



Proceedings of the Sixth Stakeholder Forum on Non-native Species

Royal York Hotel, York

12 and 13 May 2009



Introduction

The Sixth Non-native Species Stakeholder Forum used a mixture of talks and workshop sessions to explore the theme of:

'The GB Non-native Species Framework Strategy One Year On'.

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.

Day 1

The morning session on 12 May consisted of a general update on developments in GB and Europe in the previous 12 months as well as a number of presentations detailing some specific topics. Three afternoon workshops then explored views and ideas on: Legislative Change; Implementing the Media and Communications Strategy; and Surveillance and Recording. 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. Eleven posters were also presented with topics ranging from the impact of climate change to import licensing.

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

Day 2

A total of 36 delegates attended the workshop on the morning of 13 May with the following aim:

'To agree a set of priorities that will help support local action (eg through forums, committees etc) and assist in the delivery of the GB Strategy.'

The three workshop sessions focused on:

- How can interaction be improved between organisations undertaking local action and the GB Mechanism?
- What could be done to support and facilitate local action?
- Priorities for action.

PROGRAMME

Tuesday 12 May 2009

The Non-native Species Framework Strategy One Year On

10:00 Registration and coffee

10:30 Welcome and introduction (*Francis Marlow, Programme Board Chair*)

Update on progress since the 2008 Forum (*Niall Moore, GB Non-native Species Secretariat*)

Update on EU Strategy progress (*Huw Thomas, Defra*)

Presentations

11.00 Public awareness survey (*Steve Griggs, Creative Research*)

11.30 Scottish legislative review (*Angela Robinson, Scottish Government*)

11.55 The new INNS recording scheme (*Mark Hill, BRC*)

12.20 Update on *Didemnum* (Sea squirt) in Wales (*Gabe Wyn, CCW*)

12:30 Introduction to the workshop sessions (*Niall Moore and Huw Thomas*)

12:40 Lunch (chance to mingle, view posters and specimens)

13:40 – 15:00 Workshop sessions

1) Legislative change (*Angela Robinson and Huw Thomas*)

2) Implementing the Media and Comms strategy (*Niall Moore and Paul Walton*)

3) Surveillance and recording (*Mark Hill and Angela Taylor*)

15:00 Coffee break

15:30 Panel session (Q&A)

15:50 Closing remarks/next steps (*Francis Marlow*)

16:00 Close

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

Wednesday 13 May 2009

Aim of the day:

To agree a set of priorities that will help support local action (e.g. through forums, committees, etc) and assist in the delivery of the GB Strategy.

09:30 Registration and coffee

10:00 Introduction

10:15 Session 1 – How can interaction be improved between organisations undertaking local action and the GB Mechanism?

- a. How can action at the local level help deliver relevant aims of the GB strategy? How can this be better supported?
- b. Can the interaction of organisations (e.g. government agencies, NGOs, private companies, individuals) be improved to help deliver local action?
- c. Can the interaction between groups undertaking local action across Great Britain be improved to help share support and best practice?

Output: a list of ways in which interaction can be improved.

11:00 Coffee break

11:15 Session 2 - What should be done to support and facilitate local action?

- a. What do organisations at the local level need to help deliver action?
- b. Who should provide this support and how?

Output: a list of prioritised requirements and desired actions

12:15 Round up - deciding priorities for action

Output: a short list of actions for organisations within the GB mechanism (e.g. country working groups, NNSS) to support local action

Output: a short list of actions for organisations undertaking local action to support the GB Strategy

13:00 End and lunch

Progress since the last Forum (May 2008 - May 2009)

Niall Moore, Secretary to the GB Programme Board, and Huw Thomas, Defra head of Non-native Species Policy, outlined the main areas of progress since the 2008 Forum. These are summarised below:

GB Developments

- The GB Framework Strategy: of 49 Key Actions and 68 tasks we have 8 tasks complete and 42 tasks in progress. The Media and Communications Working Group has drafted a Strategic Plan for GB and Defra has completed a survey of public attitudes towards non-native species in England.
- Non-native species fora have been successfully established in Norfolk and Cumbria.
- The report of the Rapid Response Working Group is due to be presented to the Programme Board in autumn 2009.
- The Non-native Risk Analysis Mechanism is currently processing 76 risk assessments of which ten are complete.
- The Non-native Species Information Portal (NNSIP) is currently being established.
- Control efforts continue to take place:
 - Removal of strategically important populations of Topmouth Gudgeon.
 - *Ludwigia* sp and Bullfrogs are both progressing towards eradication this year.
 - The Ruddy Duck eradication programme is progressing extremely well. Duck numbers are down by over 95% (from 6000 to 200) with over one year of the project to go.
- Scotland has opened its consultation on their review of NNS legislation.
- Defra has published its summary of responses to the Schedule 9 consultation.

