

## OUTDOOR ENGINEERING

# Staying informed and within the law

**David Layland, Joint Managing Director of leading treatment specialist, Japanese Knotweed Control (JKC) offers a timely warning to landowners on the perils of ignoring the latest invasive plant legislation**



As the invasive plant treatment industry advances and matures, the impact of these plants on the ecology and infrastructure is becoming increasingly apparent. DEFRA estimates that the problem costs the UK some £1.7 billion each year, with Japanese Knotweed alone accounting for some £165 million.

The scale of the problem is why both the UK and EU governments are implementing legislation to try and stem these costs and make landowners assume greater responsibility for treating their own land. If a landowner, whether commercial or domestic, does have a Japanese Knotweed infestation and does nothing about it then they are

now breaking the law and liable to prosecution with potentially heavy fines. It's therefore imperative that they keep up to date with legislation and know their responsibilities.

But staying abreast of legislative changes and taking action against invasive species counts for little if the contractor they then use is not also fully compliant with current guidelines. It remains the landowners' responsibility to ensure that the hired contractor carries out the work appropriately for it is they who are open to prosecution if things go wrong.

What then can be done to mitigate this risk? Our first recommendation would be to attend one of Japanese Knotweed Control's regular DCE seminars where we explain more about the regulations and landowner responsibilities. The second would be to ensure that whoever you use as a contractor has the right credentials for the work. We would always recommend membership of a recognised trade body such as the Invasive Non-Native Specialists Association (INNSA) and that they can offer industry-specific insurance that fully covers the treatment work being undertaken.