

Housing association gets to the root of Japanese Knotweed control

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One of the North West's largest registered providers of social housing, New Charter Housing Trust Group is investing in an ongoing programme of Japanese Knotweed treatment as the escalating problem continues to blight tenants across many of its properties.

Recognising the continuous spread of the plant over the past ten years, the housing association and its subsidiary Aksa, which together own over 18,600 homes across Tameside, Oldham, Bury and Manchester, are now proactively working with Stockport-based treatment specialists, Japanese Knotweed Control to eradicate the problem.

New Charter Housing became one of the first major housing associations to appoint a dedicated ongoing specialist having at first unsuccessfully tried to control the problem itself. The foliar spray technique it initially used served only to kill the weed's top growth without destroying the plant's deadly rhizomes that can quickly reproduce and spread.

In contrast, stem injection treatment achieves a complete kill by delivering a given dose of glyphosate herbicide directly into the plant stem, achieving maximum control and specific to the plant species, with no impact on the surrounding vegetation or wildlife.

Les Crowther, ground maintenance manager for New Charter Housing, with responsibility for the entire estate said: -With thousands of domestic properties to maintain across Greater Manchester, Japanese Knotweed has become a major issue for our housing association. We need to identify and proactively target priority areas across our housing estate, dealing not just with individual garden growth but also surrounding areas such as parkland and riverbanks from which the infestations often originate and spread.'

The housing association's growing knotweed problem in domestic gardens is mirrored by Japanese Knotweed Control's own recent experience. Whereas once it was seen as a problem exclusive to commercial property developers or land-owners, today domestic enquiries from concerned homeowners UK-wide are now an increasingly significant part of the company's treatment business.

Educating the public on how to identify and best treat knotweed is also increasingly important. As part of this project for New Charter Housing Japanese Knotweed Control is delivering training seminars for housing association staff and liaising with tenant management teams so that they can roll awareness of the issue and the treatment programme out amongst all residents.

Les Crowther continued: -Tenant satisfaction and the correct and prompt response to property maintenance issues are at the heart of New Charter's social housing provision and Japanese Knotweed is one recurring problem that needed to be addressed. Working alongside Japanese Knotweed Control on a structured treatment programme we are able to monitor and review treated sites across all our residential properties and amenity areas and with a success rate of over 95% when it comes to controlling regrowth, we have been delighted with the stem injection treatment results so far.'