

A stakeholder engagement strategy and communication plan for Scotland's Plant Health Centre

Project Summary Report



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1 Project Summary

1.1 Background

There has been increasing concern over plant health, especially over the past decade. The risks of invasion and spread of new pests and pathogens have escalated due to globalisation, international trade, climate change and changes in social practice. In order to understand these risks and be able to plan and put solutions into place, we need effective knowledge production, exchange and implementation.

Scotland's Plant Health Centre (PHC) wanted to understand where in Scotland people obtained information about plant health to enable more effective management of their communications efforts. Together, University of St Andrews, Forest Research Scotland and SRUC undertook a review and scoping research to begin to address this issue. That report listed initial recommendations, emphasising the importance of developing a stakeholder engagement strategy including different knowledge exchange approaches for different stakeholder types and contexts, sectors, pests and stages of outbreak and that includes (and maintains existing) collaborations and partnerships as well as creating specific knowledge channels.

1.2 Project Aims

To develop an operational communication plan from existing stakeholder engagement principles, communication theories and knowledge banks addressing the following questions:

- 1) What is the overall goal and vision for PHC and how do we articulate this for different groups and sectors?
- 2) What do we want to communicate, when and to whom?
- 3) How do we want to communicate to different audiences and for these different purposes?
- 4) How do we optimise budget and human resource in communicating about plant health?

1.3 Principles and Intentions of Communication Plan

The role of PHC has changed since it was first established and to help it achieve its communications goals and become a 'trusted intermediary', conveying information and knowledge, a comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy was developed to build a community of plant health stakeholders, enable stakeholder identification of plant health needs, convey key plant health messages, influence policy changes, and facilitate the exchange of information at both regional and national levels.

1.3.1 Communication Resources to Support Activities

To support PHC communication activities, a range of resources were developed including communication goals, list of stakeholder roles and key communication routes, checklists for sector roles and communication activities and priorities, a communication calendar and a draft members survey. Recommendations included having a dedicated communication role within the PHC, preparing slide decks for talks and a press release pack to offer to offer background along with stories and with contact details for press and assessing impact.

1.3.2 Suggested Communication Goals

Short term

- 1) Increase membership
- 2) Develop communication routines
- 3) Devolve communication responsibilities
- 4) Refine communication resources – calendar, slide, website
- 5) Embed sector specific strategies
- 6) Plan impact strategy

Medium term

- 1) Maintain and increase membership
- 2) Consolidate communication routines and responsibilities
- 3) Enrich sector specific strategies
- 4) Enhance cross sector communication
- 5) Deepen empowering engagement
- 6) Assess impact

Long term

- 1) Consolidated extensive membership across sectors and roles
- 2) Well developed communication routines and responsibilities
- 3) Innovative cross-sectoral activities
- 4) Well established role in putting information out
- 5) Known and used location for people to get knowledge
- 6) Impact evidenced

1.3.3 Impact strategy

The communication plan should lead to impact in terms of stronger plant health in Scotland through:

Instrumental impacts – actual changes such as public improved bicycle hygiene or improved plant health issue detection

Conceptual impacts – new knowledge as produced through commissioned projects

Capacitive impacts – capacity of professionals working in sectors is strengthened

Connective impact – development of a sense of community and networks

Relational impact – improved understanding across stakeholders

1.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the PHC's commitment to fostering effective communication and stakeholder engagement is paramount in its mission to protect and strengthen plant health in Scotland. Through collaboration and knowledge exchange, it aspires to build a resilient and united plant health community, ensuring the vitality of Scotland's nature, gardens, forests, and food for generations to come.

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