



Proceedings of the Seventh Stakeholder Forum on Non-native Species

IET:London, Savoy Place

6 May 2010



Introduction

The Seventh Non-native Species Stakeholder Forum used a mixture of talks and workshop sessions to explore the theme: 'The Big Picture'.

The Forum was designed to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to become actively involved in taking forward the Framework Strategy as well as to celebrate progress made in the past year.

The morning session consisted of a general update on developments in GB in the previous twelve months as well as a number of presentations detailing some specific topics. Three afternoon workshops then explored views and ideas on: Training; Local Action Groups; and Pathway Action Plans. These workshops were followed by a question and answer session where delegates had the opportunity to raise and discuss questions relating to non-native species. Twelve posters were also presented with topics ranging from the impact of climate change to import licensing.

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

PROGRAMME

The Big Picture

- 10:00 Registration and coffee
- 10:30 Welcome and introduction (*Francis Marlow, Defra, NNS Programme Board Chair*)
- **Update on progress in 2009** (*Niall Moore, GB Non-native Species Secretariat*)
- 11:00 Presentations: key projects in 2009 / 2010
- **The rapid response mechanism** (*Huw Thomas, Defra*)
 - **Awareness raising: 'be plant wise' campaign and NBN Public Outreach** (*Angela Robinson, Scottish Government; Emma Kiddle, Caroline DeVille and Eleanor Hart, Defra*)
 - **Local action groups** (*Catherine Chatters, Hampshire & IoW Wildlife Trust and Trevor Renals, Environment Agency*)
- 12:30 Introduction to the workshop sessions
- 12:40 Lunch (chance to mingle, view posters and information material)
- 13:40 Workshop sessions: key work areas proposed for 2010
- **Non-native species training** (*Angela Robinson, Scottish Government and Olaf Booy, GB Non-native Species Secretariat*)
 - **Local action groups** (*Trevor Renals, Environment Agency and Mike Sutton-Croft, Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative*)
 - **Developing Pathway Action Plans** (*Niall Moore, GB Non-native Species Secretariat and Gabe Wyn, CCW*)
- 15:00 Refreshment break
- 15:30 Open session
- 15:50 Closing remarks/next steps (*Francis Marlow, Defra*)
- 16:00 Close

Progress since the last Forum (May 2009 - May 2010)

Niall Moore, Secretary to the GB Programme Board outlined the main areas of progress since the 2009 Forum. These are summarised below:

GB Developments

- The GB Framework Strategy is two years old. Of 49 Key Actions and 68 tasks we have made the following progress:
 - 22 Complete – (8 last year)
 - 39 In progress – (42 last year)
- The Media and Communications Working Group has completed its Strategic Plan and this was signed off by the Board in September.
 - The **Be Plant Wise** campaign was launched in February 2010 – targeting one of the key audiences identified in the strategic plan.
 - The Secretariat website was re-vamped and re-launched in February.
- The Rapid Response Working Group Final Report was signed off by the Board in February 2010.
- The Non-native Risk Analysis Mechanism is currently processing >100 risk assessments. Of this total 32 are complete.
- The Non-native Species information Portal (NNSIP) was launched in May 2009. The RISC project, encouraging public engagement in surveillance of NNS, was launched in March 2010.
- Control
 - Rapid responses: *Didemnum* eradication in Wales is making progress. Surveys in Scotland found one new population while several were found in southern England.
 - *Ludwigia* and Bullfrogs: both progressing towards eradication.
 - Local Action Groups: a workshop was held in January to help assist these groups in their establishment and working.
- Legislation
 - Scotland: The Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill has been drafted and it is hoped that it will be before the Scottish Parliament soon.
 - England and Wales:
 - Schedule 9 of the WCA – over 60 new species added in April.
 - Ban on Sale – a smaller number of species will hopefully be subject to a ban on sale by the end of 2011.

