

**Wales Biodiversity Partnership Invasive Non Native Species Group**

**Welsh Government Offices, Aberystwyth**

**24<sup>th</sup> June 2015**

**Draft Minutes**

**Attendees**

Dave Thomas	DT	Welsh Government (WG)
Holly York	HY	Wales Biodiversity Partnership (WBP)
Sean Hathaway	SH	City and County of Swansea (CCS)
Judith Oakley	JO	CCS, University of Wales Trinity Saint David
Anthony Hicks	AH	WG
Kathleen Carroll	KC	WG
Gabe Wyn	GW	Natural Resources Wales (NRW)
Nigel Ajax-Lewis	NA-L	Wildlife Trusts
Tracey Lovering	TL	WBP
Mike Bruford	MB	Cardiff University
Colin Cheesman	CC	Plantlife
Colin Chapman (part)	CC	WG
Emma Barton (Dial-in)	EB	Royal Yachting Association, RYA Cymru-Wales
Sharon Davies (Dial-in)	SD	WG – Marine branch
Nick Bialynicki – Birula (Dial-in)	NBB	NRW
Niall Moore (Dial-in)	NM	GB non-native species secretariat (GBNNSS)

**Apologies**

Richard Poole	Dwr Cymru
Dan Forman	Swansea University
Paul Stebbing	Cefas
Jo Mullett	Knotweed Control
Sarah Bird	Chester Zoo
Alison Smith	WG – Property & Infrastructure branch

## 1. Welcome, introductions, apologies and notification of AOB (Chair)

DT extended a warm welcome to all attendees.

## 2. Actions and minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous and November meeting were agreed as accurate records of the meetings and will be published on the WBP website. Chair thanked HY for minute taking.

**Action 1:** WBP (HY) to upload the Minutes from the previous meeting to the WBP website

The majority of the actions from November's & January's meeting have been completed, with the remaining outstanding actions either covered by agenda items or listed below with an update.

<b>Nov Action 2:</b> Sacred IBIS ISAP: GB NNSS (LC) to contact BIAZA	Progressing well. GB NNSS spoke at annual BIAZA conference. WG also attended.
<b>Nov Action 3:</b> Topmouth Gudgeon ISAP: RP to send note to DT on actions helping to deliver Topmouth Gudgeon ISAP, particularly in regard to the GB Strategy	RP unable to attend today's meeting. NM: Virtually eradicated, but few sites left. Keen for full eradication. Case study in GB Strategy. <b>Action carried forward</b>
<b>Nov Action 4:</b> ISAPs: ALL to provide any comments on ISAPs, particularly delivery work against action plans	NM: Recently a suspect Asian Hornet was found in Pembrokeshire. Specimen was identified within 36 hours in York and found to not be an Asian Hornet. ISAP response worked well, both at a local and GB level. SH: Delivery of ISAPs for LA's is dependent on remits and amount of LA funding.
<b>Nov Action 5:</b> DT to respond to Wales Deer Action Plan Group (CT) that eradication is the preferred route	See below
<b>Nov Action 8:</b> All record enquiries received in regard to ASBO's to KC to highlight need for resources (Minutes update: Not to KC, note & flag within LAs)	Not required at present.

**Nov Action 5:** DT to respond to Wales Deer Action Plan Group (CT) that eradication is the preferred route. **Background:** A small population of Sika Deer is present in the Teifi area, along with Red Deer and Red/Wapperty populations. **Update** provided by WG: eNGO/Deer Initiative have decided to monitor deer (~12 individuals) and stated concerns that the deer would be difficult to draw out of woodland and that once they had the deer population may then disperse. NM: It is likely that the deer will disperse anyone as the population grows. MW questioned the proximity of the Sika Deer to the Red deer and risk of hybridisation. The site could provide an opportunity for genetic survey of the separate deer populations (Evidence Gap?). NA-L informed the group that the Wildlife Trust (WTSWW) monitors the population using camera techniques, and that the area has high visitor volume (at any time

of the day). DT asked if there is a contraceptive way of controlling the deer so that the population cannot expand. NM offered to visit and talk to local land managers (WT, NRW) to discuss, DT & KC to also attend.

**Action 2:** KC to arrange meeting to discuss the Sika Deer with GB NNS, NRW and Wildlife Trust.

### 3. Work Planning

Group discussed the current work plan, including ways of progression, engagement and ensuring it is relevant.

