

Rhwydwaith Sentinel Cymru Wales Sentinel Network

Gwanwyn/Spring 2024



Hello everyone!

Welcome to the latest newsletter for the Wales Sentinel Site Network.

This newsletter is aimed at supporting the 22 sentinel sites across Wales who have signed up to the Wales Sentinel Site Network, but please feel free to share with other interested parties.

If you have any stories or ideas for future newsletters please contact Catherine.Collins@gov.wales.

The Sentinel Site Network.....	2
Loggerheads Country Park	2
National Plant Health Week 6-12 May.....	6
Invasive Species Week 20 – 26 May.....	7
Plantlife’s ‘No Mow May’	7
Focus on.... Sweet Chestnut blight	9
A focus on: Biosecurity.....	12

The Sentinel Site Network

The network is a group of parks and gardens across the whole of Wales. Each park is located in one of the 22 Local Authorities and all sites receive two site visits per year from APHA Plant Health and Seeds Inspectors.

The network aims to act as an early warning system for plant pests and diseases as well as providing opportunities for stakeholder engagement and training events for volunteers and staff. APHA colleagues conduct plant health operations and Welsh Government co-ordinate the project.

Each newsletter we will focus on one Sentinel Site, providing some background to the site, some of the significant trees and plants found there, and anything that may have been identified in the twice-yearly visits.

We are starting our Sentinel Site visits with Loggerheads Country Park.

Loggerheads Country Park



By Saul Burton

Warden Cefn Gwlad/Countryside Ranger

Loggerheads Country Park is a very special place, rich in wildlife and heritage. It's an ideal gateway for visitors wishing to explore the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. With a large catchment area including Wirral and Merseyside, the park sees over 250,000 visitors a year.



Loggerheads sits below the dramatic limestone cliffs of the Alyn Valley where the river enters steep wooded gorges, and open and secluded grasslands. Carboniferous limestone influences all parts of the park and had a huge impact on the local industry. The rich mineral veins in the rock were extensively mined for lead during the 18th and 19th centuries. The Alyn Leete (Mill-race) was built 200 years ago and took water from Loggerheads over 5km down the valley to Bryn Celyn Mine near Rhydymwyn. The water carried by the Leete drove waterwheels which provided the power to pump water out of the mines, enabling the miners to dig below the water table to extract more ore.

The limestone has not only shaped the appearance of the landscape but also influences the plants that grow here, both the flower-strewn calcareous grasslands on the hilltop and the damp riverside woodlands. The species rich grasslands are home to many butterflies, with areas of limestone pavement offering refuge for common lizards, slow worms and adders.



THE LEETE PATH.



BLOOD CRANESBILL IN THE GRASSLAND

The park is designated as a SSSI and SAC due to the limestone grassland and ash dominated woodland. Unfortunately, the Ash dominated woodland has been significantly affected by Ash dieback.

The first recorded case in Denbighshire was in 2016. Since then, the disease has spread very rapidly. Not only has the disease spread very quickly, but once infected, the trees have deteriorated very rapidly.



After two seasons of felling, the trend is still on an upwards trajectory with 200 trees having to be removed in the 2023/4 season. Only trees which pose an unacceptable level of risk to the footpaths and park boundaries are removed. The trees are assessed using the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment methodology to ascertain the level of risk they pose. Trees which are situated within the woodland are left to decay naturally as standing deadwood is a vital part of the woodland ecosystem.

A "SPIDER MEWP" WAS USED TO ACCESS TREES WHICH REQUIRED DISMANTLING

The natural process is for all the ash seed in the soil to germinate as the light levels increase. We monitor this natural regeneration to see if there is any evidence of resistance in the new growth.

Where possible we leave timber



on site to increase the deadwood habitat. In some areas, the physical constraints of the park mean that we need to extract timber to keep the path open. Where necessary, we use a horse logging contractor to remove the timber. This low-impact method prevents soil compaction and reduces the negative impact on the woodland.

Loggerheads Country Park - Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

Loggerheads Country Park, Loggerheads, Ruthin Road, Nr Mold. CH7 5LH

National Plant Health Week 6-12 May

National Plant Health Week is an annual designated week of action to raise public awareness and engagement on how to keep our plants healthy. Not only that but the United Nations has designated 12 May as the International Day of Plant Health (IDPH) to raise global awareness on how protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect biodiversity and the environment, and boost economic development. This year's theme is Plant Health and IT-supported trade, highlighting e-commerce and e-Phyto.

The focus of Welsh Government's activities will be on **Thursday 9 May** where we will be supporting Action Oak's Annual Partner Event at Cathays Park in Cardiff from 9:30 to 15:00 joined by Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, Huw Irranca Davies. This event is an opportunity to learn about the current research happening in the UK in support of protecting native oak species *Quercus robur* and *Q. petraea*. In the afternoon there will be a Walk and Talk with Plant Health Inspectors in Bute Park – one of our Sentinel Sites. Look out for social media posts from WG and Action Oak with highlights of the day.

