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PHC Bulletin Newsletter



Updating you on recent activities of the Plant Health Centre

Issue 1, July 2020

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New Bulletin Newsletter format

Hello, and welcome to the first issue of the Plant Health Centre's short-form news bulletin. The longer-form newsletters that you are used to receiving will not disappear entirely, but become less frequent. Our intention is to keep you updated with these shorter communications more often - we will be aiming for every two months to begin with. We hope that this change will keep you better up to date with the Centre's activities as well as with some updates from the wider world of plant health. As always, if you have any plant health concerns to raise then please get in touch with us via the contact details at the end of this bulletin.

-Sonia Humphris, Plant Health Centre Manager

The ongoing impact of COVID-19 on the work of the Plant Health Centre

It will come as no surprise that the work of the Plant Health Centre has not escaped the disruption caused by the restrictions to movement and gatherings in place in Scotland. While the nature of some of our activities may have altered, and deadlines shifted, we are very much forging ahead with what can be achieved remotely. The PHC is currently being very true to our title of a 'virtual' centre of expertise, with all our activities now online, from internal meetings to event participation and stakeholder engagement. We were perhaps fortunate that, going into lockdown, several of the ongoing commissioned projects were at the stage of report writing, and so these are anticipated to suffer only minor delays. Our [biosecurity flagship projects](#) for 2020 (the International Year of Plant Health) have been swapping face-to-face meetings for phone and video calls with project participants to keep pushing ahead with this important work (examining the biosecurity risks associated with large-scale plantings and non-specialist/ online horticulture sales). A few projects that are reliant on laboratory access (that is only now returning) will be delayed to some extent, and one project that we intended to commission but required field work over the summer will need to be postponed until 2021, but overall we consider that the impacts to our work have been relatively minor and dealt with enthusiastically by our staff and project leads.

Xylella news

Xylella fastidiosa, the bacterium that causes disease in a wide range of plants, is never far from the thought of those working in plant health. For example, earlier in July, it was [reported](#) that the Spanish authorities detected a batch of plant material infected with *Xylella* in the port of Castellon, in a shipment from the USA, raising biosecurity questions about import to the EU from third countries. A summary of the threat to Scotland posed by *Xylella* can be found in its [PHC Pest Review](#). The [BRIGIT](#) project, which is concerned with the UK's surveillance and response capacity for *Xylella*, has a range of online [resources](#) explaining the current and potential impact of this disease, including an animated video narrated by Dame Helen Mirren. Similarly, the RHS has a dedicated [webpage](#) that details the UK's high-risk plants.

Xylella is vectored by [spittle bugs \(froghoppers\)](#), and this year Researchers at the John Innes Centre have been inviting spittlebug spotters to contribute to a country-wide citizen science collaboration, called the

Spittle Bug Hunt. While the main season for spittle bugs to appear is April to June, if you spot the spittle on plants at any time then you can report your sighting.

New Pests added to the UK's Pest Risk Register

Since April 2020 the following Pest and Diseases have been added to the UK Plant Health Risk Register: Six weevil species, affecting conifers; *Pissodes cibriani*, *P. fasciatus*, *P. nitidus*, *P. punctatus*, *P. yunnanensis*, and *P. zitacurensis*

A fungal disease affecting conifers: *Coniferiporia sulphurascens*

Three pests which affect mostly Citrus (low threat to UK); *Candidatus Liberibacter americanus* (a bacterium), *Elsinoe citricola* (a fungus) and *Aleurocanthus citripertus* (a whitefly)

Seven viruses: Tomato chocolate virus, Tomato marchitez virus, Tomato mild mottle virus, Melon yellowing-associated virus, Squash vein yellowing virus, Sweet potato chlorotic stunt virus and Sweet potato mild mottle virus

