

The house price is right as rampant weed eradicated

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WHILE the government may have admitted defeat in wiping out invading Japanese knotweed, a Swansea woman has shown the concrete-cracking plant can be defeated.

Liz Wakeman, of Swansea, was told the price of an elderly relative's property in Carmarthen Road, Swansea, which she needed to sell to pay for healthcare and a nursing home for the 92-year-old, had virtually been halved because of the presence of Japanese knotweed.

But after intervention from knotweed removal specialists Environet, who came to the rescue, she managed to sell the house for around its original asking price of £80,000 after earlier being advised it had plummeted to £45,000.

George Eustice, a government environment minister, has now said there were "no plans to attempt a national eradication" of Japanese knotweed because of the "prohibitively expensive" £1.5bn cost attached to eliminating it, due to its widespread distribution.

The announcement follows decades of attempts to destroy the species, which arrived in Britain on a boat from Japan in 1850 at the request of the Royal Botanic Gardens of Kew.

Japanese knotweed has thwarted every attempt by the government to control it, leading Mr Eustice to declare that current techniques are "likely to be unsuccessful".

But Mrs Wakeman said the weed could be tackled effectively locally.

She said: "As soon as the initial treatment had taken place we were in a position to market the property and have since successfully sold and realised the full value... thank you, Environet."



► Japanese knotweed at the back of Liz Wakeman's relative's home in Carmarthen Road, Swansea

Headquartered in Surrey, Environet guarantees "total eradication" of Japanese knotweed using its Xtract method, which has a USA and UK patent.

A spokeswoman for the company



► Liz Wakeman

said: "There are good financial reasons why land- and home-owners should get their Japanese knotweed tackled professionally to protect their property assets. It shouldn't be taxpayers' money funding the clean-up of privately owned land.

"Furthermore, there is now a recently launched Japanese Knotweed Indemnity Insurance available to 99% of all properties, which protects them from any future invasion of knotweed on their land."

Dan Jones, an expert on Japanese knotweed from the College of Science at Swansea University, said: "As far as I can recollect I don't remember scientists using methods like bio-control to ever completely eradicate Japanese knotweed.

"A type of psyllid or jumping plant louse that will control the plant with-

out harming wildlife has been used to limited effect.

"But we have to remember these kind of approaches can take years to be effective.

"And we have to be very careful with bio-control as sometimes creatures introduced to control certain plants can get out of control.

"Classical bio-control of plants like Japanese knotweed is carried out to reduce their vigour, complete eradication would be massively expensive so I think it's a bit harsh to say the government has given up.

"Swansea University, for instance, is still looking at ways of controlling the plant.

"Since 2011 Defra has provided grant aid to several local action groups to reduce or eradicate invasive non-native species locally."