

Tree Health and Plant Biosecurity Expert Taskforce

Terms of Reference

Summary

Professor Ian Boyd, Defra's Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA), has convened a Tree Health and Plant Biosecurity¹ Expert Taskforce to support Defra's response to tree and plant disease outbreaks. The Taskforce will draw on and review evidence to provide recommendations to identify risks to the UK from tree pests and pathogens and on the steps necessary to prepare for and deal with outbreaks.

The Taskforce will provide independent expertise on tree and plant health and will support Defra's CSA in ensuring the Secretary of State for Defra has access to the most up-to-date and robust evidence to inform decisions on dealing with tree and plant disease outbreaks. The Taskforce will work towards a new UK Tree and Plant Health Strategy and will be giving focus and drive to work already underway as part of the Tree Health and Plant Biosecurity Action Plan.

Aims of the Taskforce:

- To review domestic and international risks presented from new and emerging tree and related plant pests and pathogens, including using best available evidence, assessment of risk status, and appropriate risk assessment tools.
- To provide an independent perspective on costs and benefits to inform priority setting and resource allocation.
- To identify potential obstacles to removing barriers to improve tree health and plant biosecurity, and suggest ways of resolving them.
- To make use of international best practice in tree health and plant biosecurity management.
- To produce a rapid evidence assessment and make recommendations for next steps including identifying crucial knowledge gaps.

¹The Taskforce will focus on tree health and related Biosecurity in Great Britain. This includes trees in woodlands, forests and in the wider environment, including amenity, fruit, and urban trees. Woody shrubs associated with trees and green spaces, are relevant as either a pathway of introduction/spread of serious pest and pathogen threats, or where they act as sources of infection or infestation of trees (LWEC, 2011). Available at [Securing Tree Health in a Changing Environment](#).

- To consider whether the current plant health policy and delivery infrastructure and risk mitigation framework needs to be overhauled and make recommendations for change, if required.
- To review the current contingency planning and emergency response arrangements and recommend changes, if required.

Governance:

The Taskforce is chaired by Professor Chris Gilligan and will report to Professor Ian Boyd, Defra's Chief Scientific Adviser who will in turn make recommendations to Defra's Secretary of State. It is acknowledged that Taskforce members may have links to other groups working on behalf of Defra or may be in receipt of Defra funding. Any potential conflicts of interest will be recorded. The Taskforce will be supported by a public sector Officials Advisory Group, and external peer reviewers.

The outputs of the Taskforce are expected to be:

- (i) an interim report including evidence-based recommendations (by end Nov 2012);
- (ii) a final report on the Taskforce's strategic view of the evidence (Spring 2013).

Taskforce Members

Professor Christopher Gilligan (Chair):

Professor of Mathematical Biology, University of Cambridge.

Professor Robert Fraser:

Professor of Agricultural Economics, University of Kent.

Professor Charles Godfray:

Hope Professor of Zoology (Entomology), University of Oxford.

Professor Nicholas Hanley:

Professor of Environmental Economics, University of Stirling.

Professor Simon Leather:

Professor of Entomology, Harper Adams University.

Professor Thomas Meagher:

Professor of Plant Biology, University of St Andrews.

Professor John Mumford: (from January 2013)

Professor of Natural Resource Management, Imperial College London.

Professor Judith Petts CBE:

Professor of Environmental Risk Management, University of Southampton.

Professor Nicholas Pidgeon:

Professor of Environmental Psychology, Cardiff University.

Dr Clive Potter: (from January 2013)

Reader in Environmental Policy, Imperial College London.

Professor Michael Shaw: (from January 2013)

Professor of Plant Disease Ecology, University of Reading.

Dr Jens-Georg Unger:

Head of the Institute for National and International Plant Health in Germany.

Dr Stephen Woodward:

Reader at the School of Biological Sciences, University of Aberdeen.

Professor Michael Jeger, Observer (November meeting):

Imperial College London