

# OPM Advisory Group Meeting minutes

## 14th November 2012, Guildhall, London

**Present:** Sue Ireland, Andrew Hoppit, Stewart Snape, Colin Buttery, Dave Lofthouse, Jane Carlsen, Mark Townsend, Dougal Driver, Greg Vickers, Mike Robinson, Barry Walsh, David Allister, Deborah Turbitt, Alison Field, Craig Harrison, Henry Kuppen, Julia Branson, Glynn Percival

**Apologies:** Richard Trippett, Adam Wallace, Tony Leach

### 1 Summary of actions from this meeting

#### New & outstanding actions from this meeting

<i>Action Point</i>	<i>Details</i>
1	Andrew Hoppit to draft a template letter for members to use as appropriate to push for Protected Zone Status
2	Andrew Hoppit to ensure the group strategy is reflected in the Terms of Reference
3	Barry to liaise with Henry to set up an England health sector visit to Holland to understand and learn from the Dutch experience
4	Advisory Group chairman to write to Barry's boss to request HPA input to public health information monitoring
5	Andrew Hoppit to liaise with individual members of the group to develop the detail of the plan, including apportioning shared responsibilities amongst stakeholders
6	Andrew to ensure the operational plan focuses on prophylactic spraying as a key factor in effective control and maximum efficiency
7	Alison to raise the financial incentive issue and need for contingency funding issues with FC senior colleagues - to address sudden, difficult or unforeseen issues that threaten the overall implementation of OPM control measures in any given season
8	Andrew to share Julia's presentation with the group
9	Julia and Andrew to continue work on system development for implementation in 2013 season, liaising with individual group members for their input

### 2 Introductions and welcome

Sue Ireland welcomed Deborah, Julia, Henry, David, Mike & Glynn to the meeting

### 3 Review of Actions from last meeting

<i>Details</i>	<i>Progress</i>
1. Stewart Snape to share information on the strategy change to containment and scientific basis for this	Done - email of 24 <sup>th</sup> Sep
2. Mark Townsend to point group members to European OPM articles	Done - email of 26 <sup>th</sup> Oct
3. Jane Carlsen & Sue Ireland to investigate health contacts who may join the Advisory Group	Done. Jane to verbally update. Deborah Turbitt (Public Health England) invited to the meeting

4. Andrew Hoppit to re-draft Terms of Reference based on above discussions	Done, latest version provided with meeting agenda
5. Andrew Hoppit to distribute a map showing the broad distribution of the core and buffer zone	Done. Email of 24 <sup>th</sup> Sep
6. Stewart Snape to share the briefing paper on Protected Zone Status (PZS)	Done. Email of 24 <sup>th</sup> Sep
7. Andrew Hoppit to draft a note providing information on the need for PZS and the urgency of the issue.	Done, including in meeting papers 12 <sup>th</sup> Nov
8. This note to be used by non-government members to write and inform their MEPs regarding the EU standing committee for urgent consideration and approval of the PZS application	To take forward now (7) done
9. All independent members of the AG 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	No responses received
10. Andrew Hoppit to draft 2013 operational plan for November meeting	Done - draft issued with meeting papers 12 <sup>th</sup> Nov
11. Adam Wallace to share NEs position on OPM chemical control	Done - provided with meeting papers 12 <sup>th</sup> Nov

The group agreed the notes of the last meeting with no changes.

AP 2 - Barry explained that Deborah is his HPA colleague. Barry is happy to continue representing HPA on the Advisory Group, given his involvement in OPM since 2006.

AP 7 – members of the group felt Andrew’s text was useful but some members would really benefit from being ‘spoon fed’ i.e. drafting a template letter that can be used to enable member organisation to act quickly.

**Action 1 Andrew Hoppit to draft a template letter for members to use as appropriate for lobbying re Protected Zone Status**

AP 9 - accepted it was delayed due to other tree issues and limited period for responses - discussed at this meeting.

