

AQUATIC BIOSECURITY PARTNERSHIP

END OF YEAR REPORT

YEAR ONE: 2020/21



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Summary

Invasive non-native species are one of the world's biggest environmental threats and cost the GB economy nearly £2 billion annually. The cost to water companies is a minimum of £7.5 million per annum, expected to rise as increasing numbers of aquatic species arrive in GB.

Recreational water users and gardeners / pond owners are key pathways of introduction and spread of invasive aquatic species. Two awareness raising campaigns were launched by Government and key stakeholders to provide simple biosecurity guidance for these groups:

- *Be Plant Wise* in 2010
- *Check, Clean, Dry* in 2011

In 2017, a partnership was formed between government, water companies and environmental NGOs working together to improve aquatic biosecurity and mitigate the significant threat to water companies posed by invasive non-native species (INNS). Eight water companies generously contributed approximately £405k in total to a three year work programme, led by the GB Non-native Species Secretariat, which helped to significantly improve aquatic biosecurity in GB (view the [End of Project report](#)).

In order to maintain the substantial momentum built by the project, the steering group agreed to extend this project for five years (2020-2025). Nine water companies, including two new to the partnership, are contributing approximately £590k in total to the project, which aims to build on the work delivered previously.

The previous work programme consisted of six key areas. Five of these are being continued in the new work programme:

1. **Border campaign:** run an annual six-month *Check, Clean, Dry* campaign at the border between March and September.
2. **Communications products:** continue to improve communications work (for *Check, Clean, Dry* and *Be Plant Wise*). Refine our communications products, continuing to develop bespoke materials for key audiences (for example, young water users), and deploy products at optimal locations to influence behaviours.
3. **Practical biosecurity:** provide demonstrations at major sporting events and possibly procure mobile cleaning stations.
4. **Training:** continue to deliver biosecurity training (e.g. for water asset managers, event organisers, and clubs) and develop a network of trainers, talks and articles in specialist magazines. Develop further training materials as required.
5. **European work:** expand the work with Belgian, French and Dutch partners to improve aquatic biosecurity in mainland Europe, targeting key events and the most significant European ports.

Some planned activities in the first year of the project were impacted by COVID-19 and related restrictions. Despite this the group still made good progress in the first four areas and added further activities to the work programme. Achievements included:

- running a six-month border biosecurity campaign at ports across England from March – September.
- completing a review of the *Be Plant Wise* campaign, expanding this to include terrestrial plants, producing new campaign materials, and promoting the guidance to gardeners and retailers to engage them with the campaign.
- continuing to develop and disseminate *Check, Clean, Dry* materials.
- developing biosecurity protocol for paddling events.

This report provides an overview of the progress of the NNSS and other members of the group in delivering year one of the work programme (2020/21).

Membership of the steering group

Note: see Annex A for details of contributions from individual organisations

Government

GB Non-native Species Secretariat (NNSS)

Defra

Environment Agency

Contributing water companies

Affinity Water (new member)

Anglian Water

Northumbrian Water

Severn Trent Water

Southern Water

South East Water

South West Water

Wessex Water (new member)

Yorkshire Water

***Check, Clean, Dry* partners**

Angling Trust

British Canoeing

Royal Yachting Association

Work programme – summary of progress

The work programme consists of five work packages. In the first year of the project COVID-19 impacted on delivery of the work programme but two objectives have been achieved and progress has been made in all other areas:

