



Proceedings of the Fourteenth Stakeholder Forum on Non-native Species

Principality Stadium, Cardiff

13 June 2017



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.

Overall, 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

- 09:30 Registration and coffee
10:00 Welcome address
10:15 Update on progress since 2016 Forum

Setting the scene presentations

- 10:30 Marine pathways action
10:45 Biosecurity Communications and Water Companies
11:10 Local Action Groups
11:25 *Refreshment break*
11:45 Asian hornet response 2016 and future plans
12:05 Wales INNS Programme
12:20 Introduction to workshop sessions
12:30 *Lunch*
13:30 **Workshop session:**
- **Workshop 1: Promoting greater non-Government engagement**
 - **Workshop 2: Training - Improving uptake and standards**
 - **Workshop 3: Restoration of ecosystems**
- 15:00 *Refreshment break*
15:20 Open session
15:50 Closing remarks/next steps
16:00 Close

Workshop Reports

Workshop 1: Promoting greater non-Government engagement

Chair: Leasa Fielding (WG) and Martin Williams (WG)

What has worked well/not worked well to date?

DW OATA – OATA are very keen to play a key role in preventing introduction. One of the key issues is the EU's approach to listing as this has made it difficult to engage with members when they see species on the list which they do not feel are relevant to them.

EB RYA – Members are also becoming disengaged because there was a lot of promotion of check, clean and dry in 2012 and they are surprised that this is still an issue. We are not demonstrating the risks of impact as well as we could.

DT WW – Important for organisations to engage inwards as well as outwards. Highlight the risks to the business and make issues relevant to potential partners.

NM GBNNS – Comm's need to be more consistent but do not want to risk fatigue.

DS CABI – Bugwood (www.bugwood.org) database of INNS images subject to certain conditions.

What could Government be doing to engage better?

DT WW – It would be useful to know which are priority species and the actions to take / which are being taken. Good for government to understand stakeholder priorities.

TR EA – Consider developing management plans setting out roles for different sectors.

JM ICL – JM has looked at stakeholder attitudes to tree health to see at which stage stakeholders become engaged. It seems to come down to people believing there is a problem and a workable solution. Need to move people from an awareness of a problem to concern about a problem. Only when they believed there is a solution are people pushed to act.

What methods of communication should Government be using?

DT WW – target stakeholders at different levels. Decide if you want to raise awareness or encourage action.

LB DINNS – the Dee INNS project has many different approaches to engagement to satisfy both of the above. There is little recognition of how long it takes to tackle INNS and little long-term funding available.

Case studies provide self-promoting vehicle.

How do we organise the problem?

Policy makers focus on the source not the pathways or the receptors. Pathways are important for business and receptors are important for end users because they feel they have ownership of receptors e.g. habitats.

Are we talking to the right people rather than the 'converted'. No representation at the Stakeholder forum from transport, Canal and Rivers Trust, highways agencies etc.

Possible Actions

Consider re-instating the OATA workshop process.

Consider compiling a database of impacts / stats / case studies to show, for example, CCD has worked well in x, without it x could have occurred.

GB NNS to provide simple case study template for people to complete and save on GB NNSS website (issue / action / effect)

Next stakeholder Forum

Marine stakeholders often do not engage as much as they could. Is this because they don't see a mixed freshwater / terrestrial / marine context as useful? Would it be better to have marine specific forum in future or does this risk separation and isolation? Could look at having general meeting in morning and then split for the afternoon in to environments (freshwater / marine / terrestrial) or sectors (industry / transport / service providers) in the afternoon?

Are we talking to the right people rather than the 'converted'. No representation at the Stakeholder forum from transport, Canal and Rivers Trust, highways agencies, network rail etc.

Could we be approaching specific sectors challenging them to look at issues differently – provide match funding under corporate responsibility schemes, target campaigns at different sectors eg: be plant wise at rail and tourism industry?

Could we develop an accreditation scheme for control services to improve standards.

Workshop 2: Training - Improving uptake and standards

Chair: Max Wade (AECOM) and Olaf Booy (GBNNSS)

Examples of existing training courses and providers:

- Property Care Association
- GB NNSS e-learning
- Scottish Natural Heritage Sharing Good Practice events
- EPPO RA
- Forestry Commission
- Knotweed (Jo)
- Spray certificate
- Plant Health training
- Harper Adams Biosecurity
- Cardiff and Cornwall College
- Acorn ecology
- MBA marine NNS ID
- Institute of fisheries management
- Farming connect / Link provide training for herbicide use
- Marine Biosecurity Planning

How do we ensure we maximise uptake of the existing e-learning training modules amongst Government Agency staff and NGOs.

- Include this in inductions / annual training
- NNSS biosecurity e-learning has been made compulsory in SNH

Who should we prioritise?