Presentations

Abstracts of talks

The Rapid Response Mechanism

The second of a set of guiding principles on tackling invasive non-native species adopted under the Convention on Biological Diversity urges a preventative approach. Whilst recognising that established invasive non-native species will require some kind of management response, prevention and delivering swift remedial action by eradication of new introductions is the way to go for the future in the light of increasing trends in introductions.

The concept of delivering a "rapid response" to the introduction of a potential threatening species is deceptively "obvious". At its simplest, it is a straightforward concept but it becomes far more complex when there is incomplete knowledge. For those authorities and organisations who might be expected to commit effort, people, funding etc. to the concept, closer examination reveals many legitimate questions and concerns.

Invasive non-native species affect not only biodiversity, but also economic interests and other areas of concern to, or that fall under the responsibility, of various authorities. In the absence of a single authority mandated to tackle the threat in its entirety, the GB Programme Board commissioned a working group to devise a proposal for bringing the roles and responsibilities of government bodies together to deliver rapid responses to future threats.

This presentation looked at some of the key elements of defining the concept to enable a common understanding, described broadly how it is proposed that the governmental network of bodies might work together in future and what process they propose to follow to turn the concept into a reality.

Awareness Raising: the Be Plant Wise campaign

The Media and Communications Strategic Plan was completed by the Media and Comms Working Group in 2009 and signed off by the Programme Board last September. One of the key target audiences identified was the horticulture sector. Also in 2009, in support of implementation of the Water Framework Directive, Defra provided money to the Environment Agency some of which was earmarked for awareness raising. This, combined with funding from the Scottish Government and Defra Communications, allowed us to carry out the Be Plant Wise campaign – targeted at raising awareness and changing people's behaviour in relation to aquatic plants. Defra Communications and the Central Office of Information ran the campaign with a partnership marketing and a PR company. Messaging and campaign targeting was greatly influenced by the England Public Awareness Survey of 2008-09. Representatives from the trade sector and a number of key NGOs helped greatly in honing the messages and in ensuring uptake of the campaign material. The campaign was launched to much media interest on February 24th by Charlie Dimmock and Ministers in Scotland and England.

The campaign signed up 204 garden/aquatic centres plus lifestyle partners and two pond liner manufacturers. The English Be Plant Wise website landing page has received nearly 11,000 visitors to date. The Muck In4Life website received 50,000 visitors. PR resulted in 18 broadcast features and 12 national press items with 100% of the coverage being either favourable or strongly favourable. Overall the campaign reached nearly 18 million UK adults. Using online adverts, the campaign reached over 4.7 million users, with two opportunities to see each advertisement. There was a click through rate of 0.10% which is 40% better than the average for COI.

Local Action Groups

An increasingly large part of GB has given rise to local action groups (LAGs). Whilst the structure and target species of the groups may vary, the tasks they perform are remarkably consistent and reflect the aims of the GB strategy and Convention for Biological Diversity. LAGs are inevitably inspired at 'ground level', responding to the concerns within a river catchment, county or region. The success of the groups is often determined by the energy and leadership of a core of supporters. An example of a dynamic and effective LAG can be found in the New Forest.

Catherine outlined the work of New Forest Non-Native Plants Project which was established in May 2009 as a joint partnership between the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency, Natural England, Defra, Forestry Commission and the New Forest National Park Authority. The presentation showed how action at the local level is helping to implement the GB Strategy. Catherine illustrated the importance of the strong 'partnership' element of the Project, the Project's focus on raising awareness and understanding and the ability of the Project to respond rapidly to problems as they arise. Catherine also showed how the Project offers opportunities for involvement by volunteers and used 'Be Plant Wise' as an illustration of how local projects can help to promote national campaigns. The presentation also showed how local projects benefit from the 'tools' provided by GBNNSS/Defra.

Speaker profiles

Niall Moore

niall.moore@fera.gsi.gov.uk

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 Fera (The Food and Environment Research 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.

Huw Thomas

huw.thomas@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Huw is Head of the Protected and Non-native Species Policy Team in Defra and is the lead policy contact for the GB Secretariat. He chaired the working group that developed the GB Strategy and currently chairs the Rapid Response Working Group. He represents the UK in the context of the European Commission's work to develop an EU Invasive Alien Species Strategy and also represents the UK on the Bern Convention Invasive Alien Species Experts Group.