EU and Overseas Developments

- There have been significant developments on an EU Framework over the past year. This has included:
 - The European Commission issued a communication in December 2008 which described four possible options for a future EU strategy.
 - In June 2009 the Environment Council adopted conclusions on developing the EU Strategy, planned for 2010. This re-iterated the need for a comprehensive EU framework that works with relevant existing regimes.
 - The UK has been actively engaged in the process of developing the EU Framework.
- Defra has provided extra money to JNCC to assist with action in the UK Overseas Territories.

Presentations

Abstracts of talks

Public Awareness survey for England

During the second half of 2008 and early 2009, Creative Research completed a comprehensive benchmarking exercise to explore levels of awareness of, and concerns about, the impact of invasive non-native species in England. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the research explored the attitudes and perceptions of the general public, freshwater anglers and the horticultural retail trade. With the exception of the trade, there was limited awareness of the existence of INNS but once the public discovered the potential impact they could have, there was broad support for lethally controlling them, although this varied according to the methods being proposed. The research identified some of the challenges and opportunities for engaging with, and influencing the behaviour of, the public, anglers and horticultural retailers. Steve Griggs presented a summary of the key findings from his research.

Scottish Legislative Review

Commitments to review the legislative framework have been made through the Invasive Non-native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain (2008) and during a debate in the Scottish Parliament in October 2008. This presentation provided information on a review of non-native species legislation that has been carried out by the Scottish Working Group and the legislative reforms that are being proposed.

The new INNS recording scheme

The new INNS recording scheme is an information system for non-native species in Britain, funded by Defra. It is being developed by a consortium of the British Trust for Ornithology, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and Marine Biological Association, working closely with the GB Non-native Species Secretariat. Plans for the scheme evolved over a few years, and the project has at times been called a Central Repository for NNS and a Portal for NNS. At its heart is a species register, which is a database comprising a list of all non-native species, together with basic information about when they reached Britain, what kind of impact they have, where they came from, etc. Some of the information will be compiled separately for Wales, Scotland and England. The register will be linked to the National Biodiversity Network Gateway, which presents data on species distribution. Fact sheets, with more detailed information on 300 species of interest, will be compiled by the end of the project. Data and information from the project will come from voluntary recording schemes, official bodies and the public. They will be accessible on the internet through the Non-native Species Secretariat website.

Update on *Didemnum* (Sea squirt) in Wales

Didemnum vexillum is a colonial marine tunicate (sea squirt) that is known to be highly invasive. It is a serious problem in New Zealand and North America and was found in Ireland several years ago. It was discovered in two locations in GB in summer 2008 – Plymouth and Holyhead. The Plymouth occurrence was in a single location and this was removed. In Holyhead the latest survey report suggests that *D. vexillum* is currently confined to Holyhead marina. Surveys within Holyhead Harbour and at suitable sites around the rest of Wales have detected no other. It seems likely that the species was moved from Ireland to Holyhead on the hull of a small recreational vessel. Gabe Wyn outlined the background situation and future plans.

Speaker profiles

Niall Moore

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Niall Moore has been the head of the GB Non-native Species Secretariat since it was established in March 2006. The Secretariat is based at 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

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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 (which he now chairs).

Steve Griggs

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Steve has a Psychology degree from Durham University and a PhD in Psychology from University College London. He was one of the founders of Creative Research which he helped set up in 1986. Steve has over 25 years experience of conducting qualitative and quantitative research and bringing the two together. He is a member of the Association of Qualitative Research,

the British Psychological Society, the Market Research Society, the Social Research Association and the UK Visitor Studies Group.

Angela Robinson

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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 on non-native species.

Mark Hill

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Mark is head of the Biological Records Centre (BRC), based at CEH Wallingford. Since 2000, he has worked on non-native species, plant geography, indicator values for plants, vegetation in GM herbicide-tolerant crops and biodiversity in cities. He is a keen contributor to volunteer recording, being Recording Secretary for the British Bryological Society. He edited, with Chris Preston and Tony Smith, an Atlas of the Bryophytes of Britain and Ireland (1991-94).