Work package	Objectives in year one (2020-2021)	Progress
1. Border campaign: run an annual six-month <i>Check, Clean, Dry</i> campaign at the border between March and September.	Run a six-month <i>Check, Clean, Dry</i> campaign at the border between March and September 2020.	Objective achieved but some impact of COVID-19: The border campaign was substantially reduced in 2020. Large (six-sheet) posters were installed at Dover and Newcastle ports from March to September and an advert appeared in the Spring / Summer issue of the Brittany Ferries on-board magazine. The NNSS ran a social media campaign once restrictions were reduced in July.
2. Communications products: continue to improve communications work (for <i>Check, Clean, Dry</i> and <i>Be Plant Wise</i>). Refine our communications products, continuing to develop bespoke materials for key audiences (for example, young water users), and deploy products at optimal locations to influence behaviours.	Complete <i>Be Plant Wise</i> review and update, and relaunch campaign in Autumn 2020. Disseminate <i>Be Plant Wise</i> materials to key audiences. Work with partners to develop further awareness raising materials for <i>Check, Clean, Dry</i> as required.	Objective achieved <i>Be Plant Wise</i> was relaunched in September 2020. Further materials have been developed for <i>Check, Clean, Dry</i> and disseminated by partners. Other activities have been added to the work programme including commissioning the updating of “alternatives” guides for planting, development of <i>Check, Clean, Dry</i> videos by partners, and improvements to the biosecurity section of the NNSS website.
3. Practical biosecurity: provide demonstrations at key sporting events	Compile a list of large angling, boating, and paddling events in 2020 and	Ongoing due to the impact of COVID-19

<p>and possibly procure mobile cleaning stations.</p>	<p>prioritise ten high risk events. Commission LAGs to run wash down stations.</p>	<p>No suitable events took place due to COVID-19 but the NNSS have worked with the Angling and Trust and British Canoeing to commission the procurement of mobile cleaning stations.</p>
<p>4. Training: continue to deliver biosecurity training (e.g. for water asset managers, event organisers, and clubs) and develop a network of trainers, talks and articles in specialist magazines. Develop further training materials as required.</p>	<p>Publish event biosecurity guidance for anglers and paddlers. Use this to develop event biosecurity training materials for event managers and arrange training workshops for event managers. Commission development of event biosecurity guidance for boaters (once events are permitted, to allow testing of protocol).</p>	<p>Ongoing due to impact of COVID-19</p> <p>The guidance for paddlers has been completed and biosecurity training for paddling clubs has been developed.</p> <p>The development of guidance for anglers was delayed and eventually recommissioned due to the original contractor being on furlough, but is now in development.</p>
<p>5. European work: expand the work with Belgian, French and Dutch partners to improve aquatic biosecurity in mainland Europe, targeting key events and the most significant European ports.</p>	<p>Work with European partners to identify key European ports and events to target for biosecurity awareness-raising in summer 2021.</p>	<p>Ongoing due to impact of COVID-19</p> <p>Due to ongoing travel restrictions relating to COVID-19 this work has been delayed.</p> <p>The NNSS is currently involved in an EU Commission funded project to develop awareness raising materials for key pathways including recreational water users (anglers), the trade in ornamental aquatic species (plants and animals), and the exotic pet trade, for use across the EU.</p>

Work programme – progress in each work package

1. Border campaign

Aim: run an annual six-month *Check, Clean, Dry* campaign at the border between March and September.

Priority in year one: Run a six-month *Check, Clean, Dry* campaign at the border between March and September 2020.

Priority achieved: yes, but some impact of COVID-19.

Background

In recent years the rate of new introductions of invasive freshwater species to GB has increased dramatically following the creation of a canal linking the Danube and Rhine in 1992, which facilitated the spread of species from the Ponto-Caspian basin through Western Europe. The most likely introduction pathway of these species is via recreational water use, i.e. anglers and boaters on contaminated clothing and equipment. In GB there are around 3.2 million boaters and 4 million anglers (RYA, 2015 & EA, 2004). A 2015 survey found that around 44% of anglers travel abroad to fish: 33% of those visit France, the most popular destination, and overall 50% visit France, Belgium or the Netherlands.

In order to reduce the risk of further introductions of INNS to GB, the NNSS and Defra led a pilot summer border campaign in 2016, based on *Check, Clean, Dry*. The campaign targeted anglers travelling abroad with their own equipment to areas of Europe with invasive aquatic species not yet present in GB. A2 sized awareness-raising posters were displayed in Border Force holdings at nine ports in the UK and France for four weeks in August 2016. From 2017-2020 the *Check, Clean, Dry* Biosecurity Partnership funded an expanded annual border biosecurity campaign from March-September, with large (six-sheet) posters in highly visible locations in ports, advertising in relevant publications, and a campaign on social media.

