

# Gathurst Weir

## Invasive Non-Native Species Method Statement



Ref: OURD-GAT7

Adam Wheeler  
Ribble Rivers Trust

## Introduction

Ribble Rivers Trust (RRT) is working in partnership with the Douglas Catchment Partnership (DCP) to deliver environmental improvements as part of the 'Opening Up the River Douglas' (OUR Douglas) project. After a barrier prioritisation and feasibility study, the partnership is addressing connectivity issues through the creation of fish easements at 8 priority locations, such as Gathurst Weir (SD 52990 07902)

The Douglas Catchment is colonised with three invasive non-native plant species, namely Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*). All three species are also found in the Lower Douglas Waterbody (GB112070064820).

The construction of the embedded rock ramp at this location poses biosecurity risks in terms of helping to spread these species locally and over greater distances by transport of propagules off site. Control measures before, during and after the construction phase will help to reduce these risks.

## Species Distribution

From a desktop search for INNS associated with the site location and surrounding area, there are a number of species to highlight. Crangonyx pseudogracilis has been recorded Upstream of Gathurst Weir above the M6 motorway bridge as well as in the Leeds Liverpool canal. Water Fern (Azolla filiculoides) has also been recorded in the Canal, which has the potential to enter the River Douglas via waste-water spillways. Additionally, here are records of Japanese Knotweed (Fallopia japonica), Rhododendron and Russian-vine (Fallopia Baldschuanica) in the area. In the planned works area, there are records for Himalayan Balsam (Impatiens glandulifera) as the principle Invasive non-native species (INNS) at the weir. From a walkover survey (17/01/2020) Giant Hogweed (Heracleum Mantegazzianum) has been recorded upstream of the weir, it is considered also present in the planned works area. No additional INNS were located along access route or within the working area.

Ensuring that contractors do not introduce additional INNS or spread INNS from this site to others is a key consideration. Additionally, the presence of Giant Hogweed represents a potential risk to the contractors workers and suitable control measures must be in place to remove risk of contact. All plant will be cleaned and disinfected prior to transport to and from site to ensure biosecurity is maintained. And that any spoil **Sprayed off first**

## **Biosecurity risks**

There is a risk of plant and machinery coming on to site bringing invasive species from another site they have previously been used on. This would normally be due to mud attached to wheels, tracks or undercarriage of vehicles.

There is a risk of spreading plant propagules into the river which would then convey them downstream, potentially colonising a new location. The risk of this occurring due to machinery movements is only marginally greater than the natural rate at which these riparian plants will be transported by the river. The most significant risk here is disturbance of Giant Hogweed seeds from below the soil surface.

There is a risk of spreading plant propagules locally, increasing their abundance within the vicinity of the weir. This would increase potential control costs, increase environmental impact, reduce amenity value for visitors and may pose a public safety hazard.

There is a risk of spreading plant propagules from this site to other sites with vehicles and machinery during transport to or use elsewhere.

### **Control Measures**

As well as providing this report to the contractor a toolbox talk will be given by the contractor detailing the INNS that are present in the area of works. For each species (Giant Hogweed, Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed) and information will be provided giving contractors the ability to identify INNS, understand why they are classed as INNS and how to work in an area with INNS.

Giant hogweed will be sprayed by the contractor after the award of contract and will be sprayed further prior to establishing site. This will significantly reduce the abundance of giant hogweed and the number of seeds in the soil. Himalayan Balsam is so extensive across the catchment that any localised control measures will not have any impact on the extent of the plant across the catchment.

The contractor will be required to ensure that all vehicles and machinery brought to site are clean and have no mud, soil or plant material attached. The contractor will also be required to produce their own biosecurity risk assessment prior to being awarded the contract, ensuring that they have independently considered the risks and suitable control measures.

Prior to leaving site, all machinery will be washed off with a portable pressure washer at the exit of the last river crossing. This will ensure that any plant propagules remain on site and are not spread away from the river or onto other sites which the machinery may be used on.