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**PLANT HEALTH PEST & DISEASES OUTBREAK RESPONSE**

**Purpose**

- 1) The purpose of this paper is to:
  - a) Update the Executive Board on contingency planning arrangements for plant health pest and disease outbreaks.
  - b) Decide the best approach to Incident Management Teams (IMT) working with the Public Forest Estate during plant health pest and disease outbreaks.

**Recommendations**

- 2) It is recommended that the Executive Board adopts Option B. Public Forest Estate will provide intelligence and be given direction from Forest Services Local and/or National Incident Management Teams depending on the category of the outbreak with Forest Services deciding the appropriate level (please see ANNEX A).

**Background**

- 3) The Forestry Commission is the statutory authority for plant health pest or disease outbreak in forests and woodlands as defined in the Forestry Act 1967. For outbreaks in other locations the Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA) will be the control authority (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1 – Control authority by location**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Control Authority</b>
Outbreak within a nursery/ horticultural trade facility	FERA Plant Health & Seed Inspectorate (PHSI)
Outbreak within a nursery, which has spread into the immediate surrounding environment	FERA PHSI
Outbreak in a domestic garden	FERA PHSI
Outbreak in the wider urban environment, including street trees, public parks etc (may incorporate areas of woodland or situations where there is a direct threat to forests or woodland)	FERA PHSI or <b>FCE</b> on a case by case basis
<b>Outbreak in a forest/ woodland (may incorporate non-forest areas)</b>	<b>FCE</b>
Other scenarios	To be decided on a case by case basis

- 4) In January 2014 the England National Committee (ENC) confirmed that Forest Services will be the lead organisation for incidents involving private and public woodlands including the Public Forest Estate (PFE). Forest Enterprise is the lead organisation where the incidents only affect the PFE, however in the case of a plant health outbreak Forest Services will remain the Control Authority.

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- 5) The DEFRA Plant Health Alert Status of the outbreak (i.e. ranging from WHITE to RED, See ANNEX B) will determine the level of response from FCE or possible central government support (i.e. ranging from minor to catastrophic, See ANNEX C). This is determined by the National Duty Officer using ANNEX D, and can be modified by the National or Local Incident Controller thereafter.
- 6) This means that during outbreaks affecting forests/woodlands Forest Services will be Forestry Commission England's (FCE) Control Authority and Forest Enterprise will be a key stakeholder. Below we set out the consequences of this for the way in which Forest Enterprise England and Forest Services should relate during an outbreak. There are two key elements, responding to a potential outbreak and surveying and monitoring during an outbreak. We set out our recommended approach on these below.

**Responding to a suspected outbreak**

- 7) Outbreak reported:
  - If a suspected outbreak is reported, a formal Pest Risk Analysis (PRA) on the specific pest will be completed / provided by Tree Health Division (THD) Advisory Service of Forest Research and submitted to the Head of the Plant Health GB (PHGB).
- 8) Investigation and stand by:
  - The Head of PHGB shall inform the relevant Plant Health Regional Manager (PHRM) of a confirmed infestation and he shall visit the site within 2 working days to determine its extent (using OGB 17b Duty Officer and Responder approach).
  - They shall report back to the Head of PH and THD who shall assess the implications of the initial survey findings, determine whether it should be classified as an outbreak and what DEFRA Plant Health Alert Status should be used (See ANNEX B).
  - The PHRM will contact the FCE National Duty Officer and make them aware of the infestation and DEFRA Alert Status.
  - Depending on the Alert Status FCE National Duty Officers will stand by resources as defined in the Plant Health Outbreak Incident Specific Contingency Plan.
  - The initial level of response will be determined by the FCE National Duty Officer using ANNEX D as guidance.
- 9) Decision and response:
  - The Head of PHGB shall inform the Head of Corporate & Forestry Support (CFS) and a decision shall be taken on whether an Outbreak Management Team (OMT) will be convened.
  - FCE will implement its Plant Health Outbreak Incident Specific Contingency Plan, including use of Local and/or National Incident Management Teams, if required.

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- FCE will manage the incident using the guidance from OGB 17b and Plant Health Outbreak Incident Specific Contingency Plan.

## 10) Informing owners:

- The Head of PHGB shall immediately inform the owner or their elected agent (if private) that an infestation has been confirmed on their land and that a Contingency Plan is to be implemented within 2 working days.
- If the outbreak is on the Public Forest Estate then the Forest Management Director (FMD) will be informed. If required PFE will provide intelligence and receive direction from the Incident Management Teams as defined in ANNEX A.

