

IRELAND'S Response to the Asian hornet 2025:

*Lessons and
next steps*



An tIonad Náisiúnta
Sonraí Bithéagsúlachta
National Biodiversity
Data Centre



NPWS

An tSeirbhís Páirceanna
Náisiúnta agus Fiadhúlra
National Parks and Wildlife Service



What is the Asian hornet?

The Asian hornet is highly efficient predator of native insects. It also poses a serious threat to honeybees and other pollinators. Originally from Asia, this invasive species was accidentally introduced to France in 2004, where it spread rapidly into neighbouring countries. Today, the Asian hornet is regulated by the European Commission as an Invasive Alien Species of Union concern.

How might Asian hornet get to our shores and what can we do to prevent introductions?

Asian hornet could gain entry to the island of Ireland by numerous different pathways of introduction. Prevention efforts are not likely to succeed. Based on the experience across Europe and the UK, we expect introduction events associated with the import of vegetables, import of wooden products, materials associated with the horticulture sector, or even hitchhiking on vehicles returning from the continent. As the species spreads more and more across Europe, we expect more frequent introduction events. However, not every introduction to Ireland will lead to formation of a nest. Some introductions will fail and therefore die out naturally. Building capabilities to effectively track and remove nests is a key priority.

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What is the overarching strategy?

With each passing year, the distribution of the Asian hornet is expanding across the European continent. It is anticipated that there will be future incursions of this species into Ireland.

The strategy for Ireland is to respond to this threat by raising public awareness and vigilance, receiving and verifying reports submitted to the National Biodiversity Data Centre, while also building and deploying rapid response capacity to locate and control any nests. The goal will be to maintain the island of Ireland's Asian hornet-free status.

While monitoring efforts have been established by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine around our major ports and by working with beekeepers, experience from elsewhere indicates that this species is likely to escape detection in traps.

Public vigilance is one of the best defences.



A strategy that is adaptable

The threat of Asian hornet to Ireland will never go away. We need a policy response that is adaptable and can be scaled up if or when required. The following framework has been agreed by the Asian Hornet Management Group to help decision-making and operational planning.

Level 1

Geographically isolated confirmed report(s) of individual Asian hornets in any part of the island of Ireland. No evidence of active nests at Risk Level 1.

Level 2

There is no confirmed evidence of overwintering in Ireland. Asian hornet is confirmed as potentially reproductively active in an area. This is defined as confirmation of one or more nests. Eradication is still deemed achievable with available resources.

Level 3

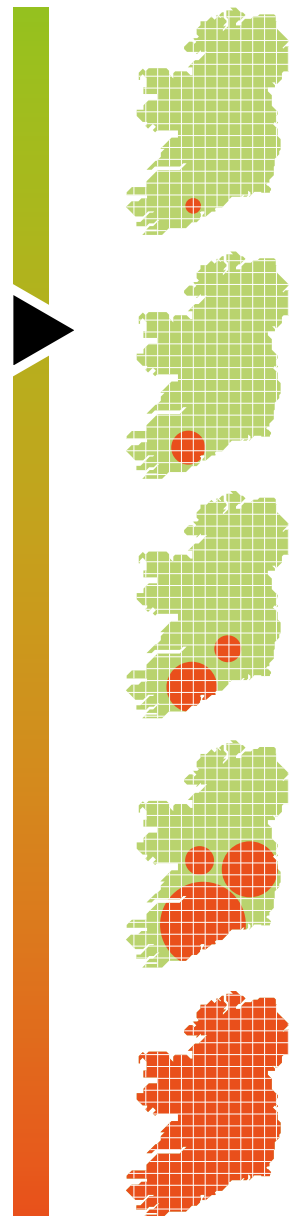
This is an intermediate risk level specifically to scale-up planning and resource availability for a wider response based on the data available. Eradication is still deemed achievable but with greater resources.

