



CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMITTEE SUMMONS

C Hanagan
Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
The Pavilions
Cambrian Park
Clydach Vale CF40 2XX

Meeting Contact: Tracy Watson - Senior Democratic Services Officer (07747 485567)

YOU ARE SUMMONED to a hybrid meeting of **PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY, COMMUNITIES AND PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** to be held on **THURSDAY, 17TH FEBRUARY, 2022 at 5.00 PM.**

Non Committee Members and Members of the public may request the facility to address the Committee at their meetings on the business listed although facilitation of this request is at the discretion of the Chair. It is kindly asked that such notification is made to Democratic Services by Tuesday, 15 February 2022 on the contact details listed above, including stipulating whether the address will be in Welsh or English.

AGENDA

**Page
No's**

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

To receive disclosures of personal interest from Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct

Note:

1. Members are requested to identify the item number and subject matter that their interest relates to and signify the nature of the personal interest: and
2. Where Members withdraw from a meeting as a consequence of the disclosure of a prejudicial interest they must notify the Chairman when they leave.

2. MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the previous meeting of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Community Committee held on 18th November 2021.

3. SCRUTINY RESEARCH

A scrutiny research facility is available within the Council Business Unit to support Members' scrutiny responsibilities and their roles as Elected Members. Such research strengthens scrutiny Committees work programmes to ensure outcome-based topics are identified. For any scrutiny research requirements please contact Scrutiny@rhonddacynon-taff.gov.uk

4. CONSULTATION LINKS

Information is provided in respect of relevant [consultations](#) for consideration by the Committee.

5. GREEN WASTE COLLECTIONS

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6. LIBRARY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN FOR 2022/25

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7. CURRENT BIODIVERSITY WORK IN RCT

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8. UPDATE ON THE CONTROL OF JAPANESE KNOTWEED IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

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9. CHAIR'S REVIEW AND CLOSE

To reflect on the meeting and actions to be taken forward.

10. URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any items, which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, is of the opinion should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication**Circulation:-**

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee
(County Borough Councillor S Bradwick and County Borough Councillor T Williams respectively)

County Borough Councillors:

Councillor A Chapman, Councillor A Fox, Councillor E George, Councillor D Grehan, Councillor G Holmes, Councillor J James, Councillor W Jones, Councillor S Pickering, Councillor G Stacey, Councillor W Treeby, Councillor M Weaver and Councillor J Barton

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Thursday, 18 November 2021 at 5.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors - Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance: -

Councillor S Bradwick (Chair)

Councillor A Chapman	Councillor A Fox
Councillor E George	Councillor D Grehan
Councillor G Holmes	Councillor J James
Councillor W Jones	Councillor G Stacey
Councillor W Treeby	Councillor J Barton
Councillor T Williams	

Also in Attendance

Councillor A Crimmings – Cabinet Member Environment, Leisure and Heritage Services

Officers in attendance

Mr S Humphreys, Head of Legal Services
Mr D Batten, Head of Leisure
Mr A Griffiths, Service Director – Highways & Engineering
Mr R Waters, Service Director – Frontline Services
Mr R Wistow, Ecologist
Mrs S Daniel, Senior Democratic Services Officer

1 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the following declarations of personal interest were made:

- County Borough Councillor J Barton – Chair of Litter Free Beddau and Tynant and agenda item 4 “attended the Local Nature Partnership representing Tynant Woods and Cwm Tips”.
- County Borough Councillor S Bradwick – Member of South Wales Fire and Rescue.
- County Borough Councillor T Williams- Son works for Highways and Traffic.

2 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 23 September 2021 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Matters Arising:

Councillor J Barton requested further information on the Council Litter Picking

Strategy as she felt it was not touched upon at a satisfactory level in the previous meeting.

Cllr D Grehan referred to page 4, paragraph 4 of the previous set of minutes and raised that this para was incomplete.

3 Consultation Links

Members were informed of the Consultations that may be of interest to them.

4 Biodiversity and the Local Nature Partnership in Rhondda Cynon Taf

The Head of Leisure, Parks and Countryside presented a report to Members accompanied by a presentation that updated Members on the work of the Council and the Local Nature Partnership in relation to biodiversity in RCT and the future direction of the work. The report outlined the significant role of the Council in the management of biodiversity in its own Land.

The Ecologist gave the presentation highlighting the different projects being undertaken by Rhondda Cynon Taff Council to maintain Biodiversity under the Biodiversity Duty imposed by the Welsh Government. The Ecologist stated that utilising the Planning Function within the Council has aided in delivery of large-scale biodiversity improvements across the Borough. The projects consist of Upland Wind Farms, and Healthy Hill-Side project with partnerships from South Wales Fire and Rescue.

The Ecologist highlighted to Members the significance of Land Management in RCT and the vitality of the Council to identify ways to maintain RCT Land better for biodiversity. The Wildflower Policy introduced by the Council sets out the how, and where Wildflower management will be undertaken in RCT. The aim is to increase the amount of Wildflower Management in the Borough

As part of the Wildflower Management, funding from the Local Nature Plan has provided the Wildflower Management with two specialised Machinery which maintain Wildflowers across the Borough i.e. 70 hectares of wildflower management is currently being undertaken by the Machines and 50 hectares by Cattle Grazing.

The Ecologist outlined to Members that through the success of Wildflower management, as a Council, we are reaching the Pollinator Action implemented by the Welsh Government.

The Ecologist highlighted to Members the significance of Community engagement in relation to the delivery of biodiversity. As part of the Local Nature Partnership, Community engagement is focal, thus focus on open communication channels is encouraged between the Council and the Public; Thus, the introduction of Living Landscape Project which focuses on the management of Council owned Land for biodiversity by residential areas to encourage direct engagement with residents.

The Chair thanked the Ecologist for a very interesting presentation and opened to Members for questions.

A Member asked what the Councils plan was to undertake work at Mynydd Y Glyn regarding the Wind Turbines in Tonyrefail, as the residents are really

excited about the land and Habitats in that area.. The Member also informed of his interest in being a part of the project for Tonyrefail area.

The same member queried the Councils plan on the maintenance of the Japanese Knotweed along the A4119 and Himalaya Balsam which has seen extensive widespread. The Ecologist advised that in relation to Mynydd Y Glyn he is aware of the proposals for the Wind Turbines development which will be dealt with through planning applications. The Ecologist is aware of the Peatbogs and other Habitats in the area, same processes will be implemented as all other planning applications for Wind Farms Scheme to identify the ecological impacts and implications.

In relation to the Tonyrefail SSSI, the Ecologist recognised the incredible Landscapes within that area. One of the 29 sites, Parc Erin, West of Tonyrefail Comprehensive has been focused on the Living Landscape project due to the amount of Marshy Grass and SSSI Woodland. With the focus on Parc Erin on the Living Landscape project this will provide residents of Tonyrefail with the opportunity to visit the Habitats nearer to their homes.

In relation to Japanese Knotweed, the Ecologist recognised the difficulty of managing the spread of Japanese Knotweed; However, highlighted the Councils efforts in controlling the spread through the recruitment of a new Invasive Plant Officer to manage the Japanese Knotweed across the Borough. He continued that compared to Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam can be controlled by pulling out the whole plant or spraying it in a controlled way.

The Chair requested for an Invasive Plant Officer to be invited to the next Public Service Delivery Committee and prosperity meeting to get further insight on the planned management of Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam for County Borough.

One member was very pleased with the work undertaken by the Local Nature Partnerships, however queried the support in place to support Community groups working on Private Land maintaining biodiversity such as in the Tynant Woodlands.

The Ecologist recognised the difficulties relating to the management of Private Land, especially in an area subject to future planning applications. He acknowledged the significance of the Tynant Woodlands site nature conservation. He referred the Community Engagement with the Local Nature Plan as a significant matter as it provided a collective overview of what residents of Rhonda Cynon Taf value as the important. The Ecologist made Members aware of small funding availability for biodiversity works which the Member can explore as support for the Community Group. He however stressed the limitations of the Council in dealing with Privately owned Land.

The Chair asked about Private sites in RCT to provide the Committee with an update on all projects being undertaken by Community groups.

The Ecologist informed Members that as part of the Local Nature Plan, a collation of all projects currently being undertaken in the delivery of biodiversity on private and Council owned Land will look to be logged and monitored.

A Member referred to Japanese Knotweed, he advised that this is a matter which should involve the Scrutiny Committee as a separate matter due to the problematic issues it causes to residents, i.e reducing house prices. In

agreement with the Chair the Members stressed the significance of the attendance of Invasion Plant Officer to identify ways to resolve this matter. The Member also queried the project partnerships with Welcome to our Woods and the Skylight project of Community ownership and forestry ownership. The Ecologist confirmed partnership between Welcome to our Woods and the Skylight project as there are ties in the peat bogs restorations.

One Member asked about the Peat Land Drainage and if there were any projects in place to reclaim old Peat Bogs.

The Ecologist advised that there are 6 large scale habitat restoration in place as part of Wind Farm developments, their aim is to block drains, increase water levels and restore the Peat Bogs. He advised that there are currently two projects in progress to restore Peat Bogs, one located in the Hirwaun industrial estate with partnership with National Grid which receives green energy from the turbines. He advised the other project is through the Climate Change Steering Working Group, who are utilising a Peatland Hydrologist to identify potential Peat Bogs area worth the Council's investment.

The Ecologist informed Members of the Cabinet that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council possesses one of the biggest areas of Peatland within Southern Wales and the significance of restoring these sites is vital.

Due to numerous complaints being received from residents concerning Grass not being cut; the Member queried on the Council's plan to inform residents of the grass growth as part of RCT's biodiversity plan.

As efforts have been made to plant trees in areas such as Parc Celyn for biodiversity, there have been numerous vandalisms that have occurred resulting in planted trees being broken and ripped out; The Member inquired on the Council's role to stop this vandalism from occurring.

The Head of Leisure, Parks and Countryside acknowledged this; informing Members of the 700 trees planted in Parks last Winter which were also vandalised. As part of a plan to resolve the matter, the team are planting bigger trees and plan to educate residents of the significance of the trees for now and future generations to come.

To Add, The Ecologist informed Members that as part of the Living Landscape project is to provide information to residents for instance through links to the website to better inform. As part of the Let's Talk Wildflowers scheme last year, the aim was to provide residents with open communication channels to share ideas and identify the public position towards wildflowers in their areas.

The Chair was very pleased with the well informing presentation regarding biodiversity. He asked to receive further information on what plans are in place for Parks in RCT for planting wildflowers. As Councillors, the Chair advised of the importance of being kept up to date on areas that have not had grass cut to inform residents to eliminate misunderstandings between the Council and its residents. The Chair also queried the Staff levels within the team to ensure they are better equipped for projects. And Lastly, in relation to wildflowers, the Chair asked if more plants will be bought from specialist areas.

The Ecologist informed Members of the substantial number of wildflowers which exist in numerous sites across RCT. He advised as a Council, if management

plans are maintained as a Borough, numerous wildflowers will emerge. He informed Members that biodiversity in RCT is not as broken as other parts of Britain.

The Chair informed Members of his encouragement to involve Schools in RCT to progress the project further due to the significance of the younger generation for the future.

The Cabinet Member was pleased with the report as it's been well received in other Committees such as the Climate Change Steering Group. She has recognised a big shift in attitude in RCT concerning the cross collaboration between Street Care, Parks and Countryside and is very pleased with Officers involvement. As a Committee she advised to keep up to date with reports and sharing these with residents. The Cabinet Members thanked Officers the reports on top on their day-to-day roles.

The Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity **RESOLVED** to:

- Note the progress made in RCT in recent years and the increasing importance of biodiversity conservation in the Council's work.
- Agree to receive a further report on local information in the new year and invite the invasive plants officer.

5 Highways Infrastructure

The Service Director, Highways and Engineering provided Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee with an update on the highway infrastructure within the County Borough with reference to the Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) and investment strategy.

A Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) sets out a structured approach to managing the highway asset based around the following core elements

- Hierarchy
- Inspection
- Defect
- Repair
- Programmed Repairs
- Planned Maintenance

Due to the extensive investment in the highway infrastructure, with delivery a priority, the COVID pandemic and lack of staff resources (which has been recently resolved) a new HAMP and ASOR will now be upgraded.

The Service Director, Highways and Engineering reiterated to Members the significance of the Highways infrastructure as one of the biggest assets that RCT Councils owns, valuing at over £3.2 Billion (2021 gross replacement cost). The Highways infrastructure consists of:

- 1,295km of Carriageways
- 1,159km of Footways
- 1,567 highway structures including 196 Road Bridges

- 29,404 Streetlights
- 134 Traffic signals (signalised junction and pedestrian crossings) Plus surface water sewer systems and road gullies, miscellaneous street furniture, signs, bollards, vehicle barriers, pedestrian barriers, etc.

Considerable investments have been received within the Highways infrastructure Asset Management. Regarding the performance specifically on Roads, the Service Director, Highways and Engineering referred Members to section 4.4 of the report which highlighted the position regarding Class A, B and C Roads in RCT.

The statistics highlighted in section 4.4 compare favourably to the condition in 2010/11, due to the extensive funding received which has aided in the substantial improvements.

The Service Director, Highways and Engineering referred Members to section 5 of the report which highlighted graphs of the investment strategy. Section 5 of the report highlighted to Members the significance of continual funding to maintain Highways and park structures within RCT.

The Director of Frontline Services referred Members to section 8.4 of the report which highlighted the year-on-year investment position and condition of the Highway from 2011/12. Similarly, to the Service Director, Highways and Engineering, the Director of Frontline Services reiterated to Members the significance of funding to maintain and improve the Highways within RCT.

The Service Director, Highways and Engineering referred Members to a presentation which highlighted the projects undertaken and the significant improvements across the highways in RCT. The projects included work on Park Structures, Footways, Carriageways, Culverts, Bridges, VRS, and Retaining Walls

The Chair was pleased with the report that provided an outlook on successful projects undertaken throughout RCT and investments provided.

One Member sought clarification on the works undertaken on Bridge 240 or Llywna Farm. The Service Director, Highways and Engineering was able to confirm it was the Bridge located on Footway 240.

One Member wanted to congratulate the Service Director, Highways and Engineering for their extensive and efficient work, specifically focusing on their good use of selecting excellent contactors to undertake the projects.

One Member wanted to thank the team for their effective work on the Ynysmeurig Bridge in Abercynon.

The Chair enquired on the budget required to improve the standard of all roads in RCT.

In response the Service Director, Highways and Engineering informed Members it would take 10s of Millions of Pounds, which does not consider all structures in RCT. The Service Director of Highways and Engineering advised Members that there are over 170 highway structures which are currently on the priority list requiring work undertaken to them. 200 inspections of bridges are undertaken every year by staff to identify any repairs and upgrades needed for instance, the drainage system, traffic lights etc. Continual funding will be required to ensure all

highways are up to date.

One Member congratulated the Highways team and informing Members of RCT road infrastructure as far superior compared to other Local Authorities.

The Chair welcomed and encouraged investment to the Highways services.

The Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity **RESOLVED:**

- To note the update on highways infrastructure within the County Borough reference to the asset management strategy and investment strategy.
- To note the expenditure required to maintain the highway infrastructure asset.

6 Chair's Review and Close

The Chair thanked all officers and members for attending and looked forward to seeing them all at the next meeting.

7 Urgent Business

None

**Cllr S Bradwick
Chairman**

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021/22

**PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY,
COMMUNITIES & PROSPERITY
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

17th February 2022

**REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR OF
PROSPERITY, DEVELOPMENT AND
FRONTLINE SERVICES.**

Agenda Item No: 5

**REPORT ON GREEN WASTE
COLLECTIONS**

Author: Steve Owen

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on green waste collections following the implementation of sack collections and the 'RCT's Got A Brand New Bag' campaign. Please note all figures quoted are as of 3rd February 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the content of the report:
- 2.2 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise in greater depth any further matters.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This Council as have all Councils in Wales has statutory targets set by Welsh Government. This year the target is again 64%, failure to meet these targets will

result in the Council receiving a substantial fine. The fine is based on performance with every tonne we miss the target by, will result in a minimum fine of £200 per tonne. Welsh Government has set all Councils a recycling target of 70% by 2024/2025.

- 3.2 However looking forward and to support the Council’s commitment to becoming a carbon neutral Council by 2030, Waste has been set a recycling target of 80% by 2024/25. As well as launching various campaigns and awareness/education initiatives to increase quality participation, Waste will also commit to reducing single-use plastic bags.
- 3.3 In November 2020, Waste launched the new re-usable sack that replaced the standard recycling bag for the disposal of green waste (both domestic and trade). It is estimated that the Council will save 3 million recycling bags by switching to a re-usable sack. Waste also required residents and trade waste customers to register their sacks to ensure our collection rounds are as efficient as possible and our carbon footprint is kept to a minimum.

4. UPDATE /ISSUES ENCOUNTERED/ CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 We have 36,256 households and 59 businesses who have registered with 96% just registering two sacks (first two sacks are free with additional sacks at £3 each). This has equated to approximately 26% of RCT properties who have registered for green sacks with high numbers in the Taff area as follows:

Location	Sign Ups
Beddau	1824
Tonyrefail	1650
Church Village	1417
Llantwit Fadre	1379
Rhydfelin	1284

- 4.2 The ‘RCT’s Got A Brand-New Bag’ campaign was launched initially online on 13th September 2021 with an unexpected overwhelming response. For example, we successfully received 6,517 online registrations in the first 24 hours. Waste then followed with delivering 50,000 leaflets to areas of high participation and to residents who regularly put out green waste in areas where green waste collections are lighter. All leaflets were delivered by the switch over date of 1st November. The communications strategy was also supported by banner board notices across RCT, a vehicle livery campaign and also town centre events. It was hoped that ‘word of mouth’ would reach most residents regardless of their chosen method of communications by the switchover date. However, following the initial communications campaign, it is noted that 97% of registrations so far have been done online.

- 4.3 On the 1st November (date that we also transferred to fortnightly Winter collections) Waste stopped collecting green waste in recycling bags. It was decided that there would be no 'grace period' however we would use awareness tactics as opposed to enforcement tactics. This is to reflect that despite a large advertising campaign, there will still be some residents who, through no fault of their own, did not know about the changes. Residents who place out green waste in recycling bags will have the following sticker placed on the bag by the recycling crews. The sticker provides information on what a resident needs to do and how they can order green waste sacks. There will be no end date to this informative procedure and the service will continue to raise awareness as opposed to enforcement with residents who put out green waste in a recycling bag for the first time.

Dydy'r Cyngor bellach ddim yn casglu gwastraff gwyrdd o fagiau ailgylchu clir.

Dim ond mewn bagiau gwyrdd pwrpasol y byddwn ni'n casglu gwastraff gwyrdd. Rhaid i chi gofrestru i gael y bagiau yma. Mae modd i chi gofrestru ac archebu'r bagiau ar y wefan neu drwy ffonio'r rhif isod.

The Council no longer collects green waste from clear recycling bags.

We will only collect green waste in green waste sacks from households who have registered. Registration and the ordering of the sacks can be done via the website or telephone number below.

 www.rctcbc.gov.uk/ailgylchu
www.rctcbc.gov.uk/recycling
01443 425001 

- 4.4 The unexpected high number of sign-ups at the outset did create some unplanned challenges in terms of delivering sacks within the 10 days. Streetcare had to move Enforcement staff over to delivering duties and additional vehicles had to be hired as well as Waste working overtime on weekend to meet the demand at the time. The numbers reduced to manageable levels (approximately 550 a week) mid-November and Enforcement returned to their normal duties. In addition, the service needed a lot of Customer Services assistance in closing down CRM's after sacks had been delivered.
- 4.5 The campaign has received both positive and negative responses. Some residents have commented that the change is welcomed and overdue particularly after we published that we use around 3 million single use plastic bags a year. However, some residents have expressed discontent to the changes as follows (*with response summary in italics*):

- The sacks are too heavy when full

Ask for an assisted collection or decant the waste into manageable sections.

- The sacks are dirty when being brought through the house
Resident use their own container to transfer waste into the sack.
- Disagree with the charges
The £3 only covers to price of the sack.
- The sacks do not contain loose material during inclement weather
Advised resident to criss-cross handles but may look at sacks with flap lids in the future.
- The charge for lost sacks
Advise to mark up sacks and collectors will do their best to securely return sacks i.e., front garden, gatepost, under food bin etc.
- Disagree that a property will be removed if no green waste presented over 12 consecutive collections
Advised that this is collections and not weeks (including fortnightly in the summer) and we should also be avoiding unnecessary journeys.
- RCT should have researched a bio-degradable bag
Bio-degradable bags by their nature are lightweight and could not support large amounts of green waste or sharp items.
- Unfair system as a flat will not have an equal need to a property with a large garden
Waste calculated that an average property would place out between 2 to 5 recycling bags in peak season. As a sack holds around 2.5 recycling bags, it was decided that every household should have access to two free sacks and should be treated equally.

4.6 All complaints have been answered on time, but some have been escalated to a Stage 2 complaint. These complaints are against the principle of the changes and not about service delivery.

4.7 Prior to the launch Waste worked alongside the Streetcare Communications Group and our neighbouring authorities to benchmark our services and to ensure our processes were sustainable and efficient. We established that RCT was the last authority in Wales to move to a re-usable container and offered the cheapest services in terms of green waste disposal. The below table shows a comparison of RCT's green waste services alongside our neighbouring authorities:

Bridgend	Only collect weekly March to November Issue 2 x 90 litre sacks Permit of £38.30 a year
Cardiff	Same collection season as RCT Issue sacks or wheelie bins £3 per sack or £25 per wheelie bin
Vale of Glamorgan	Only collect weekly March to November

	Issue sacks £2 per sack
Merthyr Tydfil	Only collect April to November every fortnight Issue free sacks Maximum of 6
Caerphilly	Collect weekly throughout the year Issue sacks £3.06 per sack

4.8 There were however some items that did not become apparent until we started the campaign and collections as follows:

- Some properties had to continue with recycling bags. These are properties that are 'hard to reach' and are collected with caged vans.
- Some converted farms were showing as 'trade'.
- Representation from allotments and therefore a web page and process for society run allotment has been designed.
- Whilst the suspension of green waste collections over the Christmas period remained unchanged again this year, we received a number of 'missed collections' complaints.

