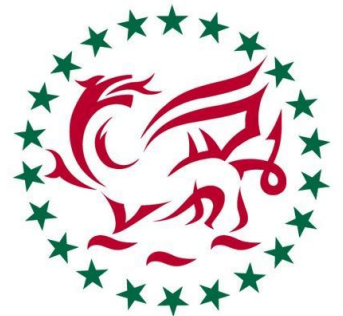




Environment and Sustainability Committee

9th May 2013

Invasive Non- Native Species



WLGA • CLILC

INTRODUCTION

1. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the 22 local authorities in Wales. The three national park authorities and the three fire and rescue authorities are associate members.
2. It seeks to provide representation to local authorities within an emerging policy framework that satisfies the key priorities of our members and delivers a broad range of services that add value to Welsh Local Government and the communities they serve.
3. This document contains evidence for the Environment and Sustainability Committee for their inquiry into Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) in Wales. It considers the issues and progress being made by the Welsh Government and Welsh Local Authorities in the identification, recording and monitoring of INNS.
4. The Welsh Local Government Association recognises this growing issue in Wales and welcomes the inquiry into INNS. The public awareness of the occurrence and spread of certain INNS (Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam) is increasing.

The adequacy of the data and information currently available on the extent and impacts of invasive alien species in Wales

5. With specific reference to Japanese Knotweed; although its spread across Wales is recognised and widely documented by a variety of organisations, the captured data is far from uniform.
6. There are control and treatment responses to sighting but there is a lack of consistency and no comprehensive all-Wales approach to the monitoring and recording.
7. Legislation [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 S14(2)(a)] does identify that it is an offence to plant or otherwise cause Japanese Knotweed to grow in the wild ; allowing it to spread onto neighbouring land is a public nuisance but not a statutory nuisance. There is no statutory requirement to control/eradicate or report its presence; as a result the recording of Japanese Knotweed is piecemeal, relying upon individuals and

organisations to advise Local Authorities of sightings on a voluntary basis and there is no central repository for the data to be reported and analysed.

8. Some Local Authorities hold a fine detail gis/gps survey which highlights the extent of the most problematic invasive species. Whilst not comprehensive this survey identifies large areas of invasive plant species and allows targeted controls to be implemented.
9. Damage to infrastructure and extent of spread between survey/treatment is highlighted but this commitment to survey requires an on-going staff resource.
10. Four Local Records Centres exist across Wales for the recoding of a range of environmental information. For example, in North Wales the Local Records Centre (COFNOD) provides a potential facility for collecting and storing records of INNS for the region. However:
 - COFNOD does not specifically monitor the spread of INNS
 - Its role is to act as a place to which people can submit and access species data for North Wales
 - Although COFNOD holds over 2200 records of Japanese Knotweed these are not comprehensive and therefore it is difficult to interpolate from the data whether the species is spreading
 - Any gaps in the information could be due to the species not being present OR that it is present but nobody has submitted the data.
11. Similar limitations apply to the other three LRCs. The National Parks do not routinely monitor the spread of Japanese Knotweed within the parks.

Action taken to date by Welsh Government and relevant authorities to tackle this issue

12. The City and County of Swansea have undertaken several detailed surveys of Japanese Knotweed dating back to the 1900s. The treatment contract surveys are very detailed to landscape design accuracy.
13. The City and County of Swansea are currently part of trials to assess the Japanese Knotweed natural control project utilising Psyllid which only feeds on Japanese Knotweed and weakens the plant and its vigour through sucking the sap.

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14. *Ludwigia Peploides* (floating primrose willow) was first identified in Wales in Swansea in 2008. As a result of accessing the (former) Environment Agency's Rapid Response this is now under a control programme. This illustrates what can be achieved with early recording and action being taken quickly.
 15. The City and County of Cardiff do not have a comprehensive programme of monitoring but restrict monitoring of Japanese Knotweed in Cardiff bay and the lower sections of the Taff and Ely river banks. These areas are regularly re-infected from viable materials washed down from out-of-county (it should be noted that a 2cm section of Japanese Knotweed stem can produce new growth and infestation). During 2012 some 2,000 sq metres of Japanese Knotweed was recorded and treated.
 16. Across the Heads of the Valleys a current project tackling invasive weeds has been running since 2008/2009. This project has seen large areas infested with Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam brought under treatment. The treatment is completed in line with current best practice and has produced excellent results.
 17. The Heads of the Valleys project has received recognition and has been suggested as a model for treatment and control which could be extended over a wider geographical area.
 18. In addition to the practical treatments the project provides advice and guidance to homeowners, landowners, developers and community groups who have problems with invasive species. The scale of advice has ranged from community groups with Japanese Knotweed affecting their allotments to large-scale development/redevelopment schemes where invasive plants had the potential to increase costs substantially.
 19. The Heads of the Valley project has established good links with local communities utilising local knowledge to undertake survey and treatment. Volunteers have been trained in a range of skills from plant identification to herbicide application.
 20. Welsh Government funding for this project ceased in March 2013. Alternative funding through introducing a changing policy is being explored.
 21. The Local Authorities in Wales have membership of the Wales Biodiversity Partnership INNS Group which meets regularly and identifies INNS which are present in Wales or

present a threat – some 111 species within the following areas: marine plants, marine animals, freshwater plants, freshwater animals, terrestrial plants and terrestrial animals have been identified.

How action to tackle invasive species could be improved

22. Current legislation fails to address the need to report, control and eradicate the threat of INNS. Stronger legislation and enforcement needs to be developed, although it is acknowledged that funding would be needed for the implementation of this legislation. It is recognised that the current systems for recording and monitoring of INNS are inadequate. There needs to be an all-Wales recording and monitoring scheme to provide a repository of relevant and up-to-date information on the occurrence and spread of INNS.
23. Greater emphasis should be given to bio-security, particularly around ports, harbours and marinas. Stricter protocols are needed in terms of scraping of hulls to remove fouling pests, and the disposal of this waste.
24. On a UK wide basis stricter border/port/airport inspections are needed to identify species coming in.
25. There needs to be a long term strategic treatment programme, allowing large areas to be addressed in a coordinated approach with ongoing monitoring to prevent re-infestation. This coordinated approach would help to address the recurring problem identified in Cardiff Bay.
26. The early identification of invasive species will allow effective and timely controls to be implemented.
27. Early identification of future threats from invasive species is needed along with sharing of best practice and measures to prevent or address infestation as soon as possible.
28. A strong lead body needs to be identified to facilitate, joint working, education and awareness of the issues of INNS bringing together all interested stakeholders to combine resources and provide coordinated and effective controls.

29. There needs to be control and protection of existing, effective herbicide products, to maintain their efficacy. If Glyphosate were withdrawn from use there is the potential for treatment costs to escalate.

The European Commission's proposals to bring forward a Directive that would require Member States to take coordinated action to address the issue

30. The spread of Invasive Species is not exclusive to Wales. It was recognised as an environmental concern in the recently adopted Communication on 'Our Life insurance, our capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020'. This set a target to address the issue of Invasive Alien Species and proposed the preparation of a dedicated legislative instrument to tackle the problem.

31. WLGA recognises that in order to address the issue of Invasive Species there needs to be a coordinated and concerted approach across Europe. A Directive would ensure that the approach was coordinated. The eradication and removal of INNS cannot be addressed by countries or member states in isolation INNS have total disregard for borders.

32. Recognition needs to be given to the fact that to eradicate INNS may have an initial cost implication which may be significant but without this action what will be the cost of INNS to the environment and economy in the longer term?

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