

New Tree Health pilot to protect trees from pests and diseases

The Government is inviting land owners and managers, including farmers, to express their interest in taking part in a new Tree Health pilot designed to support action against pests and diseases affecting their trees. The pilot will first focus on ash, sweet chestnut, larch and spruce.

The three-year Tree Health pilot will be delivered by the Forestry Commission and will cover parts of the North West, West Midlands, London and the South East of England. The pilot aims to establish 100 agreements with interested land owners and managers to help deal with trees affected by a pest or disease outbreak.

The Forestry Commission will support the felling and restocking of trees as well as providing maintenance payments for restock sites. Learnings from the pilot will inform the future Tree Health scheme, being rolled out in 2024. The pilot will work alongside the existing Countryside Stewardship Woodland Tree Health grants, which will continue to be on offer until 2024 when the new Tree Health scheme will be adopted.

As the pilot will trial new elements of the future scheme only, payments made as part of the Tree Health pilot will differ to payments made as part of the existing Countryside Stewardship Tree Health grants.

Among the incentives being tested through the pilot, support will be available for diseased and infested trees outside of woodland, for roadside ash with ash dieback, and for trees affected by the spruce bark beetle (*Ips typographus*) and sweet chestnut blight (*Cryphonectria parasitica*).

The UK's Chief Plant Health Officer, Prof Nicola Spence, said:

Plants and trees deliver £10.5 billion per year in social, environmental and economic benefits, from providing a safe environment for wildlife and sequestering carbon from the atmosphere, to enabling a sustainable timber industry.

I encourage eligible stakeholders to help us protect these vital national assets by submitting their expressions of interest to the Tree Health pilot.

Forestry Commission Chair, Sir William Worsley, said:

For the Tree Health pilot we envisage a genuine partnership with land owners and managers whose trees are affected by certain pests

and pathogens – one that will strengthen the health of our iconic natural environment.

A healthy treescape is crucial to ensure that we leave our environment in a better state for future generations. I am calling for eligible tree owners and managers across England to submit their expressions of interest to the pilot. Together we will carefully test and refine new elements of the future Tree Health scheme, to the benefit of our precious trees and woodlands – and the wildlife which relies upon them.

The pilot delivers on the Government's commitment, set out in the Agricultural Transition Plan, to reduce the impact of tree pests and diseases. It will work with landmark plans for a renewed agricultural sector which will transform the way farmers and land managers are supported to encourage sustainable farming practices alongside profitable food production.

The Tree Health pilot supports the commitment to the 25 Year Environment Plan, the Tree Health Resilience Strategy and the UK's carbon net zero goals.

For further information about the Tree Health pilot and to submit an expressions of interest, please visit the relevant [GOV.UK page](#).