

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12 January 2009

Subject: Japanese Knotweed

Report of: Executive Director - Environmental Services

Contact officer: Gary Harold 01942 404221

Purpose / summary: To inform Committee of the progress being made to develop a co-ordinated approach towards the management and eradication of Japanese Knotweed on Council owned land and the progress being made in completing the recommendations set out in the Committee's Report to Cabinet on the 14 April 2007.

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: The Japanese Knotweed Action Plan was accepted and agreed by Cabinet at its meeting held on the 14 April 2007, as commended by the Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee No.2.

Recommendation / decision: Committee is requested to note the progress being made in achieving the tasks outlined in the Japanese Knotweed Action Plan as well as welcoming the publication of the Government's comprehensive national policy framework on invasive non-native species, the Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain.

Key Decision: This report does not involve a key decision. This item is not included in the Forward Plan.

Risks / Implications:

Financial:	All work associated with the eradication of Japanese Knotweed will be implemented within existing budgets and resources.
Staffing:	Within existing resources
Policy:	
Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?	Yes
Wards affected:	Borough wide

Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?

No

If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?

Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?

No

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council’s Constitution? **Yes**

Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council’s budget? **Yes**

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? **No**

* delete which applicable

For Cabinet reports only:

Categorisation of the report:	x
Discussion leading to a decision	
Monitoring	
Sharing for corporate understanding	

	x
Discussion	
Decision	
Information	

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
	12 January 2009		

List of Background Papers in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

Document	Date	File Reference	Place of Inspection
The Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs 2008		Environmental Services Department, Development Division, Policy and Projects Environment Team, Civic Buildings, New Market Street, Wigan ,WN1 1UT

Proper Officer Martin Kimber

Date 30 December 2008

1. Background:

- 1.1 Cabinet, at its meeting held on the 14 April 2007, accepted the recommendations of the report from Overview and Scrutiny Committee No2 'Japanese Knotweed' and the resulting action plan. In addition, they agreed that the Director of Environmental Services be tasked with delivering a "One Council" approach to dealing with the issues presented by Japanese Knotweed, and invasive weeds in general, through implementation of the action plan.

The recommendations contained in the report were:

- (i) To develop a co-ordinated approach for the management and eradication of Japanese knotweed.
- (ii) To develop and publicise consistent advice and guidance on the management of Japanese knotweed and individual responsibilities concerning the prevention of spread.
- (iii) To create a single point of contact (identify a corporate lead) for advice and information and develop reporting and recording mechanisms to assist mapping the extent of the problem.
- (iv) To develop prioritisation criteria for treatment and adopt a consistent method of identifying the preferred solution.
- (v) To develop a corporate approach to treatment, utilising pooled resources from those who incur expenditure and procure an appropriate package of treatment to suit collective needs.
- (vi) To explore opportunities for the creation of partnerships that will enhance our efforts to reduce the problem.

2. Proposals:

2.1 Action Plan Update

Members will recall my previous report of the 31 March 2008 which reported on the progress made on each of the key tasks set out in the Japanese Knotweed Action Plan. I can now inform members of progress made on achieving those tasks identified in the action plan, which is attached to this report as Appendix 1.

In summary, the action plan records that the key players in relation to Japanese Knotweed were identified and an invasive weeds working group established to develop a "One Council" approach towards the implementation of a strategy for the control and eradication of infestations of Japanese Knotweed across the Borough.

2.2 Code of Practice

In particular, a Code of Practice on Invasive Species has now been prepared which sets out the Council's procedures for dealing with invasive species, including Japanese Knotweed, on Council land. This protocol is based on nationally available information sources and best practice and will ensure that consistent advice and guidance on the management, treatment and

eradication of Japanese Knotweed is available across the Council. This guidance has now been cascaded, through the invasive weeds working group, to Departments of the Council, together with the Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust and Wigan and Leigh Housing.

