| JAPANESE KNOTWEED: OVERSTRAND CLIFFS | |
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| **Executive Summary** | An area of the cliff and slope at Overstrand is contaminated with Japanese knotweed, a highly invasive plant species that has strict legal responsibilities associated with its control, disposal, and the prevention of its spread.<br><br>The Council has a responsibility to address the issue, and this is made even more critical due to the nature of the area it inhabits. The cliffs are inherently unstable and the slip material appearing on the sea wall contains knotweed, the dispose of which is very expensive.<br><br>The Council commissioned a specialist report into the issue, seeking advice on its legal responsibilities as well as a management approach for addressing the problem. The contents of the report have been considered, and recommendations have been made as to the most appropriate actions to pursue. |
| **Options considered** | There are various potential options for managing the infestation and those are detailed in the consultant's report appended to this report. There are no realistic alternatives to the immediate actions recommended, as to allow the knotweed to remain untreated, would inevitably lead to increased costs associated with removal and disposal of slip material, which might delay the planned refurbishment of the sea defences, and might breach the Council's legal responsibilities to prevent its spread. |
| **Consultation(s)** | The matter has been referred to in notices placed in the vicinity of the site and has been discussed at drop-in events held in the village. The local member has been briefed, and the Parish Council have been made aware, together with members of the public, at the 2025 annual parish meeting. |
| **Recommendations** | It is recommended that the Cabinet resolves to provide a total budget of up to £120,000 from the 'reactive coastal works' budget (approved by Cabinet in March 2025) and the CTAP budget, to undertake the actions recommended in this report to address the knotweed issues over the period between autumn 2025 and autumn 2027.<br><br>The actions will include:<br>1. Complete a programme of four containment foliar sprays by lance/stem injection between 2025 and 2027, for a 3-metre strip at both the base and the top of the coastal slope<br>2. Complete works for clearance of promenade and licenced disposal of slump material containing Japanese Knotweed |

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| | 3. Complete works to stabilise the base of the coastal slope, landwards of the top of the sea wall in the immediate proximity of promenade clearance works, to inhibit further encroachment of slump material potentially containing Japanese Knotweed<br>4. Further investigate the potential for annual foliar spraying, utilising appropriate methods, across the entire area containing the Japanese Knotweed infestation, then implement treatment by the most appropriate means (potentially between 2025 and 2027)<br>5. Implement and promote stakeholder engagement and community awareness, through stakeholder coordination, raising public awareness and education of the knotweed issue<br>6. Investigate approaches to maintaining vegetative cover during treatment of Japanese Knotweed and re-establishing vegetation post-treatment of Japanese Knotweed, in order to reduce the potential impact of rainfall-induced surface water run-off upon cliff instability<br>7. Implement long-term monitoring of Japanese Knotweed infestation, covering 2025 to 2027 treatment period and subsequent treatment/post treatment periods, as required. Long-term monitoring to track changes in infestation size and vegetation cover and review and refine initial treatment approaches, potentially including further foliar spraying and/or stem injection. |
| **Reasons for recommendations** | To ensure appropriate action is taken in a timely manner to meet the Council's legal responsibilities and allow other works to proceed. |
| **Background papers** | Reports to Cabinet on 31st March 2025 relating to Coastal Management – budget for reactive coastal works; and Coast Protection Works at Overstrand<br><br>A (Haskoning) consultant's report on the subject of this report is included as appendix 1 |

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| **Wards affected** | Poppyland |
| **Cabinet member(s)** | Portfolio Holder for Coast: Cllr Harry Blathwayt |
| **Contact Officer** | Robert Young; Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth; robert.young@north-norfok.gov.uk |

**Links to key documents:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Corporate Plan: | Protect and transition our coastal environments.<br>• Realising opportunities of external funding to secure a sustainable future for our coastal communities through transition and adaptation responses.<br>• Continuing our programme of investment in coastal and resort infrastructure and amenities, building on the progress made in recent years. |
| Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) | The project costs can be met within identified budgets and, whilst not specifically addressed in the MTFS, it is unlikely to have a detrimental impact on the overall financial position. |
| Council Policies & Strategies | n/a |

| **Corporate Governance:** | |
|---|---|
| Is this a key decision | No |
| Has the public interest test been applied | yes |
| Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter | n/a |

## 1. Purpose of the report

1.1 Haskoning were commissioned by North Norfolk District Council (NNDC) to develop a strategy for managing a known infestation of Japanese Knotweed on an area of the coastal slope landwards of the sea wall in Overstrand. Their report was finalised in June 2025 and has been used as the basis for developing the proposals contained within this report for the management of Japanese Knotweed at Overstrand. A copy of the consultant's report ('the report') is included as appendix 1.

