



Proceedings of the Twentieth Stakeholder Forum on Non-native Species

**Held at The Baltic Centre for
Contemporary Art, Gateshead**

10 June 2024



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 (apart from 2020) 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 morning sessions consisted of talks to update on developments in the past year. The afternoon workshop sessions provided the opportunity for stakeholders to have wide-ranging discussions.

Overall, 86 attendees from a broad spectrum of organisations attended the Forum.



NOTE: The views summarised in the workshop reports represent the views as they were expressed by our Stakeholders.

PROGRAMME

Registration

Introduction to the day by the Chair (Lisa McCann, Scottish Government)

Update on progress since the 2023 Forum (Olaf Booy, NNSS)

Update on the Non-native Species Inspectorate (Olaf Booy, NNSS)

Water companies and the biosecurity partnership (Ben Aston, Yorkshire Water)

Invasive species action in north-east England (Emily Iles, Tweed Forum)

Pathway Action Plans (Defra)

Cross-industry engagement (Sarah Garry, Property Care Association)

Islands eradications - successes and future issues (John Kelly, RSPB)

Feedback from BES research workshop (Steph Bradbeer, Yorkshire Water)

Introduction to workshop sessions

Lunch

Workshop sessions

Workshop 1: Non-native Species Inspectorate

– facilitating optimal working

Workshop 2: Long-term management issues

(islands, land management schemes)

Workshop 3: Industry involvement in delivering the GB Strategy

Feedback on the above

Open session

Closing remarks/next steps

Close

Workshop 1 – Non-native Species Inspectorate – facilitating optimal working

Chairs: Jenny Legg (NNSI) and Molly Cordall (Defra)

Background

The Non-native Species Inspectorate is still relatively new and has just reached its 'full' size (16 FTE). It also has, compared to plant or animal health, a much greater variety of species and pathways to deal with and a more complex set of stakeholders.

Aims:

- identify the key non-government stakeholders NNSI needs to communicate/interact with
 - o How can NNSI best work with each of these stakeholders?
- Within government can NNSI improve its ways of working with other agencies?

Key Points from Workshop

1. More focus on educating and raising awareness in a way that doesn't make those being visited feel threatened.
2. Better guidance on who should be contacted under certain circumstances by those that work with INNS to ensure the message gets to the right person quickly, e.g. inspectorate vs NE vs EA. A flow chart may be useful.
3. Regional meetings would be beneficial with the inspector of that region to share intel and also for inspectors to feedback findings of inspections to organisations members e.g. Angling Trust who would find it helpful to hear about relevant inspections, good or bad, and then they can help where they weren't so good and understand what good looks like to ensure sites keep high standards.
4. Videos on inspections and what a 'gold standard' vs pass would look like so everyone knows what should be aimed for (particularly in biosecurity) e.g. what does a great check clean dry set-up look like?
5. Consider intel capturing software such as CLUE.
6. Sharing inspectorate educational materials and successes on social media to increase engagement would be beneficial.
7. Fera could help with identification of insects if needed. The NNSI are also interested in Asian Hornet traps at ports. Fera are doing an environmental monitoring project at the border for a year and the inspectorate could utilise/help.

8. A lot of PAPs were pre-inspectorate. There is the opportunity for the upcoming PAPs to build in actions for the inspectorate.
9. Worth considering capturing the awareness of those at the beginning of their journey to help them understand the biodiversity risks of the area they are starting in eg those going for boating licenses, horticultural training etc. There's an opportunity to build in INNS and biosecurity awareness at source to reduce spread.

Workshop 2 – Long-term management issues (islands, land management schemes)

Chairs: Paul Walton (RSPB) and Alex Green (Yorkshire Wildlife Trust)

Background

Despite the fact that we spend about 10 x on LTC than we do on prevention and rapid response combined it still often seems to be not very strategic. Target 6 of the GBF requires all parties to – eradicate or control INNS especially in priority sites such as islands.

Aims:

- identify the key issues related to achieving strategic long-term management of INNS.
- Might need to do this separately for
 - o island restoration
 - o mainland species control
- How can we best overcome/mitigate the issues identified.
- Where should we look for best practice – has any country got it right?

Key Points from Workshop

1. The group discussed the use of biocontrols developed by CABI as solutions to long-term management issues and the likelihood of these being developed and able to be utilised in all conditions/scenarios.
2. Some biocontrols need refining, in particular Balsam, as they are too host specific.
3. It was generally agreed that there are unintended consequences of the restraints we have in how stakeholders operate, be that policy/legislation/funding/staff capacity. Emphasis was placed on an over-reliance on the heroic volunteer effort supported by minimal funding until we come up with a better solution.

This posed the question how do we make exceptions to the current restrictions where alternative management options are not effective?

