**Funding Hylobius Research**

There can be few foresters who have not come across the large pine weevil *Hylobius abietis*, a major pest that affects productive forest investment.

The Hylobius Industry Research Programme (HIRP) is a cross-industry collaborative body working on integrated pest management (IPM) solutions*.* The programme is seeking contributions for further research with several organisations already committing substantial funds over a five-year period to the Scottish Forestry Trust (Scottish Charity No. SC008465) Hylobius Research Fund. Realistically development of any control option is likely to cost at least £0.5 – 1 million over five years and substantial additional funding is still required.

The large pine weevil (*Hylobius abietis*) is the most serious pest of newly planted or naturally regenerating trees on restocking sites within conifer forests in the UK. It is present on mature conifer trees, but only becomes a problem when this food source is removed due to harvesting. Eggs are laid in stumps after harvesting, then adults emerge and feed on young trees. There are two peaks of damage, April/May and July/August. Young trees of all species, both conifers and broadleaves, are at risk until established, which usually occurs 2-5 years after planting.

On affected sites, in the absence of protective measures, losses of replanted trees will average around 50% each year, but 100% losses can occur. On typical UK sites with typical population levels, replanting of woodlands after felling conifer trees therefore becomes impossible.

In the UK, preventing Hylobius damage has been estimated to cost the forest industry at least £8.5 million annually, but if indirect impacts such as delays to revenue received are included, total losses are estimated to be ∼£40 million per year (Willoughby et al., 2020).

Normally, there are no practical alternatives but to treat young plants with insecticide. However, there is increasing pressure to reduce pesticide use, products are being withdrawn from the market and in the longer term it is unlikely that there will be any approved insecticides available to manage this pest. There is a pressing need to identify other effective chemical free approaches.

There are existing products that will offer some protection to planted trees where the *Hylobius* population is low enough. Unfortunately, even using a combination of the best available non-chemical strategies, it is often not possible to avoid the problem of catastrophic *Hylobius* damage to young trees. For these to work we need a method to reduce the background population below its current, extremely damaging level (anywhere between 2 to 5 times levels found in Sweden for example).

Swansea University is hosting the [New IPM: Emerging Opportunities 2024 Symposium](https://www.newipm.com/), 2-4th September, with several HIRP members supporting a Confor led initiative to engage with potential partners across the wider IPM industry to identify potential methods of reducing *Hylobius* populations in the forest.

The symposium will include a dedicated session on forestry but also complementary sessions benefitting the forestry sector, including the use of remote sensing, AI and drones to monitor plant health, the use of microbial agents to protect plants against pests and pathogens as well stimulate plant growth. There are also sessions on semiochemicals which can improve monitoring or protect against pest damage. The event attracts delegates from different industry sectors, offering the opportunity to exchange ideas, share experiences and even network to develop consortia to apply for funds (e.g. Innovate) to accelerate the development of innovative solutions to current challenges facing foresters and other growers.

However, we need to raise sufficient funds from the industry and lodge these with the Scottish Forestry Trust to be able to attract potential partners to help develop new and novel solutions. Ideally, we would have these funds in place in time for the [New IPM: Emerging Opportunities 2024 Symposium](https://www.newipm.com/) in September this year and are calling on all those affected by Hylobius damage to contribute. Funds will be available to one or more organisations capable of developing a viable biological population control option that represents value for money and is both practical and scalable.

HIRP have partnered with the Scottish Forestry Trust to ensure that any funds are managed in an appropriate manner and any awards will be made in line with the trust’s rules and procedures. The Hylobius Industry Research Programme will provide guidance to the trust on the suitability of prospective applicants.

A successful outcome would have huge benefits for the forest industry so please help in the battle against this persistent pest by committing to a meaningful an annual contribution to the Scottish Forestry Trust Hylobius Research Fund.

**Contact**

HIRP Secretary Jemma McLachlan [Jemma.McLachlan@scottishwoodlands.co.uk](mailto:Jemma.McLachlan@scottishwoodlands.co.uk)

**For more information**

HIRP <https://www.confor.org.uk/resources/hylobius-abietis-industry-research-programme-hirp/>

Scottish Forestry Trust Hylobius Research Fund<https://www.scottishforestrytrust.org.uk/hylobius-research-fund>

New IPM: Emerging Opportunities 2024 Symposium <https://www.newipm.com/>