

# OPM Advisory Group Meeting minutes

## 19<sup>th</sup> September 2012, Guildhall, London

### Present:

Sue Ireland, Andrew Hoppit, Stewart Snape, Alison Field, Craig Harrison, Colin Buttery, Dave Lofthouse, Adam Wallace, Jane Carlsen, Mark Townsend, Dougal Driver, Greg Vickers, Richard Trippett

Apologies: Tony Leach, Mike Robinson, David Allister, Barry Walsh

## 1 Summary of actions

### New & outstanding actions from this meeting

<i>Action Point</i>	<i>Who</i>	<i>Details</i>
1	Stewart Snape	to share information on the strategy change to containment and scientific basis for this
2	Mark Townsend	to point group members to European OPM articles
3	Jane Carlsen & Sue Ireland	to investigate health contacts who may join the Advisory Group
4	Andrew Hoppit	to re-draft Terms of Reference based on above discussions
5	Andrew Hoppit	to distribute a map showing the broad distribution of the core and buffer zone
6	Stewart Snape	to share the briefing paper on Protected Zone Status (PZS)
7	Andrew Hoppit	to draft a note providing information on the need for PZS and the urgency of the issue.
8	non-government group members	This note to be used to write and lobby their MEPs regarding the EU standing committee for urgent consideration and approval of the PZS application
9	All independent members of the OPMAG to	comment back to Sue Ireland using track change to identify areas where further changes are proposed with preliminary feedback to be achieved by 12th October
10	Andrew Hoppit	to draft 2013 operational plan for November meeting
11	Adam Wallace	to share NEs position on OPM chemical control

## 2 Introductions and welcome

Sue Ireland introduced everyone to the first meeting of the group and noted that there was a good representation across a wide number of stakeholders. Tony Leach wasn't able to attend and requested that 2 issues be considered; these were picked up in the course of the meeting (OPM training and financial incentives).

### 3 Terms of Reference

Group role regarding OPM strategy - the group discussed its role in terms of influencing the existing containment strategy that is in place for SW London. The London Tree Officers Association and ConFor set out their position that OPM should be eradicated, with a number of other members supportive of the principle. Many group members felt they did not know the basis for the strategy change in 2010, though Stewart said it had been shared with stakeholders e.g. via outbreak management teams. Mark Townsend's research has included a literature review of European articles about OPM which suggested eradication was still a viable option. The group discussed comparisons with other pest & disease outbreaks as examples of concerted action that proved effective where there was broad commitment e.g. foot and mouth.

**Action**                      **01 Stewart Snape to share information on the strategy change to containment and scientific basis for this**

**Action**                      **02 Mark Townsend to point group members to European OPM articles**

Public Health representation - whilst there have been very few cases of public health impact in GB to date, the group felt it important that they are represented on the group.

**Action**                      **03 Jane Carlsen & Sue Ireland to investigate health contacts who may join the Advisory Group**

Relationship with more strategic pest and disease groups – whilst the Terms of Reference picked up operational relationships with other groups, the group asked how it relates to strategic groups on pests and diseases. Alison Field explained that the focus is on London and the SE, and the group's work will be fed back to senior FC England and GB colleagues; the FC are providing the secretariat function in recognition that OPM control is only effective if it is coordinated across stakeholders. The group felt it should be feeding into groups beyond the FC, for example OPM research groups and the Bio-security Steering Group.

**Action**                      **04 Andrew Hoppit to re-draft Terms of Reference based on above discussions**

### 4 2012 season report and discussion

Following queries, Andrew Hoppit explained his role and relationship with FC Plant Health GB. In summary, GB Plant Health remain the lead FC team responsible, but Andrew is helping deliver operational programmes including increased stakeholder engagement e.g. training, information sharing. Bromley is a pilot to test alternative approach with authority delegated to FCE London for management of OPM.

#### **SW London OPM management**

The group asked for more information on the extent of the West London outbreak. The group recognised need to coordinate resources on OPM surveying as the FC has to focus effort on areas that will meet the containment strategy (buffer zone and sites within the core zone that threaten the buffer zone boundary. Stewart made clear eradication is the

policy for buffer and outbreak sites, with Statutory Plant Health Notices always served. In the core zone, notices are not normally served.

