

Civic Offices, Limerick Road
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Darragh O'Brien, T.D.,
Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage
Custom House
Dublin 1

13th April 2023

Re: Recommendations following the meeting with NPWS officials to discuss the Invasive Alien Species Report and Policy Recommendations.

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you on behalf of the National Water Forum to thank the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Officials for their engagement on the Forum's Policy Recommendations for Invasive Alien Species (IAS) Management and to bring to your attention further key recommendations we would like to make.

In January and February 2023, Forum representatives met with officials from the NPWS to present research and policy recommendations for IAS management. The officials invited the Forum to share the policy recommendations with the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) as the lead organisation responsible for developing the National Management Plan for IAS. The NBDC subsequently invited the Water Forum to participate in the Steering Group for this plan and the Forum nominated Martin McEnroe, the Angling representative on the Forum. We have since been informed by the NBDC that a significant number of the Forum's IAS policy recommendations have been included in the consultation document that will form the basis for the draft National Management Plan for IAS.

While the Forum welcomes these developments, we would like to highlight that:

- we do not consider the current level of resources adequate to address the challenges associated with IAS and we are of the view that a resourcing plan including budget estimates and costings needs to be set out at the planning stage,
- coordinated action across existing agencies/bodies working on IAS is essential and thus plans need to include the design of processes for implementation and collaboration across various agencies,
- improved governance arrangements are necessary with the establishment of a bureau or secretariat with specific responsibility for IAS and its overall coordination – these governance arrangements need to be worked out relatively early in the planning process,
- IAS is an all-Island issue and there is a need for ROI/NI collective governance to reflect that.

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Our overriding concern is that the current planning process, while very welcome, will fail to deliver unless these fundamental resourcing, governance, ownership and coordination issues are dealt with in parallel so that systems and processes are in place to ensure that the National Management Plan will be implemented effectively.

We are happy to discuss these matters with you further at a time convenient to you and your officials.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Matt Crowe,
Chair

CC.

Minister Malcolm Noonan

David Flynn, Principal Advisor, Water Advisory

Alan Moore, Assistant Principal, NPWS

