

The Bristol Invasive Weed Forum Event Report

Thursday 27 September 2007

Bristol
Living
Rivers
Project

Guy Pluckwell
Bristol Living Rivers Project

Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*)



Halt the invasion!

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Background

Bristol Living Rivers Project (BLR) is a partnership led by the Environment Agency and Bristol City Council and supported by many other organisations and businesses.

The project has been set up to attempt to protect and improve Bristol's watercourses. During the projects work, one area that appears to be of increasing problem is that of Non-Native Invasive Weeds (NNIW) in and around the city's watercourses. Many organisations appear to be affected by NNIW and many are trying to control these weeds with very limited available advice within the city.

Non-native invasive weeds should not be under estimated, they are extremely difficult and costly to treat / control / eradicate and the longer they are ignored the more costly it gets. For example it has been suggested in the press that the cost of eradicating Japanese Knotweed from a 10 acre area of the 2012 Olympic Park in London could be as much as £70 million.

Some of these weeds have the ability to find weakness in and undermine construction materials such as concrete and tarmac resulting in yet further repair costs. They have an adverse effect on our local environments and native species. All problem non-native invasive weeds out-compete most of our native species resulting in the disappearance of these native plants from some areas and increased erosion of soil.

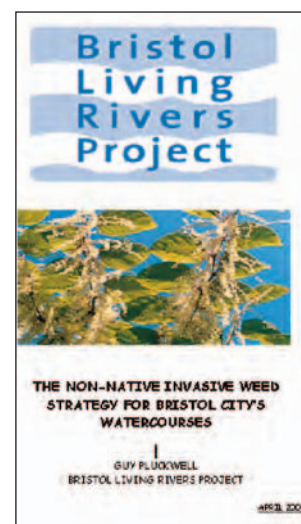
It was identified that Bristol lacks a mechanism for the co-ordination of NNIW control within the city. Further research showed that the areas within the country that are better at raising awareness, providing advice and controlling the NNIW are those areas that have established a forum to co-ordinate this work. Example s of this can be seen in Cornwall, Merseyside and Swansea.

Bristol Living Rivers Project decided that the problems identified and associated with NNIW should not be ignored.

They have since written:

A primary suggestion made by the strategy is for a forum to be established in Bristol to provide vital co-ordination of the fight against these weeds.

Rather than just going ahead and attempting to set up a forum BLR decided to hold an event to gauge the interest in such a forum and ask other organisations and groups whether they think a forum is the right approach for Bristol.



Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)



The Bristol Invasive Weed Forum

Introduction

A day long event organised by BLR was held on Thursday 27 September 2007 at the Pavillion, located on Bristol's harbourside.

Organisations that were thought to have an interest in the NNIW problems around Bristol were sent an invite to the event. Over 50 people from many organisations / companies / groups both volunteers and professionals attended the day. A list of those people and organisations can be seen in Appendix 1 - see page 12

The event was spilt in to two parts. In the morning there were guest speakers who gave presentations on their specific area of expertise associated with NNIWs. In the afternoon the delegates were split into groups and asked to discuss and comment on a series of questions put to them.

Further detail on the presentations, discussions and suggestions made during the day are detailed below and photographs taken during the day can be seen in Appendix - see page 13

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Presentations

These can be viewed at www.bristol.gov.uk/rivers

1. Introduction to the day

The morning started with a short introduction from BLR. The presentation was given by Guy Pluckwell, an Environment Officer from the Environment Agency on secondment to the Bristol Living Rivers Project.

Following an introduction and welcome to the event the speaker explained why the event was being held, why the people present had been invited and why BLR believe a forum is necessary for Bristol.

The completed city wide survey of NNIW in and around Bristol's watercourses was introduced and a timetable for the day set out. The presentation finished by setting some objectives for the day.

2. Non-native Invasive Weeds and the problems that they cause

The first guest speaker was Max Wade from RPS Group who gave a presentation on Non-native Invasive Weeds and the problems that they cause.

The presentation begun by identifying 3 main culprits. These were identified as Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed. Why these plants have been targeted as the main culprits, why they are a problem, how they disperse and the appropriate control methods for these weeds was then discussed.

It was then pointed out that we should not concentrate on these three main weeds as there are other weeds that have recently been identified as having the potential to be future problematic invaders. Such weeds as Tree of Heaven, Water Primrose and Keeled Garlic were mentioned as some of the 3586 non grass and 710 grasses identified as non native plants in the UK that could become problematic invaders.

