



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Plant disease, plant pest and invasive alien species prevention and control (England) scheme.

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Contents

Scheme background:	1
Aim:.....	2
Objective:.....	2
Legal basis:.....	3
State Aid:	3
Avoidance of overcompensation:	3
Aid intensity:	4
Aid cumulation:	4
Control of costs:.....	4
Eligibility:.....	4
Duration:	5
Payment:.....	5
Eligible activities for which aid may be paid:	5
How to participate:	6
Annex 1:.....	7
Annex 2:.....	8

Scheme background:

In August 2011, the UK Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) launched “Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England’s wildlife and ecosystem services”. The mission for this strategy includes halting overall biodiversity loss, supporting healthy well-functioning ecosystems, and establishing coherent ecological networks. The strategy contains specific outcome targets for achievement by 2020 including: Better wildlife habitats with 90% of priority habitats in favourable or recovering condition and at least 50% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in favourable condition, while maintaining at least 95% in favourable or recovering condition; No net loss of priority habitat and an increase in the overall extent of priority habitats by at least 200,000 hectares; and restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems as a contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

In the past few years, a number of new plant diseases, plant pests and invasive alien species have emerged as significant and substantial risks to achieving biodiversity objectives in England. Threats to England’s plant health and wider biodiversity from pests, diseases and invasive alien species have increased with the globalisation of trade and increased travel opportunities generally, with a marked increase in the volume and diversity of plants, animals, seeds, soil, plant products, and animal products entering the country. This has increased the likelihood of plant diseases, plant pests and invasive alien species also being introduced, spreading through gardens, woodlands, heathlands, and the wider countryside, and potentially causing serious damage to our native and exotic flora and fauna. Predicted climate change effects, such as warmer winters and changes in seasonal rainfall and storm patterns, are also likely to increase the risk of disease, pest and invasive alien species arrival, transfer, establishment, spread and impact.

These threats have been highlighted by an increasing number of plant disease and plant pest outbreaks in the England, including, for example, *Phytophthora ramorum*, *Phytophthora kernoviae*, and *Phytophthora austrocedrae* affecting trees, heathland plants and heritage gardens; oak processionary moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*); asian longhorn beetle (*Anoplophora glabripennis*) and red band needle blight (*Dothistroma septosporum*). A list of plant diseases and plant pests that require, or may require, prevention and control measures to be undertaken in England is attached at Annex 1.

In addition, invasive alien species have an impact on native biodiversity in a number of ways, such as displacing or preying upon native species, dominating habitats or by introducing new diseases or parasites. Their impacts can take decades to become apparent but, by their very nature, once established they are likely to cause long term effects. Appreciation of the impacts of invasive alien species has grown significantly. They are currently costing Britain at least £1.7billion per annum in damage and management costs and it is estimated that the European equivalent figure exceeds €12billion. Evidence indicates that the number of alien species being introduced to Europe is increasing and so the cost is likely to continue to increase if the problem is not addressed.

These threats have been highlighted by an increasing number of invasive alien species arrivals in the England, including, for example, Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Creeping water primrose (*Ludwigia peploides*), Killer shrimp (*Dikerogammarus villosus*), Monk parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*), Oak processionary moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*), Carpet sea squirt (*Didemnum vexillum*), American bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeianus*), Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*), and Asian longhorn beetle (*Anoplophora glabripennis*). A list of examples of invasive alien species that require, or may require, prevention and control measures to be undertaken in England is attached at Annex 2.

Aim:

A key need is to facilitate land managers' adaptation to the threats now posed

by currently known plant diseases, plant pests and invasive alien species (also known as invasive alien species) to the native and exotic flora and fauna of England. Those based in areas of low risk of plant disease or plant pest pressure or invasion by alien species may be able to adapt their management practices accordingly, whereas others may need to shift their focus to alternative species where this is an environmentally sustainable option.

Natural England (NE) has therefore decided to establish a plant disease, plant pest and invasive alien species prevention and control scheme which will provide support for the management of affected plants, host plants, plants at significant risk of becoming affected or host plants, sites, habitats, and other areas at significant risk of becoming affected by invasive alien species, in order to achieve both prevention and control and also to increase future resilience to currently known plant diseases, plant pests, and invasives.

Objective:

To prevent, control and reduce plant diseases, plant pests, and invasive alien species to epidemiologically insignificant levels wherever reasonably possible by removing affected plants, potential host plants and invasives from affected and high risk areas and thereby reduce the risk of significant impacts on the health of trees, shrubs, other native and exotic flora and fauna, the commercial plant trade and ornamental garden sector, and other features of England's biodiversity.

