

# **City of London Open Spaces**

## **Biosecurity Policy for the Protection of Tree Health**

### **Introduction**

This policy sets out the broad principles for biosecurity with specific regard to tree health within the City of London Open Spaces Department. The tree resource managed by The City is extremely diverse and this presents a particular challenge in setting out such a policy. This overarching Departmental policy is therefore aimed at setting down the broad principles that all Divisions are expected to adhere to. The separate Divisions are encouraged to produce their own site-specific protocols that extend the broad guidance further as appropriate to their situation.

### **What is biosecurity?**

Biosecurity is a set of precautions that aim to prevent the introduction and spread of harmful organisms. These may be pests, pathogens or invasive species. Biosecurity measures are the practical steps designed to minimise the risk of introducing or spreading these pests and diseases.

### **Why biosecurity is important**

The threat to trees and woodland has never been greater. Increased global trade and movement of goods between countries means there is an increased risk of spreading undesirable pests and diseases. In addition, our changing climate is making conditions more suitable to species that colonise, enabling some to spread more easily and to which our own native flora have no natural defence. Trees and plants in Britain are now vulnerable to a range of new pests and diseases and outbreaks can seriously threaten sustainable tree and woodland management. Outbreaks can result in economic losses both financial and in terms of staff time, as well as having consequences for visitors and tourism.

### **Why biosecurity is important to the City of London**

Trees are of great importance to the City of London. The City of London Open Spaces Department provides publically accessible open space for the people of London and beyond; in total 4,500ha are owned and managed by the City Corporation. Trees and woodland are a particularly notable part of the resource with approximately 2,865ha (64%) considered to be woodland or wood pasture. This does not include the many thousands of trees in parks and urban areas.

Open Spaces owned by the City are extremely diverse in nature, ranging from urban parks such as West Ham Park and Queen's Park to Nature reserves of European Importance such as Epping Forest and Burnham Beeches. Many of the sites have some form of nature conservation status. The City encourages public access to as much of its land as possible and in many cases this is a legal obligation.

The City of London has a legal obligation to manage land owned under its various Acts of Parliament for the benefit of the people of London and these all include some component of custodianship of the land as a 'natural' open space or an attractive park. Many also have other designations (conservation or historical) that include obligations to manage in specific ways which involves the retention of trees and woodland. The City is unusual in owning and

managing some extremely important sites with old trees, such as Epping Forest, Ashted Common, Burnham Beeches and Spring Park. These areas are very important for nature conservation because of the organisms associated with these types of trees.

Trees are hugely beneficial and contribute to the well-being of people and environments and they are an integral part of our green spaces in towns and cities. Studies have shown that they improve health and recovery after illness as part of a green environment; they clean and cool urban areas; produce oxygen for us to breathe; reduce pressure on drainage systems and lower the risk of surface water flooding. Many of the City's trees are also habitats for rare and threatened organisms and are the reason for the conservation designations for some sites. Loss of trees would have a huge impact on the appearance and workings of our City and surrounding countryside.

### **The role of the City of London as landowners**

The City of London takes its duties as a land owner seriously. This includes good practice in management of its land holding and in the relationship between visitors, employees and the land. As well as guidance within the Acts under which our spaces are managed, each division of the Open Spaces Department has a site-specific management plan that sets out the principles in relation to specific management issues.

### **Why have a biosecurity policy?**

Other organisations managing large numbers of trees have produced position statements regarding their organisation and specific tree diseases and/or tree health in general. The Forestry Commission has produced a simple fact sheet 'Biosecurity: Good working practice for those involved in forestry' and also a public information sheet aimed at visitors to the countryside promoting simple biosecurity measures.

Trees are of such importance to the City and to the Nation within the urban environment, and through the ownership of some very special sites with large numbers of old trees, that a biosecurity policy is deemed appropriate.

The City also has a leadership role within the Greater London area and liaises closely with other policy and Government bodies through the hosting of conferences and representation at forums and meetings. Demonstrating best practice is therefore desirable where possible.

