

## GB & NI Tree Health Advisory Group Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2015

Silvan House, Edinburgh

### **Present:**

Adrian Jowitt – Natural England  
Caroline Harrison – Confor  
Chris Cheffings (telephone) – JNCC  
Hugh Clayden – FC Scotland  
David Brown – HTA  
David Sulman – UKFPA  
Duncan Stone – SNH  
Harry Frew – Confor NPG  
Jane Barbrook – APHA  
John Dye – TIMCON  
John Speirs - Scottish Government  
Jon Heuch – Arboricultural Association/ICF  
Jon Stokes – Tree Council  
Mike Seville (telephone) – CLA  
John Morgan – FC GB Plant Health  
Nicola Spence – Defra  
Roger Coppock – FC (Chair)  
Andrew Smith – FC England  
Joan Webber – FR  
Tim Hall – Woodland Trust  
Chris Jones – NRW  
Jenny Park - SNH

### **Apologies:**

Austin Brady – Woodland Trust  
Alan Corson – FE England  
Diane Stevenson - DARDNI  
Jim Crummie - DARDNI  
Keith Sacre - Trees and Design Action Group  
Martin Williams - WG  
Nick Boulton - TTF  
Ray Hawes – National Trust  
Richard Siddons - NRW

## 1. Welcome and Introductions

Roger welcomed everyone to the meeting and everyone introduced themselves. Purdah was announced prior to this meeting and this was discussed. All discussion was to be at a factual level and policy would not be discussed. Anything which was not to go any further would be highlighted. If there was any doubt permission would be sought from the Cabinet Office.

## 2. Minutes of previous meeting and actions

The minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2014 were agreed as a true and accurate account of the meeting.

### Matters arising

**Action – Jon Stokes to discuss with Keith Sacre and Jamie Dewhurst and find someone suitable to represent the landscape industry.**

A representative has not, as yet, been identified. This was identified as a key area which needs to be appointed or represented. Harry Frew has provided contact details for BALI, and Roger will see if they can propose someone to join the group. **Action - Roger to carry forward.**

**Action – Roger Coppock will amend the ToR. The group should aim to agree the revised version by email so that this does not need discussed at the next meeting.**

ToR had been circulated. **Action discharged.**

**Action – Group to be used for feedback for the portal at future meeting.**

This was identified as an action point which will be ongoing. **Action - to carry forward.**

**Action – John M to discuss with Jamie how communication with the trade on notifications can be improved.**

This was raised with colleagues in Defra and discussed at the recent Plant Health Workshop. Actively under development.

**Action- Andrew to put link out to newsletter to members of the group.**

The link was included in the England update which would be discussed within the meeting. **Action discharged.**

## **Action- Roger to plan for inclusion of update from James Morison on Climate Change Risk Assessment in future agenda.**

Roger had asked James Morison to attend the meeting to provide a review but as the process was just underway it was a little premature to provide an update.

## **Action – Roger to get back in touch with James for a future meeting.**

## **3.Plant Health Service updates**

### **Nicola Spence - Defra**

- Next month will bring seasonal issues, things coming in to leaf, trading.
- Possibility of more imports due to the favourable exchange rate in the Euro zone.
- Stakeholders were brought together for a monthly biosecurity meeting and were updated on Tree Health Management Plan and Biosecurity Strategy.
- The Tree Council completed *Chalara* report on non-woodland (along roads/railways/parks etc.). The intention is to publish this after the General Election.
- Contingency planning proposals are being commented on by stakeholders.
- The following sources were being used to estimate how many Ash trees there are (England only); existing data, Network Rail, Highways Agency, local groups, local councils, wildlife groups. This has been challenging and there may need to be more rigorous analysis. Best practice has been shared amongst local authorities. Devolved tree health groups need to be linked in to this too.
- International experience – Jon Stokes looked at this in the past – There was not a great deal of numbers of trees and therefore not a great body of work in the Arboricultural industry. Symptoms of *Chalara* were then a public health hazard imperative. Countries including Sweden, Denmark and Holland usually had to remove the tree within 2-3 years, more for practical reasons. In cities such as Copenhagen there appeared to be lower levels of sporulation but these were just the perceptions of people working in the field. In Holland there was a great deal of concern in relation to public safety concerns. Overall there was a mixed picture. Leaf litter removal is a real aid to urban trees. Wouldn't want to see all Ash being removed.
- The map of stakeholders group was discussed in relation to who is in charge of updating the information and where urban trees come in. The Defra Plant Health Advisory Forum, which also covers agriculture, is separate from the England Tree Health Policy Group.
- It was noted that there will soon be a Countryfile programme on tree health. A number of stakeholders were being interviewed. There was some discussion in the group about the need to put emphasis on the fact there is not a huge concern regarding urban trees. Hedgerows and impacts on landscape were also to be included.

