



Proceedings of the Eleventh Stakeholder Forum on Non-native Species

The Royal York Hotel, York

22 May 2014



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. It provides a framework to help co-ordinate and prioritise action on non-native species across GB.

When the Strategy was launched in 2008, the Government committed to review it after five years. Therefore in September 2013 we began the review process which continued over the winter and spring and involved a series of workshops and discussions with stakeholders as well as the commissioning of two independent reviews from international invasive species experts. We collated the main findings from the above processes and presented them at the Forum along with a series of recommendations for taking forward the new strategy.

Furthermore, in September 2013 the European Commission published its draft Regulation on invasive species and this has subsequently been agreed following months of intense negotiations. As this will have a significant bearing on the future direction of work on INNS, including the strategy, we considered to look at both together at the Forum.

The morning sessions consisted of talks to update on developments in the past year and on progress with the Strategy review and the EU Regulation. The afternoon workshop sessions provided the opportunity for stakeholders to have a wide-ranging discussion on all elements of the strategy. The workshops concentrated in particular on the suggested recommendations.

Overall, 92 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: Strategy Review and EU Regulation

10:00 Registration and coffee

10:30 Welcome and outline of the day

10:40 Update on progress since 2013 Forum

10:50 Setting the scene presentations

- EU Legislation
 - Update on progress – *Trevor Salmon*
 - Risk assessment and COST projects – *Helen Roy*
- Biological Control Progress – *Rob Tanner*
- GB Strategy Review - *Craig Lee and Olaf Booy*

Brief discussions and questions to be taken after each presentation

12:10 Introduction to workshop sessions

12:20 Lunch

13:20 **Workshop session: Strategy review – forward look**

Discussion of the strategy review recommendations (in the light of the EU Regulation).

15:00 Refreshment break

15:20 Open session

15:50 Closing remarks/next steps

16:00 Close

Workshop Reports

Workshop A: Strategy review – forward look

Chair: Stan Whitaker, SNH

Aim: Discussion of the strategy review recommendations (in light of the EU Regulation).

The following issues were raised at this Workshop Session:

Governance

- The reasons for the Board not to include NGOs needs to be communicated more clearly and the ways in which NGOs can influence strategic decisions needs to be set out more clearly.
- The England Working Group needs clear Terms of Reference to be set out.
- There are insufficient recommendations relating to funding issues and how these will be overcome.
- Given that the funding stream for LAGs is likely to run out soon, a LAG coordinator role needs to be established quickly to attempt to support the continuation of LAGs.
- Local authorities need to be encouraged to take on more responsibility (but acknowledge the other pressures put on them). The planning system may be a route in to engage LAs.

Legislation

- Schedule 9 was not considered fit for purpose, mainly because it is slow to be updated (with regards plants) and has not been enforced. The schedule should be updated at the first opportunity and enforcement agencies encouraged to prioritise this legislation.
- Other powers (e.g. under the fish health regime) could be useful for responding to non-native species issues in GB.

Rapid response

- Tools used for delivering rapid responses, such as particular herbicides, are being taken off the market (largely because of EU regulation). There is a risk that this will prevent the UK from being able to respond to high priority species. A review of the impact this might have on the UK should be undertaken and, where necessary, the case should be made to be able to continue using these methods (e.g. off label).

- More research on methods of control is required and the results should be made available to practitioners.
- The decision to rapidly respond to some species but not others is not well communicated to stakeholders. Stakeholders should be more integral to the decision making and implementation process.
- There is a lack of funding for rapid response. Action should therefore be carefully prioritised to ensure the most effective approaches are funded. It is also necessary to argue for more resources in this area.
- Contingency plans developed for other purpose (e.g. oil spill, fish health, plant health, etc.) should be considered and utilised in the development of non-native species contingency plans. The Rapid Response Working Group should consider again the development of an overall contingency plan for non-native species in GB.

Long term management

- The definition of restoration needs to be carefully considered. Further research into how restoration can be achieved and the relevant cost / benefits should be considered.

Workshop B: Strategy review – forward look

Chair: Gabe Wyn, NRW

Aim: Discussion of the strategy review recommendations (in light of the EU Regulation).

The following issues were raised at this Workshop Session:

Governance

- Mention of border controls is absent and there needs to be more on this in the recommendations.
- There needs to be genuine NGO involvement in decision-making and prioritisation.
- Local Authorities need to be meaningfully incentivised.

Prevention

- There is a need to review lessons learned, and to ensure that the prevention agenda is not just driven by the needs of EU Regulation enforcement.

