

<b>PLANT HEALTH AND TREE DISEASE – update on Committee Position Paper on Tree Disease.</b>			<b>February 2016</b>
<b>Key issues</b>	<b>ARD Committee Recommendations March 2013</b>	<b>Forest Service Plant Health Directorate Outcome to date</b>	<b>Further actions planned</b>
<b>Legislative</b>	Paragraph 13: Bring forward pre-notification legislation.	Forest Service Plant Health Directorate (PHD) is working closely with industry and monitoring imports to prevent the introduction of a wide range of plant pests and diseases. This includes documentary and physical checks on plant health regulated material from third countries and the monitoring of consignments from EU countries on shipping manifests.	The Minister is still considering pre-notification legislation as a method for gathering information on imports of plants for planting that pose a risk to native tree health from other EU countries.
	Paragraph 14: Engage with DEFRA /Commission and MEPs to ensure new EU legislation takes account of NI plant health	PHD officials have represented NI on the working group led by DEFRA which is implementing the new Plant Health Regulation and contributed to the scrutiny of the proposed articles within the new EU Plant Health Law.	PHD staff will consult with NI MEPs to ensure NI plant health is taken account of in the new Smarter Rules for Safer Food reforms. The new Plant Health law will be implemented over a three year period following agreement at EU level.
<b>DARD Forest Service roles and responsibilities regarding prevention, monitoring and tackling tree diseases.</b>	Paragraph 27: Horizon scanning and planning for plant health disease and threats is inadequate, ensure that DARD can	PHD have commissioned AFBI to develop a NI Plant Health Risk Register which is currently in draft. The register, based on the DEFRA	DARD will work with AFBI to finalise the Risk Register and facilitate a user friendly web based facility to inform stakeholders of current plant

	adequately plan and respond to future plant health and tree disease threats	Risk Register will enable NI focused and locally informed horizon scanning which will allow a more targeted response to plant health risks here. The NI Plant Health Risk Register will be aligned with the DEFRA Plant Health Risk Register and will be reviewed monthly by AFBI scientists and PHD. This will be the key tool in risk assessment and management and will be delivered in a web based format with DARD facing and public facing pages.	health and pest risks to NI agriculture, horticulture, and forestry sectors. The economic impact of NI key risks will be assessed and the cost effectiveness of controls determined to enable targeted mitigation and controls. This will lead to the development of pest specific contingency plans for the key threats identified.
	Paragraph 29: Ensure succession planning for plant health specialists is included in DARD and AFBI business planning	The shortage of scientific expertise in plant health has been increased due to VES in AFBI. The remaining locally based plant pathologist has recently retired. The same skills shortage in plant pathology expertise exists across Ireland and the UK The UK Chief Plant Health Officer is leading a campaign to encourage the recruitment of Plant Health professionals and establish a professional register for those working in this	A replacement AFBI Plant Pathologist is being recruited. PHD staff are engaging in a pilot project to establish registration and the accreditation of local plant health professionals working within the UK Plant Health Service.

		discipline.	
	<p>Paragraph 30: Formal resource plan with AFBI and DARD FS re testing and other assistance for future plant health disease outbreaks. Assurance that DARD FS can continue to absorb resource demand.</p>	<p>Since the first outbreaks of Ash Dieback in November 2012, PHD has resourced annual surveillance and control programmes for the disease. This has included the seasonal recruitment of additional inspectors and the deployment of Forest Service operational staff in the removal of affected trees. Resourcing of this work remains under review in line with the current Ash Dieback policy. PHD have an agreed annual Assigned Work Programme with AFBI for the delivery of diagnostics and advice on plant health PHD have developed a Business Case to secure the needed additional resources to enable the plant health risk to be managed effectively .</p>	<p>The business case for resourcing Plant Health will be considered by senior management for affordability, value for money and the potential for delivery to mitigate the acknowledged risk rating in the DARD Corporate Risk Register. If successful additional identified priority and business critical plant health posts will be filled subject to the current NICS recruitment policies.</p>
<p><b>Contingency plans for tackling tree disease and Ash Dieback in particular</b></p>	<p>Paragraph 40: Finalise draft Chalara Control Plan</p>	<p>The All Ireland Chalara Control Strategy was agreed in July 2013 and has been implemented to manage the Ash Dieback outbreaks in the North and South. This Strategy is undergoing</p>	<p>The current review of the Ash Dieback control policy in NI will lead to a subsequent review of the All Ireland Chalara Control Strategy and the development of appropriate implementation</p>

		current review (in conjunction with DAFM and DEFRA) to ensure it effectively manages the disease risk on the island given the risk of spread to the wider countryside.	measures with the contingency plan to be amended accordingly.
<b>Relationship between DARD FS and stakeholders.</b>	Paragraph 46: Integrate stakeholders into surveillance, planning and testing aspects of tree disease and controls	An integrated approach to managing the plant health risk has been undertaken. Several workshops were held in autumn 2015 which were attended by environmental NGOs and other key stakeholders such as Council representatives and farming organisations. Stakeholder engagement has resulted in more co-operative working on tree and plant health issues enabling clearer communication and greater engagement with stakeholders including the Woodland Trust, National Trust, RSPB and Ulster Wildlife. The launch of the joint DARD/DAFM Tree Check Smartphone App has also encouraged greater stakeholder engagement in managing the plant health risk.	Encourage greater shared responsibility and stakeholder participation in plant health through consultations on policy reviews and management strategies as well as further training of observers to supplement targeted surveillance programmes .

	<p>Paragraph 59 Provide assistance to nursery trade to enable local tree stock to be grown</p>	<p>CAFRE has provided training, knowledge and technology transfer and business development support to the nursery stock sector including those engaged in tree production.</p>	<p>CAFRE seeks to build on the training, knowledge and technology transfer and business development support through the Business Development Group Scheme under the new Rural Development Programme.</p>
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