

Wales Biodiversity Partnership Invasive Non Native Species Group

Tan-y-bwlch, Welsh Government, Aberystwyth

5th December 2016

Minutes

Attendees

Dave Thomas (Chair)	DT	Welsh Government - LNF
Anthony Hicks	AH	WG – LNF
Holly York	HY	Wales Biodiversity Partnership
Neville Rookes	NR	WLGA
Kathleen Carroll	KC	WG – LNF
Richard Poole	RP	Dwr Cymru
Theresa Kudelska	TK	NRW
Jennie Jones	JJ	NRW
Niall Moore	NM	GB NNSS (Dial-in)
Lucy Cornwell	LC	GB NNSS (Dial-in part)
Emma Barton	EB	RYA (Dial-in)
Nick Bialynicki-Birula	NB-B	NRW (Dial-In)
Hilary Foster	HF	NRW (Dial-in)
David Hall	DH	Cardiff Harbour Authority (Dial-in)

Apologies

Dan Forman	DF	Swansea University
Gabe Wyn	GW	NRW
Dave Thorpe	DTh	NRW
Jo Cable	JC	Cardiff University
Dan Jones	DJ	Swansea University
Sean Hathaway	SH	City and County of Swansea
Judith Oakley	JO	CCS, University of Wales Trinity Saint David
Jo Mullett	JM	Knotweed Control
Sharon Davies	SD	WG – Marine
Alison Smith	AS	WG - Property
Sarah Bird	SB	Chester Zoo

1. Welcome, introductions, apologies and AOB items

DT (chair) welcomed attendees. DT informed the group that he now works part time and will be moving to a new two day role soon.

2. Actions from previous meetings

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

ACTION 1: HY to upload the minutes from the previous meeting onto the WBP website
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The actions from the previous meeting are either complete, agenda items or listed below with an update:

Actions carried forward:

Action 2: DTh to continue to investigate INNS data and biosecurity policies for CIEEM best practice

Action 3: Potential effects on/for INNS during the Rail electrification work in South Wales – **NAL** to continue to watch proposals and **AS** will make enquiries within work colleagues (previously July Action 4)

Action 4: HY to update membership spreadsheet with sector (i.e. water, government, local authority) and **ALL** to then identify and provide suitable contacts for gaps in membership (full or correspondence). (Previously July Action 10 & 11)

July Action 3: Environment (Wales) Act – Section 7: NERC S42 species were transposed into Section 7. WG and NRW are working on criteria for reviewing section 7 species. The criteria will go out to consultation in due course.

July Action 7 and 8: **Welsh INNS priorities list**- Group noted importance of finishing the Welsh INNS priorities list. The Marine INNS priorities are not yet ready for inclusion – likely to be ready in spring 2017. Group discussion around the list:

- Should the terrestrial/freshwater INNS priorities go through the same selection process as the marine list?
- List should fit with the EU IAS lists and GB priorities
- The list should be regularly reviewed.
- NRW to look at the potential to include reviewing the priority list work within their work programme.

Action 5: TK to look at potential to review the priority list within the NRW INNS work programme. Alternatively - **GW** to send **HY** the marine INNS priorities list when available and incorporate with the current Welsh INNS priorities list.

July action 9: DT update following the Chairs group meeting, for work plan to then be updated – Chairs group meeting has not taken place yet.

July action 12: Water hyacinth proposal – Complete. WG liaised with the APHA. Water Hyacinth listed on IAS Regulations but as it does not overwinter and proposed to be used in a contained scenario it was deemed permitted.

3. Work Planning

DT provided an update on the work plan. The WBP INNS group work plan is now out of date. Several members met to discuss the work plan recently. Since this, significant changes with the new INNS team at NRW (TK, JJ and Hilary Foster). WG will be meeting with NRW to discuss their INNS work programme. Discussion points included:

- NRW have been provided with resource for 2016/2017 to establish a work programme with a focus on the IAS regulations and GB strategy. They have been working on an analysis of major drivers, creating a baseline and meeting with relevant organisations. Areas for action/work will be prioritised and a final work programme produced.

