



Proceedings of the Tenth Stakeholder Forum on Non-native Species

Millennium Stadium, Cardiff

18 June 2013



Introduction

The GB Non-native Species Stakeholder Forum was established in 2004 to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to help shape policy and also to hear about key developments in policy and delivery. It is also used as an opportunity to facilitate networking with colleagues working on non-native species issues across GB. The Forum has been held annually since 2004 and is seen as a key element of the GB approach to non-native species. Since 2008 it has been used to facilitate the active involvement of stakeholders in taking forward the GB Strategy.

The Strategy, which built on the recommendations of the 2003 Defra-led policy review, was developed in close collaboration between government, industry and conservation NGOs. The overall vision of the strategy was to develop:

- widespread awareness and understanding of the risks and adverse impacts associated with invasive non-native species, and greater vigilance against these;
- a stronger sense of shared responsibility across government, key stakeholder organisations, land managers and the general public; and
- a guiding framework for national, regional and local invasive non-native species mitigation, control or eradication initiatives.

When the Strategy was launched in 2008, the Government committed to review it after five years. Therefore in 2013, we have begun the review process and the 2013 stakeholder forum was dedicated to this review. With this in mind, and in advance of the Forum, the Non-native Species Secretariat circulated a background note reviewing progress with the GB Strategy's tasks to help stimulate discussion.

The morning sessions consisted of talks to highlight key areas of development within the past five years since the launch of the Strategy while the afternoon workshop sessions provided the opportunity for stakeholders to have a wide-ranging discussion on all elements of the strategy, where it has delivered and where it hasn't and to explore what our priorities should be for the next five years.

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

NOTE: The views summarised in the workshop reports represent the views as they were expressed by our Stakeholders.

PROGRAMME

Theme: 2013 Review of the GB INNS Framework Strategy

09:30 Registration and coffee

10:15 Welcome and introduction (*Welsh Government*)

10:25 Welcome and outline of day and GB Strategy Review Process
(*Jeremy Eppel, PB Chair*)

10:40 Setting the scene presentations

- Update on progress since GB Strategy Launch in 2008
(*Niall Moore, NNSS*)
- Case studies
 - *Didemnum* eradication and marine pathways
(*Gabe Wyn, Natural Resources Wales*)
 - Local Action Groups
(*Bekka Corrie-Close, Cumbria Freshwater INNS Initiative*)
 - Rapid responses and biosecurity
(*Trevor Renals, EA*)
- EU Legislation update (*Trevor Salmon, Defra*)

Brief discussions and questions to be taken after each presentation

12:00 Introduction to workshop sessions (*Niall Moore, NNSS*)

12:10 Lunch

13:00 **Workshop sessions: Strategy review - forward look to 2018:**
[Each workshop to be run twice]

- Prevention, early detection, surveillance/monitoring and rapid response
- Mitigation, control and eradication, building awareness and understanding

Workshop session 1: 13:00 – 14:00

Refreshment break

Workshop session 2: 14:10 – 15:10

15:10 Refreshment break

15:20 Open session

15:50 Closing remarks/next steps

16:00 Close

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 AHVLA (Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories 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.

Gabe Wyn

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Gabe works at Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and is based in Bangor. She runs the NRW intertidal team and co-ordinates their maritime network. Gabe is an aquatic ecologist but her main specialism is in the marine environment - principally on surveying and conservation assessment. Gabe is a member of the GB Non-native Species Rapid Response working group.

Trevor Renals

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Trevor is the National Technical Advisor on invasive non-native species for the Environment Agency. He has also spent 18 years managing the Ecology team in Cornwall. In 1997 he co-instigated the Cornwall Knotweed Forum, one of the first local action groups in GB.

