

Environmental Audit Committee

Oral evidence: [Invasive Species](#), HC 2129

Tuesday 9 July 2019

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Members present: Mary Creagh (Chair); Mr Philip Dunne; James Gray; Caroline Lucas; Kerry McCarthy; Alex Sobel; Derek Thomas.

Questions 364 - 542

Witnesses

I: Lord Gardiner of Kimble, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity, DEFRA; Professor Nicola Spence, Chief Plant Health Officer, DEFRA; and Dr Niall Moore, Chief Non-Native Species Officer, DEFRA.

Written evidence from witnesses:

– [DEFRA](#)

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Lord Gardiner of Kimble, Professor Nicola Spence and Dr Niall Moore.

Q364 **Chair:** Welcome to our final session in our invasive species inquiry. We are sitting in a newly refurbished committee room—Committee Room 6—so stroke the wood and enjoy the new name badges, which are particularly hard to read, I find. Can I welcome you, Minister, and ask your officials to introduce themselves, starting from my left?

Dr Moore: My name is Dr Niall Moore. I head the Non-Native Species Secretariat for Great Britain and I am DEFRA's chief non-native species officer.

Chair: Lord Gardiner, welcome.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Thank you very much.

Professor Spence: Good morning, I am Nicola Spence. I am DEFRA's chief plant health officer and I am also the deputy director for plant and bee health in DEFRA.

Q365 **Chair:** You are all very welcome. Apologies for the late start. We have had some issues with the Northern Line over the last couple of days and we have various Committee members running down Whitehall as we speak. We will be joined by other colleagues later on.

I will start our questioning this morning. We have heard from a whole range of stakeholders, so it is a question to you, Minister: do you think that the responsibilities for tackling non-native species are clear?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Yes, I do insofar as there is a strong collaboration with a strong secretariat that we have with some of the world experts for us. The most important thing is the collaboration and the rapid response. That is where again I am confident—whether it is Asian hornet or other species such as that, which have been the new arrivals—that we act rapidly.

The other important aspect I would like to say is with our monthly biosecurity meetings—and shorter than that, if necessary—we are, through our horizon scanning, constantly refreshing and revising where there could be threats from invasive species because our principal objective is to prevent arrivals. But I would be the first to say—and I would like to say to the Committee—we should be more ambitious. There is a lot more to do. More resources need to be put into this major contribution to environmental degradation.

Q366 **Chair:** Are you bidding for those resources through the spending review? Was DEFRA not earmarked for a 4% to 7% cut once again?



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Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I am told I cannot say any more than yes we have an ambitious spending review request because we think this is an important area.

Q367 **Chair:** What about the issues of not including pathogens in the invasive non-native species? This was brought home to us with the arrival of *Chalara fraxinea*, ash dieback, which was warned about in 2009 and which has been present on the continent of Europe for many years. Yet we, during the Jubilee tree-planting year, planted 6 million trees, perhaps unwittingly spreading that disease because many of those saplings will have come from Dutch-infected nurseries.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I am one of those people who did in 2012 plant some trees for the Jubilee and I am afraid the ash trees were part of that. I understand that.

Q368 **Chair:** Was that done through you as a landowner or through a particular charity?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: No, I did it privately as a landowner with no grant or anything like that.

Chair: It was a lovely thing to do.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I thought that the Queen deserved some more trees. The reason pathogens are not included in the invasive species strategy is because they are already included through the EU and ourselves in animal health and, from Professor Spence's point of view, in the plant health regimes and regulations, so they are covered. Nicola will have considerable knowledge of all the areas of pathogens on the plant health side, but they are designed so that animal health regulations and plant health regulations—the invasive ones—all absolutely meet, but pathogens are dealt with within animal and plant health regulations.

Q369 **Chair:** That was the problem, wasn't it, for ash dieback because we brought it in? We did not take any controls.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Yes, you are right, and that is precisely why Professor Nicola Spence was appointed after what happened in 2012 and a resolution this should not be permitted to happen again. It is why we are a country that has taken more national measures than any other EU country—precisely because our geography helps us, as does the island of Ireland, in securing some of the buffers—although unfortunately, as I see in Essex, Kent, Norfolk, Suffolk, these fungal spores were travelling naturally across from Holland. This is why I absolutely think that international collaboration, let alone within the United Kingdom and the Republic, remains absolutely vital in the arrangements we are going to have after Brexit because they are no respecters of borders. However they arrive, they certainly do not respect borders.

Q370 **Chair:** Professor Spence, your role was established after ash dieback?



Professor Spence: It was a taskforce that took place in the aftermath of the discovery of ash dieback. One of the recommendations was to appoint a chief plant health officer. Another recommendation was to develop a UK plant health risk register. That was established and now it is a very active tool as part of our biosecurity work. The UK Plant Health Risk Group meets monthly. That includes DEFRA and the devolved Administrations and colleagues from the Forestry Commission and the Animal and Plant Health Agency, and we analyse and assess and prioritise new risks. That is where we would include pathogens as well as insect risks.

Q371 **Chair:** Tell us about oak processionary moth, because one of our witnesses, and Zac Goldsmith if he was here, would say that Kew alerted DEFRA to oak processionary moth when there were just a few trees in Richmond that were infected with it, and it is now all across London and cannot be stopped. When did all that happen? Was that post your appointment?

Professor Spence: No, that was pre. We first became aware of oak processionary moth in 2006 when it was discovered in an amenity planting in a housing development quite near Kew. We were alerted to it. Forestry Commission took responsibility for doing the tracing and initial work, but unfortunately oak processionary moth is established in west London. We do have a control programme—

Q372 **Chair:** It is like we have had two goes before we have got it right, haven't we? We have had oak processionary moth, which is now firmly established across London, costing millions of pounds a year, and we have ash dieback, which is forecast to cost the economy £15 billion over the lifespan of taking down all those trees. There does not seem to be any biosecurity advice or much awareness raising for the public around the transfer of fungal spores from ash dieback. Is it just because we are accepting that it is going to be everywhere at some point?

Professor Spence: No, we have been investing in research on ash dieback. We have invested about £6 million over the last five years so that we can understand the pathogen, the host. We have sequenced the ash genome, for example, and we have a much better understanding of the risks. We have recently published the ash research strategy and there is also—

Q373 **Chair:** The question was about public awareness. When the public goes into the woods infected with ash dieback, with their boots and their dogs and their children, and they come out and they go to a non-infected wood, they are transferring the fungal spores.

Professor Spence: Because ash dieback is widely distributed then there is really no impact that we could have on public access.

Q374 **Chair:** We have given up on that biosecurity approach?

Professor Spence: Yes. That would not have any impact. We have had a public awareness campaign called "Don't Risk It" over the last year, and



this summer we are publishing the “Don’t Risk It” campaign in magazines for Brittany Ferries, for example. There will be much greater visibility at airports and ports. We have just published an article this month in the RHS *The Garden* magazine. We want to get the message out to the public particularly: do not bring back any plants, seeds and cuttings from your holidays because of the risk.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The research is starting to show from the genomes that there is a tolerant strain. In fact, next year we will be planting in Hampshire 3,000 of what we see as the most tolerant. The research and the investment in research is starting to show things that no one ever knew before about the genomes of trees. Ash has a fairly wide genome, which is giving us some hope that the tolerant strains will be sufficient to withstand Chalara.

Q375 **Chair:** Some very old trees, such as the tree called Betty, have also been found to be tolerant or resistant. Have you considered additional duties for public bodies to tackle invasive species? We have heard the story of the gulf wedge clam in a particular ditch, which has been allowed to just grow and grow and grow. It is an internal drainage board ditch, so it has been located there. It is spreading at a rate. There is no ability for the Environment Agency to force the owners of the ditch or the public authorities to get rid of the clam. We are just going to allow it potentially to take over.

Dr Moore: I have been talking to Environment Agency colleagues about the gulf wedge clam, and they have said to me that we do not have a method of eradicating it that would not do a massive amount of collateral damage at the moment. I am very keen, if we could, that we should get rid of it.

Q376 **Chair:** What is the collateral damage?

Dr Moore: It would be to some of the other native molluscs, some of which are quite rare—I cannot remember the names offhand—which are also in the South Forty-Foot Drain, which is what it is called. There are over about 10 kilometres or so of it. As a species—

Q377 **Chair:** Evidence that we heard was that they are already using up everything that is in the drain. The academic argument is about whether you damage the natives in the 15-kilometre stretch or whether you just allow this thing to come in and take over an entire ecosystem.

Dr Moore: It is also a resourcing issue. I was listening to the Environment Agency giving evidence and it was saying yes it would be good for it to have a duty to do something about this, but it would also need the resources to tackle it. The Environment Agency does a huge amount of eradications already.

Q378 **Chair:** Do you think that the Environment Agency, first, should have the power and, secondly, the funding, were it to consider the gulf wedge clam a threat, to go in and take it out?



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Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I am ambitious in all of these matters. It is one of the reasons why, in the spending review, invasive species is an area of the environment that we have not, candidly, had the resources that I would suggest animal health and plant health have had. I was talking to Sir James Bevan of the Environment Agency last week about floating pennywort, for instance, where the EA is removing 1,000 tonnes of it on the River Cam, or whatever.

We are all ambitious to do more and one again is the research we need to do. With some of these very invasive species the science is going to help us and that is why we have a research programme as well. Yes, that needs funding because we have ambitions there for our research programme.

Q379 **Chair:** In terms of the duties for public bodies, that would need legislation, would it not?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Yes.

Q380 **Chair:** Do you envisage that legislation appearing in the upcoming Environment Bill?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: It has not been published yet, but that is an interesting—

Q381 **Chair:** Has it been in your brain to feed into the Environment Bill? Presumably, you have seen the unpublished document.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The 25-year environment plan has considerable reference to the damage by invasive species, so I am ever ambitious as the Minister for Biosecurity that for invasive species we take every opportunity we can with resources, with collaboration, with civic society as well, to raise awareness about eradicating where we can and controlling and managing by enhanced scientific knowledge.

