

**Soft Landscaping****JKC TACKLES HAMPSTEAD'S TRIFFID DRAMA**

Whilst historically, local authorities' management and treatment of invasive weeds such as Japanese knotweed has tended to focus primarily on parks, open spaces and communal recreational areas, infestations have become an increasingly serious problem across council' residential estates. More and more 'domestic' examples are highlighting how apparently innocuous knotweed garden growth can quickly escalate into a major council issue if left untreated.

Camden Council is no exception having experienced a significant rise in knotweed infestations across its London borough in recent years. Faced with difficult economic conditions and consequently with restricted manpower and budgetary resource, the council recognized that, rather than adopt an ad-hoc response to each new issue, it needed to establish an ongoing relationship with an approved treatment specialist. Since then it has worked closely with Japanese Knotweed Control (JKC) to implement a planned, pro-active and fully budgeted treatment programme.

The benefits of this partnership were brought sharply into focus this summer following a major Japanese Knotweed outbreak in North London which became something of a 'cause celebre' in media after several celebrity residents including actor Tom Conti, complained their local area was turning into The Day of the Triffids.

The knotweed was spreading rapidly along a public footpath linking a number of properties belonging to some of London's rich and famous, including TV presenters Esther Rantzen and Melanie Sykes, and footballer Thierry Henry, as well as Conti. As was widely publicized in the national and local press, the knotweed's prolific and potentially destructive growth had prompted major concerns that it could threaten the structure, not to mention the value, of some of Hampstead's most exclusive properties.

Camden Council, responsible for the public land in green areas around Hampstead, responded swiftly to the problem and, with specialist knotweed contractor JKC on hand, was able to immediately implement an appropriate programme involving the innovative stem injection treatment.



The work began in late June and throughout the summer the eradication programme has been closely monitored as the infestation begins to die back. JKC's Joint Managing Director, Richard Podmore, has been closely involved in the Hampstead project and praised the council's partnership approach: "The celebrity involvement ensured this knotweed problem was widely reported but less well publicised was Camden Council's rapid and responsible response. Its foresight in appointing an authorized contractor to work on a planned schedule of treatment across the borough, enabled it to move swiftly to address this particular, high profile incident once it was flagged up."