

Scottish Wildlife Trust

Public Petitions Committee

Petition no: PE1586



The Scottish Wildlife Trust welcomes the opportunity to submit a response to the Petitions Committee regarding Petition no. PE1586:

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to amend the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 to include statutory powers enforced by penalties to force land owners/tenants to destroy invasive non-native species that grow on their lands.

The Scottish Wildlife Trust's central aim is to advance the conservation of Scotland's biodiversity for the benefit of present and future generations. With over 37,000 members, several hundred of whom are actively involved in conservation activities locally, we are proud to say we are now the largest voluntary body working for all the wildlife of Scotland. The Trust owns or manages over 120 wildlife reserves across Scotland and campaigns at local and national levels to ensure wildlife is protected and enhanced for future generations to enjoy.

The Scottish Wildlife Trust's brief response is based on our Invasive Non- Native Species (INNS) policy available [here](#), the Trust's Nature In Brief on INNS¹ and our experience of controlling INNS on Trust Wildlife Reserves.

INNS pose a high and significant risk to biodiversity - so much so that the Convention on Biological Diversity has recognised INNS as the third greatest threat to biodiversity

The Trust believes that:

INNS species are a significant and increasing threat to biodiversity in both Scotland and the UK. INNS affect our native biodiversity and natural capital asset through competition, predation, herbivory, genetic pollution, the introduction of novel pathogens or parasites and the physical alteration or destruction of habitats. Their impacts also include economic cost and harm to human health. The Trust believes that INNS should be individually assessed by an agreed lead Statutory Authority as part of an INNS Strategy for Scotland. Those species deemed to be of 'significant threat' should be controlled or eradicated, with eradication the preferred long term aim.

The Trust endeavours to eradicate 'significant threat' species such as giant hogweed, Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed on its own wildlife reserves and works, where capacity allows, with a range of stakeholders at a catchment or landscape scale. The Trust is a lead partner in removing grey squirrel through the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrel project and is involved in American mink control.

¹ See:

http://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/docs/002_293_invasivenon_nativespecies_scottishwildlifetrust_natureinbrief_april_2013_1368010815.pdf

Below is a snap shot of the Trust's INNS control work on some of the Trust's Wildlife Reserves.

- Ayr Gorge Woodlands: giant hogweed (GH) and Japanese knotweed (JK); catchment landowners co-operated briefly on GH thanks to Ayrshire Rivers Trust; but there is no current action upstream;
- Garnock Floods/Shewalton Sandpits; controlling GH and Himalayan balsam (HB) (also JK for Sandpits);
- Shewalton Wood: HB appeared after a sewerage pipe burst; pipe replaced but it will take Trust a few years to eradicate HB;
- Perceton Wood: controlling JK and HB; just about gone after 20 years; HB is present on council land up for sale nearby and will be spreading there (as it is not being controlled)
- Oldhall Ponds: HB massively reduced and under control thanks to staff and volunteer effort; it is across burn, hampering eradication on Trust reserve;
- Sourlie Wood: JK virtually eradicated (1 or 2 stems annually now);
- Gight wood: controlling GH;
- Red Moss of Netherley: controlling JK;
- Seaton Cliffs: controlling JK;
- Balgavies Loch: controlling JK;
- Montrose Basin controlling GH , HB - trying to tie in with South Esk Partnership;
- The Miley: controlling JK;
- Tummel Shingle Islands: JK, GH, HB - trying to tie in with Tay/Tummel partnership project;
- Cumbernauld Reserves: the Trust contains the spread of JK and HB - subject to grant funding;
- Pease Dean and Thornton Glen: controlling HB – Dalkeith Reserve Project Group were able to go upstream from both reserves identifying source of HB and controlling it (by repeated pulling to try and prevent flowering/seeding). The Trust undertook this work and spoke to neighbours who allowed the Trust to carry out control work on their land. This has reduced HB in both areas but still work will need to continue for at least the next 2 – 3 years to ensure plants aren't able to flower and set seed, and even then the Trust will have to remain vigilant.

Based on the Trust's experiences and expertise on INNS control, we believe to help achieve the policy intentions of the present legislation the following actions are needed:

- Coordinated catchment scale approach to eradication
- Adequate resources and funding – extending long term
- Implementation of Land Use Strategy and an Ecosystem Scale approach to eradicating INNS
- Landowners being incentivised rather than penalised regarding eradication – unless committing an offence
- Public bodies and other landowners to implement the ambitions of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy regarding combating the threat of INNS including:²
 - preventing their establishment and spread, identify their means and routes for invasion, raise awareness of the need for biosecurity, and implement legislation and international agreements.
 - acting quickly to respond to emerging threats; support early detection through monitoring programmes (including 'citizen science'), assess risks as these arise, and develop appropriate responses.
 - restoring terrestrial ecosystems degraded by invasive species, develop strategies to deal with established species (e.g. rhododendron and riverside invasive plants), in a coordinated and cost-effective way that engages the public, landowners and industry in tackling problems at a catchment-scale.

² See Scottish Biodiversity Strategy: Chapter 4 Wildlife, habitats and protected places

- making concerted efforts to protect Scottish islands and water-dominated environments.
- Full implementation of the INNS Framework Strategy for Great Britain
- Significant improvement of education and awareness of INNS amongst the general public , industry and landowners
- Wider publicity and distribution of the Scottish Government’s Code of Practice on Non-Native Species
- Research into and promotion of best practice for control and eradication of INNS
- Continued funding of Saving Scotland’s Red Squirrels project
- Strict plant import controls to prevent spread of novel pathogens
- Full implementation of the Tree Health and Biosecurity Plan
- Full implementation of the International Maritime Organization Convention on Ballast Water to prevent the introduction of non-native marine species in Scottish waters

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