

Wales Biodiversity Partnership Invasive Non Native Species Group

Welsh Government Offices, Aberystwyth

25th November 2015

Minutes

Attendees

Dave Thomas (Chair)	DT	Welsh Government - LNF
Sean Hathaway	SH	City and County of Swansea
Judith Oakley	JO	CCS, University of Wales Trinity Saint David
Gabe Wyn	GW	Natural Resources Wales (NRW)
Chris Tucker	CT	NRW
Nigel Ajax-Lewis	NA-L	Wildlife Trusts (and on behalf of WEL)
Dave Thorpe	DTh	NRW
Niall Moore	NM	GB non-native species secretariat (GB NNSS)
Alison Smith	AS	WG - Property
Cledan Evans	CE	WG - LNF
Anthony Hicks	AH	WG – LNF
Holly York	HY	Wales Biodiversity Partnership
Jo Cable	JC	Cardiff University
Nick Bialynicki-Birula	NB-B	NRW (Dial-In)
Jane Swan	JS	Royal Yachting Association (Dial-in)

Guests

Suzanne Hearn	SH	NRW
Sonia Consuegra	SC	Aquainvad, Aquawales

Apologies

Richard Poole	RP	Dwr Cymru
Dan Forman	DF	Swansea University
Jo Mullett	JM	Knotweed Control
Emma Barton	EB	RYA
Colin Cheesman	CC	Plantlife
Kathleen Carroll	KC	WG – LNF
Sharon Davies	SD	WG – Marine
Neville Rookes	NR	WLGA
Dan Jones	DJ	Swansea University
Bradley Welch	BW	Brecon Beacon National Park Authority

1. Welcome, introductions, apologies and AOB items

DT extended a warm welcome to all attendees, particularly to SC and SH for joining us to provide presentations, and to JC from Cardiff University providing further academic expertise to the group.

2. Actions from previous meetings

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting (subject to a couple of typo corrections) and will be published on the WBP website. Chair thanked HY for minute taking.

Action 1: HY to upload the minutes onto to the WBP website

The majority of the actions from June's meeting are covered by agenda items or listed below with an update.

June Action 8: All members to consider Evidence Gaps and provide idea to HY or Tracey Lovering

Action 2: All members to continue to consider Evidence Gaps.

NM: EG's work will fit well with the Research Working Group being set up (under the research action 8.1 of the Implementation Plan)

3. Data flow policy for Non-Native Species (Gabe Wyn, NRW)

GW informed the group that the policy is now ready for use internally within NRW, subject to final sign off. GW thanked members for their input. Training sessions to help implement the policy will be provided to NRW staff.

The policy is for internal NRW staff use, but has the potential for other member organisations to adapt to suit their needs. GW is happy for members to use. NM welcomed the usefulness of the document, and potential for its wider use.

Several members including AS and NA-L will look at its use within their organisations/WG. NA-L to circulate the policy to the Local Environmental Record Centres (LERCs). DT to circulate to the England and Scotland Working Groups.

HY to look at adapting the policy for Local Biodiversity Action Partnerships use.

DTh highlighted issues with the ownership of data coming from ecological consultancy surveys – useful for the INNS data flow policy to be part of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's (CIEEM) best practice guidance. The policy would require adaption for GB, as it refers to NRW principals and requirements.

Action 3: NA-L to circulate policy to LERCs

Action 4: DT to circulate policy to England and Scotland Working Groups

Action 5: HY to look at adaption of policy for LBAPs use.

Action 6: HY/DTh to investigate scope for an adapted INNS policy for CIEEM best practice guidance

4. Marine Biosecurity Guidance (Gabe Wyn, NRW)

GW provided an update on the Marine Biosecurity Guidance.