Angela Robinson

angela.robinson@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Angela has had responsibility for invasive non-native species policy for the Scottish Government since 2004. She is also Chair of the GB Media and Communications Working Group and Chair of the Scottish Working Group.

Caroline De Ville, Eleanor Hart, Emma Kiddle

caroline.deville@defra.gsi.gov.uk, eleanor.hart@defra.gsi.gov.uk,
emma.kiddle@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Caroline, Eleanor and Emma work in the Defra Campaigns and Marketing Team and managed the Be Plant Wise campaign.

Catherine Chatters

catherinec@hwt.org.uk

Catherine has worked for the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust as the New Forest Non-Native Plants Officer since the Project was established in May 2009. The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project is a joint partnership between the Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency, Natural England, Defra, Forestry Commission and the New Forest National Park Authority. Prior to this post, Catherine spent nearly 22 years working in Hampshire for the Nature Conservancy Council, English Nature and Natural England. In her spare time Catherine is Secretary of the Hampshire & IoW Wildlife Trust's Flora Group.

Trevor Renals

trevor.renals@environment-agency.gov.uk

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.

Workshop reports

Non-native Species Training

Chairs – Olaf Booy and Angela Robinson

Background

The Media and Communications Strategic Plan was signed off by the GB Programme Board in September 2009. One of the four main chapters dealt with Training and Education which was seen as a key area that needed to be improved. Some of the key elements we hope to take forward in the next twelve months are:

- Carrying out an audit of current relevant training in GB.
- Establishing a focussed sub-group to recommend strategic improvements.
- Developing information and education packs and identifying alternative options for training provision.

The aim of this workshop was to get stakeholders to assist in the establishment of the training working group, including suggestions for its composition, ToRs etc. More generally we wanted stakeholders to input on how we best develop training on non-native species issues in GB.

Conclusions and key points raised:

What groups across GB require training?

- People in the field professionally – government agencies, local government, local record centres, rangers, contractors, consultants, local action groups
- Horticulture trade – importers, quarantine, plant buyers
- Land managers – countryside managers, landscaping contractors, consultants, shooting / game keepers
- Training bodies – Lantra, NFUS, IEEM, colleges, universities, schools
- Commercial sector – big business, land holders
- Police officers
- Policy makers
- Ports – quarantine officers
- People who are effected by invasive species - construction industry, recreational boat users, etc.

What subjects should be covered by training?

- Awareness raising – e.g. impacts, community engagement, media management
- Identification, surveillance and recording
- Management – good practice, bad practice, developing strategies

- Biosecurity – disposal etc.
- Legislation
- Risk assessment
- How to – record, use alert system, train volunteers, set up LAG
- Biology and ecology

What tools could be used?

- E-learning
- Workshops
- Materials – e.g. ID sheets
- Accredited training or trainers
- Videos e.g of management
- Learn from overseas
- Accreditation scheme

Who could help provide training?

- IEEM
- BTCV
- LANTRA
- FSC
- NFU
- Landscape Institute
- Science café
- Local Record Centres
- Agricultural College

Who on sub group?

- Target audience based? Sector based? Provider based?
- Agreed need mix of training professionals with sector knowledge
- Need people with clear line of sight to delivery

Need draft terms of reference and estimation of time and commitment.

Local Action Groups

Chairs – Trevor Renals and Mike Sutton-Croft

Background

A key focus of the GB Non-native Species Strategy is on achieving action on the ground. To this end we in government have been encouraging the establishment of local action groups (LAGs). Many of course existed before the launch of the Strategy. At the 2009 Forum we devoted a half day to discussion of how best we can take forward local action against NNS. We also organised a workshop in January where 26 attendees discussed how best to take forward action on a local, county or regional level.

The aim of this workshop was to get stakeholders to input into the development of the local action groups.

Conclusions and key points raised:

What role are LAGs best placed to perform?