4. Agreement on islands and priority habitat being a priority for management and this also raised the question why the UK is not considered a priority with it being an island especially when it is considered internationally as an important location/habitat for 22 bird species. Is it too large an island?
5. Azolla would be extremely damaging to the water environment if not for the weevil, what if there is an equally damaging INNS and we don't have the same solution.

Discussion on Operating a scale (catchment scale)

6. Evidence and findings from SISI showcase working at larger than just catchment scale for some species, e.g. mink, giant hogweed.
7. There is a need to develop greater and more coordinated rapid response teams to deal with new invasions even for species that are not black listed/horizon species.
8. To manage INNS at catchment scale we need to understand all pathways. Road, rail, river, recreation etc.

Discussion on Sources of Funding

9. Long term sustainable funding is needed to manage invasives and is wasted if not secured. Looking at 10+ years of funding to manage invasives at catchment scale.
10. Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
11. Polluter should pay for INNS but can be hard to identify the polluter.
12. More resource should be put towards helping with enforcement in areas where treatment programmes are operating.
13. Income from mitigation and class licenses are to be allocated towards water vole recovery and management of mink.
14. ELM and countryside stewardship – mid-tier and higher-tier options for controlling INNS. Higher tier over 20+ years.
15. Private companies – water companies.

Discussion on why control riparian INNS & what's the management goal

16. Define what are we aiming to do with management, e.g. is the aim eradication, control, manage spread, impact mitigation. These all affect how we should proceed with management.
17. We control riparian INNS to improve biodiversity in relation to flood events and preventing flooding and erosion of banks.

Discussion on limitations in how we currently operate

18. Biosecurity gets a lot of focus, but long-term INNS management should not be ignored alongside this. Both are needed and should be prioritised.
19. Multi-species action, we should think about efficiencies in managing multiple species and coordinating action against both. For instance,

Himalayan balsam can often invade areas previously covered by Japanese knotweed after it has been treated.

20. Having a specialist at the secretariat to provide advice or guidance on applying for Countryside Stewardship and how to pitch successful projects to funders on managing INNS.
21. Guidance from the Secretariat on which species we should prioritise for long-term management.

Workshop 3 – Industry involvement in delivering the GB Strategy

Chairs: Max Wade (AECOM) and Defra

Background

- identify the key industries.
- ascertain what the industries identified are or could do to help support the GB Strategy.
- identify three priority actions for government.

Key Points from Workshop

1. Attendees identified the different industries that needed to be involved in the delivery of the GB INNS Strategy and ranked these out of 5 on their degree of importance/impact on the strategy delivery. The majority of those identified were ranked as a 5 (for example, education as an area that plays a key role in awareness raising amongst the public/wider industry), with about 50% of the industries present in the forum either directly or indirectly. The attendees then split into four groups to discuss different industries, and what reactive and proactive activities these might take on.
2. Group 1 – water companies, water (canals & rivers), shipping, education
 - a. Not a lot of reactive actions for shipping industry, mainly monitor for pests and react, focus on cleaning.
 - b. Proactive – adopting BWMC, data sharing would be good as hard to access at the moment (need to prioritise what ships might be risky), piggybacking what plant health are doing with the industry.
 - c. Training & comms key for all industries.
 - d. The group thought that industries most likely didn't know about strategy and questioned who actually needed to know.
3. Group 2 – rail, energy, land & landscape management
 - a. Mostly do reactive things – health and safety etc.
 - b. Proactive – providing training, energy companies understanding their role in spreading INNS, funding for rail especially to support landowners to manage species.
 - c. Mention of industries using cooling water etc – often have water transfers, in theory liable across water bodies but may not be aware of liabilities.
4. Group 3 – forestry (public & private), horticulture, media
 - a. Forestry Commission do things like pallet checks, wood imports for hitchhikers.
 - b. Need more trees sourced in the UK.
 - c. Awareness raising – lots of forestry sites are trail sites.
 - d. Horticulture – importance of buying local rather than importing, awareness raising for garden centres and nurseries, training for staff.
 - e. Media – also awareness raising.

- 5. Group 4 – road, aquaculture, leisure
 - a. Road – distinction needs to be made between national highways and local authorities.
 - i. Construction is seasonal, need awareness with contractors on expectations of INNS management, requires a strategic oversight.
 - ii. Reactive – reporting needed and contribution to records.
 - b. Leisure – likely not aware of strategy, awareness raising needed.
 - c. Aquaculture – making sure workers are trained, having rapid response plans in place, surveillance.