- Discussion around local authority action on INNS. INNS management tends to be focused on Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and Giant hogweed. Action is restricted to available budgets. Keen to work in an integrated and collaborative approach with partners such as the Wildlife Trusts. Third sectors can access other funding streams e.g. the Heritage Lottery funded Gwent Living Levels project which includes managing and raising awareness of INNS on the Gwent levels, including community involvement and establishing a network of volunteers. A local community in Torfaen is looking to become an invasive plant free ward.
- KC has been contacted by someone taking action at a community level to control Japanese knotweed. They are working with their local parish council and want to draft an action plan for it. KC asked if members had a generic plan that could be adapted to meet their needs. NB – the example above in Torfaen may have something useful.

4. Evidence Gaps update

Cardiff Places Sustainable Institute continues to lead on the [Evidence Gaps Project](#). Dave Thorpe leads on INNS EG's for the group. Evidence Gap suggestions can be submitted at any time.

5. GB Strategy, including GB NNS Programme Board, Implementation Plan

Update from GB NNS – this included, but not restricted to:

- The Programme Board met last week (2 per annum). Discussion focused on rapid responses and contingency plans and the estimated resources required for these.
- Important to retain specialist capacity and resources.
- Pathway Action Plans – Emma Barton is taking forward the recreational boating PAP
- Discussion on the recent Asian hornet outbreak. Eradication costs (paid by Defra) were similar to those estimated in the contingency plan.

6. Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) D2 updates

Item cancelled – MSFD team unable to join us.

7. Communications, including Invasives Week planning

LC provided an update on Invasives Week 2017 to the group.

- Invasives Week will take place the week beginning 27th March.
- Holding a teleconference on 7th December to begin discussions, WG (Kathleen) and NRW (Jennie) will attend.
- May have a different theme on each day e.g. biosecurity campaigns, Recording, surveillance, action on ground. Planning to launch Asian Hornet Invasion app.
- Wales's events? Potential to launch the biosecurity e-learning which is in the process of being translated. WG had a stand at Cathays office with the Museum staff last year. Potential to invite the Minister to an event/site visit or tweet?

ACTION 6: HY to circulate more information on Invasives Week

ACTION 7: ALL members to consider Invasives Week engagement. Get in touch with HY or Lucy Cornwell.

8. COBWEB, the Citizen Science Observatory WEB

Presentation provided by Colin Chapman, WG on COBWEB (<https://cobwebproject.eu/>). COBWEB aims to enable citizens to collect environmental data using devices. The collected information is suitable for use in research, decision making and policy formation. It relies on crowdsourcing, is interoperable and flexible in design. One of the COBWEB projects run was on Japanese Knotweed in Snowdonia National Park Authority (<https://cobwebproject.eu/co-designers/snowdonia-national-park-authority>). SNPA has been able to map Japanese Knotweed locations in certain areas of the park through the use of a COBWEB phone app and its engagement with the public including events to use it. Use of earth observation to map Japanese Knotweed proved more difficult with low accuracy to identify it, particularly for smaller patches. COBWEB project has finished but access to the infrastructure (and thus ability to create apps) is available at the moment. For further information, get in touch with Colin.

9. UK Water Industry Research (UKWIR) INNS project

RP – the UKWIR has published a report on the INNS implications on the Water Industry following its assessment on the potential obligations for the UK water industry and their role in meeting legal and social requirements. The report looks at the threats of INNS in 2015-50, along with a catalogue of management measures and recommendations. It also provides fact sheets on key INNS species.

The report is free to download here - [https://www.ukwir.org/Invasive-and-Non-Native-Species-\(INNS\)-Implications-on-the-Water-Industry](https://www.ukwir.org/Invasive-and-Non-Native-Species-(INNS)-Implications-on-the-Water-Industry)

Dwr Cymru are continuing to work on biosecurity and raising awareness within their business. It's INNS Funding scheme is continuing to run – with money being made available for projects which will enable them to support local groups to take action to prevent, reduce, eradicate or manage the risk of INNS - [link](#)

10. Welsh Government updates, including legislation, SCO Code of Practice

Update from Welsh Government – this included, but not restricted to:

- Legislation is the key priority at present. The EU IAS Regulation has a FAQ and awaiting further guidance from Defra.
- Biocontrol updates
 - Testing of the rust fungus on Himalayan balsam has shown limited spread from source. The site in Wales is showing the best results. A DNA analysis will be undertaken to identify the source of the Himalayan balsam – possibly a Pakistan variety and if so, an alternative rust may be used (Indian one used) subject to permission for release.
 - CABI has discovered a new mite in Australia and are looking at conducting trials for its use on *Crassula*