2.3 Information Sheets

In addition to the Code of Practice on Invasive Species, detailed information sheets have now been prepared on the control of Japanese Knotweed and Ragwort. The sheets provide information on the identification, control and disposal of both plants. The information sheets are available to the public and can be found on the Council's website. Also, the Council's Ecologist continues to work with private landowners, utility companies and statutory undertakers to co-ordinate the eradication of Knotweed on sites adjoining Council land.

2.4 Pilot Scheme of Control and Treatment on Selected Housing Sites

As part of the "One Council" approach to implementing a strategy for the management and eradication of Japanese Knotweed infestations on Council land the Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust is piloting a new approach to the treatment of a number of sites managed by Wigan and Leigh Housing, utilising more powerful herbicides such as "Trickle". Selected sites will receive a minimum of 3 spray applications during the growing season when the WLCT will then assess the success of the treatment and consider the need for further applications. It will be spring 2009 before the effectiveness of this approach can be determined.

2.5 Publicity

Publicity is fundamental to the control of Japanese Knotweed and a range of publicity material has been prepared and disseminated through articles in the local press and Borough Life. An article on Japanese Knotweed is to be published in the spring edition of Housing Matters, the tenant magazine of Wigan and Leigh Housing.

2.6 Recording, Mapping and Monitoring

Recording, mapping and monitoring the extent of the problem of Japanese Knotweed is critical in the identification of priority sites for action. The WLCT are actively investigating the practicality of identifying sites known to have infestations of Knotweed on their land management mapping system, which should be available in spring 2009.

A rolling programme of risk assessments are undertaken on sites managed by the Director of Environmental Services. Infestations of Japanese Knotweed are identified and the information recorded for prioritising for future treatment. This information is shared with partners, most notably the WLCT, for mapping purposes.

2.7 Partnership Working

The Council continues to work to explore opportunities for the creation of partnerships that will contribute to enhancing efforts to reduce the problem of Japanese Knotweed, particularly where their land ownership adjoins Council Land.

The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs together with the Welsh Assembly Government and The Scottish Government having

recognised the importance of the issue of invasive non-native species and, in particular, the huge economic and ecological impacts imposed by non-native species such as Japanese Knotweed, have developed a comprehensive national policy framework on such species. They have recently published the ***Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain***. The Strategy will guide action at governmental level and provide a high-level context for regional and local initiatives.

The Strategy provides a framework for a more co-ordinated and structured approach to dealing with non-native species and any potential invasive threat in or to Great Britain. The Strategy advocates a partnership approach, with landowners and conservation bodies, leading to greater public awareness, more strategic research and proposals for an improved legislative framework. However, it does not provide for additional resources for specific problems at a local level.

2.8 Alternative options considered and reason for the recommended option:
The Japanese Knotweed Action Plan was accepted and agreed by Cabinet at its meeting held on the 14 April 2007, as commended by the Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee No.2, having considered various options for the control and eradication of that particular pernicious weed.

2.9 Conclusions:
Committee is requested to note the good progress made in achieving the tasks set out in the Japanese Knotweed Action Plan set out in the Committee's Report to Cabinet on the 14 April 2007 and the development of a co-ordinated approach towards the control and eradication of Japanese Knotweed on Council owned land.

In addition, Committee is requested to welcome the publication of the Government's comprehensive national policy framework on invasive non-native species, the ***Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain***.

Diversity Impact Assessment form

Section:

Environmental Services Department – Development Division

Policy/Service Area: Policy and Projects (Environment)

Person Completing Form: Gary Harold

Date: 29
December 2008

Do any of the below groups suffer specific disadvantage (please indicate)

	Yes	No		Yes	No
Race		X	Disability		X
Ethnicity		X	Gender		X
Age		X	Religion		X
Class		X	Sexual Orientation		X

Is there evidence of disadvantage or associated problems?

There is no evidence of specific disadvantage or associated problems caused to the above groups associated with this report.