Attendance

AECOM
Angling Trust
APEM Ltd
APHA
CABI
Canal & River Trust
Cefas
Cefas Fish Health Inspectorate
Chagos Conservation Trust
Coventry University
Defra
Eden Rivers Trust
Environment Agency
Fera Science
Forestry Commission
Greenspace Information for Greater London
Marine Management Organisation
National Trust
Natural England
Natural Resources Wales
NatureScot
Newcastle University
Non-Native Species Secretariat
Non-Native Species Inspectorate
North Wales Wildlife Trust
Northumbrian Water
NTS
Property Care Association
Queen's University Belfast
Responsible Reptile Keeping
Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh
Royal Forestry Society
RSPB LIFE Raft Programme
RSPB Scotland and Scottish Environment LINK
University of Central Lancashire
Scottish Environment Protection Agency
Scottish Government
South West Lakes Trust
South West Water
St Catharine's College, Cambridge
Stellenbosch University
Tees Rivers Trust
Tweed Forum
UKCEH
United Utilities

University of Edinburgh
University of Hull
University of Leeds
University of Southampton
Welsh Government
West Cumbria Rivers Trust
Wildlife & Countryside Link
Woodland Trust
Yorkshire Water
Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

Feedback from the attendees

86 delegates attended the Stakeholder Forum and 21 feedback forms were returned. All 21 agreed that holding an annual Forum was a worthwhile activity.

Comments about the Forum of which aspects worked well:

- Content was interesting and engaging especially for a new person to INNS.
- The open discussion format was good and allowed free-flowing and interesting discussions.
- The discussions and interactions with other stakeholders are invaluable.
- I like the cross-industry conversations during the day.
- Breakout sessions broken into smaller groups created a very good environment for all to contribute and ensured a real mix of people in each group. More time please as it was a large topic and very useful.
- Interesting to see/hear about invasives in housing industry.
- Like to hear about other successful partnerships.
- The presentations were good and of high quality.
- NNSS and BES event works very well together.
- Liked the contributions from industry.
- Short presentations in the morning worked well but have more time for Q&A after each talk. Enjoyed hearing from a range of speakers.
- Good workshop however next time could we look at specific challenges and make sure the stakeholders have to commit to deliver change. Would be super if we could see commitments to delivery on specific challenges.
- Update on Non-Native Species Inspectorate was fantastic.

- More presentations from other industries.
- A generous time for breaks and lunch to meet and chat, great for networking.
- Breakout sessions gave the opportunity to talk between lots of different parties with different viewpoints.
- All talks useful – would be good to get a short paragraph on talks beforehand introducing the speaker and topic.
- More about INNS management at an international level - new techniques, other successes on prevention, rapid response or case studies.
- It will be useful to know how the info from the breakout sessions will be applied, e.g. report back at the next Form to indicate that they were worthwhile inputting to.
- Would love to see a live case study alongside the conference.

Comments from the Forum which didn't work well:

- A roving mic for questions would be helpful.
- Breakout sessions are always good however in large groups some people tend to dominate conversations. If you had smaller groups covering the same subject it might allow for a more varied input.
- A series of shorter talks might be better to break up the structure.
- Breakout room (the cube) – no natural light and airless.
- The Chair should encourage speakers to stick to time.
- Shorter talks please – 10 minutes with longer times for Q&A.

Comments about the catering or venue:

Everyone who attended agreed that The Baltic was an excellent venue. The lunches were perfect, catering to all dietary requirements, however a few more seats for lunch would be good.

Secretariat Website

How often do you visit the website?

Never	
Rarely	5
Once per month	3
Once per week	4
Several times per week	3

Suggestions for improving the NNSS website.

Difficult to navigate particularly for homeowners.

Be aware of those with disabilities, ie red/green colour blind.

Information which should be added to the NNSS website.

Mapping of research on INNS.

Funding – what is available / case studies.

It would be good to have information linking researchers and their projects.

A list of all INNS.

Sources of funding organisations.

List of research / researchers.

NNSS e-learning modules completed are:

Module 1: Introduction to invasive non-native species	6 people
Module 2a: Introduction to identification and recording	4 people
Module 2b: Identification of freshwater plants	6 people
Module 2c: Identification of freshwater invertebrates	6 people
Module 2d: Identification of riparian plants	4 people
Module 3: Biosecurity	7 people

Suggested improvements to the online training included:

Looking forward to the biosecurity for fieldwork training.

Maybe a refresher course for those to do annually?

Increase awareness of modules and try to embed in-training modules for other initiatives.

Other resources that would be useful for the NNSS to develop:

GB wide map of INNS actions that are being undertaken across all industries.

Decision making principles for long term management.

Videos for inspectorates – a baseline for biosecurity.

INNS action mapper – some kind of contact list, ie who's involved with working on what, in what region.

Applying for funding guidance.

Links between researchers and practitioners, eg development in methods, habitat management and species autecology.



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