One of the issues is that in some of the work we are doing—for instance, with the work on oak processionary moth—we know that there is certain collateral damage, but our determination is to contain oak processionary moth in London and wherever it appears. We are taking immediate action to eradicate it but containing it in London and parts of Surrey where it unfortunately has become established. I am very keen to see if there is any scientific work that we can undertake to learn more about the oak processionary moth and how it could be better controlled. I am very interested in that.

Q382 **Chair:** We have the new invasive species strategy, which will be needed in 2020. Has work begun on that?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Yes.

Q383 **Chair:** How are you planning to integrate pathogens into that strategy because that is the policy gap that we have heard?



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Dr Moore: We will continue to have the same scope because if you look at the history of the various biosecurity regimes you will see we have four biosecurity regimes. We have animal health, plant health, aquatic animal health, which is effectively fish health, and we have bee health. They have been around for decades. On the invasive species side, we are about 40 years behind our plant health colleagues and 70 years behind our animal health colleagues.

What we do not want to do is overlap with the existing regimes where they are already working very well. In fact, we looked at the success. Last year I produced some papers for my programme board, the GB Non-Native Species Programme Board, and it looked at the resourcing to the four regimes and for invasive species. It also looked at how successful the regimes are, and they are incredibly successful. It looked at how unsuccessful we are overall on invasive species, highlighting the need for extra resources. We get something like 0.4% of the biosecurity spend currently.

Q384 **Chair:** So you are looking to increase that?

Dr Moore: Yes.

Q385 **Chair:** Obviously, some of that biosecurity spend goes on TB and cattle and all of those things, so probably non-negotiable. We have heard some very interesting research about the use of biocides and the fact that they are underutilised. The criticism that we have had is that we are great at identifying the problem and then we all just sit back and go, "Oh, well". Then five years later we are trying to manage a big problem. Have you looked at biocides, for example, on things like floating pennywort? It is called biocontrol: little things that come in that can chomp through these invasive species at a rate. It is not being used but it is well known about.

Dr Moore: DEFRA has a very good record on this. It has spent, as a Department, over £2 million on developing a whole range of biocontrol agents, including for Japanese knotweed, which was released in 2010 but has not been entirely successful yet.

Q386 **Chair:** What is the biocontrol there?

Dr Moore: It is a psyllid called *Aphalara itadori*.

Chair: You will have to write that down for us later.

Dr Moore: I will write it down.

Q387 **Chair:** What is it, a plant?

Dr Moore: It is a tiny little insect. There is also a rust for Himalayan balsam, which was released in 2014, and it is also developing a weevil, I think, for floating pennywort. I think there is also a mite for *Crassula*, which is one of these aquatic species that is completely intractable. The Environment Agency advises if you get *Crassula* in your pond fill it in because you cannot get rid of it.



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For these sort of intractable species, DEFRA—and also the Welsh Government, I hasten to add—has put in a lot of money, over £2 million, to try to develop this. We are leading the way in Europe by a mile on this.

Q388 **Chair:** But it is not working?

Dr Moore: They can often take a while to work. In fact, there was a lot of nervousness at releasing another non-native species in case it causes you more of a problem—the old cane toad issue. There is a massive amount of research and that is why it costs a lot of money to make sure they are safe.

Certainly, with the Himalayan balsam, it has taken a while to get going because there were different strains of Himalayan balsam introduced at different times and there are different strains of the rust, which only attack different strains. They are trying to match up these now. That work is ongoing and hopefully that will work.

Q389 **Chair:** Do you have anything to add, Professor Spence?

Professor Spence: Yes, we are also investing in biological control research for oak processionary moth. We know that there is a native parasitoid, which is another insect that will feed on the oak processionary moth. There is work going on at the University of Newcastle currently on that. We are investing in research on a range of other biological control solutions because, particularly for tree health, we need long-term resilience for our trees, so solutions that will develop over time and that we understand fully what the biological consequences of using them are are critical.

Q390 **Chair:** Is the moth eater native or non-native?

Professor Spence: The parasitoid for oak processionary moth is native. For another pest that we have, the Oriental chestnut gall wasp, we are looking at the potential for a non-native parasitoid, which has been used very successfully in Italy. We are doing a full risk assessment on that at the moment. We think combinations of parasitoids, fungi and so on could have potential in the long term.

Q391 **Chair:** How concerned are you about Xylella?

Professor Spence: We are very concerned. It is one of our top threats on the UK plant health risk register. We brought in additional controls last year on some of the high-risk hosts for Xylella so that we have statutory notifications. We are reviewing that currently as new evidence develops around the Xylella outbreak in other parts of Europe. I chair a Xylella preparedness board, which is a UK-level board, where we are looking at our response, our readiness and our research needs.

Q392 **Chair:** These are olive trees. Are they in quarantine for a certain amount of time?



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Professor Spence: Under the regulations on olive trees, you can only import olive trees if they have additional declarations to show that they have been tested and shown to be free of Xylella, have a plant passport and they are all inspected. We do have strict regulations; however, we are currently reviewing that. We feel that we probably need to do more, particularly on olive.

Q393 **Chair:** What would that look like? What would “more” look like?

Professor Spence: It could look like a complete ban on olive imports.

Q394 **Chair:** What are you worried about with Xylella because we do not produce olives?

Professor Spence: Xylella has a very wide host range, so olive is just one of the hosts and there are several strains of Xylella. It is a threat to horticulture and our native trees. It is imperative that we keep Xylella out and we will do everything we can to achieve that.

Q395 **James Gray:** Why not just ban all olive imports?

Chair: That is where they are going to be going.

Professor Spence: We are currently looking at that at the moment. We have a risk-based approach to all of this where we are looking at the risk in the trade, the impact on industry, as well as the threat. We feel that more needs to be done, particularly on olive.

Q396 **James Gray:** I make the point not so much particularly with regard to the olives, but throughout everything you have said so far you have talked a great deal about research and science and all those things, all of that being enormously important, how much DEFRA is spending on it and all that. It takes forever and most of these things are happening now. There are olive trees arriving at this moment in Heathrow Airport or wherever they come into.

Chair: The ports.

James Gray: I am slightly concerned that you are perfectly correct to focus on scientific research and risk assessments and all those things we discussed, but the machinery of government lasts so long it will all be too late. The oak processionary moth is spreading across London like wildfire right now, today, and spending £5 million on researching it is very good stuff and I am in favour of it, but it will not stop the moth.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: On that particular point, it is not that no work is being undertaken on oak processionary moth. We think that the scientific work will make it easier for us to contain and control, but certainly Kew, the royal parks, the London Borough of Richmond, the collaboration of all the bodies, the RHS, there is a lot of work going on in terms of spraying.

There were some tree injections in Regent’s Park being trialled. A lot is going on in terms of controlling, particularly in areas of public access



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where the oak processionary moth is not only damaging to humans and human health but to animals as well. I would not want you to think we are waiting for the science; there is a lot of work going on with stakeholders—the ones I have mentioned and others.

Q397 **Chair:** The science is adopting an iterative approach is what you are saying. You are trying and failing.

Professor Spence: We have a combination of import controls to prevent bringing in in the first place. That is the absolute imperative. If things are introduced, because we cannot reduce all risk, we will attempt to eradicate if at all possible. If a pest does become established, like oak processionary moth in London, then our strategy is to contain it, manage its impact and come up with a solution to reduce it over time.

Q398 **Chair:** Can I just finish off, Professor Spence? What trees are you most concerned about from the risk of Xylella?

Professor Spence: We know that it can infect, for example, oak, so that would be of particular concern. Xylella has about 500 species that are susceptible to it.

Q399 **Chair:** This came to Europe six years ago and six years on we are considering an import ban.

Professor Spence: We have had very strong controls over those six years. There is an EU emergency decision about Xylella. Any material that is moved has to be tested, it has to be passported, it has to be notified to the plant health inspectors in the UK. We do have very strict controls over that material.

We have to look at the proportionality and the balance between trade and risk, particularly for high-risk hosts like olive. Because it is a host that is very mature, some of the trees are quite old. They might have been infected many years ago by Xylella; that is what we are concerned about. There was a host last year that was being imported, Polygala, the September bush, which is a very attractive pink shrub. That is now not being imported.

Q400 **Chair:** There is a ban on that?

Professor Spence: We put very strict controls on that. It has become not viable to import it, so we have had some success in managing.

Other hosts are things like lavender and rosemary, which we can grow perfectly well in the UK. I am very keen that horticultural trades use this as an opportunity to increase UK production so that we are reducing our dependence on bringing in imported plants and managing risk.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Obviously, we have had meetings with the Horticultural Trades Association and there is a much stronger understanding in the nursery world that it is imperative that Xylella is not allowed in. Referring to bans and so on, the Secretary of State for DEFRA



was very clear about increasing the controls, and we took it to Europe fully intending to take our own decision on national measures if it had not been adopted through the European Commission. I would want to emphasise that although we need to do more, we are probably more rigorous than anywhere else because of our island situation. It is the prevention of the arrival that I am absolutely clear about; we must stop that.

Q401 Chair: When would we institute a ban? This is the growing season now, isn't it? This is when people are going to the garden centres and buying their olive trees. When will this ban come in, if it does come in? What is the decision point?

Professor Spence: We are looking currently at what the legal options are. We would take national measures. We will discuss it with the EU standing committee to see whether the Commission is prepared to do more. If not, then we will consider national measures, which we would put to Ministers in the next few weeks.

Q402 Derek Thomas: Lord Gardiner, you have clearly set out your commitment to the prevention agenda and we have also heard already a lot about the sheer size and scale of the task. Can you say a bit more about what challenges you face? Some of the reasons why I ask the question are that the Department's comprehensive pathways analysis arrived two years late. Your 2015 invasive species strategy committed to subsequent pathway action plans, so we are assuming that we are at least two years late in those areas. Can you give an idea about whether I am right in saying that or what the reasons are behind that and what the challenges are for the Department?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Again, I recognise that my own desires would be that we had sorted a lot of these things out way before and we had been in a position to deal with invasive species on arrival going way back, but that, I am afraid, is where we are at. We are about to consult on the 14 species that come through from the EU invasive species regulations with stakeholders and others on how best to manage these species that are on the current list.