**Action**                      **05 Andrew Hoppit to distribute a map showing the broad distribution of the core and buffer zone**

Stewart explained that Forest Research decides on the boundary of the core zone after data from the annual survey has been reported back to them. It was stressed that this annual survey information needs to be produced in early Autumn each year so that resources can be planned for OPM control by Local Authorities and other stakeholders in the following season. Previously this information has not been available until early spring.

Colin Buttery provided an update on Richmond Park OPM management. They have seen an exponential growth in OPM, and the weather for 2012 has resulted in extended range of instars making the season for OPM longer than subsequent years. There have been over 70 volunteer surveyors looking for OPM in Richmond Park. Even using volunteers for surveying, the rising costs for nest removal is unsustainable for the Royal Parks and they will most likely have to focus on key sites e.g. of highest public access areas. The effectiveness of nest removal is being compromised by reinfestation from neighbouring untreated trees. A discussion regarding nest removal vs spraying took place, with some stressing that spraying is the only cost effective approach to OPM control.

### **Pangbourne outbreak**

Issues regarding access to infested woodland to undertake control were discussed. It was felt that the FC could be more proactive in dealing with the management of woodlands to allow them better access to survey woodlands. The FC's position has been to work in a collaborative way with landowners to try to get the necessary work (with help from grant where appropriate) done by landowners to manage their woodlands to allow better access for surveying.

## **5 OPM and statutory aspects**

Emergency measures are in place requiring plant passports, but further measures are being sought. Protected Zone Status application was first submitted 2010. It had to be rewritten as Dutch objected to additional controls such as nursery survey with a 500m buffer zone.

**Action**                      **06 Stewart Snape to share the briefing paper on Protected Zone Status (PZS)**

Resubmission still awaiting approval but EU Standing committee haven't considered it for the last 2 meetings. The group discussed whether / how it could apply pressure to get it on the agenda.

**Action**                      **07 Andrew Hoppit to draft a note providing information on the need for PZS and the urgency of the issue.**

**Action**                      **08 This note to be used by non-government group members to write and lobby their MEPs regarding the EU standing committee for urgent consideration and approval of the PZS application**

The Plant Health powers under which the FC is working to control OPM does not include powers of compensation or financial incentive for control. Indeed, there is no 'contingency funding' available for new outbreaks (as with other outbreaks)

## 6 2013 Plans

The group agreed there were 2 aspects

- to review the broad strategy for OPM management (especially in London)

and

- to develop a coordinated operational response.

Strategy – Group members confirmed that they wished to review this strategy and consider alternative approaches. FC/NE participants agreed to share whatever relevant data they can and advice on implications of alternative approaches. Should the group decide that an alternative strategy to that approved by Ministers is required, FC/NE members would have to carefully consider the extent of their involvement given their civil servant responsibilities.

Operational Plan – FC agreed to sketch out and draft the plan as per the group's recommendations (subject to the above - this could be delivered as a suite of core actions, with further/alternative approaches set out by other members of the group). This will include training plans for landowners/volunteers. Timescales agreed were 1<sup>st</sup> draft 12<sup>th</sup> October, final draft mid November, sign off early December.

**Action (repeated) 01 Stewart to share the current strategy agreed by ministers**

**Action 09 All independent members of the OPMAG to comment back to Sue Ireland using track change to identify areas where further changes are proposed with preliminary feedback to be achieved by 12<sup>th</sup> October**

The operational plan can be developed alongside the strategic plan, though may be varied accordingly to reflect resource implications/commitments. FC will be adjusting its operational OPM management to maximise effectiveness/efficiency – for example, more rapid sharing of FC survey results – but effective control will only be possible via a coordinated programme of work with stakeholders.

**Action 10 Andrew Hoppit to draft 2013 operational plan for November meeting**

## 7 AOB and next steps

The group raised the risk of ineffective control due to chemical limitations on sensitive sites. Adam agreed to provide a 'position statement' from Natural England.

**Action 11 Adam Wallace to share NEs position on OPM chemical control**

**Date of Next Meeting**

13th November 2-4pm at Guildhall – with a focus on the strategy paper and draft plan encouraging other key group members to attend e.g. health sector.