It is therefore very important to monitor and survey these potential problematic plants as they will be much easier to control if they are identified as problematic at the earliest possible stage. Max suggested that there is capacity for research into these and other species.

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3. The Cornwall Knotweed Forum

The second speaker was Colin Hawke from Cornwall County Council who gave a presentation on The Cornwall Knotweed Forum and why it has been a success.

The presentation began with a description of the birth of the forum, how it initially approached the problem, what it concentrated on in the early days, the objectives it set for itself and priorities.

Through the use a risk assessment the forum prioritised specific environments, weeds and industries to target.

A website was suggested as the main tool used by the forum in their work. They have put together an interactive map from surveys data.

Publicity was also highlighted as an area which they believe to be very important. They have produced a number of informative leaflets, attended shows and issued press releases all with the aim of raising awareness and educating about the problems associated with Japanese Knotweed. Colin also highlighted the importance of gaining support in securing the success of the forum.

The forum believe that the fact that most people in Cornwall are now aware of Japanese Knotweed and the problems associated with it is as a measure of the success of the forum.

4. The Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain.

The final presentation was given by Huw Thomas from DEFRA on The Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain.

The presentation began with an explanation as to why we needed a strategy for Great Britain and what were the international drivers that resulted in a strategy.

The history and recent development of the strategy were then discussed with the start of the process coinciding with the launch of the Review of Non-Native Species Policy in 2001. The Review Group recommendations were made in 2003 and a mention of the control of non native species was seen in Labour's 2005 Manifesto. In 2005 the Programme Board was established and NERC bill/Act came in to force. In 2006 a working group was established to develop the GB strategy.

The strategy itself was out to consultation until May 07 with the final version expected in Spring 08. The Strategy's overarching aim is to minimise the risk posed and reduce the negative impact caused by invasive non-native species in Great Britain.

The Bristol Invasive Weed Forum



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Lunch and display

Following the presentations the delegates were given a break and provided with a hot two course lunch. During this break many took advantage of information provided on the display and banners that had been put together for the day.

Photographs of these displays can be seen in Appendix 2 see page 13

Discussions and suggestions

The afternoon took a different format with the delegates split into groups to discuss a number of questions put to them as a group regarding the establishment of an Invasive weed forum for Bristol.

Each groups suggestions were then discussed by the delegates as a whole and decisions / suggestions recorded. Suggestions made during these discussions are detailed below:

Question 1 - Is the forum a good idea?

Unanimous YES with the following comments

- As long as it delivers
- Depending on how it is set up

Question 2 - What should it look like?

- Small enough to be workable
- Website based
- Facilitated by BCC
- Core group with sub groups
- Mix of professionals and volunteers

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Question 3 - Who should be included in the forum?

- Bristol City Council
- Environment Agency
- Avon Wildlife Trust
- Network Rail
- BRERC
- Community Groups
- Highways
- BCC Contractors
- Natural England
- Voluntary Sector
- Fisheries
- Garden Centres , Horticultural Trade Association
- Weed Control Industry
- Chambers of Commerce?
(or someone to represent developers)
- National Federation of House Builders
- Royal Horticultural Society
- BANES DC
- S. Glos DC
- Land Management
- Avon Biodiversity Partnership
- British Waterways
- Education, specifically the universities
- Planning
- Waste Industry
- NFU
- Major landowners in the city
e.g. C of E, hospitals, council, Network Rail,
universities, amenity societies, civic society)

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Question 4 - What should the forum do?

- Set up a website
- Identify what the problem is and its extent
- Survey and monitor
- Map the weeds
- Have a database of info gained from survey / reports
- Educate and raise awareness of the problem
- Seek funding
- Identify what is being done already and co-ordinate and fill in the gaps
- Publicise itself - Press releases / events
- Identify high risk sectors and target education at them
- Identify which geographical area
- Prioritise species, pathways and environments
- Disseminate information
- Provide an advisory telephone service
- Network information
- Identify best practice
- Identify research opportunities
- Collate a list of experts
- Link BCC departments
- Gain media interest
- Update national database
- Co-ordinate
- Seek commitment from members (sign up?)
- Pressurise organisations that are not fulfilling their duties
- Be independent
- Involve the community
- Attend events
- Display information in prominent places e.g. Bristol Zoo

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Question 5 - Where do we go from here?

