

Review: Proposed Budget 2026-2029

Submission: John De Carteret, Member, Asian Hornet Volunteer Group

Dated: 4th November 2025

Dear Scrutiny Panel member,

As one of the founder members of the Jersey Asian Hornet Group, I write regarding the potential budget cuts to the Environment department, specifically the effect that any budget cut, or other cost saving measures may have, if imposed upon the Asian Hornet Control Program, currently coordinated by an Invasive Species Officer within the Environment Department.

Although the classic Asian Hornet nest location is high up in a tall tree, only about 50% are, other locations have included the General Hospital, H.M. Prison, Government House (ground) and within the grounds of many leading Jersey hotels and tourist attractions. Those nests found at ground level pose a significant risk to public health, this year in particular has seen an increase in sting incidents, and with an increasing number of nests found in/on school buildings, public parks as well as within several Andium Homes housing estates, many more people are coming into contact with this species. Singly they are fairly docile, but disturb a nest and things can get very serious very quickly.

Many people think that these insects are out in the countryside, but this is an insect that is quite happy living around us. In the last few weeks Asian Hornets have been reported at Snow Hill, flying into shops in Bath Street, flying down in the direction of the States Building and further towards the Royal Yacht, this is just one location in St Helier but sightings are island wide.

As a beekeeper, I and other members of the beekeeping community had been monitoring this insect in its progress across France, after a single insect (a mated Queen) had inadvertently been imported from South East Asia in 2004.

This highly invasive species took ten years to expand across France, reportedly reaching St Malo in 2014, but only two years to get across to Jersey, very likely in/on shipping transport.

In 2016 the Environment Department recorded the first of these highly invasive insect species in Jersey, at Mont Bingham.

In 2017, following the discovery and identification of further Asian Hornets in St Catherine Woods a small group of beekeepers got together to do something..! This was the nucleus of what is now known as the "Jersey Asian Hornet Group" (JAHG).

Two years later in 2019 the Government of Jersey created a dedicated post (but only on a six month contract) of Asian Hornet Coordinator (AHC) to coordinate the volunteer efforts, continue the recording and mapping of reports, whilst continuing its relationship with Professional Pest Companies (PPC) in destroying Asian Hornet nests. Something which government has funded since 2017.

Meanwhile the Jersey Asian Hornet Group, initially started by a handful of beekeepers has now attracted many members of the general public, people who are concerned about what damage this species is capable of doing to our environment, biodiversity and human health. Asian Hornet volunteers give hundreds of hours to finding nests (3,000 hours during one summer alone).

An Asian Hornet “Spring Queen Trapping Program” was commenced with the aim of trying to catch as many mated Queens as possible during their most vulnerable time as they emerge from winter hibernation March to June. Following social media and press appeals the AH volunteers are now supported by another much larger group of volunteers from the wider general public, who host modified traps supplied by government. These are managed through the AH volunteer group, this year nearly 600 “Spring Queen Traps” were able to be spread out across the island. This wide spread public awareness led to 1,376 Asian Hornet Queen reports. Next year it is hoped to raise this to 1,000 but only if funding is available.

Over the last nine years the partnership between the Government of Jersey, though the Invasive Species Officer, Professional Pest Control companies (only two companies are involved), the Asian Hornet volunteers and the general public has grown, mainly through social media, such that it is often regarded as a model of seamless working envied by other jurisdictions, who are now joining the fight as the Asian Hornet sweeps across Europe, the UK and recently Ireland, and even more recently this invasive species found its way to New Zealand.

The damage that these insects cause is hard to quantify, as no baseline records of local biodiversity, beneficial insects existed, so there’s nothing to compare but in a report published earlier this year by Exeter University (which includes material supplied by Jersey) the report recorded that AH prey included 1,449 species, mostly beneficial species ...”Out of the top 50 most commonly occurring prey species, 43 were potential pollinators (feeding on nectar or pollen as adults) and this included 3 of the most dominant European crop pollinators”...

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Almost all reports received by the government Invasive Species Officer are forwarded on to a volunteer to investigate, once the presence of AH has been verified then it is volunteers who instigate and carry out the tracking of the nest, not a government officer as most members of the public expect.

Apart from verifying the many hundreds of reports now received from an increasingly, and rightly so, concerned general public, volunteers are able to catch, mark and release Asian Hornets to find their nests with many JAHG volunteers now “Registered Asian Hornet Volunteers”.

The nest locations are then reported back to the Invasive Species Officer, who having regard to the location, will either treat it themselves, engage a PPC to treat the nest, or in some cases the volunteers themselves are asked to deal with the nests.

The process of tracking AH to find their nest is very time consuming, it has been estimated as an average of 25 hours per nest, in one year a total of 3,000 volunteer hours was recorded, although many volunteers don't report how much of their own time they give, nor do many claim the expenses they are entitled to.

Over these last nine years Jersey has been seen as the Asian Hornet capital of the UK, and many have come to learn the techniques developed by the volunteers, this has included government officers from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Island as well as beekeepers and others from across the UK, at no cost to Jersey, as they all pay for their own accommodation and travel. Jersey has also assisted with several UK academic projects and worked with national news media.

In 2024 the AH volunteers won the Pride of Jersey Environmentalist of the Year Award.

The vast majority of both Asian Hornets, and their nests in Jersey are either reported by members of the public, or tracked by volunteers, with all reports going to the Invasive Species Officer, who decides upon the best method of destruction, with until very recently the government always committing to deal with the nests reported to them free of charge.

However, what is now in the public domain regarding budget cuts, and with other savings to be achieved, its of concern to our volunteers, and members of the general public alike, if these cuts were in any way to effect the operation of the Asian Hornet Control program, especially now as the Invasive Species Officer (not a dedicated Asian Hornet Coordinator) also has responsibility for the many other invasive species threats and is an already under-resourced position.

Volunteers, who have given hundreds of hours of their time to government, to find Asian Hornet nests are rightly concerned that if funding is reduced in anyway these nests may not be treated.

Indeed there is already one nest this year on government property that has not been treated, due to cost.

We feel that it is so important to carry on, if not strengthen the Asian Hornet Control program.

The Asian Hornet volunteers have already received support from the private sector, in the form of protective suits from several local businesses and organisations. Whilst one anonymous, but very concerned private donor has purchased the very latest radio nest tracking equipment produced in Holland by <https://www.robor-nature.eu/en/> for the use of the volunteers, as government didn't have the funds to buy this system.

Even with these sterling efforts Asian Hornet nest numbers continue to rise year on year.

2017 13

2018 53

2019 83

2020 39

2021 63

2022 174

2023 339

2024 261

2025 632 (up until 2nd Nov.)

Asian Hornets nests continue to be reported or tracked across the island, with another 19 new reports this week (26th Oct - 2nd Nov).

It's clear that cost has now become a major factor in the Environment Department decision whether to treat a nest, or just leave it. The concern voiced by many is that if the government decides to reduce its support in any way for the Asian Hornet Control program, then many of the central core of Asian Hornet tracker volunteers, who only number about forty, will simply walk away. There will be no point if they are finding that nests which have taken them hours, days or weeks to find are left untreated, with the potential that each nest left untreated this year, will create five nests next year.

The result will very quickly be a sharp increase in nest numbers, and with each nest having 2,500 - 3,000 hornets at its peak, it's highly likely that many more people will be stung and worse.

In this unique situation against an apex predator, surely Government should be looking at more support, certainly not less.

John De Carteret

Jersey Asian Hornet Group.