

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Streetscene and Engineering Cabinet Board

19 January 2018

Report of the Head of Planning and Public Protection

N. Pearce

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: *All Wards*

Report Title

Japanese Knotweed Management & Treatment Service

Purpose of Report

1. To seek Members approval for the introduction of a Japanese Knotweed Management & Treatment Service.

Executive Summary

2. This report seeks approval of Members to introduce a charged for service aimed primarily at residential landowners who want assistance in treating and controlling Japanese Knotweed on their own land.

Background

3. Japanese Knotweed is a non-native plant which thrives in certain areas of the UK, including Neath Port Talbot, and is classed as an invasive weed. Many property owners face challenges when dealing with a growth of Japanese Knotweed on their own land. Various treatment methods are available, including herbicidal treatments- many of which require professional application. Japanese Knotweed is a hardy species and can take a number of treatments over a number of years to see best control results.

This proposal aims to deliver a management and treatment programme delivered by skilled council operatives for private land owners. It will include operatives undertaking a survey of the land, developing a control plan, implementing the most appropriate treatment, and undertaking monitoring of the site for a defined period of time.

Members will be aware that additional resources have been secured to treat Japanese knotweed on council owned land, however the restricted budget together with the high costs of treatment mean that this is undertaken having regard to a set of criteria associated with risk, whereby priority is given to areas of land considered to be high risk. This process will continue to operate.

Proposal

4. To establish a charged for service aimed at landowners who want assistance in managing Japanese Knotweed on their own land, using the skills and expertise of existing Council staff. The growth of Japanese Knotweed is sometimes a cause for concern amongst some Mortgage and Lending institutions, as well as neighbouring land owners who may be able to take private legal action for damages.

The service will not be enforcement based, so there will be no statutory compulsion to use the service, however by offering this service it may encourage land owners to tackle a problem, which otherwise may ultimately de-value their land.

The proposal will primarily offer a service to land owners of domestic properties with garden sizes of up to 200 square metres with up to 25% Japanese Knotweed coverage. Where larger gardens or bespoke sites are involved, a separate quotation will be undertaken, to reflect the extra work and on-costs involved. Additionally, there will be a slightly discounted rate for Micro sites of up to 4 square metres, where mainly fresh growth has occurred.

Appendix 1 contains fuller details of the Schedule of charges and Service plan overviews.

Financial Impact

5. It is proposed to offer the service on a cost recovery basis. Whilst there will be upfront costs associated with setting up the service, these will be covered by the income generated from delivering the service.

Equality Impact Assessment

6. A Screening Assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. After completing the assessment it has been determined that this proposal does not require an Equalities Impact Assessment.

Workforce Impact

7. No significant impact on current workforce- existing officers will incorporate these duties into their current work activities, in accordance with existing Job Evaluation responsibilities.

Legal Impact

8. No significant legal impacts, although it should be noted that the Council is unable legally to provide a guarantee associated with the work. We will however operate as a responsible council.

Risk Management

9. None

Consultation

10. There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendation(s)

11. That Members approve the establishment of a Japanese Knotweed Management & Treatment Service, subject to the charges outlined in the attached appendix.

Reason for Proposed Decision(s)

12. An opportunity exists to provide and develop a charged for service to deal with the increasing anxiety of land owners over controlling an invasive weed which has the potential to blight and de-value land. This service will land owners to secure remedial action to protect their land and to prevent the spread of Japanese knotweed onto third party land for which they may be liable.

Implementation of Decision

13. The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

Appendices:-

14. Appendix 1 – Japanese Knotweed Management & Treatment Service Schedule of charges and Service plan overviews.

List of Background Papers

15. None

Officer Contact

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Appendix 1

Japanese Knotweed Management & Treatment Service

Three separate standard packages will be available to the owner/occupiers of properties which are as follows:

1. Spray-treatment plans for regular gardens (up to 200m² in area with no more than 25% coverage of Japanese Knotweed) or other areas of land of a similar size.
2. Bespoke / Larger sites spray-treatment plan (These may require longer treatment plans if they are heavily infested).
3. Micro sites spray-treatment plan (up to 4 m² in area).

Scope of Service Plans

Following first point of contact with the council, a council operative will visit the site and provide a quotation for the works. This is a free service and there is no obligation to appoint the council to carry out treatment.

