

## WBP Invasive Non Native Species Group Meeting

Welsh Government Building, Aberystwyth

27<sup>th</sup> February 2013: 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting

### MINUTES

#### Attendees

Dave Thomas	DT	WG
Alys Edwards	AE	WBP
Niall Moore	NM	GBNNS
Jo Hughes	JH	CCW
Nick Birula	NB	EAW
Colin Charman	CC	CCW
Nigel Ajax-Lewis	NAL	WTSWW/WTW
Matthew Ellis	ME	CCW
Sean Hathaway	SH	Swansea City Council
Kathleen Carroll	KC	WG
Anthony Hicks	AH	WG
Mike McCabe	MMc	CCW
Neville Rookes	NR	WLGA
Chris Tucker	CT	FCW
Wolfgang Wuster (from Bangor website)	WW	Bangor University

#### Apologies

Lizzie Wilberforce	WTW
Sarah Bird	CZ
Chris Newman	
Ben Wray	CCW
Richard Poole	RP
Mike Morris	SRT
Rob Taylor	PAWS
Jenni Hartley	WG
Judith Oakley	OI

## 1. Actions and minutes from the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and would be published. The majority of actions from November's meeting have now been addressed, with the remaining outstanding actions either covered by agenda items or on-going.

ACTION 05 - NM provided update on progress with the EU IAS Directive, which is likely to be available around Easter. The exact timescales are unclear and there is a chance that this may be adopted as a regulation rather than a Directive. The focus is likely to be species which are not native to any part of the EU but which are of high concern.

It was acknowledged that the impact of the Directive in Wales will need to reflect changes brought about by Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

ACTION 08 - Satellite populations of ring necked parakeets have been identified in Wales. SH provided details of incidental sightings in Swansea, which appear to be predominantly escapees. Details of Cardiff population remain unclear. DT informed attendees that the issue is likely to be raised at the next GB NNS Programme Board and it would be useful to have an update on Welsh populations size/distribution beforehand.

<p><b>ACTION 1.</b> AE to get update from Laura Palmer on population size in Cardiff and feed back to Welsh Government and GBNNS.</p>
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ACTION 14 – NM provided an update on progress with balsam rust work. The research at CABI is progressing well.

The GBNNS Biosecurity Working Group aims to improve coordination of INNS biosecurity across environment sector public bodies within GB. Currently the main focus on biosecurity tends to be “disease” with INNS given lower priority. Work on the Environment Agency aquatic operational biosecurity guidance is on-going, once completed it will be added to the E-learning package and EAW are keen to share this more widely for others to adopt or modify as they see fit. Both the biosecurity guidance and the E-learning package should be available this Spring (April).

<p><b>ACTION 2.</b> AE to add aquatic biosecurity guidance to WBP website once available</p>
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KC provided an update on the Law Commission Review of Wildlife Legislation. The Law Commission have developed proposals/recommendations in relation to INNS but a decision has been taken to put this work on hold as a result of the impending EU Directive, which could result in changes to existing legislation.

Attendees agreed that this approach seemed counter intuitive as the EU Directive was unlikely to have a significant impact on domestic Legislation in England and Wales and could result in missing out, with regard to strengthened legislation around INNS.

Proposals have been developed and these now need to be pushed forward.

**ACTION 3.** NM to contact Law Commission regarding impact of EU Directive on domestic legislation and feedback following discussion.

The next meeting of the GB NNS Programme Board will be hosted by Welsh Government on 11 April 2013.

DT updated attendees on work undertaken at a GB level since the last meeting, which includes a decision taken with regard to a ban on sale of a number of highly invasive species of aquatic plants (water fern, parrot's feather, floating pennywort, Australian stone crop, water primrose). An Order will be developed Spring 2013 in relation to England and Wales which would come into force April 2014 to allow for disposal/sale of affected plants.

At the BIC meeting on 7 September 2012 (Edinburgh), Ministers of the BIC Administrations tasked officials of the UK and Ireland to conduct a workshop to share experiences and good practice on INNS. Defra are organising a two day workshop in London for the British and Irish Council 30 April/1 May. The WBP INNS group will be represented at the event by Welsh Government, EAW and CCW (then NRW). Areas for discussion include *Didemnum vexillum* eradication work in Holyhead harbour.

