



## **LONDON PROTOCOL FOR DEALING WITH SEWER RAT INFESTATIONS (APRIL 2005) PILOT**

### **1. THE NEED FOR A LONDON PROTOCOL**

- 1.1 In 2000, Water UK issued a protocol providing a mechanism for improved communication and co-ordination between local authorities and sewage undertakers on the control of rats in sewers. The protocol called for co-operation on rodent control and for sewer baiting and surface treatments to be undertaken in a complementary manner and in agreement with all relevant agencies. The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) supported the National Protocol and continues to work with DEFRA and Water UK to improve its profile nationwide. The National Protocol can be found in appendix 1.
- 1.2 In view of this National Protocol and the need to review the communication and effectiveness of joint working between London local authorities and Thames Water, a joint meeting was arranged between the Association of London Environmental Health Managers (ALEHM) and Thames Water in May 2004. The meeting confirmed the desire of both parties to improve the current situation and a series of suggestions were put forward. A working group was set up to take forward details of the review programme and to put together a specific London protocol for the treatment of sewer rat infestations.
- 1.3 The aim of the London Sewer Rat Baiting and Treatment Protocol is to clarify and support improved communications between all the relevant agencies and set in place a system of developing appropriate and agreed plans for treatment, remediation and prevention of rat infestations. Working together in partnership enables resources and staffing to be more effectively utilised, provide better value service and improve the quality of response to the public.

### **2. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF THE LONDON PROTOCOL**

- 2.1 The overall co-ordination of the London Rat and Sewer Baiting/Treatment programme will be undertaken by a strategic group, initially set up by ALEHM, and will be formed of representatives of all relevant agencies including ALEHM, Association of London

Government, Greater London Authority, Thames Water, Network Rail, Metronet Environment Agency, CIEH, Pest Control Liaison Group, British Waterways. The strategic group will meet once a year or as required.

### **3. COMMUNICATION**

- 3.1 All London authorities will be linked to a Thames Water Catchment Group. In each group members will be given a detailed list of contacts for relevant agencies within the Catchment area. This will include email addresses that enable direct contact with relevant officers and avoiding call centres. The contact sheets are available as a separate document.
- 3.2 All rat complaints will be directed from Thames Water to the relevant local authority to aid co-ordination and to improve public response.
- 3.3 Quarterly meetings will be arranged by Thames Water for each of the Catchment Groups. The meetings will enable members to discuss current hot spots and treatment regimes and highlight any problem areas or issues. The meetings will enable feedback to the strategic group of key issues and trends in the rat infestation and treatment across London.

### **4. CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING HOTSPOTS**

#### **4.1. What are Hot spots?**

Hotspots are areas that have been highlighted for specific attention and treatment as part of the joint protocol between London environmental health services and Thames Water.

#### **4.2. Using the Criteria**

For each area of infestation, the investigating officer (local authority) must decide, using professional judgement and experience, on a figure that realistically reflects the seriousness and impact of the infestation within each of the six criteria. The table below sets down the highest figure that can be given for each of the criteria. For example : Criteria a- score between 1-30 depending on how many premises are affected by the infestation. When the officer has used all the criteria to assess the infestation and ranked each section, the total score is added up. This gives a score that can then be ranked against other areas of infestation to aid priority targeting of resources.

#### **4.3. How are the priority lists for treatment agreed?**

Each potential area must be reviewed against the criteria and then placed in order of priority according to the points allocated to it. The highest score being the highest priority. Those areas with the highest priority are then put forward first for joint agreement of treatment plans. Table 1 illustrates the criteria and scoring system.

**Table 1: Criteria for assessing hotspots and determining rank/priority**

| <b>Criteria</b>  | <b>Rank</b> |
|--|-------------|
| a. Number of customers/householders/properties affected by the infestation         | 1-30        |
| b. Number of customers potentially affected ( e.g. housing estates)- public health | 1-20        |

|  |      |
|--|------|
| impact   |      |
| c. Proximity of vulnerable sites ( e.g. schools, hospitals, food establishments)         | 1-20 |
| d. Number of reported complaints and backed up by visits and assessment                  | 1-10 |
| e. Physical evidence and sitings by environmental health staff on site (density measure) | 1-10 |
| f. Unresolved/recurring problem or received prior treatment                              | 1-10 |

4.4 A sample criteria assessment and record sheet can be found in appendix 2. Guidance for completing the ranking assessment can be found in appendix 4. A spread sheet has also been developed to facilitate completion.