- Results for the CABI trials releasing a psyllid as a control agent for Japanese Knotweed in the UK are not appearing successful during the second phase. New release techniques will be tried.
- Asian hornet update – as the group are aware Asian hornets were discovered at beekeeping hives in Gloucestershire in September. The contingency plan was implemented, and the nest found and confirmed as Asian hornets. The nest was removed. Further reports of Asian hornets were received – a single male hornet was collected back in May, south of Bristol and one found in Gloucester following a camping trip. Surveillance and awareness building is important now.
- Consultation on Species Control Orders has finished. Amended document is being checked by lawyers, it will then go to the NRW Board and WG Minister for February/March
- WG are funding alpine newt eradication action. NRW and Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC) have been working on 3 sites known to have alpine newts in Wales. One site in Ceredigion is proving to be complex, with a network of ponds covering a 20km stretch. Further surveys are required to establish the extent of the spread and to establish the best methods of eradication or containment.

Action 8: HY circulate link to IAS Regulations FAQ.
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Sharon Davies, Marine Branch provided the following update prior to the meeting:

- There has been no new developments on the American Lobster – we have to date only had one confirmed sighting/catch over the summer. WG are grateful to the help of the Welsh Fisherman’s Association, NRW and all stakeholders with this matter and for the help in circulating the information note which is aimed at increasing awareness and encouraging the reporting of INNS.
- We continue to work with the UK government to implement the requirements of MSFD Descriptor 2, which is specifically aimed at INNS. In early November, WG Marine Biodiversity and MSFD colleagues attended a 2 day Marine Pathways MSFD and INNS workshop in London. I can provide further details to the group on this in due course.
- WG Marine Biodiversity continues to work with NRW on the development of a priority list of marine INNS. Once we have a final draft we will share it with WBP INNS group and marine stakeholders for comment.

11. Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS) update

HY provided an updated on BARS. The UK BARS partnership has taken the difficult decision to discontinue support for BARS and as such the system closed on the 30th November. Unfortunately Defra and Natural England felt that they were no longer able to support BARS and the remaining members (including WBP and WG) were unable to meet the shortfall, particularly as use across Wales has been inconsistent and as such BARS was not cost effective. WG and WBP continue to support processes and mechanisms to capture and manage data on biodiversity and alternatives to BARS (as is) are being investigated at present e.g. an application on the NBN Atlas. More information will be provided at this develops.

Discussions:

- This has implications for the group, which have been using BARS for their 'Action Audit'.
- It is of benefit to gather this information, and would be useful for this to include costs, be less clunky and easy to share.
- A legal obligation under the Environment (Wales) Act for public authorities to report on the actions they are taking to improve biodiversity and promote resilience.
- Until alternatives to BARS are in place, the group should produce something in the interim to capture action.

Note, for more information on the closure, a closure notice and information note can be read [here](#)

12. Partner updates

Updates around the room from partners – these included, but not restricted to:

- The Green Blue is running a University Sailing Sustainability Challenge, which sees university sailing clubs taking action to make their sailing more environmentally sustainable, including action on INNS such as implementing Check, Clean, and Dry. Universities across Wales are taking part (EB)
- Cardiff Bay is hosting the Volvo Ocean Race in May 2018. This is a large sporting event and as such the Harbour authority is looking to produce a specific biosecurity plan. Members input are welcomed.

13. Any other business

- Nature Recovery Framework – the 'Wales Biodiversity Strategy Board' are due to meet on the 9th December to look at the Natural Resource Policy consultation and to discuss the latest thinking on the next steps and governance going forward.
- *Gammarus fossarum* – Information was circulated to the group recently on this freshwater shrimp. It has recently been identified in Britain during an eDNA project. This included an identification guide, particularly the differences between *G.fossarum* and *G.pulex*. Please consider checking any historical records of *G.pulex* to ensure the correct species was identified.
- Committee Report – a request to all members for completion of the template for actions undertaken in 2016 and future work planned in 2017 by the 13th January (see email sent 09.11.2016 by HY 'Welsh Government Invasive Non-Native Species Policy Forum – Environment and Sustainability Committee - INNS').

12. Future agenda items and date of next meeting

Action 9: ALL please send any further agenda suggestions to **HY**

Action 10: HY/DT to arrange date and location of next meeting