

Proceedings of the Third Annual Consultative Forum on Non-Native Species

London Wetland Centre, Barnes

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SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Introduction

The 3rd Annual Forum on Non-native Species takes its direction from key recommendation 8 of the Working Group report of the Review of Non-native Species Policy – i.e. that stakeholders should be fully consulted and engaged in the development of invasive non-native species policies and action, through a mechanism such as a consultative Forum.

This year's Forum, responding to feedback from the last two fora, used a mixture of talks and break-out sessions. There was also a conscious attempt to broaden the focus to include a European perspective (by including the first talk). The 2006 Forum also attempted to achieve stakeholder input into the process of developing a strategy on non-native species for GB by early 2007, through four break-out sessions.

PROGRAMME

10:00 Registration and coffee

10:30 Welcome and introduction (*PB chair – Hilary Thompson*)

Introduction to the programme

Setting the scene for the day

Update on progress since the 2005 Forum (Programme Board, Secretariat, Working Groups)

Presentations

10:40 European activities on Invasive Alien Species (*Piero Genovesi*)

11:05 The Ruddy Duck eradication programme (*Iain Henderson*)

11:30 Tweed Invasives Project: A catchment-scale approach to invasives control (*Tweed Forum*)

11:55 The crayfish story (*Trevor Renals*)

12:20 Introduction to the workshop sessions (*Niall Moore*)

12:30 Lunch (chance to mingle, look at posters, visit Centre, etc.)

Workshop sessions

13:45 – 14:45 Workshops

Developing a rapid response approach (*Chair – Richard Ferris, Rapporteur – Ruth Waters*)

GB Strategy approach (*Chair – Niall Moore, Rapporteur – Judith Webb*)

Education and awareness (*Chair – Trevor Renals, Rapporteur – Peter Robertson*)

Measuring the effectiveness of tackling INNS (*Chair – Phil Hulme, Rapporteur – David Gilchrist*)

14:45 Coffee break

15:00 Report back from workshops and discussion from the floor

15:55 Closing remarks/next steps (*Hilary Thompson*)

16:00 Close

Progress since last Forum (March 2005 – May 2006)

The chair outlined the main areas of progress since the 2005 Forum. These are detailed below.

- o **Co-ordinating mechanism:** as announced by Ben Bradshaw MP, Biodiversity Minister, at last year's forum, the co-ordinating mechanism (the first recommendation of the 2003 Review) has been established. It consists of a high-level Programme Board to ensure buy-in by a number of government departments and agencies and a Secretariat sitting alongside the Programme Board [PB] to carry out the PBs objectives.
- o The *Programme Board* was established in September 2005 and has met twice since then.
- o The *Secretariat* was established in March 2006 and currently consists of the head of the Secretariat (Niall Moore) with a further member of staff currently being recruited. The Secretariat has an initial life-span of three years.
- o The **GB Strategy** on non-native species is being drafted by the Strategy Working Group which first met in March 2006. It is due to finalise the strategy by early 2007.
- o A **Scottish Working Group** on non-native species has been set up to ensure effective policy co-ordination and practical implementation within Scotland.
- o A **Companion Animal (Pet) Code of Practice** is currently being drawn up by a further working group.
- o The **NERC Act** received its royal assent on 30 March 2006. This has several important provisions for tackling non-native species. These include the ability to prohibit the sale (or advertisement for sale) of specified non-native plant and animal species and a power for the Secretary of State to issue or approve codes of practice relating to non-native species.
- o The **Ruddy Duck Eradication Programme** was launched in September 2005 following the successful bid for partial funding from the EU.
- o An **Audit of Responsibilities** among government departments and agencies is currently in the process of being commissioned (to report by early autumn 2006).
- o Follow-on research on the original risk assessment work (that was funded by Defra and reported on at last year's forum) is being commissioned by the Scottish Executive and Defra.
- o In Scotland last year, Schedule 9 was updated with 13 (mainly aquatic) plant species, making it an offence to plant or cause these species (or their hybrids) to grow in the wild. A further consultation is expected later in summer 2006.

Presentations

The four talks set the scene at a variety of scales, from action at a European level, through national campaigns to some very effective work at a local scale. They showed both where things have gone well and not so well. The talks also helped set the scene for the afternoon break-out sessions.

