Written evidence submitted by Roland Ascroft

1. Species Mapping

Accurate and timely species mapping is a necessary requirement for both native species conservation and invasive species control. The NBN Atlas should be a key national resource for anyone interested in native species and invasive species, but is a charity and appears to be unable to keep up to date with the volume and flow of data. It seems completely absurd that there isn’t statutory provision and national (UK-wide) funding for species mapping. Fixing this problem is (a) urgent, and (b) would have benefits across the board.

2. Coordination

Species do not respect political or provincial boundaries. To be effective, monitoring and control of invasive species requires national, i.e. UK-wide coordination, and yet the statutory organisations ostensibly responsible or involved are multifarious, e.g. Natural England, S.N.H., Natural Resources Wales, C.E.H., J.N.C.C., A.P.H.A., etc, etc, and all have severely limited budgets. Further fragmentation has taken place with the division of the former Forestry Commission. Budget cuts and lay-offs have led to a great loss of expertise. Whether the UK remains part of the EU or not, information exchange and coordination across Europe is highly desirable and probably essential for control of some invasive species. Clearly this is a long-term problem and requires both a long-term view and a permanent change of direction.

3. Research

In the case of the Grey Squirrel (Sciurus carolinensis L.), research on control by contraception seems to be down to charitable funding. For such an economically important pest and one that threatens to cause extinction of a native species, one would expect there to be national funding where the UK has both a national interest and an international obligation, i.e. to protect its biodiversity.

4. Support for NGOs, Regional and Local Activities

Because NGOs and local organisations use a large proportion of volunteer labour, they can deliver disproportionately enormous results per unit funding, however, they do need a core staff and continuity. Intermittent funding threatens to disrupt activities, for example in SSRS (Saving Scotland’s Red Squirrels and RSNE (Red Squirrels Northern England). This is not special pleading but is intended to illustrate a general problem. Funding sources such as HLF are great for getting projects started, but hopeless for long-term continuity.

5. Biosecurity at Ports
In my limited experience of travel, biosecurity at UK ports and airports is extremely weak as compared with, for example New Zealand or Australia. I believe this will inevitably result in further species invasions.

6. Public Awareness and Education

While I see much evidence of greater environmental awareness and concern among people in the UK, there would seem to be enormous scope for more education about specific problems caused by invasive species and things people can do to help. Here are three out of many possible examples.

(1) It is common for gardeners to throw garden waste over the back fence into local woodland or other land, but this practice commonly leads to garden escapes, e.g. the Spanish Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*).

(2) Targeted information via outdoor web sites, retailers, notice-boards and other relevant channels to get walkers & climbers to clean their boots after visiting key areas may help to control the spread of certain pests such as Piri-piri (*Acaena novae-zelandiae*) and *Phytophthora ramorum*. Kauri die-back is well-known in New Zealand for example, and it is common to find boot-cleaning stations on forest trails in the relevant part of North Island. These cleaning stations seem to be frequently used.

(3) The destruction of Wallace’s Realms, i.e. the distinct biogeographic kingdoms upon the earth by humans translocating species should be a matter of global concern and a standard curriculum component.

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