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## **UK'S FIRST TREE HEALTH CENTRE TO BE BUILT AT THE YORKSHIRE ARBORETUM**

### ***Healthy trees for a healthy future***

The Yorkshire Arboretum, located near Castle Howard in North Yorkshire, has raised funds to build the UK's first purpose-built facility to expand public awareness about the threats to our trees posed by an increasing number of pests and diseases, and the need to keep our trees as healthy as possible. Funding for the project has come from the Peter Sowerby Foundation, the Prince of Wales's Charitable Fund and £286,000 of the Government's Local Growth Fund, secured by the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding (YNYER) LEP. Construction is expected to begin in July this year.

The Tree Health Centre will offer training courses given by specialists and cater to all levels of expertise. The large and diverse collection of trees at the Yorkshire Arboretum, its location, reputation and connections with plant health professionals, make it ideal for this purpose. Following successful pilot courses held in 2018, the centre will offer training on a commercial basis mixing classroom, lab and outdoor learning settings, as well as a public outreach programme.

Yorkshire Arboretum Director Dr John Grimshaw says: "Our trees are threatened by an unprecedented array of pests and pathogens. Protecting our trees has never been more important – everyone is a stakeholder in tree health, from private householders with a back garden tree to the Highways Agency and councils. All need to know how to maintain healthy trees, or identify and manage those affected by pests and disease. The government has identified a significant skills shortage in the field, and this lack of understanding around biosecurity has contributed to the current crisis. The Tree Health Centre is of vital importance in the promotion of healthy trees for a healthy future."

Beverley-based SALT Architects were commissioned to design the building: a single-storey structure adjacent to the arboretum's existing visitor centre. Yorkshire Arboretum Chief Operating Officer Mathew Harrison says that the centre "is the realisation of our core strategy and values. It is a chance for us to create strong links with tree health experts in a professional capacity, and raise awareness of the critical issues of tree health with our visitors and the wider public."

Sir William Worsley, Britain's national Tree Champion, said "I regard tree health as a critical issue to be addressed, and believe that the Tree Health Centre at the Yorkshire Arboretum will be a major force in raising public awareness and knowledge of this vital subject."

Dr Ruth Smith, chair of YNYER LEP's Skills and Employability Board, said "Our natural environment plays a vital role in our social and economic health as a region. It is crucial that we have the skills available to protect Yorkshire landscapes and contribute to securing tree health in the UK and beyond. LEP funding will ensure that this vital, specialist knowledge centre will build the capacity in the region to protect tree health and lead the way for others, raising the profile of this critical issue."