Welsh Government will also be showcasing the Welsh Plant Health Surveillance Network (WPHSN) which targets invasive biological threats to trees which have historically been detected in Wales, or which are likely to migrate to Wales with the changing climate.

We will also be highlighting the #NoMowMay and #It'sForThem campaigns to discuss habitat and resources for pollinators and how this affects biodiversity and the future of food production; talking about Citizen Science and how everyone can help to monitor pests to report sightings; and being a plant health citizen – plant health practices and responsible purchasing of plants/plant materials from reputable sources to prevent the spread of plant diseases or pests. As part of this we will be at the Senedd Biodiversity Day on 7th May.

Round-up of other social media activities to look out for:

- **APHA** will be hosting a science blog on Colorado Beetle outbreak 2023 and information on online trading of seeds
- **Forestry Commission**: will be promoting a celebration of plants and how to keep plant healthy as well as an Ash dieback blog to raise awareness of Ash Dieback
- **Scottish Forestry** are planning a demonstration of the CivTech Challenge Scotland
- The **Royal Botanic Garden at Kew** will be hosting 'A Day in the Life of Plant Health Officer' following David Hicks around completing inspections and quarantines.
- **Woodland Trust** – will be having a useful focus on Oak processionary moth, promoting what to look out for.

Follow the campaigns:

National Plant Health Week | Plant Health Action

Action Oak

It's For Them stakeholder toolkit

Invasive Species Week 20 – 26 May



Invasive Species Week is an annual week of awareness raising and events to help prevent the spread, and reduce the harmful impacts, of invasive non-native plants and animals.

There are five simple things that you can do to help prevent the spread of invasive non-native species:

- Keep any boats, clothing, footwear and equipment used in water free of invasive non-native species – remember to **Check Clean Dry** after use.
- Be Plant Wise and don't let your garden, pond, or aquarium plants enter the wild.
- Take care of your pets, never release them or allow them to escape into the wild. It's cruel and could harm other wildlife.
- Look out for Asian hornet and other alert species and record your sightings.
- If you enjoy being outside why not volunteer with a Local Action Group working on invasive species management.

For more information visit [Invasive Species Week » NNSS \(nonnativespecies.org\)](https://nonnativespecies.org/invasive-species-week)

Plantlife's 'No Mow May'

We've lost approximately 97% of flower-rich meadows since the 1930's and with them gone are vital food needed by pollinators, like bees and butterflies.

But your lawn can help! A healthy lawn with some long grass and wildflowers benefits wildlife, tackles pollution and can even lock away carbon below ground. With over 20 million gardens in the UK, even the smallest grassy patches add up to a

significant proportion of our land which, if managed properly, can deliver enormous gains for nature, communities and the climate.

This is why Plantlife calls for people to get involved with #NoMowMay every year, and let wild plants get a head start on the summer. With #NoMowMay, Plantlife is trying to change people's behaviour in how they cut their lawns. Their first step is to encourage people to leave their lawns to grow over May. Ideally, they would like people to leave cutting for longer and as the summer progresses – 'No Mow May' changes to 'Let it Bloom June' and 'Knee High July'. Leaving the lawn grow to the summer and then cutting and collecting the cuttings is mimicking what would happen in a traditional hay meadow.

Best of all, to reap these benefits all you have to do is not mow your lawn in May and beyond!

Read more at [Plantlife's No Mow May Movement](#)

Focus on.... Sweet Chestnut blight

Sweet chestnut blight is a destructive disease of sweet chestnut trees (trees in the *Castanea* genus) caused by the fungus *Cryphonectria parasitica*. It can also affect a small number of other plant species.

It was accidentally imported to Italy in the 1930s and has been spreading in Europe since.

The *Cryphonectria parasitica* fungus has caused severe epidemics of sweet chestnut blight over large areas of North America. It has also affected European sweet chestnut (*C. sativa*) over a wide area of continental Europe.



FISSURED CANKER © MICK BIDDLE FOREST RESEARCH



CANKER ON YOUNG TREE © MICK BIDDLE FOREST RESEARCH

The disease was first discovered in the UK in 2011, then further outbreaks occurred in 2017 in Devon, Dorset and south-east London. It most likely spread through the import of infected plants from mainland Europe.

Sweet chestnut blight enters the tree through wounds and fissures. In cases where the tree has been grafted it occurs around the grafting point.

Symptoms include:

- Cracks in the bark that develop into dark, sunken cankers.
- Stem girdling, where the canker surrounds the stem and kills branches, causing them to wilt.
- Brown wilted leaves that remain on the tree above the canker. Orange fruiting bodies on the bark. These can produce long orange growths in humid conditions known as tendrils. These tendrils produce the spores which spread the blight.

The cankered bark can become bright brown on younger branches in contrast to the usual greenish colour.



