



Subject:	Management of Invasive Species (Himalayan Balsam)
Date:	Tuesday 04 November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Stephen Leonard, Director of Resource, Fleet and OSS
Contact Officer:	Anthony Conway, Transition Support Lead Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
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1.1	At it's September meeting the Committee agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting that would outline the Council's policy, management and removal of invasive plant species, in particular Himalayan Balsam, and how such future work might be enhanced and undertaken in partnership with local communities.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	Members are asked to note the content of this report.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	BCC has an obligation under the "The Invasive Alien Species" (Enforcement and Permitting) Order (Northern Ireland) 2019 in regard to: 1. Prevention, 2. Early detection and rapid eradication of new invasions and 3. Management of invasions that are already widely spread.
3.2	Of a list of species, most prevalent being Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed.
3.3	Our current processes within OSS are for our operational teams to log and map all instances of invasive species and record grid references as well as records of control methods and start and end dates of the control programmes. This is recorded and held on our internal IAS monitoring and control sheets
3.4	We currently have a contract in place with an external contractor for the treatment of invasive species. In the case of Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed this is through the foliar application of glyphosate to control and eradicate the growth and spread. The contractor provides detailed treatment reports which we hold internally
3.5	In the case of Himalayan Balsam, our appointed contractor will hand pull as this the preferred control method before the plant flowers. We also engage our own OSS staff to mechanically control balsam through strimming and mowing before the flowering period. This is all recorded on the monitoring sheets
3.6	We currently facilitate volunteer hand pulling of Balsam through our area based Outreach teams and we also engage partner organisations such as Belfast Hills Partnership and Lagan Valley Regional Park and Business in the community partners to hand pull balsam on our land.
3.7	The Parks Events and Outreach team currently pilot volunteering opportunities that contribute to the tackling of invasive species. A recent call for volunteers via our City Matters magazine has led to a programme of volunteer Friday's. Amongst other things these sessions have included hand pulling Himalayan Balsam and digging snowberry.
3.8	We propose to widen the scope of our volunteering opportunities and look to increase our opportunities to link in with a wider range of stakeholders and volunteer groups in our citywide parks to proactively tackle this issue. As part of the recent alleyway transformation consultation on Your Say Belfast we sought expressions of interest for volunteers and will look to include those who registered to our city-wide bank of volunteers.
3.9	The current pilot will inform how we expand volunteering opportunities across the city. This will be targeted for the next growing season, starting in April/May 2026. This will greatly supplement our current control programme and will have the tandem result of increasing positive participation and volunteering in our parks at the same time as helping to meet our legislative obligations. Volunteering sessions and planning can be shared when finalised in Spring 2026

3.10	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> No additional costs other than re prioritisation of officer time
3.11	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None
4.0	Appendices
4.1	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2019/159/contents/made