

UK PROGRAMME BOARD FOR NON-NATIVE SPECIES

SEVENTH MEETING

VIRTUAL

22 APRIL 2024, 13:30 – 15:00

APPROVED MINUTES

1. Attendance / apologies

Present:

- Sarah Swash (Defra) – Chair
- Niall Moore (NNSS) - Secretary
- Olaf Booy (NNSS)
- Sharon Boyle (Defra – marine)
- Finn Eaton (Defra – INNS)
- Leasa Fielding (Welsh Government)
- Liz Halliwell (NRW)
- Rebecca Isted (FC)
- Theresa Kudelska (NRW)
- Julie Lane (APHA)
- Bill MacDonald (Welsh Government)
- Lisa McCann (Scottish Government)
- Gavin Measures (NE)
- Mark Preston (DAERA – NI)
- Toni Scarr (Environment Agency)
- Alison Seton (SG)
- Stan Whitaker (NatureScot)
- Iain Henderson (APHA) - until the end of Item 4

Apologies:

- Colin Edwards (Scottish Forestry)
- Chris Graham (MMO)
- Jo Long (SEPA)
- Nicola Spence (Defra, Plant Health)
- Dave Stone (JNCC)
- Jenny Stewart (APHA) – replaced by Julie Lane
- Sarah Wood (NRW) – replaced by Liz Halliwell

2. Minutes of meeting on 24 October 2023

Paper circulated (PB Apr 24-02)

The minutes were signed off. See item three for actions and matters arising.

3. Actions / matters arising

Paper circulated (PB Apr 24-03)

Actions 1, 3 and 5 were carried over (see actions below). Remaining actions were discharged.

On action 5, Finn noted that an initial discussion on governance had recently taken place with the DAs and GBNSS. This identified a gap in how progress, risks and issues with delivering the GB Strategy are reported to the Board. He set out a potential solution, which is to hold meetings of Defra, WG, SG, DAERA and GBNSS between Board meetings (i.e. in July / August and January / February). These meetings would review progress using the implementation plan and identify risks, issues and questions to put to the Board at the following meeting.

ACTION 1 – (carried over). **Non-native Species Inspectorate (NNSI)** to continue to meet with government agencies individually after which it will arrange a workshop with multiple agencies to discuss its work – before the next Board meeting.

ACTION 2 – (carried over). **Defra** to engage with Border Force to attempt to facilitate access of the NNSI to the Border.

ACTION 3 – (carried over). **Defra**, working with **Welsh Government, Scottish Government** and the **GBNSS**, to produce a paper for the Board that provides a clear articulation of the issues and/or gaps that the original paper on governance was seeking to address.

4. Inspectorate annual report

Paper circulated (PB Apr 24-04)

Niall talked through this paper, setting out progress and the highlights of the NNSI in the previous year. He noted some of the key issues that the NNSI continues to face, including lack of powers at the Border and the speed with which permits and licenses are being handled.

The Board welcomed the report and made the following comments.

The Board appreciated the comprehensive report, but noted it was long and lacked the 'so what' aspects for the Board to consider. In future, they suggested bringing a shorter note to the Board setting out the 'so what' and making it clearer what issues and / or questions the Board was being asked to consider. This could include horizon scanning, risks, priorities and direction setting. It could also identify things that the Board, its members or the administrations needs to do and / or put in place. Niall agreed to bring a short paper to the next Board meeting detailing issues related to the work of the NNSI.

The Board noted that invasive non-native species in general, and the work of the NNSI specifically, is not given as high a profile as it should be when wider environmental / biodiversity targets are being discussed. For example, Defra noted it does not get the same airplay as other apex targets. The Board, NNSS, and NNSI need to do more to ensure that INNS is taken seriously and is up there with the other biodiversity / environmental work that is going on. NNSS and NNSI can help with this by being clearer on the delivery targets of their work and how this helps to advance policy outcomes.

The Board noted the issue with the NNSI's lack of powers, particularly at the Border, and asked how it could deal with this. Niall, Finn and Iain noted that some progress was being made in discussions with Border Force. Finn also noted that the post implementation review (PIR) of the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019 is coming up and this would be an opportunity to review the general working of this legislation in England. In Scotland, Stan noted that Environmental Standards Scotland may want to get their teeth into this issue.

Lisa was keen to ensure that Scottish priorities are being included in the work of the NNSI and NNSS. Bill highlighted the importance of ensuring the NNSI's continuance. Theresa suggested it would be useful to provide a review at the end of the NNSI's 'pilot' period.

ACTION 4. NNSS and NNSI to provide a short note on the NNSI's work for the next Board meeting identifying relevant risks, issues, or other questions for the Board.

ACTION 5. Defra to include the NNSI's work in the PIR of the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019 in England.

5. GB Strategy implementation

Paper circulated (PB Apr 24-05)

Finn led on this item and asked for comment on the implementation plan. It is a working document and not for publication, but an annual report on progress needs to be published (as set out in the GB Strategy).

Stan commented that he was unable to open the spreadsheet because it included macros. He asked for it to be circulated without macros and whether it could be put on SharePoint so all could review and edit it directly.