1.2 The report recommends that a long-term, site-specific management plan that includes regular monitoring, legal compliance, and adaptive treatment strategies will be essential, to control the spread of Japanese Knotweed and mitigate its environmental impact on the Overstrand coastal slopes. This report outlines a costed management plan, based upon the report's recommendations.

1.3 Implementation of this costed management plan is also required in order to provide access via the sea wall (which effectively acts as a promenade) for the Coastal Protection Works at Overstrand, as reported to Cabinet on the 31st March 2025 and recommended to Full Council for approval.

1.4 Implementing the management approach for the proposed coastal slope works intends to utilise, in part, funding from the 'Coastal Management - Budget for

Reactive Works', as reported to Cabinet on the 31st March 2025 and recommended to Full Council for approval.

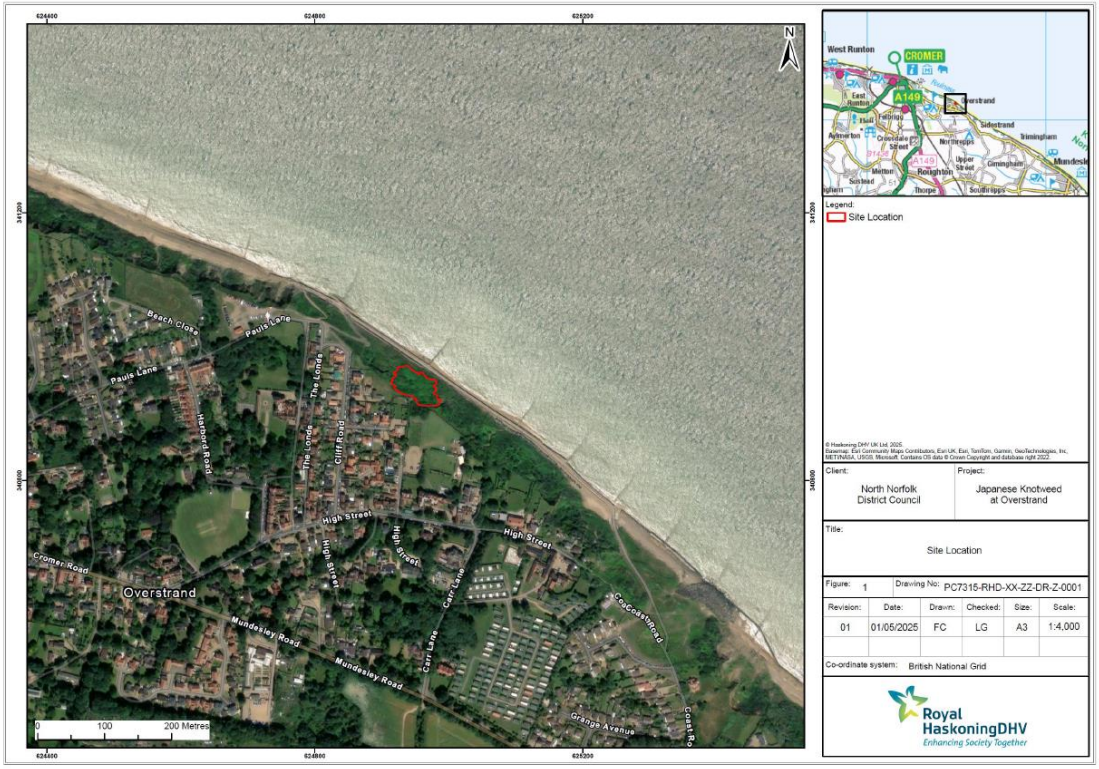
## 2. Introduction & Background

2.1. An area of the Overstrand coastal slope is infested with Japanese Knotweed. This is an area thought to be owned by the Council, which is inherently unstable and frequently slips onto the promenade. The promenade is effectively the top of the sea wall, upon which the route of the England Coast Path passes. The slip material contains Japanese Knotweed.

2.2. Whilst it is not illegal to have Japanese knotweed on private land, there are strict legal responsibilities associated with its control, disposal, and the prevention of its spread to adjacent properties or the wider environment.

2.3. Treatment of Japanese Knotweed is expensive and can take many years.

2.4. Treatment of the Japanese Knotweed at this site needs to commence as soon as possible in order to prevent its spread, but also to minimise potential future costs and to ensure the proposed refurbishment of the sea defences can go ahead in a timely fashion.