11) The FMD shall be asked not to carry out any activities in the area involved pending the arrival of the PHRM who shall advise on strategy for the infestation. In particular, no material shall be removed from the outbreak site without the written authority of a Plant Health Inspector. The FMD shall be asked by the Head of PHGB to confirm in writing (e-mail) that no activities will be carried out without first consulting the relevant PH authorities.

12) If necessary a statutory notice shall be served on the owner or occupier.

**Survey and monitoring during an outbreak**

- 13) A significant challenge during any Plant Health outbreak, as experienced during the Chalara outbreak in 2012, was the management of the surveying process; sometimes an extreme incident will require a response at the national level, calling on resources from us, our partners, contractors and wider government.
- 14) Learning from our recent experience of the rapid survey for *Chalara* dieback of ash, we will use the following as the basis for future surveying for moderate to higher outbreak incidents, including:
- a) Using 10km by 10km squares (linked to Ordnance Survey national grids) that cover National Forest Inventory (NFI) identified woodland and forests.
  - b) Linking these grid squares to the Incident Management Team structures to help manage our response to the outbreaks. Each grid square will come under the supervision of a Sector Commander who will be responsible for opening, surveying and closing them.
  - c) A response within each grid square by Forestry Commission England staff, partners and contractors, who will confirm any suspected infected sightings or survey any sample plots.
  - d) The local level will record outcomes, using an electronic system (e.g. Geographic Information Systems, database) and pass this to the national level to conduct analysis, prediction and modelling.

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- 15) During moderate or greater category incidents (see ANNEX C) surveying will occur at an appropriate level of the Incident Management Team supervision e.g. Sector Commander.
- 16) The boundaries of Forest Services' Areas do not reflect the operational boundaries used by Forest Enterprise to manage the PFE. The following should be noted during incident management:
- a) The selection of the most appropriate geographical level to engage with Public Forest Estate will be critical for achieving the most effective and efficient outcome for both organisations.
  - b) That Forest Services will determine the geographical level of engagement as the Control Authority. For Minor and Moderate incidents this will be the Forest District's Forest Management Director (FMD) in the first instance. For Major incident this will be Forest Enterprise's Chief Executive.
  - c) PFE intelligence gathering and communication (primarily via Geographic Information System and Forest Planners) are limited at the national level (3 members of staff) and not based in the national office. Better resilience, capacity and cohesion can be found at the Forest District level.
  - d) Forest Services will require the Public Forest Estate to engage primarily at the local level to collect intelligence (e.g. point and polygon data) and then to collate at Forest District level for basic analysis. Once completed this intelligence should be sent to the National Incident Management Team's Intelligence Officer.
  - e) Due to differences in boundaries between Forest Service and Forest Enterprise, Local/National IMT's and FMD's will agree where data is reported to and by what geographic units.
  - f) For Minor incidents, PFE Beats (roughly in +/-5,000 hectare block) would link more seamlessly with Local Incident Management Teams, with PFE being treated as a key woodland stakeholder, reporting to their respective Sector or Divisional Commanders. For Moderate incidents PFE would report to Operations Commanders.
  - g) As part of FS response to the enhanced Defra PH budget, Plant Health England will appoint a dedicated GIS Officer resource that will operate within the Intelligence Section (in the GIS Mapping Unit). For Major Incidents or greater Forest District will provide intelligence directly to this unit.
  - h) Further details will be agreed by Forest Enterprise as necessary and in line with the Forest Service Plant Health Outbreak Incident Specific Contingency Plan (ISCP).

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**Discussion of the alternative courses of action available**

17) With reference to ANNEX A the following options have been considered for the approach during an outbreak:

<b>Option A</b>	Public Forest Estate will provide intelligence and be given direction from Forest Services National Incident Management Teams
<b>Option B</b>	Public Forest Estate will provide intelligence and be given direction from Forest Services Local and/or National Incident Management Teams depending on the category of the outbreak with Forest Services deciding the appropriate level (please see ANNEX A).
<b>Option C</b>	Public Forest Estate will decide its own level of operational response.

18) Option A would be too inflexible to the broad range of pest and disease vectors (e.g. isolated, slow moving and lower contagious to wide spread, fast moving and highly contagious pathogens).

19) Option C would prevent Forest Services play its role as Control Authority, it may become the best option once the Public Forest Estate Management Organisation (PFEMO) is set up, or we could build the recommended option into the Government’s agreement with the PFEMO.

