**New Chief Plant Health Officer announced**

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[Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs)

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[Lord de Mauley](https://www.gov.uk/government/people/lord-de-mauley)

Professor Nicola Spence to take up post in April



Environment Minister Lord de Mauley announced today that Professor Nicola Spence will be taking on the important role of Chief Plant Health Officer from the start of April.

Lord de Mauley said:

Professor Spence will be advising Ministers, industry and others about the risks posed by plant pests and diseases and ensuring that measures are in place to manage those risks and minimise their impact. I am very pleased to welcome her to the team and look forward to working with her.

The importance of the role of the Chief Plant Health Officer was highlighted by the independent Tree Health and Plant Biosecurity Task Force in its report last year when it recommended that a senior-level person be appointed. In the event of a disease outbreak, the Chief Plant Health Officer will lead the operational response, providing clear leadership and accountability. Plant health policy is devolved, but the Chief Plant Health Officer will play a role in representing the whole of the UK in EU and international fora.

Professor Spence joins Defra from Science City York, a consortium of City of York Council, the University of York and York St John University set up to develop a strong knowledge-based local economy for whom she is CEO. She is an expert in plant health and international plant trade and was previously the Chief Scientist at the Food and Environment Research Agency, where she is a Fellow.

Professor Spence said:

I am delighted to be appointed as Chief Plant Health Officer at such an important time for plant biosecurity. I strongly believe that plants and trees are an essential economic, environmental and social resource and I look forward to working with colleagues and a broad range of partners to safeguard the future of our trees and plants.

Professor Spence is a Special Professor in the Department of Biosciences at Nottingham University, a member of Court at the University of York and a Trustee of Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. She has a BSc in Botany from the University of Durham, an MSc in Microbiology from Birkbeck College, University of London and a PhD in Plant Virology from the University of Birmingham