- This depends on the county or region in question (e.g. the Cornwall Knotweed Forum came about as control of knotweed was a priority in Cornwall).
- They have an important role to play in co-ordinating strategic action locally (e.g. controlling Himalayan Balsam at a catchment level).
- LAGs can also be useful in mobilising and focussing the work of the '3rd sector' (the volunteer sector).
- *To what extent should a LAG identify its own role?*
 - These groups come about because there is a desire at a local level to take action to control certain species.
 - They should help facilitate action to control local priority species, but keep these actions in the context of national level strategies.
- It was noted that, although there are only a handful of species that a LAG can directly control, they can also help perform other services, such as surveying for species.
 - LAGs may also act as a catalyst to stimulate other organisations to control invasive species in their local area, through lobbying.
- LAGs are well placed to feed information in to the Non-native Species Information Portal.
- As LAGs are often hosted by non-statutory organisations, they can offer an effective, 'friendly', non-confrontational way to raise awareness of invasive species issues locally. This can be more effective than Government bodies trying to undertake all of this themselves.
- LAGs provide a good network for the GB NNSS to feed information down to those working on the ground, as they have good contact with relevant field workers in their particular area. Also, LAGs are well placed to feed any relevant information back up to the GB NNSS.

What options exist to fund LAGs?

- A consortium approach to applying for funding could be useful, where several LAGs club together to develop a proposal.
 - It was suggested that this approach need not be used only when applying for funding, but also to exchange ideas and develop a consistent approach to controlling invasive species.
- It was suggested that it might be useful to approach businesses to see whether there was any scope for them to help fund LAGs, perhaps through sponsorship of particular projects. Some businesses also pay for groups of their employees to be taken on corporate volunteer days.
- There is a guidance document on the NBN Gateway which aims to help guide local projects to potential funding sources. This could be a useful reference for LAGs.
- Information on potential funding sources can also be found on the LAG section of the GB NNS website.

What other resources are available to LAGs?

- It was highlighted that an updated version of the Environment Agency's guidance on managing non-native invasive weeds in or near fresh water is available electronically from the Environment Agency website.
- It was suggested that it could be useful to establish some sort of informal 'buddy' system where established and successful LAGs provide advice to new LAGs.
- It was highlighted that there is already guidance available on the NBN website about starting recording schemes and that this could be useful to LAGs.

How do we manage Health and Safety?

- It would be useful if some generic risk assessments (for things like working near water, manual handling etc.) were made available on the LAG pages of the GBNNS website.
- Information on other risks that should be taken in to account when organising management activities (such as disturbing breeding birds etc.) would be useful.
- Although it is not possible for the GBNNS to actively suggest contractors that may be suitable for certain pieces of work, it would be useful if a list of questions that should be asked of potential contractors (such as details of required insurance, spraying licences etc.) were made available on the LAG pages of the the GBNNS website.

Developing Pathway Action Plans

Chairs – Niall Moore and Gabe Wyn

Background

Key Action 6.5 of the GB Strategy calls for the development of Pathway Action Plans (PAPs) but it does not specify what these should involve:

Action 6.5

Through the use of working groups or lead bodies draw up action plans (where necessary) for specific pathways (Pathway Action Plans - PAPs) to minimise the risks associated with them.

We have started to draft ISAPs (Invasive Species Action Plans) which are also called for in the GB Strategy. These are short (2-3 pages) action-focussed documents which are underpinned by the risk assessment and will also (in many cases) be influenced by a formal risk management process.

We sought views from stakeholders on the best way to take forward Pathway Action Plans and for suggestions on priorities. We were also keen to have input on how best we produce PAPs and what they should include.