Support has been secured from the Welsh and Scottish Governments, CCW and Scottish Natural Heritage for the continuation of the GBNSS website. The exemption case, submitted to Defra, has been approved and as a result the site will remain separate from the Gov.UK site.

Smarter Environmental Regulation Review work is currently being undertaken by Defra, with support of other bodies including GBNSS, Welsh and Scottish Governments, Environment Agencies, Nature Conservation bodies, Forestry and CEFAS. The cross-cutting review, launched July 2012, evaluates the scope for making improvements to the framework of environmental regulation. A model structure is being developed for information provision across a number of issues - INNS, Habitats, Nutrients. INNS testing currently underway. At present this work is very Anglo centric, although Wales has participated in discussions, and there is a need to further influence this work.

The Non Native Species Information Portal (NNSIP) steering group met recently and DT requested volunteers to represent the WBP INNS Group at future meetings. (post-meeting note: the next NNSIP meeting is being organised by Defra 11:30-15:00, London (venue to be confirmed), 20 June 2013).

A discussion followed around data flow and rapid response for high alert species, with the links between Local Record Centres (LRC) and National Biodiversity Network (NBN) and availability of species data produced as a result of planning application surveys being cited as a key issue which needs to be addressed.

NM requested feedback on the Floating pennywort guidance sheet developed by GBNSS and whether the document accurately reflects the current situation in Wales. It is estimated that Floating Pennywort costs the British economy £23.5 million per year.

**ACTION 4.** ALL to feedback on Species Factsheets, available on the NNSIP to GBNSS

**ACTION 5.** NAL/ME to represent the WBP INNS group at the next meeting of the NNSIP SG.

GBNNS are currently developing e-training materials in relation to INNS following recommendations from the training group, which should be available in May 2013.

## **2. WBP INNS Terms of Reference**

The revised Terms of Reference for the WBP INNS Group were circulated in December for comment and have since been updated. The final version will be circulated following the meeting for final sign off, so they can be provided to Welsh Government in advance of the inaugural meeting of the Wales Biodiversity Strategy Board on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 2013.

**ACTION 6.** All to send any final additions/comments to AE [aedwards@wtwales.org](mailto:aedwards@wtwales.org) by no later than 12<sup>th</sup> March 2013

## **3. Topmouth Gudgeon Eradication**

NBB provided an update on the Topmouth gudgeon eradication project taking place on 3 sites in south west Wales. The project is on-going but ultimately should result in eradication of Topmouth gudgeon in Wales. NBB confirmed that there is a commitment to continuation of the project once NRW is in place.

**ACTION 7.** NBB to ask Topmouth gudgeon project officer to produce short briefing on eradication project for circulation to INNS group.

## **4. Aesculapian Snake**

The issues around the aesculapian snake population in north Wales was discussed at length. The population is currently estimated at between 50-100 individuals. Bangor University are monitoring the population and there appears to be no evidence that they have spread beyond their current range and no current evidence of impact in the wider countryside.

The Zoological Society of London (ZSL) have had a similar issue with aesculapian snakes, with a significant population now present in Regents Park in London, which has begun to spread along the nearby canal.

Colwyn Bay Zoo may be in breach of s14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) and should therefore take responsibility, as it is bad practice that the zoo owners allowed the snake population to establish in the wild. JH informed attendees that the zoo seems happy to address the issue if required. However at present the risk is reasonably limited given that the snake is a central European species which will interact with same species. Despite the limited impact seen to date controlling spread/eradication remains a priority for the Group.

NM noted that a number of zoos, including Colwyn Bay, have signed up to the Zoos and Aquaria code of practice which means that they should be addressing the issues of current and past escapes. However the discussion highlights a much wider issue around biosecurity in zoos and wildlife parks which needs to be addressed at a GB level. Attendees agreed that zoos should be raising the

awareness of the impact of INNS, addressing the issue of escapees, and providing clear leadership and messaging. At present a number of zoos are not abiding by the voluntary code of practice and a wider approach with the sector would be the best option.

Issues could be addressed through tightening of licensing conditions, for which local authorities are responsible for compliance, and ensure that zoos are liable for cost of remediation. However this could be difficult to impose as a significant number of escapees are not reported.

Attendees agreed that despite the relatively low impact/risk to date there was a need to be consistent in messaging and approach to escapees and not take a species by species approach.