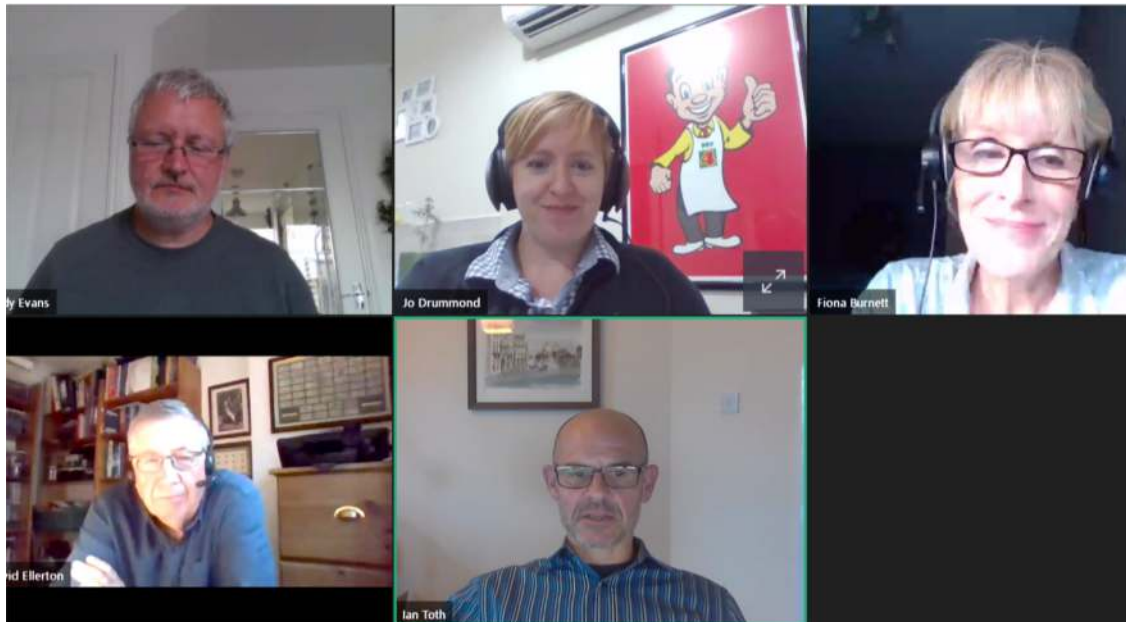
Also, seven species of tortricid moths (pests of various broadleaf trees and shrubs): *Acleris issikii*, *A. robinsoniana*, *A. semipurpurana*, *A. senescens*, *A. minuta*, *A. nishidai* and *A. nivisellana*

EPPO updates

New dynamic EPPO datasheets are available on the two-lined chestnut borer, *Agrius bilineatus* and *Agrius fleischheri*, a cambial-feeding pest of poplars and willows, as well as the spotted-wing (or cherry) drosophila *Drosophila suzukii*.

The Working Party on Phytosanitary Regulations recommended adding Tomato brown rugose fruit virus (Tobamovirus - ToBRFV) to the A2 List. A draft EPPO PRA is available.

Events



Arable Scotland, 02.06.2020

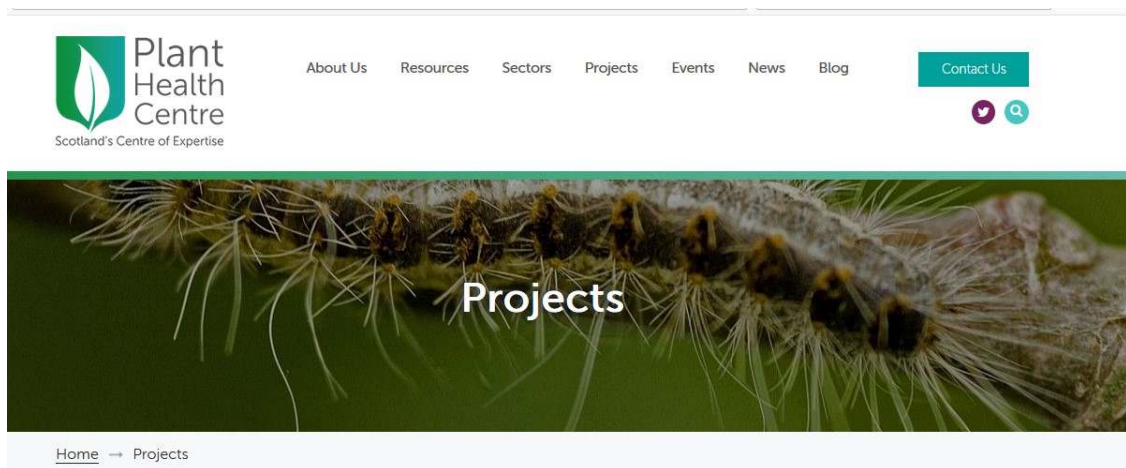
The industry event Arable Scotland, previously held as an on-site event by the James Hutton Institute and partner organisations with demonstration plots, guided tours, a marquee with stalls and machinery demonstrations, was held this year as a virtual event on the 2nd of July. The Plant Health Centre had a stall in the virtual marquee, and also organised one of the “Arable Conversations” a live panel discussion titled “Plant Health – the challenges and opportunities of implementing best practice”, with panel members Professor Ian Toth (PHC Director, James Hutton Institute), Professor Fiona Burnett (PHC Sector Lead for Agriculture, SRUC), Jo Drummond (New Zealand’s Foundation for Arable Research) and David Ellerton (Hutchison’s) that had 46 attendees, and our experts contrasted New Zealand and UK