Clearly, the pathway actions we have devised have distinguished where we think there are concerns about arrival, whether it is hitchhikers, in hulls, in ballast water. In a range of areas, we have recognised the pathway so that we can raise the bar on shutting off these arrivals. Yes, I would be the first to say that I regret that we are not further advanced.

We are literally, in the next week or so, going to be consulting on these measures and, of course, all the EU measures that we will have on the statute book and we will be required to implement and are going to implement are all about either eventual eradication or containing and management pending the sort of biocontrols and abilities that we described earlier. I would be the first to say I would have liked us to have been further forward.



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Dr Moore: I do not think we are two years late compared to what the EU regulation requires. I am pretty sure we are only one year late, but it still would have been better to have been on time. However, it is very complicated. For the invasive species area, there are 45 pathways in total that the Convention on Biological Diversity only just agreed on in 2014. We have 31 that are relevant to us in the UK. Then we have identified six of those but we have not sat around waiting to do the pathway analysis. We have actually been taking some forward. We agreed an action plan on zoos and aquaria back in 2016 and we are working on ones for recreational boating and angling at the moment, which we think are key ones that we want to tackle.

Q403 **Derek Thomas:** I was trying to understand the context and both of those answers help with that. Where are we in terms of ratifying the international Ballast Water Management Convention? Why has the UK not signed that?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Yes, is the answer to that.

Chair: Five years ago our predecessor Committee recommended this.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: It is an area I have had discussions with colleagues in the Department for Transport, and I will put my neck out and say that I think this is an issue that we should address and get done. That is my opinion on the matter because it is one of the pathways and we need to be serious if we are to enhance the environment. Invasive species are arriving at an alarming rate, particularly since the Ponto-Caspian species, which are arriving because of the navigability through from the Black Sea. In the Rhine there are species that will eventually reach us.

Q404 **Derek Thomas:** Should we be asking that question to Nus Ghani? Is that your suggestion?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I would be very happy for that to be the case and I would do it myself. Many countries have signed it and it is an area that I have been exploring with the Department for Transport and colleagues because I think that it is an area we ought to be addressing.

Q405 **Derek Thomas:** We are all acutely aware now of climate change and what might be coming down the track if we do not take urgent action and even if we do take urgent action. Has the Department identified non-active invasive species that due to the warming planet will present a problem to us? If that is the case, if we have identified or if we are working to identify, are we in a position to put in measures before it becomes a problem? Again, your prevention, Lord Gardiner.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: All risk assessments do include the issue of climate change because clearly horizon scanning has to take that into account. It is clear that with certain species—for instance, those native to some parts of the continent—and with that climate change and so forth, we are very conscious of that, particularly of what we describe as sleeper



species, which are non-native species currently present that could well become invasive. I have some examples here: the aquatic plant *Cabombia caroliniana*, ragweed, false acacia, tree of heaven. These are all species that, if or when we need to be prepared, should be tackled.

One of the issues is that obviously we live in a world where people are able to trade. We are a country that has always wanted to have new plants. A lot of our gardens are full of non-native species but they are not invasive. *Rhododendron ponticum* is hugely invasive. There are all sorts of azaleas and rhododendrons that people have in their garden that are not native but they are not invasive. One of the areas we need to work on in our horizon scanning is working out what are the species that if conditions change here will become invasive.

Q406 Derek Thomas: There is a real need for public information that is science based and helpful as we learn more and more about what the species threats are?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: That is also why, for instance, the Royal Horticultural Society, in its magazine *The Garden*, a lot of gardening programmes, such as "Gardener's World", and Chelsea have had pieces on climate change. The resilience garden at Chelsea, which won a gold medal, and others by DEFRA and the Forestry Commission were all about resilience to climate change, because we need to look at our treescape and have a variety in our treescape. The garden that DEFRA was involved with as part of Year of Green Action at Hampton Court was also precisely about showing how you need to have resilience and what you can do in a small area and how you engage young people. I was at Carnaby Street yesterday because it is Bees' Needs Week. The owners have over 700 window boxes up Carnaby Street. We had four schools coming. Some of the children were some of the youngest beekeepers in the country. It was all about engaging with the natural world, understanding about bee health, about invasive species, about the Asian hornet.

Yes, we need to raise public awareness much more. I think about Asian hornet as one of our strong worries at the moment, alongside *Xylella*. We now have over 40,000 registered beekeepers. That means intelligence. The state should do a lot of things, but this is a matter on which civil society can also engage, whether it is observatories or the WhatsApp on Asian hornets, so that we can get it immediately confirmed or not—that rapid reaction. All the Asian hornet nests so far the last four years have been eradicated. In the Channel Islands, there is a big worry there—we are worried for them—but every time someone reports an Asian hornet, the teams have gone in and they have all been eradicated.

It is such a collaborative effort what we are seeking to do. The Government and the state need to do research, they need to do some regulations and so forth, but the message is that gardeners, canoeists, fishing people—everyone—should be alert to heightened biosecurity.

Q407 Derek Thomas: I am sure that you are as keen to get the Environment



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Bill in front of us as we are. What specific plans are there to restore habitat as a form of increasing resilience to invasions and increased risk posed by invasive species? Are there specific things that we can do to restore habitats or to help?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: There are a number of things that are ongoing, like peatland restoration. I answered a question on soil health yesterday from Lady Boycott, in which I mentioned that we are particularly concerned about loss of peat in the East Anglian Fen, for instance. There is a lot of work going on in terms of research into soil health, adaptability, what best we need to do in terms of not only climate change but soil fertility and food production, as well as environmental enhancement.

Yes, preparedness for climate change, adaptation for climate change, is clearly an essential. You will have to deal with the Environment Bill before it comes to the Lords, but I know it is substantial.

Q408 **Derek Thomas:** I think that you are keen as a Department to get it before us.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Very much so. If the 25-year environment plan is to be fulfilled and it is not just a lot of words, then we have to put into action all the things that the land can provide: working with farmers for cleaner water and better air quality—with 72% of the land in this country farmed, clearly that is essential—ensuring that our machinery, whether it is combustion engines, whether it is vehicles, all of that is hugely essential, and invasive species are one of the five key issues that are affecting our environment.

Q409 **Chair:** Before we move on, can I just ask Professor Spence about the false acacia? Is that a tree?

Professor Spence: It is a tree, yes.

Q410 **Chair:** This is planted by local authorities at the moment. I cycle past about five false acacias on my way home in London. Why is that now a threat?

Dr Moore: Because it can spread. I have a house in France and you can see that one of the woods in the back has just been taken over by false acacia. It has been around for a long time. I think that it was brought over from the Americas in the 1600s.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: 1630s. I have this beside me always. Seriously, this is a very excellent bible and here is the false acacia.

Dr Moore: We have one of the authors behind us.

Q411 **Chair:** You are worried about takeover. Have we seen any evidence of false acacia takeover?



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Dr Moore: Not yet, as far as I know, in the UK. I live in York and even that far north on a south-facing slope I can see it beginning to spread by suckers and it is something that is definitely worrying us.

Q412 **Chair:** It spreads by suckers under the roots like a blackthorn? It will come up into your garden?

Dr Moore: Yes, absolutely.

Q413 **Chair:** What should local authorities do if they have five of them planted along the street?

Dr Moore: I would not advise them to plant it, particularly in the south.

Q414 **Chair:** It is too late. They have been planted there for the last 15 years, so what should they do with them now?

Dr Moore: They could take them out. They could remove them before they become a problem. It is potentially one of the sleeper species that is not yet invasive in GB but may well become so if the climate continues to warm.

Q415 **Chair:** It could show up in someone's back garden? Could it travel underneath the house?

Dr Moore: I wouldn't think it would travel underneath the house. It is not quite like Japanese knotweed, no.

Chair: Good to know, thank you very much.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: In raising that, it pricks my ears that in terms of guidance on future planting policy and working with the Horticultural Trades Association, these sleepers are ones to be dealt with with caution.

Dr Moore: If I could add briefly, about 10 years ago DEFRA funded a guide on gardening without invasive species; I think there were three leaflets. One was on terrestrial plants, one was on pond plants and one was a general leaflet. We would be looking, with extra resources for our Be Plant Wise campaign, to revive those. I am not sure if it is—

Q416 **Chair:** Does this guidance go out to local authorities, all this research that is happening? Does DEFRA issue guidance to local authorities on tree planting, yes or no?

Professor Spence: The Forestry Commission issues guidance to all stakeholders and all landowners, so that would include local authorities.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Obviously we have done a lot of work, particularly on ash dieback, with a lot of the local authorities that are particularly engaged on this Forestry Commission toolkit that has been supplied to local authorities on how to manage their ash trees. Yes, health and safety means that they need to deal with those trees that are badly affected—

Q417 **Chair:** That is not my question. It is about planting street trees. Is there



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any guidance from DEFRA on that?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The Forestry Commission is the route for that.

Q418 **Chair:** But have they issued anything that you know, Minister?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Candidly, I do not have it in front of me, but what I will do is supply to the Committee—

Q419 **Chair:** Dr Moore, do you know given that you are chief non-native species officer?

Dr Moore: I don't think we have. We can certainly check.

Q420 **Caroline Lucas:** I wanted to talk about the Department for International Trade and to ask you what kind of formal relationships you have with them when it comes to measures to try to stop invasive species coming via new trading routes.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Our arrangements on all of those things are through the regulations on animal and plant health. In other words, our arrangements have been traditionally through the European Union and the regulations that are required through that prism so that across Europe there is free trade and that we would, therefore, be acting in line with what would be the regulations on all of those.

As for international trade, and therefore trade in plants, certainly all the regulations would apply. Did we not have an issue about the presentation of a tree once?

Professor Spence: Where there are any trading issues in relation to trees, then we refer to our import controls regulation. Some species are completely prohibited. Others can be controlled and are subject to additional declarations and so forth.

