



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

York Biotech Campus
Sand Hutton
YO41 1LZ

Dear Sir/Madam,

Proposed release of the non-native biological control agent *Listronotus elongatus* for the control of *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides* (floating pennywort)

I am writing to invite your views on whether the non-native biological control agent, *Listronotus elongatus*, should be released into England to reduce the impact of *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*, a widespread and invasive non-native aquatic weed.

Hydrocotyle ranunculoides was first recorded as being naturalised in the UK in Essex in 1990, and has since been found across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The weed clogs up slow-moving water bodies, hampering access for recreational activities, such as fishing, and reduces the aesthetic appeal of landscapes, with knock on effects to tourism. It also negatively impacts on water flow, sedimentation, and light and oxygen levels, and endangers communities of native plant species and associated fauna. Management of *H. ranunculoides* is currently labour intensive, expensive and not very effective.

To solve this problem, CABI, in partnership with South American collaborators, carried out surveys in the native range of the weed, in Argentina, to identify a suitable biological control agent. CABI is a non-profit, intergovernmental organization, which applies scientific expertise to solve problems in agriculture and the environment. CABI was successful in finding insects that feed on the weed, with the weevil, *L. elongatus*, showing particular promise.

Under article 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, animals that are not ordinarily resident in, and are not a regular visitor to, Great Britain are prohibited from being released into the wild in England. However, under article 16 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, these animals can be released into the wild in England under a licence authorised by Defra.

Before authorisation can be given, an assessment of the biological control agent's safety must be made. CABI has produced a risk assessment for *L. elongatus*, and this has been reviewed by Defra, and externally by other bodies.

We now welcome your views and comments on whether *L. elongatus* should be released into England to control *H. ranunculoides*. We are contacting directly the organisations in Annex I, but this list is not exhaustive, so if there are any organisations that are not included on the list that you think would like to contribute then please make them aware of this letter.

If you would like a copy of the risk assessment and a summary of reviews (including the CABI response to them), please use the following contact details:

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Plant Health Risk and Horizon Scanning team
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Room 11G19
York Biotech Campus
Sand Hutton
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Telephone: 02080262509

Or e-mail: non-nativebiocontrol.licensing@defra.gov.uk

Responses should be received by **7th May 2021**

We request that you do not reproduce, publish or further circulate the information and data provided within the risk assessment and summary of reviews. This is because the risk assessment includes confidential information and original research that is not yet published. Publishing the risk assessment at this stage could damage the chances of CABI publishing the information in the future. Publishing scientific papers is important for the careers of the scientists involved. Therefore, if you are enquiring on behalf of an organisation, the risk assessment and summary of reviews should not be distributed further than relevant staff or disclosed publicly.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be made available to the public on request, in accordance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs).

If you do not wish your response, including your name, contact details and any other personal information, to be publicly available, please say so clearly in writing when you send your response to the consultation. Please note that if your computer automatically includes a confidentiality disclaimer, this will not count as a confidentiality request. Please explain why you need to keep details confidential. We will take your reasons into account if someone asks for this information under freedom of information legislation. However, we cannot promise that we will always be able to keep those details confidential.

Yours faithfully,



Richard McIntosh
Assistant Chief Plant Health Officer

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Annex I

List of interested parties

- Ada (internal drainage boards)
- Angling Trust
- Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland
- Association of Local Government Ecologists
- Botanical Society of Scotland
- Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland
- British Association of Landscape Industries
- British Association of Nature Conservationists
- British Canoeing
- British Ecological Society
- Buglife
- Butterfly Conservation
- Campaign for National Parks
- Campaign to Protect Rural England
- Campaign to Protect Rural Wales
- Canal and River Trust
- Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (+ Aquatic Plant Management)
- Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science
- Campaign for National Parks
- Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland)
- English Heritage
- Environment Agency
- Environment, Food and Agriculture, Isle of Man
- Horticultural Trade Association
- Inland Waterways Association
- International Plant Sentinel Network
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee
- National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- National Parks England
- National Trust
- National Trust for Wales
- Non-Native Species Secretariat
- Natural England
- Plantlife
- Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh
- Royal Botanic Gardens Kew
- Royal Entomological Society
- Royal Horticultural Society
- Royal Parks
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Royal Society of Biology
- Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts
- Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture
- Scottish Canals

- Wales Biodiversity Partnership
- Wildlife and Countryside Link
- Wildlife Trusts
- Water UK