The prevention and control scheme aims to maintain a plant disease-resilient, plant pest-resilient and an invasives-resilient land management sector in England as an integral part of the sustainable management of nature, biodiversity, ecosystems, and the wider countryside in England.

Legal basis:

Payments would be made by Natural England under the powers provided for in sections 2-10 and 13 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

State Aid:

This scheme is in accordance with Article 26 of the Agricultural Block Exemption Regulation (EC Regulation 702/2014). The measures under this scheme will assist in the prevention and eradication of plant diseases, plant pests and invasive alien species:

(a) The gross aid intensity will not exceed 100 %;

(b) The aid shall be granted in kind by means of subsidised services and will

not involve direct payments of revenue money to producers. Producers or third party contractors may only receive payment in respect of their reasonable costs or charges for preventing, and/or controlling, and/or eradicating plant diseases, plant pests and invasive alien species. None of the items for which eligible costs or charges may be reimbursed or paid are expected to lead to an increase in production capacity.

This scheme will not include any aid for replanting costs or technical aid.

This scheme will only be open to micro, small and medium -sized enterprises in accordance with EC Regulation 702/2014.

Avoidance of overcompensation:

Natural England (NE), as the scheme's managing authority, will ensure that there is no overcompensation. To this end, NE will ensure that all applicants are clearly identified and the activities they intend to undertake are based on fair and open market valuations and reasonable costs.

If it becomes evident from any application that payments would result in an aid intensity exceeding eligible costs, the applicant will be required to amend the application accordingly to ensure that the aid intensity will not exceed eligible costs.

Moreover, each contract concluded with the beneficiary will provide for a mechanism to reclaim aid already paid (interest included) should the beneficiary fail to comply with the contractual terms, including failure to carry out the works agreed.

NE will ensure that no overlap occurs with other publicly funded measures to cover the same eligible costs, for example where actions are required by public order as part of a compulsory programme. NE will administer the scheme on an internal IT system, and the risk of dual funding will be minimised by carrying out constraints checks in advance to ascertain the existence of other funded agreements that might overlap with the scheme.

Aid intensity:

Activities pursuant to Article 26 of Commission Regulation 702/2014 will have an aid intensity of up to 100% of eligible expenditure. NE gives its assurance that in no case would the aid intensity exceed 100%.

Aid cumulation:

NE confirms that the aid under the present scheme will not be cumulated with any aid received from other public resources to cover the same eligible costs.

Control of costs:

The scheme authority will ensure that the total payments to any individual land manager for all eligible activities shall be the fair and reasonable costs and/or losses incurred, after deduction of the total market value [if any] of destroyed plants or plant material or wild animals which are affected or are at risk of being affected by the spreading of plant diseases, plant pests or invasive alien species, in each of the qualifying years that the scheme will operate.

The costs or losses eligible for aid will also be reduced by any amount(s) received under insurance schemes, or in respect of costs not incurred because of the plant diseases, plant pest or invasive alien species prevention and control measures which would otherwise have been incurred.

Eligibility:

The scheme will be open to all land managers in England which have been specifically requested by NE to carry out plant disease, plant pest or invasive alien species prevention and/or control measures in accordance with the scheme's rules to contribute to the delivery of the UK Government's strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services (known as "Biodiversity 2020" and published by the UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in 2011). NE will normally target its requests to land managers to

carry out prevention and control measures to prioritise the protection of international and national designated nature conservation sites, and their associated habitats and species, according to their relative environmental and wildlife values. NE may also target its requests to land managers to carry out prevention and control measures to address threats from EU and/or UK blacklisted invasive alien species.

Duration:

The scheme will be available in financial year 2014/2015 commencing from 1st January 2015 and, at NE's discretion and subject to the availability of funding resources, payments will also be available in 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20, and 2020/21. No further commitments to make payments will be made after 31st December 2020.

Payment:

Support will only be available for eligible activities and measures undertaken after an appropriate contractual agreement has been signed by the relevant land manager and NE. The contractual agreements will normally be of up to five years in duration, with the possibility of up to ten years in exceptional circumstances, in order to ensure that both the initial measures and any necessary follow-up actions are carried out as part of integrated programmes of prevention and control.

Eligible activities for which aid may be paid:

The costs of the necessary administrative activities to implement the overall scheme will be borne by NE.

The scheme comprises the following measures in accordance with Article 26:

As part of the scheme, qualifying land managers will be required to enter into a

contractual agreement with NE to deliver the appropriate plant disease, and/or plant pest and/or invasive alien species prevention and control measures on land and other property over which they have sufficient control.

