



# Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

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President Sir David Attenborough CH, FRS

## Position Statement on the Oak Processionary Moth *Thaumetopoea processionea*

- Butterfly Conservation does not accept there is any evidence that Oak Processionary Moth has a significant impact on oak tree growth or survival in the UK. There is no evidence of repeated defoliation events such that there is a likelihood of oak trees dying or being impacted significantly by Oak Processionary Moth.
- There have been relatively few reports of negative health impacts from Oak Processionary Moth, and this has been assessed by Public Health England as a low threat in the London area. There is the potential for health impacts to be an issue where human contact is likely, or the population is vulnerable, for example in parks, hospitals and near schools. Butterfly Conservation therefore believes that control of Oak Processionary Moth is only necessary in these circumstances, where there is an increased risk to human health.
- Control using the Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki*) toxin, an insecticide effective against all Lepidoptera, has a negative impact on Lepidoptera populations and will impact on the ecosystem services they provide. The impact of control on biodiversity should be carefully considered, and the Bt spraying method should be discontinued in favour of other less damaging control techniques. Great care should be taken to minimise and mitigate against any biodiversity impacts, making use of the interactive risk mapping tool developed by Butterfly Conservation and colleagues at Defra.
- Despite an extensive and costly (largely public-funded) control programme in recent years Oak Processionary Moth continues to spread, and at an increasing rate. Given this ongoing range expansion, BC encourages a transition towards a risk-based strategy to inform landowners of decision-making options. These include manual removal of nests only where absolutely necessary for public health reasons, and otherwise focussing on education of at risk groups such as school children. There should be greater reliance on natural predation by the parasitic fly *Carcelia iliaca*, which has recently become established in the UK. This will create a more effective, balanced and sustainable response to Oak Processionary Moth in Britain.
- For further information and the evidence underpinning this position statement see Butterfly Conservation's *Fact Checker: Oak Processionary Moth in the UK*, which can be [downloaded here](#).

Butterfly Conservation, October 2021