- Government Agencies
- NGOs
 - OATA membership
- Private sector
 - Contact association of ecological clerks of works
 - Business in the community
 - Apprenticeships through the professional bodies
- Universities
- Need to monitor uptake / behaviour change
 - keep a log of who does what for a national coordination group

How should recommendations relating to accredited courses and development of qualifications and standards be progressed?

- Accredit those who do accreditation

What further training materials should be developed as a priority?

- Industry specific training – working with OATA / RHS
- Contingency planning / rapid responses
- Management of established species

- STEM / schools / education
- Existing NNSS ID e-learning should be updated
 - Marine

Key points

- Not enough demand for training (awareness is a problem)
 - Develop a comms plan for training providers
- Need for national coordination
 - Develop a log of training courses / providers
- Schools and education are a priority group
- Include training in PAPs and ISAPS and contingency plan

Workshop 3: Future Monitoring and Surveillance Needs

Chairs: Jess Chappel (RSPB) and Hannah Freeman (WWT)

There was broad consensus that a site/scale specific risk assessment is a useful tool to understand whether restoration is needed.

What general topics should be prioritised for the development of guidance as suggested above? Are the two suggestions above appropriate? Are there others?

- The two suggestions are the obvious ones but there are other areas where it could be appropriate. For example ponds can be seen as reacting similarly to islands.
- More difficult in marine environments, mainly because it is usually too difficult to carry out an eradication/control in the first place therefore you never get to the restoration stage. But there are cases where restoration would be required – for example Chinese mitten crabs cause erosion and damage to river banks and therefore if areas are controlled restoration work might involve work to re-establish stable river banks.
- Grey squirrel control is usually carried out with the sole goal of increasing red squirrel numbers in the area. But there are other impacts that grey squirrels have (e.g. tree damage) therefore restoration of woodlands should be considered as part of grey squirrel projects to ensure that woodlands recover on a greater scale. This highlights the need to identify what the end goal is – in this case red squirrel conservation OR fully restored woodland.

Do we need to put effort into restoration of the ecosystems for the species we are currently eradicating?

- We need to learn from past experiences. E.g. remove water primrose (for example) from a site and monitor whether or not the ecosystem restores itself without assistance.

- Ruddy duck - the species has a very specific impact on one particular species (i.e. white-headed duck) and not on the wider ecosystem, therefore further restoration not required.
- American bullfrog – depends on the method, if involves dredging then yes.
- Water primrose – would need to be considered on a site by site basis and the impact of the species on that site.
- Topmouth gudgeon – the species generally invades “unnatural” waterbodies which are stocked by anglers therefore difficult to identify what you’d be trying to restore. A risk assessment would be required to identify the likelihood of reinvasion/ invasion by other species.

NB the EA have already produced an impact assessment for practitioners to use prior to TG removal.

- Important to recognise that landowners may have their own management objectives e.g. recreation. Use restoration as a way of engaging landowner – it would enhance their land.

Do we need to put effort into restoration of the ecosystems for the other species on the EU List that are present in the UK?

- Yes, given that the GB Strategy and the Regulation do not talk just about restoration following eradication/control, but more about restoration of “ecosystems damaged by INNS”. Therefore could look at the requirement as being about restoration to make ecosystems more resilient to the impacts of INNS, even if GB is not trying to nationally eradicate a particular species. “appropriate” was highlighted as an important word in this.
- In addition other legislation may lead to restoration being applicable, notably birds and habs and WFD
- See above re. grey squirrel
- Muntjac – risk that the species would be replaced by another non-native browser if removed. There is evidence of conflict between native roe and muntjac, but how do you ensure that it is the native species which moves in following muntjac control?
- Red-eared terrapin – it is thought that the method to control would be shooting and that they have limited impacts on the wider environment so this species will probably not require restoration of habitat after eradication/control.

General/other

- In wanting to remove a species it is useful to consider the following:
 - How to keep the species from re-invading
 - How to maintain ecosystem function
 - What other native and non-native species are in the area
 - Are there opportunities to take out numerous INNS at the same time