Risk Analysis

- The communications element of risk analysis is poor and needs to be strengthened.
- Risk analysis needs to be linked to horizon scanning.

Horizon Scanning and Contingency Planning

- Links to the horizon scanning process in Plant Health and to those in other EU member states need to be strengthened.
- Identification of species coming from left field was also seen as a potential problem.

Early Detection, Surveillance, Monitoring

- There was strong support for NNSIP but the need to ‘consolidate’ data flow was seen as key.

- There was worry that too much stress on EU-related monitoring would sideline GB needs.
- There is a need to tap into existing reporting and recording more efficiently.

Rapid Response

- There needs to be more rapid decision making by the Programme Board.
- There needs to be more rapid listing on Schedule 9.
- Clarity of rapid response protocol will help agencies to respond.
- There needs to be rapid availability of funding.
- There are issues with training/moving staff across internal GB borders.

Mitigation, Control and Eradication

- The strategy needs to reflect that resources may be needed over the long term.
- There is a need to review ISAPs.
- Local Authorities should be incentivised to support LAGs (tax relief for LAs)?
- There should be mention of BARS.
- There were calls for a LAG co-ordination role to be established and based within NNSS.

Building Awareness

- The strategy needs to acknowledge that Government involvement in communications is key and this needs to continue.
- Links with Plant and Animal Health communications need to be strengthened.
- The training recommendation needs to be strongly worded.
- There was strong support for maintenance of the NNSS website.

Legislation

- There is a need to look at all the requirements of EU regulation in the round including on CAP, CFP, WFD, MSFD, state aid etc.
- More species need to be banned from sale.
- Legislation for management (especially pesticide usage) is hindering available controls.
- Most participants did not agree that Schedule 9 was fit for purpose. The process of listing on it needs to be transparent and it needs updating with reference to the EU list when it is extant.

Research

- There is a need to include the identification of operational needs as well as gaps and priorities.
- A key element will be fostering the link between researchers and practitioners – knowledge exchange being vital.
- Any working group should include practitioners.
- A database of INNS research in GB will be difficult to maintain.

Information Exchange

- The recommendations (specifically 1) should be more explicit on what is included – Animal and Plant Health, Border Control, etc.
- There is a need for a stronger recommendation on overseas territories.

Workshop C: Strategy review – forward look

Chair: Craig Lee, Defra

Aim: Discussion of the strategy review recommendations (in light of the EU Regulation).

The following issues were raised at this Workshop Session:

Governance

- General feeling for the need to set up an England Working Group, to include both Government and non-Government organisations, with term's of reference and a focus on project operations. The EU Regulation will provide the working group with focus.
- A Working Group should be considered for overseas territories.
- There is a need to re-invigorate rapid response plans and engage with species experts to do so.
- Biosecurity should become a mandatory practice and local authorities should promote and help achieve this in local areas. A biosecurity duty should be considered under the NERC Act 2006.
- Community Protection Notices should be available to local authorities soon.
- Local Action Groups would benefit from a central coordinator or a mechanism which encouraged groups to meet up on a regular basis to discuss common issues, share knowledge, etc.

Legislation

- General feeling that legislation should either be used more effectively and to its full potential or be deleted.
- Need to be clear which organisations are going to take responsibility for dealing with INNS issues and delivering action on the ground in the future (Government, Agencies, NGOs).
- The police are not the most appropriate enforcement body; this should instead be a plant health inspector or someone else with a working knowledge of the subject area.

Building Awareness

- The public attitudes survey undertaken 4 – 5 years ago should be repeated. Impact of public attitude campaigns should be assessed regularly.

- Other sectors (NGO's, trade associations) should be encouraged to embrace results of Government public attitude surveys in their work, and also consider implementing such surveys in their own working practises.
- Need to drill INNS messages in at grass roots level and improve collaborative working between policy teams, Government departments and across country borders. High level management is required to resolve such border issues through reciprocal agreements and sharing expertise.

Financial Issues

- Organisations need to agree dedicated funding streams as early as possible during the financial year to give the best possible chance of project delivery on time and to budget.
- Funding should be made available for emergency action to tackle INNS issues – we need to learn from the experiences of Ash die back.
- Need to incentivise landowners to take action to control INNS before species take hold; the group felt that economic drivers would be the biggest incentive.
- Government, it's agencies and NGO's need to present cost/benefit evaluations to encourage others to buy into this work.
- There was general agreement from the group that, in the long run, the 'polluter pays principle' should be upheld with UK business and industry ultimately having to pay to help deliver the strategy. However there is no mention of who should pay in the strategy. Therefore industry needs to be approached urgently to 'warm up' businesses to this expectation, stressing the costs and benefits of early action to tackle INNS.
- An INNS strategy implementation plan should be developed.

