



NORTHAW & CUFFLEY PARISH COUNCIL

7 Maynard Place, Cuffley, Herts, EN6 4JA
01707 875825

MEETING	Parish Council Meeting
MEETING DATE	9 th September 2026
SUBJECT	KGV Oak Processional Moth infestation
AGENDA ITEM NO.	26/27-37a
REPORT BY	Sally Griffiths, Office Manager, Northaw and Cuffley Parish Council

01 BACKGROUND:

On 24th July officers of the Council were alerted to the fact that there were Oak Processional Moth nests in two Oak trees located at KGV Playing Field.

The trees were immediately cordoned off then, as required, the sighting was reported to the Forestry Commission via TreeAlert (Submission ID: 132777).

The caterpillars (larvae) of oak processionary moth (OPM) are pests of oak trees and are deemed to be a hazard to human and animal health. In humans, the toxin from the spines of the caterpillars can provoke allergic reactions that manifest as skin rashes, conjunctivitis, respiratory problems such as pharyngitis and asthma, and, in the worst case, anaphylaxis.

The Forestry Commission notes that the groups most vulnerable to the health hazards are:

- curious children;
- curious pets;
- people who work on or close to oak trees;
- anyone spending time close to infested trees; and
- grazing and browsing livestock and wild animals.

The proximity of the trees to the playground and playing field at KGV, and the increased usage of the playing field over the summer break, meant that the matter constituted a major safety issue and therefore officers contacted suitable contractors to complete the required surveys of the trees at KGV and obtain costed proposals for the removal of the nests.

NEST REMOVAL:

Following the required surveys, it was ascertained that there were in excess of 96 nests requiring removal, those being under 10m or in higher foot traffic areas, and that at least 16 Oak trees around the boundaries of KGV were affected. Once removal was completed on 24th August, it was reported to us that Maydencroft had removed 341 nests from KGV.

OPM nests are deemed to be an active public health biohazard, and therefore the removal, and subsequent destruction, of nests must be carried out by Lantra trained specialists.



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OPM nests remain a threat, even after the Moths have emerged, as the spines of the caterpillars remain in the nest. Then, as the nest deteriorates and breaks apart, these spines can be spread on the wind to infect anyone that they come in contact with.

3 proposals were received, from suitably qualified companies, and, due to the safety issues involved, it was agreed, following consultation with the Clerk, Chair and Vice Chair, that the matter was significant enough that it constituted such an emergency to justify the expenditure under NCPC Financial Regulation 5.3, and then seek retrospective approval from Council at the next meeting.

It was therefore agreed to proceed with Maydencroft for the following reasons:

- Maydencroft is a well-established company, who we have worked with before.
- Their proposal was the cheapest, and one of the most comprehensive.
- Maydencroft is an Arboriculture Association recommended company for OPM nest removal.
- They could start the required work over a week earlier than anyone else.

Total cost of the removal work: £6,000.00 plus VAT

PREVENTION:

Once adult Oak Processionary Moths (OPM) emerge from their nests, they have a lifespan of only three to four days. During this time, male moths are capable of travelling up to 20 km in search of a mate, while females generally travel only a few kilometres.

Given the distances that adult moths can travel, there are currently no chemical measures that can completely eliminate the risk of future infestation. Furthermore, as eggs are laid high within the tree canopy, it is difficult to determine whether egg clusters are present until they hatch in late spring.

However, specialist advice indicates that Blue Tits and Robins are natural predators of OPM caterpillars and larvae. The installation of small bird boxes on trees that have previously been affected is therefore considered to be a practical preventative measure that may help reduce the likelihood of future infestations. We have been advised that these should be mounted at a height of 6ft.

We would therefore request the purchase, and installation, of 16 National Trust WoodStone 28mm Nest Boxes, to be installed by our current ground's maintenance contractor.



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This design has been proposed as:

- They were specially developed for Blue, Marsh & Willow Tits
- The material is long-lasting: lasts at least 3x longer than wooden nest boxes
- The material insulates the nest which creates a more consistent internal temperature than an ordinary wooden box.
- Predator-proof: durable, protective material birds can rely on
- Guaranteed for 10 years.
- Easy to clean each season

Proposed cost, including installation: £806.53 (plus VAT)



02 DECISION REQUIRED FROM COUNCIL:

MOTION

Council resolves to retrospectively approve the specialist removal of the Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) nests from the KGV Playing Field at a cost of £6,000 plus VAT.

Council further concurs that the circumstances comprised an urgent health and safety matter, presenting a significant risk to both members of the public and Council officers, and constituted such an emergency to justify the expenditure under NCPC Financial Regulation 5.3.

MOTION

The Council approves the noted expenditure required to purchase 16 bird boxes, suitable for nesting Blue Tits, and subsequent installation.



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Implications (completed by the Clerk)	
Staffing Implications	Co-ordination, arrangement of works and overseeing, will be completed in normal working hours
Council objectives	Meets objectives
Equalities and human rights	There are no equality or human rights issues
Crime & Disorder	Crime and disorder have been considered
Biodiversity	There are no adverse biodiversity issues
Financial	Decisions may give rise to additional expenditure from ear marked reserves
Legal	Local Government Act 1894, Section 8 (i) Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 Occupiers' Liability Act 1957
Risk Management	Material risks exist and these will be assessed prior to works carried out. Insurances and all other documents from contractors will be retained