



Invasive species and deer

Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 Sites Theme Workshop Note

Introduction

Invasive non-native species (INNS) are one of the top ten high impact pressures and threats affecting Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in England (2013 Article 17 data for England), and together with invasive native species have been identified as a priority for the Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 Sites (IPENS) to address.

Whilst much work is being undertaken by volunteers, agencies, non-Governmental organisations (NGOs) and Defra to tackle invasive species, tailoring this to Natura 2000 would complement existing approaches to benefit this suite of sites.

A technical workshop was held on 21 August 2013, attended by 15 experts from Natural England and a range of NGOs. It was decided to include deer within the scope of the workshop, as whilst not all are non-native, there are similarities in the approaches required to manage them.

Views were sought about what we want to achieve for Natura 2000 sites in relation to invasive species and deer, including priorities for action, how to resolve blockages to progress and innovative approaches. Although IPENS will not be able to address all the issues raised, the wealth of information gathered by the workshop will be used to shape the content of the IPENS Theme Plan.

The Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 Sites (IPENS) has hosted a series of workshops with key stakeholders in order to gather views and ideas on how to resolve some of the issues affecting Natura 2000 sites. The views in this note are those of the workshop participants and do not necessarily represent those of Natural England or the Environment Agency.



Key messages from the workshop

- **Better evidence** is required to demonstrate which invasive species are likely to affect Natura 2000 sites and interest features and what the resulting impact will be. Improvements to monitoring, surveillance and horizon scanning are all required.
- **Political will, funding and willingness to take ownership** of management action is needed. This may be achieved by better explaining to the public and policy makers what the impacts of invasive species and deer on Natura 2000 interest features will mean in economic and ecosystem services terms.
- A **suite of management plans** should be developed and implemented, acting at different scales. These should include:
 - strategic and site specific biosecurity plans acting on pathways to prevent invasive species from reaching Natura 2000 sites, and
 - strategic and local control or eradication plans to minimise the impact once an invasive species is present. Good governance of management plans is vital to ensure full implementation.
- A thorough **understanding of responsibilities coupled with good information networks and data sharing** is needed, particularly to ensure that action is taken quickly once a window of opportunity appears, such as to prevent the spread of new species.
- It is important to understand what **scale** control measures need to operate at if they are to be successful. Deer require regional management, whilst freshwater or riparian invasive species need catchment level action and other species may need very local management.
- **Marine Natura 2000** sites face a different set of issues from terrestrial sites, particularly in relation to the vast scale within which management action is needed and the lack of 'managers' akin to those on land.
- It may not be appropriate or possible to manage all invasive species and / or deer in all locations. It is therefore important to understand the **priorities for different geographical areas**, the Natura 2000 network and individual Natura 2000 sites.
- It may be important to prioritise control action for invasive species which impact those Natura 2000 interest features for which England is a **stronghold area** within Europe, or where interest features exist in refugia locations, such as white-clawed crayfish.
- Comprehensive management of invasive species needs action in the **wider environment**, not just on sites in the Natura 2000 network or other protected areas. The tools to enable this are urgently needed, such as powers to access private land for management control purposes.

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- Even where we know what management action is required, a number of factors can cause **blockages to progress**, for example the herbicides of choice for managing certain invasive plants are becoming less easily available due to regulatory restrictions. In other circumstances, we may be able to take necessary action to manage a species within the United Kingdom, but insufficient international collaboration means that our efforts may be in vain.
 - Appropriate **levers and legislation** need to be in place to support the process of managing invasive species. The will and resource to take regulatory or enforcement action are also required.
 - There is a need for **innovative and creative approaches** to manage invasive species, for example by opening up new markets for the by-products of control measures such as venison or incentives to encourage volunteer effort such as recognition awards.
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Envisaged next steps

- The content of the invasive species and deer theme plan will be developed in conjunction with workshop attendees and invitees during 2014.
 - Areas of focus for the theme plan are likely to include recommendations for a framework for managing invasive species across the English Natura 2000 network, and a systematic approach for prioritising actions in order to proactively influence funding opportunities.
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Workshop participants

The following organisations and Natural England staff participated in the workshop:

Senior Adviser, IPENS
Senior Adviser Marine, IPENS
Principal Adviser, Species & INNS
Senior Adviser, Freshwater INNS
Specialist, Marine Operations
Senior Adviser, SSSI Delivery
Senior Adviser, External Funding
Executive Director

Natural England
Natural England
Natural England
Natural England
Natural England
Natural England
Natural England
Natural England
The Deer Initiative
Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture
Science
Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture
Science
Forestry Commission
INNS Secretariat
INNS Secretariat
Norfolk County Council
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
The Rivers Trust

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