Report on progress

In March seven large (1200 x 1800 mm) posters were installed at two GB ferry ports with links to France and Holland (Dover and Newcastle, see Annex B for examples of artwork) and an advert was placed in the Spring / Summer issue of the Brittany Ferries on board magazine. These materials were commissioned and installed before COVID-19 restrictions were implemented.

Further activity was delayed until the restrictions began to lift in July, when promotion of the campaign was resumed on social media and the NNSS wrote to partners asking them to help share this with their audience. The posters were displayed until the end of September.

2. Communications products

Aim: continue to improve communications work (for *Check, Clean, Dry* and *Be Plant Wise*). Refine our communications products, continuing to develop bespoke materials for key audiences (for example, young water users), and deploy products at optimal locations to influence behaviours.

Priority in year one: Complete *Be Plant Wise* review and update, and relaunch campaign in Autumn 2020. Disseminate *Be Plant Wise* materials to key audiences. Work with partners to develop further awareness raising materials for *Check, Clean, Dry* as required.

Priority achieved: Yes, and other activities have been added to the work programme.

Background

The NNSS and partners lead two national awareness raising campaigns targeting two key introduction pathways:

- *Be Plant Wise* – launched in 2010 with the aim of preventing the spread of invasive ornamental plants by gardeners and pond owners.
- *Check, Clean, Dry* – launched in 2011 with the aim of preventing the spread of invasive aquatic species by recreational water users.

Awareness raising materials were provided to clubs, water users, plant retailers and gardeners with guidance on biosecurity.

In recent years campaign partners had called for the existing materials and messaging to be redeveloped to make them more effective. In 2017 the NNSS used funding from the *Check, Clean, Dry* partnership and RAPID Life project to carry out a full review of *Check, Clean, Dry* and worked with partners to update the messaging and branding, and develop new bespoke materials for different recreational groups.

In 2019 the NNSS began to redevelop the *Be Plant Wise* campaign with funding from the partnership.

Report on progress

Check, Clean, Dry

- 189 A3 signs have been printed and sent to partners for installation at key sites (709 in total through this project and the previous *Check, Clean, Dry* Biosecurity Partnership).
- Two new leaflets for tour operators have been developed with the Angling Trust.

Further *Check, Clean, Dry* materials are in development:

- Large signage for priority sites.

- Animated biosecurity videos for anglers and paddlers, developed by British Canoeing and the Angling Trust.
- Biosecurity videos for canal users, developed by the Canal & River Trust.

Be Plant Wise

The *Be Plant Wise* campaign was relaunched in September 2020, during National Plant Health Week. A leaflet, poster, sticker and information sheet for retailers is available on the updated campaign website www.nonnativespecies.org/beplantwise for each of the two strands of the campaign (garden plants, and aquatic plants). See Annex C for examples of artwork. The NNSS is working with partners to promote the campaign to retailers and has commissioned a series of adverts in summer 2021 to promote the campaign to gardeners.

The NNSS has commissioned a contractor to redevelop three “alternatives” guides featuring non-invasive plants to use in place of common invasive non-native species, due to be published in Autumn 2021.

NNSS website

The NNSS has begun working with a contractor to develop a new NNSS website. A contribution from this project is helping to fund updates to the biosecurity content.

Four workshops were held in December 2020 / January 2021 with the NNSS and stakeholder groups to seek feedback on the needs of website users. Since then the NNSS and contractor have been revising the current content and developing a new site, due to be launched in Autumn 2021.

3. Practical biosecurity

Aim: provide demonstrations at key sporting events and possibly procure mobile cleaning stations.

Priority in year one: compile a list of large angling, boating, and paddling events in 2020 and prioritise ten high risk events. Commission LAGs to run wash down stations.

Priority achieved: no, but other activities have been added to the work programme.

