

# The Great British Non-native Species Strategy 2015

By Craig Lee, in collaboration with Jason Learner from the National Bee Unit

*Threats from invasive non-native species are increasing, but as Craig Lee from Defra's Non-native Species Team explains, there is a comprehensive strategy in place to deal with them.*



Knotweed by Ancatdubh43 at English Wikipedia - Transferred from en.wikipedia to Commons by Flamenc. Licensed under Public Domain via Commons - <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Knotweed.jpg#/media/File:Knotweed.jpg> .

There are nearly 2,000 non-native species established in Great Britain. The number of new arrivals is increasing with 10–12 new, non-native species becoming established every year. While the majority of non-native species are not problematic, around 10–15% cause significant adverse impacts.

The problems caused by invasive non-native species affect us all. For a start, they cost us billions of pounds; in the region of £1.7 billion every single year in Britain alone.<sup>1</sup> Japanese knotweed is estimated to cost the British economy around £166 million per year. But invasive non-native species are not only an economic problem, they are also a serious threat to our environment. From challenging the survival of our rarest species to damaging some of our most sensitive ecosystems, the biodiversity impacts of invasive non-native species are severe and growing. Their impact is now so significant that they are considered to be one of the greatest threats to biodiversity worldwide.

It is not just our wildlife that suffers. Invasive non-native species can also have an impact on the way we live. Some species, such as giant hogweed, have a direct impact on our health while others have less apparent, but just as serious effects such as invasive plants clogging water bodies and preventing access for navigation and angling.

In response to these threats, Defra and the Scottish and Welsh Governments published a joint *Great Britain Invasive Non-native Species Strategy* in 2008 setting out key aims and actions to deliver a co-ordinated approach to tackle these species,

working in partnership with environmental NGOs, trade representatives and the voluntary sector. We have made significant progress underpinned by the strategy. We have developed a unique risk-analysis mechanism, funded strategic research and established an information portal and alert system. On the ground, three species have been completely eradicated from Great Britain and a further five are in the process of being eradicated. This early action has saved the British economy millions, preventing further environmental damage and avoiding the cost of delayed action. Of particular note is the almost completed eradication of ruddy duck, an international exemplar and demonstration of our commitment to safeguard biodiversity at a European and international level.

At a European level, the Invasive Alien Species Regulation, which came into force on 1 January 2015, in which the United Kingdom had a major input, represents a step-change in approach and requires Member States to implement a range of measures to prevent and manage invasive non-native species.

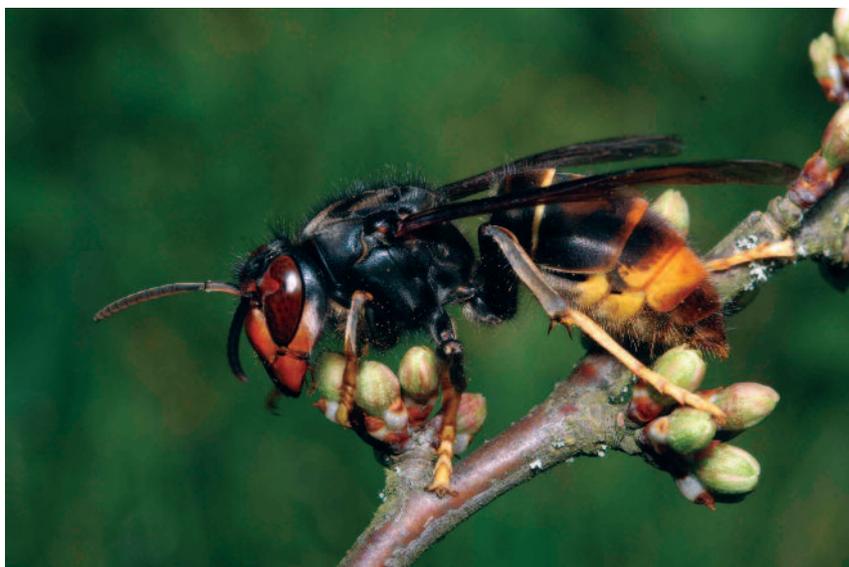
In August 2015, we published an updated *Great Britain Strategy*.<sup>2</sup> This updated Strategy builds on the successes of the first, recognises where more work is required and sets a series of ambitious aims and objectives, which will underpin action over the coming years.