Q421 **Caroline Lucas:** Are you in any discussions, though, particularly in the context of Brexit and so forth? We heard evidence of people's concerns about new trading routes, more trade—if Brexit goes ahead—coming from, for example, South America or Asia, and the new threats that that could pose in terms of invasive species coming in. Are there any discussions going on with the Department for International Trade about those future risks?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I am not aware myself of direct conversations on that specific point, but all of our trade arrangements will be predicated on our adhering to what is the law of the land, and whether it is animal health, plant health or bee health, we already have those standards and requirements.

Q422 **Caroline Lucas:** The point is that if our trade patterns change substantially as a result of Brexit—in other words, if we are trading far more with Asia and South America and North America—presumably that might at least mean that some of those regulations need to be looked at



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again to check that they are fit for purpose.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Certainly. In all the trading that we already have with countries in South America, Central America and so on, those rules that we already have would continue to apply for the produce that they are already bringing in.

Q423 **Caroline Lucas:** As I understand it, right now, as part of the EU, we get an early warning system when we are aware of invasive species in other parts of the EU. We can see it slowly coming over and we have relationships in place to be able to respond to that. If post-Brexit those relationships become less robust, it has been put to us by a number of witnesses that one way of dealing with that would be to set up an inspectorate dedicated to the interception of invasive species at the UK border. Is that being considered?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Yes. The concept of an inspectorate is something we should consider, given that we have other inspectorates. I certainly am more than sympathetic to that consideration. It is something that in the spending review we will be looking at because it is vital that we raise the bar on the considerations of invasive species. Obviously, any new trade route has to adhere to our existing regulations. For the future we want to do more, but we are recognised as world leading. We have experts alongside me who go around the world to our overseas territories—

Caroline Lucas: I have lots more questions, so perhaps—

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Sorry.

Q424 **Caroline Lucas:** You say that it could be considered. I would be interested to know if there is actual work going on right now about what a new inspectorate should look like.

Dr Moore: First, on the issue of trade and how important it is, some figures for invasive species: something like 56% of our non-native species pre-1950 were from Europe. That has dropped to 24% since then as we have traded more with temperate Asia particularly and the Americas, which is an interesting fact. Already, it has changed.

We are looking at an inspectorate function. For the GB Non-native Species Programme Board last year I pulled together a series of papers, which I am happy to share with the Committee if necessary. One of the suggestions from that meeting was that we look at inspectorate functions. My colleagues and I have identified 51 potential duties of an invasive species inspectorate or enforcement functions, of which we think 39 are not covered by existing inspectorates. Twelve are partially covered. Thirteen are key duties, of which 10 are not covered. We are certainly looking at it and we have started that process.

Q425 **Caroline Lucas:** That is encouraging. That raises the question about co-ordination of both the existing inspectorates and certainly this new one if



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it were to happen. Some of the evidence we received suggested that some improvement could be made between that co-ordination. Do you have any proposals around that?

Dr Moore: It is possible that some of that, if the Government did decide to have an inspectorate function, could be done by other inspectorates. Already our Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate is working very closely with us on the invasive species listed in the EU regulation and intercepting them at the border where necessary, and also our animal health inspectors. There is a good degree of co-operation.

As Lord Gardiner mentioned earlier, one of the good things that came out of Chalara back in 2012 was that the Department developed monthly biosecurity meetings, chaired now by Lord Gardiner of course, where we look at animal health risks, plant health risks, bee health and invasive species in the round. That brings together a great degree of collaboration and co-ordination.

Q426 **Caroline Lucas:** Okay. I wanted to ask a specific question about why it took so long to ban the sale of water primrose and floating pennywort. As I understand it, there were repeated recommendations from industry associations from the early 2000s, yet the ban did not happen until 2014.

Dr Moore: In order to comply with WTO rules, we have to have a comprehensive risk assessment in place. We established the risk analysis mechanism only in 2007 and it takes a few—

Q427 **Caroline Lucas:** What was happening before that? If people were raising this as a serious concern in the early 2000s and then we are talking about some action that took place in 2007—

Dr Moore: I am trying to remember when we had the ability to ban the sale of species. That came about only relatively recently. We did not have that. We could list species you could not release into the wild under section 14 and schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. I am trying to think which Act amended that to give us the ability to ban the sale of species.

Q428 **Caroline Lucas:** Even if it was 2007, though, the ban did not happen until 2014.

Dr Moore: Until 2014, seven years, yes.

Q429 **Caroline Lucas:** Why did it take seven years?

Dr Moore: We did not have a risk analysis mechanism in place before that.

Q430 **Caroline Lucas:** I have no idea. How long does a risk analysis take?

Dr Moore: It can take a year or two to do a risk analysis, plus we had lots of other competing risk assessments to do for lots of species for lots of reasons.



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Q431 **Caroline Lucas:** Are you confident that in the future a ban could happen more quickly? It feels like seven years is an awfully long time. We have heard already that by the time all this work is done, the things we are worried about have already taken hold.

Dr Moore: Yes, I agree absolutely. We are far slicker now. We have learned lots of lessons from our plant health colleagues in particular.

Q432 **Caroline Lucas:** What are you doing to mitigate the risk of importing invasive species specifically through online sales? It has been suggested that that is a bit of a loophole.

Dr Moore: It is a potential issue and I know that DEFRA colleagues have been assiduous in chasing down when it is reported that there are online sales of banned species. It is one of the potential duties of a dedicated inspectorate or an enforcement function if we had that, rather than having DEFRA policy colleagues doing it.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Also, online sales would be subject to the same import requirements. The passporting requirements would be the same and APHA undertakes regular checks on that particular pathway. But we live in a global trading world and I worry and express frustration that it takes a long time. Immediate action is needed when an invasive species comes in. I agree that the moment it gets established it is so much more difficult.

On the online sales, DEFRA and APHA are working with online retailers. Clearly, one of the issues we always have to address is that they are bringing it in because they think they can sell it. We need to stop them bringing in—

Q433 **Caroline Lucas:** That does not sound very urgent. The Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association said that it had, in its words, repeatedly sent examples of illegal aquatic plant sales found on eBay and Amazon to the Animal and Plant Health Agency, but as yet the only avenue available to them is to advise sellers about the law. That feels like an entirely inadequate set of powers to deal with a growing problem.

Dr Moore: They do ask them to take them down and they always have complied.

Q434 **Caroline Lucas:** But they have to do more than just ask them to take them down, surely. There needs to be stronger rules in this area.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: That is right.

Q435 **Caroline Lucas:** What are you going to do about it?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Action this day. Absolutely, whether you buy it online or at a nursery, they should be subject to absolutely the same biosecurity arrangements. We are getting a lot of the aquatic plants because of people who dispose of them irresponsibly. That is why we have them in ponds and watercourses. If it is emerging that online



trading is proving a route for banned species and it is not being satisfactorily dealt with by the online retailers, we must take action, yes.

Q436 **Caroline Lucas:** Good. That has certainly been a theme of some of the evidence we have been taking so far.

I have a couple more questions about public awareness. We have heard that public awareness of the Government's biosecurity campaigns has gone down. Do you have a sense of why that is and what steps you are taking to reverse that?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Funnily enough, this year and this summer, I would be very interested to hear what the feedback might be after the holiday season because we have stepped up at ports and airports the work on "Don't Risk It" and "Check, Clean, Dry". I would be interested in any evidence of where this is not hitting targets because people going on holiday this year, particularly in this summer period, should be seeing a lot more of that.

I would be very interested in hearing if there is any feedback on that because there should be. This is all part of the civic society getting engaged and, of course, on invasive species there is a huge amount of work by volunteers in civic society wildlife trusts and others. I see a lot of them and their groups are being very successful in helping us.

Q437 **Caroline Lucas:** The evidence we have had so far is that "Check, Clean, Dry" is well known but "Be Plant Wise" is not and, indeed, awareness is going down, not up.

Dr Moore: From some of the statistics, we have spent since 2008 about £960,000. This is the Government's spend, mainly DEFRA. That was in 11 years, so it is £87,000 per annum. That is mainly on "Be Plant Wise" when it was launched in 2010 and "Check, Clean, Dry" launched in 2011.

The resources have been limited, so we have concentrated our efforts particularly on "Check, Clean, Dry" and, as the Minister said, trying to keep out these Ponto-Caspian freshwater species from getting here. That is why we have also concentrated our efforts on those pathways of angling and recreational boating.

Q438 **Caroline Lucas:** Is the lack of resources a real problem?

Dr Moore: It is, potentially. We had a look at the New Zealand spend. Between 2005 and 2008, they spent 10 times what we spent on "Check, Clean, Dry"—about £600,000—and their level of awareness is much higher than ours. We do have money. We have contributions from eight of the water companies, which has been excellent. That £450,000 over three years has helped us to run a border campaign, which the Minister referred to.

Q439 **Caroline Lucas:** Do you have a sense of how much money you would need to do what you would like to do?



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Dr Moore: Yes. We were thinking we needed an extra £120,000 to £200,000 per annum. That would help to leverage money from the private sector as well.

Q440 **Caroline Lucas:** You mentioned New Zealand. Have you considered replicating their approach with citizen science? Lord Gardiner, you were talking earlier about the role of civil society. I understand that in New Zealand they have a programme where 150,000 people have been trained in biosecurity and they are all out there with their apps and feeding back quite a lot of helpful information. Is that something we could do here?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Every year for Invasive Species Week I join a group of volunteers. One year it was pulling out floating pennywort. Another year it was Himalayan balsam. This year it was American skunk cabbage. This is with volunteers. If we totalled up the number of people in the national parks and civic society, it would be thousands. An ambition is to get ever more people to do it because the people I join for the day doing this really enjoy it and have a sense of purpose. For instance, the Himalayan balsam in the upper reaches of the New Forest National Park has been reduced very considerably because of the team of people with Catherine Chatters, who is one of these heroes who organises these things, involving not only civic society but business. Instead of business going off and playing with paint or something, they will come and have a day bonding and pulling—

Q441 **Caroline Lucas:** Does it need the Government to give it a push, as in New Zealand?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The Government did set up and DEFRA did fund from 2011 to 2015—deliberately it was for a distinct period—local action groups precisely to get this going. Nearly all of them are continuing in some way, whether it is with Japanese knotweed or Himalayan balsam, mainly on the plant side.

