

A call for evidence on controlling oak and sweet chestnut timber imports to prevent the introduction of oak lace bug into Great Britain (*Corythucha arcuata*)

March 2019

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PART 1 – THIS CALL FOR EVIDENCE

Purpose of this call for evidence:	The purpose of this call for evidence is to seek information from importers of oak and sweet chestnut timber in order to understand how measures to prevent the entry of oak lace bug into Great Britain would impact on the trade in timber.
Scope of this call for evidence:	Imports of timber are subject to phytosanitary controls to prevent the introduction of harmful pests and diseases into Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In Great Britain the legislation is made by a statutory instrument; the Plant Health (Forestry) Order 2005. Other legislation sets out the phytosanitary controls on a wider range of plants and plant products. Plant health and forestry are devolved areas of competence and the delivery of plant health (forestry) functions in Great Britain is carried out by the Forestry Commission on behalf of Defra

	<p>Ministers and on behalf the Ministers in the Welsh and Scottish Governments.</p> <p>The UK has a coordinated approach to introducing new phytosanitary controls through Defra’s UK Plant Health Risk Group (PHRG). The PHRG consulted on different options in response to oak lace bug in May 2018 and then in December 2018 when a new Pest Risk Analysis was published. These consultations supported the introduction of national measures to prevent the entry of oak lace bug.</p> <p>The call for evidence is seeking further technical information to help the development of measures specifically on timber imports. These measures include further third country import requirements on unprocessed wood with bark and isolated bark of oak and sweet chestnut. The measures would also extend the plant passporting requirements which apply to the movements of these products between Member States within the EU.</p> <p>The call for evidence is concerned only with the measures that are being introduced for unprocessed wood with bark and isolated bark of oak and sweet chestnut.</p>
Geographical scope:	<p>The measures will be introduced through an amendment to the Plant Health Forestry Order 2005 that would apply only in relation to England. The introduction of similar measures is also being considered by the Devolved Administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Complimentary measures will be introduced in relation to oak and sweet chestnut plants for planting through an amendment to the Plant Health England Order.</p>
Impact Assessment:	<p>An Impact Assessment has been drafted and will be updated by incorporating any additional information obtained through this call for evidence. The final version of Impact Assessment will be made available on request.</p>

Basic Information

Audience:	<p>We would like to hear from businesses who import oak and sweet chestnut with bark and isolated bark of oak and sweet chestnut into England from the European Union (EU) and from countries outside of the EU, to be known as third countries throughout this call for evidence.</p> <p>We would also like to hear from businesses that process oak</p>
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	timber at premises in England.
Body/bodies responsible for the call for evidence:	Forestry Commission, Plant Health Service
Duration:	6 weeks from 25 th March 2019 i.e. closes 29 th April 2019
Enquiries:	<p>Enquiries about the content or the scope of the call for evidence can be addressed to Nick Mainprize</p> <p>Tel: 0300 067 5149</p> <p>Email: nick.mainprize@forestrycommission.gov.uk</p> <p>Requests for hard copies can also be obtained from the above email address or Forestry Commission, Plant Health Service, Silvan House, 231 Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh, EH12 7AT or Tel: 0300 067 5155.</p>
How to respond:	<p>Please send responses to either:</p> <p>plant.health@forestrycommission.gov.uk for the attention of Nick Mainprize or</p> <p>Forestry Commission, Plant Health Service, Silvan House, 231 Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh, EH12 7AT.</p>
After the call for evidence:	<p>We intend to publish a summary of the responses on the GOV.UK web site. If you do not wish your response, including your name, contact details and any other personal information, to be publically available, please say so clearly in writing when you send your evidence. Please note that if your computer automatically includes a confidentiality disclaimer, this will not count as a confidentiality request. Please explain why you need to keep details confidential. We will take your reasons into account if someone asks for the information under freedom of information legislation. However, we cannot guarantee that we will always be able to keep those details confidential.</p>
Compliance with the Consultation Principles	<p>The call for evidence complies with government Consultation Principles - see GOV.UK website at - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance</p>