Background

Large events carry an increased risk of spread of invasive aquatic species due to greater numbers of participants attending from other parts of GB or further afield. Participants may unintentionally introduce new invasive species to the event waters, or back to the waters they usually visit.

Across GB there are a number of Local Action Groups (LAGs) that carry out work on non-native species, including practical management, awareness raising and training. Some are also experienced in implementing biosecurity at competitions and events, and have developed biosecurity guidance for event organisers.

Members of the *Check, Clean, Dry* partnership group identified a number of priority events (large competitions) for biosecurity assistance. The NNSC commissioned Local Action Groups to run washdown stations at these events.

Report on progress

Due to COVID-19 no suitable events requiring biosecurity support took place in the first year of this project.

British Canoeing and the Angling Trust have researched hot and two cold high-performance pressure washers to use at relevant competitions and floating pennywort management events. They will commission the procurement of these in year two of the project.

4. Training

Aim: continue to deliver biosecurity training (e.g. for water asset managers, event organisers, and clubs) and develop a network of trainers, talks and articles in specialist magazines. Develop further training materials as required.

Priority in year one: publish event biosecurity guidance for anglers and paddlers. Use this to develop event biosecurity training materials for event managers and arrange training workshops for event managers. Commission development of event biosecurity guidance for boaters (once events are permitted, to allow testing of protocol).

Priority achieved: in part, due to the impact of COVID-19.

Background

In 2019 a subgroup of the *Check, Clean, Dry* Biosecurity partnership developed a [biosecurity e-learning module](#) for use by water company staff, based on similar modules for government field staff (developed by the Environment Agency, NNSS, SNH, NRW and Natural England) and for Anglian Water staff.

The NNSS commissioned a local action group with experience in delivering event biosecurity to develop tailored event biosecurity guidance for paddling and angling.

Report on progress

The [Biosecurity at Paddling Events toolkit](#) developed by North Wales Wildlife Trust, British Canoeing and the NNSS has been published. Development of the guidance for anglers has been delayed due to furlough, the original contractor no longer being able to deliver the project, and a lack of suitable events at which to trial biosecurity protocol, but will be revisited in the second year of the project.

A draft biosecurity training presentation for paddling clubs has been developed by the NNSS and British Canoeing and trialled at two online workshops led by British Canoeing.

5. European work

Aim: expand the work with Belgian, French and Dutch partners to improve aquatic biosecurity in mainland Europe, targeting key events and the most significant European ports.

Priority in year one: work with European partners to identify key European ports and events to target for biosecurity awareness-raising in summer 2021.

Priority achieved: no, due to the impact of COVID-19 but other activity is underway.

Background

Since 2011 government has promoted the *Check, Clean, Dry* campaign across GB. *Check, Clean, Dry* has also been promoted in Northern Ireland, while a separate biosecurity campaign, *Inspect, Remove, Dispose, Clean, Notify* was adopted in the Republic of Ireland.

No aquatic biosecurity campaign is currently promoted in neighbouring countries in mainland Europe (France, Belgium and the Netherlands). A number of invasive aquatic species are present in these countries which have not yet been introduced to GB, and they are popular destinations for recreational water users travelling abroad. Key stakeholders have called for *Check, Clean, Dry* to be extended to these countries to reduce the risk of introduction of novel invasive aquatic species.

In 2018 the campaign was formally adopted across the eight British Irish Council administrations.

Following an initial meeting in 2018, in 2019 the NNSS, accompanied by the Angling Trust, met with colleagues from Belgium, the Netherlands and Ireland at a meeting hosted by the European Commission. The NNSS commissioned the translation of key *Check, Clean, Dry* guidance (for anglers, boaters, paddlers) into French, Dutch and German and shared the artwork with the group for adaptation. All countries agreed to:

- promote *Check, Clean, Dry*.
- attend an annual meeting to update on progress with their aquatic pathways.
- try to link the relevant parts of their pathway action plans.
- identify a small number of important international competitions/events – 2 - 3 events for each of angling, kayaking, sailing etc. in BE, NL, UK (and FR) to target for increased biosecurity.

