

Current State of Himalayan Balsam in the River Kent Catchment 2021

Highest points of current control for the Kent and its tributaries are:

- **Kent:** below Jump Waterfall at NY461044; Small stream above Kentmere Hall at NY451044; stream through Rawe Cottage E of the Kent at NY458043; Green quarter streams above NY463049
- **Oxenholme Beck:** Above Oxenholme Beck on land west of Hayclose Road at SD535903
- **Sprint:** Above Gurnal Bridge at SD523978 (Thornyslack Farm)
- **Gowan:** at Broadgate Farm Ings SD435993; at Heaning at SD432991; at Ashes Lane SD479964 Ratherheath
- **Mint:** On private land (former quarry) adjacent to Moresdale stream, a small tributary of Lambrigg Beck (SD584955) Lightwater Beck SD540948

Positive control areas 2021

Reports from all monitoring and control volunteers have been overwhelmingly positive this year. Some 'hot spots' remain but generally people were finding fewer plants. The situation has no doubt been helped by a combination of a late cold spring and very dry spring and summer weather with very low river levels for much of the year. Which greatly helped control work.

- The **Sprint** remains almost clear and is being monitored.
- Lambrigg Beck continues to improve and control has been continued by a small team of local volunteers.
- The **Gowan** catchment is steadily becoming clear of balsam. Both the site at the top of the catchment at Heaning (SD432991) and the whole of the Broadgate Farm/Holme field land is now virtually clear.
- The land around Croppers wood off the A591 and adjacent verges are now almost clear.
- Ashes Lane/ Ratherheath site is very much improved especially the Ratherheath woodland and Ashes Lane. Despite having no access last year to the campsite we were pleasantly surprised at the amount of balsam.
- Oxenholme and Natland Becks are now almost clear
- The Kent is generally greatly improved with many sections clear of balsam from Staveley down to Sedgewick
- The major balsam infestation at the National Trust caravan site at Sedgewick is now very much under control.

Challenges in 2021

- Network Rail failed to tackle the infestations on the west coast mainline above Lightwater beck, a tributary to the Mint.
- Network Rail failed to deal with balsam infestation on the approach to Kendal station.
- Kentmere continues to be a significant challenge and a significant infestation was found in the village in a tricky ravine along the Green Quarter stream.
- Difficult access to the overgrown bank under Kentgate flats in Kendal – a hot spot for balsam possibly from the Kendal Network Rail site.

Manpower, resources and impact of Covid 19 restrictions

Most of our work this year has been undertaken by individuals along with some small team working in remote and difficult areas. In addition we organised 3 work parties at Ashes Lane and 3 work parties around the Kendal WWTW. These more flexible arrangements actually better suited the control of balsam now that much of the river is clear and enabled us to tackle known 'hot spots'

Volunteers have contributed over **330 hours of balsam control from early June to mid October**. This figure is down on previous years (500 hours in 2020) and confirms that the balsam situation is well under control. For the first year we had no major panics in August – a time when in previous years new infestations were discovered!

Other Invasives

- 6 reports of Giant Hogweed made to the Environment agency

Work this year

Control means – work parties needed and/or significant new areas or re-infestations tackled. Significant numbers of plants still being found.

Monitoring means work parties not required. Relatively few plants removed and numbers of plants found is decreasing.

Clear – means – no plants found in the area for at least 2 years.

<p>Kentmere to Staveley</p>	<p>4 local volunteers (RR&RR, JG &RG)</p> <p>supported by JW, RN, GT, SP; KT & RT, JA&PW</p> <p>9 visits</p> <p>60 hours</p>	<p>Kentmere continues to be a significant challenge as the infestations are spread over quite a wide and difficult area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patches of balsam tackled in the brambles and bracken on the fellside above Kentmere Hall. • 150 or plants found up at the top of the Kent below Jump Falls and in a couple of patches down towards the village. • In the village the Green Quarter stream continues to cause concern with infestation found below the road by Middleholme. Plants also found in the field below High Fold and seeds from here had re-established balsam in the garden below the road by the river. • Infestation at Rawe Cottage is not yet cleared. Contact made with the new owners and some damage limitation done. • The river from the village to the northern end of the tarn is almost clear. 200 plants removed from the northern end of the tarn and a further 150 from the wooded area at NY456032 • Two visits made to West bank with a small number of plants found. • The southern end of the tarn was not checked this year.
<p>Gowan</p>	<p>KT&RT (Heaning)</p> <p>JW (Broad Oak.Holmeffield)</p> <p>JA&PW (Ings)</p> <p>(17hrs)</p>	<p>The upper catchment of the Gowan is now almost clear and the Gowan is in Monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very few plants found at Heaning apart from in a concrete bunker where a team removed about 100 or so plants accessing via a ladder. • No plants were found on the Broad Oak/ Holmeffield farm area or around Bike Trek. • Plants are still being controlled in a small wood south of Low House and also on a steep bank just off the western edge of the Staveley bi pass
<p>Staveley to Burneside</p>	<p>SL&PL, CG</p> <p>Supported by KT, MC & JC</p> <p>Est 30+hrs</p>	<p>This section is largely clear except for a few areas where plants keep appearing. SL has established a constructive relationships with Croppers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croppers Wood area off the A591 is now almost clear. • Plants were found in the Cowan Head gorge and tackled by a climbing team. • Plants were found in the difficult area under Croppers wall in Burneside and tackled either by canoe or by climbers. • Some plants found at Bowston.

