

**Minutes of the Meeting of the  
Oak Processionary Moth Outbreak Management Team  
12.00, 25 February 2009  
City Hall, London**

**Present:**

Roddie Burgess (Chairman), Head of Plant Health, Forestry Commission  
Chris Begley, Ealing Council  
Shaun Case, Richmond Council  
Guy Nettleton, PHSI, Defra  
Sara Redstone, Plant Health Officer, Kew  
Martin Jukes, Tree Health, Forest Research  
Ron Melville, Regional Director, London, Forestry Commission  
Joanne McAuley (Acting Secretary), Corporate Services, Forestry Commission

**Observers:**

Richard Barnes, Biodiversity Officer, Greater London Authority  
Alex Nickson, Strategy Manager, Climate Change Adaption and Water, Greater London Authority  
Scott Meadows, Committee of Horticulture, Jersey  
Matthew Oates, National Trust  
Martin Townsend, Consultant Ecologist

**Apologies:**

Hugh Evans, Charlton Clark, Ben Clutterbuck, Neil Manning, Frances Hirst, David Lofthouse, Christine Tilbury, Robie Kamanyire, Mike Turner

**Welcome and Introductions**

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologised for the short notice given. Thanks to Richard Barnes for providing the venue.

**Minutes of the Second Meeting**

2. The minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2008 were agreed, with the following three amendments:
  - Under matters arising, first bullet point, remove 'and Kew Gardens'.
  - Under bullet point four insert 'update and' before publish.
  - Under Next Steps, bullet point three, insert 'support' before sub-group

A change to para five in paper OPM09/02 was noted – remove Acton and insert Ealing.

## **Matters Arising**

3. None

## **London Resilience Forum**

4. CB gave an update on the LRF. He confirmed that an update on OPM had been presented to this group and would be a regular topic on each forum agenda, which meets quarterly. The information would also be cascaded to tree managers in the London area. It was agreed that there was a role for the Forestry Commission on this forum and would be represented by Ron Melville. He also explained that representation had been made to the LRRF (London Regional Resilience Forum) and that OPM is now recognised as a “rising tide emergency” as defined under Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

## **Report on 2008 Surveys**

5. MT gave the Team an update on his report on the survey for OPM in 2008. He explained that overall 506 nests had been found: 424 in Richmond, 13 in Hounslow, 51 in Ealing and 18 in Brent. This was down in numbers from 2007 (estimated at 708). It was proposed that work should continue using the same procedures and this was agreed. Part of MT’s remit for 2008 was to locate egg masses to get data on hatch date. This was generally agreed to be resource heavy and only a limited effort should be made to find masses this year, though MT indicated he wished to offer material to Monique Simmonds (RBGK) and Christine Tilbury (Forest Research) for monitoring. MJ commented that the FR insectary was not secure for L1 larvae so this may not be an option. Chair suggested monitoring an egg mass in situ, though it would depend on the safety of the site concerned. SR raised the fact that most organisations and institutions are having to divert existing resources to manage OPM and that the current financial climate is putting all involved in tackling OPM under huge pressure. SR advised the team that RBGK had received a sample quote to remove 9 nests in 3 areas of the garden over a period of about a week at a cost of £5,380 a day plus vat. SR advised that this was not acceptable to RBGK and that they would continue to do the best with the resources available. Where appropriate, they may have to look at increased use of pesticides and other measures. The chair stressed the importance of dealing consistently with all nests at all outbreak sites and noted that of 506 identified in the survey, 295 of these had been in the Gardens of which an estimated 30 – 50 had not been removed last season. He recognised that RBGK is unique as the trees there were very large whereas at other sites they were more manageable. SR advised that many had since been removed but that about 5-10 were thought to still remain.

6. The Chair noted that it would be difficult to justify continuing with an eradication programme if an ongoing source of future generations of OPM were allowed to remain in situ. It would simply not be possible to achieve eradication in such circumstances and he urged RBGK to reconsider. MT confirmed that all known nests at all other sites monitored had been removed and destroyed, although there had been delays in some cases and moths may have emerged. CB suggested a procedure for alerting to emergence etc and an information cascade network. MJ felt this would be useful but pointed out that this already exists to some extent as SR already provides

alerts of moth emergence so FC can check traps. CB noted a need for a blanket approach and that trees on private land in Ealing and Richmond were an unknown quantity and a potential source of infestation – LA's need to deal with these. MT noted there had been issues with a golf course and Old Deer Park close to Kew where it had proved difficult to search every tree. RB felt this was self-defeating. SR felt this contradicted the attitude to RBGK. CB asked about the massive number of tree imports (20 million pa) and the need to look more widely for signs of OPM. Chair noted that the plant health (Forestry) Order 2005 had been amended last March and imports could now only come from places where OPM was not present. MO suggested use of County Recorders and the chair agreed to ask Christine Tilbury to contact them. Chair thanked MT and his colleagues for all the hard work in executing the survey and nest destruction programme and for producing the report.