The Wales and England [Marine Biosecurity Planning Guidance](#) was launched by Carl Sargeant AM last week. NRW, Natural England and the RYA developed the guidance, using the Scottish Marine Biosecurity Planning Guidance. It provides guidance for a wide range of marine users (e.g. marina and port managers) in developing site-based biosecurity plans for marine invasive non-native species. The guidance also covers the development of biosecurity plans for a time-limited operation in the marine environment, such as a construction project or a major recreation event. Shellfish and finfish farms have to develop *Biosecurity Measures Plans* to cover disease risk as a condition of their licence and this guide can also be used to expand these biosecurity measures plans to address INNS issues. The guidance also includes a template (with instructions) for completing a biosecurity plan.

The guidance has been launched on the WG and the GB NNSS websites. Carl Sargeant AM tweeted (@WG_NatResMin) on November 19th 'I welcome the new Marine Biosecurity Planning guidance from @NatResWales and CheckCleanDryGB'

Members to circulate guidance widely to all stakeholders please.

Discussion on potential events to communicate guidance at – British Marine Annual Marina Conference suggested.

Action 7: RYA to look into whether the guidance (or templates) can form part of the delegate pack at the British Marine Annual Marina Conference (GW offered to print).

5. Aquainvad (Dr Sonia Consuegra)

Presentation provided by Dr Sonia Consuegra on Aquainvad-ED and Aquawales

Aquainvad-ED is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Network running from June 1st 2015 to May 31st 2019.

There are 6 parts to the Aquainvad-ED project:

- Early detection
- Vectors & dispersal
- Impacts, risk assessment & control
- Training
- Dissemination & exploitation
- Integration & management

Is a collaboration project between Universities, local governments, NGOs and end-users with partners based in the UK, Spain and Italy.

Objectives include developing and trialling novel methods for early detection and control. Members noted usefulness of traceability work for early detection of INNS.

There will be a joint Aquainvad meeting with Wye & Usk Foundation anniversary celebration taking place between the 19th and 21st of May in Hay on Wye. There will be several talks giving updates on the Aquainvad and Aquawales progress during the 19th that will be open to anyone interested and a session on Citizen Science on the 20th. An agenda will be circulated once available.

Best practice guidance for aquaculture will be developed.

GW noted lots of overlap/linkage with the [Marine Pathways Project](#). Lots of useful project reports, documents, etc. on the Marine Pathway page e.g. types of monitoring, hotspots of introduction on the GB NNS website. GW suggested the project gets in touch with CEFAS.

6. Welsh Government update

Work of late has been mainly focused on Regulations and the GB Strategy.

[EU Invasive Alien Species \(IAS\) Regulations](#) came into force on 1st January 2015. The regulation foresees three types of interventions; prevention, early detection and rapid eradication, and management. Domestic legislation is required to be put in place to enforce certain aspects including border control, penalties and sanctions and permits. This is expected to be put in place early 2016, but some slippage may occur across UK and in some other Member States.

Two consultations will take place shortly on:

1. Domestic IAS legislation
2. Code of practice on Species Control Orders and Agreements (UK Infrastructure Act)

An initial list of invasive alien species of Union concern is being drawn up. By late January 2016 those species listed will be banned from being kept, bred and being placed on the market. Adoption of the list will trigger a number of actions within 12 months, with keepers of commercial stocks of species no longer being able to sell them. All member states will be required to produce an analysis of pathways within 18 months, establish a surveillance scheme and put in place effective management measures for the specified species.

DTh reported he has received a letter from Janet Haworth, AM for North Wales regarding a constituent's concern on the presence of *Eichhornia crassipes* (Water hyacinth) and *Lagarosiphon major* (Curly waterweed) on the list. The constituent runs a nursery and is claiming that they will lose £10K per annum if the ban goes ahead.

The inclusion of species on the list has been based on risk assessments and regulatory criteria. The inclusion of species is blanket across the EU states so species will be an issue in certain countries, if not all. NM will discuss further with DTh to help formulate a response.

This case highlights the importance of communications with trade, such as suggestions of alternative species to sell.

Traders will have one year to stop selling/eradicate stocks and zoos will have 2 years to remove any of the species listed. Selling will be banned unless sold dead e.g. deer meat (Muntjac Deer).