Abstracts

European activities on Invasive Alien Species

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Alien species pose major and growing threats to European biodiversity. Despite the growing activities carried on by many states in collecting updated information on alien species, preventing new invasions and tackling alien species that are already established in their territory, it is evident that a coordinated regional policy is urgently needed. Several cultural, legal, and technical constraints inhibit the ability of European states and institutions to effectively address biological invasions. The “European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species” - formally adopted by European states and institutions - provides a comprehensive tool to assist countries and regional institutions to develop effective and consistent policies on this issue. The Kyiv Biodiversity Resolution states that by 2008, the European Strategy shall be implemented by at least half of the countries, through their respective National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. It is of crucial importance that countries identify main constraints and gaps in their legal and policy frameworks, and address them through a revision of their policies. Competent European regional authorities are called to follow up the implementation of the European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species by the European States. Examples of best practices and successful management actions on invasive alien species and flag projects on invasive alien species shall be promoted and circulated.

The Ruddy Duck eradication programme

Iain Henderson, CSL
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The ruddy duck is a North American species that has become established in the UK following escape from wildfowl collections. It is the most serious threat to the survival of the white-headed duck with which it hybridises. Following several years of Defra-funded research into the feasibility of eradicating ruddy ducks from the UK, an eradication programme began in September 2005. This will run for five years, and is jointly financed by Defra and the EU LIFE-Nature programme.

This is a unique eradication programme for a number of reasons - the geographic extent involved (the whole of the UK), the need for co-ordination with several other European governments to ensure that small feral populations elsewhere are also

eradicated, and the fact that Ruddy Duck control in the UK is opposed by many at the local level. Control of Ruddy Ducks will concentrate on the main wintering flocks and the prime breeding sites. Access to all sites is with the agreement of the site owner. Control by shooting has proved to be the only effective method to bring about a rapid reduction in the population, but other methods, including breeding season trapping and egg oiling, may be employed at later stages of the eradication programme.

The Tweed Invasives Project: A catchment scale approach to invasives control

Tim Barratt, Tweed Forum
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The presentation will cover the strategic development and subsequent delivery over the past four years of the Tweed Invasives Project, a long-term project focusing on the catchment scale control of Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed. The presentation will go through how support for the project was developed, how problems associated with control were resolved and how the project is delivered on the ground in partnership with farmers, landowners and other groups.

The crayfish story

Trevor Renals, Environment Agency
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Non-native crayfish were first introduced into the UK during the 1970s for aquaculture. This business diversification attracted grants from Government and was largely targeted to provide additional income for fish farms. Within a short space of time, non-native crayfish had established themselves within the environment, providing a source that rendered most farming efforts uneconomic.

Five non-native species of crayfish are now resident within the UK. The noble crayfish *Astacus astacus* and Turkish crayfish *A.leptodactylus* originate from other parts of Europe and are not crayfish plague vectors. The red swamp crayfish *Procambarus clarkii* and spiny-cheek crayfish *Orconectes limosus* are plague vectors from the US, but have limited range within the UK. The greatest problems have been caused by signal crayfish *Pacifastacus leniusculus*, a plague vector from the US that is also having a profound impact on native aquatic plants, invertebrates and fish. Signal crayfish burrow into riverbanks, causing erosion and undermining flood defences. They damage plant and invertebrate communities, particularly leaches, caddisfly larvae and molluscs. Loss of these invertebrate families from infested watercourses undermines our ability to use biological monitoring techniques for assessing water quality. Crayfish also interfere with fishing baits, resulting in loss of recreation and associated income.

Our control methods have so far proved inadequate, and monitoring methods fail to identify the presence of signal crayfish in sufficient time for early intervention programmes. Despite knowledge regarding disease and invasive potential,

Government encouraged the spread of a variety of non-native crayfish. It appears that we will have to live with the legacy of that decision.

Notes on the speakers

Dr. Piero Genovesi

Piero has been a wildlife biologist at the Italian Government's Wildlife Institute since 1996. He has a PhD in animal ecology from the University of Rome. He is currently the deputy chair of IUCN SSC* Invasive Species Specialist Group, and also chairs the group of experts on alien species of the Council of Europe. With the Council of Europe he has worked on the development of a "European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species" and is the senior author of the European Strategy document itself.

Mr. Iain Henderson

Iain is the manager of the UK Ruddy Duck Eradication Programme run by CSL. He joined Defra in 1991 and transferred to CSL in 1999 to lead the regional control trials into the feasibility of ruddy duck eradication in the UK. The ruddy duck eradication project is the largest vertebrate project ever funded in the EU, involving 10 staff over five years. It is jointly funded by Defra and the EU LIFE-Nature Programme.

