

From the Permanent Secretary
Dr Denis McMahon

Your reference SS
Our reference: SINV-0450-2018



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk

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27 November 2018

Dear Mrs Steele,

Thank you for your letter of the 13th November, highlighting the concerns about Japanese knotweed discussed at your People and Communities Committee meeting in October.

To clarify, the Departments' role in relation to the management of non-native invasive species such as Japanese knotweed (in both national and EU legislation) is to assist protect the ecology of an area as opposed to safeguarding property or other commercial assets.

The Department is not in a position to provide a service to manage non-native invasive weeds on land outside of their own ownership as the responsibility for managing species such as Japanese knotweed lies solely with the owner of the land on which it is growing.

It is not illegal in Northern Ireland to have Japanese knotweed present on private land nor is there any legislation which would enable the Department to compel a landowner to remove it.

Departmental officials provide guidance and advice on how best to manage non-native invasive weeds such as Japanese knotweed. The Departments' Natural Environment Division supports the Invasive Species Ireland website (www.invasivespeciesireland.com), which contains a wide range of information on managing and removing non-native invasive species. They have also provided training events to parks staff at local councils, and have visited this issue on a number of previous occasions with Belfast City Council officials.

Given the above and my extensive diary commitments, I will decline your invitation to meet with a Council all-party deputation on this particular matter, although Departmental officials remain happy to provide advice.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Denis McMahon'.

DR DENIS McMAHON
Permanent Secretary

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