

**Issue 2: January 2014****Phytophthora—*P. ramorum* and *P. kernoviae***

With the five year *Phytophthora* Disease Management Programme coming to an end in March 2014, the FCE plant health team and colleagues from the Food & Environment Research Agency (Fera) visited Cornwall last December to obtain a first-hand view of the state of the disease and the management programme.

Some key lessons learnt:

- Prompt and stringent removal of sporulating hosts (including larch and rhododendron) is required to arrest disease spread.



Fig 1: *P. Ramorum*

- Larch clearance has major benefits in terms of limiting collateral damage to neighbouring conifers and to plants of significance to biodiversity e.g. bilberry
- Huge biodiversity benefits from *Rhododendron ponticum* clearance

Compliance flights

A flight was undertaken on the 5 December and targeted 41 SPHN areas that had compliance dates from 31 August up to the 31 December. Inflight observations and photo analysis indicated eight sites had not started (20%), 11 had work in progress (27%) and 22 were complete (53%). An interim flight to assess progress of sites with a compliance date of 31 March 14 will be undertaken during the middle of February.

Chalara

During September 2013 the annual wider environment Chalara rapid survey was undertaken. Our specialist contract surveyors were engaged to conduct a rapid assessment for the presence, or not, of Chalara as a follow on from the previous rapid assessment conducted by FC and staff from the Defra network in 2012, and subsequent positive site identification by the PH England Team. The survey work was concentrated on the eastern side of the country to assess the spread of the disease from known points of infection. Sites showing visual symptoms of infection were then confirmed by laboratory analysis of samples. The [results map](#) can be seen on econnect.

Continuing Chalara assessments are on-going through routine PH England team work and investigation of sites reported via external sources such as [Tree Alert](#).



Oak Processionary Moth (OPM)

FCE have been working with stakeholders to develop a more coordinated, effective and efficient control programme in London and beyond. In March 2013 Defra made available an additional £2M of funding for 2013/14 to complement the work already taking place, which was rapidly implemented before OPM larval emergence began.



Fig 2: Oak Processionary Moth

Given this work the headline outcomes are:

A 53% reduction in total nest numbers from 10,163 in 2012 to 4,756 in 2013, reversing the previous increase in nest numbers. Anecdotal evidence suggests nest size and larval numbers are also reduced.

A reduction in OPM annual rate of spread (by area) from 50% in 2012 to less than 17%.

Major efficiency savings through a single control contract and good contractor / stakeholder collaboration

Improved stakeholder collaboration, not just because control is part paid for, but a genuine common commitment to the control programme, evidence of collaboration and evidence of successful impact on the ground and far wider public awareness due to communications effort.

Based on what we have learned it has been recommended that we continue the strategy of eradicating OPM outbreaks, except in West London where the strategy of containment should remain. The positive impact of the 2013 programme gives confidence that the spread can be contained, and the complementary research efforts and increased operational knowledge will hopefully create opportunities for eradication in future.

Acute Oak Decline (AOD) - England and Wales

A survey programme started late last year aimed at establishing the boundaries of AOD. The main aims of sampling, modelling and mapping are to estimate the boundaries and extent of the condition, estimate severity/incidence for certain sites, and to predict the risk and spatial spread of AOD in Britain.

Results from this work will allow FR colleagues to think about preventing spread into unaffected areas. This work is part of a larger [Defra funded project](#) looking into the causes, distribution and scale of AOD in the UK.



Fig 3 : Acute Oak Decline



Asian Longhorn Beetle (ALB)

Paddock Wood, Kent remains the focal point for surveys as a result of the outbreak in 2012, and annual surveys will be needed for up to four years. Zones from 100m to 800m have been established for surveying purposes, although there are sentinel trees and traps out to, just beyond, 2kms. Each suspect tree is tagged with a tree number, barrier taped for easy identification, and recorded in terms of GPS location/DBH/Height/species and details of the suspect symptoms seen. Each tree is then revisited by climbers/FC/FR staff so as to remove the suspect limbs to look for the presence of ALB.

This work is scheduled during winter to coincide with leaf fall and to be completed well before adult emergence period. If evidence of ALB is found then eradication of all potential host trees to 100m from each infected tree will start immediately.



Fig 4: Asian Longhorn Beetle



Dothistroma Needle Blight (DNB)

In England DNB has effectively halted the growth of large areas of Corsican Pine and in Scotland DNB is threatening the Caledonian Pine woods. We need a better picture of its effect in England on Scots Pine and therefore intend to undertake a second "intensive" survey to look at the health of those crops that are shown to be positive from our survey last year. This will then be repeated to build up a picture of crop decline over time. Our first survey resulted in the identification of approximately 75 positive sites.

Next season we will also consider expanding other DNB work to include SP > 10 years old.

Fig 5: Dothistroma Needle Blight

Sweet Chestnut Blight

A survey late last year was completed with nothing being found. This information will be used to support the UK protected zone status. This supports the introduction of new restrictions on movement of sweet chestnut (and plane) to protect UK tree species. These new regulations mean that movements of sweet chestnut trees in, around and out of England will need to be accompanied by official documentation confirming they are from an area free of any disease. In the US 4 billion trees were lost to chestnut blight in the 20th century so this new legislation will help keep the UK free from chestnut blight.



Fig 6: Sweet Chestnut Blight



Other....

Staff

Plant Health GB has asked that the FCE Plant Health team provide support to port inspections, in the short term initially. This work will include:

- Phytophthora ramorum inspection of premises in response to an application to become a licenced processor
- Overview of Wood Packaging Material (WPM) inspection work at Felixstowe and Southampton
- Review of WPM inspection data capture and presentation of statistics in standardised format
- Ongoing support for and monitoring of port inspectors.

Biosecurity

As mentioned in the latest [Connect Bulletin](#), issue 410, new guidance has been issued on biosecurity disinfectants. The [guidance](#) is available on the [plant health pages](#) of the intranet.

Defra Plant Health Business Case

In line with it being one of Defra's top four priorities the department has identified extra funds for plant health for 14/15 and 15/16. FC and Fera have been advising on the nature of activities that require funding. These include enhanced import inspections, capacity to undertake pest risk assessments to support strengthened legislation, continued activity on Phytophthora and OPM, additional inland surveillance capacity, enhanced science capacity to guide inspectors and surveyors and to process incoming reports. Ministers will make final decisions in the next few weeks and we envisage some new posts being established in England, FR and GB as a result.

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