20) Option B provides a more dynamic approach that provides more rapid and direct transfer of intelligence and direction from and to PFE while allowing Forest Services to act as the Control Authority. It is our recommended option.

**Resource Implications**

21) For Forest Services and Forest Enterprise no further resources will be required.

**Risk Assessment**

22) This paper relates to the following Forest Service and Forest Enterprise risks defined on their respective risk registers:

Forest Services Risk Register

<b>Reference and Risk</b>	<b>Additional control measures</b>
<p><b><u>Strategic Risks</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>FS/1</b> – Failure to control pest and diseases</li> </ul>	<p><b>Contingency Planning</b> – Improved our anticipation</p>

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<p><b>Programme Risks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>FS/2</b> - Forest Services lacks the resources needed to meet delivery expectations. This could be caused by: Plant Health income reducing to zero in FY 14/15; Big Tree Plant expected expenditure increase in FY 14/15 (£1.5m delivery); SR10 introduction of programme/admin budget split; possible additional savings required; increased expectations arising from increased pest and disease threats.</li> <li>• <b>FS/7</b> – Failure to provide an adequate policy framework to support the change of emphasis by government/European Union, and subsequent operating environments to meet the business need.</li> </ul>	<p>and assessment of risks, ensure we are appropriately prepared and have reasonable prevention in place to reduce the impact of incidents, therefore improving our overall effectiveness and efficiency of response and recovery.</p>
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Forest Enterprise Risk Register

Reference and Risk	Additional control measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1011/02</b> - Phytophthora Ramorum/RBNB.</li> </ul>	<p>TBC</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1011/08</b> - Major tree death from either new disease or climate change.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1011/14</b> – Major accident or dangerous occurrence</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1012/06</b> - Chalara</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1011/28</b> - Ability to meet public expectations</li> </ul>	

Equality Impact Assessment

23) Our [Current Equality Analysis web-pages](#) still apply.

Communications

- Update the dedicated intranet webpage with a specific Incident Specific Contingency Plan for Plant Health Pest & Diseases Outbreaks
- Awareness raising to FC staff (BARK, NET news)
- Appropriate training for relevant FC staff (currently being rolled out).

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April 2014

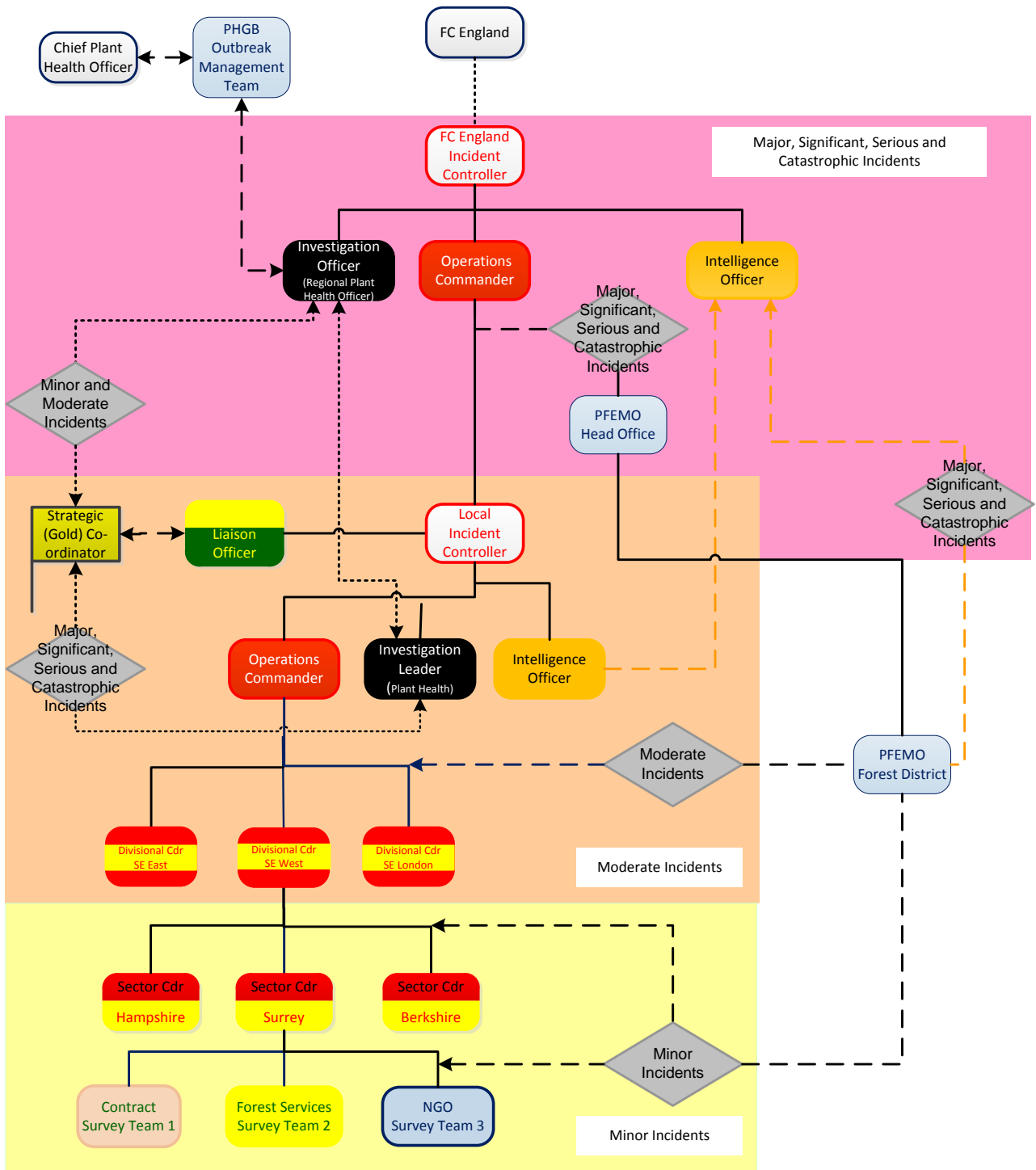
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**ANNEX A – FCE PLANT HEALTH INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM AND PFE**