- A requirement under Wales Biodiversity Strategy Board for each WBP Group to have a work plan in place.
- The work plan should define activities of the group, and for the group to report against.
- GB Strategy is due to be released – align work plan to it
- Additional fields can be added to the work plan such as Risks, Rapid Responses/Contingency Plans, Campaigns e.g. Clean, Check, Dry, Education
- Work Plan can highlight areas of work that the group would like actions to be delivered on, and highlight those with no available resources
- Useful for group to know the direction of WBP Groups, particularly as the Nature Recovery Plan is established.
- Use partner updates to feed into work plan
- Link with Action Audit

**Action 3:** HY to refresh work plan with GB Strategy for group to discuss at next meeting

**Action 4:** HY to create a proforma form for partners to input updates to feed into the work plan.

### 4. Data Flow Policy for Non-Native Species

Following January's meeting on data collection, GW took an action to look at data flow within NRW. GW & Monica Jones have produced a draft NRW data policy for non-native species (Paper 4 - circulated prior to meeting). The policy is intended to inform staff about suitable data flow mechanisms for INNS records to ensure they reach the GB portal in a timely manner. GW welcomes comments from members. GW has contacted Helen Roy, CEH for comments.

The document is aimed for internal NRW staff use at present, but has the potential for other member organisations to adapt to suit their needs as well as adaption to produce a WBP Group data policy. Members supported the document, and agreed the usefulness of a set out data pathway.

Discussion points

- Important that INNS data is made more accessible.
- Increasing data flow for key species would be useful.
- Use of member of public sightings e.g. INNS apps. GB NNS have spoken to apps to ensure data is being fed into NBN.

- Important to have information to back where action is being undertaken and where to direct future action.
- Identification guides/books often lack INNS species and some species e.g. cotoneaster can be difficult to identify.
- NRW grants have a condition to include how data will be recorded (for marine).
- Must be mindful of sensitive locations e.g. Japanese Knotweed in private gardens affecting future house sales. Important that data is used for the right reasons.

**Action 5:** Members to provide comments on the draft NRW data policy to GW or via HY by 15<sup>th</sup> November.

**Action 6:** GW to present final document at next meeting and group to discuss adaption for a WBP Group data policy/Guidance.

## 5. Welsh Government Update

WG provided the group with an update, including:

- KC showed members the new freshwater angling biosecurity sign. The sign is made of light weight and flexible metal. Signs are ready for distribution. WG are working with contacts for distribution to ensure the signs are installed in the best locations. Welsh language Check, Clean & Dry, Stop the Spread and Be Plant wise leaflets are also available. Contact KC for merchandise.
- AH updated the group on CABI's Himalayan Balsam Project funded in part by WG. Four locations were used in Wales for the release of a pathogenic rust fungus. Positive results have been seen so far. AH thanked SH for locations and landowner help. The initial 5 year phase of the project has ended. A second phase will go ahead in Wales, subject to funding. More sites required in Wales. Sites are likely to be larger in scale than previous release sites, probably but not exclusively riparian.. Contact AH with potential sites.
- Species Control Orders became law on 12<sup>th</sup> April. The Codes of Practice are currently being developed. These will go to consultation, and likely be published by end of 2015. It is unlikely that a SCO will be implemented before the Code of Practice is published, unless it is an emergency.
- Planning to make GB NNS e-learning available in Welsh.

## 6. Marine Biosecurity Guidance

GB informed the group of the recent Marine Biosecurity Planning Guidance document produced by Scottish Natural Heritage ([Link](#)). The guidance focuses on producing site and operation-based plans for preventing the introduction and spread of INNS. Principally to guide the owners and operators of small harbours, visitor moorings, mooring associations, boatyards, marinas and slipways. The document provides useful practical guidance. It has been written for Scotland, and includes some information and case studies specific to Scotland.

NRW used the guidance during recent training in Wales. NRW would like to adapt the document for use in Wales. WBP INNS Group members present support and agreed the adaption in principle. JO & EB offered their assistance on producing a Welsh version to GW.

A Communication Plan accompanies the Scottish guidance, and again could be useful for Wales. The Plan could include campaigns such as the Check, Clean & Dry.

EB (RYA): England are also reviewing it, making it more business case focused such as advantages to businesses to use good biosecurity.