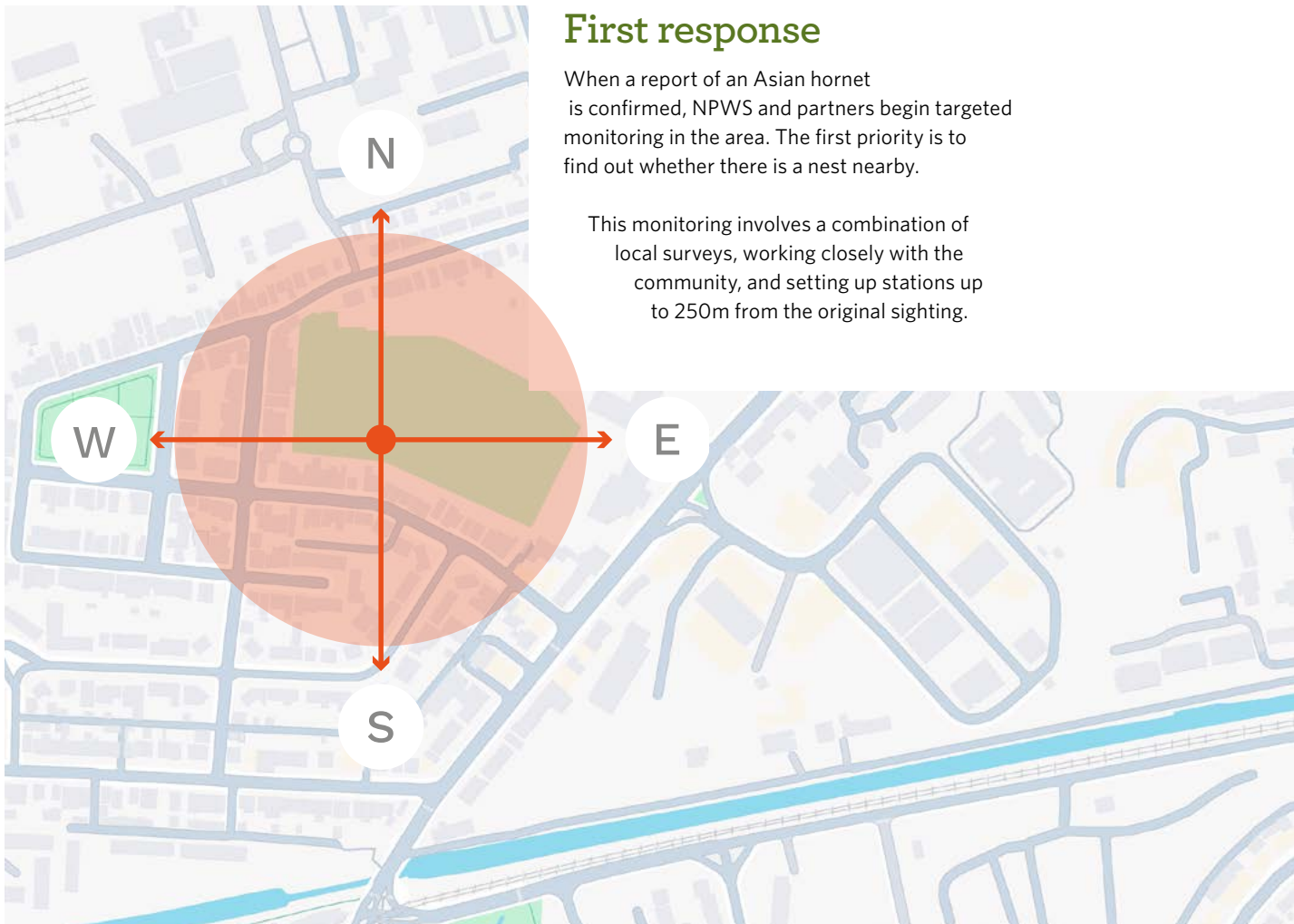
Level 4

Asian hornet is more widely established in a region or multiple areas across the island of Ireland. Maintaining the goal of eradication is less certain.

Level 5

Asian hornet is considered established on the island of Ireland. New strategic approach required for longer-term adaptation.





First response

When a report of an Asian hornet is confirmed, NPWS and partners begin targeted monitoring in the area. The first priority is to find out whether there is a nest nearby.

This monitoring involves a combination of local surveys, working closely with the community, and setting up stations up to 250m from the original sighting.

Overview of the 2025 response

In 2025, two Asian hornet nests were successfully located and destroyed in County Cork. The operation was led by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and supported by the National Biodiversity Data Centre; the National Museum of Ireland; The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; and other partners. NPWS led monitoring around the location of these nests has not identified any evidence of further nests in the Cork and Cobh areas. The response demonstrated Ireland's growing capacity to detect and eliminate invasive species quickly.

