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leading invasive
plant experts

Environet

Early intervention is crucial when dealing with invasive plants on site

Failure to tackle invasive plants early on nearly always leads to increased costs to developers in the long run.

With Landfill Tax increasing this April, Environet Director Luke Walton explains how early intervention can allow for low-cost removal and on-site, zero-waste solutions, often eliminating landfill use altogether.



Removing contaminated soil to landfill

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Preparing a site for cell burial

Consigning Japanese knotweed infested waste to landfill has never been cheap, but it’s about to get more expensive. **From 1st April 2025, the standard rate of Landfill Tax will increase from £103.70 a tonne to £126.15 - an increase of 21.6%.** For developers removing say 50 sqm of knotweed, which could equate to 400 tonnes of waste, the cost could jump significantly depending on the make-up of the ground.

Taking into account haulage costs for transporting the knotweed to the licensed landfill site on top, and pressures arising from developers’ own sustainability strategies and net zero pledges, on site solutions for dealing with knotweed are becoming increasingly attractive.

Tackling controlled invasives on development sites

Japanese knotweed, Giant hogweed and Himalayan balsam are some of the most problematic invasive plants developers have to deal with, but any plants listed on the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are considered controlled waste under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and can therefore only be disposed of at licensed landfill if removed from site. Avoiding disposal altogether will save money and comes with the same guarantees when a specialist is used. As an added bonus, any investment in on-site remediation solutions for Japanese knotweed is eligible for [Land Remediation Relief](#).

Typically, there are three alternative on-site options for commercial treatment and removal of invasives that are lower cost, eco-friendly and zero-waste:

Xtract™	Stockpile & Treat	Cell Burial
Our own eco-innovative method uses patented machinery to sift and separate knotweed rhizome from the soil The clean soil can be safely returned to the ground in an area of the site that will not be built on directly Particularly effective on friable, sandy soils Completed in a matter of days or weeks	Excavated plant material is stockpiled in a non-critical area of the site Growth is actively encouraged and herbicide applied Measures are put in place to prevent spread Requires 2-3 years to complete Effective on sites where there is Public Open Space (POS) available away from new homes	Physical excavation and removal of all plant material and contaminated soil Large underground cell is created and lined with specialist root barrier to contain spoil. Great for sites with large car parks, POS or attenuation ponds. Requires groundwater to be at least 3m below finished levels. Completed in a matter of days or weeks

Our bamboo removal work has traditionally focused on the homeowner market, but cases of bamboo infestations on commercial sites are increasing and we have dealt with three cases in the last month alone. As bamboo is not a controlled species, the plant material can be effectively recycled once it has been expertly traced through the ground and the soil separated, much in the same way that Xtract™ works.

Why early intervention pays off

The presence of invasive plants on a residential development site is a problem that can't be ignored. By making strategic decisions at the planning stage, developers can accommodate on-site remediation strategies or design the site layout to avoid the need for excavation altogether in certain areas. Of course, this is not always practical – but these considerations often result in significant savings without compromising design or the number of plots achievable from a site.

By remediating as early as possible, preferably within an enabling works contract, developers and contractors benefit from keeping their options open for treatment/removal and ensure no accidental spread of plants - helping to keep on top of costs.



Japanese Knotweed rhizome

An early and decisive approach paid dividends for a developer client in Cornwall, who was able to review his plans in order to provide a designated area for excavated and filtered soil to be reused following Xtract™ treatment. Located well away from the future homes, this area formed part of the landscaping, ensuring full compliance with planning conditions and enabling us to easily monitor for potential regrowth over the course of the construction phase.

Delaying decision-making until after groundworks or building works have begun significantly reduces the options available – particularly on smaller sites – often resulting in developers being restricted to off-site methods, thereby incurring significant haulage and landfill disposal costs.



Xtract™ in action

Case study: *Surrey Bamboo Removal*

A property developer in Surrey identified both Japanese knotweed and bamboo on a 12-acre plot before development commenced. Environet produced a management plan recommending remediation of both species. The Japanese knotweed was prioritised for treatment in line with regulatory requirements, while the bamboo, located within an area designated to become a garden, was not considered an immediate concern as it did not impact the construction process.

As the development progressed, the bamboo remained in place within the rear garden. Since there was no legal obligation to remove it, the issue was only revisited when a buyer for the property was secured. The buyer expressed significant concerns about the bamboo and requested its full removal before completing the purchase.



By this stage, the garden had already been fully landscaped, significantly increasing the complexity of the removal process. With no access for machinery, the work had to be completed by hand, making it far more labour-intensive and time-consuming. In addition to the increased removal costs, the developer also incurred further expenses to reinstate the garden once remediation was complete.

Early mechanical removal, integrated with other remediation work during the initial phases, could have reduced remediation costs by up to 80%.

Conclusion

Although many of our commercial clients still opt for traditional dig and dump methods, we are beginning to see a move towards early intervention and taking time to deal with invasive plants on site over the course of the development process.

We anticipate impending landfill tax rises will only further focus minds, alongside growing ESG pressures driving demand for zero-waste solutions.

Authored by experts, Beacon is a series of quarterly information papers providing insights into the removal and treatment of invasive plants in the UK. Sign up to receive future Beacon articles [here](#).



Further information



About the author



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Luke Walton has been an integral part of Environet since 2014, bringing expertise in invasive plant management and environmental consultancy. As Contracts Director, he is responsible for operations across the UK, overseeing project management, staff training, and research & development to ensure Environet remains at the forefront of the industry.

With a background in Geography and Environmental Management, Luke plays a key role in shaping Environet's approach to tackling invasive species. He also works closely with clients across the South East, providing consultancy and support to help deliver effective solutions.



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