

### Outline of proposed action in response to comments received

A programme of activity is proposed which will address the risks posed by the two pathogens through three main workstreams:

#### Disease control

The majority of respondents were in favour of a programme of increased activity aimed at reducing the level of inoculum to epidemiologically insignificant levels by removal of infected host plants in woodlands and the wider environment, coupled with removal of uninfected *Rhododendron ponticum* to protect vulnerable woodland and heathland that is currently uninfected. Enhanced containment and eradication measures in infected gardens and nursery sites were also supported, as well as identification and control of new outbreaks.

The proposed programme will substantially increase the current level of activity with the aim of eradicating sporulating host plants (principally *R. ponticum*) from known infected sites, this may involve removal of uninfected rhododendron to protect vulnerable woodland/heathland, coupled with a national surveillance programme to identify and control all new outbreaks. Containment and eradication measures in infected gardens would be enhanced. An enhanced regime of checks and controls on commercial plant trade would be applied and proactive management of high risk sites will be encouraged.

#### Behavioural change

Several respondents commented that improved biosecurity measures at nurseries and gardens was essential to prevent further spread.

The programme will work with all stakeholder groups to develop and coordinate the drafting of joint codes of practice which will improve biosecurity through better operational procedures both in management of established plants and through better buying and selling protocols. This will be combined with an education and awareness programme aimed at increasing knowledge about these diseases and suitable biosecurity measures which will protect against these and other diseases.

#### Research

The need for further research on, for example, the biology and impact of the diseases and the effectiveness of differing control mechanisms including chemical treatments was highlighted by many respondents.

A continued programme of research will aim to refine further knowledge of disease characteristics and spread and develop tools for better disease containment and eradication in the future. In particular there will be increased study into the impact of these diseases on *Vaccinium*.