SHOWING THE FRUITING BODIES © MICK BIDDLE FOREST RESEARCH



SHOWING THE MYCELIUM FANS UNDER THE BARK

© MICK BIDDLE FOREST RESEARCH

Last year, the RHS focused on Sweet Chestnut health in their 'Check a Chestnut' campaign. The page provides excellent information on the identification of the tree as well as specific pests and diseases to look out for. For more details follow the link here: [Check a sweet chestnut | RHS / RHS Gardening](#)

For further information on Sweet Chestnut blight, please follow the links below:

Forest Research - [Sweet Chestnut blight resources](#)

Woodland Trust - [Sweet Chestnut blight information](#)

If you think you have identified Sweet Chestnut blight on your sentinel site report it at [Tree Alert](#)

A focus on: Biosecurity

Plant biosecurity refers to the measures and practices implemented to protect plants from pests, diseases, and invasive species that can harm agricultural, horticultural, or natural plant populations. It encompasses various strategies aimed at preventing the introduction, spread, and establishment of harmful organisms that could threaten plant health, biodiversity, food security, and economic stability.

The World Health Organization (WHO) in 2010 emphasized biosecurity as a strategic approach encompassing risk analysis and management for human, animal, and plant life, along with environmental concerns. Its goal is to protect human health, agricultural systems, and related industries by preventing, controlling, and managing risks specific to each biosecurity sector.

Since then the Welsh Government has jointly published our commitment to biosecurity in the Plant biosecurity measures GB Plant Biosecurity Strategy 2023-2028. Our vision is to protect GBs plants through a strong partnership of government, industry, and the public, working together to reduce and manage risks posed by plant pests and pathogens, and facilitate safe trade.

The measures we take to protect our plant biosecurity may include:

- **Quarantine regulations:** Regulating the import and movement of plants, plant products, and potentially harmful organisms to prevent the introduction of pests and diseases into new areas.
- **Surveillance and monitoring:** Regularly monitoring plants, crops, and natural ecosystems to detect any signs of pests or diseases early on, allowing for prompt intervention.
- **Pest and disease management:** Implementing control measures such as pesticides, biological control agents, cultural practices, and resistant plant varieties to manage and mitigate the impacts of pests and diseases.
- **Public awareness and education:** Educating stakeholders including farmers, gardeners, industries, and the general public about the importance of plant biosecurity and how they can contribute to preventing the spread of pests and diseases.
- **Research and innovation:** Investing in research to develop new technologies, tools, and strategies for plant protection, including early detection methods, genetic resistance breeding, and sustainable pest management practices.

Border Target Operating Model Implementation

The Border Target Operating Model (BTOM) continues the phased approach of biosecurity controls to the import regime of plants and plant products moving from the EU, Switzerland and Liechtenstein to GB. The first phase of BTOM import controls came into force on 31 January 2024 and the next date where new controls will be implemented is 30 April 2024.

Introducing biosecurity controls on imports to Great Britain is critical to protecting the UK from harmful diseases, such as *Xylella fastidiosa*. The overall ambition of the BTOM is to provide a risks based approach to preventing pests and diseases from entering the UK which would severely impact our industries and our ability to export food, as well as posing risks to the environment, public health, and the wider economy.

For plants and plant products the following will occur:

- 31 January 2024: This phase introduces the requirement for phytosanitary certificates and risk-based documentary checks for medium-risk plants and plant products from the EU.
- 30 April 2024: The introduction of physical and ID checks on medium risk goods. These checks, along with high-risk goods, will be moved to Border Control Posts (BCPs) or Control Points (CPs). CPs must meet the same requirements as a BCP but are inland inspection facilities where SPS checks of plants and plant products can take place under customs supervision. The POD scheme will come to an end. These checks will not occur at West Coast Ports at this time. Additionally, the Authorised Operator Status Pilot will start on this date.
- There will be a delay to the implementation of checks (and associated fees) on goods from the EU, Switzerland and Liechtenstein, entering GB via a listed West Coast Port, to align this with the end of the Transitional Staging Period.

Useful links and resources

Biosecurity

- GB Plant Biosecurity Strategy – sets out joint commitments to protect plant biosecurity from 2023-2028.
- Forestry Commission Biosecurity guidance – how biosecurity can prevent the spread of tree pests and diseases.
- Keep it Clean resources – here you can find printable posters and other materials for the office and beyond.
- Biosecurity Risk Assessment form – download and tailor to your work activities, can be added to an existing risk assessment.
- Forestry Commission Biosecurity e-learning modules – register for an account login – for more detailed biosecurity training.
- NNSS biosecurity e-learning – register on website for an account.
- Association for Public Service Excellence – ran a one-day seminar on biosecurity, and another on parks in March 2024 – see website for presentations.

Other useful links

- [UK Plant Health Risk Register](#)
- [UK Plant Health Information Portal](#)
- [WG plant health pages](#)
- [Forest Research Pest and Disease resources](#)
- [NRW - SPHNs](#)
- [Observatree Pest and Disease resources](#)
- [Plant Healthy e-learning](#) - register on website for an account – covers plant health and biosecurity.
- [TreeAlert](#)