

Welcome to our Spring 2026 newsletter and thank you to our contributors. [View previous issues on the NNSS website.](#)

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News

Local Action Group Workshop

On 20 and 21 January the GB Non-native Species Secretariat held the 17th Local Action Group Workshop, funded by Defra. 51 people attended the workshop, held at the Woodland Grange, Leamington Spa. Representatives from a range of organisations gave talks on invasive non-native species (INNS) management, biosecurity, communications, and more. Attendees also took part in

workshops on biosecurity equipment, identifying priority locations for biosecurity, and stakeholder needs for new techniques for INNS management. Thank you to everyone who attended! For more information, [visit the NNSS website LAG workshop pages](#).



Participants at the Local Action Group Workshop (January 2026)

New national framework for action towards the eradication of American mink in England

Jo Heisse, Environment Agency

In January, we published a new Framework for the Eradication of American Mink in England, produced jointly with Natural England. The framework sets out the strategic direction, priorities, and guiding principles needed to achieve nationwide eradication of American mink by 2035.

This is a significant milestone in our efforts to address the impacts of this well-established invasive non-native species. Natural England and the Environment Agency now have a shared national approach that will help drive coordinated action at a scale not previously possible.

A core aim of the framework is to support the development of new local and regional partnerships—especially in areas where activity is currently limited or projects are only just emerging. By aligning methods and goals, we hope to make it easier for groups across the country to collaborate, share learning, and maximise impact.

Our next steps include establishing a national partnership and developing standards to guide projects as they grow.

You can access the full framework here: [National framework for the eradication of American mink in England](#).



Image: Snowdonia NPA.

Scottish Action Plan for Invasive Non-Native Species 2026-2032

On 30 March NatureScot published the [Scottish Action Plan for Invasive Non-Native Species 2026-2032](#) which is an ambitious plan to prevent, detect, eliminate and control new and existing invasive non-native species (INNS) in Scotland. There are 1164 non-native species known to be established in Scotland (across land, freshwater and marine environments). Of these, 124 species have been assessed as having negative ecological impacts and so are considered invasive non-native species. Of these 124 species, 76 are plants, and around 48 are animals (including insects and other invertebrates). INNS are a major cause of nature loss in Scotland, including substantial reductions of some seabird populations and rare woodland lichens. Globally, INNS have contributed to 60% of recorded extinctions on islands. In Scotland, INNS are increasing on land and in our lochs, rivers and seas. They affect important ecosystems like islands, temperate rainforests and peatlands, and iconic species such as puffins, water voles and red squirrels. To tackle these serious impacts, the new Scottish INNS action plan (a key element of the [Scottish Biodiversity Delivery Plan 2024-2030](#)) sets targets to reduce the rates of new and established INNS by at least 50% compared to 2000 levels, as well as to eradicate or control INNS in priority sites such as islands.

Comprehensive marine non-native species (NNS) survey for England and Wales available

Jan Maclennan, Natural England

This study looked at marine non-native species (NNS), the full report is now available from: [Comprehensive marine non-native species \(NNS\) survey for England and Wales - ME6065](#). The Marine Biological Association surveyed 51 marinas and 6 ports across England and Wales in 2023 and 2024, comparing results to the same marina surveys done around 8 years ago.