Bekka Corrie-Close

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Bekka is the Cumbria Freshwater Invasive Non-Native Species (CFINNS) Initiative Coordinator and is based with South Cumbria Rivers Trust. The CFINNS Initiative is one of two pilot county-wide and multi-catchment Initiatives sponsored by DEFRA through Natural England and the Environment Agency. It aims to promote a coordinated approach to the strategic prevention, early detection, surveillance, monitoring and response and mitigation, control and eradication of invasive non-native species. As Coordinator, she has developed the project from its launch in 2010.

Trevor Salmon

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Trevor is Head of the Protected and Non-native Species Policy Team in Defra and is the lead policy contact for the GB Secretariat. He represents the UK in the context of the European Commission's work to develop an EU Invasive Alien Species Legislative Instrument and also represents the UK on the Bern Convention Invasive Alien Species Experts Group.

Workshop reports

Workshop 1: Prevention, early detection, surveillance/monitoring and rapid response.

Chairs:

Catherine Murdoch (Scottish Government)

Keith Davenport (OTA)

Aim

To seek views from stakeholders on our future priorities over the next five years.

A starting point may be to seek views on:

- What has worked well in the last five years.
- What has worked not so well in the last five years.
- What could be improved or done differently over the next five years.

Conclusions and key points raised

Summary of key issues raised

1. No indication from either group that the gaps/issues highlighted on the paper circulated were wrong.
2. Need to manage expectations: need to get a better understanding among stakeholders of what is possible (available science, available technical solutions, political will, resources etc).
3. Speed is a problem across different issues: RAs are not always fast enough to be useful; follow up action (or decisions on what action should be taken) take too long; flow of data, from reporting to being accessible to those on the ground, must be faster to be useful.
4. Data: level of detail available (for example through NBN gateway) is not sufficient to be useful to those on the ground; there is a widespread lack of understanding around mechanisms for reporting.
5. Contingency planning: need to do more of this and pin down who is responsible for what in various circumstances, where resources will come from and get the right people involved (including NGOs and LAs).
6. Must have better links with Plant/Animal/Fish Health.
7. Research: needs better coordination, also have been weak in directing research (much current research does not answer policy questions).

Detailed summary of issues discussed

Prevention

- Rapid RAs are sometimes not rapid (although process and product are good).
 - Must not sacrifice quality for speed.
 - Should be better at communicating delays and reasons for them.
 - Lack of clarity on process for requesting a RA and what the prioritisation process is, doesn't appear strategic.

- Rapid RAs are often produced in good time but followed by a very slow decision making process.
 - Precautionary bans on movement/sale should be possible to put in place rapidly following a RA/RRR.
- Pathway Action Plans are not ready but this is largely due to the fact that they require a great deal of information and understanding of the issues and we were not equipped five years ago.
 - A lack of easily accessible RAs from other countries hinders progress.
 - A better overview and a more strategic approach to research would help inform these Pathway Action Plans.
 - A weakness of the PAP approach is that they can only look at known issues.
- Need more people practicing prevention e.g. landowners spend vast sums of money controlling plants but take no action to improve biosecurity.
- *Chalara* highlights the need for us to be better linked with Plant Health messages as they are often the same.
- Prevention at a regional level is difficult.
 - RAs should support this by having a regional breakdown of impact.
- Some prevention measures (e.g. biosecurity in industries where the cost would be high) will never be adopted voluntarily. There will always be need for a statutory 'push'.

Early detection, surveillance and monitoring

- Trying to get everyone to report is probably wasted effort.
 - Engaging with expert amateurs is a better strategy
 - Have a very small number of high alert species messages targeted at the general public.
- Some thought that mechanisms for reporting are too varied but others felt that targeted mechanisms were vital to engage people (PlantTracker vs an 'all plants' or 'all species' approach).
- Avoid a one size fits all approach, not everyone can use a phone app.
- Few people understood that many of the apps/websites feed data to a central point; so is the problem is one of branding and communication rather than any weakness in the reporting mechanisms?
 - Need to create confidence in the standards adhered to in creating these apps/websites and in where the information is going. More explicit branding required?
- Local/regional perspective: reports are not fed through to those that need them, especially if a species is widespread in most of the country but is a priority in a region where they are hoping to prevent it establishing.
 - Currently there is no alert in place to flag issues up locally.
 - Most people make direct link to Local Record Centre and bypass the national reporting mechanisms as this is the only way to get complete, detailed and timely data with locally relevant issues flagged up to you immediately.
- Recording absence, or clearing out records once an eradication project has been successful, is vital.

