



Invasive Non-Native Species Policy

Date 24/02/2026



Rationale for the Policy

Invasive Non-Native Species

This policy outlines how the Council will deal with invasive non-native species (INNS) on land that it owns, manages or is otherwise responsible for.

An INNS is defined as one that is not originally from the ecosystem in which it is found and causes harm to the environment, economy and/or human health. The Council considers species to be invasive if they are identified and listed in the Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy Species Short List – [INNS \(pages 30-31\)](#).

The introduction and spread of INNS poses significant environmental, economic, and social challenges to the UK. These species sometimes thrive in their new environment, disrupting ecosystems, causing economic damage, and impacting human society. INNS cause £1.84 billion of economic damage in the UK each year and are one of the greatest threats to biodiversity¹; these challenges will increase as the climate changes.

Links to Local Policy

INNS are listed as one of the main causes of biodiversity loss in the Council Nature Strategy, and the Nature Action Plan includes two actions relating directly to INNS:

- O22 - 'Develop, publish and implement the Council's invasive non-native species policy'.
- O23 - to 'Work in partnership to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive non-native species, and the diseases they carry across our area, through increased biosecurity, including education, engagement, and targeted risk reduction'.

Priority 2 of the Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy is to 'Halt the spread and reduce the extent of INNS in Cumbria, prevent the arrival of new INNS and where possible eradicate specific INNS from target catchments/areas'. This policy seeks to support these actions and ensure that we meet our obligations under the law.

Links to National Policy

In England, councils have specific responsibilities regarding INNS to ensure they do not cause harm to the environment, economy, or human health. These responsibilities primarily involve prevention and management of invasive species, and compliance with legal obligations under national policy.

The specific national policies directly affecting councils are:

The Wildlife and Countryside act, 1981³: This law makes it illegal to release or allow certain invasive non-native species to spread in the wild. It covers a list of species, including Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed, and grey squirrels. In addition, landowners must prevent the spread of certain invasive species like

Japanese knotweed. They are encouraged to follow good practice and work with local authorities and environmental agencies to tackle invasive species issues.

The Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order, 2019⁴: This order allows authorities to control the movement, sale, and release of species that have been identified as invasive. It places a responsibility on local councils to work with central government departments to ensure the enforcement of legislation and the appropriate control of invasive species.

Environment Act, 2021⁵: There are two aspects to the Environment Act that are relevant to the control of INNS. These are:

- **The Biodiversity Duty:** Public authorities who operate in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England, including the management of invasive species.
- **Species Recovery Plans:** Natural England is currently developing Species Recovery Plans for several species, including the water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*). Local authorities will be expected to cooperate with the implementation of the plans, which in some cases is likely to require the management of INNS.

The Infrastructure Act, 2015⁶: This allows Environmental Authorities in England to require the removal of some INNS from private land. Environmental Authorities include the Secretary of State, The Environment Agency, Natural England, and Statutory Forestry authorities. Local Authorities are expected to provide a supporting role where appropriate.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990⁷: Under the EPA 1990, material containing invasive species (including plant parts and contaminated soil) is classified as controlled waste. Section 33 (1)(c) makes it an offence to keep, treat or dispose of controlled waste in a manner likely to cause pollution of the environment or harm to human health. Section 34 of the EPA 1990 places a duty of care on anyone who imports, produces, carries, keeps, treats, or disposes of controlled waste.

The Invasive Non-Native Species Policy

This policy represents part of the solution towards meeting the above aims through the management of INNS on Council-owned and/or managed land. These are necessary actions to reduce economic losses, social impacts and meet our statutory obligations.

In view of this, the Council as a landowner will:

- Take all reasonable steps to prevent the introduction and spread of INNS on Council owned or managed land.
- Manage and, where possible, work towards the reduction and eradication of INNS on Council-owned or managed land.
- Deliver effective management programmes on land for which the Council is responsible, using strategies that have as minimal negative impact on the environment as possible.
- Promote specific responsible practices for limiting the spread of INNS on our own land and land that we are responsible for.
- Ensure that the Council complies with all relevant legislation regarding INNS, especially the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019.
- Ensure the safe and legal management and disposal of invasive plant material to prevent further spread or reinfestation.
- Lead monitoring and evaluation on council-owned land, coordinate reporting, and provide technical guidance.

In relation to non-Council owned or managed land we will work in partnership with multiple statutory bodies, charities and volunteer organisations. We will:

- Work alongside statutory organisations and local partners to implement strategies for controlling INNS and maximise the effectiveness of collective efforts to manage INNS across Westmorland land, watercourses and waterbodies.
- Communicate and engage with Westmorland and Furness residents, developers, businesses and visitors about the risks and impacts of INNS. Encourage reporting by local communities and landowners.
- Seek to secure funding to support partnership efforts to identify, report on, monitor and manage INNS across Westmorland and Furness.
- Work with partners to monitor at-risk habitats (waterways, wetlands, areas with high footfall and transport corridors).
- Support, as appropriate, regulatory and enforcement action against private landowners who fail to control INNS on their land.

- Support statutory bodies, as appropriate, in dealing with outbreaks of new INNS, monitoring and reviewing INNS across Westmorland and Furness.

The threat of INNS is a constantly evolving issue where effective control measures often require a rapid response. This will involve working with local partners to discuss current, emerging and likely future issues and how we might deal with them in safe and appropriate ways on our own land and on other high risk priority areas outside of our responsibility. This should be done on an annual basis with more regular meetings as required to deal with priority issues. In addition, the Council needs to be aware of, and respond to, guidance issued by statutory bodies.

As such, this policy should be reviewed on an annual basis.

References

1. Defra, the Scottish Government & the Welsh Government (2023) The Great Britain Invasive Non-Native Species Strategy: 2023 to 2030. Available at [The Great Britain Invasive Non-Native Species Strategy: 2023 to 2030 » NNSS](#)
2. (2023) The Environmental Improvement Plan 2023. Available at [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 - GOV.UK](#)
3. GOV.UK (1981) *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981*. Available at: [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981](#)
4. GOV.UK (2019) *The Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019*. Available at: [The Invasive Alien Species \(Enforcement and Permitting\) Order 2019](#)
5. GOV.UK (2021) *The Environment Act (2021)*. Available at [Environment Act 2021](#)
6. GOV.UK (2015) *Infrastructure Act 2015*. Available at [Infrastructure Act 2015](#)
7. GOV.UK (1990) *Environmental Protection Act 1990*. Available at [Environmental Protection Act 1990](#)