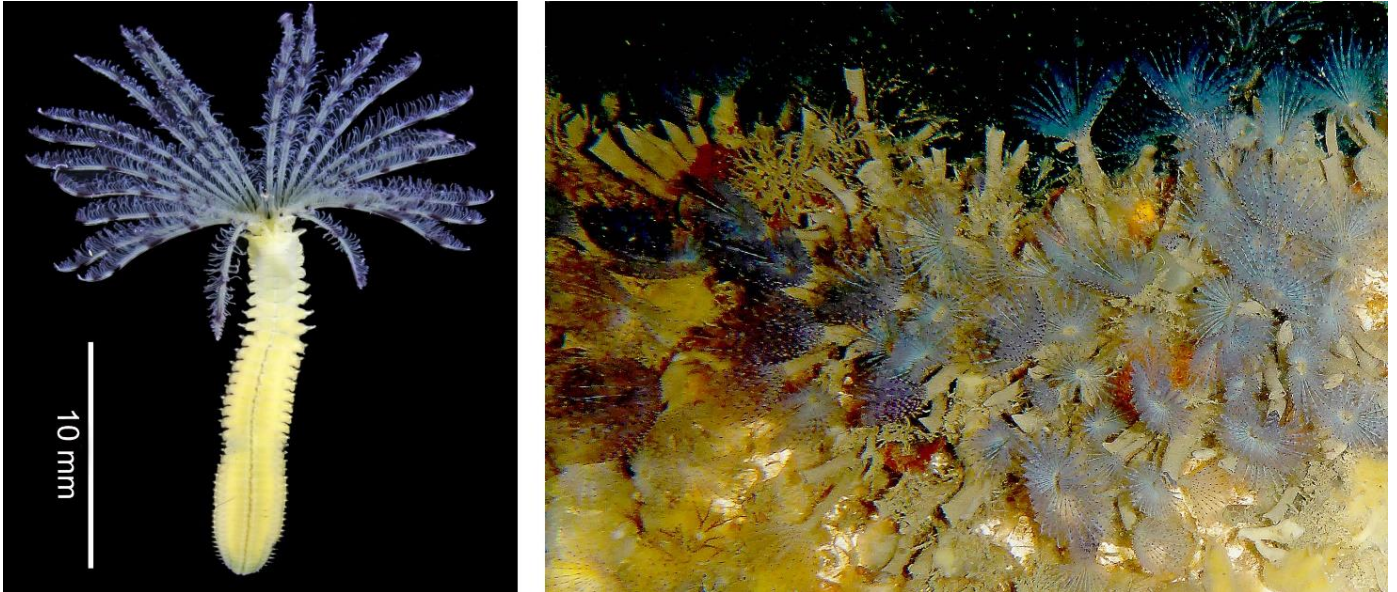
Key Findings

- **More marine non-native species than before:** There was a **29% increase** in NNS records compared to the previous surveys, 4/5ths of which was due to spread of NNS already present in the UK.
- In England, **39 different NNS** were found, up from 35 last time. In Wales, **25 different NNS** were recorded, compared to 19 previously.
- The most common species were:
 - **Darwin's barnacle** (*Austrominius modestus*)
 - **Tufty-buff bryozoan** (*Tricellaria inopinata*)
- One new species, the **Purple fan-worm** (*Bispira polyomma*), was found at **18 sites**—it wasn't seen in the UK before 2021.

The results reported above come from visual surveys. Experts inspected marinas by Rapid Assessment Surveys (RAS), and ports using installed settlement panels on which organisms can settle.

Additional records of NNS at some sites came from environmental DNA (eDNA) analysis. Water samples were tested for traces of species DNA. Both metabarcoding (a way to identify the DNA

from many different species) and qPCR (detecting specific DNA sequences from 6 species) were used.



Bispira polyomma (Purple fan-worm). Images: © T Darbyshire Nat. Mus. Cardiff, J Bishop MBA.

Combining both methods gave the best results. Some species were only found using DNA methods (often planktonic and sediment dwelling species), while others were only detected by visual surveys.

The data will help inform assessments of progress against the [UK Marine Strategy](#) and support condition assessments for marine protected areas. More research is needed to understand why some species are spreading faster than others.

Update on yellow-legged hornet sightings

National Bee Unit / Defra Bee Health Policy Team

The Animal and Plant Health Agency's National Bee Unit (NBU) has received 3 further credible reports of Yellow-Legged Hornet (YLH):

- On 10th April a householder found a YLH in Sandwich, Kent in their home.
- On 11th April a beekeeper found a second YLH in a trap in Nonington near Dover, Kent.
- On 11th April a householder found a YLH in Kingston, Kent in their shed.

Specimens will be sent to Fera Science. These are reported as single hornets and due to the time of year, unlikely to be associated with a nest, so we are not planning to take any further action.

For more information on previous sightings in 2026, please visit the [website of the National Bee Unit](#). **We would be most grateful for your support in helping to raise awareness and encourage reporting of any further sightings.** Free [alert posters](#) and [ID sheets](#) are available on request to help with awareness raising. Any suspected sightings should ideally be reported via the Asian Hornet Watch app or the online reporting form. For further details on identification and reporting, please visit the [yellow-legged hornet alert page](#).

Communications

Lucy Cornwell, NNSS

Invasive Species Week 2026

Invasive Species Week is only a couple of months away (22 to 28 June)! Soon we will add an events page to our website with details of our daily webinars and other events taking place. Please let us know your plans so we can help to share these. If you haven't already made plans, there's still time! You can find ideas for activities at: [Invasive Species Week » NNSS](#).

