

Rhododendron- Invasive Non-Native Species Wild Challenge Action Plan



Wild Challenge Long Term Vision 2040

No semi natural habitat within The Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park will be at risk from invasive Rhododendron.

Introduction

In order to move towards achieving this vision, several pieces of work are being undertaken in 2016/17, starting with the production of a strategic plan for rhododendron control within the National Park. The strategic plan will prioritise coordinated control in specific project areas. It will build on the existing National Forest Estate strategies and other established control programmes to ensure that landscape-scale control is achieved through best use of public and private money. In line with the strategic plan, the National Park Authority and other partner organisations will identify priorities and opportunities for invasive rhododendron control programmes on a landscape scale working across ownership boundaries, through both grant funding and officer time. Resource constraints will be highlighted and a case will be made where Wild Challenge Actions are at risk through lack of funding or staff capacity. There is a need to continue work with Statutory Providers within prioritised areas to further develop agreed management plans to actively managing invasive rhododendron to achieve eradication on the land they control. The work of existing volunteer groups can also be encouraged and built on, e.g. the Plantlife Flora Guardian groups, who complete survey work on the ground and produce data that can be used by land managers to inform future management.

As complete removal of rhododendron from any location requires persistence, longer term work will be required to continue to 2020 and beyond. We will ensure that rhododendron control is being carried out on National Park Authority land and that preventative action is taken through the development planning process to control and manage invasive rhododendron from any development site where it is posing a risk to a semi natural habitat. We will also keep working to ensure that no designated site is in unfavourable declining condition due to the presence of invasive rhododendron, that all long term forest plans detail management of invasive rhododendron in line with the FCS publication 'Managing invasive and non-native forestry species', where required and that Statutory Providers within prioritised areas are implementing the agreed management plans.

We will also have monitoring in place to demonstrate successes and areas where follow up-clearance or habitat restoration work is required. This monitoring can be achieved at most sites through volunteer Flora Guardians.

Finally an effective communications campaign will be needed to raise awareness of the problems posed by invasive rhododendron and the benefits of controlling it, to encourage a change in the expectations and outlook of residents and visitors to the National Park and win support for ongoing control.

Wild Challenge delivery

Objectives	Actions	Target date	Measures of Success
Actions undertaken supporting priority areas for landscape scale control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sign off Strategic Plan by Q1 16/17 - Ensure one priority area to be fully under positive management for invasive rhododendron - Development sites with invasive rhododendron will have conditioned management via the planning process to contribute to this Wild Challenge - Undertake annual review of capacity and resources - Undertake annual sharing good practice 	2017 2018/19 Ongoing Annually Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One priority area fully under positive management for invasive rhododendron - No. of hectares controlled successfully by partners across all/prioritised project areas - No. of hectares controlled across all/prioritised areas with approved grant aided control/ agreed management plans provided by FCS and SNH - No. of development sites with invasive rhododendron with conditioned management to control it
Promote uptake of FGS/AECS grant funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree priority grant areas with SNH, FCS and RPID (if work is out with a designated site) - Support 5 landowners to access FGS/AECS grant funding - Deliver one ECAF project within a priority area - Review uptake of FGS/AECS grant funding annually and consider barriers which may be present and influence nationally for measure to remove these barriers 	2 nd Quarter 2016/17 2020 2018/19 Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. of landowners supported to access FGS/AECS grant funding - Number of ECAF projects delivered within a priority area
All NPA owned and managed land is free from invasive rhododendron	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement a targeted action plan for the NPA estate as part of the wider NPA strategic plan - Undertake internal 	Start of 2017/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NPA estate will be in active management to eradicate by invasive rhododendron by 2018/19

	communications with relevant NPA staff to raise awareness of responsibilities on NPA estate		
Forest Enterprise Scotland is working to remove invasive Rhododendron from the National Forest Estate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to remove Rhododendron, subject to budget constraints, from areas around Loch Katrine, Aberfoyle and Ardentinny, where work has already taken place over number of years - Identify work programmes for the removal of Rhododendron in the Ardgartan area 	Ongoing 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. hectares of Rhododendron removed from areas around Loch Katrine, Aberfoyle and Ardentinny - Production of work programmes for Ardgartan
Achieving favourable condition for designated sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Designated sites in unfavourable declining condition are identified - Management and funding options identified for designated sites and suitable buffer zone falling within priority areas 	End of 2015/16 2016/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All designated sites are in active management to eradicate invasive rhododendron by 2019/20
Statutory undertakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incorporate into their medium term work plans proposals to eradicate invasive rhododendron from their areas of control in line with the priority areas identified in the strategic plan - Are undertaking management in priority areas in line with surrounding control - Work collaboratively and highlight resource challenges at a national level where needed 	End of 2016/17	
Communication Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete annual public awareness raising campaign of the 	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. of social media posts - Leaflets produced

	<p>negative impact of invasive rhododendron and promotion of alternative species for garden landscaping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness raising undertaken for landowners about availability of FGS/AECS grant funding - Annual sharing good practice 	<p>Annually</p> <p>Annually</p>	
Linking to wider challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using wild challenge to increase peoples' engagement with nature through 10 volunteering activities per year - Following rhododendron clearance; landowners will be encourage to bring their semi natural habitats into positive management to benefit woodland habitat network or peatland management as applicable 	<p>Annually</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. of volunteering activities delivered
Biosecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor risks in relation to biosecurity - Annual sharing good practice 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Annually</p>	

Key challenges for delivery

A number of challenges exist which could threaten the success of this Wild Challenge, these include:

1. Landowner willingness to undertake control.
2. Limited funding opportunities for control in domestic properties.
3. Competitive nature of FGS funding.
4. Ensuring NPA priority areas are recognised by assessing authorities for grant funding.
5. Aligning National Targets with NPA priority areas.
6. The need for some specialist rhododendron identification in some areas.
7. Financial resources and staff capacity.

Opportunities for delivery

1. The potential PR which this project will generate will help address some of the key challenges but contingencies should be in place should this project not progress.
2. Investigating alternative funding streams to enable control work to be undertaken on land ineligible for AECS/FGS funding.

Rhododendron – Invasive Non-Native Species Wild Challenge Group	Key partners
<p>Chair - Simon Franks, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority simon.franks@lochlomond-trossachs.org</p> <p>Graeme Auty, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority graeme.auty@lochlomond-trossachs.org</p> <p>Graeme will ensure that this action plan and resulting actions from it are maximised by action undertaken by the wider INNS Wild Challenge Group and vice versa.</p>	<p>Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Countryside Trust</p> <p>Forestry Commission Scotland (Conservancy)</p> <p>Forest Enterprise Scotland</p> <p>SNH</p> <p>Private estates</p> <p>Statutory undertakers</p> <p>Possibly Botanic Gardens, as specialist Rhododendron knowledge may be important</p> <p>RSPB/Plantlife- given the potential LIFE/HLF bid and its contribution to the WC outcomes</p>

Governance

Meetings will be held at least every six month. Although in the first few years three monthly meetings of some if not all partner may be required. The strategic plan will to be reviewed every year. The plan will be updated to take into account, progress of control programmes, changes in funding and any other issues such as plant health.