Key facts of the 2025 response

- ✔ All known nests were removed before new queens emerged.
- ✔ The multi-agency field response mobilised within days.
- ✔ NPWS led monitoring efforts in the areas around the two nests.
- ✔ Hundreds of public reports suspected to be Asian hornet were processed and discounted by experts at the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

As a result of these efforts, we have no evidence of further nests.





Asian hornet nest analysis now complete

Nest analysis was carried out by the National Museum of Ireland. This analysis has informed our understanding of the risk. The Cork nest did not reproduce, while the Cobh nest had a very low risk of successfully producing queens for the 2026 season.

The risk based decision making for nests based on when they are controlled



LOW RISK

Nest was controlled before September 6th

Risk returns to background level and no enhanced actions are required.



MEDIUM RISK

Nest controlled between September 6th and 29th

Targeted engagement at a local level to support local communities in accurately identifying Asian hornet and report to the National Biodiversity Data Centre.



HIGH RISK

Nest controlled on or after September 30th

Support enhanced monitoring efforts but with a decision taken by the NPWS in consultation with the Asian Hornet Management Group.

Success stories

- ✓ **Early detection:** Public vigilance and rapid reporting were vital.
- ✓ **Teamwork:** Rangers, scientists, and Asian hornet experts worked seamlessly together.
- ✓ **Effective communication:** Regular updates, media engagement, and community cooperation helped inform the public.
- ✓ **Evidence-based response:** Field techniques such as tracking and baiting ensured nests were found quickly and in compliance with relevant wildlife legislation in Ireland.
- ✓ **Media engagement:** Raising awareness by working with the media is essential.



Public reporting remains essential

By reporting sightings of the Asian hornet, the public effectively became Ireland's "first line of defence" against this invasive species. This grassroots vigilance proved invaluable in tracking and managing potential incursions throughout the country.

Awareness of what the Asian hornet looks like and knowing where to report sightings was critical during 2025, and this knowledge will remain essential as Ireland learns to live with the ongoing risk of repeated incursions. Public education and engagement continue to be cornerstones of the response strategy.

Social media played a dual role in the effort, helping to spread accurate information quickly and allowing authorities to respond to public concerns in real time. However, there were also challenges in countering misinformation that circulated alongside the official guidance.

For up-to-date and accurate information on Asian hornet incursions, please refer to **[www.invasives.ie/asianhornet](https://invasives.ie/asianhornet)**, which serves as the authoritative source for guidance and reporting procedures.



How the public can continue to play their part

- ✔ Report any suspected sightings via **<https://invasives.ie/asianhornetreporter>**
- ✔ Learn how to recognise the Asian hornet and similar native species.
- ✔ Do not approach or disturb suspected nests.
- ✔ Share accurate information from official sources only.

Citizen-led trapping for Asian hornet

Citizen-led trapping for Asian hornet is not part of Ireland's current response to Asian hornet. The population of Asian hornet is either at zero, or at such a low density that an effective citizen-led trapping programme is difficult to resource, especially considering that it is expected Ireland will need to respond to incursions by Asian hornet over many years to come.

If you choose to carry out your own monitoring for Asian hornet, please ensure you know the facts about the species, its lifecycle and that you choose methods that are not likely to cause harm to native pollinators or rare species.

Learn more at:
<https://invasives.ie/asianhornet/trapping/>



Lessons moving forward

Future incursions of Asian hornet into Ireland are expected. NPWS will continue to lead the national readiness efforts and respond to any such incursions. Equipment and resources will be maintained ahead of future incursions to ensure preparedness, while cross-border collaboration between Ireland, the UK, and the EU will continue to be strengthened. It is easy and understandable for members of the public to confuse Asian hornet with native wasps or other invertebrates, therefore education and awareness remain essential.

Planning for the future

- ✔ The Asian Hornet Management Group will remain as the key coordinating function should Asian hornet be recorded in Ireland during 2026.
- ✔ The National Biodiversity Data Centre will lead on mapping verified sightings of Asian hornet and maintain Ireland's reporting systems.
- ✔ The Asian Hornet Management Group will ensure lessons learned are built into future rapid responses as required.
- ✔ Ireland will continue to build capacity to respond to Asian hornet through training of staff and pest control companies.



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