Ashes Lane/ Ratherheath woodland	KT & RT Supported by 3 work parties Est 50+hrs	This is a main area for control. It comprises the Ratherheath woodland, the Ashes Lane campsite and three pasture/gorse fields to the north of Ashes Lane <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite having no access to the campsite in 2020 the balsam situation was better than feared and control work was manageable • An area that we had not had the resources to deal with previously was tackled this year. • Ratherheath woodland was almost clear with few scattered plants being found and Ashes Lane was clear • The gorse/pasture fields were much improved with a few scattered plants found over the season.
Sprint	MC & JC	Sprint now almost clear
Carus Green and Kentrigg and	IA supported by JW,JA,PW Est 50+hrs	Carus Green from the Sprint down to Gilthwaiterigg beck is now much improved. The areas on the golf course seem clear and relatively few plants have been found along the river banks. There remains a number of 'hotspots'. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaining access to the garden of the house at Pepperhag is an annual problem and plants continue to appear. • A number of plants were found in amongst the reeds and willow scrub on the right hand bank (looking downstream) below the concrete bridge on the golf course. • The bank area along Gilthwaiterigg beck behind the 6th tee is another difficult area to access. • The areas on the golf course itself are now largely clear.
Mint	MC&JC supported by local volunteers	Reports on the Mint are positive with the exception of the infestation on the Network Rail site off the mainline above Lightwater Beck. The patch was not treated by Network Rail in 2020 and volunteers minimised downstream infestation by removing all accessible plants outside the fence line and down the beck.
Lambrigg Beck	Local volunteer team	Lambrigg Beck is monitored by local volunteers.
Kendal Dockray Bridge to Nether Bridge	CM &RL (Mintsfeet) KT,JW,JA & PW (Kendal) Est 29hrs	This section is being monitored . Plants have been found in a small number of areas and have been removed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mintsfeet area is generally much improved with small numbers of plants removed – main areas are the island at the Mint confluence and the southern edge of the wood. • Plants spotted within the Nutricare factory were removed by the factory team. • Patches at Kendal Cricket club now clear. • Overgrown bank under Kentgate flats .still troublesome. • Infestation behind Jewsons again not tackled by Network Rail. SCRT in discussion with NR with support from the Lakes Line User group. • River banks between Stamongate Bridge and Nether Bridge are largely clear except for a few hot spots (eg Abbott Hall bank) and odd random clumps mainly on the left bank.
Kendal Nether Bridge to Scroggs Wood/ Watercrock	3 work parties (right bank JW, JA & PW KT (Left bank) 49 hours	This area is in Control and improving . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to the closed right bank area around the WWTW for a small team of volunteers was negotiated and small numbers of plants were removed on each visit • A small number of plants removed down the left bank • Small number of plants removed from Scroggs Wood • Access to the area around Helsington Mills was off limits due to EA flood works

Natland Mill Beck & Oxenholme Beck	KT&RT 19 hrs	This area is now in Monitoring and is now almost clear. Relatively few scattered plants found on each visit
Watercreek to Hawes Bridge	JW & PB 5hrs	Almost clear <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 plants found on the sand banks at Watercreek. • Right and Left banks clear down to Hawes Bridge. • A small number of plants removed from under the leaf wall and within the leaf at Hawes Bridge.
Hawes Bridge to Force Bridge	JW & PB Supported by BG 20 hrs	This area is in Monitoring . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The area of infestation on the right bank at SD510886 opposite Dorothy's seat is now almost clear. • Two patches of plants removed from the islands by the campsite at Sedgewick. • Small wood at SD 511879 is improving. • Right and left river banks down to the footbridge are almost clear. • Number of plants removed from the edge of the NT woodland at hedgerow along the Low Sizergh Farm boundary. • Contact made with new National Trust Warden who is willing to take responsibility for balsam control on the Sedgewick campsite.
Force Bridge to A6		Not under control.
Other areas	KT (South Kendal patches) SP with PL&PL (Fisher tarn)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SLDC land behind Heron Hill School is now greatly improved. • Land off the A65 near Oxenholme checked • New housing estate off the Natland Road in Kendal now almost clear • SP has organised a control programme around Fisher Tarn and Paddy Lane.

Challenges and priorities for 2022

Working round the EA work on flood defence schemes at Mintsfeet and within Kendal

Through SCRT continue efforts to get Network Rail to tackle balsam on the railway embankment in Kendal and on the West Coast mainline (Online meeting was held in January 2022 to discuss NR approach to invasive control.)

Priorities for 2022

- Focus on Kentmere and how to best tackle control in this difficult area
- Continue control and monitoring at Ashes Lane
- Continue control and monitoring in Kendal
- Support individuals undertaking control/monitoring of sections of the catchment and encourage others to take on areas
- Continue work to check all sections of the rivers under monitoring

Judith Wallen, (April 2022)