Summary of Q&A session

Question 1. We should be using contacts within industry and trade to help with horizon scanning (i.e. they will be able to advise what new organisms are being brought into GB etc).

Response. NM agreed that this was a good point.

Question 2. Will the EU Regulation allow for the listing of species by group (e.g. by genus) rather than listing only specific species?

Response. Yes, this is possible within the Regulation.

Question 3. The Plant Health advisory forum could be a useful group to interact with, it includes trade representatives who help with biosecurity and horizon scanning.

Response. Agree that we need to strengthen links here and throughout Plant Health.

Question 4. Register thanks for the efforts that have gone into the Strategy Review and pleased with progress made.

Question 5. What is happening with the ballast water convention (when will it be ratified / why hasn't the UK signed up?)

Response. The UK has some concerns over how it would be enforced at the moment (particularly in relation to the sample and management of ballast water).

Question 6. Will the new EU Regulation bring with it any dedicated funding streams?

Response. There are no dedicated funding streams associated with it.

Question 7. How can we bring more professional ecologists into the next 5 years of the Strategy?

Response. An area to work on, possibly through representative bodies (e.g. CIEEM) or possibly the planning system.

Feedback from attendees

92 delegates attended the Forum, however only 7 feedback forms were returned at or after the Forum. All 7 agreed that holding an annual Forum was a worthwhile event, however a suggestion was made to hold the forum over two` days to allow for networking purposes.

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

- ‘Excellent opportunity to hear about progress and updates on the GB Strategy and EU Regulation’.
- ‘Posters were interesting and good to see’.
- ‘Workshop sessions very good’.
- ‘The afternoon group sizes were too large – this could have been avoided by having more groups’.
- ‘The whole forum worked well - good networking opportunities’.
- ‘Updates in the morning and discussions in the afternoon worked well’.
- ‘Afternoon discussion was very open which sometimes allowed folk to go off topic, but that was the nature of the discussions’.
- ‘The GB Strategy review and EU Regulation are a major piece of work and should be repeated again at the next Forum’.
- ‘The workshop sessions were dominated by a few more confident participants - not sure how to solve this though’.

All agreed the Royal York Hotel was an excellent venue for the Forum, especially so close to the train station. Both the meeting rooms and catering facilities were of a very high standard and having a sit down lunch was particularly welcome. One person commented that the meeting room was too hot.

Venues suggested for the 2014 Forum were:

- York (Royal York Hotel again)
- Brussels
- Scotland

Are there any issues you consider have not been addressed by the review’s recommendations?

- ‘No new ones that haven’t already been discussed’.
- ‘All issues and recommendations seem to be addressed. The workshop worked well to highlight the minor issues and those were noted’.
- ‘Usefulness of strategy for all sectors and how the strategy is supported by the ACTUAL Government’?
- ‘Need for UK endorsement of IMO ballast water management convention’
- ‘The large attendance was good, but thought needed as to whether there needs to be more than one forum to cater for various constituencies and/or to develop a more structured approach, eg avoiding multiple attendees for a single constituency’.
- ‘Look at possible problems of management of INNS in UK water, eg Aberdeen to Portsmouth’.

Secretariat Website

Comments on the GB NNSS website included:

- 'It's great.'
- 'Website good and user friendly'.
- 'More up to date information required. Most information comes through e-mails from others not the NNSS website and this would help with rapid response'.
- 'Very useful resource and very easy to use'.

All 7 delegates had visited the Secretariat website. The table below shows the frequency of delegate visits to the website reported in the questionnaire feedback.

	2014	2013	2012	2011
Less than once per month		2		3
Once per month	5	6	2	11
Once per week		4	8	8
Several times per week	2	2	8	2

The most useful parts of the website included:

- Species Information
- Publications and useful links
- Biosecurity

The least used parts of the website included:

- Local Action Group pages
- Projects pages
- Training
- GB Co-ordination pages

Suggested improvements to the website included:

- 'Use of social media, ie Facebook, Twitter'.
- 'A youth section - as young people wouldn't find it interesting or interactive'.
- 'A blog might be a good addition but it needs to be very regularly updated'.
- 'More regular updates of LAGs pages to ensure information is current'.
- 'Review list of LAGs'.

Suggested information to be added to the website included:

- 'Educational resources'.
- 'More information on research'.
- 'Films to use in presentations'.
- 'EU Regs - updates, council decisions, lists, consultations, voting'.

Acknowledgements

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