



## Belfast City Council

**Report to:** Parks and Leisure Committee

**Subject:** Invasive Alien Species Strategy for Northern Ireland:  
Consultation Response

**Date:** 11 August 2011

**Reporting Officer:** Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure

**Contact Officer:** Orla Maguire, Biodiversity Officer

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The Department of the Environment (DoE) published in March 2011 a draft Invasive Alien Species Strategy for Northern Ireland for public consultation. Responses to the consultation must be returned to the DoE by 30 September.
1.2	The consultation document is available at <a href="http://www.doeni.gov.uk/invasive_alien_species_strategy_consultation_document.pdf">www.doeni.gov.uk/invasive_alien_species_strategy_consultation_document.pdf</a> .
1.3	Invasive alien species (IAS) are defined by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) as an alien species whose introduction and/or spread threatens biodiversity.
1.4	Invasive alien species are now recognised as a major threat to biodiversity loss. This threat is likely to increase in future unless action is taken at all levels to control the introduction and establishment of these species and address those already introduced.
1.5	The impacts of IAS are far reaching from disrupting ecosystem services to threatening economic interests such as agriculture, fisheries and development proposals.
1.6	Recent estimates of the cost of IAS in the EU were at least €12 billion per year. The economic costs of IAS to NI is not currently known however a GB report estimated that IAS cost the GB economy £1.7 billion per year.
1.7	The draft Invasive Alien Species Strategy aims to establish a co-ordinated policy and management framework that minimises the risk of invasive alien

	species to the economy, environment and society. Appendix 1 outlines a summary of the objectives of the Strategy.
1.8	Appendix 2 outlines the suggested council draft response to the strategy. As part of the consultation the department has asked a number of questions which have been covered in our proposed draft response.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<p><u>Need for the Strategy</u></p> <p>The need to address the issue of invasive alien species has been recognised by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) 1992 to which the UK Government is a signatory. Northern Ireland is committed to the Convention on Biological Diversity and EU targets to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services by 2020.</p> <p>In Northern Ireland we have set targets to significantly reduce biodiversity loss by 2010 and to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2016.</p>
2.2	<p><u>Summary of Response</u></p> <p>There is a significant policy and legislative gap in terms of IAS and Belfast City Council welcomes this strategy as a key step to address this complex issue. The strategy will aid co-ordination of action across government departments and stakeholders which will be essential to deliver the objectives.</p>
2.3	The current NI legislation framework is inadequate to deal with this complex and wide ranging issue. Primary legislation is required to ensure action can be undertaken on IAS.
2.4	Currently the council receives a significant number of queries from the public on IAS particularly in relation to Japanese knotweed and Giant Hogweed. Education and awareness on IAS and clear guidance on treatment and legislation are essential.
2.5	The emphasis of the strategy is on prevention of introductions since prevention is more cost effective than control and eradication measures. While an emphasis on prevention is welcomed a more proactive response is required to include restoration to habitats and species affected by IAS.
2.6	The strategy needs to be sufficiently resourced. Investment now will buffer against future costs.

<b>3.</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
	None.

<b>4.</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
	There are no equality or good relations considerations attached to this report.

<b>5.</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
4.1	Members are requested to consider the content of the proposed draft response to the draft Invasive Alien Species Strategy, as set out in Appendix 2, and if appropriate endorse this as the formal response for submission to the Department of Environment.

<b>6.</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
Agreed response to be submitted to DOE by September 2011 by the Biodiversity Officer.	

<b>7.</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
DOE: Department of the Environment IAS: Invasive alien species	

<b>8.</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
Appendix 1: Objectives of the Invasive Alien Species Strategy for Northern Ireland Appendix 2: Draft response to the Invasive Alien Species Strategy for Northern Ireland	