



NEWS RELEASE

5 August 2010

Oak Processionary Moth. It's a human health issue!

The LTOA welcomes this week's stories on OPM and agrees that this is primarily a human health issue.

In 2006 OPM was first identified in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames and now in 2010 it has spread to the boroughs of Ealing, Brent, Hounslow and Hammersmith & Fulham. The LTOA is of the opinion that, without drastic action, OPM will continue to spread across the UK, as it has across the continent. We are close to the last chance for eradication. The LTOA has alerted the tree officers in Hillingdon, Harrow, Kingston, Merton, Wandsworth, Kensington and Chelsea, Spelthorne and Elmbridge who may well be next affected. In a relatively short period we might be faced with problems at, for instance, Olympic venues such as Greenwich Park.

The LTOA is about to release a Guidance Note on OPM.

Among key aspects highlighted are:

- The London Boroughs are trying to fight a problem without the correct resources. We need funding for a pan London approach to management and control of OPM.
- More effective and environmentally friendly treatments are in use on the continent but are not currently licensed for use in the UK. This needs to be addressed immediately.

- Although increasingly seen as a human health issue, the legal tools to fight the pest are based on plant health. If OPM fully establishes itself legal tools appropriate to eradication would be automatically discontinued. We would then be faced with permanent and expensive damage limitation measures.

Over the last year the LTOA has:

- Provided free training to members regarding the identification and treatment of OPM.
- Written to MPs, the Mayor of London and the press to seek funding for treatments and to try to raise awareness of the consequences of failure to deal conclusively with this issue while it remains containable. These initiatives have had little effect.
- Offered support to members and other affected landowners by joining the Forestry Commission's Outbreak Management Team and setting up its own working party trying to raise awareness and utilise the extensive experience of the tree officers of affected boroughs.

Dave Lofthouse, Chair of the LTOA, said "The members of the LTOA are the officers dealing with this on the ground and do not have the resources and tools to do the job. Eradication will only be possible if this is reprioritised as a human health problem with appropriate legal controls and given adequate resources".

ENDS

Notes to Editors

The London Tree Officers Association (LTOA) provides an information network for the exchange of views, experiences and ideas on trees and their management. The Association dates back to 1982 and aims to enhance the management of the Capital's trees and woodlands. It involves local authority Tree Officers in all 33 London Boroughs from which there are approximately 130 members and an associate membership scheme of approximately 55 members. The LTOA is funded by London Borough subscriptions and an associate member scheme. For more information take a look at the LTOA website at www.ltoa.org.uk.

For further information please contact:

Dave Lofthouse, Chair of the LTOA, on 020 8545 3659 or 07901 510496 and email:

david.lofthouse@merton.gov.uk

Becky Hesch, Executive Officer of the LTOA, on 07771 976238 and email:

executive.officer@ltoa.org.uk.