

## PSHB IS SPREADING IN THE WESTERN CAPE

Professor Francois Roets from Stellenbosch University and Prof. Wilhelm de Beer of FABI, two leading members of the PSHB Research Network, observed the ongoing outbreak of the Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer (PSHB) in the Somerset West area on 21 January. Prof. Roets expressed his amazement at how many more beetle attacks there were on some of the indicator trees that they were monitoring since his previous visit to the area in December 2019. The outbreak area of beetle in the town of Somerset West is also expanding, with more and more trees affected. London plane, Boxelder and English oak species were infested.



In December, Prof. de Beer also visited the outbreak in the towns of George and Knysna. Here the beetle and its pathogenic fungus have killed the stately historical English oak tree planted in 1844 on the grounds of the NG Moederkerk. Prof. de Beer is currently advising the Church Council on how best to dispose of the dead tree to avoid further spread of the beetle, as it can continue to breed in the dead wood for many months. Many large oak trees in the surrounding streets are also dead or dying as a result of the deadly beetle-fungus attacks.

In the meantime, members of the PSHB Research Network are monitoring the outbreak in several parts of the country, including the native forests of the Outeniqua-Tsitsikamma region as well as those surrounding Durban. However, research efforts are severely hampered by the fact that funding committed by government bodies already in 2018 has yet not materialized.