The updated Strategy places an even greater focus on preventing the introduction and establishment of new invasive non-native species. We already undertake horizon-scanning involving a

range of experts to identify non-native species that are likely to arrive shortly in Great Britain, which enables us to analyse their likely impacts and respond accordingly. We are also now identifying and prioritising pathways of introduction and developing specific Pathway Action Plans to reduce the risks each pathway poses. And we are developing contingency plans setting out how we will deal with particular species in advance of any incursions.

### Asian hornet response plan

Our response to the threats posed by the Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) demonstrates our approach to prevention in practice. The Asian hornet is an aggressive predator of honey bees and other insects. It was introduced accidentally to France ten years ago where it quickly became widespread and it has now reached Spain, Belgium, Portugal, Italy and Germany.



Asian hornet, *Vespa velutina* by Jean Haxaire.

Is it OK to use this photo - it has been used by the NBU before, but we may need to seek permission again.

There is great concern that this species will reach Great Britain via imported goods or simply by flying across the English Channel. Establishment would have a detrimental impact on the beekeeping sector and on the environment and would also pose a risk to public health.

Following completion of the risk-assessment in 2011 and an assessment of the management options, we decided on a general policy of attempting to prevent establishment of the species. In April 2012, the Asian Hornet Response Plan was finalised. This plan was the first in Europe to address an invasive non-native species that was not a statutory pest and was not yet present in the country. The plan's main objective is to rapidly intercept this species if it is detected in Great Britain.

Early detection is vitally important to the success of the plan. We have established an alert system which allows the public to report sightings, which are then identified by the National Bee Unit. To date, all of the 1,000+ suspect reports have proved negative. There is also a network of sentinel apiaries that carry out active surveillance for the species.

If the Asian hornet is detected in Great Britain, the National Bee Unit and staff at the Animal and Plant Health Agency will work together to locate and destroy nests. The plan has been tested in one desktop and two field contingency exercises and the response team has also been trained in France.

### How beekeepers can assist

First, make sure you know how to recognise Asian hornets, which are slightly smaller than our native European hornet



*Vespa crabro* worker, (Netherlands) courtesy of Niek Willems;  
Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 Generic license.

with distinctive yellow 'feet' and a dark abdomen; an ID sheet is available.<sup>3</sup> Monitoring for arrival of the Asian hornet is strongly encouraged throughout the UK, but especially in areas where likelihood of arrival is considered to be highest; South and South East England.

Beekeepers who are participating in the Sentinel Apiary Programme can download guidance notes about monitoring for the Asian hornet<sup>4</sup> and other members of the public should also consider hanging hornet traps.

It is also important that beekeepers sign up to BeeBase. In the event that the Asian hornet (or any other exotic threat to honey bee colonies) arrives here, efforts to contain it will seriously be jeopardised if we do not know where vulnerable apiaries are located.

If you wish to report a potential sighting of the Asian hornet, please notify the Great Britain Non-Native Species Secretariat alert email address at [alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk) immediately, ideally providing a photograph of any suspected sighting. Additionally, you can report sightings on their website.<sup>5</sup>

## References

1. CABI report: *The Economic Cost of Invasive Non-native Species to Great Britain* (2010) available at <http://www.nonnative-species.org/downloadDocument.cfm?id=487>
2. <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/index.cfm?sectionid=55>
3. <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/beebase/downloadDocument.cfm?id=698>
4. <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/downloadDocument.cfm?id=1056>
5. <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/alerts/index.cfm?id=4>.



**Don't put your bees at risk**  
**Register on BeeBase**

BeeBase is a **FREE online service** provided by the National Bee Unit to help protect you and your fellow beekeepers from colony threatening pests and diseases.

**Register online today - [www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)**



*Your produce, our Jars*  
**The Perfect Package**

*Quality Made British*  
**Honey Jars**

**Start next season with**  
**Honey Jars**  
from  
**Compak ( South ) Ltd**

Our standard 1lb Honey Jars are British made to our own specification from quality glass.

We offer special quotations for members of BBKA, Bee Farmers & all associations nationwide - you will find our prices competitive & our service efficient with a friendly touch.

For further details on Honey Jars or any other products contact our sales team or visit our website - we'll be pleased to hear from you.

**Suppliers of Glass and Plastic Containers & Closures Nationwide**

2, Ashmead Road  
Keynsham  
Bristol  
BS31 1SX  
Tel : 01179 863 550 Fax : 01179 869 162  
Email : [sales@compaksouth.co.uk](mailto:sales@compaksouth.co.uk)  
Website : [www.compaksouth.com](http://www.compaksouth.com)



