

OPM Advisory Group Meeting minutes

12th February 2014, Guildhall, London

Present: Sue Ireland (Chair), Julia Branson (Geodata), Richard Tripett, Mike Robinson, Dave Lofthouse, Mark Parsons, Andrew Hoppit, Craig Harrison, Gill Brown (FC), Colin Buttery, Nigel Straw, Craig Ruddick

Apologies: Barry Walsh, Emer O'Connell, Tony Leach, Adam Wallace, Andrew Jones, Charlton Clark, Mark Townsend, Stewart Snape, Jake Morris

1. Introduction & Welcome

Attendees introduced themselves

2. Summary of actions from this meeting

Action Point	<i>Details</i>
1	Andrew Hoppit to chase Stewart re latest results at Pangbourne
2	Adam/NE are invited to comment on Mark's report
3	Craig to look at sharing the OPM research summary more widely
4	Mark Parsons to publish his report subject to NE and any further AG comments by end of February
5	Julia to share final winter survey results with the group once it is completed and results collated
6	Craig to feed back AG thoughts on 2015 programme and stakeholder engagement to the Defra OPM project board
7	FC to liaise with AG members who have not regularly attended
8	AG comments on contingency plan to Andrew Hoppit

3. Review of Actions from last meeting

AP	Details	Progress
1	Craig to check if Mark can share AG papers with RSPB and BugLife	Protocol agreed with Mark Parsons
2	Stewart to consider sharing final moth report from last year with AG members	Has been distributed
3	Jake Morris, Defra to be invited to next meeting to discuss OPM control programme evaluation project	Jake sent his apologies
4	Andrew to send email to workshop attendees to assure outputs are being dealt with	2015 proposals meet workshop
5	All - comments on OPM workshop review to Andrew by 22 December 2014	Done
6	All - comments regarding 2015 proposals to Andrew by 22 December 2014	Done
7	2014 OPM survey and control information	Largely provided but a few reports to be sent in
8	PHE to share report on human health impact 2014	PHE will provide shortly

No matters arising

4. Impact of OPM control

Mark Parson summarised his AG paper and the key conclusions. The group agreed ongoing monitoring is key to enhance understanding of the impact and long term effects.

Action 1 Andrew Hoppit to chase Stewart re latest results at Pangbourne

On Richmond Park research, the group discussed the results:

- Inherent problem that differences could be down to other factors due to sampling design
- Bt breaks down quickly, so hard to explain why there is impact in later feeders and following year
- Royal Parks hope to continue the monitoring in future years. Emphasised RPs seek to minimise chemical use in line with Richmond Parks conservation status
- Bycatch interesting – Bt isn't supposed to have an impact on beetles and further work would be valuable
- Discussion whether not controlling OPM would have an impact on other Lepidoptera such as Tortrix (OPM defoliates a little versus overall spray of many infested trees)
- Noted that we don't know the impact of chemical on ground layer
- Noted that Tortrix was sprayed in mid 90s, especially winter moth when they were having a significant impact in southern England, hasn't been a problem since and unlikely we'd do similar again
- The group agreed Richmond's work is ground breaking
- Greater interest in research e.g. PhDs and other academic institutions noted, how do we collate that interest

Action 2 Adam/NE are invited to comment on Mark's report

Action 3 Craig to look at sharing the OPM research summary more widely

Action 4 Mark Parsons to publish his report subject to NE and any further AG comments by end of February

5. Update on winter survey

Andrew & Julia provided a summary of the winter survey findings. The survey started 2nd week of January and will finish this week (so therefore not quite complete data set). Julia described the survey methodology.

Headline results were: 673 sites visited, >16,000 trees inspected, 320 infested trees found (2%). Access to schools have proved a challenge occasionally but largely resolved. Only 2 infested trees found outside known extent from the 2014 summer programme.

Where surveys around pheromone traps were done (traps that caught >4 moths), only 1 site was found (Beckenham Palace Park) and the group agreed this was generally good news, albeit further analysis required. A number of nests have been found at Regents Park which threatens some adjacent sites.

The group discussed using light traps that could pick up female moths but it is labour intensive and requires a power source.

