our approach to PR on this issue?
 - If so, how do we go about doing this?
 - Who should be our key target audiences?
 - What key messages?

Conclusions and key points raised:

- There are many 'arguments' used by those lobbying against control
 - They are pretty
 - The species is 'rare' in the UK
- There is a small core of vocal people who will influence others if we do not respond to their arguments
- We are not going to change the views of the activists but we can win over the public and media
- A proactive approach works best
- We need to have facts and figures on hand to counter the emotive arguments
 - Tailored datasets for gardeners, LAs, Wildlife Trusts etc.

- Perhaps produce a leaflet on each species or a control booklet with case studies
- Need to get NGOs and others briefed in advance so they can provide support in media
- We should focus on the key message. Acting now to save high costs in the future.
- Think about language. “Problem species” may be more appropriate than non-natives; eradicating populations not species.

Summary of Q&A session

Qu 1. What has happened with the plans to ban the sale of some non-native species?

- A proposal to ban the sale of some of the plants considered most invasive has been put forward. There is considerable emphasis within government to ensure that no unnecessary burdens are put on business and there are lots of criteria to meet and scrutiny given to new regulatory proposals. The proposals are still going through the new processes.

Qu 2. What are the next invasive non-native species we should be concerned about?

- There have been a number of projects looking at horizon scanning for new non-native species (e.g. those commissioned by Natural England and led by Fera and Plantlife). Since the arrival of Killer Shrimp there has been particular concern about the potential arrival of other Ponto-Caspian invertebrates (e.g. other crustaceans, etc), and fish (mainly gobies). Defra has funded Cefas to undertake research into the pathways that might introduce these species as well as funding the Freshwater Biological Association to produce an identification guide to shrimps and isopods that might become invasive in the future. Examples of species to be on the lookout for include: Quagga Mussel, Asian Hornet, American Lobster, Asian Longhorn Beetle and Emerald Ash-borer. An important point which has also been discussed at EU level is that the better systems get at early detection, the more control methods will need to be developed to increase our capacity to deal with these kind of species.

Qu 3. Do we need to review the GB Strategy next year (this is currently in the work programme)?

- Stakeholders agreed it was probably a good idea, but that it should be relatively short and focussed. There was no need to carry out a very large and expansive review. A comment was made that the review should look at whether there is a need for improved regulation / legislation and how this might have influenced progress to date. There was also a comment that so many of the actions in the strategy have been tackled that a review might help to work out where the next set of priorities lie.

Qu 4. Should we be publicising the considerable successes and progress that we have made in relation to invasive non-native species? For example, producing case studies of some of the good work that has been done.

- There was general support for this idea.

Feedback from attendees

Forum

83 delegates attended and feedback forms were returned by 21 delegates at or after the Forum. There was unanimous agreement that the holding of the annual Forum is a worthwhile activity (the majority answered 'yes'; other answers included: 'definitely', 'yes very', 'not only worthwhile but essential' 'very much so', and 'one of the only chances for practitioners to get together and talk about what we do'). Others noted that there was 'a good mix of presentations', that it was 'very useful for keeping up to date on current thinking', 'a good opportunity to catch up with people', and 'always good to have a mix of policy and on the ground project updates'.

Secretariat and Secretariat Website

Comments on the work of the Secretariat included:

- 'Provision of support and materials is excellent'
- 'They do a super job. So supportive to the Local Action Groups ... with so many helpful resources.'
- 'The amount of work that the NNSS achieves is astonishing ... [everyone is] personable and approachable and always seems to have time to talk about any issue.'
- 'All good, very positive, a very welcome focus for partner organisations and driver to get things done.'
- 'The Secretariat has been very strong at pulling together strategic/policy groups, but I would like to see [it] playing an even stronger role in pulling together operational partners into workshop group – the doers!'
- 'I think the website's content is great.'

18 out of 21 delegates had visited the Secretariat website. The table below shows the frequency of delegate visits to the website reported in the questionnaire feedback.

	2012	2011
Less than once per month		3
Once per month	2	11
Once per week	8	8
Several times per week	8	2

The most useful parts of the website included:

- Species information
- Gallery / ID sheets etc.
- News and events
- Be Plant Wise / Check, Clean Dry pages
- Risk assessments
- Projects database

Suggestions for improvements to the website included:

- Update the Local Action Group pages more quickly
- Provide editable 'check, clean, dry' leaflets / posters

- Provide template / example PowerPoint slides for all species which you have ID sheets for as well as Check, Clean, Dry and Be Plant Wise.
- Need more ID sheets and ISAPs.
- Need to provide contact details for organisational leads.
- Consolidate information on biosecurity.
- Could the site have separate regional tabs?
- The website can be pretty confusing ... information could be better grouped.

GB Mechanism and Strategy

Strengths of the GB Mechanism and Strategy that were highlighted included:

- A common policy to tackle a cross border / sector problem.
- Advice and information available to LAGs and stakeholders.
- Support for LAGs and stakeholders.
- Bringing everyone together.
- Provides a united point of reference for an industry that can be quite fragmented.
- Providing an information hub.
- The review of the GB Strategy should go ahead regardless of the impending EU Directive.
- High quality content and website.
- The ability of the Secretariat to bring a wide diversity of people to the same table.
- Excellent work, but the close communication between all involved is imperative.

Weaknesses and potential improvements suggested were:

- Need more confidence that the law can be involved effectively in the few rare cases where this is necessary.
- Need to make clear how small groups can play an active role.
- The Forum 'felt very rushed ... and [is] sufficiently important to warrant a two day event ... I'm sure some of the key partners could contribute to make this possible'.
- Need more strategic overview/planning/guidance for on the ground control of INNS.
- GB policy still too slow to enact a ban on sale on any INNS.
- When reviewing the Strategy try to break up 'ongoing' tasks to make them more management and success easier to communicate.
- Try to make the workshops more focussed with specific questions / issues to discuss.
- Need to raise awareness of INNS through schools.
- More people required in the Secretariat.
- More contingency planning required.
- The area is under resourced, particularly with regards ISAPs and LAG coordination.

Overall, the Forum, the work of the Secretariat and the GB Mechanism in general were extremely well received by delegates.

Acknowledgements

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