How was the information collected and/or who have you consulted with?

Not applicable

Action Plan – *What specific actions are planned to tackle any disadvantage identified?*

n/a

Is the policy in line with current equality legislation and relevant codes of practice?

Yes

Timescale	On-going
Responsibility	Gary Harold
Comments	Input from Invasive Weeds Working Group as necessary

Are the actions specified included in any other documents/plans?

Departmental Service Plan	No
Section/Team Plan	No
Other (Specify)	

Date for further review

Not necessary

Appendix 1

Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee Review – Japanese knotweed Action Plan

Aim: To develop a “One Council” approach to the management of Japanese knotweed in Wigan

Updated: December 2008

	Objective	Tasks	Timeframe	Lead	Progress on tasks
1	Identify and allocate responsibility to an appropriate Chief Officer for Japanese Knotweed to act as Corporate Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify Chief Officer. • Communicate Cabinet decision. 	12 April 2007	Cabinet	Decision to task the Director of Environmental Services with delivering on the action plan made by Cabinet on 12 April 2007.
2	Develop a co-ordinated strategy for the management and eradication of Japanese Knotweed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key players in relation to Japanese Knotweed issues. • Develop a vision for Japanese Knotweed management. • Identify resources for strategy implementation. • Develop performance monitoring framework. 	May 2007	Corporate Lead / Chief Assistant Planning Officer (Environment)	<p>Invasive Weeds Working Group established to develop the “One Council” approach to the control and eradication of Japanese Knotweed on Council land.</p> <p>Code of Practice developed to control the spread of invasive weeds, in particular,</p>

					<p>Japanese Knotweed.</p> <p>The guidance has now been cascaded, through the Invasive Weeds Working Group, to Departments of the Council, together with the Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust and Wigan and Leigh Housing.</p>
3	<p>Develop and publicise consistent advice and guidance on the management of Japanese Knotweed and individual responsibility concerning the prevention of spread.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify current advice and information sources. • Identify best practice. • Revise and enhance advice and information material. • Develop a communication strategy for publicity. 	June 2007	The Council's Ecologist	<p>The Council's Ecologist has attended Conferences and Seminars on best practice in Japanese Knotweed control and eradication.</p> <p>Best practice has been incorporated into the Council's freely available Information Sheets on Japanese Knotweed and Ragwort.</p>

			On-going		Articles have been placed in the local press and Borough Life to publicise the problem of invasive weeds.
			Spring 2009	WALH	An article on Japanese Knotweed is to be published in the spring edition of Housing Matters, the tenant magazine of Wigan and Leigh Housing.
4	Create a single point of contact for advice and information and develop reporting and recording mechanisms to assist in mapping the extent of the problem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify nominated contact. • Identify appropriate software package. • Communicate reporting and recording facility as appropriate. • Monitor and track progress on reports. 	On-going/Spring 2009	Chief Assistant Planning Officer (Environment)/WLCT	The Invasive Weeds Working Group in partnership with the WLCT are actively investigating the practicality of mapping known and reported infestations of Japanese Knotweed on their land management system, to identify priorities

			On-going	Chief Assistant Planning Officer (Environment)	for action. A rolling programme of risk assessments are undertaken on sites managed by the Director of Environmental Services. Infestations of Japanese Knotweed are identified and the information recorded for prioritising for future treatment.
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					Knotweed on a number of selected sites managed by WALH. The effectiveness of this approach will be determined in spring 2009.
7	Explore opportunities for the creation of partnerships that will enhance efforts to reduce the problem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify relevant partners with land ownership responsibilities. • Invite collaboration through development of shared objectives and priorities. 	<p>September 2008</p> <p>Autumn 2008</p>	<p>Chief Assistant Planning Officer (Environment)</p> <p>DEFRA</p>	<p>Initial contacts made.</p> <p>Publication of Government's comprehensive national policy framework on invasive non-native species, the Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain.</p>