**ACTION 8.** NM to consider establishment of a small group, led by the GBNSS, across England and Wales to address issue.

**ACTION 9.** DT and KC to discuss approach with colleagues in Policy Team and consider contacting the zoo, reminding them of their duties under s41 of the WCA

## 5. Prioritisation

MMc provided some background to the development of the prioritisation document, which has been in development for a number of years. A similar approach has been taken to the one in Scotland, with the original list of 100 species produced following consultation with the WBP Wales-level Groups. This original spread sheet has been used to prioritise and categories species of differing levels of concern. Following November's meeting a sub group meeting was convened in order to refine the list enabling rapid response to be developed where appropriate and helping to target resources at selected species/recommended action.

From this work three headline categories have been identified; High alert species – *species that are not in Wales yet, but that are likely to arrive and have proved highly invasive elsewhere*; Species already present in the wild but where eradication at a local, regional or national level may be possible; and Strategic control priorities - *for species that are established where the strategy may include protecting key areas, containment, control or mitigation. Including setting up arc sites/satellite sites*. A list of potential action areas has been provided and this now needs to be developed further by the wider group.

The document will need to be held as a working document which develops over time and requires annual review through the INNS group.

It was noted that the focus of the first category is primarily awareness raising and development of rapid response/contingency planning. A significant amount of work is already being done at a UK level by the GBNSS and there is a need to ensure there is no replication. The Wales Group considered that priority should be around species present in category two.

Despite the work undertaken to refine the list it remains significant and presents challenges in terms of resourcing. As such there is a need to try and take a view on level of resource required and potential impact of species. The prioritisation list should act as a centralising mechanism to help people understand what action should be taken. As such wording needs to be clarified as does

practical use of the document, which can be used to flag potential resources required. Need to include development of national plans.

For category 1 we need to set up and ensure monitoring is in place, identify where rapid response has been developed and where there are gaps and this needs to be completed.

The GBNSS has been developing a risk management framework, which identifies the issues, whether action identified is feasible, cost, risk of reinvasion etc. To date this has only been developed in relation to rapid response species, but does help to provide clarity and could be applied more widely.

Moving forward there is a need to consider whether actions identified are appropriate, continue to populate the list with further actions and identify leads/contacts for individual actions, which may lead to the development of individual action plans for some species.

**ACTION 10.** JH and MMc to produce covering note explaining aim of exercise, methodology used etc. to accompany prioritisation doc.

**ACTION 11.** JH and MMc to contact individuals directly and further populate actions required and circulate for comment amongst INNS group.

**ACTION 12.** INNS Group to complete GBNSS Action Plan template for species in category 2

**ACTION 13.** AE to add review of prioritisation document as standing item on the agenda for INNS meetings.

## 6. Water Framework Directive (WFD) Update

NBB provided an update on the WFD. No comments were received from the INNS Group by the WFD engagement team around current cycle (2015). In England, money has been secured from Defra for delivery of INNS through WFD, which currently runs to 2015. The WFD presents significant opportunities in relation to funding for INNS work and the INNS group needs to provide a more coordinated level of input on what we might like to see included in the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of River Basin Management Plans (RBMP).

NR noted that there is a need to work with local authorities in delivery of RBMPs to ensure secondary benefit of those plans could be delivery of INNS management, and piggyback on other funding opportunities and projects. RBMPs are statutory and once actions have been agreed WG has a commitment to deliver on them.

**ACTION 14.** NBB to circulate outputs (action 21 Nov 2012) and produce paper for next meeting on opportunities to input to second cycle of RBMP.

## 7. Strategic Plan for Non Native Plants

DT informed Members that this work, along with the review of the GB Framework, has been postponed until more is known about contents of EU IAS Directive. However the focus for invasive

plants is likely to be based on highest profile plants such as Japanese knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and aquatic plants with a ban on sale.

Welsh Government also has a commitment to development of a strategic approach to rhododendron, a commitment contained within the Woodland for Wales Strategy. This has not been progressed to date and needs to be revisited. Snowdonia National Park have a strategic plan for rhododendron– a lot happening and this all needs to be brought together.

It was suggested that there is a role for the Wales INNS Group to encourage the establishment of further regional forums along similar lines of the Pems and Dee and North Wales groups which could be extremely beneficial in terms of developing a strategic approach to non-native plants in Wales. This could programme target to encourage establishment of regional action groups.

