

## Tree Health Conference 11<sup>th</sup> March 2016, RHS Wisley “Minimising the impact of new and future tree threats” Conference Summary

### Introduction

120 delegates attended the conference at RHS Wisley Gardens to find out about and discuss the latest and future threats to tree health in the SE and London.

The area has the highest tree cover in England and a suite of protected landscapes that include ancient woodland. 16 million people live there and more work in and visit the capital in particular.

Large numbers of people and trees bring challenges -

Young trees are a pest and disease pathway, and trees can suffer from climate change stresses, exacerbated in London and other towns by the urban heat island. Consumption by 16M people requires the importation of goods from all over the world that provide pathways to introduce pests and diseases.

There are ways in which these challenges can be planned for and managed to minimise their impact, and the conference sought to demonstrate this.



*Mary Barkham, FC Commissioner, giving the conference opening address*



*RHS Wisley Gardens*

## Conference Aims

The conference aimed to provide some of the most up to date information on the recent and imminent tree health threats, and investigate what we – individually, as a sector and as society – can do to help minimise their impact.

Conference objectives were to:

- build sector knowledge on the latest tree health threats in the area
- highlight ways that we can reduce the risk of introducing new threats, and dealing with them if/when they first arrive
- pull together the rural & urban forestry sector with the landscaping / and horticulture sectors, to share understanding and work together



The conference built upon some of the messages from the conference in January 2013 on "[Tackling the threat to London's trees](#)" and the Kew conference in June 2014 on [Urban Forest resilience](#).

*Rebekah Robinson of RHS briefing delegates on Xylella fastidiosa – a threat to many trees, shrubs and plants*

## Conference Programme and links to presentations

The highly regarded speakers delivered a wide ranging and informative set of presentations, interspersed with discussion and questions on individual subjects amongst all attendees.

Helen Carter	<a href="#">Oriental Chestnut Gall Wasp</a> – Symptoms and operational response to UK outbreak
Jon Stokes	<a href="#">Key messages from the Chalara non-woodland management plan</a>
Andrew Hoppit	<a href="#">Oak Processionary Moth</a> – current extent & control
Keith Sacre	<a href="#">London iTree Report: the ecosystem service and economic cost of pests &amp; diseases</a>
James Roberts	<a href="#">Biosecurity</a>
Andrew Salisbury	<a href="#">Tree pests – RHS Perspective</a>
Rebekah Robinson	<a href="#">Xylella fastidiosa: a European threat</a>
Ana Perez-Sierra	<a href="#">TreeAlert: a new way to report tree pests and diseases</a>
Joan Webber	<a href="#">Other existing P&amp;Ds in the SE&amp;L area; horizon scanning and analysis of potential pests of the future</a>
Nick Hazlitt	<a href="#">Cross Border Plant Health Service: Overview, challenges and current focus in a world of international trade</a>

Alison Field, Forestry Commission SE & London Area Director gave concluding messages. After the main conference, delegates either partook in a Chalara Local Action Plan workshop or had a tour of the Gardens from RHS staff



Wes Olcliffe, Gardens Manager, gives delegates a tour of the RHS Wisley Gardens

## Key conference messages and discussions

### Working together

The broad range of conference delegates was quite unique. It highlighted our united interest in tackling these threats and the need to work together to minimise their impact, using the collective range of tools available e.g. regulations, procurement, biosecurity, education and advice.



*Delegates came from urban and rural areas; from public to private bodies and NGOs; forestry, arboriculture, landscaping and horticulture sectors; from policy and research to delivery.*

### Knowledge

The conference highlighted the need to understand how pests and diseases differ in their biology, and that operating context affects our response. This knowledge helps us prevent introduction or spread of pests and diseases, and helps us minimise the impact they have, by planning and implementing appropriate controls / responses.

## Key conference messages and discussions



The 'Keep it Clean' campaign encourages everyone to help reduce the risk of pest and disease transmission.



Reports of suspected tree health sightings should be sent to Tree Alert for further investigation.

### Building resilience

Whilst we can reduce risks, we have to be realistic and tackle the issue through increased resilience. This includes the use of a range of tree species suited to the site and are able to cope with expected future climatic conditions; implementing good practice so trees remain healthy and can best cope with threats; and building a tree resource for future generations to enjoy.

### Practical response

The conference provided practical advice on what we can all do. To prevent introduction of pests and diseases there are international controls and inspections to intercept risks. We can apply citizen science, reporting through Tree Alert, biosecurity and asking questions when procuring trees. Where a threat has been found, early and robust responses significantly increase the chance of preventing major spread and impact.



*At RBG Kew, a fantastic specimen of *Aesculus indica* 'Sydney Pearce' (1935) – an example of a potential alternative species that doesn't suffer from Horse Chestnut Leaf Miner*

### **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks go to everyone involved in organising and attending the conference.