In the New Forest, it is working. That civic society engagement is a win that I would want to expand—

Q442 **Caroline Lucas:** I am sure it is working. I am interested in ways to scale it up and whether, for example, there is going to be a formal review of exactly how many of those local action groups are still very active after five years once the funding has finished and whether there needs to be something else in that space.

Dr Moore: As Lord Gardiner said, we spent about £1.5 million between 2011 and 2015 on 29 local action groups. We still have about 18 local action groups on the books. As Lord Gardiner said, the New Forest has one of the most active ones. They are controlling something like 17 species, including almost accidentally a national eradication of the Venus flytrap without even realising it. They have a contribution to make.



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The Cumbrian one developed Event Biosecurity, which we are aping now. The Norfolk Mink Project is doing fantastic work on mink at a large level. This is part of the examination of resources we did last year when we were looking to put in place something similar to what had been in place previously when we were supporting this.

Q443 **Caroline Lucas:** Why have you not put out a campaign raising awareness of the risks of dumping plants and pot-plant soil, given that is one of the main pathways for invasive species?

Dr Moore: We have a campaign for “Be Plant Wise”. We have directed heretofore at aquatic plants because they are much more likely to be invasive than terrestrial plants. Only about 7% of terrestrial plants, luckily, turn out to be invasive. For aquatic plants it is more like 40% or 50%. We have directed our efforts at the aquatic plants.

We are now looking to revitalise “Be Plant Wise”, having concentrated for a long time on “Check, Clean, Dry”. Hopefully, that will be out later this year. One of the suggestions is that we use it for terrestrial plants as well.

Q444 **Chair:** The Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association told us “Be Plant Wise” is “out of date”, has led to confusion about the target audience, what action it promotes and which aquatic species are banned, and only five of the current 14 species are listed. This is full of holes, isn’t it?

Dr Moore: That is why we are going to be looking at it and revising it.

Q445 **Chair:** It is full of holes.

Dr Moore: It is not full of holes. The basic message, which is do not dump species in the wild, particularly aquatic plants, holds true. There they are referring to the list of species of EU concern on the website.

Q446 **Chair:** Are we still on track for the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order coming into force on 1 October?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I am having discussions about that with colleagues in Wales as well because I—

Q447 **Chair:** Has the statutory instrument gone through this place? Is it a statutory instrument? Has that gone through the legislative process?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Yes, absolutely, it has all gone through, but I am hearing, in terms of the consultation, which we have to undertake on the management—all I would say is I am hopeful we will get it done by 1 October. I am saying something to the Committee because it is so current in some of the meetings I am having as to whether, to get this right, we may need to have a couple more months to get it done. I am saying something because I do not want to mislead the Committee because it is very current in the discussions I have had in only the last couple of days.

Q448 **Chair:** What are the issues that are holding it up? Is this not something



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everybody wants to get behind?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I could not agree more. No one could be more frustrated than me about it. But we need to co-ordinate this with our Welsh colleagues and also Scotland and Northern Ireland. I am not blaming any particular part of the administration or anything, but we need to get this co-ordinated across the United Kingdom and that work is undergoing. We are about to start the consultation process on the species literally in the next few weeks. I hope we can get that done in proper time and to have that properly assessed so that we can bring forward our plans. We are working on that at the moment.

Q449 **Chair:** When was this statutory instrument passed?

Dr Moore: It was in February or March.

Q450 **Chair:** I do not understand. If something was passed in February or March—

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: It was due to come into force in October. I am really saying that—

Q451 **Chair:** The consultation has not started in July?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: It is literally about to start again.

Q452 **Chair:** We have waited four months to begin a consultation?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: There was a lot of preparation to be done on the 14 species. I would like to put on record that I am, of course, frustrated that this is where it is. I would have liked to have done it many years ago, candidly, but that is where I am at.

Q453 **Chair:** Can I ask the scientific colleagues about *Hydrocotyle leucocephala* or Brazilian pennywort? Is that classed as an invasive non-native?

Dr Moore: I have not heard of that.

Q454 **Chair:** I am just looking at what is available on Amazon. *Centella asiatica* or Asiatic pennywort and Brazilian pennywort are both available for sale.

Dr Moore: We have a native pennywort in this country, from what I know.

Chair: These are the Brazilian ones.

Dr Moore: We could certainly risk assess it. It might be useful to do so.

Chair: Let us take that offline but I would be grateful for your thoughts on that. There are these things and you do not have the powers to force them to be taken offline. That seems to be a very large hole. We will move on with a question from Alex.

Q455 **Alex Sobel:** First, I want to congratulate the Department for the action taken last week on the Asian hornet. There was reporting and there was very quick action and early intervention to eradicate the Asian hornet in



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Hampshire. That is a success story for the Department, but I understand that there are only six invasive species action plans currently in place. How are you intending to prevent other species coming in and what action are you taking to roll that out?

Dr Moore: The main thing we are hoping to do is to concentrate on pathways. We have learned this lesson from our plant health colleagues. Concentrating on pathways that cover a multitude of species is the better way to do it. We started in the early years of the secretariat and the GB Non-Native Species Programme Board looking to do quite a few invasive species action plans. We will be developing action plans for 14 of the species listed under EU regulation very shortly and consulting on those. We are trying to up the ante on rapid responses so that when things turn up we hit them before they become established.

Q456 **Alex Sobel:** Between 2012 and 2014 you implemented these six invasive species action plans. Exactly five years ago the last one was implemented. Why have we had no new action plans in that intervening period? In two years you managed six. In five years you have managed none.

Dr Moore: We have been concentrating on other things—for instance, the Asian hornet. I have a specimen here if anybody would like to look at it.

Q457 **James Gray:** Is it dead?

Dr Moore: It is well dead. It is frozen. It is in a little block of clear Perspex.

Q458 **Chair:** We would like to see that. If you could pass it around, that would be fascinating. Thank you.

Dr Moore: We are trying to ape the situation with that and develop a lot more contingency plans. One of my colleagues here in the room has been developing and trying to agree a set of generic contingency plans that cover about 40 species.

Q459 **Alex Sobel:** I am taking a photo of the hornet.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: We have been dealing with the Asian hornet as well, but the Environment Agency has eradicated all populations of fathead minnow and the highly invasive black bullhead. They are working on the non-native white river crayfish. We are dealing with water milfoil. There are a number of other invasive species—I would like to suggest American bullfrog—where successful eradications have taken place. It would be fair to say that the most successful eradications have taken place in our overseas territories where 90% of the UK's biodiversity rests.

On the Asian hornet, we have the app and the ability now to register beekeepers. We have now over 40,000 registered beekeepers. There is the early detection and surveillance of civic society with the very strong bond the beekeepers have. The hornet is an invader that affects the



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honeybee in particular. There is a great army of people out there determined to help us. That is why it is important to have specimens like that. We were up to 8,000 reported sightings last year. Reports go to CEH. They are looking at it. There were 8,000 reported and only eight were confirmed as Asian hornets.

Q460 **Alex Sobel:** The beekeepers have a WhatsApp group and they discuss it and report it into the Department and CEH?

Professor Spence: No, we have an app called Asian Hornet Watch, which you can download on to your smart device. That has photographs so that you can check whether it looks like that. You can upload a photograph. It will capture its location and then it goes straight to the triage process. The Centre for Ecology and Hydrogeology carries that out. Then, if it is a credible finding, we will send an inspector to have a look.

Q461 **Alex Sobel:** That sounds like good practice. How many species do you have a similar process for?

Dr Moore: That is the only species. We have five species as alert species, but that is the only one because it is one of the key ones.

Q462 **Alex Sobel:** It sounds like a model of good practice that you need to roll out.

Dr Moore: It is an absolute model of good practice. We have already eradicated four species. Rather than developing plans for the sake of plans, we would prefer to concentrate on actions. We are attempting to eradicate monk parakeets, topmouth gudgeon, water primrose and variable-leaf water milfoil, and we have a whole string of other new priorities we would like to tackle as well.

Q463 **Alex Sobel:** Coming on to new priorities, we had Kew in here and in 2006 oak processionary moth was spotted but has not been tackled quickly enough. Our understanding from the evidence is that that is because agencies could not decide whether it was a public health or a plant health issue and it fell between the stools. What are you doing about oak processionary moth and how are you ensuring that this sort of scenario does not happen again?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: After all these issues, in particular with ash dieback, Professor Nicola Spence was appointed, precisely picking up that these matters were not, in my view, properly looked after. That is why Professor Nicola Spence was appointed.

Professor Spence: For oak processionary moth we have a core zone in west London where we know that the pest is established and around that is a control zone and a surveillance zone. We are taking action in the control zone, the strategy being to try to stop the oak processionary moth spreading any further. The rest of the UK is designated a protected zone, which means we have controls over import of oaks into that protected zone and we take action if we find OPM in the protected zone.



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We will destroy the trees and eradicate the pest from the protected zone. Protecting the rest of the UK is the priority, but we are trying to contain and reduce the impact of OPM in the core zone.

We were talking earlier about research we are investing in to look at whether parasitoids of the oak processionary moth would have potential in the future for control. We have been trialling tree injection treatments. We spray the moths in the control zone with a biocide called *Bacillus thuringiensis*. It is a combination of spraying, nest removal and eradicating new findings.

Dr Moore: On the general issue of rapid responses, that is a very valid point. From 2006 when OPM arrived, there was a bit of finger-pointing between agencies. We have a rapid response working group, which has met on many occasions. It developed a protocol for identifying lead agencies. It is a decision tree, which points to the agency that then leads on each individual rapid response if it is not obvious.

Q464 **Alex Sobel:** Coming on to the rapid response working group, my understanding is that that was set up in 2008 and worked well for a number of years, but we are not clear whether that rapid response working group for non-native species is still operating, how it is operating and who is involved with it.