- Email everyone who attended asking how they would like to be involved and find out what they can offer
- Initial implementation should be driven by BCC and the EA in partnership
- Statement of purpose - Vision of forum
- Collate all existing survey data, review and compare
- Set proposed plan for commitments and sign up
- Try to identify individuals to drive the forum forward
- Decide on scope for forum (area / weeds)
- Identify who should be involved
- Organise first meeting and set a date for it
- Identify what we want to achieve
- Maintain momentum
- Release press statement advertising the forum and its targets
- Nominate chair and core team and invite them to first meeting
- Find temporary host regulator
- Set up website
- Get interested parties to volunteer time and resource
- Raise awareness of forum's existence
- Invite an existing forum e.g. Swansea or Merseyside to give presentation at first meeting
- Decide what the forum should be called and an acronym
- Identify terms of reference / objectives

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The Next Step

Following the event and the consideration of the suggestions made during the discussion period of the event, BLR have sent out a questionnaire to all that attended. The questionnaire asks if the delegate would like to be involved in the forum, to what degree and what they have to offer the forum. It is hoped that this questionnaire will keep the momentum and enthusiasm seen on the day going as well as aiding BLR in inviting the right mix of people to join the forum.

Acknowledgements

Bristol Living Rivers would like to thank everybody who came along to the event and helped to make it a success.

A big thank you also goes to the three speakers Huw Thomas from DEFRA, Colin Hawke from Cornwall County Council / Cornwall Knotweed Forum who travelled up from Cornwall for the event and Max Wade from RPS Group Ltd who travelled across from Cambridgeshire for the event.

There will be people who we have inadvertently overlooked when trying to establish this forum. We do apologise and would encourage you to contact us if you would like to be involved in the Bristol Invasive Weed Forum.

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Appendix 1 Bristol Invasive Weed Forum Event participants, 27 September 2007, The Pavilion, Bristol

Name	Organisation
Floyd Blake	Environment Agency
Melissa Clarkson	Environment Agency
Laura Edwards	Environment Agency
Chris Francis	Environment Agency
Mathew Sully	Environment Agency
Steve George	Environment Agency
Laura Forward	Environment Agency
Claire Adams	Bristol City Council (Parks)
Terry Wait	Bristol City Council (Parks)
Jan Walters	Bristol City Council (Parks)
Caroline Hollies	Bristol City Council (Parks)
Liz Kirkland	Bristol City Council (Clean and Green)
Paula Spiers	Avon and Frome Development
Philip Williamson	Bristol City Council (Nature Reserves)
Andy Walker	Bristol City Council (Repairs and Maintenance)
Pete Fryer	Bristol City Council (Env Quality and Sustainable Cities)
Fred Parkinson	Bristol City Council (Engineering and Construction)
Dave Jones	Wessex Water
Jon Mortin	BRERC
Fergus Mitchell	BRERC
Jenny Dowell	BRERC
Adrian Murdoch	Continental Landscapes
Mathew Hamilton	Avon Wildlife Trust
Neville Quinn	UWE
Michele Davis	Environment Agency
Suzy Grindley	Bristol Universtiy student
Marie Jo Coutanche	Malago Valley Conservation Group
Beryl Heaton	Malago Valley Conservation Group
Angela James	Malago Valley Conservation Group
Nancy Carlton	Kingfisher Group
Dave Tuffrey	Bristol City Council
Alan Aburrow	Friends of Badock Woods
Richard Bland	Bristol Naturists Society
Bekki Farrar	BTCV
Martin de Retuerto	Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
Jane Biggs	Bath and North East Somerset
Chris Giles	South Glos DC
David Simms	South Glos DC
Kevin Ponting	Complete Weed Control
Richard Curnock	Complete Weed Control
Guy Pluckwell	Environment Agency
Debbie Collins	Environment Agency
Tanya Darch	Bristol City Council
Kathy Derrick	Bristol City Council
Max Wade	RPS
Huw Thomas	DEFRA
Colin Hawke	Cornwall County Council
James Wigmore	Environment Agency

Appendix 2 Photos of the event



Photo1: Delegates listening to one of the presentations during the event.



Photo 2 and 3 show some of the displays of information put together for the event



Photo 4 and 5 show some of the groups discussing the establishment of a forum

The Bristol Invasive Weed Forum