Topmouth Gudgeon (TG) and Grey Squirrel are proposed species on the regulatory list. TG is now only present on 5 sites in England (2 recently discovered) and 2 sites in Wales following eradication programme on 18 other sites. Environment Agency are knowledgeable on the eradication of TG but have reported a 3 to 4 year wait until work can take place on the remaining Welsh sites. Can we use contractors? Cost of TG eradication is high – estimates

given are £130K for one site and £500K for the other. Time scale is a potential problem, particularly if regulations criteria are to notify and start eradication in 3 months.

Action 8: NM to discuss TG eradication on Welsh sites with the Environment Agency

GB Strategy:

- Draft Implementation Plan has been circulated. DT and GW provided input into the plan
- It will look to Working Groups in England, Scotland and Wales to help the Programme Board deliver
- New strategy is ambitious, with a focus on prevention, early detection and rapid response.
- A Research Working Group has been re-established
- Olaf Booy is drafting contingency responses for ~50 species at an England level
- No formal reporting of Wales INNS Group to the Programme Board will take place but chairs may feedback verbally at meetings.

Sika Deer Update: Following recent meetings' discussions regarding the invasive non-native deer population in the Teifi area, WG arranged a site visit to Cilgerran to discuss the issues. The Wildlife Trust hosted the visit with NRW, GBNNSS, APHA and Welsh Government attending. Following the meeting, advice has been provided to the Minister for Natural Resources seeking agreement for a feasibility study this winter, and, subject to outcomes, then proceeding with an eradication programme during 2016/17 winter. Awaiting Ministerial response.

Communications: AH reported that leaflets on Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam are being produced. Leaflets contain general information to provide to members of the public and for use at various events.

CABI's Japanese Knotweed Control Project: Looking to identify ~ 5 sites preferably in South East Wales, linear and riparian for phase 2 of the psyllid release.

Action 9: AS to send further details on the site requirements to HY to circulate to group members

AS reported a Biodiversity Audit is taking place on landholding within Welsh Government Estates including for the presence of INNS. A programme of management will look to address the audit's findings.

WG have provided small amounts of funding to INNS projects over the year including:

- Carpet Sea-squirt work at Holyhead
- Rhododendron control
- Supporting mobile phone app to record Japanese Knotweed in Snowdonia National Park Authority
- Upgrading software for the PlantTracker app
- SBRI is in development with 2 of the 3 projects going forward for further development
- Producing (with GB NNSS) updated media, mainly related to Check, Clean, Dry campaign. JS: A list of where signs have been distributed would be useful.

Action 10: DT to send distribution list of CCD signs and comms to RYA

7. N2K INNS Thematic Action Plan (NRW)

Presentation provided by Sue Hearn, NRW on the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for Wales INNS Actions.

The programme is managed by NRW and co-funded by EU LIFE+ Nature. It provides a strategic forward plan for the management and restoration of the Natura 2000 (SPA, SAC) network and identifies key challenges and actions to address them.

Main outputs of project are Prioritised Improvement Plans (PIPs) - site based action plans and Thematic Plans - action plans to address main issues and risks at a Wales level. Thematic action plans will be on the NRW website shortly. INNS are the second most frequently cited issues in PIPS. INNS are listed as an issue in 84 out of 112 Natura 2000 sites in Wales (75%) and on 71 out of 123 Natura 2000 habitat or species features (58%). Main suggested mechanism of action is for direct management. Other mechanisms include management agreement, investigation/risk surveillance, biosecurity measures, awareness raising & education and developing/reviewing plans & policy. Cost of Invasive Species actions on Natura 2000 sites is £12,723,000.

Breakout groups looked briefly at each action. Discussion points included:

- Members noted that the actions follow the GB Strategy, albeit specifically for N2K sites
- Strategic Action 1.4 - *Ensure that NRW is in a position to make use of Species Control Orders and Species Control Agreements, and that local councils and the Police use Community Protection Notices to help facilitate control of invasive species.* CT reported that NRW are currently working on this.
- Provides useful statistics on environmental effect of INNS.
- Strategic Action 1.5 - *Develop a sensitivity matrix for assessing impacts of INNS on N2K feature condition to prioritise action.* This action could be addressed through Evidence Gaps.

