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## ABSTRACT

### **Policy on non-natives: an RSPB view**

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The impact of invasive non-native species is one of the principal drivers of global biodiversity loss and environmental degradation, but is also one of the least understood and appreciated. Therefore, developing an appropriate response is a very significant challenge to policy makers. Several factors compound this difficulty, as the impact is often counter-intuitive (adding species yet reducing biodiversity), controversial (invasive non-native species can be attractive or useful to people), politically problematic (import restrictions might affect trade) and unpredictable (our ability to predict which species will become invasive is imperfect). In this context, recent progress in developing domestic and international policy on invasive non-native species is to be commended.

The United Kingdom is one of relatively few European Union (EU) member states to put in place a national strategy, and is engaging with the issue at international level to promote progress. Three imperatives are evident at this juncture:

1. We must ensure that the developing policies retain sound biological rationales, ensuring the effective biodiversity conservation impact;
2. We must accelerate the implementation of action on the ground urgently;
3. We must ensure that legislative frameworks are adequate to support the policies.

Regarding 1: the current Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain ([http://www.nonnativespecies.org/documents/Invasive\\_NNS\\_Framework\\_Strategy\\_GB\\_E.pdf](http://www.nonnativespecies.org/documents/Invasive_NNS_Framework_Strategy_GB_E.pdf)) is incomplete in its omission of the UK Overseas Territories. This runs contrary to biological sense, as these areas support a disproportionately rich array of globally significant biodiversity, much of it directly and urgently threatened by invasive non-native species.

Regarding 2: implementation will require political favour, resources, personnel and public support. All of these will require an urgent elevation of general political awareness and understanding of the issue, training for individuals in key positions, and the active promotion of ecological literacy among the public. There are key opportunities to make progress that should be capitalised upon.

Regarding 3: The EU is about to issue a Communication on invasive non-native species. This will be an opportunity to develop EU legislation, bringing all member states up to a shared, co-ordinated legislative standard in this regard. As the whole issue is inherently international in nature, the opportunity should be taken.