Report on progress

Due to travel restrictions and event cancellations relating to COVID-19 this work has been delayed and will be revisited in year two of the project.

The NNSS is involved in an EU Commission funded project to develop awareness raising materials for key pathways including recreational water users (anglers), the trade in

ornamental aquatic species (plants and animals), and the exotic pet trade, for use across the EU. Other *Check, Clean, Dry* and *Be Plant Wise* partners are also involved in these projects.

Total spend in year one of the project

Approximately £87k has been spent in year one of the project. Full details of spend below:

Year one

Key area	Expenditure in year one	Cost (inc VAT)
	Advertising at ports	
Border campaign	Printing / installation of posters, site rent (2020 campaign)	£1,170
	Printing / installation of posters, site rent (2021 campaign)	£20,574
	Adverts and artwork updated	£576
	Angling advertising campaign (2021 campaign)	£11,262
	Total (border campaign)	£33,582
	Design	
Communications	Rebranding of Be Plant Wise and development of new materials	£2,257
	Check Clean Dry materials for tour operators and paddling event biosecurity guide	£2,760
	Printing	
	172 Check Clean Dry A3 signs for British Canoeing, Angling Trust, South West Lakes Trust and RYA	£5,734
	Check Clean Dry materials for Angling Trust and British Canoeing	£2,545
	Be Plant Wise materials	£3,164
	Other	
	BPW adverts in Gardeners World magazine, website and mailing list	£11,999
	Updating the alternatives booklets	£10,740
	NNSS website development (a further payment is due next year)	£1,544
Postage for materials	£277	
	Total (communications)	£41,020
	Event biosecurity	
Practical biosecurity	Staff time to estimate the costs for dealing with the online trade in banned species	£2,023
	Non-refundable costs incurred for cancelled events	£720
	Total (practical biosecurity)	£2,743
	Training	
Training	Development of paddling event biosecurity guide	£4,998
	Development of angling event biosecurity guide	£4,998
	Total (training)	£9,996
European work	No spend	£0
	TOTAL	£87,341

Next steps

In year two the NNSS will continue to build on progress made in the first year of the project:

1. **Border campaign:** run a *Check, Clean, Dry* border campaign from March – September 2021.
2. **Communications products:**
 - Develop further *Be Plant Wise* materials with partners as required and deploy these in garden centres and aquatic retailers.
 - Publish the updated “alternatives booklets” commissioned in year one.
 - Run an annual awareness raising campaign for *Be Plant Wise* at key times in the gardening calendar.
 - Develop further *Check, Clean, Dry* materials with partners including materials for young water users, and biosecurity videos for paddlers and canal users.
 - Launch the updated NNSS website with mobile friendly biosecurity information.
3. **Practical biosecurity:** compile a list of large angling, boating, and paddling events in 2021 and prioritise ten high risk events. Commission LAGs to run wash down stations. Purchase four mobile pressure washers for events.
4. **Training:**
 - Publish the event biosecurity guidance for anglers commissioned in year one. Use this to develop event biosecurity training materials for event managers and arrange training workshops for event managers in summer 2021.
 - Commission development of event biosecurity guidance for boaters (once events are permitted, to allow testing of protocol).
 - Develop a network of trainers who can deliver training for water asset managers and clubs.
5. **European work:** work with European partners to identify key European ports and events to target for biosecurity awareness-raising in summer 2021/2022 (depending on restrictions).

Annex A: Contributions to aquatic biosecurity from *the Check, Clean, Dry* biosecurity partnership

Government

Government will continue to invest over **£600k** per annum in tackling aquatic invasive species over the three years of the project.

Since the launch of its invasive species strategy in 2008, government has spent over **£5 million** on aquatic invasive species, including:

- Biological control and other research.
- Eradications.
- Risk assessments.
- Sales ban.
- Public awareness.

A major part of this has been the development of the *Check, Clean, Dry* public awareness campaign.