It was noted that non-native plants are an issue across the Wales-level groups and therefore development of a strategic approach would be extremely beneficial, with Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed and rhododendron being the most prevalent.

ME informed attendees that the ‘Big D day – the invasion’ would be held on the last weekend of June with a focus on INNS recording and control in the Dee catchment involving the LAs and LRCs. Lessons and messages from the event could be shared across Wales.

**ACTION 15.** AE to discuss including INNS Dee Forum on Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) seminar, or at WBP conference with WBP Support Team colleagues.

Colin Charman enquired about the status of the ADAS report, commissioned by WG and circulated in advance of the meeting. The report was commissioned by the Natural Environment and Agriculture team when they took over responsibility for the INNS work programme and before knowledge on the prioritisation work which was on-going. CCW have already submitted comments and WG would be grateful for any additional comments

**ACTION 16.** ALL to send comments on ADAS report to Dave Thomas  
[David.Thomas4@Wales.GSI.Gov.UK](mailto:David.Thomas4@Wales.GSI.Gov.UK) by 15 March

## **8. The spread of Japanese Knotweed across Welsh local authorities**

NR provided an overview to the paper, the aim of which was to assess the impact and level of action for Japanese knotweed across the local authorities in Wales. A disappointing response was received from LAs, with only around a 50% response rate so there is a need to build a better picture moving forward. It was noted that only one LRC (Cofnod) had been approached so far, and it would be useful to contact the remaining LRCs to see if they can contribute to the picture.

The paper highlights the fact that there is no formal reporting structure for INNS in Wales and the need to address issues strategically, at a catchment level. Demonstrating a need for a standard methodology for recording non-natives which could be promoted across Wales.

Exegesis have been undertaking work using aerial surveys to survey river corridors @ £2.30 p/ha which could be utilised to survey river corridors.

NM informed attendees that the GBNNSS Annual Stakeholder Forum will be held in Cardiff this year and invitations will be sent out shortly. The event is likely to be held in early May/ June although the format is yet to be determined.

- ACTION 17.** NM to circulate info on GBNNSS Stakeholder Forum once available.  
**ACTION 18.** MMc to share details of Exegesis work – send to AE to circulate to group.  
**ACTION 19.** WG to develop note for Minister regarding potential Assembly event on non-native plants and circulate to the group for comment.

## 9. Action Audit and BARS

AE provided a brief overview of BARS development and progress to encouraging recording of INNS actions on BARS.

Attendees agreed to consider the current Action Audit in advance of the next meeting and discuss future approach in June. The BARS database will continue to be populated and an overview of current actions on the system can be provided at the meeting.

- ACTION 20.** AE to circulate Action Audit in advance of June meeting and add to agenda.

## 10. Partner Updates (see attached)

## 11. AOB

AE provided an update on WBP work with academic institutions across Wales, being led by Tracey Lovering. The WBP Wales-level Groups have all provided a list of evidence gaps relevant to their habitats or area some of which have been worked up into more detailed project proposals and the INNS group now needs to do the same. A meeting will be held with academic representatives on the 15<sup>th</sup> March in Aberystwyth to take this work forward.

- ACTION 21.** AE to circulate the current evidence gaps spread sheet and example research proposal form to all.  
**ACTION 22.** ALL to feedback any initial evidence gaps and research proposals, taking into account current prioritisation document, by no later than **Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2013**

CT provided an update on the eradication of sika and wapiti deer. FCW staff have been carrying out control with the shooting due to finish at the end of March. NAL noted that sika deer have recently been reported in Brynmenyn near Bridgend and therefore it seems the population has spread wider than originally thought.

- ACTION 23.** CT to ask the Deer Initiative (DI) to look into sika deer in Brynmenyn and feedback at next meeting.

NAL enquired about restrictions on the use of foreign bumblebee pollinators, which has been highlighted as a potential issue recently. Licencing is required for the use of bumblebees as

pollinators, which would be dealt with by the licencing team within WG, which will be moving to NRW on 01<sup>st</sup> April.

**ACTION 24.** KC to investigate procedure for licencing of foreign bumblebee pollinators and feedback at next meeting.

## **12. Date of future meetings**

26<sup>th</sup> June 2013, Ladywell House, Newton: Banw Room

27<sup>th</sup> November 2013, Ladywell House, Newton: Banw Room