Call for Evidence

Background

1. The oak lace bug is a pest of *Quercus* (oak), but can also feed on a range of other broad-leaved trees including: *Castanea* sp. (chestnut), *Acer* (maple), *Carpinus betulus* (hornbeam), *Corylus* sp. (hazel), *Fagus* (beech), *Prunus* spp., *Rosa*, *Rubus caesius*, *Sorbus* (whitebeam), *Tilia* (lime) and *Ulmus* sp. (elm). The oak lace bug is not known to kill trees and its ability to be damaging in the UK is unclear. However, in areas outside the UK where it is present it has had an aesthetic effect on trees, and could potentially weaken trees making them more susceptible to other biotic and abiotic threats.
2. The pest is spreading naturally within the EU where it has been present in mainland Europe since 2000 and most recently was confirmed in France in 2017. It is not known to be present in the UK.
3. Its principal pathway for long-distance spread is through transport of oak and sweet chestnut logs with bark, as the pest overwinters in bark crevices. The pest can also move on other types of plant material e.g. plants for planting including by hitchhiking, which means that it is not feasible to control all pathways for long-distance spread. However, a risk based approach that controlled the principal pathways (oak and sweet chestnut) would significantly reduce the risk of introduction and establishment in Great Britain.
4. Although preventing the entry of this pest will be challenging, not least due to the risk of entry through hitchhiking, improved protection is seen as a worthwhile objective, given the uncertainty about the scale of potential impacts that could arise. England's oaks are already facing several pest and disease issues, and approving and controlling the main long-distance pathway of an oak pest would also be consistent with [Action Oak](#) objectives and actions.
5. The pest is not regulated at EU level, as it is already present in several Member states, and the UK policy approach to date has been to raise awareness with industry and to carry out surveillance, as part of ongoing surveys of oaks and sweet chestnut.
6. Against this background Defra's Plant Health Risk Group has considered the case for statutory requirements to enhance protection against this pest, in light of its ongoing spread within Europe. Stakeholder organisations, including the UK Plant Health Advisory Forum and Defra's Tree Health Policy Group, have been

consulted and have noted the technical limitations to the prevention of entry and the implications for industry but, on balance, support enhanced protection.

7. More information on the oak lace bug and the potential effects should it become established in the UK is provided in the draft 2018 pest risk analysis – see Annex 1. See also the [UK Risk Register](#) for details of the pest's risk rating.

Legislative proposals and implications for industry

8. The most appropriate method to protect against the introduction of oak lace bug from areas within the EU where it is present would normally be through EU Protected Zone status. However, as there is uncertainty about the extent to which the UK will remain within EU Plant Health arrangements, these changes are unlikely to happen within a timely manner and there is a risk that they may not gain the support from a majority of the EU member states.

9. The national measures planned involve adding oak lace bug to the list of prohibited pests, introducing additional third country import and extending plant passporting requirements (which apply to movements within the EU) requirements for host material i.e. unprocessed wood with bark including isolated bark of oak and sweet chestnut through an amendment to the Plant Health Forestry Order 2005.

10. The aim would be to retain equivalent measures following the UK's departure from the EU, including in the event that the UK is no longer subject to EU requirements. In the event of an EU Exit Implementation Period being agreed, this option would provide protection against this pest allowing time for consideration of EU wide introduction of measures for this pest. However this is not guaranteed and would not be a quick process.

11. The specific requirements for any movement into England unprocessed oak and sweet chestnut wood with bark, including isolated bark from 3rd countries and EU Member States where oak lace bug is **known to be present** would be as follows:

- square sawn and completely bark-free, or
- complete bark removal, or
- air-drying for a year in a premises which is free from the pest, or
- kiln drying to below 20% moisture content.

These treatments will need to be verified by official documentation (phytosanitary certificates from 3rd countries and official statements from EU Member States).

12. Imports into England of unprocessed oak and sweet chestnut wood with bark, including isolated bark would be permitted from countries, areas, places of production (such as timber processors) or sites that are currently pest free. Pest freedom must have been officially verified as such and consignments must be accompanied by official documentation (phytosanitary certificates from 3rd countries and official statements from EU Member States) to confirm their status.

