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# OPM Advisory Group Meeting minutes

## 14 September 2015, Guildhall, London

**Present:** Sue Ireland (Chair), Craig Harrison, Andrew Hoppit, Alison Field, Stewart Snape, Jake Morris, Colin Buttery, Mark Parsons, Craig Ruddick, Mark Townsend, Adam Wallace, Emer O'Connell, John Deakin, Gill Brown (FC)

**Apologies:** Julia Branson (Geodata), Charlton Clark, Nigel Straw, Dave Lofthouse, Mike Robinson, Richard Tripett, Barry Walsh

### 1. Introduction & Welcome

Sue welcomed everyone to the meeting including Jake Morris.

### 2. Summary of actions from this meeting

Action Point	Details
1	Stewart Snape to circulate Amsterdam OPM annual report.
2	Andrew Hoppit to share 2015 pheromone trap results as soon as they are available
3	Craig Harrison to share 2016 OPM control plans with the group by end of October

### 3. Review of Actions from last meeting

AP	Details	Progress
1	Stewart Snape to circulate ' <i>Comparing and Valuing the Impacts of OPM in the Netherlands to England</i> ' report when available.	Ongoing
2	Andrew Hoppit will check and confirm with London Zoo on control action taken to date. Andrew will also check findings with survey team.	Completed
3	Andrew Hoppit to look at improving wording of SPHN for 2016.	Noted for 2016 - closed
4	All to review ' <i>OPM review of challenges, progress and options</i> ' report and send comments to Andrew Hoppit by 17 July 2015.	Completed
5	Craig to look at sharing the OPM research summary more widely	OPM research update event being planned by Defra - closed

The group reviewed actions from the last meeting:

Andrew Hoppit confirmed prophylactic spraying did not take place at London Zoo but they did carry out nest removal. Two separate surveys completed and no further nests have been found.

### 4. Update on OPM Control Programme

Andrew Hoppit referred to the map circulated prior to the meeting and gave an update on the following sites:

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## **Pangbourne:**

- Visual survey completed. No nests found.
- Pheromone trapping programme has shown a total of 7 moths found in 7 different traps.
- An amateur lepidopterist has recorded 2 moths trapped within Reading town
- Currently awaiting results from trapping programme of the corridor between Heathrow and Pangbourne. Results should be available by the end of September 2015.

## **Olympic Park area:**

Ongoing problems at Olympic Park. 6 nests found this year which were removed as soon as possible.

## **Hampstead Heath and Barnet:**

Concerns were raised re the potential risk of an outbreak within the London Borough of Harrow following the contiguous outbreaks at Hampstead Heath and Barnet. Andrew confirmed the pheromone trapping programme includes Harrow and results would be available soon.

## **Croydon/Bromley:**

Site shows some success. Infestation moved slightly northwards but contracting in the south.

## **Wisley:**

- OPM discovered by in-house team at RHS Wisley gardens.
- Site is 12km away from known OPM sites.
- Most nests found so far have been within RHS Wisley gardens but one has recently been found along nearby A3 boundary.
- 1km survey of infestation in progress. Likely to extend to 2km in line with contingency plan.
- Results so far show nothing has been found at Ockham Common.

## **Other:**

Mark Parsons advised that for the past 3 years OPM moths have been recorded in Dartford area and this year from Braintree.

John Deakin advised no findings yet in 12 pheromone traps checked at Windsor Estate. Pheromone trapping not carried out at Oxshott Estate but being considered.

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## **Pheromone Trapping programme update:**

Intensive pheromone trapping programme now complete and collation of data currently in progress. This should be available by the end of September. Early indications are that nearly all traps are showing captures – not high density, apart from Wisley site.

After reviewing the maps and early pheromone trap findings, the group agreed that it indicated continued OPM spread beyond the survey/trapping area. Despite the 3 year pilot, more extensive survey/control programme and complementary activity by other stakeholders, the group noted its disappointment in the findings and the current approach is unsustainable in the long term.

## **5. OPM Control Programme Evaluation update**

Jake Morris briefed the group on the OPM control programme evaluation project update report circulated prior to the meeting.

Discussions followed including:

- Alison Field highlighted the importance of human decisions rather than theoretical. Human dimension is key to points of learning including attitudes, initial responses and how to focus people to take action.
- The resulting evaluation framework will 'attempt' to look at the spread of OPM without control and compare to OPM control programme. This raised the question that the project could be 'evaluating something that is not complete?' Jake advised that the control programme would be looked as a pilot programme of tried methodology and not as a scientific project.
- The group discussed how cost effective the control programme has been and this raised the question of the potential cost if nothing is done. The group agreed the cost of the control programme so far has been against trying to contain the spread of OPM and recognised that eradication probably not possible. It was noted that the project will be limited on evaluating economic impact as it would require an experienced economist to completely evaluate the cost of no OPM control.
- Mark Townsend reminded the group of Kew's experience of severe reinfestation when they refrained from taking OPM control action for one year after several years of control activity
- European comparisons discussed - aware of contextual reasons why experience and control of OPM is different in Europe. Suggestion that the recent 'Comparing and Valuing the Impacts of OPM in the Netherlands to England' report could be 'fed into' the project. Mark Parsons also referred to biodiversity studies and how various species behave differently overseas.