Upon appointment, the Council will undertake a site visit and prepare a management plan for the site, identifying the area or areas where treatment is needed; precautions for Health & Safety; the type of treatment required and the recommended duration of the treatment; advice to compliment treatment, and options for subsequent follow up. The charge for such a site visit and management plan is £120 (Includes VAT). This will be deducted from the payment associated with the first spray should the customer wish to proceed with the treatment. If the customer does not want to proceed with the treatment then the cost of the management plan is non-refundable. Payments will be secured up front albeit on a phased basis, i.e. prior to the completion of the management plan, each annual treatment and prior to the monitoring inspections.

If the customer wishes to proceed with the treatment plan, the council operative will arrange a date and time to undertake the first annual spray. Advice will also be provided to the owner/occupier regarding access to this part of the site for health and safety reasons and to prevent further spread. The owner/occupier will also be provided with a recommended phased programme of works to cover future years.

In accordance with the phased programme of works the council operative will return in years two and three to undertake a further spray of the infected area(s).

In year four, subject to the owner/occupier complying with the advice to prevent the re-growth and spread of knotweed from the treated areas, the officer's visit should only be to establish the success of the treatment programme and to provide an update report to the owner/occupier.

In year five, a council operative will visit the site again to monitor the success of the treatment and identify whether any further action is required. (This is predicated on the owner/occupier adhering to the health and safety and prevention of re-infection of treated areas advice, previously provided by the officer). Following completion of that site visit a final report will be provided confirming the success or otherwise of the treatment.

The Management Plan

The management plan will be the starting point for the treatment of the site and will provide comprehensive advice to the owner/occupier covering the following issues:

- Establishment of land ownership details & boundary locations.
- Identification of water courses and any ground water protection zones.
- Assessment of risk to any protected species (animal & plants) within the zone.
- Assessment of extent and location of Japanese Knotweed.
- Assessment of Health & Safety- operative; land users, pets etc.
- Confirm if any Tree Preservation or Hedgerow Orders exist.
- Establishment of previous Japanese Knotweed treatment on site.
- Site photographs & RICS (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors) Risk level categorisation.
- Summary of Management Plan recommendations & options.
- Biosecurity & preventative actions and advice.
- Confirmation of actions and herbicides employed.
- Confirmation of timescales associated with the treatment plan

The Treatment

Treatment can be administered in two forms, either through the spraying of appropriate and effective herbicide or through stem injection. Regardless of which method is undertaken, customers will receive a customer focussed service which pays special regard to health and safety, is delivered by trained and suitably qualified operatives who will provide regular updates on the effectiveness of the treatments:

Fees

Regular / Domestic spray-treatment plan:

Year 1	£325.00 for the Management Plan and 1 st treatment. * (The management plan costs £100 in isolation)
Year 2	£225.00 for Subsequent visit / Re-treatment. *
Year 3	£225.00 for Subsequent visit / Re-treatment. *
Year 4	£150.00 Monitoring visit & progress report.
Year 5	£150.00 Monitoring visit & confirmation report.
Total	£1075.00, includes VAT @ 20%.

(*Can opt for up to 2 treatment visits per year, to speed up or enhance success but each visit will be charged for at a rate of £225 per visit/treatment).

Bespoke / Larger sites spray treatment plan:

These will require a bespoke Management plan and as such the quotation will be based on the charges for the Regular / Domestic sites, as outlined above, plus £90/hr (includes VAT) for additional time spent on dealing with the areas over and above the 50m² included within the standard price.

If stem-injection is identified as being the most appropriate form of treatment additional costs will be incurred as it is more labour intensive hence the duration on site will be longer. It is considered to be more potent and therefore potentially more likely to succeed in a shorter period of time. It is also considered to be more suitable near aquatic and sensitive areas.

Micro sites spray treatment plan (up to 4m2):

A service for Micro sites of up to 4m² in area, of mainly fresh growth, non-woody sites is also available.

Given the restricted size of these sites and/or the existence of fresh rather than established growth, a less intensive treatment plan will be required hence the costs will be lower.

Year 1	£225.00 for Management Plan and 1 st treatment. *(The management plan costs £100 in isolation).
Year 2	£125.00 for Subsequent visit / Re-treatment. *
Year 3	£125.00 for Subsequent visit / Re-treatment.*
Year 4	£100.00 Monitoring visit & progress report.
Year 5	£100.00 Monitoring visit & confirmation report.
Total	£675.00, includes VAT @ 20%).

(*Can opt for up to 2 treatment visits per year, to speed up or enhance success, but each visit will be charged for at a rate of £125 per visit/treatment.)

Guarantees

Legal advice has confirmed that the council is unable to provide an insurance/industry backed guarantee. However no organisation can guarantee that the Japanese knotweed will be eradicated successfully.