**Action 7:** GB to progress and feedback to group.

## 7. Evidence Gaps

Tracey Lovering, WBP Evidence Gaps Project Lead and Mike Bruford, Cardiff University provided an update on the Evidence Gaps (EGs) project and help to progress INNS EGs.

The EG's project was launched in April 2014, by the Minister for Natural Resources. There are now 380 Evidence Gaps questions, which are linked to policy areas and Aichi targets. These are contained within a filterable spreadsheet ('WBP Evidence Gaps Register'). TL & ML have been taking the project on a 'roadshow' tour of the Welsh Universities to engage with supervisors based on their interest topics. Timescales vary across universities and across level of study e.g. Degree, Masters, PhD, etc. TL & ML welcome invitations to talk about EGs at any universities, etc.

At present many of the INNS EG's are a baseline species name, based on the WBP INNS Priorities list provided by DT. An action for group members is to establish EG's questions on these species, and then further develop into a Research Project Proposal (a 2 sided proforma).

- Level of difficulty of EG's questions can vary to match the varying levels of ability of students, and study level. Basic undergraduate research can provide useful first steps in answering INNS questions.
- Consider what field work would be required, and the time of year this would need to be carried out
- Potential for collaborative working across universities on an Evidence Gap e.g. multi-site projects
- EG's enable students to answer real questions, gain transferrable skills and knowledge
- List of WBP Academics are available on the WBP website. Over 100 academics are engaged with the Project.
- Forum on LinkedIn. Note, it appeared few members of the INNS group use LinkedIn
- The WBP INNS Group review any suggested INNS EG's for agreement. EG's can be suggested to the group from any members and non-members, including academics. Mike Bruford and CEH also provide comments on the EG's suggestions.
- Few EG's have been taken up by students so far, although the new MSc in Invasive Species Management (expected in 2 years' time) while provide scope for EG's to be taken up. Interest has also been noted from Swansea University.
- Important to link EG's with policy priorities and top issues, particularly with resources short. Can priorities come from the GB Strategy to review priority species and highlight top issues for EG's?
- NM: Potential to link to level of threat – top 10 species. Identify species in need of meaningful data?

- SH: Be good to have an update Japanese Knotweed survey on the Gower (previously surveyed by NRW). MB: Surveys are ideal for students - enabling them to develop hypothesis, study old and new surveys and produce GIS layers.
- INNS topics can be thought of widely e.g. social science, risks of INNS
- A citizen science group for Wales has newly formed. Discussing holding a one day citizen science event (possibly during Wales Biodiversity Week) to promote best practice for credible data – potential to do an INNS themed event, and answer an INNS EG's question.
- N2K LIFE funded project is looking at bringing Natura 2000 species and habitats (European protected sites) into favourable condition, and as such have created thematic action plans to address major issues & risks e.g. habitat change, air pollution, INNS and Pathogens. At a site level, each site is given prioritised actions (Prioritised Improvement Plans) to take forward, subject to funding. Potential for these priorities to link/feed into EG's? TL to take away.
- TL can provide advice to members on framing EG's questions, and a 'Formulating Questions for Scientific Research' paper is available on the WBP EG's website Page (<http://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/WBP-Evidence-Gaps-Project>).

*Potential EG's from discussions:*

*'New Japanese Knotweed survey on the Gower & assessing against historical survey' (Suggested by SH)*

*'What alternative practices are possible for the control of New Zealand Pigmyweed in ponds where the standard advice of filling in the pond is not suitable, for example where Great Crested Newts are breeding' (Suggest by NA-L)*

*'Why is Japanese Knotweed so resilient to control e.g. glyphosate? What biochemical/physiological processes are taking place for Japanese Knotweed to store metal? (Suggest by AH) [Note, EG's can be taken to Chemistry departments]*

<b>Action 8:</b> All members to consider EG's and provide ideas to HY or TL.
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## **8. Wildlife and Countryside Act – schedule 9 review**

JNCC led working group (including WBP Group members GW & NA-L, along with other conservation bodies and stakeholders) have been reviewing the W&C Act Schedule 9 criteria. GW informed the group that the consultation is out now until 2<sup>nd</sup> August. Consultation information, including information pack is available on the JNCC website (<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-7013>). The consultation welcomes proposals for submissions for the inclusion or removal of (non-native) species under schedule 9. Any suggestions require good evidence and to be presented in a proforma. NRW will be commenting on the consultation. Following the consultation, the working group will review comments and prepare the report, with sign off due October 2015. A final recommendations report will then be submitted via Defra and WG to ministers at the end of October 2015.