Awareness-raising days

This year we are arranging awareness-raising days to promote the Be Plant Wise and Check Clean Dry campaigns. **We need your help!** Please join us in promoting the campaigns on (or close to) the dates below by posting on social media and including information in newsletters, magazines, on websites etc. [Social media resources for each campaign are available](#).

Be Plant Wise

- 25 June (during Invasive Species Week)
- 18 August
- 27 October

Check Clean Dry

- 24 June (during [Invasive Species Week](#))
- 28 July
- 25 August

[Find out more about the themes for each day](#) and view details of [all awareness raising materials available from the NNSS](#). For other key dates for awareness-raising this year, check out our [calendar of non-native species awareness raising priorities](#). Please get in touch if you have any dates or initiatives to add to the calendar, Invasive Species Week plans to share, or any other comms queries: nnss@apha.gov.uk.

Updates from non-native species projects

The waterborne spread of invasive plants from ornamental gardens

Dr Kevin Walker, Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland

The escape of non-native plants from large ornamental gardens is a known pathway for many invasive species but has rarely been studied in detail, at least in the UK. One way that these invasives can spread is by waterborne dispersal of seeds and vegetative material along watercourses that originate or pass through gardens.

To investigate this process, we surveyed the introduced flora of a catchment below a large ornamental garden in northern England – the Royal Horticultural Society's Harlow Carr garden just

outside Harrogate, North Yorkshire. The results, which were published in *British and Irish Botany* in February 2026 (Walker & Cook, 2026), show that 42 garden escapes had become established within the riparian zone of the catchment, 14 of which had originated from the garden itself. Two of these species were locally invasive.

Coralroot *Cardamine bulbifera*, although native in southeast England and much of Europe, is widely grown in British gardens, from where it has spread into natural habitats via the dispersal of vegetative bulbils, especially along watercourses. This plant had spread from borders of Harlow Carr (where it had originally been accidentally introduced in a consignment of lily bulbs) to form very large stands on sandy riverbanks throughout the catchment studied. Likewise, American Skunk-cabbage *Lysichiton americanus*, is grown as an ornamental by the stream in Harlow Carr from where it has spread by seed to form dense stands in swampy woodland downstream. All the other garden introductions were more locally distributed.



*Left: A large stand of American Skunk-cabbage *Lysichiton americanus* growing in the boggy woodland by the Oak Beck below RHS Harlow Carr, Harrogate. Right: A large stand of Coralroot *Cardamine bulbifera* on the bank of the Oak Beck below RHS Harlow, Harrogate. Images: Kevin Walker.*

The findings of this study highlight the critical role that ornamental gardens can play as ‘entry points’ for some invasive non-native plants and emphasises the need for gardens to identify, manage and in where necessary eradicate potentially invasive species, especially where they have the potential to escape and spread along watercourses.

Walker, K.J. & Cook, P. 2026. Waterborne spread of introduced plants from a large ornamental garden in northern England, UK. *British and Irish Botany* 8: 84-95. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33928/bib.2026.08.084>