### **Reports on Action Taken**

7. A brief update and summary of different techniques was discussed. SM pointed out a problem with pheromone traps where the glue does not always work in hot temperatures – in this situation it is better to use funnel traps rather than delta-type traps.

### **Update on Statutory Controls**

8. Chair advised the team that following an amendment to the Plant Health (Forestry) Order 2005 in March 2008, under temporary emergency measures, all oak trees imported from member states were now required to be nursery grown and free of OPM. The UK request for designation as an EU protected zone against this pest had been referred to the European Food Standards Agency for an opinion on the Pest Risk Analysis which had been prepared by Forest Research. The Chair hoped that the request would ultimately be agreed and our import requirements made permanent. He had been asked to consider a modification to the requirements to permit the import of oak trees under 2 meters in height on the grounds that there was no evidence that trees of this height were infested by OPM. He noted that this seemed reasonable and their experience was that it was the semi-mature specimens that posed most risk. GN confirmed that PHSI experience was the same. There were no objections to the proposed modification.

### **Review of Action Plan**

9. Chair brought to the attention of the team paper OPM09/02 and as time was tight, suggested that any comments on the paper should be submitted by e-mail. CB then presented paper OPM09/05 to the team. The paper outlined a joint action plan for 2009 by the boroughs and partner organisations affected by OPM. The plan aims to co-ordinate a joint response and consistency of approach to enhance knowledge of OPM, areas to be surveyed, approved treatment method, joint procurement contracts for surveying treatment & removal (to ensure consistency & speed of treatment), warning and informing. Chair thanked CB for the paper which he saw as a welcome initiative and invited the team to feed comments back to CB by end of the following week. He also noted that such a co-ordinated approach may well prove critical in preventing spread of OPM east, thus posing a threat to the Olympic Games. RM confirmed that he had already been in touch with the

organisers recommending that they avoid using oak in the landscaping works as a precaution.

### **Review of Forest Research handout “Survey and intervention in relation to different phases of the oak processionary moth life cycle**

10. Paper not discussed. Chair noted that it required amendments to incorporate new technology such as nest removal by industrial vacuum techniques. Any other comments from members should be submitted by e-mail.

### **Review of Plant Health Contingency Plan**

10. Chair agreed to circulate proposed amendments to the Contingency Plan to the team for comment. Chair raised the point that he had offered statutory powers to the local authorities but he had found them to be reluctant. CB explained that this was the case, as there were no resources available in terms of manpower and enforcement. Despite this, local authorities were keen to support all actions, though the impact of OPM on each LA will necessarily vary. CB recommended a quantitative survey of a larger area and suggested that funding needs to be identified as a priority. Many of those present agreed. Chair explained that the FC do not have powers to pay compensation (which includes costs of remedial work), and while Ministers do have the necessary powers, it had been the policy of successive Governments not to exercise them. Defra had consulted on this last year and the outcome was awaited. CB felt that with a larger team of plant health inspectors there would be no need for LAs to take up this role. Chair said there were no plans to increase team of 5 inspectors. Chair advised that he would be keeping Ministers apprised and RB said he would consider briefing the Mayor’s office.

### **Next Steps**

12. Chair recommended endorsement to continue working together as a team to carry out the necessary work and attempt to do more. He confirmed that the FC was prepared to fund additional survey resource, as recommended in the Survey Report. This was agreed.

### **Any Other Business**

13. It was suggested that communication strategy and training were added to the agenda for the next meeting. Agreed

14. Alex Nickson was then invited by the chair to discuss Climate Change and Oak Processionary Moth Outbreak. A number of concerns were raised about the outbreak and the impact on London. Chair noted that the FC was already engaged in work to assess the impact of climate change on a number of tree pests and diseases and offered to liaise with AN over pooling knowledge. AN also noted that problems had occurred when dealing with transport utility officers and getting access to areas identified as at risk. AN and RB agreed to help in this area using their City Hall contacts and influence. Chair agreed that this support would be very welcome as the FC had also encountered similar difficulties in certain areas. MT to liaise with RB.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

13. No date for the next meeting was set but it was agreed the team should aim to meet again in September 2009. Secretary would write out shortly to try to identify a suitable date.