

PHC News

THE PLANT HEALTH CENTRE LAUNCH EVENT

Scotland’s Centre of Expertise for Plant Health held its launch event at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh on 22nd May 2018. Over 60 delegates from Scotland and the wider UK attended the event, each with a diverse range of plant health interests and needs. Gerry Saddler, the Chief Plant Health Officer for Scotland, welcomed delegates and outlined the importance of plant health to Scotland, before Nicola Spence, UK-Chief Plant Health Officer, outlined the UK’s vision for plant health. Following a morning of short talks that presented various aspects of the Centre, a series of workshops was held in the afternoon to find out more about stakeholder’s plant health needs. Thanks to all those who attended and contributed to the event.

Find out more about the outcomes of the workshops on page 2.

Image: Chris Quine (Forest Research) and Glenn Marion (BioSS) from the Centre together with delegates during the launch event workshop at the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh on 28th May 2018.



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A THREAT FROM *XYLELLA FASTIDIOSA*

Xylella fastidiosa is a bacterial pathogen that infects a wide range of plant species. In 2013, following imports of ornamental coffee plants from South America, its devastating effects were seen on olive trees in Italy. Just 5 years later, over 1 million olive trees have been destroyed, either by the pathogen or through control measures, resulting in a major economic hit to the olive industry. While Italy battles to prevent the spread of *Xylella*, other areas including Corsica and mainland France are seeing the effects of the disease.

Other European countries are now on high alert to prevent the spread and devastating consequences of *Xylella*. Scotland is doing all it can to prevent the pathogen being introduced, and

the Plant Health Centre is assisting the Chief Plant Health Officer for Scotland by helping to identify knowledge gaps that can be filled to improve the government's emergency response plans to *Xylella*. For example, the Centre is commissioning work to identify potential host plants and map their locations across Scotland in relation to the possible points of entry of the pathogen and the insect vectors that carry it.

For more on *Xylella fastidiosa*:

<https://tinyurl.com/PHC-Xylella-fact-sheet>

For more on the latest European research on *Xylella*:

Image: Burning olive trees infected with Xylella. Credit - Pier Paulo Cito

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

DATABASE OF EXPERTS

A main remit of the Plant Health Centre is to provide plant health knowledge to Scottish Government and stakeholders, and it is therefore important to know who our experts are and what information they can provide both now and in times of emergency.

To better enable access to plant health knowledge, we are in the final stages of combining and updating Scottish and UK Government information on plant health expertise to generate a database for use by both the Scottish and UK plant health authorities.

OUTCOMES OF THE LAUNCH EVENT

The series of workshops, held at the launch event at the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh on 22nd May 2018 (see front page), asked stakeholders a series of questions about the Centre and their relationship with it, including:

Workshop A: What are the priority plant health issues ?

Workshop B: What can the Plant Health Centre do to help?

Workshop C: What are the plant health networks and information flows?

Based on the feedback we received, we have compiled a list of areas that you as stakeholders told us are important to your plant health needs. This list is now available on our website as a summary of the launch event, together with projects that have been commissioned from your feedback.

To see the list of areas and projects visit:

www.planthealthcentre.scot/news



Image: Katherine Haydon (RBGE) and Andrew Barnes (SRUC) leading a workshop at the launch event.



Image: Mr Pete Wishart MP for Perth and North Perthshire speaks to plant pathologists Lauren Watts (James Hutton Institute) and Lilly Riddle (University of Exeter) at the Royal Highland Show, helping to celebrate 2018 as the Year of Young People.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communicating plant health is a vital part of the Centre’s activities and we have been engaging with our stakeholders at every opportunity. In addition to our launch event we have attended a number of other events and meetings across Scotland. Our main one this quarter was the Royal Highland Show in Edinburgh on 21-24th June where we erected our new stand in the James Hutton Institute marquee. Four days of excellent discussions took place, and we are grateful for the interest and excitement that the Centre has generated. A special thanks to the politicians that took time out to visit the stand, including Pete



Wishart MP pictured above speaking to some of our early career colleagues in the 2018 Year of Young People.

associated with bringing plants into Scotland from abroad, in support of the recently launched government initiative 'Don't Risk It' campaign. Many thanks Jim for your excellent hospitality.

An excellent day was had with Jim McColl and colleagues at the Beechgrove Garden, where Centre Director Ian Toth spoke about plants health risks

See the interview on BBC iPlayer (Episode 11 starting at 16 min and 23 sec) first aired on BBC2 Scotland on 28th June 2018.

To find out more about these stories and other communications, including news publications, newsletters and on Twitter visit our web site at www.planthealthcentre.scot.

Image: Ian Toth (Centre Director – JHI) with Jim McColl from Beechgrove Garden

UK AND EUROPEAN NETWORKS GROW

While the Plant Health Centre’s role is to assist the Chief Plant Health Officer for Scotland and the many stakeholders for which plant health is so important, it is also vital that the Centre is part of the wider UK and European plant health networks.

To assist with this, representatives from the Centre have accepted invitations to join:

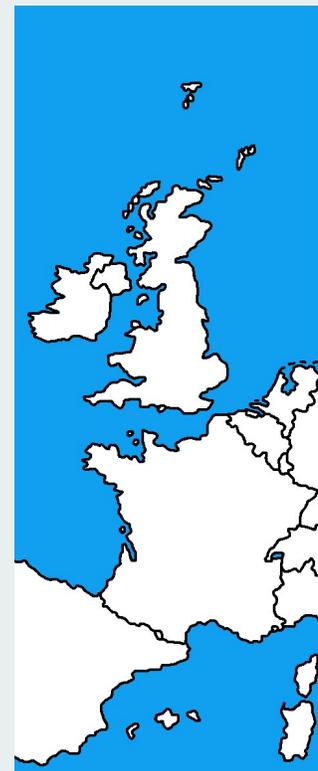
i) Survey Methodology, Diagnostics & Capability Working Group (part of the UK *Xylella* Preparedness Board).

ii) UK Science Partnership for Animal and Plant Health.

Visit our website in ‘Resources’ for more information on the ‘UK Animal and Plant Health Research Report’.

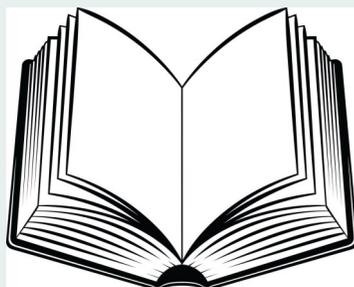
Our networking activities have also led to an invitation to join the regular networking meetings of the European *Xylella* project ‘Cure XF’:

<https://www.cure-xf.eu>



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

'DON'T RISK IT' PLANT HEALTH AWARENESS

A plant health campaign has been launched across Europe to raise awareness about the importance of plant health and how the public can play a part in protecting it. The **"Don't Risk it!"** campaign is targeted at travellers, tourists and commercial businesses who are bringing plants, plant products and other high risk items made of plant material into the UK from abroad.

To learn more visit the UK Plant Health Portal from the 'Useful Links' on our website.



Sceptical about plant health? See our latest article at the Sceptical Scot "Battling pests and diseases: Scotland's new plant health centre" - <https://tinyurl.com/Sceptical-Scot-Plant-Health>

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WEB SITE AND TWITTER

There is only so much we can put in a newsletter so for more information on our activities please visit the web site or follow us on Twitter.