4.9 The collection crews are currently coping well but have not yet collected green sacks during a summer season. All crew members have been trained in how to lift green sacks and the procedures for leaving sacks that are not registered or contaminated. Crew members have also been trained in how to use in-cab devices that will show their daily schedule and allow them to report issues. This has the ability to be transferred in live time to Enforcement and Customer Services.

4.10 However despite the high in-take of registrations at the outset, crews are reporting that since 1st November, only 31% of registered customers have put out green waste. This however, for the first time, gives Waste invaluable intelligence on how we can make further efficiencies in the future e.g., we now know exactly where our collections are as opposed to driving around looking for them.

4.11 The following shows a comparison of this year (sacks) and last year (bags) in terms of tonnage collected. This table shows no notable or significant changes since the launch of the green waste sacks

Green waste collected in tonnes (week commencing)

	1 st Nov	8 th Nov	15 th Nov	22 nd Nov	29 th Nov	6 th Dec	13 th Dec	20 th Dec	27 th Dec	3 rd Jan	10 th Jan	17 th Jan	24 th Jan
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21-22 (sacks)	57.82	55.40	94.67	70.32	82.02	60.86	35.62	41.66	7.22	34.10	49.28	71	78.44
20-21 (bags)	61.72	103.20	66.56	69.52	68.96	83.00	24.10	27.78	17.06	41.49	26.19	42.38	37.65

4.12 There has also been no reported increases in fly tipping of green waste since the changes to the sacks.

4.13 There are some early concerns that some of our vehicles are not suitable for sack collections and this will be addressed as and when vehicles are due for renewal. In the meantime, crews have been trained in double handling and some vehicles have had temporary modifications in terms of removing rave rails and installing slave bins.

4.14 The Streetcare Communications Group are meeting again in February to discuss the second wave of registrations that is predicted from early Spring onwards. As we have predicted that 75% of the total number of green waste participants have already registered, we are hopeful that the majority of the work has already been completed. We will however prepare for a heavy workload in terms of deliveries and customer services support and amend our Spring communications to address the most common issues that have arisen thus far.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no Equality or Diversity implications aligned to this report

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 There are no Consultation implications aligned to this report

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

7.1 There are Financial implications in failing to achieve the statutory targets.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

8.1 There are no Legal Implications aligned to this report

9. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP

9.1 The recycling processes we adopted align itself to the Corporate Plan and Corporate Priorities.

9.2 This clearly is linked with the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, helping to create a resilient Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 RCT Council are proud of its recycling services and how it continues to improve and support carbon neutral initiatives.

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021-22

PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY,
COMMUNITY AND PROSPERITY
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17th February 2022

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, PUBLIC
HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY
SERVICES

Agenda Item No. 6

**THE LIBRARY SERVICE DRAFT
STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN
2022-25**

Author(s): Wendy Edwards, Service Director – Community Services

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an opportunity to review the Draft Strategy for Rhondda Cynon Taf's Library Service and its associated Action Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the content of the report;
- 2.2 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise in greater depth any further matters.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 requires local authorities to ensure the provision of a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service without specifying what that entails. In Wales the duty 'to superintend and promote the improvement of the public library service provided through local authorities' has been devolved to the relevant Welsh Minister and since 2002 this duty has been fulfilled through the Welsh Public Library Standards. These standards consist of 12 core entitlements and 15 Quality Indicators.
- 3.2 Core entitlement 12 of the Welsh Public Library Standards requires every local authority in Wales to produce a strategy and action plan that outlines the future development of its public library service. Once approved these documents must be placed on the Council's website so that they can be easily accessible to the public.
- 3.3 Developing a Strategy and Action Plan is also important as it ensures that the library service is aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan and to other local and national strategies so that it supports the wider Council and Welsh Government agenda.
- 3.4 Rhondda Cynon Taf's first Strategy and Action Plan was produced in 2015 and the second in 2019. This third strategy is designed to cover a three-year period and it is especially significant as it comes at the end of a challenging period for public-facing services as a result of the Covid pandemic.

4. IMPACT OF THE COVID PANDEMIC ON THE 2019-21 ACTION PLAN

- 4.1 It should be noted that all static and mobile library provision was suspended in March 2020 during the National Lockdown and that library staff were transferred to other duties to support residents. However, static libraries and the @homelibraryservice reopened at the end of June 2020 and delivered its services in line with Welsh Government guidance at that time. Continuing to provide access to services throughout this period with frequent changes to the guidance as Wales progressed through different Alert Levels was challenging.
- 4.2 The service adapted its provision to meet the new conditions so that we could continue to support residents to access books and other library services that supported their wellbeing at this difficult time:
 - Welsh Government provided additional funds for e-books and e-audiobooks which saw a boost in downloads.
 - Ancestry made its database accessible from home for members of the Library Service which resulted in an increase in the number of customers using its databases for family history and other research
 - Story-telling and craft sessions delivered by the Youth Librarian and her team were transferred online
 - Quizzes and other activities using photographs and materials from the service's Local Studies and Photographic Archive collections were placed on the Library Service's Facebook page

- Colleagues in IT ensured that new members were able for the first time to register online
- An Order and Collect service was introduced so that customers could order their books online or by phone and pick them up within 15 minutes slots at their nearest library
- More self-service machines were installed to reduce the risk of virus transmission (funded by Welsh Government)
- The @homelibraryservice was expanded to provide book deliveries to residents who would normally rely on the mobile library service
- Detailed risk assessments were undertaken and protective measures implemented to protect customers and staff.

5. **KEY ACHIEVEMENTS**

5.1 Appendix 1 highlights the progress made against the priorities outlined in the 2019-21 Action Plan in more detail but the following highlights are worthy of note:

- The role played by the Library Service in the development of community hubs - work on Llys Cadwyn (Pontypridd) and Porth Plaza was completed and both venues played an important role as Community Resilience Hubs supporting residents in their area.
- The capital investment made by the Council and Welsh Government in improving library facilities at Treorchy library in readiness for its launch as a cultural hub in partnership with the Park and Dare Theatre.
- The progress made in use of digital technology – there was a 110% increase in loans of digital materials between April/May 2019 and April/May 2020.
- Significant investment in digital equipment and enhancement of digital skills among staff.
- The success of the service in gaining external funding to enhance the range of opportunities/activities on offer to customers.

5.2 In addition the merging of the One4All service with the Library Service offers further opportunities to enhance the provision of advice and information available to residents.

5.3 A key aim of the 2019-21 Action Plan was to increase visitor numbers to libraries. Unsurprisingly, the National and Local Lockdowns as well as the restrictions placed on browsing, delivery and facilitation of learning and other community-based activities throughout most of 2020 and 2021 has had an adverse effect on visitor numbers resulting in fewer visits to libraries than in 2018/19. This was unavoidable and the new proposed strategy will focus on further developing services that will attract current customers back to libraries and attracting new customers.

6. THE DRAFT LIBRARY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2022-25

6.1 The Draft Strategy can be seen at Appendix 2 and the draft Action Plan is at Appendix 3. The Draft Strategy outlines the services currently available and identifies the key priorities proposed for the next 3 years and the outcomes and impact achieving these will have. The Draft Action Plan outlines the actions that will be implemented to ensure that the desired outcomes and impacts are achieved.

6.2 The key priorities proposed for the next three years are:

- keeping the service relevant in a rapidly changing environment.
- improving the library experience for all customers.
- take the opportunities and lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic to inform and shape future provision.

6.3 To achieve these priorities, the service will:

- further enhance the programme of digitisation of resources and make these available online so that customers can access collections at any time.
- harness new IT developments to improve the customer experience.
- blend traditional and digital services by developing a Digital strategy for libraries.
- build on online delivery of services to children identified during Covid-19 pandemic to strengthen, expand, and increase the reach of these services to families across RCT.
- ensure that all staff have the skills required to provide a service that remains relevant at a time when innovations in technology and changing patterns of usage are having an impact on how customers want to engage with the service.
- embed new models of delivery and monitor customer feedback to ensure they achieve their objectives.
- support the further development of community hubs.
- ensure that residents have access to a broad range of learning opportunities.
- work with partners to provide a wider range of information, advice, and support on well-being and health.
- work with partners and volunteers in the heritage, arts and cultural sectors to develop a range of cultural activities.
- reflect all communities in the promotion of and engagement with our culture, heritage and local history collections.

- recognise and promote reading & library use as an essential element in peoples improved mental health and wellbeing.
- Provide opportunities for agencies and partners to work to address poverty & employability initiatives.

6.4 The service will work towards ensuring the following outcomes and impacts:

- People will be able to increase their knowledge/skills having used the library.
- People will be able to take part in reading and other cultural events organised by the library of their choice.
- People will feel part of a community using the library service.
- People will be able to take advantage of the opportunities of the digital world through using the library.
- People will be able to re-engage with reading and visiting the library as a pleasurable leisure activity.
- Personal health and well-being will be enhanced by using the library.
- People can participate more fully in local affairs via the facilities in the library.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 The draft strategy reflects learning gained from the Customer Satisfaction Survey undertaken by the service in 2019 and informal feedback from customers and partners provided to library staff that is fed back through the branch librarians during management and branch meetings that review our services.

7.2 Feedback on the draft strategy and action plan has been provided by the Community Development team and the Arts Service that are closely involved in developments related to community hubs and expansion of the cultural offer within libraries.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

8.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report. The Library Service is core funded by the Council. However, it applies for external funding to deliver additional activities whenever the opportunity arises as in the case of the National Lottery Heritage Project 'Altered Images.'

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 Library authorities are required to produce a strategy and action plan that will outline the direction of travel for their service and to reflect how they will work towards meeting the core entitlements and quality indicators outlined in the Welsh Government's Quality Framework for libraries.

- 9.2 There have been some significant developments and progress made during the past 2 years despite the challenges of providing services during the Covid pandemic. However, the reduction in footfall due to lack of confidence among key groups to return to their previous level of usage is likely to continue for longer than previously anticipated and the proposed strategy for 2022-25 has a focus on further enhancing provision and ensuring access to a wider range of support through collaboration with partner organisations, to attract people to our venues.
- 9.3 The pandemic has demonstrated that library customers want to borrow and read digital formats and that they expect to borrow these items as easily as they can print formats. These expectations will require us to examine our service in order to transition to a service that offers both traditional and digital collections to our customers. The shift to a more blended service will undoubtedly throw up challenges as we look to accommodate both traditional and digital customers within existing budgets.

Appendix 1 – Progress Against the 2019/21 Action Plan

The pandemic had a major impact on library provision in 2020/21 but despite there were some significant achievements as identified in the table below:

Action Plan 2019/21 – Evaluation

Theme	What we wanted to achieve.	What we achieved
<p>Keeping the service relevant in a rapidly changing environment</p>	<p>Improved and up-to-date digital and computer equipment available at all libraries in RCT.</p>	<p>Public access PCs were renewed at all branches in 2021.</p> <p>Large interactive screens suitable for training or holding meetings online have been placed in community meeting rooms at Pontypridd, Ferndale, Porth, Rhydyfelin and Mountain Ash Libraries</p> <p>Self-service machines have been installed in all libraries. Where possible these have been situated to allow use out of normal library hours.</p> <p>MFD photocopiers and scanners have been installed in all libraries</p> <p>All staff have been given access to Teams for virtual meetings and staff training sessions. In a service such as ours with locations spread over the County Borough this will reduce travel and increase contact between managers and staff.</p> <p>Senior managers issued with laptops to aid remote working and to give opportunities for remote access with both staff and public. (This has been used for meetings, training sessions, remote interviews etc).</p>
	<p>More access to a wider range of electronic resources.</p>	<p>The provision of electronic resources is one area that has benefitted from the Covid-19 pandemic due to an inevitable surge in the use of digital technologies due to social distancing and lockdowns. In effect the Library Service became a virtual service almost overnight and had to quickly adjust to new ways of working and delivering services. These changes highlighted the fact that there is an appetite for digital services with a significant increase in users and items borrowed being seen.</p> <p>The increased appetite for digital services and in particular e-books and e-audiobooks led to significant investment in these areas. With funding coming from Welsh Government and a realignment of our book budget to increase the amounts being spent on e-resources</p> <p>As well as investing in our existing e-book and e-audiobook platform Borrowbox we have also taken out a subscription to another e-resource platform (Ulverscroft) to increase availability and choice for our customers.</p> <p>People now have the option of becoming digital members of the library by joining online. Digital</p>

		<p>membership provides access to all our digital content and digital members wishing to borrow physical items can upgrade to full membership by providing ID at one of our libraries. Digital content includes access to a large collection of e-books and e-audiobooks containing a wide selection of titles including Welsh language titles. The number of people borrowing e-books and e-audiobooks has increased greatly during the Covid-19 pandemic as can be seen by the following table.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="742 593 1236 761"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">Total loans</th> </tr> <tr> <th>April & May 2019</th> <th>April & May 2020</th> <th>Variance</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>69,528</td> <td>145,736</td> <td>110%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <table border="1" data-bbox="742 795 1236 963"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">Active users</th> </tr> <tr> <th>May-19</th> <th>May-20</th> <th>Variance</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>8,144</td> <td>16,088</td> <td>98%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>During the Covid-19 pandemic a temporary 'Order and Collect' service was introduced where library members could order books online or by telephone for collection from a library of their choice. This service has proven to be popular with library members appreciating the book selections made by staff and so the service is to be retained.</p>	Total loans			April & May 2019	April & May 2020	Variance	69,528	145,736	110%	Active users			May-19	May-20	Variance	8,144	16,088	98%
Total loans																				
April & May 2019	April & May 2020	Variance																		
69,528	145,736	110%																		
Active users																				
May-19	May-20	Variance																		
8,144	16,088	98%																		
	<p>Improved use of social media platforms for promoting the service to current customers and new customers.</p> <p>Work with the Council's marketing team to promote the Library Services online resources.</p>	<p>Prior to the Covid pandemic our use of social media via our Library Facebook page had showed a slow but steady increase as we continued to expand our promotion of library materials and events as well as providing service updates and information. However, during the pandemic we had to rapidly adapt to dealing with an online audience and increasingly made use of social media to share information related to Covid-19, communicate changes to the library service and to promote available library resources. This increased usage can be seen in the following table</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="742 1691 1380 1836"> <thead> <tr> <th>Month</th> <th>Facebook followers</th> <th>People viewing content</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>April 2020</td> <td>580</td> <td>6300</td> </tr> <tr> <td>April 2021</td> <td>969</td> <td>11,600</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Further improvements in this area could be made if other social media platforms such as Instagram were made available to the service.</p>	Month	Facebook followers	People viewing content	April 2020	580	6300	April 2021	969	11,600									
Month	Facebook followers	People viewing content																		
April 2020	580	6300																		
April 2021	969	11,600																		

		<p>The Schools and Children’s service have utilised Facebook to provide (with publisher consent) on-line storytelling and craft sessions, these have temporarily replaced physical sessions in libraries. Going forward a blended approach using both physical sessions and online sessions is planned. All relevant stories and posts are shared with the council’s marketing team for inclusion on the council’s Twitter feed, website, and news feeds.</p>
	<p>Digitisation of collections and development of an appropriate platform to enable 24/7 accessibility to online resources</p>	<p>The digitisation of local history materials has continued throughout this period and both our ‘Photographic Archive’ and ‘Our Past’ websites have had additional material added to them. The rate at which digitisation has occurred has been affected by the Covid pandemic with our digitisation officer not being able to carry out this work from home. Funding to develop an appropriate platform has been acquired via a successful bid to the National Heritage Lottery Fund with this being part of the larger ‘Altered Images’ heritage project. One of the project purposes for Altered Images is to merge the library service’s existing heritage websites to create one all-encompassing website that showcases, records, preserves and promotes the culture, history, and heritage of Rhondda Cynon Taf. Thereby making the collections more accessible and attracting more and a wider range of people online.</p>
	<p>More digital programmes and activities for children and young people at RCT libraries.</p>	<p>Staff from the Schools and Children’s service were able to access a digital training package thanks to a grant from the Welsh Government’s Cultural Recovery Fund. This ‘Estyn Allen’ project involved technical training in the use of basic equipment and software apps as well as providing funding for authorities to invest in the basic hardware and software needed to produce good quality activities and content.</p> <p>The skills, equipment and software gained from participating in this project has allowed staff to produce on-line storytelling and craft sessions and tie in videos for events such as how to bake a chocolate cake (Roald Dahl Day) and how to make Welsh Cakes (St David’s day). In addition to this our Teenage Librarian established an on-line reading group. All these activities have proven to be popular and although they were introduced as a means of engaging with children and young adults during Covid restrictions we will look to take a blended approach going forward with a mix of physical and digital activities.</p>

<p>Embedding new models of service delivery</p>	<p>A successful and well-used mobile library service that offers a range of services and is accessed by customers of all ages.</p>	<p>Of the all the services we offer the mobile library service has been hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic due to the restricted space available on a mobile library and the need for social distancing to be observed. Mobile services were suspended as of March 2020 and are yet to be re-instated making it impossible to make any progress in developing this service. Instead, we have worked to expand our At Home service by restructuring the current service and incorporating the Mobile staff and vehicles into the service to expand the number of visits available. This has allowed us to incorporate many of the mobile library members into this service as well as opening the service to vulnerable people affected by the pandemic.</p>
	<p>A @homelibraryservice that supports customers to access books in a variety of formats that meet their needs.</p>	<p>Prior to the disruption caused by Covid the service continued to develop with staff piloting a tablet loan service whereby tablets with pre-loaded digital e-books/e-audiobooks were delivered to @home library members. Unfortunately, this was cut short due to the Covid pandemic but will resume as soon as conditions allow.</p> <p>During the pandemic after an initial period where the service was temporarily withdrawn, we were able to reintroduce the service due to the appropriate use of PPE and the introduction of Covid safe delivery guidelines. The service has continued to operate since its reintroduction and expanded during lockdown, offering a service to people who were shielding or identified as vulnerable as part of the local response to the pandemic. Use was also made of Mobile Library staff and vehicles to expand the service further to include deliveries to mobile library members whose service had been withdrawn due to covid restrictions.</p>
	<p>Well-used libraries at the heart of their communities co-located with other services and partners in community hubs at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ferndale • Mountain Ash • Porth • Pontypridd (Taf Vale) 	<p>The co-location of libraries with other services in line with the Council's development of community hubs that provide a range of services has been successfully completed during the timeframe of this strategic plan with community hubs that contain libraries being established at the following sites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountain Ash (Canolfan Pennar) and Ferndale - Ferndale Hwb) – 2019 • Porth (Porth Plaza) and Pontypridd (Llys Cadwyn) – 2020 • Treorchy (Cultural hub in partnership with the Park and Dare Theatre) – 2021 <p>Investment from the Council and successful bids to MALD for Transformation Capital Grants have</p>

		<p>allowed us to create modern and well-equipped libraries at each site that are well suited to serve their local communities.</p> <p>Although the Covid pandemic has disrupted the process of building a customer base for these locations' initial data from Ferndale and Mountain Ash libraries that opened prior to the pandemic show a significant increase in use and in the number and range of activities and events being offered from these sites.</p> <p>The One4all service which provides a face-to-face information service for the council was transferred into the Library Service in April 2020. The timing of the move and the disruption caused by Covid-19 has not allowed any real analysis of how this service can best fit into the library service to take place and this is something that we hope to achieve during the period of the next Library Strategy.</p>
Improving the library experience for customers	All library buildings to be attractive and suitable for the needs of the communities that they service.	<p>Prior to the period covered by this strategy a number of successful bids to MALD for Transformation Capital Grants had resulted in the overall condition of our libraries being raised to a good level. The good work previously carried out has been built upon during the period of this strategy with the development of the Hub model for service delivery leading to significant investment in libraries situated within community hubs. This includes the installation of Adult Changing Places at Canolfan Pennar, Llys Cadwyn and Porth that ensures improved access to people with disabilities.</p> <p>All libraries have benefitted from investment to IT facilities which has allowed all our public access pcs to be renewed, self-service kiosks to be introduced and remote printing facilities made available. We also use our annual budget to maintain libraries to ensure that they are attractive, welcoming, and fit for purpose and make improvements where possible. Example of this would be the significant improvement made to facilities at Tonypanydly library and the creation of a small community meeting room at Hirwaun which allows private One-to-One meetings to take place</p>
	More access to learning opportunities for all ages.	<p>The ability to develop access to learning opportunities has been severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Face to face groups and classes have been suspended for long periods and when reintroduced only available for limited numbers. However, the foundations for developing greater access to learning opportunities have been created during this period with more community rooms, IT</p>

		<p>suites and better connections with learning providers being developed thanks to the community hub model of service delivery. In libraries at Ferndale and Mountain Ash where these improvements were introduced prior to the Covid-19 pandemic access to learning opportunities increased with 11 additional opportunities per month being created at Ferndale Library and an additional 15 per month at Mountain Ash.</p> <p>During the pandemic the library service has looked to develop learning opportunities online by creating online story and craft sessions, increasing the range and number of educational stock available via our digital e-book/e-audiobook platform, and promoting other library online resources such as Libby (e-magazine platform with over 3,000 titles), Ancestry and Transparent Language Online.</p> <p>It is hoped that once services return to normal, we can take advantage of the foundations laid down during Covid, both physical and digital, to provide more access to learning opportunities.</p>
	<p>Well -developed Reader Development Programmes for all ages</p>	<p>The library service has a number of reader development programmes in place including Bookstart for children under three years of age, the Summer Reading Challenge and various Book Clubs, for example English Language, Welsh Language, Teen, Visually Impaired, Sci-Fi and Manga. In addition to this we organise and hold regular in-house story time sessions at libraries throughout RCT. Again, many of these were disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic but we were able to deliver story time sessions and book clubs online and the Summer Reading Challenge was hosted fully online in 2020 and a hybrid version was held in 2021.</p> <p>Our Schools Library Service provides registered schools with project collections on a wide range of subjects and reader collections which allow classes to read the same book.</p>
	<p>Programmes of cultural activities developed with other partners.</p>	<p>The Library Service works with a wide range of people, groups, organisations, and other council departments to develop cultural activities. These include one off exhibitions, annual events, and larger grant funded projects. Examples of these include: Three Welsh Language sessions were held at Aberdare and Pontypridd libraries as part of Owain Glyndwr day on the 16th September 2019. Paintings by the Ystradyfodwg Arts Society are regularly displayed at Treorchy Library.</p> <p>The Library Service produces an annual anthology of poetry and prose by local writers and launch/performance events are held each year to showcase</p>

		<p>the work included in the anthology. (2021 no events held due to Covid 19). Other annual events include activities to promote national initiatives such as 'World Book Day' and 'Libraries Week'.</p> <p>The Library Service was successful with a bid for funding from Carnegie UK as part of their Engaging Libraries project. Our project was entitled 'The Fake News Immunity project' and we engaged with members of the public on the creation of a Fake News booklet, a short film based on community conversations about Fake News and we also worked with a local school to produce a local History booklet that explored local Fake News stories from the past to discover whether they were true or fake</p> <p>As a NLHF Priority Area RCT received a solicited invitation to apply to the NLHF for grant funding towards a project of our selection that would look to rebuild capacity within Rhondda Cynon Taf and the community in relation to heritage. The project that was developed as a result of this approach - 'Altered Images' - was approved in August 2021. It has been allocated £250,000 and will last for 3 years. and will look at the theme of Altered Images – How views of the past change over time and how understanding the past can challenge our assumptions about where we come from and how our communities developed. The Library Service will be leading on the delivery of this project working closely with the Heritage and Arts Service and local communities.</p>
	<p>Well-qualified and skilled staff able to offer advice and support on a wide range of issues</p>	<p>We work hard to identify opportunities to provide staff with training including in-house training and free training offered by suppliers or external organisations. Funding for two staff to undertake a professional qualification via distance learning has been provided and two staff are currently enrolled at Aberystwyth University. We support any staff member who wishes to improve their Welsh language skills by paying course fees or allowing time away from work. Library staff also undertake training which is relevant to developments in their work or to specific projects recent examples of this include Census Support training and use of the Order & Collect' module. Recent events and in particular the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of good digital skills and two staff were enrolled in the Estyn Allen project which involved technical training in the use of basic equipment and software apps.</p>
	<p>Good use made of volunteers to add capacity to the service</p>	<p>Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic the library service offered a number of volunteer opportunities primarily in the form of work placements, including</p>

		<p>long term placements for people with learning disabilities, and a small number of identified roles being offered out to volunteers such as assisting in the digitisation of materials from the local history collection. Young adults from our e-teens library regularly assist with library activities such as story time sessions and special events. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic and to ensure the safety of staff and volunteers, a temporary suspension of library volunteers has been enforced.</p> <p>During Covid however as part of the development of Community Resilience Hubs established to provide residents with support, library staff contributed to the coordination of Community Resilience Volunteers who delivered food and medication to vulnerable people on the Shielded Patients List.</p>
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RHONDDA CYNON TAF LIBRARY SERVICE DRAFT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2022-25

STATUTORY DUTIES OF LIBRARIES IN THE UK

Local authorities have a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 'to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons'.

