

**UK PROGRAMME BOARD FOR NON-NATIVE SPECIES
FOURTH MEETING**

**VIRTUAL
04 OCTOBER 2022, 10:00 – 12:00**

APPROVED MINUTES

1. Attendance / apologies

Present:

- Bill MacDonald (Welsh Government) – Chair
- Niall Moore (NNSS) - Secretary
- Olaf Booy (NNSS)
- Mark Diamond (Environment Agency)
- Finn Eaton (Defra)
- Leasa Fielding (Welsh Government)
- Richard Gray (DAERA – NI)
- Rebecca Isted (FC)
- Theresa Kudelska (NRW)
- Jo Long (SEPA)
- Lisa McCann (Scottish Government)
- Gavin Measures (NE)
- Mark Preston (DAERA – NI)
- Dave Rowlands (MMO)
- Michael Sigsworth (Defra)
- Kath Webster (APHA)
- Stan Whitaker (NatureScot)
- Sarah Wood (NRW)
- Nicola Spence (Defra, Plant Health)
- Iain Henderson (APHA) – Items 1-4 only

Apologies:

- Matthew Bird (Scottish Government)
- Christine Maggs (JNCC)
- Colin Edwards (Scottish Forestry)
- Vanessa Fairbank (Defra – Marine)
- Chris Graham (MMO) – replaced by Dave Rowlands
- Nicholas Greenwood (MMO)
- Richard Pullen (Defra) – replaced by Michael Sigsworth
- Des Thompson (NatureScot) – replaced by Stan Whitaker

2. Minutes of meeting on 13 April 2021

Paper circulated (PB Oct 22-02)

The minutes were signed off with no modifications.

Sarah flagged the issue with NRW failing to meet with the inspectorate and agreed that it would be expedited by NRW.

3. Actions / matters arising

Paper circulated (PB Oct 22-03)

All actions were discharged.

On action 7 Rebecca updated on Forestry Commission plans for new / novel species to be risk assessed, which is specific to England only.

4. Inspectorate update

Paper circulated (PB Oct 22-04)

Niall introduced this paper and handed over to Iain to provide a summary of progress.

The Board welcomed the progress made, noted the benefit of having the inspectorate and that it is still very early in its development. It acknowledged that the inspectorate would need to trial various approaches as it develops, ranging from inspection to communication and awareness raising.

The Board commented that it will be important to continue to reinforce the case for the inspectorate. As such, they flagged the importance of more clearly understanding the inspectorate's strategic role, priorities, and metrics for measuring impact. They also highlighted the importance of meeting with other agencies to work on how best the inspectorate can work with these.

Niall highlighted that the current report is interim and that a more substantial report on the inspectorate's work will be provided in April. He commented that the inspectorate is currently in the process of meeting with agencies individually. He welcomed the suggestion by Leasa of a workshop with all agencies, which will be scheduled for after the individual agency meetings. He highlighted that the inspectorate is focussed on the priorities agreed at the last Board meeting, including on inspections at the border which the Board agreed was a gap that was a priority to address.

The Board made some specific comments:

- There are gaps in the inspectorate's powers, for which it is gathering evidence. The legislative opportunity to fill this gap has slipped in England; however, there may be an opportunity in Scotland.
- Inspecting anglers at the border will not be easy because they will not be obvious. Iain and Niall acknowledged this but noted that initial work has found it is possible to identify some anglers.
- Plant Health has a standard on inspecting sea containers that may be useful for the inspectorate.
- In relation to online searches, the inspectorate continues to explore webscraping software to support this, but there remain significant issues.
- Theresa asked whether the inspectorate received many reports to its inbox from Welsh stakeholders. Iain responded that the inbox has been quite busy, but mainly in relation to England – many emails are referred from NE's public facing inbox.
- NRW have bilingual *Check Clean Dry* leaflets and signage that the inspectorate may wish to use.

ACTION 1 – Inspectorate to continue to meet with government agencies individually after which it will arrange a workshop with multiple agencies to discuss its work – before the next Board meeting.

ACTION 2 – Inspectorate to prepare a more substantial report for the Board's next meeting in April 2023, including more detail around purpose, strategic direction, priorities and impact.

5. GB INNS Strategy

Finn led on this item, noting the strategy was sent to the Board between meetings for comment and approval. Some returns have been received and it is assumed that nil response from others means that the Board is content. The Strategy is therefore considered signed off by the Board, subject to minor modifications required to response to comments received. These are being made, at which point the strategy will go to Ministers at the end of October with an intent to publish by the end of November.

