

Press release: Asian Longhorn Beetle eradicated in the UK



The Asian Longhorn Beetle (ALB) has been eradicated in the UK following six years of trapping and surveillance work

The Asian Longhorn Beetle (ALB) – an insect which poses a risk to broadleaved trees such as oak and silver birch– has been eradicated in the UK following six years of trapping and surveillance work by the Animal and Plant Health Agency and the Forestry Commission.

The pest was initially discovered in Kent in 2012, most likely introduced through infested imported wood packaging material.

The pest is a serious threat to a range of broadleaved trees, including species grown commercially for timber and fruit production. The larvae of the beetle feed on the wood of living trees, boring galleries, or tunnels in the trunks and branches. The galleries can penetrate all the way from the outer layer to the heart wood, and a severe infestation can kill the tree.

Lord Gardiner, Defra Biosecurity Minister said:

I am delighted that we have been able to eradicate Asian Longhorn Beetle – this is a testament to the dedication and hard work carried out by our Plant Health service.

Globalisation in trade, increased travel and the diversity of plants entering the UK mean more threats to plant health. Our strong response includes investing more than £4.5m to strengthen our border security, recruiting and enhancing training for new plant inspectors.

Furthermore, we identify and assess new threats to our trees by using the UK Plant Health Risk Register, the most comprehensive in

the world, containing over 1000 pests and diseases which are regularly reviewed and prioritised for action

Nicola Spence, Defra Chief Plant Health Officer said:

Asian Longhorn Beetle would pose a serious threat to our treescape if allowed to establish, so it is great news that it has been officially eradicated in the UK.

Strong biosecurity relies on everyone playing their part – in our forests, at borders or when buying plants. It is important that we continue to raise awareness of the simple things that people can do to protect against pests and diseases, such as sourcing plants from a reputable nursery.