The Board discussed the need to review this plan and use it to identify progress, risks and issues for the Board's attention at future meetings. Finn and Niall noted that this used to be done by Defra as part of an exception reporting process, but it may be more sensible for it to be done by GBNNSS.

ACTION 6. GBNSS to work with **Defra, Scottish Government, Welsh Government** and **DAERA** to review the implementation of the GB Strategy and provide an exception report, highlighting key areas for the Board's awareness or decision, at their next meeting.

6. Stakeholder forum

Niall noted that this years' stakeholder forum is taking place on 19 June in Newcastle. He asked the Board for suggestions on the forum's theme or any items to include in the programme - to be sent to Niall directly after the meeting. One suggestion already received is to have a workshop on the Pathway Action Plan consultation (see agenda item 8).

ACTION 7. Board members to send ideas for the stakeholder forum programme or theme to **Niall**.

7. Resourcing

Niall has been working on collating figures to update the previous Board paper on resourcing, in preparation for the next SR round. He has still not received data from several organisations. Defra stressed the importance of this work and encouraged all to get their data in to Niall.

ACTION 8. Board members to facilitate the provision of data to support the resourcing assessment being led by Niall.

8. Pathway Action Plan update

Public Consultation

Finn updated the Board on Defra's delayed plans to run the consultation on Pathway Action Plans. It is hoped that the consultation will commence in summer 2024. Defra will be seeking Ministerial approval for the consultation soon and will keep Welsh Government, Scottish Government and DAERA informed. It is not clear what level of response to the consultation will be received, given that the plans were developed in consultation with stakeholders and have been on the NNSS website since 2020.

ACTION 9. Defra to run the consultation on Pathway Action Plans in summer 2024, working with Welsh Government, Scottish Government and DAERA.

9. Rapid Responses

Working group update

The group's work is progressing well and Niall expects to present an update report to the next meeting of the Board. Defra noted that the important work of this group needs to feed into the SR.

Updates from Agencies (exception only)

Niall thanked the agencies for their updates, which were sent separately (Annex 1).

10. Secretariat Report

Paper circulated (PB Apr 24-10)

Niall summarised the work of the NNSS since the Board's last meeting and its priorities for the next 6 months. He flagged the ongoing issue with the voluntary withdrawal of second generation rodenticides and the serious impact this could have on island restoration and biosecurity. Bill, Leasa and Lisa raised their concern relating to the rodenticide issue and were keen to assist with this where possible.

Finn provided a brief update on ongoing work with the G7 to share information and good practice relating to INNS and GBF Target 6 in particular.

11. AOB

There was no AOB.

12. Date of next meeting

NNSS will seek dates in October. Scottish Government will be in the chair.

ANNEX 1 – RAPID RESPONSE UPDATES FROM AGENCIES

DAERA

Ruddy duck: On 3rd March 2024 - Portmore Lough – report came via GB Inspectorate, Iain Henderson after seeing member of public report on www.ebird.org Landowners are the RSPB who have been informed of their responsibility to try and eradicate it if possible. They have reported back to NIEA that they have employed a marksmen to specifically target what is likely one of the very few ruddy ducks left in Northern Ireland. Report was uploaded to NOTSYS.

NRW

Topmouth gudgeon (TMG): Due to weather patterns and concerns about flooding and containment NRW had to suspend the chemical-based eradications of Topmouth gudgeon (TMG) in Carmarthenshire. It became evident that a chemical-based eradication, is not compatible with the sites where TMG are present in Carmarthenshire due to environmental factors. NRW sought permission from Welsh Government (WG) to explore alternative methods of controlling TMG. Following this investigation carried in the winter of 2023/24 NRW have suggested changing focus from chemical control to physical and biological control methods. NRW gave a presentation to WG outlining potential alternatives to chemical control including saltwater intrusion and the use of predatory fish. In terms of predatory fish perch are suggested as an ideal candidate, with 95% of its diet consisting of smaller fish. A proposal was submitted to WG for the introduction of Perch at sites across Carmarthenshire, which is supported by the local authority and other stakeholders. Each site has been appropriately assessed for stocking density, and with the proposed monitoring plan, NRW would be able to evidence the impact of predatory fish on TMG and their ongoing management. It is hoped that NRW with funding from WG will be able to trial the introduction of perch to control TMG at three sites (Sandy Water Park, Tegwen's and Ashpits) in the FY 24/25.

NatureScot and SEPA

Pink salmon: eDNA was consistently detected in 10 out of 32 studied rivers, demonstrating presence of these fish in these rivers, and results indicated suspected presence in a further 5 rivers. Anglers detected pink salmon in 7 of the same rivers and on the Tweed, where eDNA initial samples near the mouth of the river did not detect presence of pink salmon, but later samples upstream did. Results will be published in due course.

UKPB 07 Approved Minutes

Slipper limpet: A shell collector found tiny immature shells at two locations in the Moray Firth and the records were accepted by the Conchological Society in January 2024. It's too early to say whether these animals were transported into the area as larvae or bred locally.

We are asking people to look out for slipper limpets in the Moray Firth area as these may impact on native oyster restoration projects and, in theory, it is possible to manage slipper limpets to mitigate their impacts, if not eradicate them.