

Clinton Devon Estates

Himalayan Balsam Control: Works undertaken in 2013

Commitment: Clinton Devon Estates recognises its legal obligation to control Himalayan Balsam. We are committed to taking all reasonable measures to control the spread of this species on our land through our own endeavours and working in partnership with other stakeholders.

Summary of Activity:

During 2013 Clinton Devon Estates developed a policy document and a control/eradication strategy on Himalayan balsam (see: <http://www.pebblebedheaths.org.uk/downloads.ashx>), and during the year, 35 staff days from all departments were employed in clearance activities of balsam and other invasive species, often in partnership with other groups including the Royal Marines and local community organisations.

The Appendix provides full details of the areas where Himalayan balsam has been recorded as present in 2013, and areas where Estate staff and other community groups have undertaken clearance work. Clinton Devon Estates recognises, and is grateful for, the efforts expended by community groups in helping the organisation to tackle invasive species on land it manages.

Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust (7 staff days). Effort concentrated on protecting the Pebblebed Heaths SSSI, SAC and SPA to ensure there is no spread onto the heaths from tributaries of the River Otter. Work in 2013 focused particularly on controlling and eradicating Himalayan balsam south of Hawkerland Brakes on Colaton Raleigh Common; at the site of the old quarry near the north-east corner of Colaton Raleigh Common; a section of the Colaton Brook adjacent to Back Lane; a short section of the main Otter River above White Bridge (with the Royal Marines), and a section of the Back Brook between Stoneyford and Goosemoor. Significant additional effort was spent in 2013 attempting to solicit effort from additional sources. Trust staff were successful in gaining support from the Royal Marines (30 man days) on the 13th June who assisted with clearance work on the main river and at the site of the 'Yettington swamp' on the Budleigh brook. In addition, work (through drainage management) was undertaken to eradicate a significant population of Parrot's feather from a pool on Colaton Raleigh Common. Throughout the season staff from the Conservation Trust also liaised with community groups engaged with balsam control with a view to ensuring that all future efforts locally are coordinated and mapped. This included the OVA and groups from East Budleigh and Newton Poppleford. An end of the clearance season a BBQ was hosted by the Conservation Trust in the autumn 2013 during which all clearance efforts were mapped and future clearance strategies discussed. Control means have included hand pulling, strimming, mulching and chemical spraying, dependent upon the location.

Forestry: 8 days: Effort focused on farmland and adjacent roadside vegetation to the east of Coombe Common (pulling; 12 hours), West Hill Plantation to the NE of Budleigh Salterton (strimming; 3 people days), Bicton Arena, Stowford (tractor and flail; 2 hours) and Dotton Farm (pulling; 1 day). In addition, work was undertaken at Beer (3 people days).

Farms: 10 staff days: The main geographic focus of the Farms Department is the primary Otter Valley floodplain and surrounding slopes between Newton Poppleford and Otterton, with dairy farming being the

predominant land use of this area. Himalayan balsam is abundant alongside all parts of the river, the railway embankment and field boundaries/hedgerow. The farm is organic which does not allow the use of chemical control of balsam. The Estate strategy is to control Himalayan balsam from the tributaries of the River Otter before attempting to control it in the main floodplain, and thus the Farms Department focused its efforts in 2013 on assisting clearance work on the tributaries, with the primary area visited being the Colaton Brook adjacent to Back Lane, in association with the Otter Valley Association.

Property and Land Department: A copy of the Estate's Himalayan balsam policy, information on balsam and its control, and a reminder of legal and tenancy obligations to clear Himalayan balsam from land was sent to all tenant farmers.

Other Departments (Directorate/Finance/Admin/Land and Property): 10 staff

days. Two staff events were organised in 2013 to assist the efforts of other teams. These focused on a section of the Back Brook between Stoneyford and Goosemoor, and a section of the Colaton Brook adjacent to Back Lane.

Planned works in 2014: Staff from the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust will liaise with volunteers from community groups in the spring 2014 regarding finalising the Estate's geographic attack strategy for 2014. Key will be re-focussing effort on the Back Brook, Colaton Brook and Budleigh Brook, with the 'Yettington swamp' being one key area which needs urgent addressing in 2014. It is also hoped that efforts can intensify on the Knowle brook. In addition, efforts will also be made to try and ensure that balsam does not spread further westwards from the main valley than the minor road running between Newton Poppleford and Otterton. and to tackle discrete populations associated with farm buildings. Staff from the Conservation Trust will continue to control any outbreaks of balsam on the Pebblebed Heaths, whilst staff from the Forestry team will focus on chemical control in plantation and broadleaf woodland areas.

Lessons learnt in 2013: There will be improved recording of the number of times each site is visited, the date, and the means of control.

Appendix

