



**Natural England
Strategies for Non-native
Freshwater Species
Management - Cumbria Pilot
Record of Cumbria Workshop:
14 January 2008**

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Note

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Executive Summary

- Natural England has designed this project, undertaken by Atkins, to progress a coordinated approach to non-native species management in two pilot areas; Cumbria and Norfolk
- The second meeting of the Cumbria non-native species initiative was held at the Freshwater Biological Association, Far Sawrey, Windermere, Cumbria and was attended by representatives from a variety of interested individuals and organisations
- The group discussed the list of species of concern in Cumbria and suggested appropriate actions suitable for all categories of species
- Discussions emphasised the need for a coordinated approach to non-native species management, the need for a centralised database and for concerted effort in recording non-native species
- New approaches to non-native species management were discussed and included the potential of using existing schemes, new grants and legislation as incentives and disincentives for landowners and others to tackle the problem on their own land, as well as planning legislation to define responsibility for non-native species management

1 Introduction

1.1 Non-native Species

Invasive non-native species are a significant threat to biodiversity. There are around 3000 non-native species in the UK; only a minority are freshwater species and this project focuses primarily on these.

Species such as Australian swamp stonecrop *Crassula helmsii* and North American signal crayfish *Pacifastacus leniusculus* are now widespread in many areas of England. In contrast, other species, such as floating pennywort *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*, have been introduced more recently and further spread of these species may be preventable. Non-native species may contribute to unfavourable status in SSSIs and cause significant impacts in many other areas.

A number of different terms are used when referring to non-native species. A few definitions are given below:

- Invasive non-natives – species introduced to the UK from another country and have a tendency to spread
- Naturalised non-natives – species introduced to the UK from another country but now behaving as if growing naturally in the wild
- Aliens – species not naturally occurring in the UK
- Translocated species – species that occur naturally in the UK, but that are not necessarily naturally occurring in a specific area
- Transfaunation – the transfer of e.g. a fish parasite to a new host species
- Introductions – the release into the wild of species not naturally occurring in the UK
- Non-indigenous – species not originating from the UK
- Weeds – native plant species growing where they are not wanted
- Exotics – species introduced from or originating in a foreign country

1.2 Strategies for Freshwater Non-native Species Management – Pilot Project

Natural England recognises the fact that a strategic approach to non-native species management is required and has set up this project, which Atkins is managing. Experience in controlling invasions of problem species has indicated that eradication is difficult and that there is a risk of re-infestation from neighbouring sites or upstream sections if a strategic approach is not adopted.

Natural England recognises the importance of working with a range of partners and stakeholders to address invasive non-native species problems (see RPS, 2006) and have advocated such an approach as a means of delivering programmes of measures for the Water Framework Directive. Non-native species management ‘initiatives’ have the potential

to ensure a coordinated approach to prevention and management activity and capture existing effort.

Via this project, Natural England proposes to establish two pilot initiatives to demonstrate the potential of such approaches and to serve as best practice examples. The initiatives are to be established in Cumbria and Norfolk and will initially deal with freshwater and riparian non-native species. There are other examples of successful strategic control projects including the Cornish Knotweed project and the Tweed, which has a full-time person employed to encourage and manage efforts.

There is currently no single authority with responsibility for the control or management of non-native species and no dedicated funding available but it is important that this should not limit suggestions from the group or from the main focus of discussions; there is not necessarily one way to go forward, the group needs to decide what the focus of should be and how to proceed. There may be organisations or individuals involved in this initiative that are unable to provide funding, but they will be able to offer some other resource, all of which are important.

This project has been brought about because Defra has a non-native species strategy for the UK, but this is at a very high level. This project is looking at how this can be translated to work on the ground and at what needs to be done within that high level framework. The UKTAG for non-native species is also trying to get non-native species into the Water Framework Directive; currently there is no direct mention of non-native species but rather emphasis on the effects of non-native species.

1.2.1 Objectives

This project is intended to demonstrate the potential of a coordinated and strategic approach to managing non-native species by initiating freshwater non-native species initiatives in Cumbria and Norfolk. The objectives of this project are as follows:

- to establish an initiative in each of the two areas including key individuals and organisations;
- to organise and facilitate at least one workshop/ meeting of each initiative;
- to assist each initiative in developing a suite of targets/objectives and a work plan to deliver these;
- to produce a report describing the work undertaken, critically evaluating the process and detailing lessons learned.

It is envisaged that at the end of the project there will be two operational non-native species initiatives, which will serve as exemplars for other regions of the UK.

1.3 Freshwater non-native species management – Cumbria Initiative Workshop 2

Atkins' contract with Natural England was to establish two pilot 'initiatives' to develop, and eventually deliver, strategies for the management of non-native freshwater species. The first workshop for the Cumbria Initiative was held on 20th November 2007 at the FBA in Cumbria,

with a following meeting held on 14th January 2008. This document provides a record of discussions, synthesis of the main findings, decisions and suggestions and outlines future actions of the second meeting.

