

Forest Services Board

27 June 2019

TREE HEALTH RESILIENCE STRATEGY

Purpose

1. To **update** the Board on Forestry Commission (FC) involvement in the delivery of the Tree Health Resilience Strategy and seek their views on progress to date and next steps.

Recommendation(s)

2. That the FS Board notes the **key progress** to-date and next steps.

Background

3. The threat to the health of our trees from pests and diseases is real and increasing. It is imperative that we do all we can to reduce these threats.
4. In 2018 government published the Tree Health Resilience Strategy. The strategy set out an approach designed to reduce the risk of pest and disease threats occurring and to strengthen the resilience of our trees to withstand threats.
5. The strategy takes a proactive approach to tree health, with landowners, industry, charities, the public and government working together to build resilience.
6. The strategy will be delivered over 5 years through a National Action Plan (NAP). The NAP is divided into 11 priority areas (See Annex 1, page 39 to 45) and includes actions to build resilience and protect the value of our treescape.

Notable highlights in the first year of the strategy

7. Notable highlights in the first year of the strategy with direct FC involvement:
 - **Resistance:** Development of a new FC Tree and Plant Health (Forestry) Comms campaign to be launched later this summer; Initial preparations for the International Year of Plant Health 2020; Continued development of the UK Plant Health Risk Register (contains 1,040 pests as of 14/06/2019); Establishing stronger biosecurity protections e.g. on Oak Processionary Moth and Xylella; Planning for implementation of the new EU Regulations e.g. timber passporting; Use of statutory notification for solid fuelwood to target high risk commodities; Launch of the HTA Plant Health Management Standard.

- **Response and recovery:** Preparedness reviews on Xylella and Emerald Ash Borer; Forestry Commission 2019 'Noble Fir' contingency planning exercise; Extensive aerial and ground surveillance; Launch of Observatree phase two and volunteer training; Active encouragement of reporting through TreeAlert (1380 reports in April 18/19 compared to 974 in April 17/18); Management of the *Ips typographus* outbreak; New FC ash dieback management guidance; Tree Council Ash dieback Toolkit launched; Action Oak launched.
 - **Adaptation:** Initial development of Tree Health Grant proposals; Launch of the urban tree manual.
8. Next steps for **Government** led activities include:
- Continued collaboration between Forestry Commission and Defra Tree Health, Plant Health and Comms colleagues, including **development of Spending Review 2019 bids** to support delivery of the Tree Health Resilience Strategy.
 - Enhanced collaboration with the above players and Defra Forest Policy colleagues to ensure that the **England Tree strategy** reflects and supports the successful delivery of the Tree Health Resilience Strategy, particularly with regards to the 'Adaptation' activities.
9. Next key areas for focus of **sector** led actions are:
- **Sharing intelligence** – Sharing intelligence about plant sourcing and supply chains between government and industry networks, and between nurseries, with a focus on high risk trades and purchasing practices. The ambition is to foster a greater spirit of openness, allowing us to collectively tackle issues as early as possible. This includes the potential for self-inspection on arrival of consignments and prompt reporting of anything suspicious.
 - **Responsible procurement** – Work together to help minimise the importation of high risk planting material by encouraging improvements in procurement strategies. This may involve changes to practices to specify safe sourcing, voluntary agreements on high risk hosts and commodities, as well as improving awareness within some sectors to adopt more bio-secure and sustainable practices.
 - **Assurance and certification schemes** – Continued support for assurance schemes, whilst raising awareness of the schemes and ensuring collaboration between schemes.
 - **Strengthening biosecurity practices** – Emphasise biosecurity in routine management operations e.g. cleaning machinery and equipment prior to movement between sites; sourcing quality planting stock; managing sub-contractors to achieve high standards. Explore potential for new approaches including, for example, the concept of quarantine for high risk hosts.

Questions for the FS Board

10. We invite the Board to comment on the key progress to date (point 6) and focus of the next steps (point 7 and 8):

- Are you content with the progress to date?
- Do you agree that the Government led next steps are the correct focus for FS input?
- Any thoughts on helping to ensure successful delivery of the sector-led actions?

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