

Action against oak tree pest underway by Forestry Commission

Forestry Commission are acting to tackle the oak tree pest, oak processionary moth in parts of London and South East England.

Oak processionary moth was first identified in London in 2006 and has since spread to some surrounding counties.

The caterpillars and their nests contain hairs which can cause itchy rashes, eye and throat irritations, so a Government programme is in place to limit their spread. They can also occasionally cause breathing difficulties in people and pets, so should not be touched under any circumstances.

People with infested trees in the control zone have been advised that work needs to take place over the next two months to help stop the spread of this pest. Contractors spraying affected trees on behalf of the Forestry Commission will carry out work safely, adhering to social distancing guidelines.

Craig Harrison, the Forestry Commission's South-East England Director, said:

Green spaces with trees are proving particularly valuable for visitors of woodlands, who are exercising whilst practicing social distancing this spring.

Controlling OPM will help protect oak tree health and ensure continued enjoyment of parks and woodland by reducing the impact of OPM caterpillars to human health.

Everyone is reminded, particularly those in London and surrounding counties, to report sightings of OPM caterpillars, which could be damaging oak trees in their area.

Any sightings should be reported to the Forestry Commission via [TreeAlert](#). Alternatively, people can email opm@forestrycommission.gov.uk or call 0300 067 4442.

The Forestry Commission, councils and land managers have an annual programme in place to tackle the pest, which affects certain part of the country in the spring.

How to identify OPM

Nests are typically dome or teardrop-shaped, averaging the size of a tennis ball. They are white when fresh, but soon become discoloured and brown. The caterpillars have black heads and bodies covered in long white hairs which contain proteins which can cause irritations and occasionally, breathing

difficulties.

The greatest risk period is May to July, when the caterpillars' emerge and feed before pupating into adult moths, but caterpillars and nests should not be touched at any time. The caterpillars feed on oak leaves, which can leave the trees vulnerable to other pests and diseases and drought.

Anyone pruning or felling oak trees in the affected areas should contact Forestry Commission England's Plant Health Forestry Team beforehand on opm@forestrycommission.gov.uk or 0300 067 4442 for advice about safe removal of the material.

Further information is available from the [Forestry Commission](#) and advice about stings and bites is available on the [NHS Choices website](#).

Further information

- Sighting reports should include a precise description of the location. An Ordnance Survey grid reference is ideal, otherwise a postal address and/or a clear description of the tree's exact position, is helpful, as are clear photographs.
- Forestry Commission's latest operational update in relation to Covid-19 can be read [here](#)
- For further information, contact the Defra Press Office on 020 8225 7318. Out-of-hours, please call 034 5051 8486.

[Lord-Lieutenant of Herefordshire: 15 April 2020](#)

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

[Government to offer testing for](#)

“everyone who needs one” in social care settings

- All symptomatic care residents will be tested for COVID-19 as testing capacity continues to increase
- All patients discharged from hospital to be tested before going into care homes as a matter of course
- All social care staff who need a test will now have access to one with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to contact all 30,000 care providers in the coming days to offer tests

Currently the first 5 symptomatic residents in a care home setting are tested to provide confirmation of whether if there is an outbreak.

However, as lab capacity increases every day the government is expanding testing to include all care home residents who develop symptoms.

The safety of residents and staff is a priority and as such, testing will now also be provided to all potential care home residents before they are discharged from hospital. This will provide reassurance and peace of mind to residents and family members, and will help care providers to take appropriate action to ensure that social care workers and other residents are safe – including implementing isolation procedures for those who test positive.

The measures confirmed today are expected to be outlined further in the government’s COVID-19 social care action plan tomorrow, and will help give residents, their families and those that they care for peace of mind.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Matt Hancock said:

I am deeply conscious that people in residential care are among the most vulnerable to coronavirus. We are doing everything we can to keep workers, residents and their families safe, and I am determined to ensure that everyone who needs a coronavirus test should be able to have access to one.

We have already begun testing social care workers and will roll this out nationwide over the coming days. And as we continue to ramp up our testing programme, we will test all current care home residents with coronavirus symptoms and all new care home residents who are discharged from hospital into care.

Testing is key in our battle against coronavirus, and as part of

our plan to prevent the spread and save lives we will ensure that everyone in social care who needs a test can have a test.

As the rollout continues, the Health Secretary has confirmed that every social care worker who needs a test can now get one.

Dedicated testing has already begun for frontline staff, including social care workers and in addition to over 20,000 tests for NHS workers and their families.

As capacity grows further through the government's new mega labs, it will prioritise the testing of symptomatic social care workers and anyone in their household who have COVID-19 symptoms.

