

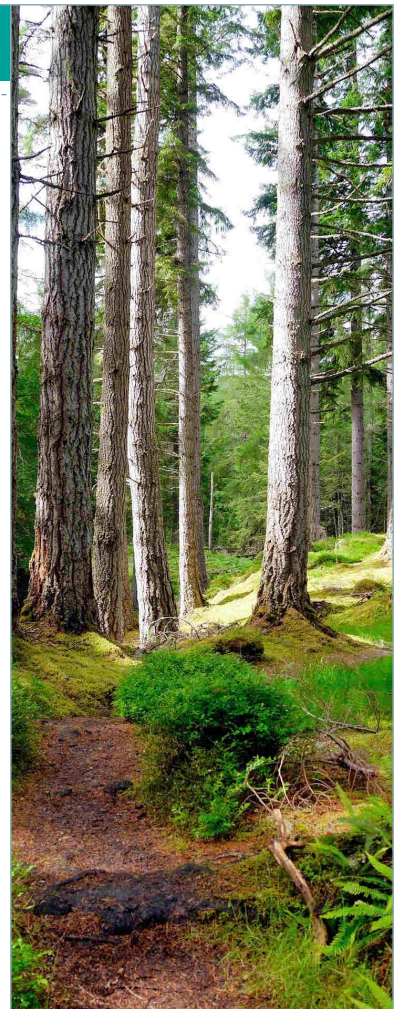
PHC News

SCOTLAND LAUNCHES ITS VIRTUAL PLANT HEALTH CENTRE

Scotland’s Centre of Expertise for Plant Health was launched on 1st February at SASA (Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture) by the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity Mr Fergus Ewing. Mr Ewing said “Protecting Scotland from the environmental, economic and social consequences of plant pest and disease threats is becoming increasingly challenging. That is why I am pleased to announce the creation of the virtual Centre of Expertise for Plant Health.”



From left to right: Prof Gerry Saddler [SASA]: Chief Plant Health Officer for Scotland and Head of SASA; Prof Ian Toth [James Hutton Institute]: Director of the Plant Health Centre; Mr Fergus Ewing [Scottish Government]: Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity; Prof Fiona Burnett [SRUC]: Sector Lead for Agriculture; Prof Chris Quine [Forest Research]: Sector Lead for Forestry; Prof Pete Hollingsworth [RBGE]: Sector Lead for Horticulture and Environment.



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THE PLANT HEALTH CENTRE

The Plant Health Centre is a virtual Centre of Expertise funded by Scottish Government through RESAS (Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services Division) to help tackle plant health challenges for Scotland.

Working with the Chief Plant Health Officer for Scotland, Professor Gerry Saddler from Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA), the Centre is bringing the plant sectors for forestry, horticulture, environment and agriculture together to coordinate plant health knowledge, skills, needs and activities across Scotland. We work with Scottish Government, public bodies and stakeholders to provide scientific evidence to help them make important decisions about pests and pathogens that threaten Scotland.

The Centre Directorate is headed by the James Hutton Institute, and has Sector Leads from Scotland's Rural College (Agriculture), Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (Horticulture and Environment) and Forest Research (Forestry), and have been ably supported in these first few months of the Centre's life by Sonia Humphries (JHI), who has taken on the role of Centre Manager. The SART (see box below) and Steering Group complete the Centre's personnel.

For more information on the team please visit our web site at www.planthealthcentre.scot.

Image: Emerald ash borer courtesy of www.nyis.com

“The Plant Health Centre is a virtual Centre of Expertise funded by Scottish Government through RESAS (Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services Division)”

SCIENCE ADVISE AND RESPONSE TEAM

As well as the Directorate, the Centre has a Science Advise and Response Team (SART) from the above organisations as well as partners from the universities of Edinburgh Strathclyde and Exeter, Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and Biomathematics and Statistics Scotland (BioSS), each bringing with them a range of plant health-related skills from understanding public perceptions to long-term disease forecasting.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT A PRIORITY

Working with Scottish Government and our stakeholders is at the heart of what we do. Even at this early stage we have had a number of requests for evidence from Scottish Government, which we are working to fulfil. The Sector Leads (see above) are also holding a series of one-one meetings with stakeholders to better understand their plant health needs. To help in the gathering of information and its standardisation, we have developed a questionnaire with a series of questions under the categories:



- What are the priority plant health issues?
- What can the Plant Health Centre do to help?
- What plant health networks and information flows currently exist?

