

Belfast City Council Response to Management measures for widely spread Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in Northern Ireland

Introduction

Belfast City Council (BCC) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the management measures being considered by DAERA for species of Union concern which are widely spread in Northern Ireland pursuant to Article 19 of Regulation (EU) No. 1143/2014.

Protection of biodiversity is key to Council policies including the Belfast Local Biodiversity Plan and the Local Development Plan. Biodiversity provides numerous ecosystem services such as water purification, carbon storage and flood protection. Many of these services are under threat.

Invasive Alien Species are widely acknowledged as the second biggest threat to biodiversity loss worldwide. This threat is likely to increase in the future unless robust action is taken at all levels to control the introduction and establishment of these species and address those already introduced. The impacts of IAS are far reaching from disrupting ecosystem services to threatening economic interests. Consequently the Council would welcome additional legislation and action on the control of IAS, supported by the appropriate identification of additional resources.

Comments on Consultation Document

Belfast City Council in principle, supports the management measures focussed on reducing the impact that the 10 widely spread species of Union concern have on native biodiversity and ecosystem services as well as their wider socio-economic impacts.

The Council welcomes a strategic approach but considers it is not possible to provide specific comments as the document outlines a range of options/approaches such as control or eradication for the 10 species listed. Naturally management measures will depend on the local circumstances however BCC considers clarification is needed at the local level to identify impacts and costs for each of the listed species.

The council suggests the following should be completed to assist with the implementation of this legislation and to maximise efforts to control IAS across NI.

- Criteria should be developed to determine the approach taken ie control or eradication at a local level. It is not possible to comment on specific species given that criteria has not been provided to assess the level or type of action/approach likely to be taken for each species. In addition is DAERA the Competent Authority which determines the approach?
- The criteria should be unambiguous and evidence based to ensure consistent approaches across NI.
- Monitoring of actions should also be undertaken to ascertain effectiveness and plan for future action.
- Funding should be provided to key stakeholders to enable additional action on the control of IAS.
- The provision of advice and guidance is essential. Currently there is a lack of guidance from the Department on control options. Costed case studies and best practice should be developed to enable effective action. This is particularly relevant for the widespread aquatic species listed.

BCC would welcome further engagement with DAERA to clarify and assess specific implications of this legislation for Belfast.