Written evidence submitted by the Property Care Association (PCA) Invasive Weed Control Group (IWCG)

Executive Summary

- The PCA represents nearly 100 professional companies specialising in invasive non-native species (INNS), particularly invasive weed management (with trained and qualified surveyors).
- The Management of terrestrial and aquatic invasive weed species is a major contributor to the estimated £2 billion cost to the economy of invasives overall.
- The PCA/IWCG has created a framework for training and assessment of invasive weed specialists and publishes free-to-access Technical Guidance all aimed towards raising professional standards in the sector.
- Existing legislation is a key driver for remedial action on large development sites but less so in the case of domestic/urban environments
- The PCA is developing a risk assessment model to aid local decision-making about INNS infestations and the selection of cost-effective responses (based on fiscal and environmental criteria)

1. Introduction

1.1 The Property Care Association (PCA) was established in 1931 (originally as The British Wood Preserving Association). It now represents over 450 highly specialised companies that provide services to the built environment. An important part of the Association is the nearly 100 companies that specialise in the management and control of invasive non-native plants, our Invasive Weed Control Group (IWCG). Control of Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*) is the service most often provided but other species such as Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam are commonly encountered too.

1.2 The PCA acts as a centre of knowledge for this important sector of industry: plant INNS are a major driver of biodiversity loss. Japanese knotweed alone costs Great Britain an estimated £165m every year (Williams et al., 2010). The PCA develops and publishes guidance and best practice for the benefit of members and the wider community. We have the capacity to act as a single point of contact for industry and work with others to affect change where this is considered beneficial.

1.3 The PCA has developed a professional framework for the control and management of invasive non-native plants not seen elsewhere in Europe or indeed the world. The PCA’s activities have generated interest from, and contact with, countries which are also challenged by the spread of invasive non-native plants.

* formerly *Fallopia japonica*

2. Response to Terms of Reference

- 2.1) How well is the UK and its overseas territories managing the impact of invasive species and controlling the risks of further invasion? We cannot comment about the risks of further (future)
invasion but the management of Invasive non-native plants is a mature industry with a distinct network of professional/specialist weed control consultants/contractors (many of which are PCA members, see below). However, success is difficult to quantify. Two factors seem most relevant.

- Many plant species listed in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA81) Schedule 14 are readily available in garden centres and almost always bought/planted without any advice given to consumers regarding appropriate management to prevent spread/escape to the wild. The PCA attended the Chelsea flower show in 2018 to highlight the key concerns (for which we won a silver gilt medal) and spoke to hundreds of well-informed if not ‘expert’ gardeners and found the level of awareness regarding the control of invasive alien (plant) species was poor. A campaign of Education was needed and we followed up the show by writing an informative article (“Dealing with Invasive non-native plants”) for the Horticultural Trade Association’s magazine ‘The Horticulturist’ (Autumn 2018 edition). This year a team from Reading University presented at Chelsea (their stand was called “Garden Escapers”) and introduced many common ornamental plants that have the ability to become tomorrow’s invasive species emphasising the fact that the invasives problem is dynamic and evolving.

- Management of existing plant INNS can be very effective indeed but is dependent on financial resources or high levels of community engagement (e.g. via Wildlife Trusts etc.). In the former case it is not usually difficult to make a case for the remediation of a site colonised by Japanese Knotweed due to its impact on property values and/or planning restrictions etc. (a matter discussed by the Scientific Select Committee in January). However, most landowners small or large struggle to justify spending large sums of money to control e.g. Himalayan Balsam even though it could be said to be a greater ecological threat due to its ability to spread by seed dispersal. In these situations, enforcement of the WCA81 (which requires land owners to ‘prevent spread to the wild’) seems poor probably due to a lack of resources at English Nature etc.

2.2) Of those that are already in the UK, which invasive species are posing the greatest harm to:

a. human health; Giant Hogweed (harmful by skin contact due to photo-sensitisation effects; can lead to serious burns and recurring ill health several years after exposure). Two plants listed under the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulations 2014 (IASR14) likely to spread to the UK partly due to global warming, Parthenium Weed and Tree Groundsel, are both known to be toxic to humans.

b. animal health; see a) above – livestock, dogs and cats could be affected too but we don’t know of any cases.

c. plant health and biodiversity. All INNS plants are capable ‘by definition’ of causing displacement of native plant communities. The extent to which an individual species can have an impact will depend on how well it is adapted to the habitat conditions (soil type, climate, the health/vigour of the existing plant community). Perhaps the most widespread examples are Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed which are both highly competitive in riparian (riverside) habitats. However, other noteworthy examples of largescale displacement impacts are caused by species like Rhododendron, Giant Rhubarb (Gunnera) and Floating Pennywort and Water fern/Azolla (both aquatics). Another aquatic of concern to the Environment Agency is Water Primrose (subject of an NNSS Species Alert here) as this is highly likely to become established and spread quickly due to global warming.
2.3) What are the risks of invasive non-native species migrating to the UK from future climate change? No Comment

2.4) What actions should the UK take to mitigate the risk, or adapt to, climate migrations of invasive species? Mitigation to prevent the further spread of INNS should be based on channelling resources towards improving and enforcing current legislation plus an education programme to address ignorance of the issue amongst all relevant stakeholders and the General Public.

2.5) Where should the four nations prioritise resources to tackle invasive species? No comment

2.6) How can the risk of trade and future trading relationships bringing non-native invasive species to the UK be mitigated? No Comment

2.7) How effective have the European Union’s Invasive Alien Species Regulations been at addressing and tackling invasive species? One significant aspect of the AIS regulations is that it places strict controls on the sale of certain priority species but these don’t appear to work very well as the internet is a difficult market to police/monitor/control.

2.8) In the event of EU exit, how should the UK establish its replacement for the European Commission’s scientific forum to update the species list of concern? We already have a committee (NNSS; Non-Native Species Secretariat, EA) which fulfils this role under existing UK legislation and it can easily assimilate the IAS list (Species of Concern) which overlaps in many regards with WCA81 Schedule 14.

2.9) How should the UK work with the European Commission and others internationally to reduce the risk of invasive species? Provide funding for basic and applied research into INNS control. Support ‘intelligence’ sharing e.g. projects to create/maintain databases for species distribution; provide direct funding for conferences to assist the dissemination of best practice management techniques (cf. PCA Codes of Practice). Help UK universities to establish a professional qualification in INNS management. Note: in the commercial sector the PCA has implemented a training/qualification programme for consultants and contractors specialising in the management of invasive plants, especially Japanese Knotweed (Table 1) resulting in over 220 professionally qualified surveyors and approx. 160 Technicians to date.
Table 1. A summary of training currently available which includes relevant sections on Japanese knotweed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Training provider</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Further details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificated Surveyor for Japanese Knotweed</td>
<td>Property Care Association (PCA)</td>
<td>2-3 times per year</td>
<td>Two days’ training. Linked to PCA Examination for CSJK</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qualified Technician (PCAQT) – Japanese knotweed</td>
<td>Property Care Association</td>
<td>2-3 times per year</td>
<td>One day’s training with end of course examination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japanese Knotweed - Site Containment and Cell Burial Strategies</td>
<td>Property Care Association</td>
<td>2 times per year</td>
<td>One day workshop (first run Q4 2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of Invasive Plants</td>
<td>Property Care Association</td>
<td>2 times per year</td>
<td>Due to run in 2019 for first time</td>
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