

FORESTRY AND LAND SCOTLAND UPDATE APRIL 2021

Phytophthora ramorum

This is a fungus-like pathogen which infects and kills larch trees very quickly (in one or two seasons).

PR was first identified in Corlarach Forest in 2016, and has since spread rapidly throughout (mainly) the west of Scotland, with Cowal a particular hotspot. The spread is shown in this link -

<https://forestry.gov.scot/publications/832-phytophthora-ramorum-on-larch-map/viewdocument>

When an infection is detected, the regulator (Scottish Forestry) serves a Statutory Plant Health Notice (SPHN) which compels the landowner to fell all larch trees within 250 metres of the infected tree, to prevent fungal spores being produced in the tree and dispersed to cause additional local infections.

FLS have been felling trees to comply with SPHNs for the last five years, having dealt with around 150 infections in the forests around Dunoon, Kilmun, Ardentinny and Lochgoilhead. This felling hasn't yet been too obvious in the landscape, however with large-scale felling currently taking place on steep slopes in Pucks Glen, Kilmun Hill and Lochgoilhead the visual impact of this felling will become more apparent over the next few months.

FLS are about to survey for infections that have occurred over the winter months, and we expect to see a significant increase in infected trees, leading to more SPHNs being served, with subsequent additional felling.

All felled areas will be replanted, with a range of species (except larch) to maintain the visual diversity of the forest which is such a hallmark of the Cowal landscape. This will be an opportunity to introduce a wider range of native species, however given that the average age of the trees being felled is around 40 years old these newly-planted trees will take decades to have the same impact.

Land Management Plans

FLS prepare Land Management Plans on a 10 year cycle for individual forest areas (or parts of forests). These plans are required mainly to gain approval for tree felling, replanting and forest road construction for the 10 year period in detail, showing a further 30 – 40 years in outline. An example of a local plan can be found here –

<https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/planning/active/loch-eck-land-management-plan>

The development of the plan includes consultation with a range of stakeholders, local community councils being key amongst these.

I would be grateful for suggestions on how we can better engage with communities to ensure the views of local people can be represented within the plan.

John Hair

Planning Manager.