Future Tree Pest and Disease Threat Management

Purpose and Scope

This document outlines the Council's approach to protecting the health, biodiversity, and long-term sustainability of Council-owned trees by preparing for and mitigating the impact of emerging pests and diseases.

It applies to all trees located on land owned or managed by the Council, including parks, green spaces, cemeteries, Council housing areas, and public open spaces. Trees located on the public highway are excluded, as they fall under the management of Hertfordshire County Council in accordance with their Tree Policy and Strategy.

Objectives

- Proactively identify future threats through horizon scanning and research.
- Prevent the introduction and spread of pests and diseases through robust biosecurity measures.
- Respond swiftly and effectively to outbreaks.
- Support recovery through resilient planting and ecological restoration.

Key Actions

Horizon Scanning and Intelligence Gathering

Monitor national and international sources (e.g. DEFRA, Forest Research, EPPO).
Track emerging threats including:

- Xylella fastidiosa (commonly referred to as "Xylella")
- Emerald Ash Borer
- Asian Longhorn Beetle
- Thousand Cankers Disease

Maintain a dynamic risk register to record and assess potential threats.

Risk Assessment and Prioritisation

Evaluate threats based on:

- Likelihood of arrival
- Presence of host species
- Environmental suitability
- Potential ecological and economic impact

Prioritise high-risk areas such as urban centres, transport corridors.

Biosecurity and Prevention

- Enforce strict hygiene protocols for staff, contractors, and equipment.
- Source planting stock from certified suppliers with traceable provenance.
- Restrict movement of soil and plant material from high-risk zones.

Surveillance and Monitoring

- Conduct regular inspections of Council tree stock.
- Utilise digital tools (e.g. GIS mapping, TreeAlert) to monitor symptoms and outbreaks.
- Encourage public and volunteer participation in research initiatives.

Resilience and Recovery

- Diversify tree species in planting schemes to reduce vulnerability.
- Prioritise native and climate-resilient species.
- Restore affected areas with ecological sensitivity.

Training and Capacity Building

Provide ongoing training for staff and contractors in:

- Pest and disease identification
- Biosecurity best practices
- Emergency response procedures

Collaboration and Advocacy

- Partner with neighbouring authorities, NGOs, and academic institutions.
- Share data, insights, and best practices.
- Advocate for stronger national biosecurity policies and increased funding.

Governance and Review

Lead Responsibility: Arboricultural Officer
Review Cycle: Annual review of the risk register and response plans
Reporting: Outcomes to be reported to Council leadership.