The Act does not specify how local authorities should ensure they deliver a modern and efficient library service that meets the needs of their communities except that they should:

- have regard to encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service
- lend books and other printed material free of charge to those who live, work or study in the area

In Wales the duty 'to superintend and promote the improvement of the public library service provided through local authorities' has been devolved to the relevant Welsh Minister and since 2002 this duty has been fulfilled through the Welsh Public Library Standards.

These standards consist of 12 core entitlements and 15 Quality Indicators.

An annual assessment is undertaken of the performance of each Library Service in Wales against the WPLS. Due to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and the closure of public libraries during the National Lockdown, no assessment was undertaken in 2020/21. However, in 2019/20 Rhondda Cynon Taf's Library Service met all 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 9 quality indicators which have targets, Rhondda Cynon Taf achieved 5 in full, 1 in part and failed to achieve 3. The full WPLS Assessment Report can be found on the Welsh Government website.

THE WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT 2015

The long-term aim of the Welsh Government is to build a Wales that is prosperous and secure, healthy and active, ambitious and learning, and united and connected.

The Well-being Goals from the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) Act 2015 are:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language
- A globally responsible Wales

Libraries contribute to each of the 7 Well-being Goals by:

- providing access to a world of lifelong learning through books and online information, free access to the internet and the delivery and facilitation of learning opportunities for people of all ages
- encouraging personal development and offering a range of services and activities that promote social and economic resilience
- working with partners to support wellbeing and reduce social isolation including providing information to support individuals to make informed choices and supporting the Book Prescription Scheme

- providing safe and inclusive facilities, and offering support to those who are socially disadvantaged to access provision within their communities that will improve their prospects
- providing places where people can meet and connect with each other and with the services they need locally, including through the development of local hubs
- encouraging and promoting cultural activities for all ages, preserving local collections that safeguard local heritage and ensuring access to materials, and activities in the Welsh language
- making efficient use of resources, recycling materials, and working with MALD and other library services in Wales to develop the All-Wales Library Management system and implement good practice that reduces impact on the environment.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF'S CORPORATE PLAN

The Library Service contributes to the priorities identified in the Council's Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 'Making a Difference':

- People: are independent, healthy and successful
- Places: where people are proud to live, work and play
- Prosperity: creating the opportunity for people and businesses: to be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper

LIBRARIES CONNECTED – UNIVERSAL LIBRARY OFFERS

The Library Service is guided in everything it does by themes identified by the Welsh Government in its Sixth Quality Framework – 'Connected and Ambitious Libraries' that outlines the following Universal Offers:

HEALTH & WELLBEING: Healthier, Happier, Connected - To support the health and wellbeing of local people and communities through services that inform, engage and connect.

INFORMATION & DIGITAL: Inform, Inspire, Innovate - To ensure local communities have access to quality information and digital services, to learn new skills and to feel safe online.

READING: Engage, Imagine, Discover - To build a literate and confident society by developing, delivering and promoting creative reading activities in libraries.

CULTURE & CREATIVITY: Explore, Create, Participate - To enable local communities to access and participate in a variety of quality and diverse arts and cultural experiences through local libraries.

VISION

Our vision for Rhondda Cynon Taf Libraries is to support all individuals and communities to achieve their full potential.

LIBRARY SERVICES IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

Despite pressures on local authority finances across Wales, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council has maintained a mixed model of delivery that includes:

- 3 Area Libraries.
- 10 Branch Libraries
- Mobile provision including the @homelibraryservice for residents who are unable to use static libraries
- A Schools Library Service that offers a loan and advisory service to all primary schools.
- A Children and Youth Librarian that develops programmes and activities that promotes reading and information literacy among young people.
- E-books, e-audiobooks and e-magazines available online at all times to all residents.
- Local studies collections at Aberdare, Pontypridd and Treorchy libraries.
- Online access to local studies materials and photographic collections.
- Delivery of the Council's face-to-face 'One4all' information service
- Access to community meeting spaces and digital technology

The development of community hubs from 2019 has added another dimension to the Library Service and enhanced the offer to residents. The following libraries are currently co-located with other Council services and/or partner organisations:

- Porth
- Mountain Ash (Canolfan Pennar)
- Ferndale (Yr Hwb)
- Church Village (Garth Olwg Lifelong Learning Centre)
- Llantrisant (co-located with the Leisure Centre)
- Pontypridd (Llys Cadwyn)
- Treorchy (Arts Service/Park and Dare theatre)

In addition, in April 2020 the Council's One4All information and advice service was merged with the Library Service. This service operates from the following library/hub buildings:

- Treorchy
- Aberdare
- Llys Cadwyn
- Canolfan Pennar (Mountain Ash)
- Pontyclun

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

Covid- 19 had a major impact on library provision in 2020-21. The major negative impact was the requirement for services to close during the National Lockdown and during the Local Lockdown in Rhondda Cynon Taf. On-going restrictions as Wales passed through different Alert Levels continued

to have a negative effect on the footfall in libraries, although conversely, there was a significant increase in the number of people downloading e-books and e-audiobooks.

Library services adapted quickly to the challenges and provision, such as story-telling and craft sessions for children, transferred online while the development of an 'Order and Collect Service' for books has been extremely popular and enabled libraries to provide services from the end of June 2020 onwards in line with public health regulations.

Mobile library provision was suspended during this period to protect staff and customers as the vehicles were unable to meet social distancing requirements, and there was a need for staff in other areas of the service and elsewhere in the Council to provide resident support. However, additional resources were provided to the @homelibraryservice for residents unable to leave their homes to access books – this has been crucial for the wellbeing of the most vulnerable residents.

It was during this period of lockdown that Community Hubs and the support co-ordinated from library bases locally had the greatest impact on resident health and wellbeing.

It is difficult at this time to assess the longer-term impact of the pandemic, but it is recognised that there will be some customers who still lack confidence in visiting their local libraries and hubs and this may continue for a longer period than anticipated.

KEY PRIORITIES

The financial pressures experienced by local authorities in recent years and those imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic have resulted in the library service reviewing every aspect of its offer to ensure that it:

- remains relevant in an increasingly technological age
- provides access to the range of opportunities and support required by residents
- embraces change and adopts an innovative approach to problem-solving to ensure the service is fit for purpose for the longer term

The focus going forward will be on:

- keeping the service relevant in a rapidly changing environment
- improving the library experience for all customers
- taking the opportunities and lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic to inform and shape future provision

Engagement with communities to understand their needs and work with partners to ensure that customers have the range of provision they require ensuring that development take account of the voices of seldom heard members of the community will be a cross-cutting theme, as will the focus on ensuring that libraries/hubs remain at the heart of local communities.

To achieve these priorities, the service will:

- further enhance the programme of digitisation of resources and make these available online so that customers can access collections at any time
- harness new IT developments to improve the customer experience
- ensure that all staff have the skills required to provide a service that remains relevant at a time when innovations in technology and changing patterns of usage are having an impact on how customers want to engage with the service
- embed new models of delivery and monitor customer feedback to ensure they achieve their objectives
- build on online delivery of services to children identified during Covid-19 pandemic to strengthen, expand, and increase the reach of these services to families across RCT
- ensure that residents have access to a broad range of learning opportunities
- work with partners to provide a wider range of information, advice, and support on well-being and health
- work with partners and volunteers in the heritage, arts and cultural sectors to develop a range of cultural activities
- recognise and promote reading & library use as an essential element in peoples improved mental health and wellbeing
- blend traditional and digital services by developing a Digital strategy for libraries
- reflect all communities in the promotion of and engagement with our culture, heritage and local history collections
- Support the further development of community hubs working in partnership with Neighbourhood Network partners.
- Provide opportunities for agencies and partners to work together to address poverty & facilitate employability initiatives

OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS

- People will be able to increase their knowledge/skills having used the library
- People will be able to take part in reading and other cultural events organised by the library of their choice
- People will feel part of a community using the library service
- People will be able to take advantage of the opportunities of the digital world through using the library

- People will be able to re-engage with reading and visiting the library as a pleasurable leisure activity
- Personal health and well-being will be enhanced by using the library
- People can participate more fully in local affairs via the facilities in the library

LIBRARY STATISTICS

Physical visits			
2018 – 2019	2019 – 2020	2020 – 2021	2021 – January 2022
727,922	712,686 (up to 20/03/20)	11,952	284,145

Virtual visits			
2018 – 2019	2019 – 2020	2020 – 2021	2021 – December 31st 2021
114,966	147,601	177,525	112,915

Physical Items borrowed			
2018 – 2019	2019 – 2020	2020 – 2021	2021 – January 2022
434,404	535,281	98,737	185,227

Digital Items borrowed			
2018 – 2019	2019 – 2020	2020 – 2021	2021 – January 2022
30,309	48,330	88,289	N/A

Active members			
2018 – 2019	2019 – 2020	2020 – 2021	2021 – January 2022
13,948	18,632	22,981	12,797



what our customers say

'You have valuable resources that, in this time of increasing family research being made, deserve all the recognition they can get.'

'I honestly can't thank the library service enough for the support I've had in my role, and I can't praise enough the work that goes on to support community and voluntary groups.'

'I have like many others had a difficult lonely life during the present restrictions. The click and collect system in our library was a godsend and much appreciated.'

'A big thanks to the library staff for delivering a fabulous service during these strange times'

The staff couldn't do enough for me, they were both helping me chose some appropriate books to take home. The kids loved them. I then returned to see what else we could try, and the staff suggested audio books, what a hit!!!! the kids loved these too.

'I appreciate the services provided greatly and my 6-year-old son has progressed very well with his reading since I joined the library'

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APPENDIX 3: LIBRARY SERVICE ACTION PLAN 2022-25

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
<p>Keeping the service relevant in a rapidly changing environment</p>	<p>Improved and up-to-date digital and computer equipment available at all libraries</p>	<p>Identify new technologies to meet new customer’s needs. For example, the use of VR equipment.</p> <p>Optimise the use of our existing ICT provision to build upon recent enhancements. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring ways to promote and enhance the use of interactive screens in IT suites to increase usage and improve the customer experience. • Create a library home page for use on all public access pcs to promote library online resources and allow quicker 	<p>Information Services Librarian to lead with nominated staff</p> <p>Principal librarian with nominated staff. Branch library staff to be responsible for front line promotion and development of identified opportunities and projects.</p>	<p>Number of library users that provide positive feedback on the use of digital and computer technologies.</p> <p>Increase in number of library members attending IT related classes and in the use of the interactive screens.</p>	

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
		<p>access to these resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in partnership to deliver IT training opportunities including current digital courses such as apps, tablets, and virtual reality. • Greater use of tablets in Static Libraries and services such as the '@home service'. • Extend use of the Library Management System by making greater use of existing functionality. For example, use of SMS and emails to contact library members. 			

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
		Identify and apply for relevant external funding as appropriate.	Principal Librarian and nominated staff		
	More access to a wider range of electronic resources	<p>Identify and evaluate new online resources that reflect users' current needs. For example, 'online newspaper collection'.</p> <p>Continue to promote and encourage customer use of the 'Pori' library app.</p> <p>Continue to work with MALD and the Society of Chief Librarians to identify potential All Wales resources.</p> <p>Continue to work with the Society of Chief Librarians on the creation of an All-Wales Library Card.</p>	<p>Principal Librarian and Information Services Librarian</p> <p>Frontline staff and Area Librarian</p> <p>Principal Librarian</p> <p>Principal librarian</p>	<p>Increased usage of electronic resources.</p> <p>Number of people downloading and using the 'Pori' app.</p>	
	Improve use of social media platforms for promotions	All library staff to participate in the creation of digital content.	Library staff	Increase in the number of in-house produced digital content	

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
		<p>Create and develop digital content to improve customer engagement and access to online resources building upon the technical training provide by the Estyn Allen project.</p> <p>Explore the possibility of library use of other social media platforms and in particular Instagram.</p>	<p>Library staff who have undergone Estyn Allen training.</p> <p>Area Librarian</p>	<p>Number of visitors to Library Social media</p> <p>Number of library posts on social media</p>	
	Creation of an integrated Digital platform to enable 24/7 accessibility to digital content	<p>Work with specialist organisations as part of the 'Altered Images' project to facilitate the creation of an all-encompassing website that showcases, records, preserves and promotes the culture, history, and heritage of Rhondda Cynon Taf.</p> <p>Work with MALD and SCL to explore the development of an All-</p>	<p>Principal Librarian, Information Services Librarian, Project coordinator and other members of the project board.</p> <p>Principal librarian</p>	Number of visitors to newly created platform.	

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
		Wales digital resources' platform.			
	More digital programmes and activities for children and young people in RCT libraries	Relaunch Code club and work to expand provision to other branches throughout the authority. Explore the use of new technologies such as VR headsets to engage children and young people in library events.	Information Services Librarian and Children Services Librarian	Number of code clubs. Number of children participating in code clubs	
Improving the library experience for customers.	Community Hubs	Continue to develop library services within Community hubs to improve and extend the advice, information, and services available. Work with the Community Services team to reach out to network partners to improve the visibility of Library services and engage with groups that are seldom heard.	Principal Librarian and nominated staff Area Librarian and front-line staff.	Number of visitors Number of partners/organisations offering sessions. Number of exhibitions and cultural activities held at Treorchy Library.	

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
		<p>Work in partnership with the community and the Park and Dare to develop and embed the new cultural hub at Treorchy Library.</p> <p>Support the 'Ageing Well Wales Plan' by introducing initiatives that remove barriers to access by older people.</p> <p>Work with the Community Development Team specialist Officer Older Persons advisory Groups, to achieve Age Friendly Status for RCT Neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>Area Librarian and Treorchy Library branch librarian.</p> <p>Area librarian and nominated staff.</p>	<p>Neighbourhoods achieve Age Friendly status.</p>	
	More access to learning opportunities for all ages	<p>Work with Digital Communities Wales and facilitate digital inclusion initiatives to support people to get online.</p> <p>Work with partners to offer basic skills courses including ESOL and Welsh classes.</p>	Principal librarian and nominated staff.	<p>Number of people accessing learning opportunities.</p> <p>Number of volunteers and volunteering hours.</p>	

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
		<p>Work with partners to maintain a programme of Digital literacy support such as Digital Fridays and Job Clubs.</p> <p>Facilitate a range of formal and informal learning opportunities that will enhance the well-being of customers.</p> <p>Offer volunteering opportunities, providing each person with a meaningful volunteering experience to make them more job ready.</p> <p>The School Library Service to source new titles and resources that reflect the needs of the new Wales school curriculum.</p>	Children Services Librarian	Number of schools expressing satisfaction with the SLS.	
	Greater access to information and advice services within libraries.	Embed One4all service into the library service to make greatest possible use of available resources.	Principal Librarian and nominated staff.	Number of customers accessing the One4all service	

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
		<p>Work with partners to provide information and advice at our libraries on matters such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational programmes • Employment support • Welfare benefits • Health and Well-being <p>Promote and support the 'Reading Well Scheme' by developing book collections that support the health and wellbeing of targeted groups.</p>	Area Librarian	<p>Number of people attending information and advice sessions</p> <p>Number of Reading Well loans</p>	
	Cultural activities	<p>Encourage staff to support more reading groups within libraries and the wider communities. Explore the possibility of establishing 'Reading Friends' groups.</p> <p>Promote the Summer Reading Challenge and</p>	<p>Area Librarian and branch librarians</p> <p>Children Services Librarian</p>	<p>Number of reading groups.</p> <p>Number of 'Reading Friends' groups</p> <p>Number of children taking part in the SRC reaches the all-Wales median.</p>	

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
		<p>increase participation and number of children completing the challenge.</p> <p>Work to develop programmes outside of core opening hours.</p> <p>Work with the project coordinator and partners to achieve all of the aims and objectives set out in the NHLF project 'Altered Images'.</p> <p>Work with partners, providing free space in libraries for cultural events including exhibitions, local history talks, author events and events linked to national or local campaigns. e.g. World Book Day.</p>	<p>Principal Librarian and Area Librarian</p> <p>Principal Librarian, Information Services Librarian, Project coordinator and other members of the project board.</p> <p>Branch Librarians</p>	Number of out of hours sessions	
	Well qualified and skilled staff.	Seek funding and opportunities that enables staff to develop the skills and knowledge	Principal Librarian	Number of staff training hours.	

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
		<p>required in a modern library service.</p> <p>Continue to support staff wishing to pursue formal qualifications.</p> <p>Adhere to Welsh language standards by supporting Welsh language learning and recruiting Welsh speakers where service demands dictate.</p> <p>Review the current staffing structure to ensure potential career pathways.</p>		Number of Welsh Language speakers in service.	
Take the opportunities and lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic to inform and shape future provision	Attracting new and diverse audiences.	<p>Build upon the success of the delivery of digital content achieved during the covid-19 pandemic. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating and developing our own digital content such as story time and craft sessions. 	Principal Librarian and Children Services Librarian	<p>Number of online sessions</p> <p>Numbers of online groups</p>	

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging the development of online groups including book clubs and reading groups. <p>Review our stock policy to create a more relevant blend of digital and traditional resources adjust book budget expenditure accordingly.</p> <p>Review the current policy of charging fines for overdue books.</p> <p>Review room hire charges for those organisations required to pay.</p>	<p>Information Services Librarian, Area Librarian and Teenage Librarian</p> <p>Principal Librarian and Area Librarian</p> <p>Principal Librarian</p> <p>Area Librarian</p>		

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021-22

PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY
COMMUNITIES AND PROSPERITY
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17th FEBRUARY 2022

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, PUBLIC
HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY
SERVICES

Agenda Item No. 7

**CURRENT BIODIVERSITY WORK IN
RCT**

Author(s): Richard Wistow, Ecologist; Kate Stock graduate Ecologist and Liz Dean, Environment Planner

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update members on current biodiversity work across the Council and to provide specific action feedback from the Public Service Scrutiny Committee of November 18th 2021.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members support the direction of biodiversity action and delivery identified in this report and the proposal that, in future, regular progress updates are reported to the Committee.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure scrutiny of the Implementation of key elements of the Council's Biodiversity Duty delivery.