Mr. Tim Barratt

Tim has worked for the Tweed Forum on the Tweed Invasives Project since completing his Masters at The University of Edinburgh in 2002. He has previously worked for Kent County Council for two years in Rural Economic Development, delivering environmental and sustainable development projects. The Tweed Invasives Project is one of the Tweed Forum's projects that has been running for nearly four years and targets the active control of Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed.

Mr. Trevor Renals

Trevor has worked for the Environment Agency and its predecessor bodies for 16 years and is currently on assignment to head office as the EA's invasive species advisor. He is currently completing a revision of the Japanese knotweed code of practice for developers and is developing the EA strategy on invasive species. Trevor instigated the Cornwall Knotweed Forum in 1997, and has written a variety of public information material on invasive species management.

*SSC Stands for the Species Survival Commission

Reports from workshops

Four workshops were organised on the following topics to provide input for the developing GB strategy. The text below outlines the main points discussed and the main conclusions drawn.

Developing a rapid response approach

Chair Richard Ferris (JNCC)
Rapporteur Ruth Waters (English Nature)

Effective detection and alerting of new arrivals would be facilitated by having a central focal point to collate information and disseminate it where it is needed (the Secretariat). Taxonomists need to be alerted to the need to record information on new non-native species. Email alerts could be a useful tool for dissemination to relevant individuals/agencies, including to those in charge of contingency planning and action.

There is a critical need for a more joined up approach in Government including the need to convince people in Government to act before the species becomes a problem (by which time it is often too late). One way this could be achieved is to estimate the cost of inaction and compare it to the cost of action.

There needs to be a dedicated contingency pot of money and both the resources and responsible organisations need to be identified in the contingency plan. There is a role for a co-ordinating body to prioritise them, ensure contingency plans are kept updated and fit for purpose. There should be a general contingency plan with some taxon/vector/habitat-specific ones in some cases.

A risk assessment panel is fundamental to non-native species management and this could be funded by call-off contracts (or free!). There is a need to have a network of experts capable of rapid response. The Secretariat needs to keep a watching brief with experts feeding back to the secretariat. It is essential to build up and adequately resource the Secretariat. There is also a need for lead agencies where they do not already exist. Public involvement should be through the Secretariat who directs them to relevant experts/organisations.

The key message was the need for:

- a strong, properly-resourced secretariat to act as a focal point
- clear guidance on who makes the decision for action
- an expert network to advise (which needs resourcing)
- maintenance of updated contingency plans (general and specific)
- the presumption for eradication unless otherwise advised.

GB Strategy approach

Chair Niall Moore (Secretariat)

Rapporteur Judith Webb (Forest and Timber Association)

This group discussed a draft outline of the GB strategy document which was broadly welcomed. There was agreement that there needed to be a strong precautionary element in the document with a robust risk assessment mechanism built into it. Effective information exchange was seen as a key element of any GB strategy to make use of best practice overseas. This would include an element of 'horizon scanning' to flag up potential issues well in advance.

There was an emphasis on using existing strengths, particularly in the monitoring area where GB is well served. There was nervousness with the suggestion to draw up management plans for lots of non-native species or habitats impacted by them. There was the suggestion that the existing BAP mechanisms could be more effectively used instead.

Several constraints were considered, notably the public resistance to culling and ministers desire for short term wins rather than longer term prevention mechanisms. There was also a great need for evidence to justify actions, integrated with robust cost/benefit analyses. The need for long-term and sustained effort was stressed.

Public awareness was seen as a key area to be addressed in the strategy with worries about any attempt to demonise non-natives. To help counter this there needed to be more stress on the mitigation of negative impacts of invasive species. There was also agreement on the need for wide stakeholder involvement at all stages of the process of producing the strategy, not merely at the public consultation stage.

Delivery also needed to be emphasised and the differing priorities at different scales (local, regional, national and GB-wide) needed to be accommodated within the framework of the strategy.

Finally, the strategy needed to acknowledge the impact of climate change, stress the importance of monitoring and address the issue of definitions (including 'nativeness' in different parts of GB).

Education and Awareness

Chair Trevor Renals (EA)
Rapporteur Pete Robertson (CSL)

From the long list of suggested topics the broad ranging discussions identified five priorities for action, namely communicate five times!

There is a need for consistent language particularly as there is a difficult and complex message to be communicated. The existence of beneficial non-native species (including most of our food plants and animals) needs to be acknowledged as does the potential conflict between the different messages on social inclusion and native vs. non-native species.

