

Plant health

Pests and disease represent a growing risk to forestry. Here are some of the issues on which Confor and members of the Confor Nursery Producers Group have been working on behalf of its members over the past year.

- **A UK Plant Health Risk Register:** Confor strongly supported this proposal, attended all the workshops to develop it, and helped test the register which was launched in 2014.
- **UK Chief Plant Health Officer:** Confor supported this proposal. The post was created and Professor Nicola Spence appointed 2014.
- **Procedures for contingency planning:** Confor has fed into the species-specific contingency plans on the Defra Plant Health Portal and has made members aware through Forestry and Timber News, Confor enews, and on our website. The procedure was established in 2013 and the plans are subject to ongoing revision.
- **Improving governance and legislation:** Confor supported the establishment of tree health groups in each nation (see organogram below). We have ongoing representation on all of these groups which give guidance on policy developments, grants and regulations to respond to plant health issues.
- **International information-sharing:** Confor has supported improved procedures for sharing information across the EU. We are concerned that these channels of communication are at risk due to Brexit, so this has become a renewed focus of our work.
- **Biosecurity within the UK:** Confor supports the UK Forestry Commission Keep it Clean Campaign and helped produce the good-practice z-card.
- **International biosecurity:** Confor developed a strong action plan on import control in 2012 which remains current. With increasing awareness of biosecurity issues and Brexit negotiations we are seizing the opportunity to call more strongly for its implementation.
- **Better communication to the sector:** Confor supported the development of planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk. Confor collates and reports key tree health news from around the UK through Forestry and Timber News, Confor enews, and on our website.
- **Supporting research:** Confor has been key in retaining support for Forest Research to continue *P. ramorum* aerial surveys. We are involved in discussions around the devolution of forestry, in particular at present the Forestry and Land Scotland Bill, to ensure that UK-wide forestry research continues. Confor are supporting the breeding programme of *R. grandis* to control *D. micans*.
- **Tackling squirrel damage:** Our ongoing involvement in the European Squirrel Initiative and UK Squirrel Accord has helped create a step-change in government recognition of this threat over the past five years.
- **Reducing deer numbers:** Confor continues to support the creation of Deer Management Groups, and commitment to deer control from landowners like Woodland Trust and National Trust. We have ongoing participation in the Scottish Association of Deer Management Groups, Lowland Deer Network Scotland and England and Wales Deer Initiative.

Confor provides ongoing representation for the industry on plant health at all levels