Conclusions and key points raised:

- The group agreed that PAPs are a sensible way to proceed.
 - They are needed to help pick up where INNS are not being considered in ISAPs.
 - They would be very useful for large organisations to integrate into their procedures.
- PAPs should include both introduction pathways into GB and also internal 'spread' pathways.
- On internal spread pathways we should not forget stakeholders that deal with railways, roads and waterways.
- The importance of using risk analysis to underpin the PAPs was stressed.
- There is a need to build on existing mechanisms/tools such as IMPASSE, Fishbase, Australian PAP model, EPPO etc.
- Stakeholder involvement is essential from early in the process of developing a PAP. Workshops would be a useful mechanism.
- We need to be mindful of the EU role relating to free movement between member states.
- Using a hierarchical approach would be useful.
- Use indicator species to deal with common pathways.
- PAPs should be linked to horizon scanning.
- There is a role for receptor analysis to look at areas or habitats in GB that are most at risk.
- We need to be mindful of lapsed or under-used legislation while drafting PAPs.

- Discussion of priorities came up with the following suggestions:
 - Movement from the Rhine to GB of freshwater (especially Ponto-Caspian) species via pleasure boats.
 - Marine renewables and dredging.
 - Recreational boating and angling (*Gyrodactylis*).
 - Fish movement and live baiting (freshwater and marine).
 - Bird seed.
 - Single farm payments should include INNS management.
 - Tree ferns and other specific pathways within the horticulture trade (but not all of the horticulture pathway as one).
 - Plant disposal mechanisms.
 - Planning-related.
- PAPs should be kept short and functional.
- PAPs should include the following: overall aim, priority, risk level, maps of GB and the world, measures of progress/success, education and awareness, legislation.

Summary of Panel session

The meeting was opened to the floor for a general Q&A and comments session. The topics raised included:

- It would be useful to provide more reports on research being conducted in GB.
- It is important to restore habitats after invasive species have been controlled, however this is an area that doesn't get much attention (in fact at times it can seem like invasive species work and restoration work are in competition with each other). It will be important to make sure the biodiversity strategy and INNS are closely linked.
- INNS affect our status under the Water Framework Directive. We need to make the link with WFD more explicit.
- Developers and local authorities are using an ecological assessment (e.g. BREEAM) which rewards developers for biodiversity gains, however invasive non-native species management is not recognised here. By including INNS management under schemes like BREEAM it can encourage responsible work by developers.
- Agri-environment schemes are similar to the above in that they reward people for good work.
- We need to encourage trade and industry to fund more work that helps them operate while taking a responsible approach to INNS.
- The *Living with Environmental Change* Forum should include something on INNS.
- Should we have people from other countries attending the Forum?

Feedback from attendees

Ninety-one delegates attended and feedback forms were returned by 30 delegates either at or after the Forum. There was unanimous agreement that the holding of the annual Forum is a worthwhile activity. The majority answered 'definitely' or 'yes'; others noted that it was 'very good to meet up with other practitioners', 'most worthwhile', and 'very important – only way to gain the big picture'.

All 19 respondents who answered the question on the Secretariat's performance provided strongly positive comments. These included 'lots achieved with relatively limited resources', 'very impressive progress', 'how much is now happening and how well co-ordinated', and 'everyone enthusiastic and helpful'. Several delegates asked for more Local Action Group events such as that held at Preston Montford. On the GB Mechanism the comments included: 'raising the profile in non-specialist media is of increasing importance', 'make closer links with the BAP process' and 'NNS needs to provide a link between GB and other countries in the EU and around the world'.

This year we also asked for comments on the re-launched NNS website and 19 delegates replied, all positively, including 'It is on my favourites list', 'Big improvements recently', 'It's excellent – so much info there and very clearly set out', and 'It's wonderful'. There was also one slight negative – 'navigation/finding stuff not always easy'.

Delegates expressed great satisfaction with the Forum venue and catering and commented 'excellent venue, service and food', 'superb' and 'fantastic, great find'.

There were some useful comments on what worked well and on ideas for next year. The talks and workshop sessions were both received positively: 'very interesting talks and breakout groups', 'the format was most successful', and 'I thought the workshops worked better this year'. Several delegates said they appreciated 'plenty of time to chat to people' and that it was an 'excellent opportunity for networking'. This aspect of the Forum came through as extremely important but needs to be balanced with enough working time. One person said 'shame it wasn't two days', others 'an extra bit of time for talks would be nice' (including more on research and more posters) and 'more technical presentations on NNS methodology'. There was also some feeling that it 'would be interesting to hear about European work' and 'agree with suggestion for speakers from other countries'.