There need to be simple and clear messages for repeated use, based on science. Examples of Colorado beetle and Rabies were mentioned, not only for their species-specific messages but for their ability to transmit wider messages. The use of these and other messages needs to be assessed through existing questionnaires.

Debate needs to be facilitated on issues surrounding non-native species. The main thrust should be to promote awareness and foster goodwill with minimal use of the 'stick'.

There needs to be accepted standards of behaviour promoted at all levels, including Government. The latter includes the Government estate using contractors which are signed up to the relevant codes of practice (e.g. encouragement of *Miscanthus* as an energy crop, is it wise?).

Routes for dissemination: there needs to be a range of methods used, including high profile (but short term?) exposure via routes like Countryfile, Biodiversity and other media as well as long-term initiatives such as inclusion on the National Curriculum. Other outlets include web-based information, information at borders and sales outlets.

Monitoring the effectiveness of tackling INNS

Chair Phil Hulme (CEH)

Rapporteur David Gilchrist (Horticultural Trades Association)

One of the main issues discussed was what are the priorities for monitoring. In deciding on priorities there needs to be joined up thinking across all the bodies/organisations – a task for the secretariat/programme board. These priorities should include both short-term and longer-term ones with an early assessment of the sizes of the problems that currently exist. Reporting should also feed smoothly from the local level to the PB. In general, there needs to be better dissemination of information with messages giving practical and effective advice to practitioners.

In terms of specific priorities for monitoring, aquatic plants are clearly one. There needs to be regular physical inspection, extended monitoring and greater use of mapping to show affected areas.

The effectiveness of the existing legal framework needs to be monitored, this includes empowerment, penalties etc.

The effectiveness of communication with key stakeholders is important; peoples' behaviour needs to be changed and this needs to be managed and monitored. This includes assessment of the impacts of codes of practice - many of the key targets for the Horticulture CoP have never heard of it.

For management of existing non-natives, there needs to be clear aims and objectives with realistic and clear targets and milestones.

All of the monitoring that is carried out needs to be effectively communicated through the non-native mechanism and to all the key stakeholders.

Discussions following the reports

The following outlines the main points that were raised in the discussions following the reporting back from the four workshops.

GB Strategy approach

Robbie Macdonald (Quercus) asked whether the role of GB as a donor of invasive species rather than just a recipient was to be included.

Hilary Thompson (Defra) replied that close interaction between the GB and All Ireland non-native species mechanisms would be part of the strategy and that GB should be mindful of its potential to act as a source of invasive non-native species.

Trevor Renals (EA) enquired about the idea of facilitating the movement of species from the near continent in response to climate change.

Niall Moore (Secretariat) replied that this was rather a controversial area and that, while the impact of climate change would be included in the strategy, there were no plans to include this facilitation role in it.

Education and Awareness

Paul Walton (RSPB) suggested that there need to be demonstration projects to get the message across to practitioners.

Monitoring the effectiveness of tackling INNS

Dick Shaw (CABI) suggested that monitoring needed to be started as soon as possible. There was a need to establish benchmarks (a national questionnaire to establish current attitudes?).

Gordon Copp (CEFAS) noted that nomenclature needs to be clear and the difference between non-native species in general and invasive non-native species consistent.

Feedback from attendees

Feedback forms were distributed to all of the 79 attendees, of which 21 people responded on the forms. All agreed that the forum was worthwhile with 29% elaborating, saying it was very good, very helpful etc.

In general, the current format was well received, some people preferred the talks, others preferred the workshops. Several respondents specifically praised Piero Genovesi's talk and enjoyed the 'extra-GB' focus. We specifically asked a question on the workshops to provoke a response to help improve them. These responses ranged from: too long discussion at the end to too short discussion. More structure/targeting/bullet pointing were also suggested. One person said that the workshop group size was 'almost too large'.

All 21 agreed that a short progress report would be good in future (with one person suggesting that it should be sent to all on the mailing list rather than just those who attended). Several suggested that a Q&A session might be useful to help quiz Government on progress, policy etc.

Despite worries by several people (mainly outside Government), 76% agreed with rotating the venues but concerns were raised about ease of travel to certain parts of the country (northern Scotland and parts of Wales were specifically mentioned). Several people suggested using other locations in England as well as London and there was also the suggestion of holding a joint one with N. Ireland.

Conclusions:

The Forum was very well received and is perceived as being useful for informing, networking and discussing. The structure seems close to the optimum but with perhaps a short (30 minute) Q&A session of a panel (of Government and non-Government representatives) also needed, as well as a short progress report. Alternating locations around easily accessible parts of GB is also recommended.

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