Dr Moore: It met between 2008 and 2010 originally and it produced a series of recommendations and this protocol. In the review of the GB strategy on invasive species, one of the suggestions was that we needed to up the ante on rapid responses. We then reconvened the group in 2015. Between then and the end of 2017 it met seven times and did virtually all the work it needed to do. It was particularly aiming to assess future priority species, which it has done, and we sent those on to the programme board. It also looked at the resourcing needs of tackling those species as well as identifying the lead agency issue. Those have been reported to the board and have gone up to the programme board as part of the overall resourcing needs package.

Q465 **Alex Sobel:** Would we be able to have the outcomes of that for the inquiry?

Dr Moore: Absolutely. There were two specific recommendations to the board. One was to establish a virtual GB rapid response incident response team based around the Environment Agency, the Fish Eradication Team and APHA's vertebrate control side. I am happy to share all the papers with the Committee, yes.

Q466 **Chair:** Can I ask about who was on that? When we asked the Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency about it, the representatives were not aware. Why was that?

Dr Moore: I am not sure. I suspect, if there were other representatives from those agencies, they would have been very aware, yes. Both agencies were on it and contributed.



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Q467 **Chair:** They have not written back to us. They said they would write back and they did not. You have done that.

Dr Moore: That is ongoing, I think.

Chair: The letter from them?

Dr Moore: Yes.

Chair: Okay. It is underway. Thank you.

Q468 **James Gray:** Rapid reaction is very important and, of course, there are things that need to be done, but it is reasonably easy to do and reasonably easy to say, "If this thing arrives, we must deal with it". Much harder is long-term strategic eradication of the invasive species that are already here.

First, do you think that when you make your submission on the comprehensive spending review you will be asking for money for eradication of things that have been here a long time already? In particular, can you address yourselves, please, to the question of the grey squirrel and what you intend to do about that?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: On the grey squirrel, some of the most interesting work is going on in York. It is about a fertility bait, which the scientists are working on. I do not want to promise anything, but so far the progress is encouraging. This is precisely one of the areas where we think that by making the squirrel infertile—and at the moment it is all about retaining the infertility in the squirrel. A lot of work is also going on because the bait needs to be species-specific so that there is no collateral on this.

So far, the work is very encouraging. Through Professor Spence and others, I hear quite a lot about how the scientists are doing. They have trials on this. This is, for instance, an investment not only through the Government but also through the Squirrel Accord, which is part-funding this work. That is an accord of a large number of groups interested because the grey squirrel is one of the most damaging mammals we have as an invader in terms of not only the pox and the devastation to the red squirrel population but the very considerable assault on our treescape. If we are to plant more trees, which we need to do, then we do need to be looking at how we protect those planted trees from the grey squirrel. I have leapt in on the grey squirrel because there is a lot going on.

Q469 **James Gray:** It is a good example, but the question was really about the commitment DEFRA has to the eradication of long-established invasive species. This is a straightforward question. Does Her Majesty's Government intend to eradicate the grey squirrel from these islands?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Our requirement under the EU regulations is that eradication is one of those options, but of course we are seeking an eradication or seeking containment, particularly in the areas where there



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are red squirrels. This work, we think, with the fertility bait is the one that will arrive at that solution—

Q470 **James Gray:** I am sorry. You are simply not answering the question at all. Does Her Majesty's Government intend to eradicate the grey squirrel from the United Kingdom or not?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: It is an EU regulation that we are continually—

Q471 **James Gray:** I know it is an EU regulation. I am interested in Her Majesty's Government. You are the Minister in front of us. I want to know whether your Government—

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: It is now, therefore, on the statute book of this country—

Q472 **James Gray:** Lord Gardiner, I have been here a very long time and you can ramble on for hours but I want a straightforward question.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I am not rambling on for hours.

Q473 **James Gray:** You are the Minister sitting in front of us. You are representing Her Majesty's Government. Does Her Majesty's Government intend to eradicate the grey squirrel or not?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: If the fertility bait works, that is the route by which we think it is the most practical. I am a practical man, as you know, and that is why we are seeking to eradicate the grey squirrel. It is part of the EU regulation, as I say. We need to manage it. We need to eradicate it if we can. I am being practical. I think the fertility route is the way we can eradicate the grey squirrel in parts of the country—and I am thinking particularly of urban areas—where other means would be more difficult.

I am being very practical in saying that it is desirable. Of course it is desirable because the grey squirrel is a very damaging mammal. I know there are people who do not think that and they do not think the grey squirrel should be on this list, but honestly, the damage of that mammal is immense.

Q474 **James Gray:** Okay, Her Majesty's Government does want to eradicate it. What would you, therefore, say to those people who do not agree with the regulation you are proposing to bring in, which would say that grey squirrels that have been caught and looked after in animal sanctuaries should be released? The same applies to foxes. The RSPCA until recently was releasing foxes into the countryside, believing it to be a helpful and caring thing to do. Should grey squirrels that have been cared for in animal sanctuaries be released or not? If not, how do you intend to stop them?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: No, it would be against the law to do so. We would be in line then with Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, where it



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is not permitted to release. This is precisely acknowledging that they are a damaging and invasive species. We have said that if a rescue centre wishes to retain the grey squirrel, it must not be released. In fact, it is against the law to release. It is emphatic. The regulations make that very clear and we will be in line with the rest of the United Kingdom.

Q475 **James Gray:** Finally, I know you are talking about possibly delaying the October date and I accept that point. It is good that you are frank with the Committee in that way. But the plan is to have species-specific management plans. Of the 14 in total, how many have already been completed and how many have not yet been completed?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: We are consulting on those management plans.

Dr Moore: They are pretty much ready to go for consultation in the next few weeks, yes, on the 14 species.

Q476 **James Gray:** That is pretty much ready to go and the only delay is from discussions with Wales, Scotland and so on?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: We want to get everything aligned.

Q477 **James Gray:** We should know quite shortly what the 14 management plans are when that consultation goes out. Will that be before 1 October? When will that be coming out?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: We are hoping the consultation will be—

Dr Moore: It should be out very shortly, yes.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I could give you the precise date, but I want to get this done certainly in a week or very soon.

Q478 **James Gray:** Before the summer recess?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I see no reasons why we should not.

Q479 **James Gray:** I have one other question on timings in passing. It is not actually related. We referred quite a lot to the Environment Bill. When will we see that?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Parts of the Environment Bill are ready, but I am told this will be presumably coming to your House before it comes to the House of Lords. I am not the Bill Minister, although I will be looking forward to getting it in the House of Lords—or whoever is doing my job then. I am not going to be able to give you a precise answer because I do not know.

Chair: There is another election going on, isn't there?

James Gray: I will stop asking, okay.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: It is imperative that if we are genuinely—as we are as a nation and as a Government—wanting to enhance the



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environment, we must have an Environment Bill that brings in a lot of the framework and the ability for Governments to be kept under scrutiny beyond Parliament, of course.

Q480 James Gray: Both candidates for the leadership have committed to leaving with or without a deal on Halloween. Will the Environment Bill come out before that or after it?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I do not know when the State Opening is going to be. The Environment Bill has been promised as a second-session Bill. I am afraid I do not know, as the Minister of Biosecurity and Rural Affairs, when the second session will start and, therefore, when a Bill will be introduced into your House but, obviously, the sooner the better.

Chair: Or not. Philip?

Q481 Mr Philip Dunne: Thank you, Chair. Apologies for missing the earlier part of the session. Lord Gardiner, I want to talk about funding. We understand you have considerable resources at your disposal for dealing with animal health particularly and plant health. But the funds for dealing with invasive species have to fit within a £1 million budget. Why is it so small?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: You have hit upon something we should be and are going to be considering as part of our forthcoming spending review proposals. I cannot say any more than that, but we recognise that with invasive species being one of the five major adverse impacts on our environment, we need to raise the bar on this. There is very good work going on. We need to do more of it. It needs to be more comprehensive.

I do use the opportunity of this hearing to say that invasive species have not had the recognition that animal, plant and bee health have had. With work into research, doing things and regulation, all of this is an area where we should have more ambition. This is an area where we are being damaged and we are being damaged because we have not been rigorous enough with it in previous decades and indeed previous centuries. We have been sleepwalking, in my view, over the last 100-plus years. Our great plant hunters brought back great plants that we all enjoy in our gardens. They brought back some terrible invaders. The Japanese knotweed, for instance, came to Kew and Kew happily—not realising, of course—sent it around the country. That is how, for instance, we got an invader in a previous era. We are now much more aware of those sorts of concepts for plants and for all invaders that should be much more rigorous.

Q482 Mr Philip Dunne: Does that go to your monitoring and regulating of plant species coming in from abroad, bringing with them disease, which has affected so many of our trees? Are you looking to do more to contain the spread of disease imported through plants?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: That is imperative, but the Professor will comment.



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Professor Spence: We operate an import control regime currently, which is under the EU overall plant health regime, but we do have many national measures that we introduce on top of that when we feel the risk to the UK is significant. We have statutory notifications on all the main tree species so that we are notified that they are going to be arriving and can inspect them. We use protected zones more than any other member state. That means we have freedom from certain pests and diseases and we can require much stronger import controls on plant species that are being introduced into the UK. We have a range of regulatory tools we can use.

Q483 **Mr Philip Dunne:** Stronger than the EU requirements?

Professor Spence: Yes.

Q484 **Mr Philip Dunne:** Do you have evidence that you have succeeded in doing that?

Professor Spence: As one example, we brought in additional measures on potatoes imported from Spain because of a pest called the potato flea beetle, *Epitrix*. We felt the controls and the declarations were not adequate. We intercepted *Epitrix*. We have a requirement that all potatoes from Spain are washed and that has been very successful. We have had no further interceptions since we introduced that about two years ago.

Q485 **Mr Philip Dunne:** That intervention would have come out of the plant health budget, presumably?

Professor Spence: Yes.

Q486 **Mr Philip Dunne:** If you are going to apply for more money in the spending review, which we would welcome in this area, would you be expecting to deploy some of that into a rapid response unit?

Dr Moore: Yes, absolutely. One of the reasons why the resourcing is low in this area is because of historical accident. The plant and animal health regimes are longstanding. The EU has had a plant health regime since 1977. We have had EU legislation on invasive species only since 2015, so we have a lot of catching up to do.