On specific issues:

- Finn suggested a change to Key Action 9.4, which was agreed by the Board.
- The use of the word 'we' in the strategy had been flagged as requiring elucidation, but this will be done as part of the implementation plan. The Board agreed that no changes should be made in relation to the strategy text.
- Text boxes had been removed from the version of the strategy sent to the Board but will be re-inserted to the final version.

Work on the implementation plan for the strategy will commence in the new year after the strategy is published.

The Board asked for the NNSS to circulate a brief document setting out the timelines for the GB Strategy publication, implementation plan development and any related items indicating when and how the Board will be required to input.

ACTION 3 – Defra and NNSS to develop and circulate a brief document setting out the dates for the GB Strategy publication and implementation plan development by end October 2022.

6. Pathway Action Plans

Horticulture PAP

Paper circulated (PB Oct 22-06A)

Niall updated the Board with progress on the horticulture pathway action plan (PAP), which has been finalised and approved by the working group for the Board's consideration.

The Board approved the plan. A minor change is required to make it clear where people would report the sale of banned species – which will probably be to the inspectorate inbox.

Public consultation

Paper circulated (PB Oct 22-06B)

Finn introduced this item, noting the legal obligation to consult on all four PAPs that have been drafted so far (angling, boating, zoos and horticulture). Some of the legislative wording in the PAPs is being updated before going out. The aim is to commence the consultation at the end of November, with the consultation being communicated to key stakeholders as appropriate.

7. Rapid Responses

Revival of GB Group

Niall introduced this item, noting that revising the rapid response group is one of the actions in the new GB strategy. The Board agreed that the NNSS should carry out this action. Nicola noted the similarity with the GB Plant Health Outbreak Response Board (PHORB), which Niall or Olaf will aim to sit in on.

Stan asked whether this group would consider eradications on islands. Niall replied that this is something to pick up with the group when it convenes.

Updates from Agencies

Written updates are at Annex 1.

The chair asked for any highlights:

- Jo flagged that she would be keen to hear from anyone else working on pink salmon.
- Theresa noted that the topmouth gudgeon work that is making progress in Wales.
- Stan noted that the purple pitcher plant on Rannoch Moore has been treated and experts to confirm eradication by the next meeting.

ACTION 4 – NNSS to proceed with the establishment of the revived rapid response working group before the next Programme Board meeting.

ACTION 5 – Nicola to invite Olaf and/or Niall to a meeting of the GB Plant Health Outbreak Response Board – as observers.

8. Secretariat Report

Paper circulated PB Oct 22-08

Niall led on this paper – highlighting key points.

Theresa noted the success of the stakeholder forum including the breakout sessions which provided useful suggestions for us to consider and develop upon.

9. AOB

Bill raised the issue of the UK Government's Retained EU (Revocation and Reform) Bill – which proposes to add a sunset clause to all regulations meaning that they will cease to have affect at a specified time in the future unless otherwise stated. This is relevant to numerous pieces of environmental legislation, including the retained IAS Regulation. The bill is receiving its second reading shortly with Royal Ascent likely mid next year. The Board noted that no conclusion about this could be drawn at the meeting but that it is something that needs to be monitored over the coming months.

10. Date of next meeting

The NNSS will look for dates in April, noting that Easter holidays will impact timing.

ACTION 6 – NNSS to trawl for dates of the next Board meeting at the end of April 2023, avoiding the Easter holidays which are different across GB.

ANNEX 1 – RAPID RESPONSE UPDATES FROM AGENCIES

SEPA

Pacific (Pink) Salmon: a small number of credible sightings were made over the summer, however none were verified. Electrofishing by some Fishery Trusts, and eDNA monitoring by Marine Scotland all produced negative results. The consensus is that very low numbers, below detection limits, are likely to have arrived, as anticipated for an 'even' year. A partnership group is continuing to meet and plan enhanced monitoring for next year, when the larger numbers of an 'odd' year are anticipated.

Crangonyx floridanus: Following a record in the River Spean catchment in 2021, biosecurity signs have been deployed on NatureScot sites and in key areas of the Corrou Estate (where the record was made). A local watersports company is putting biosecurity in place and incorporating it into training. Corrou Estate has increased monitoring this year, and SEPA ecologists have been surveying further downstream as well as looking at existing preserved samples from the catchment. To date no further *C. floridanus* have been recorded.

NatureScot

Purple pitcher plant – treated with glyphosate in September 2019. Final surveillance check is due but has not been carried out due to pressure of work.

Floating Pennywort – a small amount of re-growth was removed from the site in Moray in June 2022. The site will continue to be monitored.