Gabe Wyn

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

Workshop reports

Implementing the Media and Communications Strategy

Chairs – Niall Moore and Paul Walton

Background

A Media and Communications Working Group was established in March 2008 and it is in the final stage of drafting a Media and Communications Strategic Plan. Parallel with this Defra funded a survey of public awareness of and attitudes to non-native species (the results of which were outlined in the first Forum talk). Feedback from the 2008 Forum Workshop was extremely useful in framing the England public awareness survey and also significantly helped frame the Strategic Plan.

The aim of this workshop was to get stakeholders to contribute to the finalisation of the Media and Communications Strategic Plan as well as looking for input on how best to deliver the plan over the next few years.

Conclusions and key points raised

- There was considerable discussion on the suggested key target audiences and several extra ones were suggested for inclusion: government, academia, BBC Natural History Unit, the Press and rangers in National Parks.
- Links to monitoring and surveillance need to be strengthened.
- Keep the messages simple, e.g. Don't release animals or plants.
- Provide some simple Do's and Don'ts.
- Try to have some positive elements to the messages [although planting natives as against non-native species was suggested but not agreed by the group].
- Links to volunteering need to be exploited – e.g. Defra's Muckin4Life campaign.
- Expanding the training section – including aims/objectives was necessary. A suggestion was that the aim should be to 'Establish a network of trained, knowledgeable individuals (in key places).'
- Ensure that training is separate from awareness raising and possibly aim to develop a training 'curriculum'.
- The training section should mention schools.

- For the general public, have as a general ethos that 'prevention is better than cure', and also stress that everyone has to 'Do their bit', including helping by reporting.

Legislative change

Chairs – Angela Robinson and Huw Thomas

There was a brief introduction about the aim of the workshop in relation to the consultation that was about to be launched by the Scottish Government and the background to the current situation.

The main points of the Scottish Consultation were explained and the following were discussed in more detail:

There was a general discussion about the provisions that currently exist through Section 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act and why these do not seem to be working.

- Should we adopt a ‘white-list’ approach compared to the current Schedule 9 ‘black-list’ approach?

There was general support for the issue of a white list approach for release – or a general presumption of no-release - for both plants and animals. The workshop agree that this was a more precautionary and preventative measure than currently existed.

- Should there be a power to compel landowners/boat owners to control/remove particular invasive non-native species?

Participants agreed that a power was necessary. There was considerable and very useful discussion about powers that the Environment Agency already has in relation to fish control and how these are used in practice. The issue of fairness in relation to recouping costs from landowners was also discussed.

- Should we expand the remit of existing inspection regimes beyond their current strict remits (e.g. Plant Health Inspectors)?

There was general agreement that where people were on the ground it would be useful to expand their remits to cover non-native species – but resource implications and the need for training were discussed.

There was also some discussion about whether a legislative review would also be taken forward by Defra. Huw Thomas (Defra) noted that different areas of the Strategy were being progressed by different countries within GB and that Defra were keeping in close contact with the Scottish Government and any future opportunities would be likely to be informed by the work being conducted in Scotland.

Surveillance and Recording

Chairs – Helen Roy and Angela Taylor

Background

Work to establish the GB non-native species information portal began in March 2009 and its 'front-end' web pages were officially launched on 22 May 2009. The GB portal has funding for three years initially and significant engagement (in terms of timely submission of records) is vital to ensure its utility and continued existence. The portal aims to:

- draw in and collate verified data on non-native species distributions and interceptions of specimens;
- display these and other species-specific information online; and
- report regularly to the GB Programme Board on changes in status, new threats etc.

The data will be stored on the NBN Gateway but accessed through the GB Secretariat's website. Over the three years of the project, 300 species fact sheets will be developed. Each fact sheet will have details on the species ecology, introduction pathways, management, relevant legislation etc. Fact sheets will also link to the relevant species risk assessment, the ID sheet and photographs/video of the species in the photo library.

Conclusions and key points raised:

- Data should be provided in a way that allows users to interact with and manipulate it (e.g. time slicing, providing web services).
- Data flow from government agencies (e.g. Fera) should be improved. Further links with non-government organisations should also be developed.
- Government funded projects should ensure they share their data.
- The speed at which data flows is critical - users inputting data should be able to see their records appear in the system quickly.
- The fact sheets should provide clear guidance on what to do if you find one of the species.
- Management information could be included within the fact sheets.
- Agencies / organisations involved in dealing with species could be listed in the fact sheets.
- Criteria for deciding which species to produce fact sheets for include: those which are known to be invasive, have the greatest impact, are most visible, are horizon scanning species which are likely to pose a significant risk, have been highlighted by country groups / other organisations.
- The fact sheet pages should be designed to include useful icons and graphics that help summarise the information (e.g. a traffic light style graphic illustrating status in GB).