Overall, the Forum, the work of the Secretariat and the GB Mechanism in general were extremely well received by delegates.

Acknowledgements

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List of attendees

Aldridge, David
University of Cambridge
d.aldridge@zoo.cam.ac.uk

Ashby, Steve
The Food and Environment Research Agency
steve.ashby@fera.gsi.gov.uk

Ashton, Matthew
Defra
matthew.ashton@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Baker, Helen
Imperial College London
helen.baker09@imperial.ac.uk

Bayliss, Helen
Harper Adams University College
hbayliss@harper-adams.ac.uk

Booy, Olaf
GB Non-native Species Secretariat
olaf.booy@fera.gsi.gov.uk

Brown, Peter
Anglia Ruskin University
petermbrown@googlemail.com

Brown, Lyndsay
Marine Scotland – Science
brownl@marlab.ac.uk

Bull, Samantha
Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
Bioassist@wiltshirewildlife.org

Bussell, James
Natural England
james.bussell2@naturalengland.org.uk

Chaffer, Bob
Scottish Natural Heritage
bob.chaffer@snh.gov.uk

Charter, Liz
Isle of Man Government
liz.charter@gov.im

Chatters, Catherine
Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
catherinec@hwt.org.uk

Chiverrell, Chris
CIRIA
chris.chiverrell@ciria.org

Clark, Rachel
Hadlow College
rachelj1990@googlemail.com

Close, Rebecca
South Cumbria Rivers Trust
bekka@scrt.co.uk

Cockel, Chris
Queen Mary, University of London
c.p.cockel@qmul.ac.uk

Collyer, Claire
Country Land and Business Association Ltd
claire.collyer@cla.org.uk

Crabbe, Rachel
Natural England
rachel.crabbe@naturalengland.org.uk

Davenport, Keith
Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association
keith@ornamentalfish.org

David, John
Royal Horticultural Society
johndavid@rhs.org.uk

Davies, Gareth
Environment Agency
gareth.d.davies@environment-agency.org.uk

Dehnen-Schmutz, Katharina
University of Warwick
K.Dehnen-Schmutz@warwick.ac.uk

DeVille, Caroline
Defra
caroline.deville@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Eaton, Sarah
RSPB
sarah.eaton@rspb.org.uk

Fletcher, Mark
The Food and Environment Research Agency
mark.fletcher@fera.gsi.gov.uk

Ford, Simon
National Trust
simon.ford@nationaltrust.org.uk

Fraser, Anna
Environment Agency
anna.fraser@environment-agency.gov.uk

Fuller, Catherine
Environment Agency
catherine.fuller@environment-agency.gov.uk

Gallardo, Belinda
University of Cambridge
galla82@hotmail.com

Gilchrist, David
Horticultural Trades Association
david.gilchrist@the-hta.org.uk

Griffiths, Andrea
Medway Valley Countryside Partnership
andrea.griffiths@kent.gov.uk

Halstead, Andrew
Royal Horticultural Society
andrewhalstead@rhs.org.uk

Harrington, Emma
Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
Emmah@wiltshirewildlife.org

Hart, Eleanor
Defra
eleanor.hart@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Haynes, Pete
GB Non-native Species Secretariat
peter.haynes@fera.gsi.gov.uk

Hesse, Joanna
Environment Agency
joanna.hesse@environment-agency.gov.uk

Hill, Mark
Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
moh@ceh.ac.uk

Hunter, Verity
GB Non-native Species Secretariat
verity.hunter@fera.gsi.gov.uk

Ireland, Neil
London Invasive Species Initiative
nireland@wildlondon.org.uk

Isted, Rebecca
Forestry Commission England
rebecca.isted@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Jarrad, David
Shellfish Association of Great Britain
david@shellfish.org.uk

