

Riparian Invasive Non-Native Species Wild Challenge Action Plan



© River Forth Fisheries Trust - Himalayan balsam bashing adjacent to River Teith at Callander

Wild Challenge Long Term Vision 2040

No fresh water body within National Park will be at risk from riparian invasive non-native plant species (INNS).

Land owners, fishery trusts, government agencies and volunteers are working together to reduce the extent and damaging impact of these species and wherever possible, these species will have been removed completely.

This collaborative effort includes:

- Rapid response measures are in place for removal and control to any new outbreaks of riparian INNS.
- Trained volunteers and landowners involved in projects to control riparian INNS.
- Actively controlling the spread of invasive non-native plants on our riverbanks and loch sides throughout the entire National Park.
- Raising awareness of how to avoid spreading known riparian INNS.

Introduction

People are naturally attracted to rivers and lochs – both visually and physically. If they can do this they can have a greater appreciation of aquatic and riparian wildlife, as well as enjoying the amenity. The presence of Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) within the riparian zone inhibits access and cuts off the water environment from other networks due to the structural nature of many INNS and the possibility of disturbance and spread.

The removal of INNS will allow other less structural and lower level native plants to recolonise including grasses, ferns and other low level habitat, providing visual reconnection. This recolonisation with native species will result in an increase in native biodiversity and has the potential to encourage the expansion of vulnerable native species. A higher level of biodiversity will provide better habitat for insects, birds and mammals and support these populations.

`Wild Challenge - Riparian INNS` is one of the main challenges set out in `Wild Park 2020` biodiversity action plan. This plan will deliver a number of Scottish Biodiversity Route Map aims and objectives; INNS control is a priority within all three main aims and the strategy will provide positive outcomes in relation to Ecosystems Restoration (Priority Project 3), Quality greenspace for health and education benefits (Priority Project 6 and 7), and Conserving wildlife in Scotland (priority project 6).

This Wild Challenge aims to prevent, monitor and control the introduction, spread and extent of riparian INNS that affect the riparian zones of the rivers and lochs in a sustainable manner on a catchment-wide scale. The programme is a partnership between Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority and a large number of organisations and bodies. These include, but are not limited to, SEPA, SNH, FCS, River Forth Fisheries Trust, Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust, Argyll Fisheries Trust, Tay Foundation, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Countryside Trust and supported by a network of committed volunteers, community groups and landowners.

The Programme will concentrate primarily on the control of invasive non-native plants (giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and American skunk cabbage) together with American Mink control. Coordination will be included where overlap with the Rhododendron Wild Challenge occurs in the riparian zones.

The control of INNS out with riparian zones, other than on land owned by the National Park Authority, is not included in this Action plan.

It is recognised that complete eradication of INNS may not be attainable due to the high risk of re-infestations and the lack of evidence on seed/tuber longevity and possible hibernation periods. The strategy is to manage INNS so that they do not negatively affect the riparian corridor of the Park's water courses.

Wild Challenge delivery

Objective by 2020

To prevent, monitor and control the introduction, spread and extent of riparian INNS that affect the riparian zones of the rivers and lochs in a sustainable manner on a catchment-wide scale.

Actions	Target date	Measures of Success
The collation of existing data of known riparian INNS locations and the evaluation of existing management, including designated sites into a GIS accessible format.	2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data compiled into separate action plans based on catchments/areas, including mapping. • Plan for collection of missing data agreed with partners.
Control programmes are underway on all known INNS on land owned by the National Park Authority.	2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement of project plan and ownership of each part of delivery agreed.
Development of an agreed monitoring and recording process which will also report on indicators of success.	2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recording and monitoring process in place and in use by all partners. • Indicators of success agreed.
Develop a biosecurity strategy and plan aimed at raising awareness of riparian INNS amongst residents, land managers and visitors to the National Park.	2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy and plan agreed. • Ownership for delivery agreed with partners.
All locations of riparian INNS within the National Park have been mapped.	2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map produced.
Control programmes are underway at a catchment level to remove known riparian INNS from the Upper Tay, Upper Forth, Teith, Loch Lomond, Loch Eck and Loch Goil catchments, and ensure management of contamination downstream.	2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate project plans linked to overarching strategy plan/map available and ownership of reach plans delivery agreed
Control programmes are underway on designated sites which are in unfavourable condition due to the presence of Riparian INNS.	2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated into separate project plans, agreement on ownership for delivery. • Monitoring regime agreed.

Key challenges for delivery

The delivery of this challenge relies on a wide number of stakeholders and landowners, which together with the long term and routine requirements for treatment will have significant challenges for delivery.

1. Resource limitations including staff capacity and available funding.
2. Recruitment and training of volunteers and associated costs.
3. Coordination of monitoring and recording processes, storage of data and mapping procedure.
4. Establishing an agreed system for reporting on indicators of success.
5. Long term consistent funding.

Part of the remit of the partners and the plan will be to consider and review these issues and work in partnership to resolve, this could involve sharing of resources (staff and equipment) and skills as well as considering joint funding bids.

Opportunities for delivery

There are already some projects which are ongoing and proposed which will deliver outcomes for the Wild Challenge. Some potential opportunities have been highlighted and these need to be monitored and actioned when appropriate.

1. Continue to deliver existing projects and share knowledge and skills between partners:

- Trossachs Water Vole Project.
- Upper Tay INNS Project.
- Forth Fisheries Trust – FINNS Project – Phase 4.

2. Develop and expand projects which have already been highlighted:

- Loch Lomond Catchment Invasive Non Native Plant Species Control Programme – ECAF Application submitted 15.01.2016.
- Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust – Endrick & Blane Riparian INNS Project.
- Headwaters HLF Project.
- Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park - Fresh Water Mammal Sightings Project.

3. Consider future priorities and opportunities and how these can be delivered:

- Development of a riparian INNS control programme for Loch Lomond and its tributaries.
- Development of a riparian INNS control programme for Loch Each and its tributaries.
- Establish the feasibility of developing a riparian INNS control programme for Lochs Each, Goil and Long catchments.
- Establish the need for a mink control programme across Lochs Lomond, Each, Goil, Long and the Tay and Teith catchments.

INNS Wild Challenge Group	Key partners
Chair - Alison Baker, River Forth Fisheries Trust Graeme Auty, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority	River Forth Fisheries Trust (RFFT) Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust (LLFT) Argyll Fisheries Trust (AFT) Loch Lomond & Trossachs Countryside Trust (LLTCT) Tay Foundation (TF) Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS)

Governance

Meetings will be held every six months. Although in the first few years quarterly meetings of some if not all partner may be required. The Action Plan will be refreshed annually and will be updated to take into account progress of control programmes, changes in funding, legislation and any other issues.