## 4 OPM Strategy

The group discussed the 2010 submission document, including:

- a key issue is our understanding of ‘eradication’, ‘containment’ and ‘controlling the rate of spread’
- given the regular doubling of resource commitment over recent years and continued spread, is the current approach realistic? (Nigel Straw of FR is confident the controls employed have restricted the rate of spread in SW London and eradicated outbreaks elsewhere)
- that the strategy should not be defined purely by the resources available
- that the strategy needs to include timescales and probably geographic targets
- the need to prevent continued reinfestation via newly planted oak trees
- the recent discussions in parliament about tree pests and diseases in general
- that restricting spread will hopefully give time for science and research to provide improved control methods in future; concern that existing control methods (chemicals and application) are inconsistent and not foolproof

---

Sue summarised the group discussion. The group seeks containment (i.e. OPM no longer spreads further) within a time period to be defined. This implies a medium term resource implication, but keeps the door open for eradication depending on research, resources, science etc. The group was clear that eradication remains the strategy for outlying outbreaks

**Action 2 Andrew Hoppit to ensure the group strategy is reflected in the Terms of Reference**

## 5 Dutch experience of OPM and Q&A

Henry gave a presentation on his experiences in Holland of OPM, particularly his findings for 2012 and insight on the overall situation (presentation supplied as pdf)

- OPM is present across the majority of Holland, continuing to spread into the North
- The life cycle of OPM in 2012 was significantly different to normal years due to exceptional weather patterns
- Generally fewer and smaller nests (difficult to determine whether that is due to weather and/or control methods)
- Nematodes have proved very effective control method but it has to be used correctly. Treatment also tried using mix of nematode and BT
- In the Amsterdam area, OPM control is primarily focussed on human health impact prevention, so not all infested trees are treated. Approx €8M is spent on OPM control across the whole of the Netherlands
- In Amsterdam, the control costs are met by the Public Health department in recognition of the human health impacts despite incomplete evidence (similar problems re lack of reporting of OPM symptoms, but known issue; 2 anaphylaxis cases in 2012)
- Oaks continue to be planted across Holland in areas where public health issues would suggest alternative species should be used?, so not learning from their experience. Oaks are often distributed along corridors such as roadside plantings

After his presentation, the group had a Q&A session:

- Henry's view was that eradication of OPM is impossible, only possible if you felled all of the oaks
- Discussion about the geographic scale of OPM spread/control. In Holland they have eradicated OPM on a small island but tiny compared with the >100sq km distribution in SW London
- Henry's view that OPM is probably more widely spread than we know; just hasn't been found. Similar problems in Holland where clearly infested sites have not been reported despite general public awareness of the problem
- OPM is less of a woodland problem in Holland but is a problem in Belgium and Germany
- Need for GB health sector to understand the Dutch experience of OPM impact on human health. Continued problem in England due to lack of reported cases and no unique symptoms that can be readily attributed to OPM exposure

**Action 3 Barry to liaise with Henry to set up an England health sector visit to Holland to understand and learn from the Dutch experience**

## 6 Update on 2012 OPM situation

---

## SW London

Andrew Hoppit summarised the findings as shown on the map provided. It does not include some survey data for Richmond Park, Ealing and some other areas yet but provides a good indication of the broad distribution and spread in 2012.

Ralph Parks' report was summarised – unusual lifecycle in 2012 due to exceptional weather, with staggered emergence and larval stages. This increased problems re control effectiveness, as treated trees were found to be re-infested. Spread is overall approximately 1km, but variable around the buffer zone with some outbreaks of particular concern e.g. spread East of Wimbledon Common, Willesden Green and sites to West / South West towards Surrey/Berkshire.

Colin summarised OPM work in Richmond Park – continued major survey and control efforts involving >70 survey volunteers and >4,000 nests removed at a cost of ~£160k. Chemical was selectively used this year and found to be more effective than nest removal, and the Royal Parks will look to increase use of chemical control in future. Prioritisation of OPM control based on public access i.e. focussed on sites such as car parks and café areas. The Royal Park plan on writing up their findings re control in 2012, which will help others learn from their experience and employ the right control methods.

The group discussed the establishment of OPM at Wimbledon Common, which is managed by Conservators. Only nest removal is being employed there, so similar issues to Richmond Park and the group are keen to encourage appropriate use of chemical control and prophylactic spraying for more effective control in future.

The group recognised the need for greater collaboration between adjacent landowners engaged in control measures and discussed how we find out if OPM is distributed beyond the known core/buffer zone, using general vigilance – see operational plan section below

## Bromley/Croydon outbreak

Andrew summarised the situation and shared the map showing nest distribution. At the Bethlam hospital site ~4,000 nests have been removed and work continues. No public health symptoms reported to GPs which is surprising given the significant level of infestation in a publicly accessible site and schools / other public space in the immediate vicinity. Mark Townsend noted that control contractors have suffered symptoms.