- Experience from Plant Health is that any EU monitoring system will only be as strong as the weakest information going into it. MS differ in their will and capacity to report.
- There is generally no formal monitoring for NNS, what is picked up is picked up by accident through other monitoring programmes.
 - Resources dictate how fast data are transferred to NBN.
 - Weakness is that many people don't put data on at full resolution (for various reasons).
 - Sometimes there is a lack of consistency in how detailed the records are to begin with.
- NNS need to form part of the routine monitoring that is already in place.
- One opportunity is the cultural shift towards landscape scale management and conservation (rather than just protected sites). People are not necessarily alert to the fact that recording unusual species could be of great benefit.

Rapid response

- Need more contingency plans like the Asian Hornet one.
 - Plant health model is to create generic plans that are tailored when you are faced with a particular problem.
 - Should be encouraging large landowners (MOD etc.) to develop their own plans.
 - Must be able to pin down who will be responsible for what in any given circumstance and where resources will come from to deal with any emerging problem.
 - Very difficult to draw up these plans for local/regional action (for a local priority species) – principal issue being commitment to providing resources that would be required.
- Compulsory access to land is the biggest barrier to taking action.
- Resources are limited and don't always match expectations. Must get better at communicating this to engender realistic expectations.
- Need to review the RR protocol (there is currently nothing about biosecurity in there).
- RR and contingency planning should be explicit regarding how the end of RR phase is identified – especially where RR should move into long term management. That point is currently ill defined.
- If a control project is unpalatable to a section of the public the Local Authority will often be swayed by a vocal minority. Therefore:
 - Make sure the LA is involved at the earliest point and
 - Make sure that communication of the need to carry out control etc. is clear to avoid creating bad feeling.
- Contingency planning must take into account applying for relevant licenses etc – involve the regulator early.

Workshop 2: Mitigation, control and eradication, building awareness and understanding.

Chairs

Trevor Salmon (Defra)
Carrie Hulme (WWT)

Aim

To seek views from stakeholders on our future priorities over the next five years.

A starting point may be to ask the participants:

- What has worked well in the last five years.
- What has worked not so well in the last five years.
- What could be improved or done differently over the next five years.

Conclusions and key points raised

Summary of key issues raised

1. There is a lack of transparency in, and understanding of, the decision making process
 - a. How are species chosen for ISAPs?
 - b. How do risk assessments feed into ISAP development?
2. Lack of distribution data can be a barrier to developing prioritised plans.
3. Long term funding of projects is necessary for control of most species.
4. Developing and spreading of good practice is vital to prevent wheel re-invention.
 - a. LAG workshops are good (but more good practice sharing needed).
5. Better coordination of research is important.
 - a. There has been no working group for research – one would have been useful.
 - b. A log of research projects is also required.
6. Raising awareness within, and making links across, government is important.
 - a. Further links should be made with Plant and Animal Health.

Detailed summary of issues discussed

Mitigation, control and eradication

- Need to be able to prioritise management action; this should include consideration of the severity of impacts and cost / benefits.
Management action could also be prioritised based on protecting key landscapes.