Water companies

The following contributions were made by water companies in year one of the project (£85,700 in total):

Water company	Contribution received in FY 2020-2021
South West Water	£15,227
Southern Water	£0
South East Water	£7,246
Anglian Water	£10,000
Northumbrian Water	£10,000
Severn Trent Water	£26,000
Yorkshire Water	£0
Wessex Water	£15,227
Affinity Water	£2,000
Total	£85,700
<i>Contributions carried over into year one from the previous project:</i>	<i>£65,000</i>
<i>Contributions to be carried over into year two of the project:</i>	<i>£63,359 into year two</i>

Water companies are contributing £129,865 to year two of the project, giving a total of **£193,224** including the contributions carried over from year one.

Key partners

Angling and boating organisations including The Angling Trust, Royal Yachting Association and British Canoeing have been key supporters of *Check, Clean, Dry* since the campaign was launched in 2012. These organisations have provided staff time and other resources to promote the campaign to their members. Their estimated financial contributions are detailed below.

Note: these figures are likely to be an underestimate as they do not include time contributed by other members of staff within each organisation.

The Angling Trust

To be added

Royal Yachting Association / The Green Blue

To be added

British Canoeing

To be added.

Annex B: *Check, Clean, Dry* border biosecurity materials

Border biosecurity poster for anglers, displayed at key ports in England with links to France and the Netherlands:

Carp with Koi Herpes virus

Fishing abroad?

Diseases and invasive species kill fish. Don't bring them back.



Protect the environment and the sport you love:

- CHECK** your equipment, clothing and footwear when you leave the water. Remove any muck or plant material and put it in the bin.
- CLEAN** everything thoroughly as soon as you can. Use hot water if possible.
- DRY** everything for as long as you can before using it at home as some species can live for over two weeks in damp conditions.

Find out more about invasive plants and animals and how you can help to stop the spread at:
nonnativespecies.org/checkcleandry



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Border biosecurity poster for boaters, displayed at key ports in England with links to France and the Netherlands:



Boating abroad?

Invasive species block waterways. Don't bring them back.

Protect the environment you love:

- CHECK** boats, equipment and clothing when you leave the water. Remove any muck or plant material and put it in the bin.
- CLEAN** everything thoroughly as soon as you can. Use hot water if possible. Anti-foul boats annually.
- DRY** - drain water from every part of your boat or trailer before leaving the site. Dry clothing and equipment for as long as possible before using elsewhere.

Find out more about invasive plants and animals and how you can help to stop the spread at:
nonnativespecies.org/checkcleandry



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs



Border biosecurity poster for canoeists and kayakers, displayed at key ports in England with links to France and the Netherlands:



Canoeing or kayaking abroad?

Invasive species block waterways. Don't bring them back.

Protect the environment you love:

- CHECK** boats, equipment and clothing when you leave the water. Remove any muck or plant material and put it in the bin.
- CLEAN** everything thoroughly as soon as you can, pay particular attention to areas that are damp and hard to access. Use hot water if possible.
- DRY** - drain water from every part of your boat and dry it with a towel before leaving the site. Dry everything thoroughly for as long as possible before using elsewhere.

Find out more about invasive plants and animals and how you can help to stop the spread at:
nonnativespecies.org/checkcleandry



Annex C: examples of *Be Plant Wise* materials

A3 Poster for retailers - designed to be displayed in store to raise awareness amongst customers

If your plants escape beyond your garden border they can become invasive, harming our wildlife, environment, and the economy

BE PLANT WISE

Once established, invasive plants are costly to control and the damage they cause can be irreversible. You can help to protect the environment by following our three simple tips:

- KNOW WHAT YOU GROW** (with magnifying glass icon)
Choose the right plants for your garden, pond, aquarium and water features
- STOP THE SPREAD** (with red hand icon)
Keep your plants in your garden, don't plant them, or allow them to grow, in the wild
- COMPOST WITH CARE** (with recycling symbol icon)
Dispose of your unwanted plants, roots, weeds, seeds, and seed heads responsibly



Find out more at
nonnativespecies.org/beplantwise

Waterproof stickers for use on plant pots and tanks

