

Review progress to protect against invasive species

Mr Toby Perkins MP, Environment Audit Committee Chair
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By email

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Dear Mr Toby Perkins MP

Congratulations on your election as Chair of the Environment Audit Committee.

I am writing on behalf of Wildlife & Countryside Link to suggest that the new Committee consider a rapid review inquiry to follow up on the 2019 Invasive Species [inquiry](#).

The landmark report produced by your Committee predecessors broke important ground, highlighting the threat invasive species pose to nature recovery and helping persuade the Government to establish the Non-Native Species Inspectorate (NNSI). The new Government has recently decided to put the NNSI on a permanent footing.

This welcome progress now needs to be supported by further reforms.

The Office for Environmental Protection's Environmental Improvement Plan Progress Report shows government targets on biosecurity to be largely off track. The number of invasive non-native species becoming established is rising while an increase in distribution and number of species considered to be widespread.

Nearly two years after its publication, the GB Non-Native Species Strategy is still without an implementation plan to deliver on the key actions and feed into an annual progress report, which also has not been published.

In parallel, the Pathway Action Plans which aim to prevent or manage the risk posed by priority pathways are long overdue for consultation and have been repeatedly delayed, such that some of the plans should now have been reviewed before they have even been consulted on and approved. Similarly, the Deer Management and Grey Squirrel Action Plans are also held on pause after the General Election, despite being finalised.

The NNSI is also far from complete. The NNSI only have legal powers to deal with the 66 listed species under the Invasive Alien Species Act, all of which were transposed across from the EU Regulation. An update to the list was expected after Brexit but still no new species have been added to this list since 2019. By not updating this list to better reflect threats to GB, there is an increased risk of INNS arriving and becoming established. Inspectors also lack the correct powers to effectively operate at the national borders, despite identifying that there are potentially over 300,000 contaminated units (containers, recreational boats and angling equipment) arriving in GB annually.

Five years on from the 2019 inquiry, action to fill these policy gaps is urgently required to effectively protect against one of the top five drivers of biodiversity decline in UK, ahead of the 2030 target to halt the decline in species abundance.

Link's Invasive Species Working Group would be grateful if you and your Committee colleagues could consider a rapid-review to follow up on the 2019 inquiry, to maintain the Committee's ground breaking work in this area and secure further progress at a critical time. We would be delighted to provide further information as required.

Yours sincerely,



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Chair of Wildlife and Countryside Link INNS Working Group