

**Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the
Oak Processionary Moth Outbreak Management Team
12:30pm 28 October 2009
City Hall, London**

Present:

Roddie Burgess, Head of Plant Health (Chair)
Richard Barnes, Greater London Authority
Shaun Case, Richmond Council
Ben Clutterbuck, Ealing Council
Dr Margie Meltzer, NW London Health Protection Unit, Health Protection Agency
Ron Melville, Regional Director, London
Matthew Oates, National Trust
Gary Rimmer, Assistant Arboricultural Officer, London Borough of Brent
Mike Robinson, Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate, Defra
Prof Monique Simmonds, Plant Health Officer, Kew Gardens
Nigel Straw, Programme Group Manager, Centre for Forestry & Climate Change
Christine Tilbury, Forest Research
Martin Townsend, Consultant Ecologist
Mike Turner, The Royal Parks
Barry Walsh, SW London Health Protection Unit, Health Protection Agency
Debbie Erskine, Secretary

Prof Monique Simmonds and Barry Walsh were attending in place of Sara Redstone and Ruth Ruggles respectively.

Apologies:

Tony Kirkham, Arboretum Head, Kew Gardens
David Lofthouse, London Tree Officers Association

Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Introductions

1. Roddie welcomed everyone to the fourth meeting of the Oak Processionary Moth Outbreak Management Team. He also welcomed Matthew Oates from the National Trust who was attending as an observer. Members agreed that Matthew should become a full member.

Agenda Item 2: Minutes of the third meeting held on 25 February 2009

2. The OMT agreed the Minutes of the third meeting.

Agenda Item 3: Matters arising

3. Roddie updated the OMT on the following matters arising:

Para 4 - The London Resilience Forum had met in July and the OMT welcomed the London Boroughs working together.

Para 6 - Access to a GIS database of trees in London would be difficult as not all Boroughs kept electronic records. Ben agreed to take this forward.

Action: Ben to investigate electronic tree plotting by London Boroughs.

Para 8 - The Plant Health (Forestry) Order 2005 had been amended to permit the import of oak trees under two metres in height **subject to meeting certain requirements to ensure freedom from Oak Processionary Moth¹** and came into force in April 2009.

Para 9 - The Olympic Games organisers had accepted advice not to use oak trees in landscaping work. Ron agreed to confirm with the organisers that this would also apply to associated Games sites outwith the main Olympic village.

Action: Ron to confirm oak would not be used in associated Olympic sites.

Para 10 - Defra had consulted on compensation powers and the Commission's position had not changed. Land owners were responsible for the cost of eradication and remedial works.

Para 13 - Communications strategy would be discussed as agenda item 7a.

Agenda Item 4: Report to FC on 2009 Surveys - Paper OPM09/05

4. Martin circulated a map of the results of the larval/nest survey and pheromone trapping. He presented his paper and asked the OMT to note a factual change on page 6, paragraph 3.1 – Piccadilly Line, Ealing nests 2009 should read 196. He reported that approximately 2,192 nests had been found in the outbreak area compared with 506 in 2008 and 708 in 2007. It was not clear that the increased figures were due to increased survey effort or a real population increase. He added that eradication may no longer be feasible and future planning should focus on control. The development and use of a vacuum technique at RBGK was encouraging and feasibility of an early preventative treatment with DiPel should be investigated. He added that a single nest had been found at a hospital in Leeds on a recently planted tree thought to be unrelated to the London infestations.

5. The OMT discussed the Report and noted that:

- Roddie had met representatives of the golf club who had been reluctant to carry out the required work and they had now agreed to remove all nests.
- Susan Kramer MP had written to Ministers about the situation in Richmond Park.
- RBGK would write to Ms Kramer about health issues. It was evident that there was no sign of rashes after one visit but Kew staff were showing signs of allergies as a result of prolonged exposure.
- Roddie would brief Ministers but highlighted that the Forestry Commission could not take the lead on health issues
- Barry reported that there had been no major feedback regarding health and that he would contact the Dutch and Belgian health authorities to enquire about the situation there.
- The symptoms in animals such as horses, cattle deer and dogs were similar to foot and mouth disease but could not be spread from one to another.

