

**Minutes of the Meeting of the  
Oak Processionary Moth Outbreak Management Team  
13 June 2007  
Riverwalk House, Millbank, London**

**Present:**

Roddie Burgess (Chairman), Head of Plant Health, Forestry Commission  
Hugh Evans, Head of Tree Health Division, Forest Research  
Ron Melville, Regional Director, London, Forestry Commission  
Helen Long, Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate, Defra  
Neil Manning, Ealing Council  
Ben Clutterbuck, Ealing Council  
Shaun Case, Richmond Council  
Charlton Clark, Press Officer, Forestry Commission  
Debbie Weston (Secretary), Corporate Services, Forestry Commission

**Apologies:**

Steve Mears, Southern Regional Manager, Plant Health

**Welcome and Introductions**

1. Roddie welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Oak Processionary Moth Outbreak Management Team and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

**Update on Current Outbreak**

2. Roddie advised the Team that he had put forward a Ministerial submission to alert the Minister about the outbreak in case there was any media activity. Copies were issued to the Team. Charlton issued revised copies of the News Release.

3. Hugh updated the Team on the latest situation and explained that 130 trees had been infested on a railway embankment in the Park Royal area of Ealing to which Neil added that further infestation on street trees had been found.

4. Hugh explained that insecticide treatment could not be used near water and that Kew Gardens were looking at physical management of the nests found in around 45 trees, including rare species of oak.

5. Responding to Shaun's question on feeding, Hugh said that the larvae tended to feed mainly at night but that feeding times had not been closely monitored and that the timing had to be right for physically removing the nests when they contained the pupa. He added that Kew Gardens were keen to remove the nests because of the high level of public access to the Gardens.

6. Roddie stressed that there were two clear problems: the removal of the nests and whether public access needed to be restricted. He wondered whether the use of statutory notices should be considered?

7. Helen explained that Kew Gardens had difficulty with resources available to remove the nests to which Hugh added that they should probably be at the right stage to be removed in a fortnight. He also mentioned that the location of the nests could make access difficult. Shaun agreed and said that he had visited Kew the previous day and that the nests were located in both high and low positions on the trees.

8. Neil explained that nests had been found in various locations in Ealing. They were spread over various companies' land, including several railways' companies. The Council had started to survey the nests' locations but it was difficult to manage because of the number of companies' land involved. He said that the Council would consider using category two emergency planning to gain access to the various companies' land.

9. Roddie added that Section 5 of the Plant Health Act enabled the Forestry Commission to empower local authorities to take action against the pest, including authorising inspectors and giving them powers of access (as had been done with Dutch Elm Disease). Notices could be served to ensure that the companies complied. He noted, however, that the FC would only empower local authorities if that was their wish and he asked both Ealing and Richmond to consider and advise whether they would like this option explored further.

**Action: Neil and Shaun to consider and advise**

10. Neil said that Ealing Council were considering writing to members of the public to ask residents if they had any infested trees but considered that it would be difficult to deal with if large numbers of nests were found and, additionally, funding for treatment of removal of the nests was an issue.

11. Roddie explained that it was government policy that 'the polluter pays' and that it was the owner of any infested tree's responsibility to pay for remedial measures. He sympathised over the funding difficulty but added that if the outbreak was not dealt with now, the problem would be even greater in the future. He confirmed that the Forestry Commission would not be funding remedial work.

12. Neil showed the Team a map of the infested area in Ealing which, although was mainly concentrated along tube lines, the lines backed onto residential areas and the Council had found nests in several scattered sites in street trees. Additionally, nests had also been found on cable pylons and in railway signal boxes. He added that the infestation could spread rapidly along the railway lines and into the bordering Brent Council area.

13. Hugh added that areas of new planting of oak should be investigated. Helen agreed and said that there should be stricter passporting of trees. Roddie agreed but noted that 'instant trees' such as used in new developments such as shops and commercial premises would be passported and he wondered whether it would be possible for Defra to investigate sites with recent landscaping to see if the source(s) of the trees could be identified? He also wondered if local authority planners would be able to identify further sites where closer inspection of landscape trees could be conducted.

**Action: Helen to explore whether sources of trees in recent plantings can be identified and traceback/traceforward initiated.**

**Neil and Shaun: to investigate whether Planning Officers can offer information on new developments with landscaping**

14. Roddie said that the Team did not just need to consider tree health implications but that it had a duty to inform health authorities who would need to decide how to deal with public health issues. He also felt that we had a general duty of care to warn residents when new outbreaks were found. Hugh added that this was also a big year for brown tail moth which also caused skin rashes.

15. Roddie asked members whether other local authorities should be invited to join the Team.

**Action: Neil and Shaun to consult their contacts and advise**

16. In response to a question from Neil on data capture, Hugh said that Forest Research would be happy to take on the role and to make the information available to everyone. The information would be posted on the Commission's website. A poster would also be produced, in the next week, to advise the public on 'do's and don't's' in the event of finding nests.

**Action: Hugh to co-ordinate data capture  
Charlton to co-ordinate information leaflet**

### **Communications Strategy**

17. Roddie explained that Charlton would take the lead in communications strategy and he would form a communications sub-group including representatives from the London Tree Officers, Defra, local health authorities and local London councils.

18. Charlton outlined the communications strategy and issued copies of the latest revise of the News Release which would be issued the following day. He asked Neil and Shaun to provide quotes on behalf of their Councils for the News Release. He added that the Release would be distributed to local radio stations and press media and asked the Councils to distribute it further to smaller local media.

**Action: Neil and Shaun**

19. Hugh asked the Councils to co-ordinate with him the information they wanted captured. Hugh agreed that Richmond and Ealing Councils should be the first contact point for the public, thereafter Forest Research.

20. The Team discussed the contents of the Q&A and Charlton agreed to issue a revised Q & A based on their agreed comments. He would also produce a more detailed Q & A for Press Officers' use only if they were further pressed during questioning.

21. Roddie explained that the lengthy discussions during the meeting had covered the Contingency Plan and Proposed Action and asked if anyone had any further comments on either of the two papers to email their comments either to Roddie or Debbie. Once agreed, both papers would be posted on the FC web site.

**Action: all**

22. Roddie asked if any organisations had been missed from the invitation to join the Team? It was agreed that RBG, Kew was a key player and that they should be approached.

**Action: Roddie to speak to Sara Redstone**

### **Date of Next Meeting**

23. The Team agreed that a date for the next meeting would be set at an appropriate time and that in the meantime, issues arising would be dealt with by correspondence.

### **Summary of Action Points**

Roddie	Consider using statutory notice to treat/remove nests.
Neil	Ealing Council to consider using category two emergency planning to gain access to land to survey/treat/remove nests.
Roddie	Speak to lawyers about enforcing the Plant Health Act to empower local authorities.
Helen	Areas of new planting of oak should be investigated.
Neil/Shawn	Members to decide whether other local authorities be invited to join the Team.
Hugh	Forest Research post data capture information on the Commission's website.  Produce poster to advise on 'do's and don't's' in the event of finding nests – by 20 June.
Charlton	Issue News Release on 14 June.
Charlton	Produce two Q & A's.
Team	Comments on Contingency Plan and Proposed Action to Roddie/Debbie
Roddie	To approach RBG Kew and invite them onto the Team.