4. **BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Due to a complex and fortuitous combination of historic land use, soils, topography and climate, RCT supports a complex wealth of habitats and species. Habitats are large in scale, complex in nature and connected, as a result many different species can not only flourish but can also move around the County Borough. In many cases high quality habitats also wrap around and encompasses our settlements and communities. Residents of RCT therefore live and work in environments which are wildlife rich. This is not a situation often found in Britain, and it is one of the reasons that makes RCT a great place to live. Many more people discovered this during the pandemic, when daily exercise had to be close to home.
- 4.2 In RCT, where there is already a fantastic ecology, our first two priority biodiversity actions are to protect our existing biodiversity and then where possible, enhance that biodiversity through sympathetic land management. The third action is to raise awareness of the RCT's natural wealth of habitats and species and develop public and community recognition, engagement, action and support. Recording and monitoring our habitats and species is a fourth key action. Biodiversity conservation requires long term, on-going action and planning, and appropriate provision of resources (both people and money).
- 4.3 With devolution, the approach to biodiversity has developed in Wales. The Welsh Government declared a Nature Emergency in 2021 and has recognised the close relationship with the climate emergency. The Council's biodiversity work has therefore expanded significantly, with requests for support from across the Council and although this is a hugely positive area of work it has inevitably brought pressures on a limited staff resource. Biodiversity work is based on evidence, and this relies heavily on local knowledge and expertise; from staff and our Local Nature Partnership, which includes local naturalists.
- 4.4 The current priority areas of biodiversity work are detailed in the paragraphs below.
- 4.4.1 The **planning process** is a key area of biodiversity work. This includes the Council's planning policy designations of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) which identify sites of County Borough nature conservation importance. SINC's are used strategically in the process of site allocation for the local development plan and also in the day-to-day assessment of planning applications. The Council's Local Development Plan nature conservation policy AW8 also sets out the ecological requirements for all planning applications.
- 4.4.2 **Ecological mitigation** secured through planning agreement is an area that RCT Council has a significant 'track-record' in delivering. Long-term habitat management agreements, usually through S106, have been used to secure large scale habitat mitigation and enhancement provision. As a result, a considerable hectareage (totalling in excess of a thousand hectares) of habitat management area has been negotiated. These include peatbog and upland habitat restoration on six upland windfarm sites and a National Grid sub-station site, the securing of a network of connected and managed grassland, marsh, and woodland habitats in

the south and north of the County Borough, and numerous other smaller management agreement sites. In some cases, the planning agreement measures have led to the Council's adoption of nature conservation land (with commuted management sums), on one occasion RCT's planning outcome secured Brynna Woods as a Nature Reserve adopted by Wildlife Trust for South and West Wales.

- 4.4.3 The **Local Nature Partnership** (LNP, formerly the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership) continues to be the focus for biodiversity knowledge and expertise in RCT. It involves statutory and voluntary nature conservation partners as well as local community organisations and interested individuals, including many committed and knowledgeable naturalists. For the past three years (to March 2022), Welsh Government has grant funded all the LNPs across Wales, and during that time the RCTLNP has reviewed and updated the original 'Action for Nature' documents and developed a website to promote action. This is out for public consultation until 11th March 2022. <https://rctlnp.wixsite.com/rct-actionfornature>
- 4.4.4 **Council land ownership** includes significant areas of important biodiversity land and other areas that, with modest management changes, could become more biodiverse. Council ecological and biodiversity land management expertise is key to realising such opportunities.
- 4.4.5 The **Living Landscape Project** is a landscape scale project which aims to link together a network of biodiversity rich and sustainably managed sites throughout RCT with local communities. The first phase of the project is focussing on 29 sites (see appendix) in Council ownership, located across 23 of RCT's wards and includes countryside and parks, cemeteries and council adopted S106 sites, all of which provide crucial habitat connectivity for a range of priority species. Since September 2021, practical works on the Living Landscape sites is being delivered through management work and has been made possible by the appointment of a Graduate Ecologist and two dedicated Biodiversity Apprentices. The programme of works will be expanded in the spring and summer of 2022 to include community and Member engagement, interpretation and ecological survey and assessment.
- 4.4.6 In the next few years, there is huge opportunity to extend the Living Landscape Project to include more Council owned land, increase the number Wards with sites, and to bring forward Action for Nature partners sites and sites secured through planning agreements (see 4.4.2 above) into network of managed sites across the whole County Borough. The great majority of these opportunities being in close proximity to communities and people.
- 4.4.7 **Managing grasslands** is hugely important, both for biodiversity and carbon storage. Grass verges, open spaces and parks in RCT are often rich in native wildflowers and an increasing number of these are being managed through either conservation grazing, or 'cut and collect' management. The latter involves cutting the wildflower grass in the late summer or autumn and collecting the clippings. This collection of cut grass reduces the soil fertility and in doing so both reduces grass growth but encourages wildflowers. In addition, the collecting of the cut grass

allows wildflowers seed to germinate better and, increase their abundance and diversity.

Currently 39 of RCT's wards have areas for wildflower management, with Pontyclun, Brynna, Aberdare East and Aberdare West/Llwydcoed having the largest extent of these areas (see Appendix). The distribution of the current wildflower management areas across RCT results from a number of factors including ward size, the proportion of urban areas and the availability of suitable land. Topography is crucial as cut and collect management cannot be undertaken on sites which are too steep. On smaller or steeper sites, where cut and collect is not possible there is an opportunity for community 'Grab Your Rake' events where members of the public can get involved in raking up the grass cuttings.

Last year 'RCT Let's Talk Wildflowers' [Let's Talk Wildflowers | Let's Talk RCTCBC](#) encouraged members of the public to nominate areas which they thought should be considered for wildflower management. This data will allow us to identify areas which have potential to be included in the wildflower management programme, including in wards which currently do not have any of these areas.

- 4.4.8 The **Climate Change Cabinet Steering Committee** has received a number of biodiversity reports since its inception in 2019 and has been the focus for integrating biodiversity and climate issues. The report on Nature's Assets [Cabinet Report MTSP One4aLL LG \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#) resulted in an officer working group, meeting regularly to progress specific projects. Research on carbon storage in, and carbon loss from, **peatbogs** in RCT is currently underway.

Land-use is an emerging focus of the carbon calculator that all local authorities must complete for Welsh Government. Members will be aware of the pressure to plant trees. In a county such as RCT, which already has very high levels of woodland cover and extensive semi-natural habitats on undisturbed organic soils, this is likely to be counter-productive for storing carbon and very damaging for biodiversity, if existing important habitats are planted with trees. **Natural regeneration** or colonisation occurs widely in RCT and research is proposed to quantify the contribution this has made to increasing woodland cover on Council owned land.

Managing existing woodlands, in particular the Council's tree stock and increasing tree cover in built up areas, where there are the greatest carbon storage and amenity benefits for local residents, are advocated as priorities for RCT. Members will be aware of the threat posed by ash die-back which is affecting many Council managed trees and the additional resources needed to address tree management issues in general.

- 4.4.9 **Community Engagement** is essential to the success of the Council's Biodiversity Work. Through the delivery of the old Local Biodiversity Action Plan (published 2000) a programme of engagement based on talks, walks, newsletters and projects showed the appetite and importance of biodiversity for local residents, but only reached a small proportion of the population. The new 'Action for Nature' Plan,

with its web-based format, and series of innovative internet consultation /engagement (partly forced on it by the restrictions of covid) has shown the capacity to reach a greater audience. Many community groups and interested individuals, as well as ecology groups and agencies have been engaged. The RCT Lets Talk Wildflower Programme elicited a very promising public response.

The Local Nature Plan is a County Borough wide partnership process which has drawn together technical ecological expertise with issues and concerns, solutions and opportunities with public engagement into a strategic and focussed approach to biodiversity conservation in RCT. The continuity (over 20 years) and development of the Partnership from the old Local Biodiversity Action Plan to new Local Nature Plan have been significant features of the strategic Biodiversity approach by the Council.

4.4.10 The **Biodiversity Duty** draws together all aspects of the Council's biodiversity work. We are fortunate to be supported in this by the Council's corporate performance management system which includes a 'biodiversity question' in the annual Service Self Evaluation. This encourages consideration of biodiversity by each Service, reporting of progress made and can highlight new opportunities. The RCT approach is being used as one of a number of 'best practice' examples, by Welsh Government, in their training for public bodies.

4.5 **Challenges:**

4.5.1 Biodiversity and natural processes are based on intricate webs of interconnection, with living creatures (including people) dependant on functioning ecosystems that have evolved over millennia. These complex relationships between plants, animals, fungi, soil, rocks, water, weather, oceans and atmosphere can take a long time to develop but can be destroyed very quickly. Fixing the damage we have done is rarely straight forward or speedy.

4.5.2 The main drivers of biodiversity loss around the world (and in RCT) are land-use change, pollution, invasive non-native species, climate change and direct exploitation of organisms. The first priority has to be to protect the semi-natural habitats we still have and, as far as possible, allow natural processes to function as nature intended.

4.5.3 A separate report on the Council's approach to Japanese knotweed is being considered by this Committee, with a focus on the wider risks this poses for the Authority. The management of invasive species is also important from a biodiversity perspective. Japanese Knotweed is only one of a number of invasives that are locally significant.

4.5.4 The emergence of biodiversity as an important issue, both locally and nationally, has put considerable pressure on the small number of specialist officers employed by the Council. The appointment of a graduate ecologist and two biodiversity apprentices is a welcome, if short term development. The Council will need to consider how to meet these increased demands in the future.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 5.1 There are no equality, diversity nor socio-economic implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no Welsh language implications arising from this report.

7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 As indicated above, biodiversity work in RCT is heavily dependent on the Local Nature Partnership for local knowledge and wildlife expertise. The Partnership aims to be welcoming to all who are interested in supporting, advising and informing their work and enjoying their local environment.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 No legal implications are anticipated. The Council's responsibilities are drawn from a diversity of Wildlife legislation as well the Acts mentioned in paragraph 4.3 above.

10. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 10.1 This report contributes to a wide range of the Council's priorities as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan for 2020 to 2024. Specifically, it contributes to investing in our greenspaces and to delivering natural carbon storage solutions such as those provided by trees, peat bogs, marshy grassland and other natural habitats across the County Borough to enhance air quality and reduce the impact of greenhouse gasses.

- 10.2 It also reflects the five ways of working in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Biodiversity work must be based on long-term considerations and is focused on preventative and precautionary action. It seeks to integrate biodiversity and ecosystem resilience (including carbon, water and community benefits) into projects across the Council to realise multiple benefits for local residents and wildlife. The Local Nature Partnership provides a valuable mechanism for involving all the relevant stakeholders and to promote collaboration.

- 10.3 Biodiversity work contributes specifically to the Resilience and Global Responsibility goals of the Act but in the longer term it could have implications for all the goals.

11. **CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 Consideration of biodiversity has become an important and cross cutting component of the work of this Council. This report draws Members attention to the progress that has been made to date, as well as the increasing demands and opportunities in this vital area of work.

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Appendix One

Ward	Wildflowers	Living Landscapes
Aberaman North		
Aberaman South	Y	
Abercynon		
Aberdare East	Y	
Aberdare West/Llwydcoed	Y	Y
Beddau	Y	
Brynna	Y	Y
Church Village	Y	Y
Cilfynydd		
Cwm Clydach	Y	Y
Cwmbach	Y	Y
Cymer	Y	
Ferndale	Y	Y
Gilfach-Goch	Y	
Glyn-Coch		Y
Graig		
Hawthorn	Y	
Hirwaun	Y	Y
Llanharan	Y	
Llanharry	Y	Y
Llantrisant Town	Y	Y
Llantwit Fardre	Y	Y
Llwynypia	Y	Y
Maerdy	Y	
Mountain Ash East	Y	
Mountain Ash West	Y	Y
Penrhiwceiber	Y	Y
Pentre	Y	
Pen-y-Graig		
Pen-y-Waun		
Pontyclun	Y	Y
Pontypridd Town		Y
Porth	Y	
Rhigos	Y	Y
Rhondda	Y	
Rhydyfelin Central	Y	
Taffs Well	Y	Y
Talbot Green	Y	Y

Ton-teg	Y	
Tonypandy	Y	
Tonyrefail East	Y	
Tonyrefail West	Y	Y
Trallwng	Y	Y
Trealaw		
Treforest		
Treherbert	Y	Y
Treorchy		
Tylorstown		
Ty-Nant	Y	
Ynys-Hir		
Ynys-y-Bwl	Y	
Ystrad	Y	Y



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021-22

PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY,
COMMUNITIES AND PROSPERITY
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17TH FEBRUARY 2022

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, PUBLIC
HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY
SERVICES

Agenda Item No.8

A REPORT TO PROVIDE AN
UPDATE ON THE CONTROL OF
JAPANESE KNOTWEED IN
RHONDDA CYNON TAF

Author(s): Gareth Henson, Countryside Manager

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Committee on the control of Japanese Knotweed in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1 Note the information contained with the report.
- 2.2 Consider the development of a coordinated approach throughout Council to Japanese Knotweed including the reporting and treatment as well as staff training.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Introduced from Japan in 1850, Japanese Knotweed (JK) is one of the most pernicious weeds in the UK. In its native habitat, Japanese Knotweed is a pioneer species found typically on Volcanic larva. Reproduced rapidly via tiny fragments of its rhizome, the weeds of Japanese Knotweed can grow up to 10cm a day and in just 10 weeks its stems can reach 3-4 metres in height.
- 3.2 Japanese Knotweed is able to grow in most (if not all) soil conditions found in the UK, though these species show a strong preference for man-made habitats. Common habitats where invasive knotweeds are found include roadsides, waste ground, railway embankments and cuttings, mine spoil-tips and along rivers and streams. The plant is widespread throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 3.3 The Government has introduced a number of Japanese Knotweed laws and regulations surrounding the control, growth and transportation of Japanese Knotweed in order to protect homeowners, businesses and the environment alike. These laws have been put into legislation slowly over the years as a reaction to the growing spread of invasive plant species in the UK.
- Due to the negative impacts on the UK environment and economy, all invasive knotweeds are listed under Schedule 9 of **The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981** which means it is an offence to plant or cause these plants to grow in the wild. It is not in itself an offence to have Japanese Knotweed growing on your land however it becomes an offence if you allow the plant to spread onto neighbouring land.
 - The knotweed plant material is a 'controlled waste' under the **Environmental Protection Act 1990** which means it can only be transported by a registered waste carrier to suitably permitted or exempt sites.
 - In 2014, a decision was made to include the negligent cultivation of invasive plants such as Japanese Knotweed into the remit of the **Anti-social Behavior Crime and Policing Act 2014**. Under the powers of this Act, police and local council authorities have the power to issue individuals and businesses with Community Protection Notices. This notice could require the recipient to make reasonable efforts to remove the knotweed from their property or prevent the knotweed from returning. Failure to meet the requirements of this notice, without a reasonable excuse, could be treated as a criminal offence making the recipient liable to a fixed penalty notice or prosecution.
- 3.4 The Council began treatment of Japanese Knotweed in approximately 2006 when treatment was required on the Porth Relief road project. Landtech UK Ltd was approached to carry out the spraying. This company was already well established and had a good reputation for knotweed treatment. The company also then did some trial work using the single autumn treatment per season technique now adopted as best practice in the UK.
- 3.5 The knotweed treatment programme grew steadily as more knotweed sites were identified and also because of the '7-metre rule' backed by the Royal Institute for

Chartered Surveyors (RICS). This ruling was adopted by mortgage lenders to determine risk of Japanese Knotweed affecting properties. If Japanese Knotweed was found to be within 7 meters of a property, mortgage lenders would usually require a formal treatment plan in place before mortgages were granted. The result being that the Council was required to take on treatment of many more council sites close to domestic properties. These RICS guidelines have very recently been reviewed and the '7-meter rule' reduced back to 3 meters. This will come into play in March 2022 and hopefully reduce the number of properties making legal claims.

- 3.6 To date the Council have received 34 legal claims since the first in June 2018. Of these, 23 are still open and ongoing. £873,735 of reserves have been allocated to the 34 active legal claims. The majority of claims have reserves of over £10,000 with 10 over £50,000 and the highest being £90,000.
- 3.7 It is understood that the highest contributing factor for the onset of the legal claims is the fact that several large law companies began to pursue the Councils targeting properties close to council land where knotweed was known or thought to be present. This was coupled with increased publicity and advertising by these legal firms. The Covid-19 pandemic which struck early in 2020 probably only made matters worse with people restricted to their gardens and having increased spare time to research Japanese Knotweed.
- 3.8 All knotweed queries (with the exception of allotments) are dealt with by the Countryside department. The public are encouraged to direct inquires through the Customer Complaint (CRM) System but this is currently restricted to e-forms via the call centre. Other Council departments and Councillors forward all issues relating to knotweed (and other invasive species) to the Countryside Department. We are currently treating in excess of 400 council sites in Rhondda Cynon Taf (see appendix 1).
- 3.9 All allotment sites identified with knotweed are treated annually by herbicide but treated separately by the allotments Team.

4. FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

- 4.1 After increased demand and rising numbers of legal cases, the Countryside department appointed a new full time Invasive Species officer in September 2021. This will afford greater capacity to deal with the increased numbers of knotweed complaints and legal claims.
- 4.2 There is currently no means on the Council's website to report knotweed. The Countryside department is currently reviewing and improving its web design with the intention of adding a reporting system including an online tool for uploading photographs. This will not only improve the reporting facility but also reduce time wasted on cases of mistaken identity.
- 4.3 Due to the changing nature of knotweed complaints and increased risk of legal claims it seems pertinent to update advice and training to other council departments. With the appointment of the new Invasive Species Officer, it is planned to carry out updated training to raise awareness in all relevant departments.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 5.1 The Countryside department has £10,000 allocated to Japanese Knotweed treatment. For several years the department has also been able to gain additional grant funding of £10,000 from the Invasive Non-Native Species group (INNS) which was set up as part of the Heads of the Valleys project.
- 5.2 As a result of the increasing number of sites being added to the treatment programme year on year, it is becoming increasingly difficult to work within the allocated budget.
- 5.3 As outlined in 3.6, the Council has allocated £873,735 of reserves to the 34 active legal claims in relation to Japanese Knotweed.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Over the last 4 years the Countryside department has developed a co-ordinated approach throughout the Council to Japanese Knotweed treatment. This has included better awareness and reporting as well as additional staff training further enabling the Council to mitigate against the detrimental effects of this plant and help reduce the likelihood of costly legal claims.
- 6.2 The situation around Japanese Knotweed has changed over the last few years with the Council's priorities changing and adapting to try and reduce the chances of further legal claims. Staff and budgetary constraints still mean that the systems used are predominantly reactive, however with a new dedicated officer, it is hoped that we can move towards a more proactive approach.

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APPENDIX 1: List of sites that have been treated in 2021 (442 sites)

408 SITES TREATED BY LANDTECH UK IN 2021

<u>Blaenrhondda</u>
Bryn Henllan CF42 5SY
<u>Treherbert</u>
Ross Rise CF42 5RN
Gwendoline Street CF42 5BP
Baglan Hotel PH CF42 5AW
Scott Street CF42 5NA
<u>Treorchy</u>
River Terrace CF42 6BH
Prospect Place Open Space CF42 6RS
Treorchy Cemetery CF42 6TB
3 Crosswood Street CF42 6RH
Sunnybank Terrace, Cwmparc. CF42 6ND
<u>Pentre / Ton Pentre</u>
Hillside St CF41 7DB
Gordon Street CF41 7HH
Upper Canning Street CF41 7HG
Lower Alma Place CF41 7DS
Churchfield Row CF41 7PL
1 Parry Street CF41 7AG
Pentre Park CF41 7JA
Lower Alma Place CF417DS
<u>Penrhys</u>
Penrhys Cemetery CF43 3PN
<u>Llwynypia</u>
Pontrhondda Avenue CF40 2TA
Pontrhondda Bridge CF40 2SZ

Sherwood St CF40 2TB
Cambrian Terrace CF40 2HN
De Winton Terrace CF40 2HE
Salem Terrace CF40 2JJ
Rosedale Terrace CF40 2JB
Campbell Terrace CF40 2EU
Gelligaled Park CF40 2TA
<u>Tonypandy</u>
7 Nile road. CF40 2YU
Heol Trewilliam CF40 1NT
15 Oakdale Road CF40 1RS
No's 3 & 9 Pontrhondda Ave CF40 2TA
<u>Clydach Vale</u>
Railway Terrace, rear of the 'Bakery' CF40 2DA
Court Street CF40 2RF
Jones Street CF40 2BY
High Street CF40 2BH
Court Street CF40 2RQ
Clydach Road CF40 2DG
<u>Trealaw</u>
Garth Park CF40 2UY
Trealaw Cemetery CF40 2UY
10 Bronheulwen CF39 0BJ
B4278 (Ynyscynon Road) CF40 2LJ
<u>Penygraig</u>
7 James Terrace Gethin Rd CF40 1EG
New Williamstown Primary School CF40 1RT
Dinas Isaf West CF40 1XX
Gethin Road CF40 1EF
Brook Street CF40 1RE
A4119 Arthur Street CF41 1NE
A4119 22 Oakdale Road CF40 1RS
A4119 Ty Elai Ind Estate CF40 1NY
B4278 (Ynyscynon Rd) CF40 2LJ
71 Penygraig Rd, Penygraig CF40 1HB

<u>Trehafod</u>
Cadwgan Terrace CF37 2PB
<u>Porth</u>
The Rheola CF39 0LF
Kensington Drive CF39 9NN
Bronwydd Park CF39 9DU
William Street CF39 0EY
<u>Cymmer</u>
Dai Davis Community Centre CF39 9AZ
110 High Street, Cymmer CF39 9AZ
<u>Trebanog</u>
63 Ton Hywel CF39 9EN
A4233 Trebanog Road to A4119 CF39 9DU
A4233 Trebanog Road CF39 9DT
<u>Ynyshir</u>
Railway Terrace CF39 0ES
James Street CF39 0EA
29 Gynor Place, Ynys-hir, CF39 0NR
<u>Wattstown</u>
Rugby Club Danygraig Terrace CF39 0RD
School Terrace CF39 0PG
Aberllechau Road CF39 0PB
<u>Tylorstown</u>
178A East Road. CF43 3BY
Scout Hall, Tylorstown. CF43 3HL
61 Edmondes street, Tylorstown CF43 3 HW
<u>Ferndale</u>
Darran Park CF43 4HR
Cross Lake Street CF43 4HR
North Road CF43 4RF
Fountain Street CF43 4SA
A4233 (Oakland Terrace) CF43 4DU
27 Lake Street CF43 4HL
<u>Maerdy</u>
Ferndale Cemetery CF43 4TD

