

## Our village's box hedges are being attacked by caterpillars

The Box - tree Moth (*Cydalima perspectalis*) is an invasive moth originating in Asia. First discovered in British gardens in 2011, it is now decimating Whitchurch's box hedges, some of which are extremely old and have been part of the village landscape for generations. We need to act quickly before we lose these village features altogether.

There are several ways to remove the caterpillars. One of the most effective is to remove them by hand (I have started doing this every morning, but I can't cover the whole village). Another good idea is to spray with washing up liquid diluted in water. The affected part of the box then needs to be cut back. It is also possible to purchase a box moth trap that uses pheromones to attract male box moths.

The picture shows what the caterpillars look like.



If the worst happens and your box dies completely, please don't consider replacing the box hedges with laurel. Recent research has shown that invasive shrubs including rhododendron and laurels make it more difficult for native woodland moths to thrive and their numbers are in steep decline.

*Katherine Higley, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2022*