We looked at the spend by the agencies across GB on control, long-term control mostly, and that was close to £10 million. But when we compared that to the general biodiversity spend, it was small. We have fallen between two stools, but hopefully that will be rectified shortly.

Q487 **Mr Philip Dunne:** Do you have local action groups around the country monitoring and looking?

Dr Moore: Yes.

Q488 **Mr Philip Dunne:** How much funding can they access?



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Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The local action groups were set up with funding and the money was there distinctly between 2011 and 2015. Those local action groups have, in many cases, flourished. They have been very successful. We do not directly fund them but there are all sorts of ways in which they are working with their local authorities and with us. I am very supportive of that contribution. They are our eyes and ears. Also, in terms of our management plans, particularly on the plant side, the way to deal with some of the widespread incursions is with the help of volunteers in civic society as well as the Environment Agency and the other bodies that are working on this.

Q489 **Chair:** There is no budget for it, though? There was £1 million between 2010 and 2015. That money no longer exists?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: No, it was distinct. It was never intended to go beyond 2015. It was about setting up local action groups. I have been and worked with every year of invasive species a different action group and I have to say that they are very successful and very committed. Ideally, we should have more of them.

Q490 **Chair:** But 18 of the 29 are now going, so we have lost 10 in the four years since the funding ceased. The reality is that they do not go on fresh air. They do need cash.

Dr Moore: Yes, and this is part of the bid or bids we will be putting together. We have earmarked roughly £300,000 for this. However, there is work going on with RAPID LIFE, which is an EU LIFE-funded project to develop regional invasive species management plans, RIMPs, which are like the GB strategy but at a regional level. That is a three-year project finishing in 2020. We use that as a model, plus the Water Framework Directive funding from 2011 to 2015, to see how much funding we would need.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The question may no doubt be what happens after exit. We will be continuing with a new DEFRA LIFE team and it will oversee the LIFE projects in England, including replacing the EU-agreed contribution. It is very important that that work continues and we recognise that.

Mr Philip Dunne: You have pre-empted my question.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I am sorry. I thought that—

Q491 **Mr Philip Dunne:** No, I am very impressed that you are on top of your brief, as usual, Lord Gardiner. Can you tell us how much you are allocating to that replacement scheme?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Whatever the contribution is. I do not know. I do not have in front of me the precise figure.

Q492 **Mr Philip Dunne:** You referred to £300,000.



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Dr Moore: The agreement is to match whatever funding would be coming from the UK Government's side, but after that there is a lot of development work on the LIFE replacement. I do not think we can say how that is going to work after EU exit.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: But we are clear that we wish to continue that work after we have left.

Q493 **Mr Philip Dunne:** Perhaps you could write to the Committee and tell us how much you are bidding for in replacement of those funds. There is one other source of EU funding, which is for overseas territories to help deal with invasive species, the EU BEST fund. Will you be applying some of your CSR bid to that as well?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: On the overseas territories, we are already funding quite a lot of work. £2.1 million is going to Gough Island. £800,000 went to South Georgia. On Gough Island, it is about 25% of the funding of that mouse eradication proposal, which will be implemented in 2020. With 90% of our UK biodiversity being in the overseas territories, we place great importance on that. Of the 14 overseas territories, Dr Moore has visited many, providing expertise. Wherever they are, we need to be helping the overseas territories—particularly the less affluent ones—in terms of direct money. Also, the world resource and the world expertise I have alongside me is a very important expertise to share. That is why Dr Moore has been going to a lot of the overseas territories, advising on biosecurity and advising on continuing biosecurity.

Having eradicated the rats from South Georgia and with the pintails and pipits coming back, the last thing we want is a lapse in biosecurity and for the rats to return. That is why the protocol of the visitors arriving on South Georgia and the boats and so forth is very rigorous indeed. I have had discussions with the authorities from the Falkland Islands and South Georgia precisely because biosecurity is essential, having done this work and this eradication programme.

Some of the best eradication programmes have been achieved in our overseas territories. If we deal with the mice on Gough Island, where we are working with the RSPB and others, this will enable the Tristan albatross and the Gough bunting—precisely linked to that particular island—to be secured. At the moment, we are very worried about the continuing assault on those species.

Chair: We have a couple of follow-up questions on the OTs from James.

Q494 **James Gray:** For Gough Island, DEFRA provided £2.1 million out of a total cost of £9.5 million. South Georgia was entirely privately funded. DEFRA did not pay for it at all. It was done by the South Georgia Heritage Trust.

Dr Moore: £800,000 was provided by DEFRA, some of it directly from the Department and some of it from Darwin Plus, yes.



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Lord Gardiner of Kimble: To be precise, £337,000 came from Darwin Plus and the remainder was a direct DEFRA contribution.

Q495 **James Gray:** It was a total cost of £10 million. It was done largely by private funding.

Dr Moore: It was very useful to have Government funding to leverage more money from the private sector.

Q496 **James Gray:** We need to be clear about these things. We are going to talk about the other overseas territories in a moment. South Georgia's rat eradication would not have happened were it not for a Swedish pharmaceutical giant, Dr Frederik Paulsen. He paid for most of it. It was not the British Government at all. It was not the Government of South Georgia. It was not the Commissioner of South Georgia. It was not the Government of the Falklands. It was Dr Frederik Paulsen who paid for the eradication of the rats.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: It is a fact that £800,000 of British taxpayers' money went towards that project. That is the fact.

Q497 **James Gray:** Where will Gough Island get the £7 million extra it needs? We need total eradication, as you correctly said.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: We are working with the RSPB. I have had several meetings with the RSPB. It is raising with other sources £6 million and needs another £2 million or so. It is proceeding well.

Candidly, if someone is generous and wants to help, as definitely happened in South Georgia and as will happen in Gough Island, I have no complications with very rich people who have funds or territories that have funds. This is all about a mixed funding model. It was confirmed by the RSPB that having the Government's backing to this is very helpful to them. The mixed funding model worked very well.

Q498 **James Gray:** I was not decrying private funding. That is great, so long as you can find it. But if you cannot find it, what then happens? That was my question. Moving on to Ascension Island, people are very concerned. Was the fire ant or some such thing coming into the Ascension Island with the revamp of the airport?

Dr Moore: It was with the airport.

Q499 **James Gray:** The same applies in St Helena. If we cannot find private funding, which of course is great, to what degree does Her Majesty's Government wish to step up to the plate on the issue?

Dr Moore: The general answer to your question is that we did provide money, £1.26 million over four years, from the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, the CSSF, from the FCO, which is directed towards biosecurity. We have lots of expertise in the UK and we have been putting that expertise at the behest of the territories to stop the next fire ant arriving.



Part of that work has looked at pathway analysis. We did a gap analysis first, which showed that the biggest gap was in prevention. We then did some pathway analysis to look at the key pathways for each territory and then we did a large, extensive horizon-scanning exercise for each territory to identify what species were likely to arrive. Now we are working with the territories to develop pathway action plans for each territory and also developing legislation. A lot of the territories have very old legislation that dates from the colonial era and covers just agricultural issues. We are working with them to extend and develop model legislation and, with their attorney-generals' offices, to implement it.

Q500 James Gray: When will that be in place and how long will the new biosecurity legislation in the overseas territories take?

Dr Moore: It does take quite a while because usually the attorney-generals' offices in the territories are quite small and hard-pressed and they have lots of other priorities as well. If we have the model legislation and we have the drafter to go with them, to take them through and even in some cases to visit the territories, this will really facilitate it. It is happening now with St Helena, Ascension and Tristan de Cunha, possibly with the Falklands, and maybe with Turks and Caicos and with Montserrat. I am pretty sure it was Montserrat that had this fire ant introduced in the new airport.

Q501 James Gray: I was very encouraged by your acknowledgement that a very large part of Britain's interesting biodiversity is in the OTs. Would you say, looking forward over the next 10 years, you are confident that the biosecurity will work in the overseas territories and that regulatory things you are bringing in and the small amount of seed-corn funding you are supplying will be sufficient to preserve it?

Dr Moore: If we maintain the access of the territories to the expertise in the UK, that is vital going forward. This was also suggested by the Foreign Affairs Committee, which had a report earlier this year suggesting that some of the territories are not just looking to the FCO for expertise, and DfID as well, some of them, but to a wider Whitehall ask. We are very keen that this is maintained and that this expertise is at their disposal.

Q502 Chair: Thank you. Dr Moore, you told us there were these six pathways plans developed here in the UK, but then you ripped up the pathways plans. You did not want to go through and do all the pathways, so you just looked at 40 species in the round. I am wondering why you are doing pathways plans in the OTs.

Dr Moore: Sorry, it was the invasive species action plans that we stopped doing to concentrate on pathways and also to concentrate on action and contingency planning for the UK.

Q503 Chair: It is a different thing; it was the invasive species action plans that were stopped?



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Dr Moore: Yes, the ISAPs, as they are called.

Q504 **Chair:** You looked on the pathways and said—

Dr Moore: Yes, we decided—

Q505 **Chair:** Do you think pathways are the real way to go?

Dr Moore: Absolutely. We have followed what our plant health colleagues have been doing for some time and concentrating their effort on pathways.

Q506 **Chair:** Thank you for clarifying that. You also told us earlier that one of the recommendations of the rapid response working group was to have a virtual incident response team. Has that been set up? Does it happen?

Dr Moore: No, it has not happened yet.

Q507 **Chair:** What was the other recommendation from that rapid response working group?

Dr Moore: The two recommendations were related to that. The second one was that core funding for that team should be provided by the three governments based on anticipated need.

Q508 **Chair:** Has that happened yet?

Dr Moore: No, not yet. It has all been wrapped up in the probable SR19 bid.

Q509 **Chair:** “Virtual” sounds like it does not need to physically exist. It sounds like you could all meet on FaceTime. Why has that not yet been set up?

Dr Moore: That is mainly due to resourcing because it will take about £300,000 or £400,000 to set up the team and get the expertise in place. A lot of it is specialist expertise—

Q510 **Chair:** Are you saying you do not have the experts you need to rapidly respond to incidents?