1.3.1 Objectives

The main objectives of the second workshop were:

- To consider and consolidate information about species of concern and identify any gaps and needs
- To utilise available information to prioritise action for each category of species as discussed at the last meeting
- To discuss resource availability and identify who is able to do what with the aim of assigning targets
- To decide how the initiative will continue, once Atkins' involvement has ceased.

2 Account of Second Workshop

2.1 Feedback on process to date

At the beginning of the workshop attendees were asked to identify positive and negative aspects of the consultation approach to date. Those who had not attended the first meeting were asked to identify any aspirations held. The results from this session are summarised in bullet point form below.

2.1.1 Comments from those who had not attended before:

These included aspirations as well as reasons for attending the workshop

- Representing volunteers who may be involved in future hands-on work
- Action on the ground
- Co-ordinated goose control on lakes
- Answers to *Crassula helmsii*
- Identifications of potential problem species
- Finding out about available funding
- Help in data collation
- Find out where my organisation can be most effective
- Awareness and clarity of visions, targets and dates
- Need for good science and evidence base to make effective decisions
- Clarity of control methods
- Meeting potential partners
- Gain support in Himalayan balsam control
- Link up with other projects
- Joining the process
- Obtain some kind of strategic ideas about invasives issues
- Definition of best practice
- Use of GIS/mapping tools for current and future

2.1.2 Positive comments

Positive comments from the previous meeting fell into three broad categories:

- Good to get all interested parties together and develop closer links
- Good to raise the awareness of the issues surrounding non-native species and some sort of prioritisation
- Good to have recognition from Natural England that this is a problem

2.1.3 Negative comments

Negative comments from the previous meeting fell into the following broad categories:

- Lack of knowledge of some species meant that too much time was spent on prioritisation of species and also that too much of the discussion focussed on plant species
- Lack of resources/funding to deal with the scale of the problem; some funds that are available are not being accessed
- Lack of stakeholders/landowners at first meeting
- Nothing has, as yet, been agreed on tackling problems in the future and recommendations of first meeting primarily related to 'domestic' issues

2.1.4 Discussion

After a brief discussion where the negative points were addressed, a further discussion was held on who else should be present and what else needs to be addressed in the process. Questions were asked about local/district council involvement as they need to be aware and involved in the process. This should also include their planning, highways departments etc. British Waterways' involvement was also requested, especially with the re-opening of the Lancaster Canal between Kendal and Tewitfield. The group were also made aware of the need for effective insurance cover for any worker out in the field. It was suggested that a good way forward, and something that would help to raise awareness of the group, would be to choose an achievable target (e.g. the eradication of a less widespread invasive) and to publicise that success widely. It was argued that whilst what can be done locally is important, a national strategy on invasives is needed as problems can be spread cross-county. The process needs much involvement from both Natural England and the Environment Agency as they can access funds that many other organisations cannot.

2.2 Setting targets

Targets were set against each of the species categories decided at the last meeting. It was also agreed that there are many targets that need to be set that are 'cross-cutting' (i.e. they apply to all categories of species). The targets suggested by the group are listed below:

2.2.1 Cross-cutting targets

Mapping and monitoring

- Using GIS to map known location of species
- Survey work in areas where there is no information
- Regularly updated
- Mapping of spread rates
- Audit of current information
- Use data available from national initiatives (e.g. BSBI - Botanical Society of the British Isles)
- Public appeal for relevant records

Coordination

- Identify a lead person/organisation
- Dedicated project officer time to coordinate efforts

- Establish a single point of contact for advice on identifying and managing species including H&S issues, specific equipment required
- Create a 'one stop shop'
- Help with education and training
- Help establish new control groups
- Memorandum of understanding between all interested parties

Funding

- Seek funding, especially where contractors/professionals are needed for control

Collation of existing efforts

- Collate and map what is currently happening county-wide
- Learn from and repeat existing community-based efforts with regard to Himalayan balsam/ Japanese knotweed
- Extend current Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed efforts

Awareness and education

- Raising public awareness of the species of concern, the problems they cause and how they can be tackled
- Getting children involved – 'pester power'
- Clever PR necessary (especially with regard to goose control)
- Make it clear WHY anything needs to be done
- Provide advice on use of herbicides etc
- Arrange site visits so all can see the effects
- Leaflets
- CLEAR guidance on what people can do to help