New marine biosecurity plan launched for the Stour and Orwell Estuaries

Jan Maclennan, Natural England

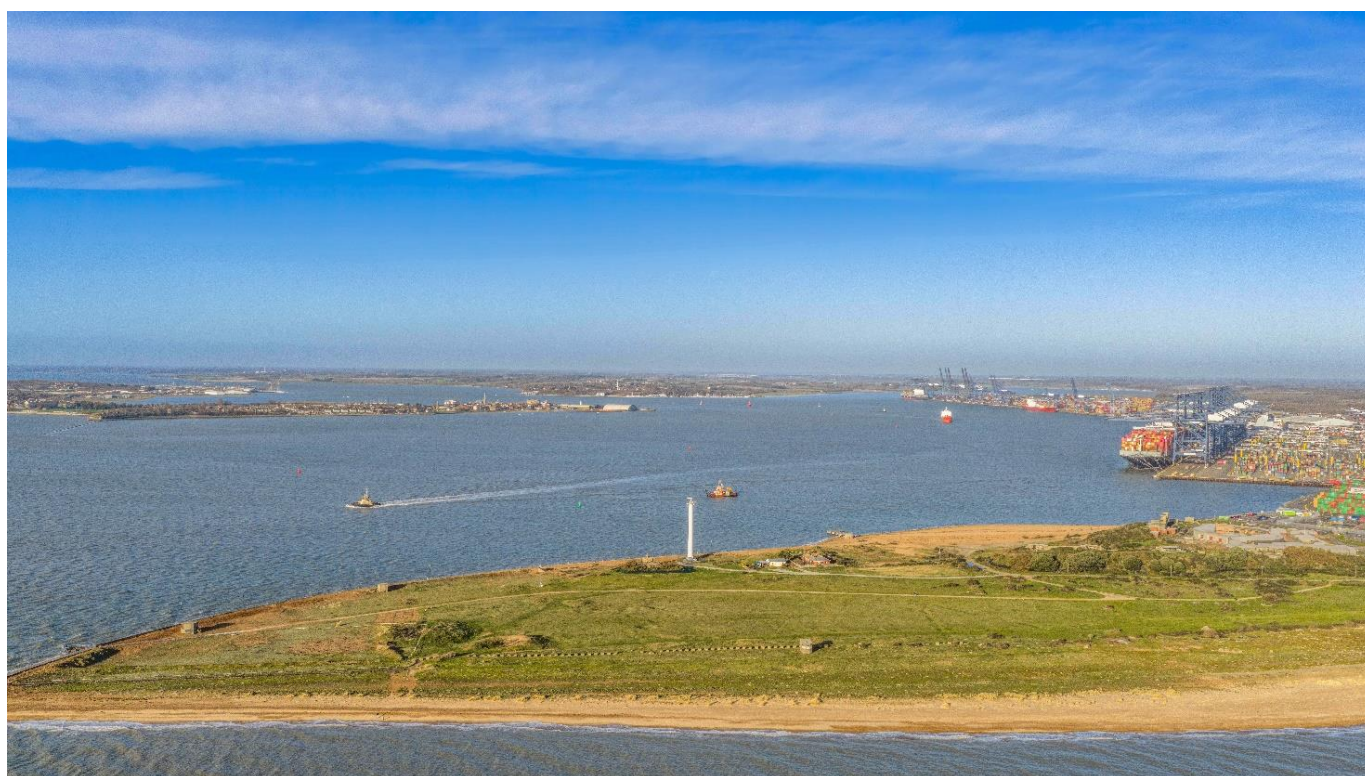
A new [Marine Biosecurity Plan](#) has been launched to help protect the Stour and Orwell Estuaries from the growing threat of invasive non-native species (INNS).

Preventing the introduction of INNS is recognised as the most effective management option, especially in the marine environment where eradication and containment are often not possible. Biosecurity plans present pragmatic, 'good practice' measures to reduce the risk of INNS movement via pathways identified as high risk. An estuary wide approach to biosecurity planning is a way to guide everyone using this environment to carry out best practice and behaviours.

The plan sets out good practice measures to reduce the risk of the introduction and spread of harmful species, which could cause serious damage to native species. They also pose potentially significant economic impacts to ports, marine industries and recreational activities.

Both the Stour and Orwell Estuaries are designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) for overwintering birds, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Ramsar site for wetland habitats.

The plan has been led and funded by a partnership of Natural England, Harwich Haven Authority, Port of Ipswich (Associated British Ports), the Port of Felixstowe (Hutchison Ports) and Trinity House, and delivered by consultancy firm APEM.



Stour and Orwell Estuaries. Image: Jeff Welch on behalf of Harwich Haven Authority

The actions and guidance contained in the plan have been shaped through a series of local workshops involving a wide range of organisations, individuals and sectors operating across the estuaries, ensuring the measures are realistic, achievable and supported by those who use or have an interest in the estuaries.

The launch of this plan adds to the growing number of estuary wide biosecurity plans that have been developed and progressed in recent years including for example:

- [Biosecurity – Severn Estuary Partnership](#)
- [Biosecurity Action Plan - Dee Estuary](#)
- [Solent Forum - Solent Biosecurity Planning](#)

Tees Invasive Species Project

Chloe Lawrence, Tees Rivers Trust

Tees Rivers Trust has developed an infographic highlighting achievements of the Tees Invasive Species Project during its development phase.



North East Invasive Non-native Species Strategy 2026-2030

Jenny Dowden, Tyne Rivers Trust

Following the completion of the previous North East INNS Strategy and Action Plan, the regional action group has developed a new strategy for 2026–2030. The group includes Tweed Forum, Tyne Rivers Trust, Newcastle University, ERIC North East, Wear Rivers Trust, and Tees Rivers Trust. The strategy aims to develop and maintain cost-effective, strategic approaches to prevent, detect, control, and eradicate priority invasive non-native species (INNS) across North East landscapes through coordinated action.