## 3. Proposals and Options

3.1 The consultant's report outlined four possible control methods (summarised below) which could be utilised for the management of Japanese Knotweed on the coastal slope, of which the chemical control method is recommended.

| Control Method | Description | Recommendation |
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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Chemical Control | Application of herbicides | Recommended<br><br>Foliar herbicide application is likely to be the most practical and effective initial treatment method and, once the vigorous growth has been suppressed, there may be potential to introduce stem injection techniques for more targeted control of any regrowth. |
| Physical Control | Direct removal or suppression of the plant through mechanical or manual means | Not recommended<br><br>The dynamic nature of coastal slope habitats, combined with the resilience and regenerative capacity of Japanese knotweed, makes precise application of these methods extremely challenging. |
| Biological Control | The biological control of Japanese Knotweed | Not recommended.<br><br>In England this remains a developing field of research. Concerns relate to the ecological safety of releasing non-native biological control agents. |
| Integrated Control | Combination of treatment methods | This is often recommended for more effective and large-scale control of Japanese Knotweed. Once the initial issues have been addressed by chemical control, depending on the results of monitoring and the success of eradication attempts, a mixed approach could be followed to minimise the chances of reinfestation and to continue a sustainable and cost-effective method of suppression. This might include planting of replacement plant species. |

3.2 From this, the following approaches have been identified as part of a costed management plan, primarily based upon chemical control methods with works to clear the promenade and stabilise the coastal slope base.

| **Control Method** | **Commencement** |
|---|---|
| Complete a programme of four containment foliar sprays by lance/stem injection between 2025 and 2027, for a 3 metre strip at both the base and the top of the coastal slope | Containment foliar spraying to commence in Autumn 2025 (prior to the plant dying back) |
| Clearance of promenade and licenced disposal of slip material blocking promenade | Works to be completed in Autumn 2025 |
| Stabilise the base of coastal slope landwards of the promenade by | Works to be completed in Autumn 2025 |

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| creating a physical structure to retain the slip material, in the immediate proximity of promenade clearance works to help prevent further potentially contaminated material arising | |
| Potentially one or other (or one followed by the other) of the following approaches to chemically control the wider area of knotweed:<br><br>After further investigation, implement a trial of annual regular foliar spraying utilising mobile elevated working platforms (MEWP), across the wider coastal slope containing the Japanese Knotweed infestation<br><br>Or<br><br>After further investigation, implement a trial of regular drone-administered foliar spraying, across the wider coastal slope containing the Japanese Knotweed infestation | Potentially from autumn 2025 (if feasible), if not spring 2026<br><br>Foliar spraying to potentially commence in Autumn 2026 |

**Overstrand - Japanese Knotweed - Management Approaches - Indicative Timescales**

| | | 2025 | | | | 2026 | | | | 2027 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Quarter 1 | Quarter 2 | Quarter 3 | Quarter 4 | Quarter 1 | Quarter 2 | Quarter 3 | Quarter 4 | Quarter 1 | Quarter 2 | Quarter 3 | Quarter 4 |
| **Option** | **Description** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Lance Spraying (Containment) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Promenade Clearance. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Coastal Slope Stability Works. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | Mobile Elevated Working Platforms (MEWPs) Spraying. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | Drone Spraying (Trial). | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Action | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Further Investigate | | | | | | | | | | | | |

3.3 Regardless of the administration method used, chemical control by herbicides typically requires multiple applications over several years. This is due to the extensive and resilient nature of the Japanese Knotweed, which can regenerate from small fragments if not completely eradicated. Indicatively, this could be 2–3 treatments per season for 3–5 years from present. Due to the plant's ability to remain dormant underground for extended periods, it is recommended that monitoring to track changes in infestation size and vegetation cover should take place during, and for five years following, the final treatment.

3.4 Future treatment works will be dependent upon the evaluation of the monitoring but could extend to at least 2030 and be of increased intensity.

3.5 Japanese knotweed suppresses the growth of native vegetation, leaving the coastal slope face bare when it dies back and at risk from erosion by surface water run-off due to rainfall. Approaches to maintain vegetative cover during treatment of Japanese Knotweed and re-established vegetation post-treatment of Japanese Knotweed should be investigated, to reduce this potential surface erosion and wider coastal slope instability, particularly during the winter months.

3.6 Effective management of Japanese knotweed, particularly in publicly accessible and ecologically sensitive areas like Overstrand's coastal slope, requires more than technical interventions. Engaging local stakeholders, such as residents, landowners, visitors, and contractors, is vital to the long-term success of control measures and to minimise inadvertent spread. There may be potential to combine this with the Coastwise programme's community engagement in relation to coastal change and the impending formulation of a local transition plan.