<u>Rhigos</u>
Mountain View Rhigos Road CF44 9UG
Mount Road CF44 9RJ
Mount Road CF44 9YS
Rhigos Road Nr Halt Road CF44 9UG
<u>Hirwaun</u>
Merthyr Road CF44 9PB
Bethal Place CF44 9PP
Swansea Road / John Lane CF44 9TB
John's Lane CF44 9TQ
John's Street CF44 9TQ/CF44 9TB
Maesycynon CF44 9PH
John Street CF44 9TB
18 John Street CF44 9TB
<u>Penywaun</u>
Ger-Y-Bont CF44 9EG
Heol Keir Hardie CF44 9AL
Aberdare Cemetery CF44 8HT
Penywaun Primary School CF44 9DR
Nant y Wernddu Beechwood Bungalow off A4059 (Hirwaun Road) CF44 9LR
Heol Caradoc CF44 9AY
<u>Cwmdare</u>
51 Bwlfa Road CF44 8UG
70 Bwlfa Road CF44 8UF
93 Bwlfa Road CF44 8UF
Dare Valley Country Park
<u>Llwydcoed</u>
Llwydcoed Road CF44 0 TH
Llwydcoed Football Club CF44 0YF
Tre Ifor CF44 0YG
Maes Yr Haf CF44 0UA
Land adjacent to Llys Haf, Bronallt and Crud yr Awel CF44 0TF
Swn-yr-Awel Crematorium Rd CF44 0DJ
<u>Aberdare</u>
Merion Street to Tudor Terrace CF44 8EB

Gadlys Car park CF44 8AW
Library Bridge CF44 7HU
Dare Aman Line CF44 7RD
Monk St CF44 7PA
A4059 Aberdare Bus Depot
Elm Grove to Neville Terrace CF44 8DN
Aberdare Park Primary School CF44 8LU
Phillips Street CF44 8ET
14 Trefelin CF44 8LB
Park Lane to Cherry Drive CF44 8HN
Glan Road CF44 8BW
15 Hall Street CF44 7BT
Woodland House Brynawel CF44 7PF
Rock Grounds CF44 7AE
Cwmbach Road CF44 0NG
<u>Robertstown</u>
4 Orchard Drive CF44 8EJ
<u>Abernant</u>
Greenways 31 – 32 CF44 0GW
Greenways 40 – 60 CF44 0GW
Education former Abernant ManPower disused site CF44 0SG
Rhos Wenallt CF44 0QE
Hurst Grove CF44 0SE
Cwmbach Road CF44 0NG
Agents Row CF44 0SW
<u>Cwmbach</u>
Blaennantgroes Rd CF44 9YY
Carigmor Trifounder Road CF44 0BE
Brynawelon CF44 0DG
Cwmbach Road and Aberaman Footpath link between CF44 0PA
Maes Hyfryd CF44 0DH
Tre Gwilym CF44 0AA
Pit Place Cwmbach Road CF44 0LW
Cwmbach Road F44 0NX
Canal CF44 0PA

Cae Coed (Rose Row) CF44 0BE
Heol-Y-Deri F44 0BQ
Cwmbach Road CF44 0NR
Bryngolwg CF44 0ER
Rear of 4 Heol Rhys CF44 OEY
<u>Aberaman</u>
Blaengwawr Primary School Cardiff Road CF44 6YP
Dare Aman Line rear of Hillcrest Avenue CF44 6YH
King George's Field CF44 6YB
Dare Aman Line CF44 6EH
Davis St CF44 6UX
Mike's Field along Dare River CF44 0DB
Gasworks Rd to Forge Row (Aberaman Link) CF44 6RS
Bell Place CF44 6BX
Cardiff Road CF44 6RD
Blaen Gwawr School Gwawr St CF44 6YP
Nant Gwawr – Belmont Terrace CF44 6UW
1 Lower Station Terrace CF44 6RH
Maesyffynon Lane CF44 7HG
A4059 CF44 6HJ
Ty y Telli CF44 6YH
23 Hillcrest Ave CF44 6YH
31 Wyndham Crescent. CF44 6RR
Farm Road, Aberaman.
Dare Aman Community route CF44 6HG
43 Cardiff Road, Aberaman. CF44 6HJ
Llys-y-Parc, Aberaman Davies Street, Aberdare CF44 6UX
<u>Godreaman</u>
Woodland Terrace CF44 6EA
Fforchneol Row CF44 6HD
North View Terrace CF44 6BJ
Pen y Bryn Fforchneol Row CF44 6HD
Ty y Teli CF44 6DW
<u>Cwmaman</u>
Brynhyfryd CF44 6LG

Glynhafod Street CF44 6LD
3 Pit Row CF44 6NW
Dare Aman Line 55 Fforchaman Road CF44 6NG
Cwmaman Institute Fforchaman Road CF446NY
<u>Abercwmboi</u>
John St CF44 6BL
Park View Terrace CF44 6AA
Maple Terrace CF44 6AU
Aberaman Football Club B4275 (Cardiff Road) CF44 6HA
<u>Mountain Ash</u>
New Road A4059 CF45 4DG
Peace Park CF45 4BZ
9 + 12 Trem-y-Dyffryn CF45 4AQ
Ffrwd Crescent CF45 4AA
Riverside Park CF45 4EY
Pwll Waun Cynon CF45 3DG
Aberdare Rd CF45 3PT
Nant y Ffrwd CF45 4BB
Dyffryn Road CF45 4DF
Llanwonno Road CF45 3LT
1 Creselly Villas CF45 4HB
Dyffryn Woods CF45 4AQ
1 Miskin Terrace CF45 3UD
Alt y Deri CF45 4ES
1 Cresselly Villas Cardiff Road CF45 4HB
Miskin Road B4275 CF45 3UA
Rowantree Cancer Care 70 Oxford Street CF45 3HB
Dover Street CF45 3HY
Lyndhurst Street CF45 4AP
29 Allen street CF45 4BD
<u>Miskin</u>
Hillside CF45 3YT
<u>Newtown</u>
A4059 New Road CF45 4HP
A4059 New Road CF45 4HG

A4059 New Road CF45 4EP
<u>Penrhiwceiber</u>
Tan-Y-Bryn CF45 3UJ
4 Church Street CF45 3YD
Anfield House CF45 3YT
<u>Perthcelyn</u>
Monmouth Street CF45 3NJ
Glamorgan St CF45 3HX
Glamorgan St CF45 3RJ
Bella Vist Penybryn Road CF45 3SX
Brynheulog, Perthcelyn CF45 3DX
<u>Tyntetown</u>
Pentwyn Avenue Rear of No'82 CF45 4YF
Rear of 45 Pentwyn Avenue CF45 4YE
<u>Ynysboeth</u>
Ynysboeth playing Fields CF45 4LJ
<u>Abercynon</u>
Springfield Drive CF45 4TY – Fife Street CF45 4TU
Abercynon Sports Centre CF45 4UY
Abercynon Rd CF45 4NE
David Dower Close CF45 4TQ
Abercynon Park & Ride CF45 4SE
Nant y Fedw Estate Abercynon Road B4275 CF45 4LT
263 Abercynon Road B4275 CF45 4LU
Pont Cynon Industrial Estate CF45 4EP
88 – 77 Park View CF45 4TR
1-2 Meadow View and 28, 30, 32 Glancynon Terrace CF45 4TG
Open space between Nant-y-Fedw and Caemaen Street CF454LP
Chy-an-Bron Greenfield Terrace CF45 4TN
Abercynon Rugby Club grounds CF45 4TR
Abercynon Rugby Club CF45 4TP
B4275 (Edward Street)CF45 4RA
Glancynon Terrace West (Floodplain land between street and river Cynon
<u>Carnetown</u>
Carnetown playing field CF45 4PG

<u>Coed y Cwm</u>
Abercynon Road CF37 3ND
Abercynon Road CF37 3ND
Abercynon Road CF37 3ND
1 Clayton Crescent, Glyncoch CF37 3AP
<u>Glyncoch</u>
B4273 (Ynysybwl Road) CF37 3BW
<u>Ynysybwl</u>
Old Parish Road CF37 3EY
B4273 (Robert Street) CF37 3EL
New Road. Property next to Dan y Cribyn – Yr Aelwyd flats. CF373HA
<u>Llanwonno</u>
Llanwonno Church CF37 3PH
<u>Tonyrefail</u>
A4233 junction with A4119
Pritchard St Allotments CF39 8PA
Llantrisant Rd Allotments CF39 8PP
Ty'n-y-bryn Recreation Ground CF39 8EW
71a Tynybryn Rd CF39 8DA
11 – 33 Tynybryn Rd CF39 8DA Add No's 35-65
Park Lane and approach to A4119 R'abt CF39 8AG
Heol Capel/Highlands Open space CF39 8NN
Tylcha Wen Close CF39 8AQ768
Nant Eirin CF39 8DW
Mill St CF39 8AA
Lane off Gilfach Road CF39 8HH
Waunrhydd Road CF39 8EW
2 Station Road CF39 8ER
Waunrhydd Road CF39 8EN
Red Gate Close CF39 8QB
Nant Eirin CF39 8DP
15 Oakdale Road CF40 1RS
Station Road garages CF39 8ER
13 Highlands CF39 8YG
16 Gilfach Road CF39 8HE

13 Gethin Road, Penygraig CF40 1EF
Appletree, 18 Gilfach Rd, Tonyrefail. CF39 8HH
<u>Gilfach Goch</u>
High Street CF39 8SN
<u>Thomastown</u>
Francis Street CF39 8DR
Francis Street CF39 8DR
<u>Coedely</u>
Ely Valley Road CF39 8BA
<u>Williamstown</u>
56 Arthur Street. CF40 1NE
<u>Llantrisant</u>
Dan y Graig CF72 8FD
Rugby football ground / land rear of 9 / 10 Maes Cefn Mabley CF72 8GA
1Heol Gwynno CF72 8DD
Leisure Centre CF72 8DJ
Chartist Road CF72 8QL
Heol Sarn CF72 8DA
<u>Pontyclun</u>
Maelog Close CF72 9AF
Merthyr St CF72 9AE
Ivor Woods A4222 Cowbridge Road
Nature Reserve A4222 Cowbridge Road
Pontyclun Rugby Club CF72 9DQ
Masonic Hall A4222 Cowbridge Road CF72 9BR
Pontyclun River Bridge and Ynysddu open space CF72 9DP
<u>Tyle Garw</u>
Llwyn Onn CF72 9ET
Coed Mieri CF72 9UW
<u>Llanharry</u>
Llanharry Road CF72 9LR
51 Gelli Estate CF72 9JA
Playing field off Llanharry Road CF72 9LF
Llanharan Road CF72 9LL
Llanharry Road and Ffordd Trecastell CF72 9ND

Degar Road CF72 9JX
<u>Brynna</u>
Brynna Community Centre. CF72 9SP
<u>Llanharan</u>
Llanharan Road CF72 9RN
Llanharan Road CF72 9TT
Llanharan Road CF72 9TW
1 Bryn Eglwys CF72 9PE
Brynna Road CF72 9UF
Chapel Road CF72 9QA
9 Bryn Eglwys CF72 9PE
12 Brooke Terrace, Llanharan. CF72 9PT
<u>Beddau</u>
Ailsa House B4595 Llantrisant Road CF72 8LR
Cwm Coking Works Parish Road CF38 2BT
Brynhyfryd Playing Field Heol Ida CF38 2AR
Mount Pleasant Park CF38 2AU
Brynteg Park and open space CF72 8LS
Land next to bungalow between Penycodcae Rd and Beddau skate park CF38 2AH
11 Willow Close, Beddau. CF38 2SJ
<u>Llantwit Fardre</u>
9 Heol Mynydd CF38 1RS
7 Erw Fach, Llantwit fardre CF38 2TE
<u>Church Village</u>
A473 ex Clariant UK site CF38 2SN
Heol Bryn Glas CF38 2DJ
Ty Draw No. 2 CF38 1UF
Coed Dowlais CF38 2BF
Church Village Bypass CF38 1SS
Heol Draw CF38 1UR
Church Road / Black Road CF38 1EP
Birchgrove, rear Cae Fardre and Central Park CF38 1EA
Cranbrook, Tonteg Road CF38 1LW
<u>Efail Isaf</u>
Open space off Heol y Parc CF38 1AN

Diswylfa Farm Heol Creigiau CF15 9NN
The Lodge Hendrecythan Farm Heol Creigiau CF15 9NN
<u>Taff's Well</u>
Cemetery Road at junction with Forest Road
Forest Road CF15 7YE
Glan y Ffordd CF15 7SH
Cardiff Road CF15 7RA
Cilcainbach, Ffynnon-Wen, Upper Boat, Taffs Well. CF15 7UU
<u>Nantgarw</u>
Cardiff Road A4054 CF15 7SR
Tyla Gwyn CF15 7TD
Taff Trail CF15 7UH
Tawelfryn Community Centre Heol Y Coed CF15 7UE
Coed Caedyrys Garth View CF15 7UL
Taff Trail Graigside CF15 7TH
Taff Trail Pen Rhos Cutting CF83 1NH
Oxford Street, Nantgarw CF15 7TR
<u>Upper Boat</u>
Taff Trail CF15 7 UU
Taff Trail CF15 7UU
A470 Verge boundary with Dunelm store CF37 5BP
A4054 (Cardiff Road) CF37 5BH
A4054 (Cardiff Road) CF37 5BE
<u>Hawthorn</u>
Brooklyn, Hawthorn CF37 5BB
<u>Rhydyfelin</u>
Morien Crescent CF37
103 Oak Street CF37 5SD
Sycamore Street CF37 5NA
Gellidawel Road CF37 5PR
A4054 (Cardiff Road) CF37 5RG
A4054(Cardiff Road) CF37 5RF
Glanfelin A4054 (Cardiff Road) CF37 5LL
<u>Treforest</u>
St Dyfrig's Church / Heathfield Villas underpass CF37 1BH

River Street CF37 1TB
Long Row CF37 1SR
Raymond Terrace CF37 1ST
Penbrae Meadow Street CF37 1SR
A4054 (Cardiff Road)
Kingsland terrace, CF37 1RX
<u>Pontypridd</u>
Cliff Terrace CF37 1RF
Lower Alma Terrace CF37 1NL
Broadway CF37 1BH
Ynysangharad Park CF37 4SP
Ynysangharad Road CF37 4DA
Llanover St CF37 4PE
Capel Sardis CF37 1DU
Grover St CF37 1LD
Graig Terrace CF37 1NH
Sardis Rugby club and Maesycoed Road CF37 1HZ – CF37 1JG
Sardis Rugby Football Ground CF37 1HA
Graig Community Centre Graig CF37 1NT
Rhondda Road CF37 1HE
Ael y Bryn CF37 2RU
A4054 Merthyr Road CF37 4DB
Berw Road CF37 2AA
Pleasant View/ Scarborough Road CF37 4DU
3 Merthyr Road CF37 4DB
Ty Mawr Road CF37 2SH
Ford Bridge CF37 2PR
Llantrisant Road CF37 1LP
Dan Y Lan Rd CF37 1ES
Sardis House CF37 1DU
A4058 (Broadway) CF37 4SP
Sardis Road CF37 1HA
NCN4 Route CF37 1DZ
12 Birch Grove CF381EL
Tygwyn Road CF374AA

7 Nile Road CF402UY
Black Road, Penycoedcae CF37 1PP
176 Broadway. CF37 1BH
Adjacent 53 Phillip Street, Graig. CF37 1LZ
<u>Hopkinstown</u>
Barry Road CF37 1HY
St David's Church CF37 2SG
Barry Sidings CF37 2PP
Barry Sidings CF37 2PP
Barry Sidings CF37 2PP
83 Trehafod Road CF37 2LR
Hafod Lane CF37 2PF
Ty Mawr Road CF37 2SH
Hopkinstown Road A4058
<u>Trallwn</u>
Bonvilston Road CF37 4RE
Taff River CF37 4LT
Taff River CF37 4LT
<u>Cilfynydd</u>
Welsh Water CF37 4WX
Cilfynydd Rugby Club CF37 4HS
Cilfynydd Allotments Above Oakland Terrace CF37 4HB
Scarborough Road CF37 4DS
Maycroft Heol Cronfa CF37 4HE
Heol Cronfa CF37 4HE
Albion Estate CF37 4NX
Pontsionnorton Rd CF37 4NA
Jones Street CF37 4EW
3 Brynderwyn Rd. Cilfynydd. CF37 4EX

<u>34 SITES TREATED IN HOUSE 2021</u>
<u>Pentrebach Stables, between Tylagarw & Llanharry</u>
<u>Quarry Street/Caerphilly Road CF83 1NF</u>
<u>Opp 44 Blaennantygroes Road, Cwmbach CF44 0EA</u>
<u>3 Blaennantygroes Road, Cwmbach CF44 0EA</u>

<u>Dringworth Bungalow, Llwydcoed CF44 0TF</u>
<u>Llwydcoed/Abernant Community route (north of Rhoswenallt pub) CF44 0YS</u>
<u>Yale Haven, Station Road, Church Village, CF38 1RZ</u>
<u>Land adj 99/100 Bryn Ifor, M Ash CF45 1AB</u>
<u>Land R/O Gloucester Street, Aberdare CF44 7BS</u>
<u>32 Gloucester Street, Aberdare CF44 7BS</u>
<u>Abernant/Llwydcoed Route</u>
<u>Roundabout by Cwmbach</u>
<u>Dare Valley Line, up from Gadlys car park</u>
<u>Cilcain, Lanelay Road, Talbot Green, CF72 8HY</u>
<u>Lanelay Park/River bank, Talbot Green CF72 8HY</u>
<u>Chapel Road, Llanharan</u>
<u>Land R/O 29/30 Ton Coch, Cefpennar, M Ash CF45 4DY</u>
<u>Dryskoed Farm/Ty Newydd Farm, Efail Isaf CF38 1SN</u>
<u>Top of Dare/Aman Line, Milton Street, Cwmaman CF44 6HG</u>
<u>Talbot Green Community Route</u>
<u>Land adjacent 42 Parklands, Tonyrefail, CF39 8PE</u>
<u>Hawthron Primary/Comprehensive School CF37 5AL</u>
<u>Kaos, 2 Spencer Lane, Hawthorn CF37 5AF</u>
<u>Land adj 29 Gwaun Bedw, Cymmer CF39 9HL</u>
<u>1 Low Road, Cwmpennar CF45 4DL</u>
<u>Culvert along Gwawr Street, Aberaman. CF44 6YP</u>
<u>13 Highlands, Tonyrefail CF39 8YG</u>
<u>38 The Paddocks, Church Village, CF38 1TL</u>
<u>Dare Aman Line</u>
<u>The Patch, Llanharry, CF72 9LF</u>
<u>Barry Sidings Country Park</u>
<u>Fountain Street, Ferndale, R/O No12</u>
<u>Rear of Lanelay Park, Llantrisant CF72 8RA</u>
<u>Opposite No.6 Tonyrefail Rd, Pencoedcae. CF37 1PZ</u>

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APPENDIX 2:

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Approach to dealing with Japanese Knotweed on Private Land

Introduction and Background

The purpose of this document is to outline the procedures followed by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council when dealing with complaints of nuisance Japanese Knotweed on private property within the County Borough.

What is Japanese Knotweed?

Japanese Knotweed is an invasive non-native plant which has been 'introduced' to areas of the UK by humans. It is a problem because it has the ability to spread easily via rhizomes and cut stems or crowns, it thrives on disturbance and the smallest piece can regrow. It is difficult to control and eradicate and poses serious threats to the economy. It can, for example, grow through tarmac, cause structural damage to property and its presence can devalue property making it difficult to sell or remortgage.

Legal Position

Japanese Knotweed is listed in Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and is subject to Section 14 of this Act, whereby it is an offence to plant or cause it to grow in the wild. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 also lists it as 'controlled waste' to be disposed of properly. This means that actions which cause the spread of Japanese Knotweed, e.g. dumping material contaminated with Japanese Knotweed (e.g. soil and grass cuttings), mowing, strimming and flailing above ground growth, may constitute an offence.

The Local Authority is only responsible for controlling Japanese Knotweed that is growing on land that it owns or manages. It does not have the ability or the authority to treat private land. Responsibility for controlling Japanese Knotweed nearly always lies with the Landowner unless the Leaseholder is responsible for land management. Land ownership details can be found at www.LandRegistry.gov.uk.

Landowners do not have to control Japanese Knotweed and other invasive Knotweeds on their own land unless it is causing an issue to neighbouring properties. Encroachment of Japanese Knotweed on to neighbouring property may give rise to a liability under a private nuisance claim.

However, where individuals are acting unreasonably and persistently in a way that has a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in that locality, for example by allowing the unmanaged growth of Japanese Knotweed, Local Authorities and the Police have the power to

issue Community Protection Notices under the Anti Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

Community Protection Notices are discretionary and can be issued to compel individuals or organisations to control invasive species in situations where they are having a detrimental effect on the quality of life of others.

Further guidance can also be found on the [Home Office website](#).

Advice for Landowners

If an individual or business has Japanese Knotweed on their land, they may be causing a private nuisance to surrounding properties. If approached by neighbours, they should control the Japanese Knotweed to prevent further spreading.

If Japanese Knotweed on a neighbouring property is causing a nuisance, RCTCBC recommends that the affected party attempts to speak with the Landowner and tries to deal with the problem amicably, rather than resorting to legal action.

Cost effective methods of control and eventual eradication are achievable through the use of appropriate pesticides applied to the plant at the right time of the year. Landowners can undertake the eradication themselves, however, once the cost of the pesticide and the equipment required to apply the pesticide has been calculated and the potential risk of pollution is taken into account, it may be best to employ a specialist contractor. By using a Specialist Contractor, there is also the reassurance that the works have been carried out to approved codes of practice and guarantees will be provided.

When looking for a contractor, the following accreditations and registrations are recommended: Amenity Forum Membership, BASIS Professional Register, BASIS Amenity Training Register, BASIS Nominated Storekeeper (NSK) Professional Register.

Membership of one of the following trade associations is recommended: Property Care Association (PCA), Invasive Non-Native Specialists Association (INNSA).

If Japanese Knotweed is not controlled by the Landowner, the Local Authority may in extreme cases be able to take action under the [Anti Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#). However, this is a discretionary power and action will not be considered until the affected party has exhausted all other avenues to resolve the issue with the Landowner.

When all available routes have been exhausted, the Anti Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 enables the Local Authority to serve Community Protection Notices against individuals who are acting unreasonably and who persistently or continually act in a way that has a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality.