## Forestry Commission

### John Morgan

- Have been working on redundant legislation being revoked including import controls on wood packaging, fees legislation and Watermark Disease. Orders have been laid and will come in to effect after the General Election.
- After the election period the illegal gateway to get access to HMRC Import Controls will be revoked.
- Interceptions have been targeted on where the known risk is. Other commodities including steel have been targeted. There have been open discussions with countries of origin and there has been strong ministerial support. There have still been problems with Ukrainian materials, including live insect larvae found in dunnage. The Maritime and Coastguard Agency has advised against re export as this encourages illegal dumping. Incineration or movement to inland treatment is the preferred method.
- Wood packaging has an EU exemption but if there was to be an outbreak the EU may want total heat treatment. There is concern that ports don't have the capacity to treat all the timber that would be required.
- Bulk shipments have been inspected as well as smaller consignments from Rotterdam and Antwerp. A press release was issued to the relevant bodies regarding wood packaging.
- Statutory notification for wood fuel – legislation only took effect in England and Scotland. Wales would need to introduce this for themselves as they have responsibility for policy functions.
- Proposals for 2015 - Measures will be taken from P.ramorum 2004 standalone order and incorporated in to the general Forestry Commission order. This has not been discussed at the Tree Health Steering Group in Wales as yet.

**ACTION – Chris to chase up discussion on P.ramorum measures with Terry at the next Steering Group meeting in 5 weeks.**

**ACTION – John to ensure Terry has this paper.**

### Andrew Smith

- OPM – A comprehensive winter survey, guided by pheromone trap results from last summer has been completed. This did not indicate an increase in the area. Few areas were found to have nests within the vicinity. There is better knowledge of the outer extent in London. The control plan for the coming year was agreed with ministers, over winter. Efforts will be concentrated on the protected zone. Any control activity on the perimeter of west London will be carried out by individual tree managers. There were no nests found in Pangbourne for the second year. There will be no spraying action in Pangbourne this coming spring.
- *Chalara* – A proactive survey in England identified the emergence of large area of infection in North West. The survey covered a large area in England.

- *P.ramorum* – There was not much change to the situation. Flights are to commence the third week April.
  - ALB – Potentially high risk premises were focussed on. There was one tree felling action in Sheffield. There were discussions with owners to inform of the risks. Sites and surrounding trees were inspected. Data from the survey was still being analysed and a number of follow ups will probably take place.
  - Plane trees – There were no confirmed infections of plane wilt found. One dead tree was found but the results were negative. The survey extended to other cities in Southern England.
  - The second Tree Health newsletter was issued last week.
  - Surrey was out of the boundary of OPM
- ACTION – John to pass details of contacts in Surrey to Andrew Hoppit.**
- Stone and slate were targeted as there was evidence of those being problem commodities. As these are lower value commodities they use lower value packaging. EU legislation requires certain amount of checks on Chinese stone. There was a Health & Safety issue with this too as pallets would be weaker if they were infected with beetles and would be unable to hold the weight of the cargo. The message needed to go further than biosecurity. At the Plant Health Risk meeting other sites were identified where garden centres were trading stone, pots etc. These were difficult to trace but the inspectors got details which can be used to find out more information about major suppliers. It was advised that B&Q are opting to use a pallet company in Britain who send pallets out to China to ensure that the requirements of ISPM15 are met. These would be loaded and sent back, the pallet company would then collect these and re send to China. The agreement was recently signed.

## Hugh Clayden

- *Chalara* – Additional resources have been deployed to look for *Chalara*, which is far more prevalent than previously thought, particularly in southern and eastern areas of Scotland. Trained people, with field experience, are now spotting early stage symptoms.
- *P.ramorum* – There were no changes since the last meeting. Waiting to get results from the first helicopter surveys from mid- May onwards. The weather appears to have played a major factor in spore production and dispersal. 2013 conditions in late summer/early autumn were relatively dry and corresponded with modest expansion and impact. Given that similar conditions were experienced in 2014, it is hoped that 2015 will also prove to be a 'light year'.
- *Dothistroma Needle Blight* – There were no changes from the previous meeting and inland Lodgepole pine still appears to be the most impacted pine species. ¼ of native pinewoods are known to be affected and further information is being collected on the impacts of this. Light winds and logistical difficulties prevented last year's aerial spraying trial (copper oxychloride) taking place on the Black Isle. The intention is to resume the trial at this site in 2015.
- *P.austrocedri* – Widespread infection is known to be present in the Cairngorm area. Elsewhere, the picture is not so clear. Surveys within woodland areas were

planned to help give a clearer picture of distribution. Judging from Welsh surveys it is possible that the prostrate form of Juniper may be less susceptible to *P.austrocedri*.

