

Natural Resources Wales

Board Meeting

9th July 2013

Paper Title	P ramorum update.
Paper Reference:	NRW B (O) 24.13
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Purpose of Paper:	This paper and annex provide background information on P ramorum in advance of a further update and presentation at the Natural Resources Wales Board meeting on 9 th July 2013.
Recommendation:	To note the impact of P ramorum in larch forests in Wales, the actions that have been taken to control its spread and the next steps being taken.
Decision Required:	N/A

Impact: To note – all headings might not be applicable to the topic	Impact on the Environment: P ramorum is likely to result in the loss of larch from Wales in the medium term. Larch makes up around 8% of the woodlands and forests in Wales and provides an important element of species diversity. P ramorum is also a threat to bilberry, an important component of semi-natural habitats in Wales. In addition to the direct impact of P ramorum, there could be indirect, short-term impacts from large scale clear-felling of infected larch, in terms of landscape and water quality. Impact on the Economy: P ramorum can have an adverse impact on recreation and tourism related businesses in forests areas where there are significant areas of larch. The infection of larch has resource and cost implications for woodland owners, managers and timber processors. Impact on Community: In areas where there is a large amount of larch near communities, P ramorum and the associated clearance can have a significant local visual impact on local communities and visitors. Impact on Knowledge: P ramorum is a recent pathogen in larch and it is therefore not fully understood. Further research is required to assist woodland managers manage this pathogen.
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Issue

1. To update the Natural Resources Wales Board on the management of P ramorum in Wales, by reference to the attached annex and the presentation to be given to the Natural Resources Wales Board on 9th July 2013.

Summary

2. P ramorum is the most serious plant health pathogen to affecting woodlands in Wales. Strategies for its control have developed to reflect the progress of the disease. The recent acceleration in the spread of the infection requires the current strategy to be reviewed again. The Welsh Government now have policy responsibility for tree health and have been briefed about the current position and are taking steps to review the current approach in conjunction with Natural Resources Wales, other agencies and stakeholders.

Background

3. The background is described in the attached paper, (P ramorum, Natural Resources Wales Synopsis to 19th June 2013)

Next Steps

4. Next steps are set out in the attached paper, (P ramorum, Natural Resources Wales Synopsis to 19th June 2013)

Risks

5. The following risks and issues have been considered by Natural Resources Wales in considering the approach managing P ramorum and next steps.
 - Legal compliance
 - Environmental impact
 - Social impact
 - Health and Safety
 - Direct cost to Natural Resources Wales
 - Wider economic impact
 - Sector capacity to deliver
 - Sustainability / Certification status of the Welsh Government Woodland Estate
 - Reputational risks

Financial Implications

6. P ramorum has significant financial implications for Natural Resources Wales and for private woodland owners. The costs of the Natural Resources Wales next steps for 2013/14 are set out in the attached paper, (P ramorum, Natural Resources Synopsis to 19th June 2013)

Communications

20. Since the Synopsis paper, the Welsh Government has been briefed, the external communications plan has been updated. A Natural Resources Wales Press Notice was issued on 24th June 2013 and media interviews have been taking place from the 25th June 2013. An update will be provided at the Board meeting on 9th July 2013.

Equality impact assessment (EqIA)

8. P ramorum is not an issue that impacts on groups with protected characteristic. It is therefore not considered that an EqIA is required.

Index of Annex

Paper: P ramorum, Natural Resources Wales Synopsis to 19th June 2013