**Forestry Commission Plant Health Incident Management Team**

Examples of a Minor to Catastrophic Incident Plant Health pest and disease outbreak in Woodland and Forests in England showing FC staff providing Incident Management Teams (IMT) across England and PFE provision of intelligence and gaining direction.



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**ANNEX B – DEFRA’S CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR PLANT HEALTH ALERT SYSTEM TO INDICATE PEST/DISEASE STATUS**

DEFRA Plant Health alert system has been adopted to describe the situation, set the appropriate command level and scale of response.

<b>ALERT</b>	<b>STATUS</b>	<b>COMMAND LEVEL</b>
<b>White</b>	Plant pest/disease with potential for limited geographical spread	Instigation of Incident management plan involving Operational command at appropriate level and follow Standard Operating Procedures or scientific advice where applicable
<b>Black</b>	Significant plant pest/disease with potential for limited geographical spread	Instigation of Incident management plan usually involving joint Tactical and Operational command at appropriate level and follow plant pest/disease specific response plans where applicable
<b>Amber</b>	Serious plant pest/disease with potential for relatively slow but extensive spread leading to host death and/or major economic or environmental impacts	Instigation of Incident management plan usually involving joint Strategic and Tactical command and follow plant pest/disease specific response plans where applicable
<b>Red</b>	Serious or Catastrophic plant pest/disease with potential for rapid and extensive geographical spread leading to host death and/or major economic, food security or environmental impacts	Instigation of Incident management plan involving Strategic, Tactical and Operational command and follow plant pest/disease specific response plans where applicable

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**ANNEX C – FORESTRY COMMISSION ENGLAND INCIDENT CATEGORIES**

Category	Level	Impact	Definition	Response?
Minor Incident	<b>YELLOW</b>	Minor Emergency	Limited focus and does not require local support	Duty and Response Officer
Moderate Incident	<b>ORANGE</b>	Moderate Emergency	Has a wider focus requiring local support but not central FC support	Local IMT
Major Incident	<b>RED</b>	Major Emergency	Has a wider focus and requires central FC support	Local and National IMT
	1	Significant Emergency	Has a wider focus and requires central Govt support	Local and National IMT
	2	Serious Emergency	Has or threatens a wide and/or prolonged impact	Local and National IMT DEFRA EOC COBR
	3	Catastrophic Emergency	Exceptionally high and potentially widespread impact	Local and National IMT DEFRA EOC COBR

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**ANNEX D – FCE RESPONSE TO DEFRA PLANT HEALTH ALERT SYSTEMS**

		OGB 17b Incident Classification					
		Minor	Moderate	Major			
		Yellow	Orange	Red	1 Significant	2 Serious	3 Catastrophic
DEFRA Alert Status	White	Yes					
	Black		Yes				
	Amber			Yes			
	Red				Yes	Yes	Yes

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