It was agreed that further analysis of the threshold number of moths trapped would help determine future survey work, and the need to consider Pangbourne trap results that indicate a low level latent populations

Martin Townsend winter surveying of Pangbourne has revealed no new nests.

Action 5 Julia to share final winter survey results with the group once it is completed and results collated

6. 2015 OPM plans and stakeholder engagement

Proposals

Craig summarised the 2015 proposals that have been approved by Ministers but subject to final budget confirmation. They are largely as presented at the last meeting with the addition of introductory notes

It was noted that the results of the Croydon/Bromley winter survey will mean higher control costs

Core zone

The Advisory Group asked about the option to do more i.e. survey and control activity in the core area, and that this option had been put to Defra.

The group discussed the thought of pheromone trapping between 10km and 20km (1 per 4sqkm)? The group felt it worth doing if the money is available, or if budget limited consider doing it in one sector (West London to Pangbourne suggested)

The idea of extrapolating Richmond Park control costs across the core area was raised as an indication of what landowner costs would be incurred if there isn't Defra funding. The group were keen to ensure Defra are advised of the cost of not controlling OPM in the core zone– both in terms of actual control cost but also longer term costs.

The group felt it appropriate that FC advise Boroughs on what they've spent per Borough in past 2 years based on the information received and the cost of the Defra funded activity to give them a sense of scale and expectation. The group also highlighted the economic impact analysis previously done that shows the cost effectiveness of OPM control now, and the relative cost of dealing with OPM on a reactive basis e.g. public enquiries.

The group discussed infestation on private sites and challenges giving advice on who can do the work – recommendation lists etc. The group also recommended mentioning in the FC letter to boroughs: a framework contract approach; TPO and tree felling risks

Contractors would be unlikely to fulfil the work if the Richmond framework approach was expanding across 11 boroughs – it requires a lead in period to prepare

The group discussed miscellaneous provisions act – work on behalf of owner and recover costs – but general consensus was that it would be administratively difficult, probably end up more expensive with Borough costs added and the short control window for OPM makes it very difficult. The group did agree that efforts should be made to coordinate work e.g. dealing with private sites when contractor is working on Borough/major landowner sites in the area

The group also noted that it will be harder for contractors to manage as will be more reactive (and conversely they will be marketing their services)

Stakeholder liaison

Craig explained the range of communication in progress to engage stakeholders in the core are in particular – Baroness Kramer’s influence, LGA magazine article, Slot on the London Council Transport & Env’t Committee, FC Director letter to Boroughs; PHE engagement in an shared OPM communications plan for 2015.

The group discussed tree felling and that there have already been cases where landowners have chosen to fell rather than control OPM (but relatively small number of sites). The general feeling was that felling would be discouraged, but also whether the option of felling as a control option should be raised. Borough advice was that educating members is key to ensuring they support Borough stance re tree felling. The debate provided a wide range of views so a quick vote was done - 3 saying something should be proactively said about the tree felling option, 1 not, rest said it depends.

AG members raised a query whether FC will write to core zone owners who we won’t fund this year

A BMJ article was suggested as it is widely read – PHE may wish to publish something related to their recent literature review of review of the 2014 public health events in West London.

Action 6 Craig to feed back AG thoughts on 2015 programme and stakeholder engagement to the Defra OPM project board

7. 7. OPM Evaluation Project

Deferred as Jake couldn’t attend

8. 8. AOB

Sue noted a number of regular non-attendees and checking whether they wish to be engaged in future.

Action 7 FC to liaise with AG members who have not regularly attended

The LTOA working party dates have been set this year but noted that there is the potential for 50 people attending (at the last meeting there were approximately 15) - this is an encouraging high level of engagement but LTOA need to consider how it is managed in future

Action 8 AG comments on OPM contingency plan to Andrew Hoppit

Richard Trippett emphasised the need for control contractors to know site allocations asap – noted by Andrew Hoppit

Colin noted ongoing liaison with Baroness Kramer and working with the FC re messaging. There is concern that there isn’t sufficient engagement at present amongst some stakeholders

Craig – OPM visit by new FC Commissioner & England National Committee member end of Feb so they better understand the issues

Date of next meeting

Next meeting: 25th June 2015 2pm at Irish Chambers, Guildhall