- A risk management process is required to help balance risk against feasibility of undertaking management in order to support prioritisation.
 - Assumption should be no action unless benefit of undertaking action is clear.
 - Priorities may be different at different scales (e.g. GB, country, regional scales).
 - Prioritisation should result in the production of more Invasive Species Action Plans and contingency plans.
 - Where possible prioritisation should be done in advance of impacts occurring / species arriving.
- While ISAPs are designed to help coordinate action in GB, they are also a useful tool to help prevent wasted effort and un-strategic action.
 - Restrictions on the use of certain management methods (e.g. herbicides) could significantly reduce our ability to respond to certain species.
 - Lack of good / accurate distribution data is a barrier to prioritising action and developing action plans.
 - Need regular updates on biocontrol progress.
 - Research coordination is particularly important in this area:
 - There are lots of questions that need to be answered to support management, how to prioritise them?
 - Limited funding needs to be targeted carefully.
 - Risk of duplication of effort within and between countries, need to understand who funds what research.
 - Recommend that a log of non-native species research projects in GB should be kept centrally.
 - Recommend establishing a group to focus on coordinating research needs across GB.
 - The NNSS projects database contains 100+ projects, but there is still a need to collate management action across GB. Consider whether BARS could help with collation.

Building awareness and understanding

- There is a general need to do more to get the message (about NNS) out to general public, NGOs, national and local government, and government agencies.
 - Mechanisms could include contacting travellers and using the education system.
 - Social scientists could play an important role.
- Greater collaboration with other, similar work areas such as Plant and Animal Health could yield significant benefits.

- Need to consider where the gaps in our existing communications are. There is a risk that we are only raising awareness of those that are already aware (i.e. NNSS circulation lists etc.). How do we reach people that we don't usually have contact with? An example could be Local Authorities, where awareness was thought to be poor.
- Awareness raising should be prioritised to those involved in high risk pathways.
- It can be difficult / confusing when trying to communicate that priorities at a GB scale may not be the same at a regional / local scale (e.g. eradication of Himalayan balsam may be feasible at a local but not national scale).
 - Need to be careful in communicating these points through ISAPs etc.
- New Zealand and Australia were thought to be good models of awareness raising. Could they provide a model for GB to follow, what lessons can we learn from them?
- Suggest having advertising at major ports and on visa forms, although Plant Health colleagues pointed out that this has been considered already and it was not straightforward.
- Continuing research into public attitudes is important to see what resonates with general public and key audiences.
- The GB communications plan should be reviewed as part of the GB Strategy review process.

Summary of Q&A session

Qu 1. How can we better record non-native species action that is going on in GB?

Response: Could try to improve / develop use of existing mechanisms including the NNSS projects database and BARS.

Qu 2. While focus has been on responding to problems within GB, how do we avoid exporting problems to other countries?

Response: A point that should be taken forward and considered during the review of the Strategy

Qu 3. (comment) Research appears to be a clear theme for improvement in the next phase of the Strategy.

Response: General agreement. Need to work to match research with key policy questions. Coordination of funders is as important as coordination of research itself. Need a strategic approach and gap analysis. Good to link with other research initiatives, e.g. living with environment change.

Qu 4. (comment) There is a need for stronger legislation, should not wait for Europe or rest on our laurels.

Feedback from attendees

Forum

82 delegates attended the Forum and feedback forms were returned by 15 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 so long as the right people and organisations are invited', 'yes very useful to have a visible forum to give formal and informal exchanges', 'yes it is a great opportunity to network and I made at least 5 new useful contacts'.

Aspects of the Forum which worked well and not so well were:

- 'Breakout groups were good, but perhaps even smaller groups (ie.10 people) would facilitate more discussion'.
- 'Time for a good discussion in breakout groups was good'.
- 'Not sure what the point of the workshops were – they seemed to descend into a lengthy whinge. Workshop 1 was badly chaired, Workshop 2 seemed unfocussed'.
- 'All very useful'.
- 'Working groups were really good'.
- 'Afternoon sessions better as Powerpoint can be a bit dull'.
- '2 x workshops that EVERYONE attends – very useful'.
- 'Good mix of information presented and workshops'.
- 'Really active comments in the afternoon sessions'.
- 'Liked workshop repetition, but I think this was good as it focused on Strategy'.
- 'The presentations were short succinct and to the point so worked very well, although the killer shrimp presentation (EA) was a little repetitive in content to the one provided by Anglian Water last year.