- Pine-tree Lappet Moth – There was now a containment strategy in place. If new breeding populations are detected, steps would be taken to eradicate them through non chemical processes; i.e. glue banding. However, a 'new' breeding population has been confirmed recently in Glen Strathfarrar (the first such finding in a Caledonian pinewood) and this will be the subject of further discussion with SNH and other stakeholders in the PtIm Management Group to determine an appropriate response.

## **John Speirs – Scottish Government**

- Been working through outputs from the interactive discussions with stakeholders at the Plant Health workshops in December in relation to development of the Scottish Plant Health Strategy. This has been a challenging exercise but will be worthwhile. The Strategy will be developed through 2015 for Ministerial approval and publication strategy in 2016.
- Have begun a review of the Scottish Generic Plant Health Contingency plan and also Scottish priorities for pest specific plans. The latest meeting of the Scottish Phytophthora Steering Group met on 25 March. The group include S G Plant Health, SASA, HMU, SEPA, SNH FC Scotland and FC Cross Border. A useful meeting which, subject to a few revisions, agreed the text for the Strategy for *P.ramorum* in Scotland and also a Status Report. Once complete this will go to Scottish Ministers for approval and then publication, hopefully in the next month or so. Further details were provided in the SG report circulated prior to the meeting.

## **Martin Williams (Welsh Government)**

Chris recapped this paper in Martin's absence.

RDP based farming connect programme – awareness raising and communication.

Royal Welsh Show – to get wider audience.

## **Chris Jones (NRW)**

- *P.ramorum* – There was limited new spread. There were fairly extensive fellings, especially on the Welsh Government woodland estate. The private sector was continuing to fell uninfected larch adjacent to infected trees. Fights were to take place around late April/early May. The *P.ramorum* zone was extended earlier in the year due to a cluster of findings in Pembrokeshire/Carmarthenshire. NRW have been accelerating their programme of felling *P.ramorum* infected larch within the last 18 months and were to continue to do so. They have been moving quickly and half way through the coming year anticipate being well on top of this in the core zone.

**ACTION: Chris to find out figures from compliance checking and pass these to David Sulman.**

- *P.Austrocedri* – a survey using data from CCW to identify Juniper areas was carried out. Most areas were of the prostrate form and no positive results came from this. There were still some sites to visit.
- *Chalara* – Over the last year, NRW has been responding to suspicious Ash sites. There were more proactive surveys for Ash of 25 years old and older. Have been getting better at spotting diseases in the earlier stages.
- ALB – Slate/stone importers were targeted. Opportunities were taken to increase communication with importers. Trees in the vicinity were inspected as well as wood packaging.
- Acute Oak Decline – this is now adjacent to the Welsh border
- RDP funding in Wales had not been sorted yet. Funding for restoration of woodland, post *P.ramorum* is part of this.
- Roles and responsibilities – John Browne moved on to another area and Owen Thurgate retired. Operational issues around disease management have been moved to NRW. NRW were to deal with on the ground work, aerial surveying and handing out of notices. More strategic areas are addressed by Chris Jones.

## Jane Barbrook - APHA

- ALB – completed winter ground survey at Paddock Wood, focussed on 500 meter zone. Three trees will be followed up further. There is no concern but tree climbers will be in to look at these. Monitoring was extended to 2018 to reflect ALB lifecycle is more likely to be 3yrs in UK climate than 2. The EU requires monitoring and freedom from pest for 2 lifecycles before eradication can be declared.
- Sentinel trees- permanent network reviewed, the project now contains 50 trees and 4 new species have been added; *Aesculus hippocastanum*, *Ulmus spp*, *Betula pendula* and *Salix caprea*.
- Post purdah leaflets will be sent to members of public in the vicinity of Kent outbreak (as key 3yrs since initial finding) A further leaflet is being drafted which can be used at other non-outbreak sites.