- Distribution maps (with date classes) should be clearly displayed at the front of the species pages.
- When displaying distribution data a notice should be included identifying how complete the information is likely to be.
- Overall the design of the pages needs to be improved e.g. reduce the amount of unused white space, use pictures rather than text, etc
- The branding of the pages should be consistent with the rest of the NNS branding (e.g. ID sheets).
- Fact sheets should include a date indicating when they were last updated and a dynamic link to the NBN Gateway.
- The portal should take on board some of the aspects from <http://invasivespecies.biodiversityireland.ie>; particularly their online recording form, map overlays and aerial maps with zoom function.
- The audience for the portal was considered to include non-native species stakeholders, the Programme Board and other government staff and the general public.

Summary of Panel session

The meeting was opened to the floor for a general question and answer session. The main topics covered included:

- The help that is needed (from the Secretariat and others) to support and co-ordinate action on the ground to control non-native species [note this was the subject of the following day's workshops].
- The importance of keeping legislation in Scotland and England/Wales as consistent as possible to avoid confusion.
- Rapid response and progress towards getting a consistent strategy in place to facilitate this.
- Public attitudes and those of conservation organisations to the killing of non-native species.
- The preoccupation of the media with the animal rights agenda which doesn't reflect general public opinion.

Summary of Workshops on 13 May

We outline below a summary of the conclusions from the three workshops held on May 13 to agree priorities to support local action.

Question	Summary of responses
<p>How can those undertaking local action help deliver aims within the GB Strategy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring and surveillance - Control / eradication - Planning - Awareness raising - Evidence collection (e.g. for RAs) - They can act as ‘eyes and ears’ on the ground - Data flow - Avoiding a negative reaction to management measures
<p>What would help those undertaking local action?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A resource pack including, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o best practice information o methodology for local groups to undertake INNS risk assessment o guidance on core messages / lines to take o generic guidance materials (e.g. templates, forms, etc) - Assistance in finding funding - Better local linkages, for example with the Wildlife Trusts - Better access to biological records - Relevant legislation to empower action to be taken - Appropriate training - Local / regional alerts - Good distribution information (and to see their records appear shortly after being submitted) - Start up kits - Help with biosecurity planning - Provide guidance on accessing funding streams
<p>How can interaction be improved?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Considered important to raise awareness, for example by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Publicising the work underway at GB level o Rebranding the website etc to make it more user friendly / accessible (not process / government orientated) o Undertaking schools outreach o Having events (regional and national), such as workshops for practioners o Providing support for training o Producing regional / local species alerts o Having a ‘chamber of horrors’ photo set - Produce an interactive map showing all of the local action being undertaken (a local action register?) - Breaking into existing networks - Increasing the resources of LRCs to allow them to play more of a coordinating function - Publicise current activities at GB level - Help to establish networks of key staff

What improvements could be made to the website to help local groups?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Have targeted invasive species alerts- Provide a central source of best practice information- Increase the number of links to work that is going on at a regional / local level- Have a dos and don'ts page- Make it clear what should be done if an INNS is found (e.g. report it)- Have a system that allows for users to raise questions and provide answers- Rebrand to make user friendly- Provide a registry of local groups (presented in a map or similar)
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Feedback from attendees

There was unanimous agreement (30 out of 30 replies) that the holding of the annual forum is a worthwhile activity. The majority answered 'definitely' or 'yes', others noted that it was 'essential' or 'very worthwhile, particularly for networking'.

The majority of respondents that answered the question on the Secretariat's performance provided strongly positive comments (20 out of 21). Positive comments included 'very supportive', 'superb', 'fantastic progress', 'a lot has been achieved', 'progressing very well', 'very supportive of my work', 'huge step forward', 'steady progress on many fronts', 'Good ... expect to see lots of results next year'. There was one negative comment that performance was 'not very visible'.

There was general satisfaction with the venue, apart from a few comments that more could be done to cater for vegetarians. Good transport links were considered very important when planning where to hold the event in future.

There were some useful comments and ideas for next year. The workshop sessions on the first day were well received but several delegates said that it would be useful to be able to attend more than one. Some people commented on the need for stronger chairing and more focussed discussion; others would have liked some immediate feedback on all the sessions.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all our speakers and workshop Chairs for their invaluable contributions. We also appreciated the help of Defra and Fera staff both before and during the event. Thanks also to the staff of the Royal York Hotel for their friendliness and efficiency.

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