N2K INNS Actions

STRATEGIC ACTIONS – GENERAL (marine, freshwater, terrestrial)	
1.1	Develop and promote adoption of codes of conduct and biosecurity initiatives, and raise awareness of impacts of INNS across marine, terrestrial and freshwater N2K features in Wales
1.2	Integrate biosecurity best practice into appropriate regulatory regimes, to ensure that risks to N2K features posed by INNS are effectively managed.
1.3	Support research into effective control and eradication methods for INNS (marine, terrestrial and freshwater) with significant impacts on N2K.
1.4	Ensure that NRW is in a position to make use of Species Control Orders and Species Control Agreements (Infrastructure Act 2015), and that local councils and the police use Community Protection Notices (Anti-social Behavior, Crime and Policing Act 2014) to help facilitate control of invasive species.
1.5	Develop a sensitivity matrix for assessing impacts of INNS on N2K feature condition to prioritise action.
1.6	Reduce the risk of spread of INNS to N2K sites by developing pathway management plans, focusing effort based on significance of the pathway, location of hotspots and

	key areas of spread, and areas most likely to be effected (e.g. sensitive habitats)
1.7	Integrate N2K habitat and species needs and priorities and the impact of INNS on them into relevant Wales and UK strategies and standards.
STRATEGIC ACTIONS – Freshwater and terrestrial	
2.1	Produce area-based long term management plans for INNS eradication/control for N2K sites at particular risk of INNS
2.2	Implementation and support existing and new projects/initiatives in support of area-based management plans for INNS eradication/control for N2K sites (see action 2.1 above).
2.3	Influence future agri-environment schemes to better deliver targeted management of INNS.
STRATEGIC ACTIONS – marine only	
3.1	Investigate pathways and vectors of spread of INNS within N2K sites to underpin the development of Site and Network Action Plans (see action 3.2. below)
3.2	Develop N2K Site and Network Action Plans (including pathways actions and species actions) for all marine N2K sites, using baseline evidence developed in action 3.1

SH asked the group to take on these actions and drive forward. Some actions will be taken forward by NRW and some actions may link with the GB Strategy Implementation Plan. Members to reflect on today's discussions before reaching a decision.

Action 11: ALL members to provide thoughts and comments on the adoption of the N2K INNS Actions to DT by 31st January 2016

8. Work Planning/Partner updates

Our current three year work plan is due to end in March 2016. Members discussed how the continuation/refresh of our Work Plan could look.

The group agreed that the work plan should be focused on the GB Strategy Implementation Plan, and include any additional Wales' priorities. Important to highlight where group organisation members can help deliver and add value.

NM reported that a prioritisation process on the Implementation Plan is taking place to focus work on ~18 actions (not all Wales relevant).

Work Plan Subgroup to be formed. Members present expressing interest on sitting on sub group included WG (DT), GB NNSS (NM), NRW and WBP (HY). It would also be useful to have WLGA and academic (Dan Forman or Judith Oakley) presence on the group.

Create a proformae for partners to easily input updates to feed directly into monitoring work plan progress. Actions to be uploaded onto BARS, either directly by organisations or via WBP through the proformae updates.

DT noted usefulness of partner updates. Please note request (Emailed by DT 16th November) for details of INNS actions undertaken in 2015 and future work planned in 2016 to form part of the Welsh Government's response to the Environment and Sustainability Committee's Inquiry into Invasive Non-Native Species.

Action 12: HY to arrange subgroup meeting for January

Action 13: ALL to provide details of actions undertaken in 2015 and future work planned in 2016 in template supplied to **DT** by no later than 11th January 2016

9. Welsh INNS Priorities

The Welsh INNS Priorities document contains a list of the priority species for Wales with potential actions. It was last revised in February 2013. Group noted its usefulness and the need to update it.