Other

- Target easier wins and publicise success
- Request national research on innovative control methods
- The need for Strategic Environmental Assessment? Appropriate Assessment?
- Is there a role for the local BAP group?
- Clarify the adverse effects of removal
- Can laymen identify, and what can/can't they do
- Use of specialists
- Train key organisations in the issues especially engineering and landscape contractors
- Statutory organisations need co-ordinated approach (e.g. EA – flood defence – awareness and protocols; Local Authority – earth-moving works, roads, etc.)
- Develop clear policy for how agri-environment schemes will deal with the issues, if at all
- Role of cross-compliance
- Health and Safety / RoSPA guidelines

- Insurance
- Setting targets for removal

2.2.2 Category 1 actions/targets

- Co-ordinated catchment-scale eradication programmes
- Prioritise removal of species from unfavourable Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) / Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
- Keep volunteers currently working on this motivated
- Massive publicity
- Intensive monitoring to identify spread, especially of *Crassula* and evaluate its true impact on the ecology of larger lakes
- Make sure work is targeted to important species
- Major landowners to tackle isolated pockets of Himalayan balsam
- Maintain clear areas for native species re-colonisation
- Action beyond county boundary for mobile species (e.g. mink)
- Specific targets for balsam (e.g. clear River Kent north of Kendal in 3 years)
- Find funding for contractor work in removal
- Set a long term vision (e.g. 100% control – or not)

The discussion that followed focussed on increasing knowledge of all the issues surrounding these species. It was suggested that use could be made of national persons, but it was agreed that local people need to have the knowledge in order to help, as an expert in one species may not want to travel all the way to visit a possible infestation site. It was also agreed that such knowledge should also inform best practice. There should be an agreement on timescales by the regulatory bodies and there should also be guidance on the safe disposal of species and it was suggested that there may be a need for waste exemption certificates.

2.2.3 Category 2 actions/targets

- Find out the current situation
- Adopt a standard non-native hierarchical approach – prevent, control/eradicate, mitigate
- For Canada / Greylag goose: identify acceptable population size, communicate (public perception issue), and action
- Encourage clear policy from regulators encouraging fishing yet limiting fish spread
- Persuade all agencies to 'bite the bullet' – e.g. exterminate signal crayfish NOW!
- Use one of these species as a high profile 'quick win' to illustrate the whole non-native species issue (e.g. signal crayfish)
- Use the initiative to push for action under Water Framework Directive, Habitats Directive, RAMSAR, SSSI

- Produce easily understandable identification charts for land managers so they know what to look for and how to manage
- Promote best practice in tackling species
- Identify conservation objectives of the specific problem sites
- Use existing networks (i.e. birds / fish)
- Promote effective PR on cross-contamination (especially with respect to recreational users)
- Identify issues to the general public – use of clever PR, and education

It was discussed that lots of talk and little action is taking place at the moment. For example, signal crayfish have been present for a couple of years at St John's Beck but no-one has actually taken any action. It was suggested that drastic action now may cause a little damage, but if left then the damage will be much worse when action is needed. It was also suggested that Category 3 species are more important as they have not yet arrived.

It was the general consensus that if all worked together, some quick wins are possible from this category and this would help to publicise the importance of tackling non-native species to the wider world.

2.2.4 Category 3 actions/targets

- Ban stocking of non-natives
- Intelligent surveillance
- Promote links to other counties
- Set up a "kill squad"!
- Create a warning/alert system
- Target water-craft users; raise awareness of e.g. zebra mussel

It was mentioned that Garden centres are now generally 'on-board' and do not sell non-natives but there is still a potential for cross-contamination and more education needs to be done.

2.2.5 Category 4 actions/targets

- Set conservation objectives
- Produce the scientific evidence on the damage/change caused by presence
- Intelligent surveillance
- Site protection where they are not present
- Are there adverse effects?
- Recreational divers survey
- Does it taste good?!

In general things are well recorded but this needs keeping up – we need to know where these species **aren't** as well as where they are. We also need to be careful about the messages that are sent out as Category 2/3 species may end up in category 4 if nothing proactive is done. There needs to be a general public awareness campaign.

2.2.6 Category 5/6 actions/targets

- Simple ID and habitat guide; applied research
- Liaise with experts for further information
- Use 'Flora of Cumbria' to reassess
- Defra link – Risk Assessment process

Discussion ensued about what, if any, research is being done on these species and whether or not any is actually useful. National knowledge on these species should be gathered to assist in distribution, impact as well as general species knowledge. It was noted the Defra have done specific species risk assessments, but it was also noted that we shouldn't unduly waste time and resources on species that are less important than those in categories 1 and 2.

It was also noted that lots of work has been done to look at the impacts of these species which have so far proved inconclusive.

2.3 Actions: Discussion on Coordinator, Champion, Funding and Terms of Reference

It was agreed that there is a need for a dedicated funded person to eventually coordinate this whole process and thoughts were sought on who would champion the process until such time as a coordinator could be in post; i.e. how does the process continue after Atkins' involvement has ceased?