**ACTION – Jane to circulate finalised leaflet. David Brown can help circulate to some members.**

- *P.ramorum* and *P.kernoviae* – Larch +ve follow up sites about 130 sites were identified for follow up as 1.5Km surveys across England & Wales in 2014/15 season

*In non-forestry, wider environment* there were 54 new *P.ramorum* sites identified 2014/15. Compared to previous years this was not the highest amount (conductive with the weather) but also not the lowest amount that have been discovered. Approx. 500 Pr/Pk sites identified since first findings in 2001

Vaccinium no new sites identified

- *P.austrocedri* – on Juniper in wider environment focussed on containment advisory biosecurity & plant movement, sites clustered in NW England. In trade eradication approach, approx 11 trade findings to date and 24 wider environment ones.
- *Chalara* – There were few findings but not many.

- *P.Lateralis*. There were no new findings from APHA to report since the last meeting.

## 4. New FC Research programmes for Plant Health

The meeting was a good opportunity to highlight research areas. Stewart Snape presented the information to the group, and is to be circulated. **Action: Lorna**. Further information or discussion was as follows:

- Understanding threats to resilience. Remote sensing does not figure strongly but it a key component.
- Working definitions of resilience were being developed. The CFS definition was developed in order to move forward.
- Issues which needed to be addressed were the effect of climate on host responses, how forests are managed, large monoculture and lack of genetic diversity.
- There has been a lot of work in partnership with APHA and Defra.
- This research was previously isolated but there was a need to develop a more formalised structure in order to integrate programmes.
- The research teams started to base their work around the research questions.
- Work Package 4 Surveillance and detection was the most topical.
- Metabarcoding – Would enable parasites living within a pest to be identified. This looks at the DNA within a range of organisms as a barcode.
- Electronic sniffer technology – This was to be used where dogs cannot be. Would be beneficial to use in containers.
- Surveillance for grey squirrels was to be improved.
- Communication was being made with wider groups to ensure work wasn't being duplicated and resources not being wasted.
- Long term, complex work with difficult challenges to meet in short term funding.
- Deer has still been a big issue but not specifically covered within the programme. This wasn't mentioned in the country questions. It is now known how to deal with deer management but solutions are either socially unacceptable and/or expensive. A deer initiative was ongoing in England.
- Collaboration with Scottish Gov and RESAS who also commission research programmes. It is important for results to be fed back to ground level.
- In the past there has been difficulty in getting information to the industry. The programme has allowed for regular updates with policy colleague leads and who have then fed back using their networks in to the industry. Have been trying to use as many new vehicles/media to get information out there. There was a good communication strategy in place.

**Action: Roger to arrange for Mark Funnell to attend the next meeting to discuss how information will be rolled out.**

**Action: For a future meeting – look across full research landscape.**



## 5. Observatree

Anna Brown presented information on Observatree to the group. Additional information or comments are detailed below.

- There were two main strands; the first was linked to Tree Alert. This aims to encourage an educated audience to go out and report findings. This was moving to the production stage and would shortly be live. It was not to be launched straight away but people with the existing app would be redirected to the new app. After the general election the app would be fully launched.
- Strand 2 is related to specialist volunteers recruited by the Woodland Trust. There was a good spread across the three countries. 10% would be desk based, looking at reports coming in through Tree Alert and picking up on missing information, they would chase up land owners and reporters. The remaining volunteers would be linked in to survey work. Work on this started last year, working on giving volunteers the observational skills needed to identify diseases.
- The OPAL project was targeting school children and their families, a less knowledgeable audience.

**Action: Chris to arrange a meeting/training for Tree Alert. The Woodland trust is fully booked up across the UK. Chris to email Kate to arrange a meeting with the relevant parties.**

## 6. Nursery Trade resilience

The Scottish Tree Health Advisory Group (STHAG) had now been restructured into a Steering Group and three Working Groups (Sustainable Forest Management; Plant Production; and Wood Use & Processing). A meeting was held with the Confor nursery group to start thinking about what issues had arisen; dealing with diseases once detected; the impact on the business and preventing the arrival of diseases.

A wide range of issues were covered in this discussion including:

- Better ways of predicting plant demand. Systems based thinking was required to help resolve this longstanding issue. A plant production forecast may be useful as with the timber production forecast. This would be on a different timescale, would be affected by grant schemes and species diversification but could be brought together with group of experts. This would be a substantial job and would need people to be willing to share data.
- There have been regulatory hurdles regarding the Grant Scheme. This would need to be addressed systematically. There had also been a lack of flexibility in planting years. Woodland owners were now in danger of losing their grant if they don't plant in the year they first advised.