## 4. Corporate Priorities

4.1 The following Corporate Plan objectives are relevant to the proposed course of action:

Protect and transition our coastal environments.

- Realising opportunities of external funding to secure a sustainable future for our coastal communities through transition and adaptation responses.
- Continuing our programme of investment in coastal and resort infrastructure and amenities, building on the progress made in recent years.

## 5. Financial and Resource Implications

5.1 The breakdown of the indicative costs is given in the following table.

| **Control Method** | **Indicative Cost** |
|---|---|
| Complete a programme of four containment foliar sprays by lance/stem injection between 2025 and 2027, for a 3 metre strip at both the base and the top of the coastal slope. | £5,200 |
| Clearance of promenade and licenced disposal of coastal instability material blocking promenade containing Japanese Knotweed.<br><br>Stabilise base of coastal slope landwards of the promenade, in the immediate proximity of promenade clearance works. | £35,000+<br><br>Up to £15,000 |
| Either:<br><br>After further investigation, implement a trial of annual foliar spraying utilising mobile elevated working platforms (MEWP) potentially between 2025 and 2027, | <br><br>£27,500 |

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| across the wider coastal slope containing the Japanese Knotweed infestation.<br><br>Or:<br><br>After further investigation, implement a trial of annual drone foliar spraying potentially between 2025 and 2027, across the wider coastal slope containing the Japanese Knotweed infestation. | £31,500 |
| **Sub-Total (Recommended Immediate Actions)** | **£55,200** |
| **Sub-Total (Recommended Approaches Pending Further Investigation)** | **£27,500 – £31,500** |
| **Total (not including any allowance for optimism bias or contingency)** | **£82,700 – £86,700** |
| **Optimism bias (OB) @ 30%** | **£26,010** |
| **Total estimated cost inc. OB** | **£112,710** |

5.1 The indicative costs quoted in this report are based upon the best available evidence at the time of writing, following conversations with suitable contractors and expert practitioners, but they are not based on detailed specifications or site investigations. It is recommended that an allowance is made at this stage for optimism bias and that, to cover other possible contingencies, the overall budget be established at £120,000.

5.2 The costed management plan aims to utilise, in part, funding from the 'Coastal Management - Budget for Reactive Works' for coastal slope works, as reported to Cabinet on the 31st March 2025 and recommended to Full Council for approval.

5.3 It is anticipated that the Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme (CTAP – or Coastwise) will be able to support the funding of the management of the Japanese Knotweed (since this is a consequence of the erodible coast and needs to be addressed as part of the transition planning for the village); it is not anticipated that CTAP funding will be available to remove the slump material or to construct the retaining structure.

5.4 NNDC's coastal repair and maintenance budget is not intended to support this kind of operation and is needed for maintenance and repair works to coast protection structures across the whole coast protection frontage of the District; it is not therefore considered to be an eligible funding source.

**Comments from the S151 Officer:**

***The S151 Officer (or member of the Finance team on their behalf) will complete this section.***

## 6. Legal Implications

6.1 There are strict legal responsibilities associated with the control and disposal, of Japanese Knotweed, and the prevention of its spread to adjacent properties or the wider environment, governed by several key pieces of legislation including:

- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended): Section 14(2) states that it is an offence to plant or cause Japanese knotweed to grow in the wild. Landowners must ensure the plant does not spread beyond their property including accidental spread through soil movement or improper disposal.
- Environmental Protection Act 1990: under this Act, Japanese knotweed is classified as "controlled waste". Any contaminated soil or plant material must be disposed of by licensed waste carriers at authorised facilities and improper disposal can result in legal penalties.
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014: this Act allows local authorities to issue Community Protection Notices (CPNs) to individuals or organisations that fail to manage knotweed on their land. Non-compliance can lead to criminal prosecution and fines of up to £2,500 for individuals and £20,000 for businesses.

6.2.1 There are also property and civil law implications:

- Neighbour Disputes and Private Nuisance: where Japanese knotweed spreads from one property to an adjoining property, liability may arise under civil nuisance law. In such cases, the courts may require:
  - Remediation of the infestation; and/or
  - Compensation for any resulting property damage or diminution in value.

**Comments from the Monitoring Officer**

***The Monitoring Officer (or member of the Legal team on behalf of the MO) will complete this section****. They will outline any legal advice provided.*

## 7. Risks

7.1 Spread

7.1.1 The uncontrolled spread of Japanese Knotweed could constitute a legal breach. This not only applies to the coastal slope face and immediately adjacent areas, but also wider dispersal. Japanese Knotweed is tolerant to saline conditions and could be moved by seawater and dispersed along the coast. Cliff slips behind the promenade/sea wall could also lead to further spread. Wider dispersal could have an impact upon environmentally designated sites.

