

INNS Rapid Response Fund – Confor and SLE joint response

At this stage, we cannot support the proposal in its current form. While we recognise the principle of taking rapid action against newly detected invasive non-native species, we do not believe the proposal provides a sufficiently robust evidence base to justify the creation of a dedicated Rapid Response Fund.

In particular, we would like to understand:

- What is the evidence that a lack of rapid funding is currently the main barrier to successful eradication? Are there examples from the last 12 months where a fund of this type would have changed the outcome?
- Are there known or likely future incursions that would justify creating a dedicated fund, rather than improving existing funding mechanisms?
- Is a fund of £1 to 3 million sufficient to make a meaningful difference, particularly where eradication costs can escalate quickly?
- Why is the fund limited to new incursions? There may be circumstances where rapid action on existing priority INNS would deliver equally good, or better, value for money.
- How would decisions be made about which species qualify? We would want reassurance that productive tree species and existing established species could not inadvertently become eligible under any future interpretation of invasive species.

More generally, the proposal would benefit from a clearer narrative. It is not yet clear what specific problem the fund is intended to solve, why existing mechanisms are unable to address it, or why a new funding pot is the most effective solution. A stronger evidence base, supported by practical examples, would help demonstrate both the need for the fund and the benefits it would deliver.

We would be happy to engage further as the proposal develops. We recognise the importance of responding quickly to new invasive non-native species and would welcome the opportunity to help develop a more evidence-based and targeted approach that delivers effective outcomes while providing confidence to those responsible for managing Scotland's forests and the wider landscapes.

Submitted jointly by:

Confor (Confederation of Forest Industries)

SLE (Scottish Land and Estates)

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