John, Chris
British Waterways
christopher.john@britishwaterways.co.uk

Johnson, Geoff
NBN Trust
g.johnson@nbn.org.uk

Kelly, John
EnviroCentre
jkelly@envirocentre.co.uk

Kiddle, Emma
Defra
emma.kiddle@defra.gsi.gov.uk

King, Tom
Environment Agency
tom.king@environment-agency.gov.uk

Long, Jo
Scottish Environment Protection Agency
jo.long@sepa.org.uk

Lord, Alex
Imperial College London
parakeet@imperial.ac.uk

Macfarlane, James
Cornwall Council
jmacfarlane@cornwall.gov.uk

Mackown, Simon
Defra
simon.mackown@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Maddock, Ant
JNCC
ant.maddock@jncc.gov.uk

Malumphy, Chris
The Food and Environment Research Agency
chris.malumphy@fera.gsi.gov.uk

Marchant, John
British Trust for Ornithology
john.marchant@bto.org

Marlow, Francis
Defra
francis.marlow@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Martin, Bridget
Lancashire Law School, University of Central Lancashire
vbmartin@uclan.ac.uk

McCollin, Tracy
Marine Scotland – Science
t.a.mccollin@marlab.ac.uk

Metcalfe, Jax
Cornwall Wildlife Trust
jax.metcalfe@cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk

Moore, Niall
GB Non-native Species Secretariat
niall.moore@fera.gsi.gov.uk

Mumford, John
Imperial College London
j.mumford@imperial.ac.uk

Munford, James
NBN Trust
j.munford@nbn.org.uk

Newman, Jonathan
Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
jone@ceh.ac.uk

O'Flynn, Colette
National Biodiversity Data Centre, Rep of Ireland
coflynn@biodiversityireland.ie

Payne, Robin
Scottish Natural Heritage
robin.payne@snh.gov.uk

Peck, Hannah
Imperial College London
parakeet@imperial.ac.uk

Perkin, Scott
Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership
scott.perkin@norfolk.gov.uk

Price, Caroline
Royal Yachting Association
caroline.price@rya.org.uk

Renals, Trevor
Environment Agency
trevor.renals@environment-agency.gov.uk

Rennocks, Lisa
Cornwall Wildlife Trust
lisa.rennocks@cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk

Robertson, Pete
The Food and Environment Research Agency
peter.robertson@fera.gsi.gov.uk

Robinson, Angela
Scottish Government
angela.robinson@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Roy, Helen
Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
hele@ceh.ac.uk

Ruggles-Brise, Archie
Association of Rivers Trusts
archie@associationofriverstrusts.org.uk

Russell, Ian
Cefas
ian.russell@cefas.co.uk

Selge, Sebastian
Macaulay Land Use Research Institute
s.selge@macaulay.ac.uk

Sewell, Jack
The Marine Biological Association
jase@mba.ac.uk

Shaw, Dick
CABI
r.shaw@cabi.org

Smith, Alison
Welsh Assembly Government
alison.smith@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Somerfield, Bill
Welsh Assembly Government
william.somerfield@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Spencer, Mark
Natural History Museum
m.spencer@nhm.ac.uk

Sutton-Croft, Mike
Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative
michael.sutton-croft@norfolk.gov.uk

Tanner, Rob
CABI
r.tanner@cabi.org

Thomas, Huw
Defra
huw.thomas@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Thomas, Sophie
Plantlife
sophie.thomas@plantlife.org.uk

Voller, Fay
Defra
fay.voller@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Wade, Max
RPS
wadem@rpsgroup.com

Walker, Phil
International Biocontrol Manufacturers Association
phil.walker10@btconnect.com

Weaire, Cyrise
Practical Ecology Ltd
cyrise@practical-ecology.co.uk

Willet, Jonathan
Highland Council
jonathan.willet@highland.gov.uk

Wilson, Charlie
Natural England
charlie.wilson@naturalengland.org.uk

Wyn, Gabrielle
Countryside Council for Wales
g.wyn@ccw.gov.uk