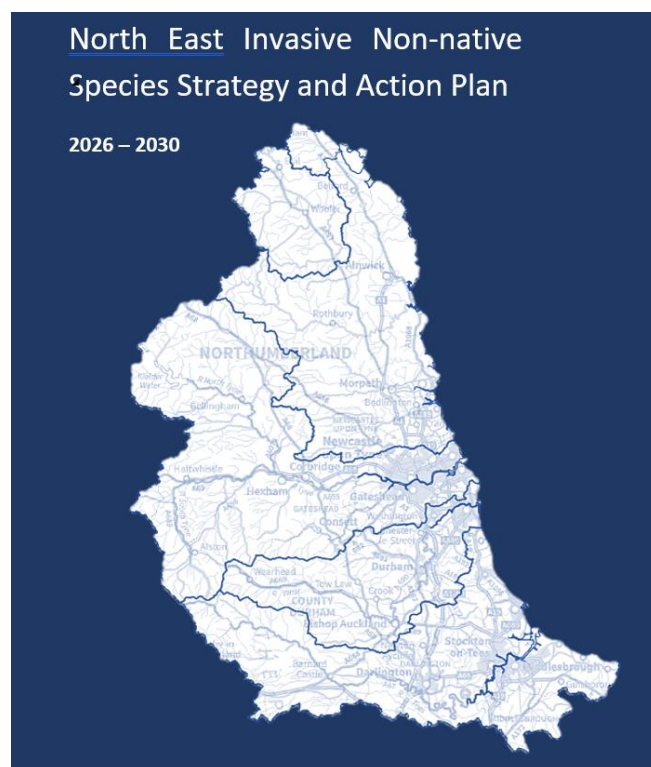
The new strategy focuses on four key objectives:

1. **Regional coordination** – strengthening collaboration to deliver strategic and sustainable INNS management across North East England.

2. **Prevention and biosecurity** – reducing the risk of INNS introduction and spread through greater awareness and improved biosecurity.
3. **Early detection and rapid response** – ensuring priority INNS are identified early and action is taken quickly to eradicate or contain them before they become established.
4. **Long-term management of established species** – delivering strategic, sustainable local programmes for ongoing control and eradication.

Through partnership working, the action group will implement these objectives to improve biosecurity and strengthen INNS management across the North East.

For more information contact Jenny Dowden, j.dowden@tyneriverstrust.org.



A Gardeners' Toolkit – new resource!

Lewis Bainbridge, Garden Escapers Project Officer, North Wales Wildlife Trust

Scoping work carried out through the North Wales Wildlife Trust Garden Escapers project showed that 63-71% of participants had not previously encountered existing invasive species resources, and nearly half were unsure which plants were considered invasive. This highlighted a significant gap in accessible, practical information for gardeners.

Participants also expressed a strong preference for clear, plain language guidance with step-by-step instructions, visual aids, and an online-first format that could be easily updated and widely shared.

The [Gardeners' Toolkit](#) bridges this gap by bringing together existing [Be Plant Wise](#) messaging with new, clear and practical materials designed to empower gardeners to take action. The toolkit contains:

15 Plant Profiles

- 10 recognised invasive species
- 5 species that may become invasive in future

Each profile includes identification tips, management options and alternative plants for inspiration.

Terminology and Legislation Guidance

Easy-to-understand explanations to demystify key concepts and help gardeners understand what responsibilities apply to them.

Guidance on Tackling Invasive Species in the Garden

Practical, step by step instructions on how to Be Plant Wise

Printable Seasonal Calendar

A simple guide showing the best times of year to monitor, remove, or prevent the spread of invasive plants.

Bilingual Video Series (16 Videos in Welsh and English)

A collection of short videos, including:

- Welcome video
- Focus species highlights
- 'Weeds vs. invasive species' explainer
- Expert accounts
- Volunteer stories and practical experiences from local gardeners

Help us promote the toolkit

For the Toolkit to have a real impact, we need your help. Please consider:

- Sharing the Toolkit link with your networks - we have bilingual social media packs for you to share at anytime
- Highlighting it in talks, meetings or training sessions
- Including it in relevant social media posts or partner pages

For more information, contact: lewis.bainbridge@northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk.

Call for data on grey squirrel bark stripping

Kay Haw, UK Squirrel Accord



Grey squirrels are among the most widespread and invasive non-native species in the UK. While many understand their impacts on red squirrels, the damage they inflict on young trees is far less well known. The UK Squirrel Accord (UKSA) aims to raise awareness of this issue but needs your help.

