

POLICY SUMMARY

PHC2018/11. DEVELOPMENT OF AN ONLINE, USER FRIENDLY PLANT HEALTH RESOURCE BANK FOR THE SCOTTISH NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



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The aim of the project PHC2018/11 was to compile a resource to be embedded within the Scottish Plant Health Centre (PHC) website, with the following three main purposes: 1) To direct users to existing, comprehensive and reliable plant health information resources; 2) To provide information on selected plant health threats to the natural environment, particularly invasive non-native species; and 3) To direct users to appropriate government agencies and resources and advise users on steps to take should a suspected statutory pest or disease be encountered.

Webpages have been developed which provide the following:

- 1) a listing of the first most pressing plant health threats to the natural environment in Scotland;
- 2) a user-friendly web template, populated with links to information about these major threats and other topics relevant to plant health in the Scottish natural environment; and
- 3) summary pages providing guidance on biosecurity and control of diseases in this sector, for which other resources were not easily available.

These pages fill a resource gap identified by stakeholders of the PHC, providing a one-stop-shop for practical information and action on plant health in the natural environment. Users are guided on the first steps in identification of major disease threats to 33 genera of Scottish native plants, signposted to good sources of information about these threats, and given clear advice on which diseases are notifiable and what to do when these threat organisms are encountered. Pages outlining clear steps that can be taken to prevent and control diseases are provided. Finally, links to trustworthy and relevant sources on disease diagnosis, biosecurity, outreach and education, and more are provided, searchable and organised by subject.

The pages have been well received by stakeholders, and have attracted a considerable portion of the PHC web traffic since their launch. One user in the landscape industry reported:

“I particularly like the ‘Prevention’ and ‘Control’ sections; so often the industry is warned about pests and diseases but fails to deliver basic precautionary steps that can be taken by plant specifiers and contractors. The measures described in the biosecurity section are really useful in this respect.”

The webpages are found on the PHC website (<https://www.planthealthcentre.scot/plant-diseases>).