# Less than 1% of UK biosecurity budget targets invasive species despite growing threat



Less than 1% of the UK government’s biosecurity budget is dedicated to addressing the mounting threat of invasive species, according to figures released following a freedom of information request to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). This alarming statistic has prompted conservationists to voice concerns over the insufficient funding allocated to combat these non-native plants and animals, which pose significant risks not only to native wildlife but also to various ecosystems, waterways, and local communities.

With only £2.47 million of an estimated £250 million biosecurity budget earmarked for invasive species control, the gap between funding and the threats faced is stark. Conservation organisations, such as Wildlife and Countryside Link, emphasise the urgent need for enhanced resources for border checks to prevent the entry of non-native species and to support local initiatives tackling invasive flora and fauna on the ground. The situation is exacerbated by the limited funding directed towards community groups—only £250,000 is being invested to aid local efforts against invasive threats like rhododendrons and giant blackberries, which are known to overrun vital habitats.

The broader biodiversity budget, comprising around £22.7 million or 3% of total expenditure, suggests some commitment to tackling invasives, yet this is insufficient, particularly when compared to the estimated £4 billion annual economic toll that invasive species, such as Japanese knotweed, impose on the UK economy. Research underscores that invasive species contribute to more than 60% of global extinctions, a trend evident in the UK where vulnerable native species, including water voles and red squirrels, are under severe threat from their non-native counterparts.

Lisa Manning, a policy officer at Wildlife and Countryside Link, stated that invasive species are "one of the biggest risks" to cherished native wildlife, adding that they "wreak havoc" on waterways, impacting both the environment and local businesses. The conservation community calls for urgent action to bolster border checks and increase funding for existing species management, aiming to transition from reactive measures to a more preventive approach against non-native invasives.

The UK government responds by highlighting its commitment to biosecurity, pointing to a £208 million investment aimed at establishing a National Biosecurity Centre and the announcement of £10 million earmarked for advanced surveillance projects to monitor the spread of diseases and invasive species. Nonetheless, critics argue that without a significant increase in direct funding for invasive species control, the long-term impact on both the economy and biodiversity could be catastrophic.

The conservationists’ concerns are backed by various studies revealing the substantial economic costs attributed to invasive non-native species, which demonstrates the crucial need for effective prevention and management strategies. CABI’s research further corroborates this, asserting that tackling invasive species demands ongoing efforts in prevention and eradication to mitigate their damaging effects across the UK’s ecosystems.

Despite governmental assurances and investments aimed at improving biosecurity, the evident imbalance in funding allocation prompts calls for more vigorous action. The current figures indicate a dire need for re-evaluation of budgetary priorities to shield the UK’s native wildlife and ecosystems effectively. Only through enhanced funding and strategic resource allocation can the country hope to curtail the invasion and safeguard its natural heritage for future generations.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1 & 2: (1), (2)
2. Paragraph 3: (3), (4)
3. Paragraph 4: (5), (6)
4. Paragraph 5: (1), (2), (3), (4)
5. Paragraph 6: (1), (6)
6. Paragraphs 7 & 8: (1), (2), (3), (5)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

* <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/12/less-than-1-of-uk-biosecurity-budget-goes-on-tackling-invasive-species-figures-show> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/12/less-than-1-of-uk-biosecurity-budget-goes-on-tackling-invasive-species-figures-show> - An article from The Guardian reports that less than 1% of the UK's biosecurity budget is allocated to combating invasive species, despite the significant threat they pose to native wildlife and ecosystems. Conservationists are calling for increased funding and enhanced border checks to prevent non-native species from entering the country and to support local groups in managing existing invasive species.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/jul/06/japanese-knotweed-invasive-non-native-species-costing-uk-4bn-a-year-ash-dieback> - This Guardian article highlights a study revealing that invasive non-native species, including Japanese knotweed and ash dieback, cost the UK economy an estimated £4 billion annually. The study emphasizes the need for effective management and prevention strategies to mitigate these economic impacts.
* <https://www.cabi.org/news-article/invasive-non-native-species-cost-uk-economy-an-estimated-4bn-a-year-new-cabi-led-study-reveals/> - CABI's news article discusses a study estimating that invasive non-native species cost the UK economy approximately £4 billion each year. The study underscores the importance of continued prevention, early detection, and eradication efforts to address the threat posed by these species.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan-annual-progress-report-2023-to-2024/environmental-improvement-plan-annual-progress-report-2023-to-2024> - The UK government's annual progress report outlines actions taken to improve biosecurity, including efforts to reduce the establishment of invasive non-native species by at least 50% by 2030 compared to 2000 levels. It also details investments in research and local initiatives to tackle invasive species.
* <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/102363/html/> - A parliamentary committee report discusses the funding disparities in biosecurity, noting that in 2016/17, only £922,000 of the £217 million allocated to the Animal and Plant Health Agency was spent on invasive species, highlighting the need for increased resources in this area.
* <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/ukbi-biodiversity-expenditure/> - The Joint Nature Conservation Committee's report on UK biodiversity expenditure reveals that in 2022/2023, approximately £876 million was allocated to biodiversity, marking a 171% increase since 2000/2001. However, the report does not specify the proportion dedicated to invasive species management.