Jake advised that Gemma Harper will be sending an email to members this week inviting them to support and become involved in the project. Also, a meeting will be

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held following the publication of the evaluation report in March 2016. Attendees still to be confirmed.

Jake can provide Gantt chart of project schedule to members if required.

## 6. OPM Comms Update

Craig referred to the Comms update report circulated prior to the meeting:

- Ongoing comms activity continues to increase awareness and encourage general reporting.
- The group confirmed that the OPM manual had been widely distributed and referred to particularly in the core zone.
- The group agreed the FC's weekly update had been well received, though the lack of input from other stakeholders through the season was a disappointment.
- Concerns were raised regarding lack of response from some key boroughs and people working within the industry.
- Sue referred to a couple of recently published articles regarding OPM. Sue reminded members to inform Forestry Commission and the Advisory Group if they intend to be involved in media activities etc.

## 7. 2016 Plans

Craig Harrison opened up discussions on planning for 2016. Given the timescale of the evaluation with results not expected until March 2016, this didn't allow the necessary operational lead in time for 2016 control – so plans need to be put in place for 2016 that do not prejudice the evaluation work but are flexible to take account of the evaluation results. Thus agreeing the most appropriate approach for 2016 presents some key challenges.

The group discussed and agreed that planning for 2016 would be influenced by:

- Control programme results this year;
- Results of Evaluation Project;
- Budget;
- Tree health priorities;
- New ministers;
- Implications of commitment to Europe regarding eradication of outbreaks in protected zones. No time scales for eradication are imposed and can apply to change area of protected zone.

The group continued discussions on:

- Do we continue with programme of surveillance, spraying and nest removal? Or do we just target 'known nests'?

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- Do we try a new approach based on managing risk rather than generic control of spread? The group agreed that risk management should be considered to include factors such as knowledge of current infestation, site sensitivity, host distribution, public health risk
  - Eradication is still policy for new outbreaks.
  - Continue with dissemination of information and awareness programmes?
  - The need for a longer term plan (5 years suggested) rather than year on year programme / budget approval.
  - Consideration re on-going control plans for the following areas:

Wisley – continue control to try and contain spread? Alison Field suggested looking at overlay map of oak woodland in Surrey.

Olympic Park – site considered ‘controllable’.

Bromley/Croydon – Contiguous outbreak? To consider this year’s results to determine logical control plan.

Sue Ireland opened up discussions on the impact of OPM on green space in London and the implications of health related issues:

- The extent of impact on public health is still relatively unknown and it is possibly under-reported. Increased exposure could have greater impact on health in the future.
- Stewart Snape advised that control in Amsterdam is public health driven. Stewart will circulate Amsterdam’s annual report on this.  
**Action 1: Stewart to circulate Amsterdam OPM annual report.**
- Colin Buttery advised that nest removal will continue at Richmond Park and other Royal Parks to protect the public.

The group agreed that greater participation from other public bodies would help in the prevention of OPM spread:

- Colin Buttery advised that Chief Executives of 17 boroughs have been invited to a meeting on 21 September 2015 to discuss views on how OPM affects a borough. Lord True, Richmond Borough, will be in attendance. Invitations will only apply to either the Chief Executive, director or lead environmental officer. Six responses received to date.
- London Council Leader Group hold 4 meetings per year. Lord True is hoping to get a slot on their agenda.
- Sue Ireland advised she has been invited to the London Council meeting on 21 November 2015. This will be an opportunity to talk about OPM during the breakout session.

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- John Deakin advised that Crown Estates would fund control.
  - Craig said that Forest Enterprise are progressing contingency plans, including getting advice from Richmond Park.
  - Mark Townsend suggested that if central government funding is no longer available then landowners/managers should be made aware asap so they can prepare accordingly

## 8. Local Authority to Control OPM

Stewart Snape referred to advice given on local authority powers to control OPM under Environmental Regulations. (Paper 2)

Prior to the meeting members were asked to '*to consider any concerns about the limited powers that local authorities have to control OPM, particularly in relation to private land, and if so, do they want FC (Stewart has agreed to take it on if need be) to explore other legislative options?*

The group agreed that there is not enough evidence to put to Defra.

Mark Townsend mentioned Ealing barrister, Charles Mynors, who specialises in tree law. Craig Ruddick will look into the possibility of contacting a tree law expert/barrister.

## 9. AOB

Sue reminded the group of the importance of continuing to communicate with each other.

Date of next meeting

**Next meeting: 29 October 2015 2pm at Irish Chambers, Guildhall**