The majority agreed the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff was an excellent venue for the Forum. Both meeting rooms and catering facilities were of a very high standard, however one person commented that 2 floors between coffee and the main meeting room was not so good.

Venues suggested for the 2014 Forum were:

- Birmingham
- Edinburgh
- Millennium Stadium, Cardiff
- Scotland
- London
- Chester Zoo
- York
- Don't mind as long as transport links are good

Future Strategy priorities

We asked attendees what were the three most important facets related to the Strategy which require, or would benefit from, greater attention in the future. We have grouped the individual responses (which are reproduced here *verbatim*) into categories to make them clearer.

Pathway issues

- Pathways (2 suggestions).
- Pathways (and reception system).
- Prevention, related to high risk pathways.
- Management of pathways to prevent introductions.

Rapid response

- Clearer commitment from organisations to rapid response responsibilities.
- Learning lessons from Rapid Response so far.
- Develop generalised action plans – less of a fan on specific species.

Research

- Coordinating research – generating clear policy and allocating these to research institutions.
- Co-ordinating research and technology.
- Research funding (3 suggestions).

Monitoring and surveillance

- Monitoring and surveillance.
- Improved coordination and clarity over data flow – where it goes, the organisations involved and what happens as a result/what is it used for?
- Data flow/recording.
- Data – speed of reporting and use.
- Support existing infrastructure for dataflow and encourage faster flow and greater access and awareness.
- Utilise eDNA technologies for rapid accurate identification of existing and new INNS.
- Reporting of actions completed.

Awareness raising and communications

- Coordination – all info in one place.
- Communication between Stakeholders.
- Getting the message through to the most important people – this could be the angling club secretary.
- Information exchange – perhaps as acknowledgement, at the very least, of the role NGOs and academic institutions can play.
- Maximise synergies with Plant and Animal Health, re surveillance, monitoring, risk registers, funding etc.
- Synergy with plant/animal health agenda.
- Much greater engagement with large asset holders, MoD, HA, Network Rail and business and industry.

- Raise awareness and use the expertise of the thousands of professional ecologists.

Management, mitigation

- Development of action plans (ISAPs) for more species – particularly marine.
- Resolve the dilemma of needing local action to achieve national strategy.
- Funding for local work.
- Resources.
- Mitigation.

Other issues

- Legislation.
- Stronger links of Risk Assessment to Risk Management.
- Tipping points – at what point could a NNS become invasive – eg fin whales (becoming more frequent in Welsh waters) putting pressure on food sources for birds / other cetaceans.
- Add INNS into the UKs Natural Capital accounting system as an annually assessed costed liability.
- Clear identity of Stakeholders of responsible parties for management assessment.

Secretariat Website

Comments on the GB NNSS website included:

- 'Very good – clear, concise layout and very intuitive to navigate and find information'.
- 'Very good'.
- 'Perhaps regular updating on current prioritisations (key and the listed 'Alerts') and potential sources of funding for 'actions'.
- 'No comments, generally excellent'.
- 'Good, but maybe simpler / less busy'.
- 'Good that layout remains relatively constant / familiar'.
- Generally very easy to use.

14 out of 15 delegates had visited the Secretariat website. The table below shows the frequency of delegate visits to the website reported in the questionnaire feedback.

	2013	2012	2011
Less than once per month	2		3
Once per month	6	2	11
Once per week	4	8	8
Several times per week	2	8	2

The most useful parts of the website included:

- Species Information (NNS Information Portal) (13)
- Gallery, ID sheets, sounds, videos (8)
- Risk assessments / action plans (7)

The least used parts of the website included:

- Be Plant Wise / Check Clean Dry pages (7)
- Europe (4)

Suggested improvements to the website included:

- 'Keep it more up to date with events'.
- 'Link the project database with BARS when the technology permits'.
- 'More in European action by other Member States'.

Acknowledgements

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