Mammals on islands – a single dead hedgehog was found dead on the road on Barra (Western Isles) in May and the Orkney ferry grounded on the island of Swona in June. Surveillance on both sites proved negative.

NRW

Topmouth Gudgeon. Funding secured from Welsh Government to eradicate TMG at two ponds, Sandy Water Park near Llanelli and a second at the top of the Lleidi catchment (Tegwyns pond). Work has started on an operational plan for the two sites. The eradication work is currently scheduled for January 2023, the EA will be applying the Rotenone (EA site visit 30/6/22) and the other supporting work is being undertaken in-house by NRW staff or through external contractors. Bathymetric surveys of the ponds are being undertaken in the next month to establish the volume of Rotenone needed. Work is progressing on completing relevant assessments necessary to be able to undertake the eradication (e.g. Habitat Regulation Assessment and Flood Risk Activity Permit). There is ongoing liaison with the landowners and relevant stakeholders in relation to the work, further engagement with the public is planned October/November. EA will be providing NRW with a

comms pack which will need to be updated for the sites in Wales, currently media lines are being drafted.

Raccoon dog. Several unsubstantiated reports of Raccoon dogs (Abergavenny, Coity Woods 13/5/22, Llandovery area 18/7/22, 11/8/22). Shared lessons learnt for the contingency plan Raccoon dog in Colbren (south Powys) in June 2022.

Muskrat. NRW were forwarded a photo which came though the Snowdonia National Park Ecologist who posted it on the mammal society website (where it was thought it could be a muskrat (24/8/22)). Following further investigation, the record has not been substantiated.

APHA

Monk parakeets. During the 2022 breeding season, egg removal was carried out at the one known breeding colony on the Isle of Dogs. There was a total of two nests (one each in two different trees), holding four active nest chambers (one in one nest and three in the second nest), and a maximum count of 9 parakeets seen at any one time. A total of 16 eggs were removed. This compares to 24 eggs from 3 chambers, and a maximum of 11 parakeets seen in 2021. In June 2022 there was an anecdotal sighting, reported to GBNNSS, of 6-8 monk parakeets in Bexley, Kent. Further communication indicated likely misidentification. This will be further followed up later in the year.

Ruddy duck. There has been no control since a single female was shot last January in Leics. Equally, apart from the occasional single male and what we believe are erroneous reports, there have been no sightings. There is no evidence, so far, of breeding in 2022. Jeff Sandon and Iain Henderson attended a Ruddy Duck control workshop in the Netherlands at the end of June, a meeting of experts of the Bern Convention in July 2022. Our estimate of the UK population is around 15 adults, and we believe they have been functionally eradicated in NI, Wales and Scotland. There are two or three remnant populations in England where breeding may still occur intermittently.

Environment Agency

TMG has been eradicated at 29 sites in England; 8 further sites are confirmed to have populations of TMG. (Prolonged dry weather - 1 site of the 8 is being investigated to reconfirm its population due to the site drying out.) 2 sites are planned to be treated during the 2022/2023 season (a single lake at a public water in Hampshire and a small pond in a field on public land in Kent).

Current situation –

- Working with NRW to begin eradication of known TMG populations in Wales.
- Development of working group for Prussian/Gibel carp.
- Progressing eDNA bio-assay for TMG for internal use.
- Continuation of *Ludwigia* programme (quantitative update in April).

Current Challenges –

- Current funding situation limits the size of the eradication operations.
- Difficulty in recruiting to and maintaining the Virtual Team critical mass of EA officers.
- Brexit impacts on acquisition and use of Rotenone.

Natural England

Chinese mystery snail

Four coffer dams have now been placed in the main colonised ditch and side ditches on Pevensey Levels to prevent further spread. A recent manual survey was undertaken in April and this confirmed that the snail had not spread further beyond the coffer dams recently erected. Further work is needed on the feasibility of ditch clearance and is delayed until further resources become available. Ongoing her work is planned with ADAS to further validate the eDNA assay developed to help with monitoring of the snail and to determine the success of any mitigation/eradication measures.

A second suspected population (in addition to the one at Pevensey levels) was detected in an artificial boating lake in Southampton in January 2022. A survey was completed by Natural England in August and this confirmed that the snail is found in two lakes (boating lake /ornamental lake) on Southampton Common SSSI.

Anatolian water frog

Over a three-day period in early August, Natural England drained five ponds at North Elham in Kent. In total over 600 frogs and tadpoles were removed and humanely dispatched. Further work will also be required in the autumn/spring to drain neighbouring ponds and remove any frogs found. Natural England is also working with Kent Police to investigate one property owner who allegedly brought back the frogs from Greece.