

Briefing 7

Strategy for ash die back

Summary

The Chalara Control Plan includes new actions to research spore production at infected sites, sharing experiences with European countries, developing ObservaTREE, a tree health early warning system using volunteers and working with the horticulture and nursery sectors on long term resilience. The task force recommends setting up a UK Risk Register, strengthening biosecurity, a review of legislation, appointing a Chief Plant Health Officer, improving epidemiological intelligence, developing contingency planning, developing quick access to data about tree health and addressing skills shortages.

This paper is taken from the Defra publication "The Chalara Control Strategy" which can be found in full at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2012/12/06/pb13843-chalara-control-plan/>. It is also taken from the interim report of a Task Force on Tree and Plant Health force which is at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2012/12/06/pb13842-tree-taskforce-interim/>

The Government has already introduced a number of control measures to reduce the speed of spread. A ban on import of ash trees and movement of trees around the country will remain in place.

Landowners and conservation organisations will continue to work with government agencies to check sites across the UK for signs of infected trees.

The Control Plan outlines some additional actions including:

- researching spore production at infected sites;
- working closely with other European countries that have been affected by Chalara to share data and experience on resistance to the disease;
- funding a study to accelerate the development of the ObservaTREE, a tree health early warning system using volunteer groups; and
- working with the horticulture and nursery sectors on long-term resilience to the impact of Chalara and other plant health threats.

An independent Task Force on Tree and Plant Health has also published its interim recommendations after it was set up by Professor Ian Boyd, Defra's Chief Scientific Adviser, to assess the current disease threats to the UK:

The Task Force's interim recommendations are that the Government should:

- develop a prioritised UK Risk Register for tree health and plant biosecurity;
- strengthen biosecurity to reduce risks at the border and within the UK;
- appoint a Chief Plant Health Officer to own the UK Risk Register and provide strategic and tactical leadership for managing those risks;
- review, simplify and strengthen governance and legislation;
- maximise the use of epidemiological intelligence from EU/other regions and work to improve the EU regulations concerned with tree and plant biosecurity;
- develop and implement procedures for preparedness and contingency planning to predict, monitor and control the spread of disease;
- develop a modern, user-friendly, expert system to provide quick and intelligent access to data about tree health and plant biosecurity;
- identify and address key skills shortages.

Notes

For further information on ash dieback visit www.forestry.gov.uk/shalara.

Information on other pests and diseases that pose a threat to our native plants and trees can be found at <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-6ABL5V>.

Alan Spedding, 12th December 2012