

Northern Ireland  
Environment Agency

River Basin Management Plans (2015 - 2021)

# Programme of Measures

**Key Sectors:** All Sectors

**Pressure Type:** Invasive Alien Species



An Agency within

**DOE**

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Northern Ireland  
**Environment**  
Agency

*Pressure Type – Invasive Alien Species*

## **Invasive alien species**

Animals and plants that have been introduced to a place where they do not naturally occur are known as alien species. Many of these do not cause problems, but some can become invasive as they upset the balance of the ecosystem as they may be bigger, faster growing or more aggressive than the native species, and some may carry diseases such as Crayfish plague. They may also have fewer natural predators to control numbers. The native species are often unable to compete and the invasive species take over causing serious problems for biodiversity and the economy.

### **Why is this a significant issue?**

As well as the direct impacts described above, invasive alien species can also have indirect impacts in the wider environment. For example, in riparian areas, excessive growth of these species can result in increased shading. Winter die back of these invasive alien species can also result in river bank instability and erosion which can lead to increased sedimentation in rivers and consequent silting up of fish spawning grounds and smothering of freshwater pearl mussels.

Invasive alien species are not specifically mentioned in the Water Framework Directive. However, the Directive requires us to assess 'other significant anthropogenic impacts on the status of surface waters'. Invasive species such as Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam can be found in a number of water bodies across Northern Ireland.

### **What are we already doing about this?**

The Wildlife Order (NI) 1985 now contains new provisions to strengthen the regulatory framework for controlling the introduction of invasive alien species. The DOE now has powers to introduce an order to prohibit the sale of high risk alien species. The Northern Ireland Countryside Management Scheme includes an option to control invasive species. Catchment scale eradication and control projects have taken place since 2007. For example, **Controlling Priority Invasive Non-native Riparian Plants and Restoring Native Biodiversity (CIRB)** is a partnership project lead by Queen's University, Belfast and supported by the DOE, will control and if possible eradicate four invasive alien riverbank plants: Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Rhododendron. These species were controlled in river catchments in Ireland and Scotland. The project ran for 4 years (2011-2014) in order to manage and control effectively the regrowth that occurs from the soil seed bank and rhizomes. Training programmes on identification and recording of alien species have been undertaken by NIEA and have also been funded through the Water Quality Improvement Grant. In partnership with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, NIEA has jointly funded the Invasive Species Ireland Project. A strategy to co-ordinate action on invasive species was published by the DOE in May 2013.

The 'Be Plant Wise' and 'Check, Clean, Dry' awareness campaigns have been launched in partnership with GB to raise awareness of aquatic invasive species.

Queens University Belfast is carrying out a project<sup>1</sup> to trial methods to control four high impact riparian invasive species and prevent reinvasion.

For a full list of measures already in place in the first cycle please see our website.

**What further actions will deliver environmental improvements?**

RBMP 1 (2009-2015)

Table 1 summarises the progress we have made against the existing and planned measures.

RBMP 2 (2015-2021)

The measures which we will take forward in the second cycle are summarised in Table 2.

These are measures which will improve our understanding of the pressures, enable us to improve the evidence base to target actions, and build on actions already complete.

In the current economic climate there is no certainty at this stage around future funding and budgets that will be available throughout the lifetime of this plan. However DOE will in collaboration with other departments and agencies continue to make a strong case for additional funding through the standard government bidding processes.

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<sup>1</sup> £2.6m, funded by INTERREG IVA, DOE and Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in Ireland.

**Key Sector: All Sectors**

**Pressure Type:** Invasive Alien Species

**Table 1 Summary of existing and planned measures 2009-2015**

Improvement Required	Actions	Delivery mechanism	Lead Department / Agency	Support Provider	Deadline for delivery of action (year end)
<b>Prevent establishment of species not native to NI</b>	Amend Wildlife Order to include species which could present a problem	The Wildlife Order (NI) 1985	NIEA	DOE	Complete
	Control release of ballast water	UK Maritime Ballast Water Convention	Maritime and Coastguard Agency /International Maritime Organisation	DOE	2015
<b>Local Action</b>	Develop risk assessments and management plans for species that are established or likely to become established	Invasive Species Ireland Project	NIEA , NPWS	EnviroCentre, Quercus	In Place
<b>Control of alien species</b>	Targeted eradication of alien species at a catchment scale for Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed and <i>Spartina anglica</i>	Catchment Scale Eradication Projects	NIEA	Rivers Agency, DCAL	In Place

**Table 2 Summary of supplementary measures for 2015 to 2021.**

Improvement Required	Actions	Delivery mechanism	Lead Department / Agency	Support Provider	Deadline for delivery of action (year end)
<b>Reduction of the adverse impact of invasive alien species to the Northern Ireland Aquatic Environment</b>	Undertake appropriate actions to implement legislation	EU Regulation 1143/ 2014. Wildlife (NI) Order 1985.	DOE NIEA	DOE RNRPD/ DARD	In Place
<b>Minimise the possible impact of alien species on aquatic habitats</b>	Introduce a permit system governing the introduction of an alien species and translocation of locally absent species within Northern Ireland or to Northern Ireland from Britain to be restricted.	The Alien and Locally Absent Species in Aquaculture Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012	DARD	DOE	In Place
<b>Control of invasive alien species</b>	Consider research, in conjunction with DARD, to improve understanding of the effects of alien species in the aquatic environment	Invasive Species Ireland Project (subject to funding)	NIEA	NPWS-ROI/ DARD	2021
<b>Control of invasive alien species</b>	Continue to implement the actions set out in the Invasive Alien Species Strategy for Northern Ireland	Invasive Alien Species Strategy partners	DOE RNRPD	NIEA/ DARD	2021
	Develop process for assessing significant impact of species as listed in Ecoregion 17 lists for WFD classification	UKTAG Aliens Species Group and Ecoregion 17 Group on Alien Species	NIEA		2021
	Develop new individual Species Action Plans as required	Invasive Alien Species Strategy partners	NIEA	NPWS-ROI/ DARD/ DOE RNRPD	2021

## River Basin Management Plans

Improvement Required	Actions	Delivery mechanism	Lead Department / Agency	Support Provider	Deadline for delivery of action (year end)
<b>Education and awareness</b>	Improve education re fish introductions and need for Section 14 authorisation for stocking and moving fish	Implementation of current controls	DCAL		2015
	Continue partnership approach between professionals and volunteers for invasive alien species monitoring to improve understanding of current distributions and spread	Invasive Species Ireland Project, NGO projects and Challenge Fund	NIEA		2021



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