

PHYTOPHTHORA INDUSTRY LIAISON GROUP

24 August 2009 – Foss House, York

Present:	Martin Ward	Fera (Chair)
	Tim Edwards	NFU
	David Brown	HTA
	Beatrice Henricot	RHS
	Caroline Harrison	ConFor (by phone)
	Tracy Wilson	
	John Richardson	
	David Slawson	Fera
	Keith Walters	Fera
	Iain Johnstone	Fera (Secretary)

1. Welcome and apologies

- 1.1 An apology had been received from Ian Wright (National Trust) who was unable to attend due to illness.

2. Project scope/Governance

- 2.1 A Project Board will oversee delivery in England and Wales of the new project against *Phytophthora ramorum* and *Phytophthora kernoviae*, which is owned by Defra and delivered on their behalf by Fera.
- 2.2 Similar projects to control and eradicate *Phytophthora ramorum* and *Phytophthora kernoviae* are in place in Scotland and Northern Ireland. On an operational level, the close working relationships which already exist between the programmes in England/Wales and Scotland will be maintained through the twice-yearly UK Co-ordination meetings.
- 2.3 A small high-level Inter-Departmental Programme Board chaired by Defra will provide strategic direction and co-ordination of activity against the diseases across the UK.
- 2.4 It was felt that under the previous programme the Industry Liaison Group had played an important role in maintaining and developing stakeholder engagement, which should continue under the new project. Stakeholder involvement on the Project Board had been considered but it was thought that more could be achieved through a separate, specific stakeholder forum. Although the group is currently lead by Fera, that was not a pre-requisite should one of the other group members be proposed for the role and acceptable to all stakeholders represented.

3. Update on current situation

- 3.1 A detailed report was provided by Keith. The main points and actions arising were:
 - a) The average cost of clearance of *Rhododendron ponticum* was estimated to be £8,000/ha including control of regrowth. Retreatment was not constrained to the same extent as initial clearance by wildlife considerations. Some proactive clearance by landowners was taking place funded through Forestry Commission grant schemes.

- b) A baseline woodland/heathland survey was being conducted to identify disease distribution nationally. Clearance priorities would be assessed based on a risk matrix to be reviewed during the initial stages of the project.
- c) Inspection targets had been rolled forward from the old programme as an interim measure. Inspection levels were currently on track to meet targets.
- d) It was thought that contractor involvement in local clearance groups would be useful.

Action 1 – Caroline to suggest possible contractor representatives for clearance groups.

Action 2 – Keith to circulate details of the proposed/agreed research programme.

Action 3 – Iain to circulate final version of the Defra business case to group members.

3.2 Group members provided brief reports on what they were doing to manage outbreaks, their view of the action being taken by Fera and priorities for future action.

- a) David Brown - HTA had been waiting for the outcome of the Reading workshop. A code of practice was being developed for members. There was some concern amongst members that the horticulture trade were seen as an easy target – there was no evidence of a need to increase inspection activity on nurseries.

There is a need for a greater push for a more co-ordinated approach and common effort at EU level.

- b) Tracy Wilson – Species specific LPDs would be useful but recognise it was not possible at the moment. Inspections are not seen as a major issue within the horticulture trade.

Publicity is seen as a priority area. Some disquiet about continuing press scare mongering – there remains a public awareness issue. Not convinced the right message is being transmitted – role for trade in developing and transmitting need for prevention/biosecurity within sensible cost boundaries. Peter Seabrook suggested as useful contact for developing and transmitting right message.

An indication of risk level by species would be useful for gardens although the variety of factors to be taken into account would make it difficult to produce.

- c) Tim Edwards – Still some scepticism within trade about whether there was a problem or not – the trade had a bigger role to play in raising awareness. The Industry Liaison Group could also become involved.

It was important to report successes e.g. reduction in findings.

European consistency was important, including follow-up action on findings on material from other Member States.

More advice needed for gardens on replanting.

- d) John Richardson – Inspections not seen as a problem – two way benefit.

Landscapers seem unknowledgeable of disease in terms of general planting schemes – need for guidelines, perhaps in context of plant health pest and diseases in general.

When purchasing host material visit suppliers to check biosecurity application – contract includes 6-month return if infection develops.

- e) *Beatrice Henricot* – RHS receive around 300 diagnostic samples p.a. – on average around 3 or 4 are positive for *P. ramorum*.

Keen to get involved in awareness campaign.

Further R&D useful on water management and fungicide use.

- f) Caroline Harrison – Project seen as an opportunity as well as a threat by forestry sector.

Possible roles for Tree Council, Tree Officers, Arboriculture Association and Arboriculturalists in awareness campaign.

4. Follow-up to stakeholder workshop, Reading

- 4.1 Some progress had been made in taking forward ideas from the workshop but there was a danger of losing the momentum that had been built up. The concepts identified need to be sifted against the new project to see if they are still valid and the volunteers contacted to see if they still wish to be involved.

Action 4 – Keith to review concepts, contact volunteers and circulate group members with how ideas on how to take things forward.

5. Any other business

- 5.1 It was agreed that a separate website with up to date information for specialist users, such as ILG members, would be useful.
- 5.2 Information on findings, area cleared etc would be provided to group members prior to the next meeting and a highlights report circulated on a two monthly basis.

Action 5 – Keith to circulate report on current findings/area cleared and two monthly highlight report.

6. Next meeting

- 6.1 Possibly linked to an optional visit to see the project in action in the southwest next spring.