



YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

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28th September 2023

Dear Mr Daubney

Consultation on Statutory Plant Health Notice (SPHN) for Woodland at Wentworth Castle Gardens (WCG).

Thank you for consulting The Gardens Trust (GT) in its role as Statutory Consultee with regard to any proposed development affecting a site listed by Historic England (HE) on their Register of Parks and Gardens. In this case Wentworth Castle, which is registered grade I. The Yorkshire Gardens Trust (YGT) is a member organisation of the GT and works in partnership with it in respect of the protection and conservation of registered sites and is authorised by the GT to respond on GT's behalf in respect of such consultations.

Thank you for our e-mail exchanges in July following your notification on 6th July and as promised I've been trying to get further advice about treatment relative to the Hardy Hybrid rhododendron collection at Wentworth Castle.

This letter is a summary of our understanding of the situation.

As you know Wentworth Castle at Grade I, means that it is a site of exceptional interest and is one of only 9% of registered sites making it particularly important.

Unfortunately, *Phytophthora ramorum* has been identified and a site visit was carried out in April by yourself and Mark Outhwaite (FC Field Manager) in contact with Rachel Parkin (Gardens and Outdoors Manager). The treatment is to be the removal of *Rhododendron ponticum*. The map showing the treatment area for the removal of *R. ponticum*, along with the total SPHN area includes the Sun Monument, Stainborough Castle and The Wilderness generally.

We understand from your subsequent e-mail that of the 5 areas where tests were carried, only 2 were proved positive. The 100m treatment area surrounds the 2 positive areas - the minimum treatment area for *P. ramorum* – and the methodology of how the *R. ponticum* will be removed will be at the overall discretion of the landowner, in this case the National Trust.

As you know from our e-mail of 13th July, we have been trying to ascertain any impact that treatment might have on the Hardy Hybrid Rhododendron collection at Wentworth Castle (quite an important collection nationally) – *R. ponticum* was used for the rootstocks for hardy hybrid breeding, - there is also the species Rhododendrons and we don't know if they are susceptible to *P. ramorum*

We have been in touch with Chris Mayes, now National Landscape Advisor for Historic England who says, 'a few years ago, we held an 'emergency summit' at Craggside, Northumberland to discuss with the National Trust and Forestry Commission how to deal with an outbreak of phytophthora nearby. The discussion was somewhat inconclusive, but it did raise the issue in the National Trust. Hopefully the National Trust will have continued to consider this matter and started developing plans.'

So, we hope that the National Trust have formulated plans for this outbreak at Wentworth Castle. The horticultural heritage significance of Wentworth Castle is very important, and the genetic material must be preserved and protected. We trust that there is a properly researched and informed plan of action that ensures the future of all the special rhododendrons so that they are not lost to horticulture. As Hardy Hybrid rhododendrons are impossible to identify when out of flower, they need to be identified prior to future works anywhere else in the historic designed landscape next May/June - in case the infection returns, so that suitable replacement varieties can be sourced and returned.

The historic structures/follies and archaeology will need to be protected during the works and measures put in place to protect them, as they are very significant parts of the heritage assets (Sun Monument, Stainborough Castle, The Wilderness, The Avenue, Broad Avenue). The site history and management plan should give detailed information and Rachel Parkin will be able to ensure that the works are carried out without damage being done.

We trust that there will be plans in place to restore the area.

Yours sincerely

Val Hepworth
Trustee Conservation and Planning

Cc, Yorkshire and the Northeast Historic England; conservation@ the Gardens Trust,