It was explained that at the Norfolk forum, funding issues had already been discussed and that funding could take many forms (e.g. £5,000 from each stakeholder per annum towards post, equipment, herbicides etc.), but it was generally agreed that the 'big players' i.e. utility companies, large national organisations, etc, are the real funders, the others cannot afford the costs involved. It was suggested by Natural England that as an interim measure, small groups could be utilised on different tasks.

It was also mentioned that if the Cumbria coordinator post becomes active and funded before dedicated funding for the position is available when the money actually arrives it could be diverted to work on the ground.

The question was also asked about Water Companies, in the course of PR09, providing funding. The representative from United Utilities stated that funding could be requested but it would probably be thrown out; it needs a directive from the Environment Agency, Natural England, Defra, and possibly Drinking Water Inspectorate to 'force their hand', but it was noted that Ofwat is not ready for this sort of approach. All agreed that this is a higher-level lobbying issue needing both the Environment Agency CEO and Natural England CEO to go to Ofwat for resources, possibly through PR09, and Defra.

The question was also asked about the possibility of tying the non-native species coordinator in with the responsibilities and duties of existing BAP coordinators?

It was asked that all should start bidding for whatever money might be available for a coordinator role now. In order to do this, it was agreed that the organisations need to know what they are giving the money for and that if a Terms of Reference for the initiative as whole and for the proposed coordinator post could be developed, this would make sourcing funding easier. Discussion moved on to the Terms of Reference.

The Terms of Reference were approved in general but it was decided that:

1. They were too 'wordy'; and
2. There was a need to also turn them into a coordinator's job description so that funders can see what they are funding

There then followed a round table discussion on what support different organisations may be able to offer to the process in order that the initial impetus is not lost. These were non-binding and are listed in bullet form below.

2.3.1 Freshwater Biological Association

- Will set up virtual office with details of meeting, attendees, species, links, etc
- Organise third meeting in June, but would require reports that are relevant
- Apply for funding for coordinator role

2.3.2 Tullie House

- Act as a collation point for distribution information – what, where, when, who
- Put all info onto a database
- In the longer term – may be able to put maps onto website
- Raise awareness of issues (co-role not lead)

2.3.3 Natural England – nationally

- Try to find money to go beyond pilot
- Report back to Defra on the outcomes of the pilot meetings
- Help coordinate meeting

2.3.4 Natural England – regionally

- Help with hands-on work and meet with volunteers
- Maps of designated sites with owner/occupier info
- Maps of agri-environment schemes
- Inflatable boat!

2.3.5 Environment Agency

- House meetings
- Provide information leaflets
- Will ask about funding
- Will provide info to Tullie House on Japanese knotweed spraying

2.3.6 Cumbria Wildlife Trust

- Consider hosting the coordinator role
- Mink control / surveys of water vole – info to Tullie House

- Raise NNSI with BAP steering group

2.3.7 University of Cumbria

- Student involvement in mapping and monitoring
- Raise awareness (need information packs)

2.3.8 South Cumbria Rivers Trust

- Support and coordinate on-the-ground efforts
- Use of trust as a vehicle for publicity

2.3.9 National Trust

- Provide information on sites with NNS issues
- Offer use of volunteer groups
- Education work: schools, website, profile raising
- Ask about funding of coordinator role
- Lobbying at HQ re funding.

2.3.10 Eden Rivers Trust

- Public awareness
- Feedback info on species
- Carry on current control efforts

2.3.11 Friends of the Lake District

- Volunteers – both physical and surveying
- Ask about funding
- Feed into policy issues – PR09 and UU
- Has produced lake shore DVDs in the past – include NNS in next remake?

2.3.12 National Association of Fisheries and Angling Consultatives

- Enthusiasm to articulate information sheets amongst the fishing fraternity
- Persuade EA to host angling seminar

2.3.13 Lake District National Park (Ranger)

- Experience of setting up groups
- Surveys of GIS – pass on to Tullie House
- Raise public awareness; meetings for LA and Parish Councils

2.3.14 Lake District National Park

- Pot of money to match funding
- Website for public awareness work
- Brockhole communications office and information centre

- House meetings
- Resurveying of Bassenthwaite
- 400 volunteers

2.3.15 Local Volunteer Groups

- Maps of Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed spread in river Kent
- Work with current volunteers and increase north of Kendal
- Aim to increase public awareness

3 Conclusion

The next phase of the Initiative will need to continue without Atkins' involvement as the project is drawing to a close. The representative from the Freshwater Biological Association volunteered to contact everyone to continue the process and the next meeting will be held in mid-June

Atkins stated that they would write up the whole process for their client Natural England and that the next contact from Atkins would be delivery of the completed final report and all appendices.

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