We will also hold a number of workshops to gather this data, the first one of which is planned for our launch event on 22nd May 2018.

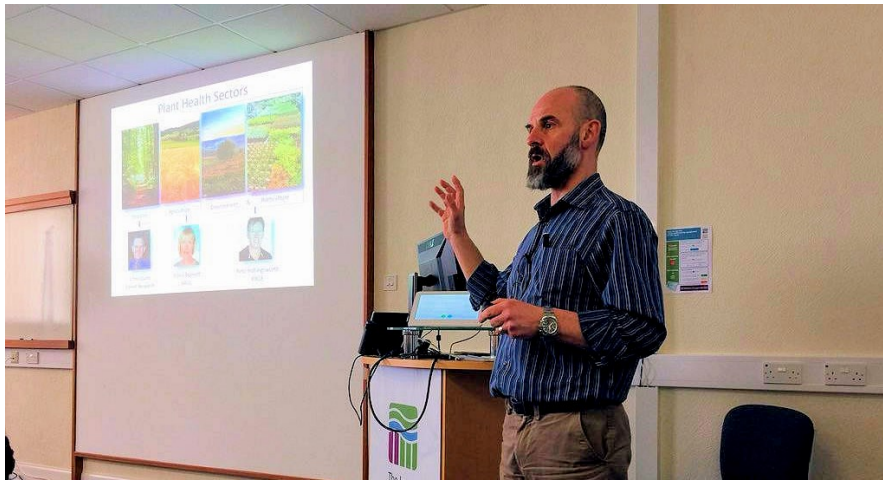


Image: Prof Ian Toth presenting the Plant Health Centre to the potato industry during the Scottish Society for Crop Research (SSCR) Winter meeting in March 2018

COMMUNICATIONS

Effective communication is central to the Centre's activities and we want to encourage dialogue and keep everyone as well informed as possible about these activities and outputs, as well as promoting key messages to stakeholders. To help with this, we have designed a logo and, fast-tracked the development of a web site, which is now up and running at www.planthealthcentre.scot. We've also set up a Twitter account for the Centre so please follow us @PlantHealthScot. We currently have over 250 followers and want to see that number increase rapidly so your help in sharing would be much appreciated. We have also been active in speaking about the Centre at a number of different events, the details of which can be found on our web site.



On 22nd May 2018 we are holding a launch event for the Centre at the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh (see image) where over 60 stakeholders will attend, from a diverse range of plant sectors across Scotland and the wider UK. We'll report back after the event. Other

events are in planning and we hope you can also visit our stand in the James Hutton Institute marquee at the Royal Highland Show, Edinburgh 21-24 June 2018 and come along to hear about the Centre at Potatoes in Practice, Dundee 9th August 2018.

As part of our communications we have also featured in a number of news publications, organisations newsletter and on Twitter. See our web site for further information.

INTERDISCIPLINARY EVIDENCE NETWORKS

The Centre is represented by ten organisations, and includes experts from a wide range of plant health disciplines. In addition, to ensure that we have all the relevant expertise to hand, we are currently mapping the plant health capacity both within and outside Scotland to help to identify key plant health expertise within and across sectors.

WORKING WITH OTHERS TO MAXIMISE OUTCOMES

To ensure that we maximise our efforts towards our stakeholders, we are working with Scotland's other Centres of Expertise (formed in 2011) to share programme management procedures. We are also looking for joint project opportunities and, together with SEFARI Gateway (a Scottish Government-funded KE Centre that promote publicly-funded research within Scotland), to build awareness through joint KE activities.

We are currently in discussion with funders other than the Scottish Government to look for joint funding opportunities.



ANY STORIES TO SHARE?

We would like to hear from you as stakeholders about plant health or other plant-related stories for a feature in future newsletters.

Get in touch at:

info@planthealthcentre.scot

VISIT US AT THE ROYAL HIGHLAND SHOW

Why not visit us at the Royal Highland Show from 21st to 24th June 2018. The display, representing all organisations involved in the Plant Health Centre, will be in the James Hutton Institute marquee. For further details of the show visit:

<https://www.royalhighlandshow.org/>



See our latest article in the Scotsman "New Centre tackles growing threat of pests to Scotland's plants" - <https://tinyurl.com/plant-health-The-Scotsman>

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THANKS TO THE WEB SITE DEVELOPERS

Finally, a big thanks to John Hume and colleagues at www.allstar-solutions.com and Andrew Thorburn at the James Hutton Institute for all their hard work in the development of our website.