The aim of the management agreement is to identify the current and potential future threats presented by plant diseases, and/or plant pests, and/or invasive alien species on the subject land, and the prevention, control, and adaptation measures required to address them.

Each management agreement will have an agreed management plan contained within it. The management plan will set out what management is to be carried out during the management agreement, including as appropriate:

- Assessment of the plant diseases, plant pests and invasive alien species that are threatening biodiversity interest features on the land, including any necessary surveys, testing (including genetic analyses), sampling, identification (e.g. of plants, diseases, wild animals, pests, hosts, locations, vectors, and pathways), diagnostics, risk mapping, and other investigation activities.
- Estimation of the costs associated with the prevention and control actions that are required to achieve the appropriate prevention and control measures.
- Actions to reduce plant disease, and/or plant pest, and/or invasive alien species pressures both on and, where feasible, in the vicinity of the sites of biodiversity interest features; including clearance, removal and disposal of plants, plant material, pests, and/or wild animals by appropriate legal means, biological controls, and follow-up treatments where appropriate.
- Plant disease, plant pest and invasive alien species surveillance and monitoring.
- Reasonable fees for essential professional advice and works project management activities wholly, necessarily, and exclusively related to the achievement of the management agreement objectives.
- Changes to land and other property management practices on the land to either avoid plant diseases and/or plant pests and/or invasive alien species arriving or to reduce risks to acceptable levels for biodiversity interest features and objectives. For example: Identify changes to any chemical, physical, or biological treatments of plants, pests, wild animals and environments to minimise plant disease infection, plant pest infestation, or invasive alien species spread and infestation, and avoid masking infections, transfers, spreading or infestations; Infrastructure improvements on the land to improve plant disease, plant pest and invasive alien species management and reduce the risk of future infections, arrivals, transfers, spreading and/or infestations.
- Biosecurity measures and enhancements on and around the land containing the biodiversity interest features, including the provision of information and standardised advice to relevant stakeholders.

How to participate:

Eligible participants should contact: Mr Julian Hosking (julian.hosking@naturalengland.org.uk) at Natural England, who will provide a scheme management agreement information request form.

Annex 1:

Plant diseases and plant pests that require, or may require, prevention and control measures to be undertaken in England to protect biodiversity

1. Phytophthora – ramorum, kernoviae, austrocedrae, pseudosyringae, alni, lateralis, cactorum.
2. Acute Oak decline.
3. Dutch Elm disease.
4. Ash dieback.
5. Horse Chestnut bleeding canker.
6. Box blight.
7. Apple proliferation phytoplasma.
8. Dothistroma (Red band) needle blight.
9. [Sweet] Chestnut blight.
10. Brown spot needle blight.
11. Pine pitch canker.
12. Oak wilt.
13. Plane wilt.
14. Large pine weevil.
15. Great spruce bark beetle.
16. Oak Processionary moth.
17. Pine tree lappet moth.
18. Eight-toothed Europe spruce bark beetle.
19. Citrus longhorn beetle.
20. Asian longhorn beetle.
21. Pine wood nematode.
22. Spruce budworm.
23. Sweet Chestnut gall wasp.

24. Emerald Ash borer.
25. Emerald Birch borer.
26. Oak pinhole borer.
27. Horse Chestnut leaf miner.
28. Grey squirrel.
29. Muntjac deer.
30. Sika deer.
31. Wild boar.
32. Other plant diseases and plant pests that are similar, or known exotic species that may arrive in England, or that may yet be discovered or identified, or that are currently unknown to science.

Annex 2:

Indicative examples of invasive alien species that require, or may require, prevention and control measures to be undertaken in England to protect biodiversity:

1. Himalayan Balsam
2. Japanese Knotweed
3. Rhododendron
4. Giant Hogweed
5. Pirri Pirri Burr
6. Creeping Water Primrose
7. Floating Pennywort
8. Parrot's Feather
9. Australian Swamp Stonecrop
10. Water Fern
11. Wireweed
12. Wakame
13. Harpoon Weed

14. Devil's Tongue Weed
15. Common Cord Grass
16. (American) Mink
17. Ruddy Duck
18. Asian Hornet
19. Non-native subspecies of Bumblebees
20. Non-native Newts
21. Monk Parakeet
22. Rose-ringed Parakeet
23. Eagle Owl
24. Killer Shrimp
25. Signal Crayfish
26. Topmouth Gudgeon
27. Zebra Mussel
28. Quagga Mussel
29. American Bullfrog
30. Marsh Frog
31. Edible Frog
32. Chinese Mitten Crab