- Is there any risk of disease spread as a result of action
- Whether or not restoration is required depends on:
 - What is the final objective? Is it purely economic e.g. topmouth gudgeon, is it large scale ecosystem functioning?
 - the size of the area involved (e.g. Japanese knotweed patches are often so small that the system rights itself easily and without assistance)
 - how long the invasive species has been present and the level of impact it's had
 - the method used for control/eradication – bare patches of ground will persist where Him balsam is removed by hand pulling making it vulnerable to invasion, whereas strimming leaves dead roots which seems to speed up ecosystem recovery, but also re-growth of HB.
 - the location of the site and what surrounds it – some areas more likely to suffer future invasions than others
 - how damaging would it be to leave the area unrestored? Is the removal of the INNS likely to result in an undesirable outcome and what can be done to prevent it.
 - Current GB species risk assessments could be used to inform about possible interactions or effects.
- The removal of various invasive non-native plants also removes microrhizomes from the soil which can impact the ability of native plants to grow back. CABI have done some work looking at native grasses which will grow in the absence of microrhizomes and therefore can be actively seeded as part of ecosystem recovery.
- If restoration is required consider impacts of actions (equally you should think of the impacts of non-intervention!) - could your restoration steps result in undesirable outputs? For example when reseeded/planting is carried out it is important that the plants are sourced responsibly and that there is no risk of INNS transfer e.g. a case where plants for re-planting were kept in water containing invasive pumpkinseed fish.
- Also need to consider what will be attracted to the plants that you are re-seeding/planting. Will they attract non-native species? E.g Canada goose. What is the longevity of the INNS seedbank?
- In order to seek funding for restoration, might help to consider the socioeconomic impact of INNS

Case studies

- In the Netherlands there was a case where removal of invasive aquatic plants led to an explosion of invasive pumpkinseed fish. A paper has been (or will be) published on this.
- Neil Green – Avon Invasive Weeds Forum are carrying out reseeded post-Him balsam removal. HB has a long flowering time so seed mixes have to include early

flowering plants as well as later flowering plants and grasses to avoid recolonization by HB or other INNS.

Feedback from attendees

82 delegates attended the Forum and 29 feedback forms were returned. All 29 agreed that holding an annual Forum was very worthwhile activity.

Comments about the Forum which worked well:

- 'Excellent networking opportunities, more time would be great.'
- 'It would be good to have a collaborative working board where we could put up our project ideas for others to see.'
- 'Really useful to get a better insight into the approaches in Wales.'
- 'Presentations, followed by workshops works well – maybe a separate marine one?'
- 'Another industry talk or from angling / boating community would be useful.'
- 'Asian hornet update useful'.
- 'Hopefully this event invite could be extended to MPA offices in England / Wales too'.
- 'The 'setting the scene' presentations were really useful'.
- 'The training workshop was a smaller group, the smaller size was more conducive to group engagement, everyone contributed.'
- 'Good balance / range of presentations – marine presentation?'
- 'Workshops very interesting – could be longer.'
- 'Useful to have a short, sharp (5 min) presentation session of good practice projects but also include marine species.'
- 'Like to see rapid fire talks – 5 minute slots from different stakeholders eg, Network Rail, Wildlife Trust, RSPB or other large wetland landowners'.

Comments about the Forum which didn't work well:

- 'Would like to see more poster presentations.'
- 'More time for introductions and open discussions please.'
- 'Workshops helpful but maybe shorter so we could attend more than one.'
- 'Feels a bit statutory body heavy – maybe try to get the industry / NGO's more involved.'
- 'Shorter presentations with one or two keynote speakers would be better.'

Most suggested locations for the 2018 Forum were:

Central England
South West
Cardiff

Secretariat Website

Comments on the GB NNSS website included:

All of the 29 delegates who returned their feedback forms had visited the Secretariat website. The table below shows the frequency of delegate visits to the website reported on the feedback forms.

	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Never							
Rarely	4	2	4		2		3
Once per month	14	10	10	5	6	2	11
Once per week	6	5	6		4	8	8
Several times per week	5	3	7	2	2	8	2

The most useful parts of the website included:

- Species Information
- Biosecurity and Prevention
- News and Events

The least used parts of the website included:

- Local Action Group pages
- Projects pages
- Training

Suggested improvements to the website included:

‘Just a bit of streamlining – some links are circular and takes too many clicks to get some places’.

‘Ensuring that the information is kept up to date so that it remains the go-to site for information’.

‘Just to try and find ways of driving people to it as it is pretty good’.

‘It would be good if you could have alerts for a site eg, if an INNS is spotted in x location you can sign up for alerts there’.

Suggested information to be added to the website included:

‘Section for kids’.

‘List RA’s you are looking at next, not just the ones which have been finished.’

‘Updates on Europe, EU exit and Government changes.’

‘A marine section’

More case studies with impact images of invasives, including costs of control, pathways etc to help communicate the problems.’

'Database of projects and experts.'

NNSS e-learning modules completed are:

Module 1:	Introduction to invasive non-native species	8
Module 2a:	Introduction to identification and recording	5
Module 2b:	Identification of freshwater plants	5
Module 2c:	Identification of freshwater invertebrates	5
Module 2d:	Identification of riparian plants	4
Module 3:	Biosecurity	8

Suggested improvements to the online training included:

Update recording (Module 2a) to include all App's (to say 'see Nature Locator' as most won't follow up).

Add marine training.

Add marine id modules.

E-mail people who have done the training if updates are made.

Acknowledgements

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