

London Councils' Transport & Environment Committee

Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) Item no: 06

Report by: Craig Harrison **Job title:** London Manager, Forestry Commission
Date: 19 March 2015
Contact Officer: Craig Harrison
Telephone: 07990563001 **Email:** craig.harrison@forestry.gov.uk

Summary: 1. This paper briefs members on Oak Processionary Moth (OPM), its implications for London and what Boroughs a) must and b) can do to complement the Forestry Commission's (FC's) actions to control it.

Recommendations: The Committee is asked to:

- Note the report;
- Note the public information leaflet attached as Appendix I
- Note the good practice guidance for handling oak material in areas affected by OPM attached as Appendix II.

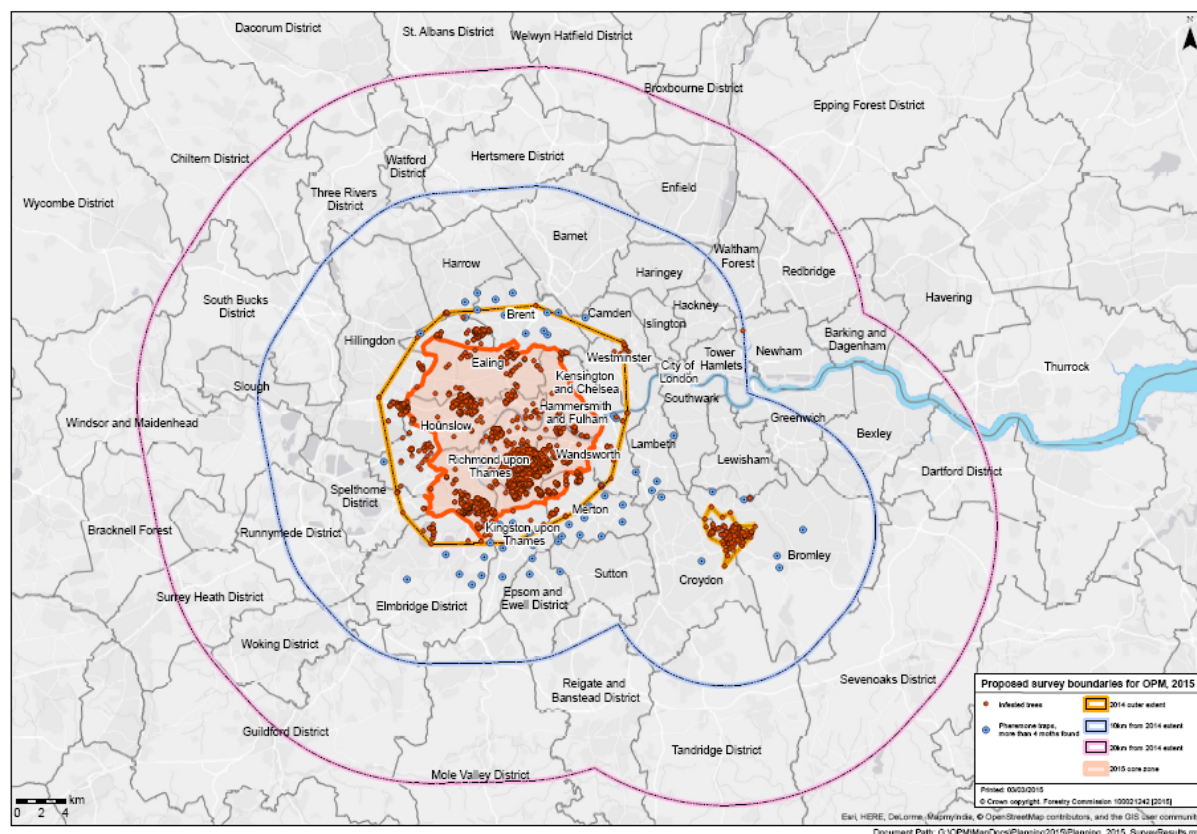
Introduction / Background

1. The OPM caterpillars defoliate trees and their irritating hairs present a human and animal health risk, threatening parks' and other green spaces' temporary closure. It is classified a tree pest under GB and EU legislation.
2. The attached OPM leaflet summarises key information about the pest - the moth's life cycle, impact it has on tree and human health and how it can be controlled.
3. In Britain, OPM was first found in West London in 2006. Eradication of OPM outbreaks remains the objective everywhere except West London, where it is so established that containment (i.e. reducing the rate of spread) is the realistic aim.
4. Since 2013 an enhanced control programme has been piloted, including extensive survey and direct control (spraying and nest removal), research, communications and skills development. 2015 marks the final year of the 3 year / ~£4M Defra funded pilot, during which an evaluation will determine future policy.
5. Whilst the impacts of OPM have been relatively minor to date, 2014 saw notable public health issues arising at a school and nursery, and occupational health problems for tree workers appear to be increasing.
6. From October 2014, European Union legislation has recognised those parts of the UK outside the affected areas as a 'protected zone', requiring its protection.

Plans for 2015

7. The orange (inner) boundaries on the map at figure 1 below indicate the known extent of OPM in London. The primary objective for the FC/Defra – consistent with the protected zone legislation – is to minimise OPM's spread into currently uninfested areas i.e. outside the orange boundaries. In addition, we want to establish greater confidence in OPM extent so are carrying out wider surveys to the blue 10km line on the map.
8. Eradication effort will continue in the Croydon/Bromley area, with FC funded survey and control activity. Communication and skills development will be employed to ensure there is public awareness of OPM, and landowners know what they should be doing to control OPM. In West London, FC funded survey and control effort will be prioritised on the outer extent of the OPM infestation, in a zone approx 2km either side of the orange lines.
9. Landowners in the 'core zone' (green on the map) will be expected to enact their own survey and spraying/nest removal and to collaborate more widely with the Defra funded survey/control programme as described next.

Figure 1 – Map of OPM infestation and control activity in London



Key points to note

10. Our experience of tackling tree pests and diseases is that collaboration is needed.
11. Boroughs, landowners and waste operators must continue to avoid moving arisings from oak trees outside the orange boundaries; due to the likelihood of such material containing OPM eggs or caterpillars. This will require adoption of the good practice guidance on handling of OPM material, attached at Appendix II.
12. In the 'core zone' of West London, landowners (including Boroughs) are responsible for surveying for and controlling OPM. Public, occupational and animal health is likely to become the priority for action and Boroughs are advised to draw up plans that prioritise action accordingly.
13. Opportunities to support other landowners through Borough framework contracts are also likely to facilitate more effective collaborative action.
14. There are opportunities to engage the public in OPM reporting and the FC is happy to provide training materials to assist this.
15. In addition, we will shortly make freely available a range of information and guidance that can help ensure landowners (a) know about and look out for OPM (b) control OPM.