Left: Grey squirrel actively bark stripping. Image: Miles Dodd

During 2026, UKSA encourages woodland owners, managers and anyone with permission to carry out the Grey Squirrel Activity & Impact Assessment and report the results. This simple methodology provides valuable information on the

scale of grey squirrel bark stripping damage. Making it useful for monitoring and feeding into management plans.

Help UKSA gather evidence that highlights the issues of bark stripping and encourages action. Leading to better protection of the UK's trees and woodland ecosystems, which benefits biodiversity like our native red squirrel. We really appreciate your involvement!

[Further information is available on the UKSA website](#). Please send any tree damage survey queries or training requests to info@squirrelaccord.uk.

Fighting Giant Hogweed on the Water of Leith, Edinburgh

Dan Rayner, Water of Leith Conservation Trust

The battle with Giant Hogweed on the Water of Leith riverbanks began back in 2017. Since then, we've been spraying every year without fail, and over the last two years we've also been expanding efforts to dig up seedlings in the early spring to help reduce chemical use later in the season.

Originally, due to staff capacity, our control work focused on the stretch from Balerno, where the river first encounters the city, to our Visitor Centre in Slateford, which is about halfway along the 12-mile urban stretch of the river. However, as the project has grown, so too has its reach — now extending all the way down to the mouth of the river in Leith, and up the Murrayburn tributary, as we continue to track down seed sources that get washed downstream.

Committing to this project represents a significant investment for the Trust. Our sprayers require specialist training for chemical use, costing around £600 per person, and the work itself is extremely labour-intensive. Teams must wade along the riverbanks several times a year to ensure no plants are missed.

We have three certified members of staff who organise and lead spraying sessions, and an expanding group of certified volunteer sprayers who donate their time and energy to help, along with more of our dedicated and inspiring volunteers, who help by wading alongside sprayers to help spot plants and record location data on treated plants, as well as removing rubbish and pulling Himalayan Balsam.



Image (right): Giant hogweed sprayed.

Image: Water of Leith Conservation Trust.

This truly is a community effort, and the results speak for themselves (see Table 1). As this year's figures show, our consistent targeting — year after year — is making real and measurable

progress in reducing the number of Giant Hogweed plants along the banks, helping to restore biodiversity and keeping the river safe and accessible for everyone to enjoy.

Table 1: Numbers of Giant Hogweed treated along the Water of Leith and Murrayburn tributary – note the increase in plants in 2022 as we expanded the scope of our operation post-covid, and the subsequent decrease as the newly discovered Murrayburn seed source responds to treatment.

| Year | Upstream of WoLCT VC | Downstream of WoLCT VC | Murrayburn | Total | Area Covered |
|------|----------------------|------------------------|------------|-------|---|
| 2017 | 787 | N/A | N/A | 787 | Balerno – Slateford (WoLCT Visitor Centre) |
| 2018 | 1205 | N/A | N/A | 1205 | Balerno – Slateford (WoLCT Visitor Centre) |
| 2020 | 735 | 1615 | N/A | 2350 | Balerno – Leith (COVID) |
| 2021 | 202 | 2298 | N/A | 2500 | Balerno – Leith |
| 2022 | 164 | 6003 | 929 | 7096 | Balerno – Leith plus Murrayburn (Longstone) |
| 2023 | 58 | 8052 | 741 | 8851 | Balerno – Leith plus Murrayburn (Longstone & Fields) |
| 2024 | 39 | 3813 | 447 | 4299 | As above with 5 sprayers and some digging in Feb/Mar |
| 2025 | 18 | 2247 | 108 | 2373 | As above with 4 sprayers and more digging in Feb/Mar, plus Riccarton site |

For more information, [view the Water of Leith Conservation Trust Giant Hogweed Report 2025](#).

Contact the NNS

You can contact us at: nns@apha.gov.uk. For more information, please visit www.nonnativespecies.org where you can find:

- [The Non-native Species Information Portal \(NNSIP\)](#) with detailed factsheets for over 300 non-native species and distribution data for over 3000 species
- [‘What can I do?’](#): links to our campaigns, [training](#), and other guidance
- A gallery of [non-native species images](#) for education and awareness raising
- [Non-native species legislation](#)
- Information on [Local Action Groups](#)
- [Biosecurity resources](#)

You can also follow our awareness raising campaigns on X: [@CheckCleanDryGB](#) and [@InvasiveSp](#).