7.2 Coastal Slope Instability

7.2.1 Intervention methods that cause or exacerbate further coastal slope instability, such as physical control methods on the coastal slope face including heavy

machinery use, deep excavation, or vegetation removal, should be avoided or carefully risk-assessed/controlled.

7.3 Impact Upon Amenity and Tourism

7.3.1 Ineffective management of the Japanese Knotweed, has the potential to have both short-term and longer-term negative impacts upon recreation, leisure and tourism along the Overstrand frontage. Removing the slip material and taking measures to prevent further build-up would improve the amenity of the promenade and consequently the visitor economy of this resort village.

## 8. Net ZeroTarget

**Overstrand Knotweed Management Plan**


| Key | Impact | Action |
|---|---|---|
| | Significant and/or long-term positive impact identified. | No changes needed. |
| | Slight or short-term positive impact identified. | No changes needed but could be reviewed to improve. |
| | No net change or not applicable. | No changes needed but could be reviewed to improve. |
| | Slight or short-term negative impact identified. | Review to identify possible improvements. |
| | Significant and/or long-term negative impact identified. | Changes needed before proceeding. If changes are not possible, justification is required. |
| | Responses incomplete. | Please return to assessment and answer all questions in this section. |

8.1. A Climate Impact Assessment Tool was completed for the proposed management of the Japanese Knotweed on the coastal slope at Overstrand. Potential positive impacts were shown to outweigh negative impacts.

8.2. The potential positive environmental impacts, which are highlighted, result from improvements to land use and biodiversity from the management of the Japanese Knotweed, by allowing native vegetation to grow and to be enhanced, and in turn providing year-round coastal slope coverage from the erosive impacts of rainfall. In addition, the improvement in access resulting from the removal of slip material from the promenade is shown in the positive social impacts including accessibility and health and wellbeing.

8.3. The potential negative environmental impacts result from chemical control through the use of herbicides, for which there is not a viable alternative for the treatment of Japanese Knotweed at this location. Waste is shown to have a potential negative environmental impact, as there is not a viable alternative to removal of the slip material from the promenade containing Japanese knotweed. This has to be actioned through licensed waste disposal processes.

## 9. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

9.1. This report gives rise to no issues in relation to matters relating to Equality, Diversity or Inclusion.

**10. Community Safety issues**

This report gives rise to measures that help to address a community safety issue, relating to the restricted use of Overstrand sea wall as a promenade. No adverse community safety issues are expected to arise from the recommendations of this report, since the treatment methods will need to comply with relevant legislation and follow best practice methodologies.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

A long-term, costed and funded management plan needs to commence as soon as possible, to control the growth of Japanese Knotweed on the coastal slope at Overstrand and provide access for planned coast protection works; this includes regular adaptive treatment strategies, regular monitoring and legal compliance.

**Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Cabinet resolves to provide a total budget of up to £120,000 from the 'reactive coastal works' budget (approved by Cabinet in March 2025) and the CTAP budget, to undertake the actions recommended in this report to address the knotweed issues over the period between autumn 2025 and autumn 2027.

The actions will include:

1. Complete a programme of four containment foliar sprays by lance/stem injection between 2025 and 2027, for a 3-metre strip at both the base and the top of the coastal slope
2. Complete works for clearance of promenade and licenced disposal of slump material containing Japanese Knotweed
3. Complete works to stabilise the base of the coastal slope, landwards of the top of the sea wall in the immediate proximity of promenade clearance works, to inhibit further encroachment of slump material potentially containing Japanese Knotweed
4. Further investigate the potential for annual foliar spraying, utilising appropriate methods, across the entire area containing the Japanese Knotweed infestation, then implement treatment by the most appropriate means (potentially between 2025 and 2027)
5. Implement and promote stakeholder engagement and community awareness, through stakeholder coordination, raising public awareness and education of the knotweed issue
6. Investigate approaches to maintaining vegetative cover during treatment of Japanese Knotweed and re-establishing vegetation post-treatment of Japanese Knotweed, in order to reduce the potential impact of rainfall-induced surface water run-off upon cliff instability
7. Implement long-term monitoring of Japanese Knotweed infestation, covering 2025 to 2027 treatment period and subsequent treatment/post treatment periods, as required. Long-term monitoring to track changes in infestation size and vegetation cover and review and refine initial treatment approaches, potentially including further foliar spraying and/or stem injection.