## 7 OPM Operational Plan for 2013

David Allister noted it felt the discussions were similar to previous years, but the group hopes its actions will provide a more coordinated and planned approach to OPM for the future. A consistent and complete approach is required if the plan is going to be effective i.e. any gaps in coordination will result in potential reinfestation pockets that undermine our strategy.

A key aspect of the plan is data collection and management, so Julia gave her presentation (below).

The group discussed the need for collective survey resource, including the use of trained volunteers to build capacity. The FC would provide survey training to enable this, and would welcome group member suggestions for the volunteers to train e.g. LPGSF network, Tree Council Tree Wardens. The ability to survey privately owned trees is a problem.

---

The group also noted the need for close liaison between non FC surveyors and the FC issue of statutory notices so that there is a clear agreed protocol for informing and supporting landowners of infected trees before issue of notice.

The group noted the apparent disparity between the survey methodology of the 500m buffer from infested trees, when the maps suggest spread up to ~1km and beyond; this needs to be addressed in the operational plan.

Barry highlighted the need for clear information to monitor plan success e.g. trees infested/dead, people affected.

The group agreed that improved host tree distribution data was critical for the implementation of an effective operational plan. Work has begun via Geodata but the assistance of Advisory Group members will be needed to provide data.

**Action 4 Advisory Group chairman to write to the Director of HPA London to request HPA input to public health information monitoring**

The group agreed volunteers wouldn't be expected to deal with landowners of infested trees (just identify infestation and inform the FC), but qualified/professional sector would be expected to liaise with them where appropriate. The group agreed that securing a positive relationship with affected landowners was critical to effective cooperation; the statutory notice approach could not achieve this on its own.

The group agreed a communications plan should be linked to the operational plan, which will define actions such as raising public awareness.

Sue picked up Tony Leach's previous concern about providing financial incentives for effective control. The group agreed plant health requires similar contingency funds/planning to that which is in place for animal health.

**Action 5 Andrew Hoppit to liaise with individual members of the group to develop the detail of the plan, including apportioning shared responsibilities amongst stakeholders and collation of host tree data**

**Action 6 Andrew to ensure the operational plan focuses on prophylactic spraying as a key factor in effective control and maximum efficiency**

**Action 7 Alison to raise the financial incentive issue and need for contingency funding issues with FC senior colleagues - to address sudden, difficult or unforeseen issues that threaten the overall implementation of OPM control measures in any given season**

## **Presentation on OPM Data Management by Julia Branson**

Julia summarised the current situation and its limitations e.g. manual collection of data; no single system for data collection; only a record of infestation, not healthy trees

The key benefits of the proposed new system/process are:

- centralised storage and availability of information
- collect infested and non-infested trees data
- automatic notices, reports etc
- spatial data management
- fulfil FC statutory needs

- 
- Mobile devices for survey data collection; immediate data provision, especially if via wifi/3G connection
  - The system would link into the national England programme for managing other current tree health issues

The data flow would be mobile device – central database – FC statutory system

The FC connected statutory system would be able to record compliance. There would be a software licence cost for field surveying associated with the new approach.

Hardware requirements would be flexible to enable maximum compatibility and limit need for special equipment - ipad, blackberry, android, netbook or laptop. Otterbox or rugged laptop options offer field based protection. The group noted any such hardware needs could limit some volunteer engagement e.g. many Tree Wardens are retired with less use of e.g. smartphones

Once the fields required have been determined, it's relatively quick to set up the forms, with little/no training required. Need to decide what fields to collect, can be set up very quickly. Simple to use, little/no training required. Likely fields to collect - location, species, dbh/ht, nests found, photos; different fields required for compliance based inspections

The website of data can be made widely available, filtered by various factors e.g. date surveyed. The data can be downloaded to spreadsheet or database. The link to FC plant health database will enable standard letters etc

- Action 8 Andrew to share Julia's presentation with the group**
- Action 9 Julia and Andrew to continue work on system development for implementation in 2013 season, liaising with individual group members for their input**

## 8 AOB and next steps

Andrew Hoppit is attending an HPA meeting on 14th Jan to discuss OPM

The group agreed the next meeting would focus on agreeing the operational plan, then a pre-season meeting

### **Date of Next Meeting**

16th January 1400-1600 @ Guildhall Irish Chambers

6th March 1400-1600 at Guildhall Irish Chamber (pre prophylactic spraying season)