Actions columns should be updated to link to GB Strategy, Implementation and Work plan.

GB priority species that are relevant to Wales should be highlighted in our priority list e.g. the list should be in line with GB-wide rapid responses, but also include species of particular concern for Wales. Review with EU regulation list also in mind.

Document could contain links to contingency plans and GB ISAPS.

Priority Species could be listed on the WBP website.

NA-L offered to lead a review of the document and report back at next meeting. DTh offered assistance on freshwater aquatic and riparian species and NM offered assistance with the integration of GB priorities.

Action 14: NA-L to lead a review of the Welsh INNS Priorities document and report back at the next meeting

10. Membership

Group membership discussed:

- Amend JO's email address on spreadsheet
- NRW may review representation on group in future
- Confirm if Sarah Bird (Chester Zoo) represents all Zoos and if not, useful to have a representative from BIAZA
- Opportunity for other Welsh Government departments to sit on group e.g. Fisheries, Nature Conservation branch
- Representation of all water companies?
- CIEEM
- Land manager representation. NFU are a corresponding member but contact's email address is no longer active – new contact required.
- National Park Authorities – Bradley Welch (BBNPA) was invited to today's meeting but unable to attend. Invite to next meeting.
- RSPB (Stephen Bladwell) are corresponding members. Simon Hughston-Roberts recently expressed an interest for full membership on the group. Invite to next meeting.
- Local Authorities/LBAPs – resources are tight. SH represents Swansea local authority
- Commoners Association?

Begin with flagging gaps, and then look to suggest names.

Action 15: ALL members to flag gaps in membership to DT 31st January 2016

Endorsements: SH reported the use of the GB NNSS logo as a sign of endorsement on a consultancy report received at City and County of Swansea. NM confirmed that the report had not been endorsed by GB NNSS and has contacted the consultancy asking for the logo to be removed.

11. Actions for the Nature Recovery Plan

The Nature Recovery Plan (NRP) Wales is currently being written by Welsh Government, with input of the Wales Biodiversity Strategy Board (WBSB) members. The NRP will take the form of three parts:

1. Biodiversity Strategy – setting out the commitment to biodiversity in Wales, links to guiding policies and acts
2. Action Plan – outlining the actions, a living document
3. Nature Recovery Framework – showing the roles and responsibilities of the key players for delivery of action

The WBSB met last Friday (20th) to review the current draft of Part 1 and to review the current actions, formed through a series of task and finish groups under the board.

The NRP has a series of objectives and outcomes. These evolve around themes of Engagement and Support, Safeguarding protected species and habitats, restoration, tackling key negative factors, Improving Evidence and a governance framework.

Key negative factors include Invasive species. The current draft of Part 1 points towards the GB INNS Strategy. Actions need to be established under Part 2 the action plan related to tackling Invasive species to coincide with the NRP objectives. The INNS Group are being provided with an opportunity to input.

Group noted and recognised importance of inputting into the Action Plan. Part 1 is due for release by the end of the year. NB-B informed the group that the AP will be released later, giving scope for it to be looked at under the subgroup alongside the work plan. The Action Plan will be a living document, reviewed regularly.

NRP to be added to agenda of next meeting, potentially as a workshop session to work on actions

Action 16: HY/DT to feedback to Caryn Le Roux/Jenni Hartley

12. Any other business

None

13. Future agenda items, date of next meeting and dates of note (e.g. events)

Suggested future agenda items:

- DT suggested focus on terrestrial INNS at Spring or Summer meeting

- Focus on work plan and our priorities (based on sub groups work and to help inform the Nature Recovery Plan)
- Deferred Welsh Federation of Sea Anglers item (Richard Poole)
- Crayfish control (Paul Stebbing, CEFAS)
- Grey Squirrel Strategy update (Chris Tucker)

Date of next meeting will be March/April time – exact date tbd

Action 17: HY/DT to arrange date of next meeting