13. Over the period 2015-2017 an average of 3,100 tonnes/year of oak in the rough was reported as imported into the UK, roughly 200 tonnes of which was from 3rd countries (the US and Canada). There is no record of sweet chestnut, which is already controlled when bark is present, being imported into the UK from 3rd countries. Records are not held on imports of sweet chestnut with or without bark being imported from EU Member states into the UK.

14. An estimated 4,800 tonnes of oak firewood, mainly from the EU, is imported into the UK each year. This wood will need to be processed either by kiln drying by the exporter, or by storing and air drying for 12 months before export, to ensure freedom from the oak lace bug. There is no record of sweet chestnut firewood being imported into the UK.

15. Under the new EU Plant Health Regulation 2016/2031, internal plant passporting of relevant material will be required within the UK from 14th December 2019. It is estimated that the proposed introduction of the measures for oak lace bug would mean that there is an estimated 30 hardwood timber processors in England that would need to obtain authorisation to issue plant passports that certify the movement of their oak and sweet chestnut wood material with bark as pest free.

16. Processed cork is not considered to be a potential pathway for the introduction of oak lace bug into the UK. Oak lace bug is absent from the main EU country of cork production (Portugal). Furthermore, the processing of oak bark for cork production involves washing and steeping in boiling water which will act as a phytosanitary treatment.

Questions

17. We are trying to establish the effect that these measures would have on importers and processors in England. The first 2 questions are aimed principally at timber importers although we understand that many processors of firewood and timber in England also import some material. Question 3 is aimed principally at timber merchants and processors who operate in England.

18. Question 1: We would welcome information on the types of wood and isolated bark of oak and sweet chestnut that you import to help us to develop a better understanding of these trades.

- a) What is your business and where is it located?
- b) What species of wood and isolated bark do you import?
- c) When importing wood and isolated bark which from which countries do you import from? Please state the region with a country where this is known.
- d) What types of wood products do you import from the following categories?
 - Isolated bark
 - Unseasoned firewood
 - Seasoned firewood (air dried > 1 year)
 - Kiln dried firewood (to below 20% moisture content)
 - Unseasoned or 'green' round wood
 - Seasoned round wood (air dried > 1 year)
 - Unseasoned sawn timber with bark
 - Seasoned sawn timber with bark (air dried > 1 year)
 - Kiln dried sawn timber with bark (to below 20% moisture content)
 - Square-sawn timber
 - Other (please state)

19. Question 2: We would welcome information on approximate annual volumes and the approximate unit values¹ of the products that you have described in Question 1.

- a) What volume do you import under the categories for 1. d) above? (cubic metres or tonnes)
- b) What is the approximate unit value for the categories that you import under 1. d) above (£s per cubic metres or £s tonnes)

¹ Values should be indicative market rates – we are not requesting commercially sensitive information

20. Question 3: We would welcome information from timber merchants and timber processors who buy and sell oak and sweet chestnut timber in England.

- a) What is your business and where is it located?
- b) Are you responsible for the movement of oak or sweet chestnut round wood? (please state which or both)
- c) What volume of either oak or sweet chestnut round wood do you either buy or process per year? (cubic metres or tonnes)
- d) Does your premises have chain of custody certification? (e.g. FSC or PEFC please state which)

Your views and comments

21. We invite your views on the evidence that we are calling for to determine the impact that additional controls will have on importers and processors of oak and sweet chestnut timber and isolated bark. Is there any additional information that you could provide to help us to determine what the impact of the legislative proposals will be or do you have any comments on the information provided?

Sources of further information

For further advice on plant health controls, please consult the Forestry Commission's Plant Health Service (helpline; 0300 067 5155):

E-mail: plant.health@forestrycommission.gov.uk)

Web: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/importing-and-exporting-wood-and-timber-products>

[Rapid Pest Risk Analysis \(PRA\) for *Corythucha arcuata*](#)