## **9. Partner updates**

Partner updates from Knotweed Control (Jo Mullet), NRW (Gabe Wyn), WBP (Holly York) and City & Council of Swansea (Sean Hathaway) were circulated prior to the meeting.

Additional updates include:

*Nick Bialynicki-Birula, NRW* updated the group on the Small Business Research Institute (SBRI) proposals. 11 registers of interest have been received, with at least 3 viable for scoping. These focus on better use of remote sensing for plants, scoping biological control methods for different species and residual waste from mainly invasive plants. Richard Hancock (NRW) now leading.

Alpine Newt has been found in 3 localities in Wales. ARC is carrying out survey/trapping and material is going to IZL for disease analysis – concerns that the new ‘chytrid’ that infects newts and salamanders has been found in the pet trade. It appears to be lethal to salamanders and has devastated the Dutch population of Fire Salamander and appears to be virulent Great Crested Newts too

*Niall Moore, GB NNSS:* GB Strategy is due to be released in 2015. An Implementation plan will look at key delivery. England working group will be set up shortly. IAS regulations: 3 committee meetings since it came into force. The scientific forum and working group have also met. Committee looking at listing alien species of Union concern, based on UK risk assessments. The European Commission will be submitting the list to the attention of the IAS committee for Member State’s consideration later in the year.

*Emma Barton, Royal Yachting Association:* Pushing Check, Clean, Dry campaign to RYA and through the Green Blue initiative, including in the latest membership newsletter and at events such as the All Wales Boat Show in May. Welsh signs circulated. Any new INNS messages welcomed. Looking to develop specific inland biosecurity guidance e.g. for RIGS, dinghy’s. Recently recruited a Green Blue environmental outreach officer for proactive engagement with groups including production of education packs (including INNS information) for targeted groups such as youth groups, DoE, university sailing groups, etc. A Code of Conduct for recreational boating and INNS is in draft (NRW happy to input). Updating handbooks (including INNS) when requiring a reprint. TL: literature/leaflets when paying overnight fees at overnight ports/marinas would be a good idea. This is within British Marine Federation Control.

*Judith Oakley, CCS & University of Wales Trinity Saint David:* Produced an ID Guide on the seashore and coastal wildlife of Swansea Bay for CCS. The guide contains information on identifying non-native species. Public events ran in the Gower & Swansea area. INNS recorded.

*Colin Cheesman, Plantlife:* Successful WREN project bid for the removal of sea buckthorn and conifers from dune habitats in Carmarthenshire. Action on the ground in Plantlife’s Important Plant Areas includes work on INNS plant species.

## **10. Future Agenda Items**

- Welsh INNS Priorities – review, fit for purpose
- Presentation on [Aquainvad-ED](#) project by Dr Sonia Consuegra, suggested by Dan Forman
- Welsh Federation of Sea Anglers (Richard Poole)
- Communications (Invite Elen King)
- Membership refresh

- WG Marine & Fisheries update to the group?
- Work Plan, incorporating GB Strategy

**Action 9:** HY to circulate Welsh INNS Priorities

### 11. Any other business

- NM (GB NNSS) – reports of live crab & lobster release into the sea near Brighton by a group, thought to be Buddhists is being investigated by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). The group are thought to have released over 500 Non-native crabs (*Metacarcinus magister* – Dungeness crab) and lobsters (*Homarus americanus* – American Lobster), some of which have been found in fishing nets in the past few days.
- SH (CCS) – Surveyed a site in Swansea which previously had Creeping Water-primrose (*Ludwigia peploides*). No sign of the plant indicating that the rapid response that took place at the site was successful.

### 12. Date of next meeting, and other dates of note (e.g. events)

Dates of note:

WBP Conference is on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> September in Aberystwyth

(<http://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/Wales-Biodiversity-Partnership-Conference>)

IEEM Course: SH is running the 2 INNS courses in Swansea on behalf of CIEEM –

Japanese Knotweed 6/7/15 and Invasive non-native flora 7/9/15

(<http://www.cieem.net/training-events>)

Date of next meeting is **Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> November** in **Aberystwyth** (Note, no rooms available in Cardiff).