Knotweed Process for Complainants

The affected party should speak to the Landowner and explain the problems that the Japanese Knotweed is causing them i.e. damage to property, reduction in property value, making the property unmortgageable etc. If the Landowner is uncooperative or it is proving difficult to have a conversation with them, the complainant should communicate by letter.

If the details of the Landowner are unknown, a Land Registry Search can be undertaken by complainants at www.landregistry.gov.uk.

A first letter should:

- Outline the situation i.e. where is the Japanese Knotweed located, include pictures if possible, the location of the complainant's property in relation to the Japanese Knotweed and any other relevant information.
- Explain the issues that the complainant and fellow neighbours are facing i.e. any damage to property, the effect that the presence of Japanese Knotweed is having on property value or the ability to remortgage the property etc.
- Include a link to the RCTCBC guidance for Japanese Knotweed eradication procedures. <https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/EnvironmentalHealthandPollution/JapaneseKnotweed/JapaneseKnotweed.aspx>
- Provide a timescale for reply (at least 28 days).
- Be sent by Record Delivery.

If the landowner's reply is positive then they will need to provide information about how, when and who will undertake the treatment of the Japanese Knotweed. If they are going to use a Contractor, their details should be given to the complainant as this information will be required by prospective buyers/mortgage providers.

If the response is not positive, or there is no response to the first letter within 28 days, a second letter will need to be written to the Landowner. This letter should make reference to the information in the previous letter and inform the Landowner that if they do not respond within the next 14 days, all correspondence will be forwarded to the Public Health and Protection Department, who have powers to take enforcement action against Landowners who fail to control the growth of nuisance Japanese Knotweed on their land with the use of Community Protection Notices (Anti Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014).

If a negative, or no reply is received from the Landowner within the timescale, the complainant can contact the Local Authority's Public Health and Protection Department who will review the case. The powers that the Local Authority can use to deal with nuisance Japanese Knotweed on private land are discretionary and the Local Authority is not legally required to take any action. The Local Authority will only intervene once the complainant has tried and exhausted all other avenues for resolving the issue with the Landowner. Written evidence i.e. copies of correspondence, suitable photographs and other evidence to demonstrate the nature of the Japanese Knotweed issue and the actions that have been taken to resolve the matter will be required to support the complaint. **Without appropriate evidence the Public Health and Protection Department will not act on the complaint and additional evidence will be requested.**

Japanese Knotweed Referral Process

Complaints of Japanese Knotweed issues will only be accepted by the Public Health and Protection Department through the RCTCBC Contact Centre (01443 494700).

The information passed to the Customer Services Agent will be forwarded to a single point of contact (SPOC) in the Community Safety Department via the Flare Case Management

Programme. A Japanese Knotweed Information Pack will be sent to the Complainant (See appendix 1).

The Japanese Knotweed Pack will include information about Japanese Knotweed, advice on the steps that the complainant should take before the Local Authority will consider reviewing the case and a list of the evidence that they will need to provide before the Local Authority will proceed.

When the Complainant has exhausted all of the steps required of them, but have still not had positive outcome, they should recontact RCTCBC via the Contact Centre. The Public Health and Protection Department will allocate the case to an appropriate Officer who will contact the Complainant.

The Complainant will be asked to provide details of the case so far, including all correspondence that has been undertaken between the parties, suitable photographs to demonstrate the nature of the Japanese Knotweed issue and any other actions that have been taken to resolve the issue with the Landowner.

When these documents have been received and reviewed by the Officer, if the Officer is satisfied that the Complainant has exhausted the options available to them to resolve the issue, they will contact the RCT Countryside Manager to request that a member of their department visit the property and undertake an inspection of the nuisance Japanese Knotweed. If the information provided by the Complainant is not sufficient, they will be provided with a plan of action which they should follow before resubmitting their request.

Following the RCT Countryside Manager's visit to the property, (assuming that the facts presented to the Local Authority by the Complainant are confirmed to be accurate) a letter will be sent to the Landowner explaining that the Public Health and Protection Department have been contacted by the Complainant, have assessed their case and are satisfied that the Landowner has a responsibility to eradicate the Japanese Knotweed growing on their property. It will outline that the Complainant has suitably attempted to resolve the issue themselves and explain the legal processes that the Local Authority will be forced to take if they do not take steps to eradicate the nuisance Japanese Knotweed within 28 days. A copy of the RCT Japanese Knotweed advice sheet will be included with the letter.

If no correspondence is received by the Complainant or the Public Health and Protection Team to prove that steps are being taken to treat the Japanese Knotweed on their land, the CSP Officer will begin to take action against the Landowner using the powers that they have been given to issue Community Protection Notices under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, in cases of Japanese Knotweed nuisance.

Japanese Knotweed Community Protection Notice Process

A Community Protection Notice (CPN) can be issued against individuals who are acting unreasonably and who persistently or continually act in a way that has a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality. The Local Authority can use the powers bestowed on them in the Anti Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to stop or prevent any behaviour that meets the legal test in the powers.

The CPN can be used to require someone to control or prevent the growth of Japanese Knotweed or other plants that are capable of causing serious problems to communities. The

test is that the conduct of the individual or body is having a detrimental effect of a persistent or continuing nature on the quality of life of those in the locality, and that the conduct is unreasonable. Under section 57 of the Act, “conduct” includes “a failure to act”. See the CIEH guidance on the use of CPN’s (<https://www.cieh.org/media/1238/guidance-on-the-use-of-community-protection-notices.pdf>).

The CPN can place restrictions on a person’s behaviour (in the case of an individual, as long as they are aged 16 or over) and, if necessary, force them to take steps to rectify the behaviour that is having a detrimental effect on the quality of life of the community. I.e. if an individual, or organisation, is not controlling Japanese Knotweed and could be reasonably expected to do so.

Breach of any requirement of a Community Protection Notice, without reasonable excuse, is a criminal offence, subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice (a penalty of £100) or prosecution. On summary conviction, an individual would be liable to a level 4 fine. An organisation, such as a company, is liable to a fine not exceeding £20,000.

Before a Community Protection Notice is considered, it is imperative that the Landowner has been contacted by the complainant in the manner referred to previously in this document and that every effort has been made to resolve the situation amicably and without having to resort to Local Authority intervention.

The Public Health and Protection Department will have sent out a letter to the Landowner which explains that the Local Authority have assessed the case and are satisfied that the Landowner has a responsibility to eradicate the nuisance Japanese Knotweed (See appendix 2). An information pack providing advice on how to proceed with treatment of the land will have been included as well as contact details for the Officer dealing with the complaint.

It is only on receipt of a negative response, or lack of response after 28 days that the Local Authority will consider taking steps to utilise the powers given to them by the Anti Social Behaviour, Crime and Disorder Act 2014 and the process of issuing a CPN will begin.

Once a decision has been made to apply for a Community Protection Notice, the Officer dealing with the case will compile the relevant evidence that will make up the CPN file.

Stage 1 Community Protection Warning

In the first instance, a Community Protection Warning (CPW) Letter will be sent to the Landowner. (see appendix 3). This letter will outline the problem behaviour, the actions that the Landowner is required to take and provide a set timescale for the Landowner to act within. It will also ask for evidence of action to be provided to the Local Authority and the Complainant. This is an opportunity for the Landowner to modify their behaviour without any formal sanctions being taken.

Stage 2 Community Protection Notice

If the Landowner ignores the Community Protection Warning Letter or fails to provide evidence of action within the set timeframe, a full Community Protection Notice will be issued (see appendix 4). The full CPN will mirror the requirements set out in the CPW, but on this occasion, if the Landowner does not act within the timescale, the letter explains that breach of a Community Protection Notice is a Criminal Offense.

Fixed Penalty Notice

In the event that the Community Protection Notice is breached, a Criminal Offense has been committed and as such, the Local Authority will issue a Fixed Penalty Notice of £100 to the Landowner (see appendix 5).

Works In Default

If after a Fixed Penalty Notice has been issued, the Landowner still refuses to treat the nuisance Japanese Knotweed on their land, the Public Health and Protection Department may consider utilising the 'Works in Default' process to undertake the work necessary and recover the costs from the Landowner. See CIEH Guidance above.

Appendices

Appendix 2.1	Japanese Knotweed Advice Letter to Complainant
Appendix 2.2	Japanese Knotweed Advice Letter to Landowner

Appendix 2.1: Japanese Knotweed Advice Letter to Complainant

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for contacting RCTCBC regarding nuisance Japanese Knotweed on private land.

The Local Authority is only responsible for controlling Japanese Knotweed that is growing on land that it owns or manages. It does not have the ability or the authority to treat private land. Responsibility for controlling Japanese Knotweed nearly always lies with the Landowner unless the Leaseholder is responsible for land management.

If Japanese Knotweed is not controlled by the Landowner, the Local Authority may in extreme cases be able to take action under the Anti Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. However, this is a discretionary power and action will not be considered until the affected party has exhausted all other avenues to resolve the issue with the Landowner.

When all available routes have been exhausted, the Anti Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 enables the Local Authority to serve Community Protection Notices against individuals who are acting unreasonably and who persistently or continually act in a way that has a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality.

We hope that by following the process detailed in this letter, you will be able to resolve the issue amicably with the Landowner, without having to resort to legal action. Please find enclosed a 'Controlling Japanese Knotweed Information Guide' and advice about the steps that you must follow before RCTCBC can get involved in the case on your behalf.

Regards,

RCTCBC Public Health and Protection Department

Japanese Knotweed – A Step by Step Guide for Complainants

If you are concerned about Japanese Knotweed on land neighbouring your property, please follow the steps outlined below and attempt to resolve the issue amicably with the Landowner.

Firstly, ensure that the plant that you are concerned about is Japanese Knotweed (see Welsh Government Advice Sheet at <https://gov.wales/japanese-knotweed-controlling-it-your-land>).

If the plant is confirmed as Japanese Knotweed, you should attempt to speak to the Landowner and explain the problems that the nuisance Japanese Knotweed is causing you i.e. damage to property, reduction in property value, making the property unmortgageable etc (if details of the Landowner are unknown, a Land Registry Search can be undertaken at www.landregistry.gov.uk). If the Landowner is uncooperative or it is proving difficult to have a conversation with them, you should communicate formally by letter.

A first letter to the Landowner should:

- Outline the situation i.e. where is the Japanese Knotweed located, include pictures if possible, the location of your property in relation to the Japanese Knotweed and any other relevant information.
- Explain the issues that you and fellow neighbours are facing i.e. any damage to property, the effect that the presence of Japanese Knotweed is having on property value or the ability to remortgage the property etc.
- Include a link to the RCTCBC guidance for Japanese Knotweed eradication procedures. <https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/EnvironmentalHealthandPollution/JapaneseKnotweed/JapaneseKnotweed.aspx>
- Provide a timescale for reply (at least 28 days).
- Send the letter by Record Delivery.

If the landowner's reply is positive and they agree to treat the nuisance Japanese Knotweed on their land, they will need to provide information about how, when and who will undertake the treatment of the Japanese Knotweed. If they are going to use a Contractor, they should give you their details as this information will be required by prospective buyers/mortgage providers.

If the response is not positive, or there is no response to the first letter within 28 days, a second letter will need to be written to the Landowner. This letter should make reference to the information in the previous letter and inform the Landowner that if they do not respond within the next 14 days, all correspondence will be forwarded to the Public Health and Protection Department, who have powers to take enforcement action against Landowners who fail to control the growth of nuisance Japanese Knotweed on their land with the use of Community Protection Notices (Anti Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014).

If a negative, or no reply is received from the Landowner within the timescale, you can then contact the Local Authority's Public Health and Protection Department who will review the case. The powers that the Local Authority can use to deal with nuisance Japanese Knotweed on private land are discretionary and the Local Authority is not legally required to take any action. The Local Authority will only intervene in extreme circumstances, once you have exhausted all other avenues for resolving the issue with the Landowner.

The Public Health and Protection Department can be contacted through the RCTCBC Contact Centre on 01443 494700 or via the 'Report It' tool on the RCTCBC website (www.rctcbc.gov.uk). Your case will be allocated an appropriate Officer who will contact you to discuss the case and the steps that you have taken.

You will be asked to provide details of the case so far, including all correspondence that has been undertaken between the parties, suitable photographs to demonstrate the nature of the Japanese Knotweed issue and any other actions that have been taken to resolve the issue with the Landowner. **Without appropriate evidence the Public Health and Protection Department will not act on the complaint and additional evidence will be requested.**

Appendix 2.2: Japanese Knotweed Advice Letter to Landowner

Dear Sir/Madam,

I understand that you are the private owner or the landlord of [ADDRESS]. This property has been identified by the RCTCBC Public Health and Protection Division as containing Japanese Knotweed which is causing a nuisance by encroaching onto neighbouring properties.

I believe that you have been formally contacted on a number of occasions by [COMPLAINANTS NAME] who has brought the presence of Japanese Knotweed on your land to your attention and has requested that you take steps to control the nuisance, but you have failed to do so.

As the landowner or landlord, you have a responsibility to prevent Japanese Knotweed on your land spreading to the land of adjoining properties. As such, I urge you to begin to take steps to eradicate the Japanese Knotweed on your land within 28 days and contact me as soon as possible to discuss your treatment plans before the Local Authority is forced to take legal action against you.

Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC have powers bestowed on us by The Anti Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 which enables a Local Authority to serve Community Protection Notices against individuals who are acting unreasonably and who persistently or continually act in a way that has a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality. This includes the growth of Japanese Knotweed on private land which is causing a nuisance to neighbouring property.

I have enclosed an advice sheet and some guidance in relation to the issue of Japanese Knotweed eradication on private land and your responsibility as landowner. It is important that you follow the guidance outlined in the attached document. YOU MUST NOT pull up, dig up, cut down, flail or burn the plant as all such actions will only aggravate it's growth and complicate the eradication process, doing so may also constitute an offence under The Environmental Protection Act 1990.

I must stress that if we do not hear from you in the next 28 days then we may be forced to look to take legal action in the form of a CPN "Community Protection Notice" to address the matter.

My contact details are as follows -

Yours faithfully,

RCT Anti Social Behaviour Coordinator

Japanese Knotweed – Advice for Landowner

You must now put in place a programme of treatment to remove the Japanese Knotweed on your land. This plan must remain in place until the Japanese Knotweed has been eradicated. This may take between 3 and 5 years.

Cost effective methods of control and the eventual eradication of Japanese Knotweed are achievable through the use of appropriate pesticides applied to the plant at the right time of the year. In order to have any validity, treatment must be undertaken by a contractor that is affiliated to either the **Property Care Association** (PCA) or **Invasive Non-Native Species Association** (INNSA).

When looking for a contractor, we advise that the contractor is BASIS registered. The following accreditations and registrations are recommended: Amenity Forum Membership, BASIS Professional Register, BASIS Amenity Training Register, BASIS Nominated Storekeeper (NSK) Professional Register. This is a request of mortgage lenders following the guidance of RICS the institute of chartered building/land surveyors. <http://www.rics.org/uk/knowledge/professional-guidance/information-papers/japanese-knotweed-and-residential-property-1st-edition/>

Contractors must provide written evidence of treatment which details when, how and what type of treatment has been undertaken and this confirmation should be sent to the Local Authority as proof that the work has been undertaken.

You **MUST NOT** pull up, dig up, cut down, flail or burn the Japanese Knotweed as all such actions will only aggravate it's growth, complicate the eradication process, doing so may also constitute an offence under The Environmental Protection Act 1990.

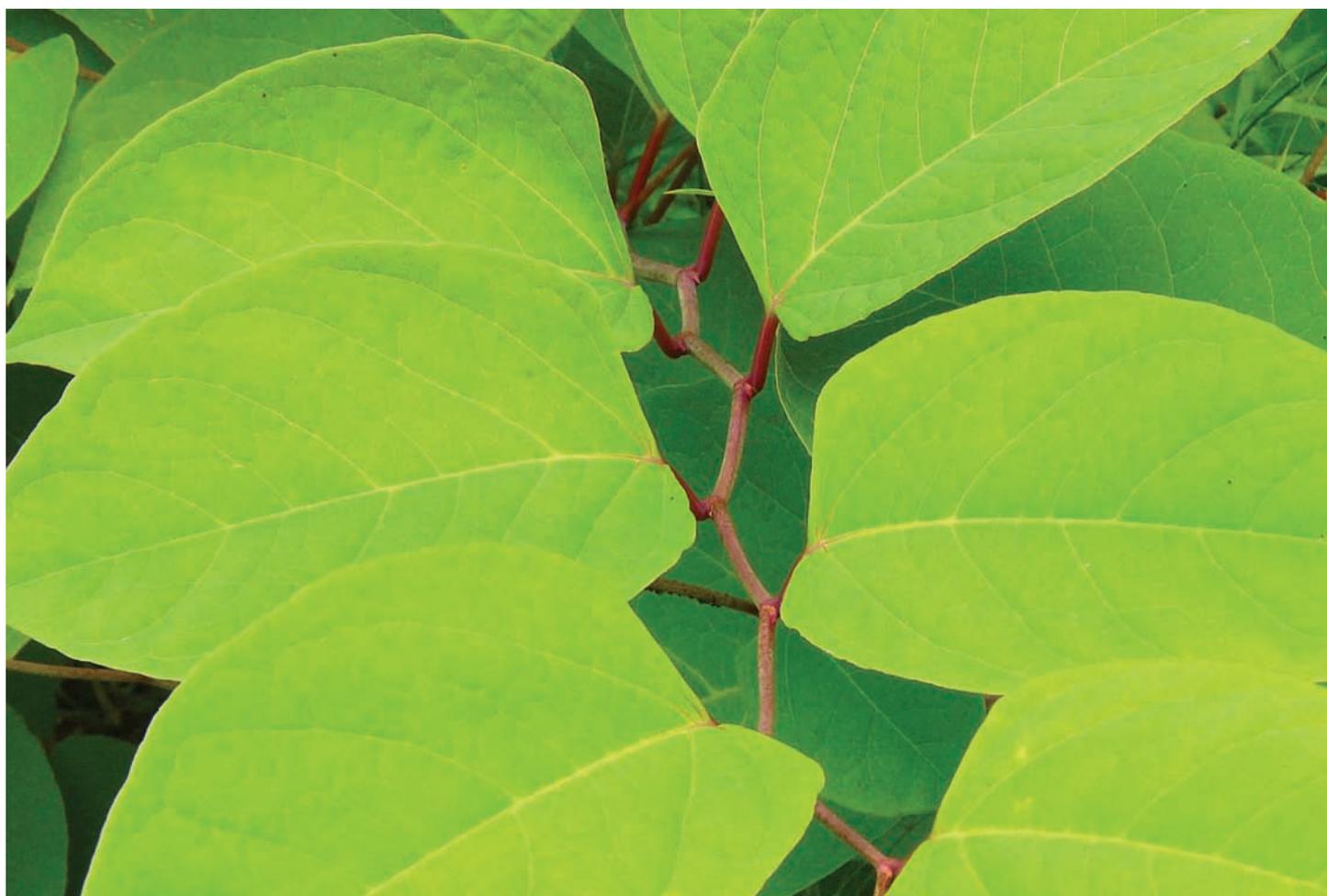
If you require further advice to find a suitable contractor, please contact the Local Authority.

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RICS Professional Information, UK

Japanese Knotweed and residential property

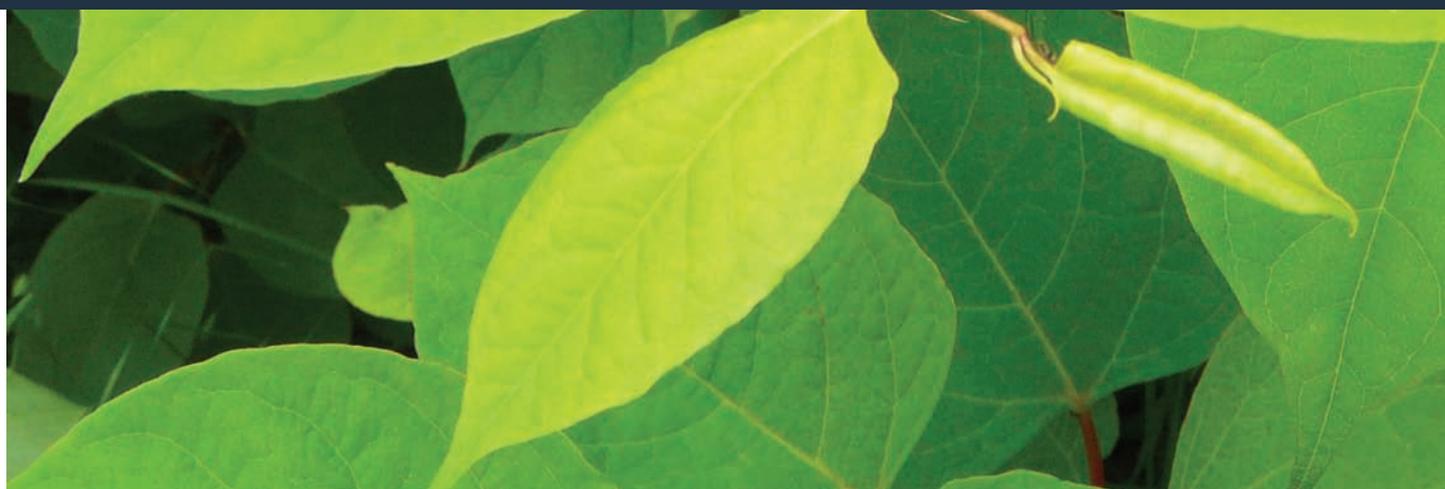
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Japanese Knotweed and residential property

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Appendix C Japanese Knotweed identification chart: images 1, 3 and 9-11 © GB non-native species secretariat; image 2 © Philip Santo; all other images © Phil Parnham

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RICS information papers

This is an information paper. Information papers are intended to provide information and explanation to RICS members on specific topics of relevance to the profession. The function of this paper is not to recommend or advise on professional procedure to be followed by members.

It is, however, relevant to professional competence to the extent that members should be up to date and have knowledge of information papers within a reasonable time of their coming into effect.

