

# Freshwater non-native species management initiatives

**Non-native species are recognised as a major threat to biodiversity and are a reason for the unfavourable condition of a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Currently, there is no one body responsible for the control or management of non-native species. Most management is carried out piecemeal by numerous organisations, individuals and volunteer groups. One of the problems of this is the risk of re-infestation if management is not addressed in a coordinated manner on a wide scale.**

## What was done

Two pilot non-native species management initiatives were established to demonstrate the benefits of a coordinated approach and to act as best practice guidance for other initiatives. These were in Cumbria and Norfolk and involved stakeholders from a range of statutory and non-statutory organisations, individuals and volunteer bodies. Two workshops were held in each county and champions were identified to continue the work.

## Results and conclusions

The workshops indicated that in both counties there was already considerable non-native species monitoring, recording and control taking place, but that often this was uncoordinated and inadequately resourced. The need to address freshwater non-native species was widely acknowledged and it was agreed that the current effort was not as effective as it should be. Most organisations represented admitted that they lacked the resources to develop appropriate strategies or programmes of work. A major recommendation from both initial workshops was that a collaborative funding proposal be developed to support a coordinator post. Key work would include:

- Collating information on the distribution of problem species and existing control/management effort.
- Developing coordinated work programmes.

- Developing funding proposals for major work elements.

Comparisons were made with structures and processes already in place to help deliver regional and local elements of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Multi-partner funded projects and posts are a strong feature of this work and similar funding models could be easily adapted to cover non-native species work. Central funds to initiate the first workshops and assist in the collation of information would help get other initiatives off the ground.

The pilots started to develop categories of species in order to begin to formulate plans. Species which were not thought to be of concern to the county were grouped into Category 6, those for which insufficient information was available were grouped into Category 5. The remaining categories were:

- Category 1 widespread and well established species needing county wide action.
- Category 2 species have a restricted distribution and require site specific action.
- Category 3 species are not currently present within the county but are elsewhere and require a watching brief.
- Category 4 species are widespread, but their presence is somewhat accepted due to either having little adverse effect or because their removal would be more detrimental than their presence.

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A number of constraints to action were identified. In some cases these relate to a lack of local data or resources but in others the need is for a more strategic approach. Some of the more strategic needs, such as research on the ecology and the development of novel control techniques would be most effectively considered at a national level. A key recommendation is that a national tier of work is developed to produce guidance, provide support and manage research projects.

The pilots have involved a wide range of stakeholders and whilst the process has focused on biodiversity there are a range of drivers for the management of non-native species. In addition to their contribution to the GB non-native species strategy, local initiatives are seen as a valuable component of the Water Framework Directive programme of measures for each river basin district. It may not be appropriate to establish the initiatives at the river basin district level because there is a risk that existing good work focused at the local authority level is not recognised. There is also a risk that other drivers and objectives are lost due to the strict timetables and processes associated with the Water Framework Directive. Nevertheless good links between the initiative members and the River Basin Liason Panel will be critical in ensuring the success of both.

Differences in institutional structures and existing projects indicate that there is not one scale that is appropriate and each region or area will need to consider the geographical scope and organisational mix that best suits them.

### Natural England's viewpoint

Natural England recognises the threat posed by non-native species. Freshwater and riparian habitats appear to be particularly susceptible to invasive non-native species and the challenges to managing such problems are considerable. Prevention, control and management needs to be integrated across a number of sectors (fisheries, flood risk management, navigation, conservation) and take account of the wider catchment.

The two pilots have demonstrated that there is considerable potential for area-based prevention, control and management and it is envisaged that such local initiatives could play an important role in delivering non-native species management for the EU Water Framework Directive and contribute to the implementation of the GB Non-native Species Strategy.

### Selected references

Defra. 2007. *Consultation on the review of Schedule 9 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the ban on sale of certain non-native species*. URL: [www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/wca-schedule9/index.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/wca-schedule9/index.htm)

UK Technical Advisory Group on the Water Framework Directive: *Guidance on the assessment of alien species*. URL: [www.wfduk.org/tag\\_guidance/Article\\_05/Folder.2004-02-16.5332/TAG%202004%20%28PR1-16-03-04%29](http://www.wfduk.org/tag_guidance/Article_05/Folder.2004-02-16.5332/TAG%202004%20%28PR1-16-03-04%29)

### Further information

For the full details of the research covered by this information note see Natural England Research Report NERR023 - *Freshwater Non-native Species Management Initiatives: Pilot Project*.

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