



Invasive Non-Native Species Rapid Response Fund

June 2026

Key points:

- Commit to develop and pilot a rapid response mechanism for invasive non-native species within 12 months, with full operation within 24 months.
- Enable action within 10 working days of identifying a high-risk incursion, improving the likelihood of eradication.
- Ensure rapid response is embedded within a longer-term management approach and supported by local delivery partnerships.

Background

Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) are one of the leading drivers of biodiversity loss in Scotland, impacting ecosystems, land use and communities. Their spread and impact are expected to increase due to climate change, placing further pressure on Scotland's natural environment and economy.

Current approaches to tackling INNS are often too slow to respond effectively to new incursions. Funding mechanisms are typically designed for longer-term projects, meaning opportunities for early intervention (when eradication is most feasible and cost-effective) are frequently missed. Delays allow species to establish, significantly increasing the complexity and cost of management.

The case for rapid response capability

Establishing a clear, operational rapid response mechanism would enable Scotland to act quickly when new high-risk invasive species are detected, improving the likelihood of eradication and reducing long-term impacts.

While rapid response is critical, many INNS challenges extend beyond initial intervention. In practice, eradication and control can take multiple years due to factors such as scale of spread and reseedling (particularly for plants), meaning rapid response should be designed as part of a longer-term management approach.

A rapid response approach would support a range of government objectives, including:

- Preventative spend by enabling early action that avoids significantly higher future control costs

- Climate resilience by strengthening Scotland’s ability to respond to increasing biosecurity risks linked to climate change
- Nature targets by tackling one of the key drivers of biodiversity loss and supporting ecosystem restoration
- Effective delivery by ensuring that existing policy commitments on INNS can be implemented in practice

Proposed Approach

The Scottish Government should commit to developing and piloting a practical rapid response mechanism for INNS within 12 months, with the aim of full operation within 24 months.

NatureScot is well placed to coordinate this work, in collaboration with SEPA and the Marine Directorate, ensuring coverage across terrestrial, freshwater and marine environments. There is also an opportunity to build on existing rapid response models, such as SEPA’s approach to pollution incidents.

Delivery should also draw on the expertise of locally based organisations with experience in INNS management (for example, river catchment partnerships), to utilise local knowledge, improve efficiency and avoid duplication of effort.

The mechanism should be designed to enable action within weeks of detecting a new high-risk species, when there is still a realistic opportunity for eradication.

Key features should include:

- A simple and fast decision-making process to assess and approve interventions
- The ability to mobilise delivery partners quickly, including public bodies, locally based organisations and local authorities
- A clear triage system, potentially through NatureScot or the Non-Native Species Inspectorate, to prioritise high-risk cases
- Streamlined access arrangements for urgent, small-scale interventions without requiring full project bidding processes

What is being asked of Scottish Government and NatureScot

- Develop and pilot a rapid response mechanism for INNS within 12 months
- Ensure that approved interventions can be initiated within 10 working days of a confirmed high-risk incursion

- Enable access for delivery partners without complex application processes in urgent cases
- Establish a clear triage and decision-making system to support rapid, evidence-based action

This is a focused delivery ask rather than a new policy direction. It is intended to ensure that Scotland can respond quickly and effectively to emerging biosecurity threats, reducing long-term costs and protecting biodiversity.

Further reading: [Invasive Non-native Species in Scotland: A Plan for Effective Action](#) (Scottish Environment LINK, 2024)

This proposal is supported by Scottish Crofting Federation and NFU Scotland.

Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 50 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

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