Dr Moore: We have some. It depends on the incident. For instance, on Asian hornet, we have all the experts we need. I am trying to think of some of the other species where we would not have. For some of the vertebrates, for instance, we may be a bit short and also some people would be off doing other things.

Q511 **Chair:** Which vertebrates are you worried about?

Dr Moore: We are worried about things like Siberian chipmunk, for instance, and also particularly the raccoon dog, which has been in the news recently, and the sacred ibis. They are some of the key ones.

Q512 **Chair:** What about the parakeets? Are these monk parakeets the chaps—

Dr Moore: No.



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Q513 **Chair:** This is not the same thing?

Dr Moore: The ring-necked parakeet is a great example of where we failed way back when. When I first started working in the Department, which was the Ministry of Agriculture at the time, rather than tackling them when there were about 500 or 1,000 individuals—

Q514 **Chair:** When was that?

Dr Moore: This was back in about 1995 or 1996. We ducked the issue and commissioned research. By the time that was done, we were looking at a situation where we now have 30,000 and 40,000 and the population is rising. Ministers previous to Lord Gardiner decided we would not do the same with monk parakeets when the population was beginning to take off. It was at about 100 or 120. We now have it down to 20 and they will be gone within two or three years.

Q515 **Chair:** Where do they live?

Dr Moore: They build big stick nests. Initially, they were found in Borehamwood but I think the only population left is in the Isle of Dogs and it is very small.

Q516 **Chair:** Are these dangerous to power lines, telephone lines and things like that?

Dr Moore: They are. They build on utilities as well as in trees. I know that in the States they cost a vast amount of money. When they get wet, they tend to—

Q517 **Chair:** That is the power, though, isn't it? We have our cables below ground.

Dr Moore: Yes, but one of the nests somewhere in west London, not in Borehamwood, was on a mobile phone mast and they had to spend money going up to dismantle it with all the health and safety measures.

Q518 **Chair:** We have heard different responses about whether these ring-necked parakeets are invasive or not and whether they are a good thing or a bad thing. What is your view?

Dr Moore: They are definitely not a good thing. The problem is that getting the evidence to prove they are a bad thing can take a long time. By the time you have the evidence to show that, it is too late.

Q519 **Chair:** What are they squeezing out? The sparrows?

Dr Moore: No. Because they are hole-nesters and they occupy the nests very early in the season, they can oust other birds, things like nuthatches. Also, there is a lot of worry about tree-nesting bats. There has recently been some evidence that they are physically killing greater horseshoe bats—the biggest bats in Europe, massive things—in Spain. As always—

Q520 **Chair:** They look sweet but they have deadly beaks.



Dr Moore: They do and they are aggressive, yes.

Q521 **Chair:** They are fearless. If you walk through Hyde Park, you can feed one with an apple. It was a great moment of joy for my daughter last year.

If we leave the EU, will you consider deviating from the species on the list of concern, Minister?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: No, we will continue with the regulations that are on the statute book. We have no intention of changing those. The new arrangements will mean that we will be able to consider what would be on our own continuing list. I see this as an area where we should have more ambition. We should be recognising and investing in stopping new invasive species coming. Yes, wherever possible—and I use that word in a pragmatic sense—with all the invaders in this book, how will we control, manage or eradicate them? Science is going to help us. That is why I am very keen that the research budgets on these are enhanced.

I see this as a continuing process. Whatever our arrangements, we are a country that has taken more national measures on these sorts of matters than any other member of the EU. Our island status is part of that. Also, although I would absolutely say we need to do a lot more, we are a country that is regarded in Europe as leading on this. The expertise we have is a global resource as well as just UK and overseas territories.

Q522 **Chair:** The Government have committed to retaining a list of priority invasive species in domestic UK law via the Withdrawal Bill. That is a cut-and-paste of the laws as they stand. What is the process for maintaining and editing that list in the future?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: We will have the new arrangements of the EU forum and so forth. We will have our own. It will be through those mechanisms that we will have our own domestic arrangements equivalent to the EU ones with Professor Mumford and all the teams of scientists and advisers. Our arrangements will be replicated by the EU. I can safely say that I am confident we have the expertise and the scientific forum to continue to advise us if other species need to be added. I would not be at all surprised if we needed to think of other species being added.

Q523 **Chair:** We have evidence from Wildlife and Countryside Link, who said that your, "proposal to replace current access to the EU IAS Scientific Forum with existing UK agencies and organisations risks non-native species legislation being inadequately underpinned by, and responsive to, up to date and accurate information, science and data. These UK bodies do not ... currently possess the relevant expertise or data processing capacity to carry out this role effectively".

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Given what I have just said, that we are seen to be leading on this and that the European institutions mirror what we are doing, I am very happy to have a discussion with Wildlife and Countryside Link because I would take what it says seriously. I am



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confident we have the scientific expertise in this country to do that. Of course, I did know of that and it is one of the issues. When I have a regular catch-up I would be interested because it is very important that there is confidence in what we are doing. This is a really important area we must address.

Q524 **Chair:** What do our scientific colleagues think? Professor Spence?

Professor Spence: Similarly to the regulations on invasive species, we are planning to fully transfer all our EU regulations to our own statutes and then we will review those over time. We are setting up a replacement for the standing committee, which is a UK-wide national plant protection organisation group where we will have strategic discussions. We have the UK Plant Health Risk Group, which meets monthly. That will review risks and make recommendations for future legislation. We will continue to take additional action and additional measures when we feel it is necessary.

Q525 **Chair:** What would it mean if we did not have access to the EU Invasive Alien Species Information System in the future?

Dr Moore: It would not make much difference. I am trying to remember the statistics for NOTSYS, as it is called. We will have access to it within three months anyway, so we will be able to see, plus we have lots of contacts with our—

Q526 **Chair:** How will we have access to it within three months?

Dr Moore: Because it is publicly available.

Q527 **Chair:** It is a public thing so any person can go online?

Dr Moore: Yes. You do get a very rapid notification if you are part of the EU, as we currently are, of course.

Q528 **Chair:** How rapid is the notification if you are just a member of the public?

Dr Moore: I think it is within three months.

Q529 **Chair:** There is a delay of three months?

Dr Moore: Yes. In terms of the other bodies, I am very happy to support the Minister and say that the EU aped what we did. We are going back to our Non-Native Risk Analysis Panel, which has been meeting since 2007. They also copied our risk assessment methodology. Most of the EU risk assessments are using our methodology, which we developed back in 2004.

Q530 **Chair:** How many additional staff and resources are you dedicating to this new potential data processing side of things?

Dr Moore: I do not think we need anything extra. As part of the bid we were developing, we were anticipating there might be an extra need, but



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I am pretty sure we can function with what we currently have for our risk analysis.

- Q531 **Chair:** Thank you. Minister, if we moved away from the list of concern, either to heighten it or to weaken it, that would be regulatory divergence, wouldn't it?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: We are still in a position and we should be in a position that, in the same way as we have taken national measures before, if the analysis from our advisers was that we needed to take action against a particular species, then the national interest would have to come first. It would be a case of reasonableness. The Spanish were not very pleased with us when we took this decision on Epitrix, but we took it in the national interest to protect our potato growers here and that was a success.

In terms of divergence, adding different species thereafter, in my opinion, in the same way in which we are taking national measures, yes, it would need to be scientifically based. That is why we have the expertise to help us with that. We should be in a position in this country to take further action against certain species if they were to come here, if there was a hitchhiker and we tried everything and we could not stop this.

- Q532 **Chair:** But for both the WTO and the EU we would need to demonstrate—and it was not one of the issues we discussed earlier—the lag in terms of showing that this thing is a risk. There was a delay to a particular thing because of WTO rules. I cannot remember what it was.

Dr Moore: Yes, it was listing the five aquatic plant species.

- Q533 **Chair:** We have had this issue before where WTO rules meant we could not act as quickly as we wanted. That does not change if we leave the EU, does it? We still have to demonstrate to the WTO that we are not putting up barriers to trade.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: That is why the analysis needs to be thorough but swift in dealing with an outbreak, whether it is an invasive species or whether it is a disease. We do need to be able to take rapid action. That is why, in fact, with statutory instruments we can take those immediate measures if there is an issue and, yes, it needs to be a warranted intervention. But I cannot imagine and I do not envisage this. We need to be responsible. We have international obligations. We are signatories to international conventions on these matters, the Berne Convention and so forth. We want to act responsibly but we also must protect this country and its biosecurity if invasive species arise and we need to deal with them promptly.

The lesson we have learned is that we have not taken immediate action. This is why the Asian hornet is an example. So far—and I can only say "so far"—all the nests have been eradicated and, therefore, we are holding the line.



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Q534 **Chair:** Can I just come back to Dr Moore? The floating pennywort was done under the WTO. How many years did it take to prove to the WTO that we could ban it?

Dr Moore: At the time, we just informed the Commission.

Q535 **Chair:** It was done through the European Union?

Dr Moore: Yes.

Q536 **Chair:** Do you see it being a more cumbersome process if we have to do it through the WTO?

Dr Moore: No, because the European Commission has had three tranches of species to list and there is a three-month period when the WTO is notified and any member of the WTO can come and object or make comments on it. It will be straightforward.

Q537 **Chair:** They did not at that time?

Dr Moore: On the last list of species, only one country, but I do not think I can go into that.

Q538 **Chair:** Why?

Dr Moore: I am not sure. The European Commission told us about it and I am not sure if I can say any more.

Q539 **Chair:** A country that objected to the list and what happened?

Dr Moore: No, it queried just one species on the list. I am trying to remember it.

Q540 **Chair:** What was the species?

Dr Moore: It was Cortaderia, which is a type of pampas grass. It was something about importing pampas grass heads from South America.

Q541 **Chair:** Now we would have to go directly to the WTO?

Dr Moore: We would have to go directly to the WTO, yes.

Q542 **Chair:** Do you envisage any problems with that?

Dr Moore: No.

Chair: Okay, we will leave it there. Thank you all very much indeed.