Members should note that when an allegation of professional negligence is made against a surveyor, a court or tribunal may take account of any relevant information papers published by RICS in deciding whether or not the member has acted with reasonable competence.

Document status defined

RICS produce a range of standards products. These have been defined in the table below. This document is an information paper.

Type of document	Definition	Status
RICS practice statement	Document that members with mandatory requirements under Rule 4 of the Rules for Conduct for members	Mandatory
RICS code of practice	Standard, approved by RICS, and endorsed by another professional body, that provides users with recommendations for accepted good practice as followed by conscientious practitioners	Mandatory or recommended good practice (will be confirmed in the document itself)
RICS guidance note	Document that provides users with recommendations for accepted good practice as followed by competent and conscientious practitioners	Recommended good practice
RICS information paper	Practice based information, that provides users with the latest information and/or research	Information and/or explanatory commentary

1 Scope

1.1 This information paper (IP) aims to help residential practitioners consider the implications of a Japanese Knotweed infestation on or near a dwelling, when undertaking valuations and surveys of residential property in the UK.

1.2 The IP includes reference to the main UK legislative and regulatory provisions that affect, or are considered likely to affect, residential value. Although these legislative and regulatory frameworks differ between England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, the essential features governing Japanese Knotweed control and disposal are broadly similar.

1.3 This IP describes the nature of the Japanese Knotweed problem, the scale of the damage the plant can cause, and outlines the main methods of treatment. The paper puts forward an assessment methodology to help valuers and surveyors objectively describe the scale of Japanese Knotweed infestation, allowing other stakeholders to make balanced and measured decisions. In addition, Appendix C includes an illustrated 'on-site' identification chart designed to help residential practitioners recognise Japanese Knotweed during the different seasons of the year.

1.4 This IP should be read in conjunction with the latest edition of the *RICS Valuation – Professional Standards* (the 'Red Book'). However, its scope extends beyond valuations conducted in accordance with the standards. Therefore, residential practitioners are also encouraged to take note of this IP when carrying out the following professional services:

- preparing valuations for the purposes of agency
- providing RICS Condition, HomeBuyer Reports, and other similar surveys
- Single Surveys in Scotland, and
- building surveys.

1.5 Important note:

The *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* originally included only giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) and Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*). However, in April 2010 a further 36 plants were added onto Schedule 9. Further information on these other invasive species is available on the GB non-native species secretariat website at <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/home/index.cfm>.

2 Introduction

2.1 The Japanese Knotweed problem

2.1.1 Japanese Knotweed is a hardy bamboo-like perennial plant that grows quickly and strongly. It spreads through its underground rhizomes or roots and thick clumps or stands can quickly grow to a height of over two metres. It was introduced into the United Kingdom in the mid-19th Century and was initially popular with landscapers because of its ability to grow quickly and form dense screens. However, it soon became a problem because of its ability to out-compete indigenous flora and their associated fauna. In 1905 the Royal Horticultural Society was warning its readers against planting Japanese Knotweed in their gardens unless ‘...it is kept in check’ and even the famous landscaper Gertrude Jekyll advised that it should be ‘...planted with caution’.

2.1.2 During the first half of the 20th Century the spread of Japanese Knotweed beyond the original landscaped gardens was broadly known, yet many nurseries still sold the plant until the early 1930s. East Cornwall was particularly badly affected where the price of a house was reputedly reduced by £100 because of the plant (Bailey JP, Connolly AP 2000).

Eventually the government took action. Japanese Knotweed was included in the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981*, making it an offence to ‘plant or otherwise cause Japanese Knotweed to grow in the wild’.

2.1.3 In the last few years this uneasy relationship with the plant became more of a problem when some lenders reviewed their policies. A number of loans on properties affected by Japanese Knotweed were declined. Several of these cases became prominent news stories, changing the status of Japanese Knotweed from a complication that was simply ‘difficult to solve’ to one that could result in property sales failing.

2.1.4 However, the residential property market has faced controversial issues before. Since the mid-1970s the problems of building movement,

high alumina cement, asbestos, prefabricated concrete buildings, lead, radon, and electromagnetic fields have presented assessment difficulties that have been largely resolved and assimilated into the lending process. There is no reason why the assessment of Japanese Knotweed cannot follow a similar route.

2.1.5 For the purposes of this paper, ‘Japanese Knotweed’ refers to all types of Japanese Knotweed defined by the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981*.

2.2 The Council of Mortgage Lenders (CML) and the Building Societies Association (BSA)

2.2.1 The members of the CML and the BSA account for the majority of UK residential mortgage lending. Both represent the views of their members, but neither can impose policies. When the Japanese Knotweed problem became apparent, the CML consulted its members. It did not publish a formal policy, but it was clear that there was a general reluctance to lend on Japanese Knotweed-affected properties. However, some individual lenders are willing to consider applications on a case-by-case basis once remediation works have been implemented. Although conditions will vary in practice, these lenders will generally want to see evidence of:

- an initial treatment, and
- a commitment by the owner of the property to fund, in advance, a three- or four-year treatment programme effective against Japanese Knotweed.

2.2.2 Individual lenders adopt policies that reflect their own commercial priorities. The variation in approach across the sector presents a challenge for valuers and surveyors, especially those who carry out mortgage valuations for several different lenders.

2.3 Insurance companies

2.3.1 Discussions with the Association of British Insurers (ABI) and some insurance companies revealed the following:

- Insurers do not generally ask any specific questions about Japanese Knotweed when a homeowner applies for a building insurance policy.
- Although it is not specifically excluded, most buildings insurance policies do not cover damage and problems caused by Japanese Knotweed. Additionally, because the damage occurs gradually, it is unlikely to be covered in the future.
- Where Japanese Knotweed originates from a neighbouring property, insurance companies are likely to pursue others for the costs of the damage caused.
- A number of lenders claim that they are unable to obtain insurance cover for property affected by Japanese Knotweed.

2.3.2 This can leave a home buyer in a difficult situation where their preferred lender will not grant a mortgage unless the home buyer can secure a building insurance policy that covers damage caused by Japanese Knotweed; but the home buyer cannot get an insurance policy that does.

2.3.3 Consequently, lenders and owners may need to tackle the problems posed by Japanese Knotweed without the support of building insurance policies.

3 The scale of the problem

3.1 How much of a problem does Japanese Knotweed really cause?

3.1.1 Japanese Knotweed has caused problems in the residential market because of concerns about the damaging effects of this invasive plant. However, these concerns are often based on misunderstanding and overreactions. The extent of the damage that can be caused is explored below.

3.2 Japanese Knotweed damage – the worst case scenario

If we define the level of damage that most commentators would consider ‘serious’, it can help residential practitioners be less susceptible to misinformation and so make balanced judgments. This section describes ‘serious’ damage, while section 4.6 estimates the likely cost of this type of damage.

3.2.1 The most common effects and affected areas include the following:

- **Drains and other buried services:** Knotweed roots can exploit existing cracks and gaps in the pipes in their search for water, which will further damage and, in some cases, block the drains. Large, densely packed clumps or ‘stands’ of Japanese Knotweed can disrupt drain runs. In the worst cases, the drains must be renewed.
- **Patios, paths and drives:** Japanese Knotweed can grow between slabs and movement joints of concrete drives and disrupt brick paving. Repairs can involve the removal of the existing paving and bedding material, treatment of the plant, removal of the disruptive crowns and roots and replacement of the path, patio or drive.
- **Boundary and retaining walls:** closely packed stands can undermine garden walls with shallow foundations. The mass of the stands can ‘push over’ retaining walls, often resulting in sudden collapse.

- **Outbuildings:** vigorous stands of Japanese Knotweed can overwhelm lightweight, insubstantial and poorly founded outbuildings such as garden sheds, greenhouses and in some cases, poorly built garages.
- **Conservatories:** although the effects will be similar to those described for outbuildings, owners, valuers and surveyors usually attribute greater importance to these structures.
- **Gardens:** the invasive nature of the plant can ruin well-planned and well-stocked gardens. Some owners spend tens of thousands of pounds on renovating and redesigning outside spaces, including sophisticated water features and bespoke outbuildings. Japanese Knotweed can spoil much of this.

3.2.2 The *Environmental Protection Act 1990* contains a number of legal provisions that designate Japanese Knotweed-contaminated soil as ‘controlled’ waste. Only properly licensed organisations may remove this waste from a property and they must take it to appropriately licensed waste facilities. This can have serious implications for owners who want to develop their property. In properties affected by Japanese Knotweed, large amounts of contaminated soil are likely to result from activities such as:

- adding an extension to the main building
- redesigning the garden, and
- maintaining and repairing the property following a Knotweed infestation (for example, re-laying paths and drains).

The need for licensed removal of this contaminated soil and any dead plant material will obviously add to the cost of the work.

3.2.3 There are some claims that Japanese Knotweed can result in damage that is more dramatic to buildings. These extreme problems are thankfully very rare and exceptional.

4 Effective treatment of Japanese Knotweed

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Once it is established, managing Japanese Knotweed can be challenging. As the Royal Horticultural Society states on its website: 'eradication requires steely determination'. Different treatment options that are currently in use are discussed below.

4.1.2 The relative merits of these remediation techniques are regularly (and sometimes hotly) discussed and debated within the Japanese Knotweed treatment industry itself. It is not the role of this information paper to present this debate here. Instead, we should see these as a range of approaches available.

4.2 Excavation of the plant and its roots

4.2.1 Japanese Knotweed-infested soils can be excavated and removed to an off-site, appropriately licensed, waste-management facility.

4.2.2 The volume of excavated soils can extend up to 3m vertically and up to 7m horizontally from the above-ground growth, resulting in large volumes of waste soil. At December 2011 prices, disposal costs range from £25 to £50 per tonne (not including landfill tax), with the result that excavation of even a relatively small Japanese Knotweed infestation can cost several thousand pounds in waste charges alone. Typically, off-site disposal may cost many thousands of pounds.

4.2.3 It is possible to reduce the volume of Japanese Knotweed-infested waste soils by segregating rhizomes and crowns and there are a variety of picking, sorting and screening techniques that can achieve this. However, the suitability of this approach will depend on a range of factors such as available space and suitability of sub-soil. Even when sorted, the soil will still be considered as 'controlled waste' (see Appendix B for definitions of these terms).

4.3 On-site burial and/or encapsulation with membranes

4.3.1 Japanese Knotweed can be excavated and then buried on-site, but unless it can be covered with 5m or more of overburden, a specialist root barrier membrane should be installed to fully or partially encapsulate the Japanese Knotweed-bound soil, to prevent any regrowth. A root barrier membrane can also be used to encapsulate Japanese Knotweed where space does not allow burial at all.

4.3.2 One on-site burial technique is the use of vertical barriers to prevent Japanese Knotweed crossing boundaries. This can help where adjoining landowners are not co-operating with a cross-boundary programme to treat Japanese Knotweed infestation. However, vigorous Japanese Knotweed growths can often breach a poorly designed root barrier installation so the advice of an appropriately qualified and experienced person is essential. In most circumstances, root barriers are used in conjunction with other treatment methods.

4.4 Biological control

4.4.1 Biological control involves the introduction of a 'pest' species that will attack and control the target 'host' species (in this case, the Japanese Knotweed). It is effectively a grazing system, whereby the growth of the Japanese Knotweed is controlled to a level that keeps it in check.

4.4.2 A trial is currently underway using a Japanese sap-sucking insect. However, this alone will not control a Japanese Knotweed infestation.

4.5 Chemical control

4.5.1 Chemical control is the application of specialised herbicides to Japanese Knotweed plants over a period of several growing seasons. This is often the most economical treatment option and may cost between £2,000 and £5,000 in total for a typical three-bedroom semi-detached house (at December 2011). However, this method can take more than three years to be effective although some

organisations claim Japanese Knotweed can be brought under control more quickly.

4.5.2 In a residential context, where space is limited and property boundaries are closely located, planned and managed chemical control is often the only realistic option for most properties in terms of practicality, cost and the need to satisfy lender requirements.

4.6 The costs of effective treatment

4.6.1 When preparing a valuation, the valuer or surveyor must account for a variety of issues and factors. Where Japanese Knotweed affects a property, the practitioner requires a measure of the magnitude of the problem. An estimate of the cost of treatment and subsequent repair can provide this.

4.6.2 Figure 1 shows a garden of a three-bedroom, semi-detached house in a suburban location in a medium-sized British city. It is assumed to be in a satisfactory condition, but has been affected by a large stand of Japanese Knotweed. This is approximately four metres from the rear wall of the house, with the red dotted line showing the extent of the above-ground growth. The stand and its growth has:

- blocked and damaged the rear drain and inspection chamber
- disrupted the rear patio, leaving many uneven paving slabs
- damaged the concrete slab beneath the greenhouse and distorted the metal frame
- damaged several panels of the woven timber boundary fence, and
- weakened the poorly built garage to the extent that it is now beyond repair.

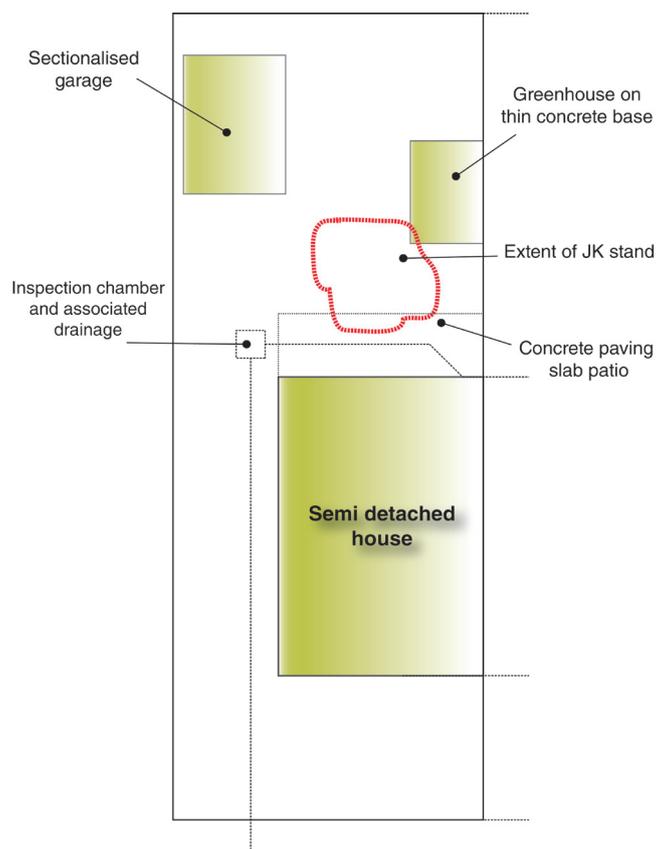


Figure 1: Illustration of a serious Japanese Knotweed problem

4.6.3 To simplify the scenario, we will assume the neighbour will co-operate with the treatment scheme and meet their share of any costs.

4.6.4 Under 'treatment costs,' we have assumed a mainly chemical-control treatment. However, some organisations may choose to include other measures in addition, such as partial segregation and protection of new work with root barriers. To account for this, we have included the higher cost of the £2,000 – £5,000 range previously identified. A further sum of £750 is required to cover legal and professional fees for initial advice on the problem.

4.6.5 Using the Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) figures published by RICS in December 2011, total remediation costs are likely to be as indicated below:

Repair	Cost (£)
Drain replacement	1,913
New patio	1,872
New greenhouse	1,070
Part fence replacement	108
New garage	4,700
Treatment costs	5,000
Legal and professional fees	750
Total	£15,413 plus VAT

Important note: These figures do not include for the removal of Japanese Knotweed contaminated material from the site and this will add to the total costs. The precise cost will depend on a number of factors, including the amount of material to be removed and the distance to the nearest disposal site.

4.7 Impact on value

4.7.1 By quantifying the likely cost of treatment and any necessary repairs in this way, the impact of Japanese Knotweed can be taken into account in the valuation process and reflected in the same way as any other defect or item of disrepair.

4.7.2 Figure 1 illustrates a particularly bad case of Japanese Knotweed in a domestic situation. Once there is a broad acknowledgement that most infestations are less troublesome than this and can be controlled without prohibitive costs, Japanese Knotweed can be considered as just one of the many factors that have to be taken into account when preparing a valuation.

4.7.3 If treatment is deemed necessary in cases where Japanese Knotweed is present in the grounds but no damage has been caused to the property itself, the sole expense may be the cost of the treatment itself. In some circumstances, this may have no adverse affect on value.

5 An assessment framework for Japanese Knotweed

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 An assessment of the seriousness of any problem affecting a residential property is usually carried out in three stages:

- 1 collection of information about the nature and extent of the problem
- 2 analysis of this information so that the magnitude of the issue can be established, and
- 3 the use of this assessment as a basis for client advice.

5.2 Collection of information

5.2.1 Information is collected through inspection. The inspection process can be subdivided into the following parts:

5.2.2 Knowledge of the area and pre-inspection checks

Local knowledge and pre-inspection checks can help the valuer or surveyor identify general neighbourhood features regularly associated with the growth of Japanese Knotweed. Such pre-inspection checks may include postal code searches for flood risk and other environmental issues, the use of mapping and 'street view' sources. Neighbourhood features associated with the growth of Japanese Knotweed typically include the presence of:

- local water sources, such as culverts, ponds, canals and lakes
- public and private paths, cycle-paths, roads, railway or underground railway embankments, dual carriageways and motorways
- large open spaces, car parks and cleared sites, and
- commercial and industrial buildings, workshops, storage depots and similar.

In some regions, local authorities may also provide useful information, especially where Japanese Knotweed infestations are common in the region.

5.2.3 The property in its neighbourhood setting

All of the likely locations for Japanese Knotweed growth identified in 5.2.2 can similarly be identified prior to and after the actual inspection, for example, while driving through the neighbourhood, arriving at or leaving the property, parking, and preparing for the inspection.

5.2.4 The inspection of the property

The latest edition of the Red Book sets out the standard approach to the provision of valuation advice to prospective lenders in the mortgage valuation. This makes it clear that in normal circumstances, as much of the exterior of the property and the land within the ownership as is readily accessible without undue difficulty, or risk to personal safety, should be inspected visually. At the time of writing, the Red Book UK appendix 10 adds:

Although personal judgment has to be used, this inspection should include all of the property that is visible when standing at ground level within the boundaries of the site, and adjacent public/communal areas, and when standing at the various floor levels.

Additionally:

Where there are locational factors that may impact value they should be recorded and reported. Certain problems, such as...invasive vegetation...are particularly prevalent in certain districts. If appropriate, the valuer should make some reference to these defects, even if the subject property does not appear to be affected at the time of the inspection.*

* These statements may be revised in subsequent versions of the Red Book. Registered Valuers have a professional duty to use the current version.

In most cases this visual inspection of the grounds of a property is relatively cursory and takes place naturally during the normal inspection process. However, in circumstances where there may be a greater risk of Japanese Knotweed, for example, where it is widespread locally, this part of the inspection may require particular attention.

If the client wants greater assurance, he or she should commission a HomeBuyer Report or a building survey. Although these are not specialist Japanese Knotweed services, the inspection of the property and its grounds will be more comprehensive than with a mortgage valuation inspection and there will thus be a greater opportunity to identify any growth. In these cases, inspection along and over the boundaries is important especially where those features listed in 5.2.2 are present.

In Scotland, the extent of the inspection for a Single Survey is approximately the same as for the HomeBuyer Report.

5.2.5 Information from the vendor

In addition to these measures, asking the vendor or their agent whether the property (or any of its neighbours) has been affected by Japanese Knotweed growth is an important part of the process. Ideally this should be done at the start of the assessment process so any provided information can be followed up during the inspection. The buyer's legal adviser should also pose this question, although this will usually occur later in the transaction.

5.3 Identification of Japanese Knotweed

5.3.1 Many authoritative publications on Japanese Knotweed have been in the public domain for a number of years; however, not all residential practitioners are confident in their ability to identify the plant.

5.3.2 This information paper therefore includes an easy-to-use identification guide for valuers, illustrated in Appendix C. Intended to be taken along on inspections, this A4-size, chronologically structured chart is divided into three sections to aid identification throughout the year.

The growing season (March–October):

- **March–April:** at this time of year the plant will be at an early stage of its annual life cycle, and some of the classic visual characteristics will not yet have developed. Despite this, its appearance can still be distinctive. It is described and pictured in Appendix C.
- **May–October:** during these months the growth of Japanese Knotweed will be most vigorous, and in normal circumstances the plant should be easily identifiable. This section of the figure highlights just four characteristics:
 - 1 the leaf
 - 2 the zigzag leaf stems or 'petioles'
 - 3 the main stems, and
 - 4 the flowers.

The winter (October–February):

- In these months the plant will shed its leaves and die back. Because the stems are robust, it is possible to identify Japanese Knotweed even during this season.

However, residential practitioners are not specialists in this area and the tightly prescribed nature of mortgage valuations, and some other surveys, mean that there may be practical difficulties in identifying the problem. The following scenarios indicate some of the difficulties that may be encountered:

- **Concealment:** Japanese Knotweed can often be hidden among other dense foliage or – as is more likely – owners may deliberately conceal growth. Typical examples include: the physical removal of the plant prior to inspection; covering over with turf and mowing the lawns before inspection; covering the garden with landscape fabric and ornamental gravel or bark chippings, and so on.
- **Mis-identification by residential practitioners:** other vigorous growing shrubs and trees can be mistaken for Japanese Knotweed. Contracting organisations report increasing numbers of abortive visits because of 'mistaken identity'.

- **Effects of treatment:** during a formal treatment programme, Japanese Knotweed regrowth can be so deformed and sparse that many valuers and surveyors may not notice it. Treatment can also send the plant into a ‘dormant’ phase, where the rhizomes remain undetected below ground for long periods only to re-emerge a few years later.

5.4 Building an assessment framework

5.4.1 Although the focus of this information paper is on the mortgage valuation, approximately 20 per cent of purchasers commission their own survey, such as the RICS Condition and HomeBuyer Reports and the building survey. These include a more extensive inspection and broader advice about the condition of the property.