There was a difference between FC England guidance on seed collection and Scotland's unchanged guidance from 2006. **Action: Hugh to bring back further updates from the group in order to discuss. Roger to add to the agenda for a future meeting.**

## 7. Current Research update

The bulk of what was one tree health programme will in future be in two programmes – Understanding threats to resilience and delivering resilient forests. The advisory part will go in to the latter.

Research highlights were discussed:

- *DNB* – the key findings were from the PhD study. There were two findings around dispersal distances of spores and variation of *Dothistroma septosporum*. Previous information on dispersal came from a study in Kenya in 1960s. This was repeated under UK conditions over longer distances. The findings were significant as it appeared spores were travelling and caused disease on pine plants much further away than was originally thought. Spores were being carried and missing some plants but landing on others. The differences in DNA sequencing were used to say which sequence was in which area. There was an indication of similarities between Scotland and Western Canada; this could have been transported through plant imports in past years.
- *Acute Oak Decline* – There has been confirmation that AOD is a decline due to a combination of factors rather than one single factor.
- OPM – Nigel Straw has looked at the potential for control with parasitoids. Spraying with BT did reduce populations but only by about 50%, this was expected to be higher.
- ALB – A lot of information was garnered from material that was collected from the outbreak at Paddock wood site. This was taken to the lab to consider. There was a longer life cycle than previously thought; distribution at Paddock Wood may be at edge of northern range.
- *Dendroctonus Micans* – Work was completed on how control of this with *R. grandis* may be influenced by a changing climate. A lot of data was gathered and built in to a model. Looking to the future there may be a mismatch between the breeding cycles of *D. micans* and its predator.
- Advisory work – There were about 2000 reports received, the majority through Tree Alert but still receive some through email, telephone and letter.  $\frac{3}{4}$  from England alone and 60% relate to Ash. *Chalara* has still been a big issue. Five new squares were filled out on the distribution map of hectads.
- Ivy – Work was completed on whether this has any effect on the health of trees. On Oak, Douglas fir and Larch, ivy growth in to the crown of trees was identified. There was much more penetration if tree was deciduous. In a small study there was no evidence that ivy effects the growth of trees. Wind blow/tree falling down due to excess ivy cover was not considered. The details of the work will hopefully be published in the quarterly journal of forestry.

## 8. EU Plant Health Regime Review update

- The import of high risk commodities remains a significant issue. The proposals have been developing under the Greek and Italian presidencies and the Latvian

presidency is working on the third draft version. There are still a number of issues to be resolved although progressing well. Trade should be supported but also need to regulate high risk.

- Plant passporting – some member states were pushing for all plants for import to be passported. This was not appropriate for some imports, for example, bananas.
- Latvian Presidency keen to make progress and if possible move to Triologue under their Presidency which concludes at the end of June. This may be challenging given outstanding issues.
- Text was circulated to the UK Plant Health Advisory Forum and would be going back next month to continue negotiations. The text would also be shared with the Tree Health Advisory Group.

## 9. Skills

- Skills – There was an ambition to develop a much stronger pipeline for a defined career structure as there has been erosion in skills over the last decade regarding practitioners/scientists. Colleges and universities were being worked with in order to improve in this area to train future scientists, inspectors and people working in the industry. People need to know where to look for jobs and what is expected. Work was to be completed into creating a professional body for Plant Health and this would hopefully be launched later this year. People at different places in their career would be asked to join the body. This would be an independent register for anyone to join whether at university, in industry or government.

## 10. AOB

Five PhDs were to be funded by FC Scotland through the Scottish Forestry Trust over the next four years. The work completed has to be of benefit to Scotland.

There was a short discussion around 'Are there better ways to communicate messages as effectively as possible?' – There should be a pipeline of information for core messages from the Forestry Commission as it has sometimes been a struggle to receive details. Some of the most useful information comes out in meetings like this one but it is not always possible to openly discuss the issues that arise. There were no policy issues discussed at this meeting and so people are free to push information down to membership or organisations. Observatree will play a good role in this but more remains to be done. It would be more efficient if there was one place for information.

## 11. Date and location future meeting

**Action: Lorna to complete a Doodle Poll for the next meeting.** Will take place at the end of June/beginning of July. School holidays will be taken in to account. The next meeting should be held in Cardiff.

**Action: Lorna to liaise with Chris Jones over suitable location.**