CQC are leading co-ordination of testing for the care sector, and have already offered 6,000 care facilities the opportunity to test their staff. By the end of the week they will have contacted all 30,000 care providers.

Care providers will identify workers eligible for testing and refer them to their local testing centre.

Tests for social care staff and residents will support the government to achieve its ambition of 100,000 COVID-19 tests a day by end of April.

- All of the tests are PCR tests.
- A small number of people may be discharged from the NHS within the 14-day period from the onset of COVID-19 symptoms who need ongoing social care. They will have been COVID-19 tested and have confirmed COVID-positive status. Some care providers will be able to accommodate these individuals through effective isolation strategies or cohorting policies.
- If appropriate isolation/cohorted care is not available with a local care provider, the individual's local authority will be asked to secure alternative appropriate accommodation and care for the remainder of the required isolation period.
- The government has made £1.3 billion available to support enhanced discharge from the NHS, and this funding can be drawn on for this alternative provision. The NHS discharge requirements will continue to apply.
- For people discharged asymptomatic into a care home – these individuals will have been tested prior to admission. Where these tests are negative, we still recommend isolation for 14 days. This will normally be in a care home that is able to meet that requirement, or it could be under alternative local authority made arrangements assisted by appropriate NHS primary and community based care.
- For individuals coming from the community we will move to these residents being tested prior to admission. The majority will have come from isolation in their own homes given social distancing and shielding policies. After discussion with the new resident and family, the care home may wish to isolate for a 14-day period following admission.

Government provides construction sector certainty by confirming 'Notice to proceed' on High Speed 2

- High Speed 2 (HS2) project reaches its next stage as joint venture companies receive approval to begin detailed design and construction phase
- 'Notice to proceed' process marks formal approval for main construction works to begin, following decision earlier this year to proceed with the project
- construction to begin in line with Public Health England advice during the coronavirus outbreak

Following the decision to proceed with HS2 earlier this year, HS2 Ltd has today (15 April 2020) marked the next step for the project after issuing 'Notice to proceed' to the companies that will undertake construction on Britain's new railway.

After careful consideration of the independent [Oakervee review](#), the [Prime Minister confirmed to Parliament in February 2020](#) that the project should go ahead, to deliver vital improvements to capacity and connectivity across the Midlands and North, alongside a reform package to improve governance at HS2 to ensure the project is delivered better and more efficiently. 'Notice to proceed' marks the formal approval for the project to begin the construction phase and HS2 Ltd is now entering Stage 2 of the main works civils contracts, with each held by a specific joint-venture.

At a time when the construction sector faces uncertainties during the coronavirus outbreak, issuing 'Notice to proceed' provides a vote of confidence in construction companies and the wider supply chain supporting HS2.

HS2 Minister Andrew Stephenson said:

While the government's top priority is rightly to combat the spread of coronavirus, protect the NHS and save lives, we cannot delay work on our long-term plan to level up the country.

HS2 will be the spine of the country's transport network, boosting capacity and connectivity while also rebalancing opportunity fairly across our towns and cities.

Following the decision earlier this year to proceed with the project, this next step provides thousands of construction workers and businesses across the country with certainty at a time when

they need it, and means that work can truly begin on delivering this transformational project.

The 4 work packages are for full detailed design and construction of Phase One of the HS2 railway. Through these contracts, small and medium businesses have the guarantee of a pipeline of activity for the future, helping to protect jobs and boost certainty for them in the current climate.

The joint-ventures that are responsible for each package of work will be able to commence work in line with Public Health England's [guidance around construction work continuing during the coronavirus outbreak](#), in a way both safe to their workers and the public.

The joint ventures, originally awarded contracts by HS2 Ltd in July 2017, are:

- SCS Railways (Skanska Construction UK Ltd, Costain Ltd, STRABAG AG)
- Align JV (Bouygues Travaux Publics SAS, a subsidiary of Bouygues Construction, Sir Robert McAlpine and VolkerFitzpatrick, a subsidiary of VolkerWessels UK)
- EKBF JV (Eiffage Genie Civil SA, Kier Infrastructure and Overseas Ltd, BAM Nuttall, Ferrovial Agroman)
- BBV JV (Balfour Beatty Group Ltd, VINCI Construction Grands Projets, VINCI Construction UK Ltd, VINCI Construction Terrassement)

As well as contracts being awarded today, the Department for Transport has today published the new Full business case High Speed 2 Phase One, setting out the strategic and economic case for the project and outlining how it will deliver a positive return on investment, alongside boosting capacity and connectivity needed in towns and cities across the country, delivering on the government's levelling up agenda.

[Time for Justice: Putting Survivors](#) [First conference update](#)

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.