### **Policy principles**

The City of London Open Spaces Department undertakes to:

- Keep abreast of issues, developments and other policies related to pests and diseases of trees found within its land holdings
- Continue to monitor biosecurity policies and protocols developed by other organisations, especially those promoted by the Forestry Commission and other Government agencies and adapt this policy to take account of these as necessary
- Comply with any legal obligations regarding tree pests or diseases
- Raise awareness of tree pests and biosecurity with staff via cascading of information from the senior management team and representatives attending departmental meetings concerning trees and biodiversity

- Raise awareness of biosecurity to contactors working on trees on City land - especially those visiting multiple sites as part of their work and/or cutting the trees and disposing of waste - encouraging them to take measures to reduce the risk of moving pests and disease around as far as possible
- Raise awareness of tree pests and biosecurity to members of the public visiting open spaces via the usual channels for each specific open space, for example through noticeboards on site, newsletters or website updates. This should include simple messages such as cleaning boots, shoes and tyres regularly to prevent mud from spreading pests and diseases, avoid dumping garden rubbish and planting garden plants in the countryside.
- Raise awareness to members of the public and colleagues via internet web pages and the staff intranet, as well as other media.
- Continue to support London and countrywide initiatives, campaigns and research related to tree pests and diseases
- Encourage the use of volunteers to survey and monitor for specific tree diseases, both within the City Corporation's Open Spaces and also in the wider population
- Develop local biosecurity policies or statements for individual sites that go beyond this general policy, especially for sites with large areas of woodland or with important populations of old trees. Attached at Appendix 1 is a protocol template that can be adapted for use by individual Divisions.
- Provide resources (including staff time) to carry out the above

### References and further reading

National Tree Safety Group (2011). Common sense risk management of trees. The Forestry Commission. See Appendix 2 for information about the benefits of trees.

Forestry Commission (2012). Biosecurity. Fact sheet about good working practice for those involved in forestry. [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCMS028-guidance.pdf/\\$FILE/FCMS028-guidance.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCMS028-guidance.pdf/$FILE/FCMS028-guidance.pdf)

Forestry Commission. Turn over a clean leaf today. Single page sheet aimed at members of the public when exploring the outdoors. [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/Poster\\_countrysidebiosecurity2012.pdf/\\$file/Poster\\_countrysidebiosecurity2012.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/Poster_countrysidebiosecurity2012.pdf/$file/Poster_countrysidebiosecurity2012.pdf)

### Appendix 1

Tree diseases of concern or potential concern to City of London sites (see [www.forestry.gov.uk/pestsanddiseases](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pestsanddiseases) for more details)

Disease	Tree species infected	Principal area of concern/impact on trees	Comments
Acute oak decline (AOD)	Oak	Causes slow death of trees	
Ash die back (Chalara)	Ash	Kills trees	
<i>Massaria</i>	Plane	Does not kill trees but	Of particular concern

		large limb failure has safety implications	to more urban open spaces
Oak Processionary moth (OPM)	Oak	Weakens trees making then susceptible to other diseases. Caterpillar hairs are a severe human health issue	
<i>Phytophthora alni</i>	Alder	Kills trees	Only a small amount of alder on CoL land holdings
<i>Phytophthora austrocedrae</i>	Juniper	Causes partial death of bushes and eventual total death	Burnham Beeches only
<i>Phytophthora kernoviae</i>	Oak, Beech, Rhododendron & bilberry	Kills trees quickly	
<i>Phytophthora ramorum</i>	Larch, beech, sweet chestnut and non-native oaks	Kills trees quickly	
Horse chestnut leaf minor/bleeding canker	Horse chestnuts	One pest and one disease. Bleeding canker can kill trees.	
Sweet chestnut blight	Sweet chestnut	Causes the death of trees	Only a small amount of sweet chestnut in CoL land holdings