#### 4.5 Emergency Action

There may be certain circumstances where it is evident to agencies concerned that the problem requires immediate or urgent attention.

The local authority will still lead the agreement of treatment plans but the communication may need to be via email and telephone rather than arranging meetings with all agencies.

These events will rely on professional judgement as to the best course of action to remedy the emergency. All such situations need to be brought back to Area Group meetings for debriefing and to prevent the overuse of “Emergency Action” for situations that may better be dealt with using the prioritisation system.

## 5.DECIDING TREATMENT PLANS

### 5.1. Treatment Plans

The treatment plan for each hot spot must be agreed jointly between all relevant agencies. The local authority officer will however, take the lead in setting out the parameters for the treatment plan.

In doing so the following factors need to be taken into consideration:

- I. Potential areas for habitat and sources of food and water that may encourage or sustain an infestation.
- II. Land use such as food establishments, restaurants, parks, ware-housing.
- III. Fat and grease build up/blockage in the sewers
- IV. Type of sewers
- V. Defects in sewers
- VI. Environmental hygiene- Refuse
- VII. London underground /utilities

5.2 Each treatment plan must have agreed target dates for completion of the treatment. The dates must be realistic and achievable. A sample treatment plan assessment and record form can be found in appendix 3.

### 5.3 Liaison

The Local authority will be responsible for bringing together all relevant agencies in relation to the hotspot/infestation to discuss and agree the treatment plan and related issues. This may include Thames Water, other utilities, Network rail, Metronet and neighbouring boroughs. If the situation trigger emergency action, liaison will take place in the most appropriate manner to expedite emergency works.

### 5.4 Public Information/Public relations

The treatment plan should also agree what information should be given to local residents and complainants in the treatment area. The local authority will lead on public relations.

The local authority press relations service will co-ordinate any wider public information and handle any press/media attention that may arise (with liaison with other relevant agencies).

### **5.5 Prevention**

The treatment plan must also address any action needed to prevent re infestation at the site.

### **5.6 Review assessment of treatment plans**

Every treatment plan must be kept under review to ensure that all target dates are met and the remedial and prevention work is completed satisfactorily. The local authority is responsible for managing the progress of the treatment plans. Any plans that fail to make reasonable progress can be discussed at the regional group meetings. All agencies must share any data collected to facilitate accurate review of effectiveness of the treatment plans and prevention strategies.

## ***6. Development and review of the protocol***

- 6.1 The protocol will be piloted within London for twelve months and reviewed regularly within each of the Catchment Groups. The results and recommendations for improvements to the protocol will be forwarded to the working group and then on to the strategic group for discussion and approval.
- 6.2 The Working Group will continue to look at improvements to the systems that support effective joint working such as the compatibility and use of geographical information systems.
- 6.3 Any comments and suggestions for improvements to the protocol should be sent to:  
Sharon Smith,  
Secretary ALEHM,  
17 Stangrove Rd, Edenbridge Kent TN8 5HT  
Tel/fax 01732 863536 email [sharonsmith@alehm.freerve.co.uk](mailto:sharonsmith@alehm.freerve.co.uk)

Date of report 7<sup>th</sup> September 2004. Amended 20<sup>th</sup> October 2004, 10<sup>th</sup> April 2005

**Produced by joint working group of ALEHM and Thames Water.**

## **Appendix 1.**

### **The National Protocol**

1. Where a Water UK member commences a new sewer baiting activity it should inform the relevant local authority.
2. Where a local authority commences a new baiting activity to combat rat infestation it should inform the relevant Water UK member.
3. Where possible sewer baiting to combat rat infestation should be undertaken in a complementary manner by agreement between the water UK member and the local authority.
4. Water UK members and local authorities should share information regarding the success of baiting strategies and the baits used.
5. Where there is an advantage in doing so, local liaison groups should be established between Water UK members and local authorities to facilitate successful rodent control in sewers.
6. Within the bounds of commercial confidentiality, Water UK members and local authorities should share information on the costs of rodent control.
7. Water UK members and local authorities should jointly review on a regular basis their operation of this protocol with a view to improvement.

***Issued by Water UK in November 2000***