5.4.2 Consequently, it is logical to establish an assessment framework that supports the decision-making process across the range of inspection and survey products. Once established, this framework can be flexibly utilised by stakeholders to suit their own business objectives.

5.5 The risk assessment of Japanese Knotweed

5.5.1 This risk assessment takes into account the real risk to a property and addresses some of the concerns of the lenders and insurance companies. A number of definitions may be helpful.

- The term ‘habitable space’ refers to those parts of the subject property associated with daily living (including conservatories) and not ancillary spaces (such as outbuildings and/or garages).
- The term ‘serious damage’ refers to a level of damage described in 3.21 and costed in 4.6.
- According to the Environmental Agency’s The Knotweed Code of Practice, Japanese Knotweed rhizomes can extend up to seven metres horizontally and three metres vertically from the last sign of visible surface growth. This has been used as the minimum distance in the assessment process.

Table 1: Japanese Knotweed risk categories

Category	Descriptors
4	<p>Japanese Knotweed is within 7 metres of a habitable space, conservatory and/or garage, either within the boundaries of this property or in a neighbouring property or space;</p> <p>and/or</p> <p>Japanese Knotweed is causing serious damage to outbuildings, associated structures, drains, paths, boundary walls and fences and so on.</p> <p>Further investigations by an appropriately qualified and/or experienced person are required.</p>
3	<p>Although Japanese Knotweed is present within the boundaries of the property, it is more than 7 metres from a habitable space, conservatory, and/or garage. If there is damage to outbuildings, associated structures, paths and boundary walls and fences, it is minor.</p> <p>Further investigations by an appropriately qualified and/or experienced person are required.</p>
2	<p>Japanese Knotweed was not seen within the boundaries of this property, but it was seen on a neighbouring property or land. Here, it was within 7 metres of the boundary, but more than 7 metres away from habitable spaces, conservatory and/or garage of the subject property.</p>
1	<p>Japanese Knotweed was not seen on this property, but it can be seen on a neighbouring property or land where it was more than 7 metres away from the boundary.</p>

5.5.2 Where the Japanese Knotweed infestation falls into categories 3 and 4, further investigations are automatically required. In terms of a 'further investigation', this should be carried by an appropriately qualified and/or experienced person who should carry out a detailed inspection and assessment of the property and provide a 'management plan' as described in section 5.7. For categories 1 and 2, the decision as to whether further investigations are needed will be based on a combination of the practitioner's professional judgment and the client's particular requirements.

5.5.3 If Japanese Knotweed was not seen on the property or in the vicinity, then no mention needs to be made and this assessment process does not apply.

5.6 Properties previously affected by Japanese Knotweed

5.6.1 Although valuers and surveyors may not see Japanese Knotweed during their inspections, they may be aware that the property has been previously affected. This information may result from their knowledge of the area or as a response to a 'seller's questionnaire'.

Please note: because the standards of previous treatment regimes adopted by property owners and their agents have been inconsistent, the effectiveness of older treatment programmes must be cautiously assessed.

5.6.2 Whatever the source of the information, one of two responses may be appropriate:

- where there is **no** satisfactory evidence to show that Japanese Knotweed is currently undergoing a properly planned programme or that the planned programme has been properly completed, further investigations **will** be required; or
- where there is satisfactory evidence to show that Japanese Knotweed is currently undergoing a properly planned programme or that a planned programme has been properly completed, further investigations will not be required.

5.6.3 An important feature of this process will be the definition of what constitutes 'satisfactory evidence' and although this will be a matter for the individual residential practitioner's professional

judgement, it should closely resemble the 'management plan' described in section 5.7.

5.7 Management plan

5.7.1 Once Japanese Knotweed has been identified, and an appropriately qualified and/or experienced person has further investigated the problem and provided a report, a Japanese Knotweed management plan should be established. This management plan can provide the necessary reassurance to both lenders and buyers that a Japanese Knotweed problem is being properly managed.

5.7.2 Although the methods of tackling Japanese Knotweed will depend on the commercial choices and preferences of the contractor, the management plan should be based on that included in the Code of Practice published by the Environment Agency and should thus be consistent across the industry. As a minimum, a management plan should include the following features:

- A description of the property with an accurate record of the Japanese Knotweed infestation.
- A scaled plan with dimensions and supporting photographs would be particularly useful.
- The full details of the contracting organisation and a description of the methods to be used to eradicate Japanese Knotweed.
- A treatment schedule that is updated as treatments are carried out.
- A completion certificate that confirms the treatment is complete and that the Japanese Knotweed at the property has been remediated.

5.7.3 Valuers and surveyors should take account of this range of information when deciding whether the evidence of previous treatment regimes is adequate.

5.7.4 To meet lender requirements, other features could provide additional reassurance, as detailed below.

- The current owner must pay all costs associated with the management plan 'up-front', so that the treatment programme can be completed without relying on financial support from subsequent owners.
- The management plan should be transferable to any subsequent owners.

- The management plan should cover the whole of the property and not just those affected parts identified by the original valuer or surveyor.
- An appropriate warranty or guarantee that will ensure that the treatment programme will be completed in the event of insolvency of the original treatment organisation.

5.7.5 Important note: It is impractical to guarantee that Japanese Knotweed will not return following the completion of a treatment programme. Consequently, the mandatory insurance should be restricted to ensuring that the treatment is completed.

5.8 Contractors and consultants

5.8.1 As standards develop across the treatment industry, it is likely that lenders will begin to specify that the management plan provider is an accredited member of a recognised trade association. At the time of writing, the Property Care Association (PCA) were finalising the details of such an organisation that should be in place by March 2012. For more information, please see <http://www.property-care.org/invasive-species>.

5.9 Neighbouring properties

5.9.1 Where the Japanese Knotweed is confined to the grounds of a single property, its eradication will normally be a straightforward process involving only two parties: the property owner and the contractor. However, where Japanese Knotweed straddles the boundaries of a number of different properties, the solution will not be so simple. Although the owner of the subject property may have paid for a treatment programme, if the owners of the neighbouring properties do not co-operate, the treatment is unlikely to be effective. In some residential areas property ownership can be complex and transient and establishing a joint strategy in this situation will be challenging. In these cases, providing root barriers along the boundary may appear an attractive option to lenders who require a straightforward, time-limited solution. However, this approach may be unsuitable for many domestic properties for two reasons:

- 1 The disruption of excavations to depths of three metres will be expensive, disruptive and legally challenging, as the owner's legal advisers take into account matters relating to boundaries, party walls and general property rights.
- 2 Not all commentators agree that root barriers on their own are effective ways of preventing the spread of Japanese Knotweed (see 4.3.2 for further discussion).

5.9.2 Consequently, where Japanese Knotweed is present on a neighbouring property or land, two strategies can be adopted:

- 1 Where the Japanese Knotweed is on both the subject and neighbouring property, the management plan should include:
 - provision for the treatment of the entire outbreak, regardless of boundary positions; and
 - a project management service in which the contractor will co-ordinate plans with willing neighbouring owners regarding access for the inspection and treatment regimes.
- 2 Where a neighbouring owner does not co-operate and prevents the completion of the treatment programme, the new owner of the subject property may have to commit to a continued treatment programme that will restrict the growth of Japanese Knotweed on the subject property until a cross-boundary, co-ordinated treatment programme can be agreed.

Conversely, where the neighbouring owner is the lead party in the management plan, the residential practitioner will want to remind the buyer of the subject property that they should cooperate and failure to do so may expose them to legal action for negligence.

5.9.3 To protect the legal interests of the subject property owner, his or her legal advisers may wish to put adjacent owners on notice of the problem, indicating what should be done to tackle the Japanese Knotweed and the possible consequences of failing to take appropriate action.

6 Conclusion

6.1 The presence and effects of Japanese Knotweed are just one of the many considerations that may affect value, and just one of the variety of factors that valuers and surveyors need to take into account when assessing market value.

While this invasive, non-native plant can be difficult to control, it should be recognised that timely and persistent treatment programmes can minimise its impact. As the treatment industry develops and matures, it is hoped that residential practitioners will be able to provide more informed advice to their clients. And as lenders adopt more consistent and balanced policies, Japanese Knotweed should soon become just one more consideration in the complex valuation process.

Appendix A: Further sources of information

Further information on Japanese Knotweed and related issues can be found on the following websites:

The Environment Agency (www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

The Cornwall Knotweed Forum (www.cornwall.gov.uk)

Devon County Council (www.devon.gov.uk)

GB non-native species secretariat (<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies>)

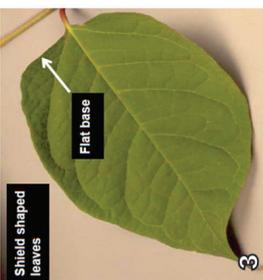
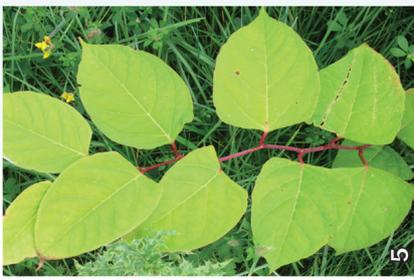
Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (www.sepa.org.uk)

Appendix B: Glossary

Included in this glossary are both terms referred to in the information paper and other commonly used terms that the valuer may encounter when undertaking desk research or investigations to support residential valuations.

Term	Definition
Canes	Tall, hollow, bamboo-like stems.
Crown	The visible part of the rhizome from which canes grow. Crowns can produce many new canes and, because of their size, can be resistant to burning or drying out.
<i>Environmental Protection Act 1990</i>	Part II of the <i>EPA 1990</i> contains a number of legal provisions concerning 'controlled waste'. Any soil or plant material contaminated with Japanese Knotweed that a person discards, intends to discard or is required to discard is likely to be classified as controlled waste. The most relevant provisions are in sections 33 and 34 of the Act.
Japanese Knotweed	The common type of Japanese Knotweed is known as <i>Fallopia japonica</i> , but there is a smaller compact variety called <i>Fallopia japonica var. compacta</i> , which reaches a height of 1 metre. Giant Knotweed (<i>Fallopia sachalinensis</i>), can grow up to 5 metres and a hybrid between Japanese Knotweed and Giant Knotweed, <i>Fallopia x bohemica</i> , is also found in the UK.
Petiole	The stalk or stem that connects the leaf to the plant.
Registered valuer	This is a chartered surveyor and member of the RICS who is registered with the RICS to carry out the valuation of land and property.
Residential practitioner	In the context of this information paper, residential practitioner refers to a broad range of professionals involved with advising their clients about all types of residential property.
Rhizome	Underground stem which enables Japanese Knotweed to survive over winter, when the canes die back. Small sections of rhizome, as little as 0.7g, can regrow into a new plant.
Stands	Large clumps of densely packed Japanese Knotweed stems.
<i>Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981</i>	Section 14(2) of this Act states that 'if any person plants or otherwise causes to grow in the wild any plant which is included in Part II of Schedule 9, he shall be guilty of an offence.' Japanese Knotweed is one of the plants listed in the Schedule.

Appendix C: Japanese Knotweed identification chart

		Winter											
		Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb								
Growing season		<p>Mar</p> <p>Small red/purple shoots or 'spears' emerge. Can be seen growing among the tall stems of the previous year's growth.</p>  <p>1</p>	<p>Apr</p> <p>Leaves begin to unfurl and can be red or green with red veins.</p>  <p>2</p>	<p>May</p> <p>Leaf: shield or heart shaped with flattened base; lush green colour.</p>  <p>3</p>	<p>Jun</p> <p>The stems: the main stems are initially green but develop distinctive purple speckles. Stems are hollow and never woody during the growing season.</p>  <p>4</p>	<p>Jul</p> <p>Stands of knotweed: Where uninhibited, the plant will grow in dense and tightly packed clumps or 'stands'.</p>  <p>5</p>	<p>Aug</p> <p>Leaf stems: alternate leaves on a 'zig zag' stem.</p>  <p>7</p>	<p>Sep</p> <p>Flowers: Spikes of small creamy white flowers with a spike length of 100mm.</p>  <p>8</p>	<p>Oct</p> <p>Bare stems: The leaves fall off as the plant turns orange and brown in the early part of winter. Eventually the stems 'peel' leaving them pale 'straw' coloured.</p>  <p>9</p>	<p>Nov</p> <p>The stems are hollow, brittle and resilient and are usually still standing the following spring.</p>  <p>10</p>	<p>Dec</p> <p>The stems are hollow, brittle and resilient and are usually still standing the following spring.</p>  <p>11</p>	<p>Jan</p> <p>Further information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Environment Agency (www.environment-agency.gov.uk) - The Cornwall Knotweed Forum (www.cornwall.gov.uk) - Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (www.sepa.org.uk) - GB non-native species secretariat (https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/) 	<p>Feb</p>

Images 1, 3 and 9-11 © GB non-native species secretariat; image 2 © Philip Santo; all other images © Phil Parrham

Japanese Knotweed and residential property

1st edition, information paper

This information paper is for RICS members and other professionals involved with the property industry.

It focuses primarily on the problems that Japanese Knotweed has been causing in the residential property sector, particularly the effect it can have on mortgageability. The information paper reflects the relevant legislation and regulations in Great Britain, and includes the following:

- why Japanese Knotweed has become a problem
- how Japanese Knotweed can damage a property, and
- the effective treatment of Japanese Knotweed in a residential context.

Importantly, the paper sets out a framework for objectively assessing and reporting the risk posed to a property by the presence of Japanese Knotweed, helping home-owners, purchasers and lenders to make balanced and informed decisions.

Additionally, the glossary contains sources of further information and a unique Japanese Knotweed identification chart that will help practitioners identify the plant throughout the seasons.



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Japanese Knotweed

Species Description

Scientific name: *Fallopia japonica*

AKA: Japanese Bamboo, Pysen saethwr (Welsh), *Polygonum cuspidatum*, *Reynoutria japonica*

Native to: Japan, Taiwan, northern China

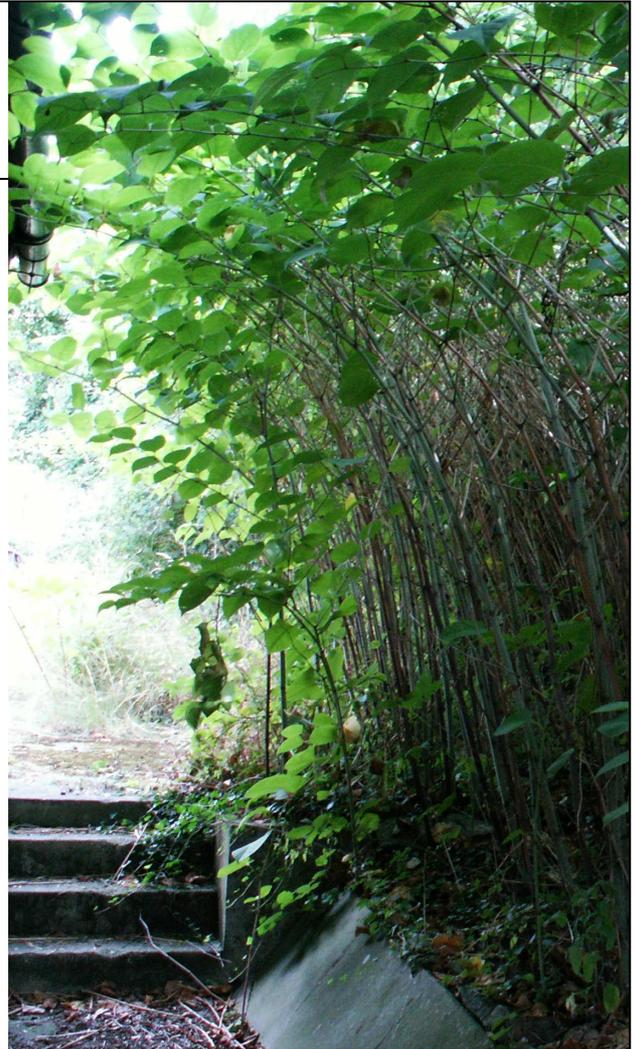
Habitat: Common in urban areas, particularly on waste land, railways, road sides and river banks

Tall herbaceous perennial with bamboo like stems. Often grows into dense thickets. Characteristic leaves and stems, persistence of last year's dead canes and distinctive rhizome (underground root-like stems) enables year round identification.

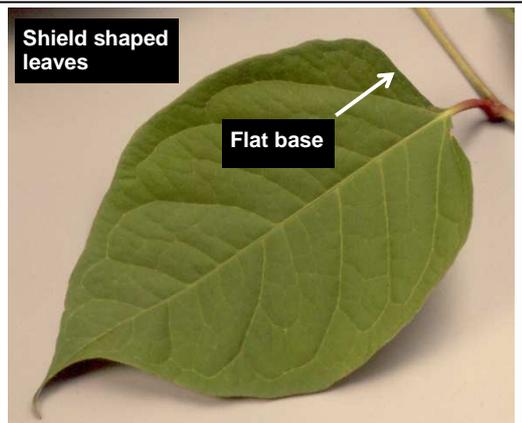
Introduced in the early 19th century as an ornamental plant. Now common and widespread across the UK. Spreads rapidly in the wild by natural means and as a result of spread by humans. Spread is solely by vegetative means, either fragments of rhizome or stem. Does not produce seed in the UK. Negative impacts include outcompeting native flora, contributing to river bank erosion and increasing the likelihood of flooding. Can also cause significant delays and cost to development as well as structural damage (it can grow through asphalt and some other surfaces).

Japanese Knotweed is listed under Schedule 9 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 with respect to England, Wales and Scotland. As such it is an offence to plant of otherwise cause Japanese knotweed to grow in the wild. Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Japanese Knotweed is classified as controlled waste.

For details of legislation go to www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation.



Key ID Features



Identification throughout the year

Winter



Summer

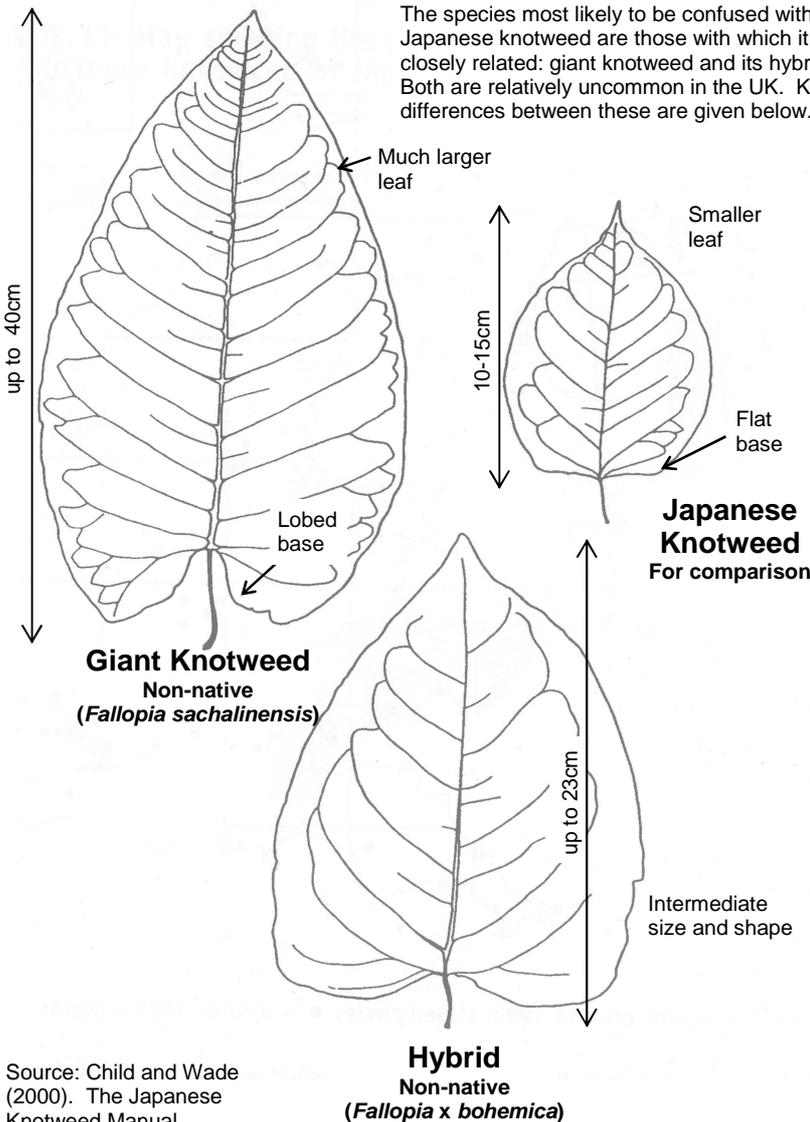


Spring



Similar Species

The species most likely to be confused with Japanese knotweed are those with which it is closely related: giant knotweed and its hybrid. Both are relatively uncommon in the UK. Key differences between these are given below.

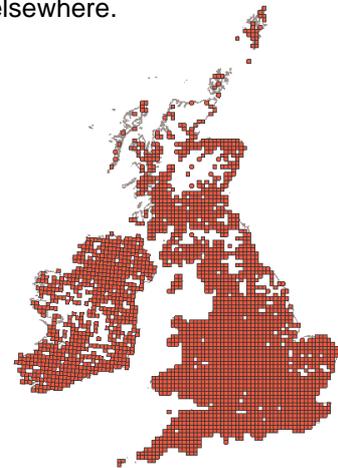


Source: Child and Wade (2000). The Japanese Knotweed Manual

Distribution

Widespread and common across the UK. Notably extensive infestations are found in the south-west of England, south Wales and Greater London, however similarly extensive populations can also be found elsewhere.

Source: NBN Gateway. Check website for current distribution



References and further reading:

- Blamey, M, Fitter, R and Fitter, A (2003) "The Wild Flowers of Britain and Ireland. The Complete Guide to the British and Irish Flora." A & C Black
- Child, L E and Wade, P M (2000) "The Japanese Knotweed Manual". Packard
- Environment Agency (2006) "The Japanese Knotweed Code of Practice". Environment Agency
- Preston, C D, Pearman, D A and Dines, T A (editors) (2002) "New Atlas of the British and Irish Flora". Oxford University Press
- Stace, C (1999) "Field Flora of the British Isles". Cambridge University Press