¹ Amended at Oak Processionary Moth Outbreak Management Team Meeting held on 24 March 2010.

- A nest in Richmond Park had disappeared and it was suspected that a deer might have eaten it. Mike confirmed that all deer found dead in Richmond Park were incinerated and not sold as venison.
- Martin was trying to identify where the tree in Leeds had originated, although the nest had now disappeared.
- Christine confirmed that samples were available for DNA testing and that she would update the survey results map to include recent findings.
- The OMT agreed that survey work should continue in 2010 and asked Martin to consider widening the survey area.
- RBGK were concerned that the numbers of nests being found and the trees affected were increasing and nests were now also being found on hybrid trees.
- Nigel explained that the vacuum technique was similar to that used in the asbestos industry.
- Roddie explained that normal policy was not to identify individual sites where any pests were present unless there were public interest grounds for doing so. He asked for views, within two weeks, on whether the survey report should be sanitised to remove the names of the sites where the nests had been found before being published. The original version would, however, be included in Ministers' briefing.

Action:

RBGK to write to Susan Kramer.

Roddie to brief Ministers.

Barry to seek HPA support for literature search on European Health agency responses and control measures.

Christine to update survey results map.

Martin to widen survey area for 2010.

All to send views to Roddie whether site names should be included in the survey report.

Agenda Item 5: Reports from the London Borough Councils

6. Ben reported that Ealing had met the London Tree Officer's Association the previous week and that he would send out a note of the meeting to OMT members. He added that Ealing Council would treat nests on its own land but not on private land although it was recognised that centralised funding was necessary to subsidise those who could not afford to pay for treatment.

Action: Ben to send note of meeting with LTOA to OMT members.

7. Gary reported that Brent agreed with the Ealing approach. The Council recognised that public awareness needed to be raised but OPM was not high on their list of priorities.

8. Shaun reported that he had not been so involved with OPM lately as it was now dealt with Richmond's tree section. They had carried out surveys throughout the summer and had reported their finding to Martin. The cost of spraying and nest removal had cost almost £40k.

9. Mike reported that Richmond Park was extremely under-resourced to deal with all the associated issues and was concerned about availability of contractors to undertake the work.

10. Roddie asked the OMT to provide estimated costs for treatment, including staff resources, to include in the Ministers' briefing. Matthew asked for total figures to be circulated to the OMT.

Action:
All to send Roddie estimated costs for treatment.
Roddie to circulate figures to OMT members.

Agenda Item 6: Update on Statutory Controls (EU Protected Zone)

11. Roddie reported that the European Food Safety Authority had considered the Pest Risk Analysis prepared by Forest Research and the key conclusion was that they had agreed that OPM justified being classified as a pest of phytosanitary concern within the EU. Proposals on how this might be achieved were now awaited from the European Commission.

Agenda Item 7: Review of Action Plan - Paper OPM09/06

12. The OMT agreed that the points in the action plan had already been covered in the Councils' updates.

Agenda Item 7a Communications Strategy

13. Roddie explained that there was not much to be done on communications at this time of the year and asked that this be considered at the next meeting in February 2010.

Agenda Item 8: Next Steps

14. Roddie considered that actions had not been co-ordinated between the main stakeholders in the most heavily infested area in Richmond Borough. The OMT agreed his suggestions for a meeting of the six parties in the affected area to discuss and agree a treatment strategy and a similar meeting between FC inspectors and LTOA, both to be held in February before the next OMT meeting.

Action: Roddie to organise meetings.

Agenda Item 9: Any Other Business

15. Barry will seek HPA support to explore potential health surveillance options and work to develop an outbreak plan.

Agenda Item 10: Date of Next Meeting

16. Roddie suggested that the next meeting of the OMT should be in the second half of February, following the two meetings suggested at paragraph 14.

17. Richard offered City hall as a venue and Matthew offered Queen Anne's Gate, depending on dates and availability.

Action: Debbie to set a date for February 2010.