experiences on new products, pesticides and sustainable practices. The webinar was [recorded](#), and the marquee is still available [here](#) for anyone who could not 'attend' on the day. Over 500 people visited the Arable Scotland website in total up to the end of the weekend, with 3000 + viewing the programme for the Plant Health Q and A. There were a total of 979 visitors to the Virtual Field Map since it opened on 2nd July (as of 10th July), from 18 countries: UK, US, New Zealand, India, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Estonia, Romania, Spain, Ukraine, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Mexico, Norway, and Poland. The organisers consider the event to be such a success that they intend on maintaining a virtual element at future events.

Fruit for The Future, 24.08.2020

As with Arable Scotland, this year's industry event Fruit for the Future, organised by The James Hutton Institute aimed at farmers, agronomists, representatives of the food and drink industries, scientists and others interested in soft fruit, will be a virtual event. The Plant Health Centre will have a presence, and we encourage anyone with an interest to [register](#).

Publications



Our In-Progress And Completed Projects

Since the June edition of the longer-form PHC Newsletter, we have published the following documents:

The final report and policy brief for PHC commissioned project **The Future Threat of PCN In Scotland** can be found [here](#). This project has: i) reviewed possible PCN interventions; ii) modelled future risks; iii) surveyed grower behaviours and attitudes to interventions; and iv) conducted an economic analysis of likely impact in Scotland based on a range of possible interventions.

Modelling Framework for invasive pests: Emerald ash borer as a case study. The first report is [available](#) from a project being conducted by [Dr Vincent Keenan](#), a Postdoctoral fellow jointly funded by the PHC and the University of Strathclyde, that has investigated the availability and use of generic models for bark beetles and wood boring pests, including the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) and the Bronze Birch Borer (BBB). Vincent's work in this area is ongoing and we look forward to future installments of this fascinating work.

The final report from the PHC commissioned project **Impact of climate change on the spread of pests and diseases in Scotland**, that constructed a modelling framework which combines epidemiological and economic modelling and explored predictions of spread and economic impact of *Xylella fastidiosa*, *Candidatus Liberibacter solanacearum* (Zebra chip) and *Ips typographus* (Eight

toothed Spruce Bark Beetle) in the UK, can be found [here](#).

There is also a final report for the Expansion of PHC Online Plant health resources [here](#) – you can read more on this project in our blog (below).

Blog Spot - Knowledge Bank, by Katy Hayden (RBGE)

Information by Sector



AGRICULTURE



ENVIRONMENT



FORESTRY



HORTICULTURE

In the Plant Health Centre's inaugural year, a resource gap was identified by stakeholders from the Natural Environment sector; there was no central location for information on plant health threats to the Natural Environment in Scotland. To address this, the PHC commissioned Joanne Taylor and myself (both from RBGE) to create an online 'Knowledge Bank' to fill this resource gap ([PHC2018/11](#)). This [Knowledge Bank](#) has been live since May 2019, and has created a 'one-stop-shop' that provides practical information and action recommendations on plant health in the Natural Environment, receiving over 600 page views to date.

Following on from the success of this resource, the PHC recognised that for the remaining three sectors (Forestry, Agriculture and Horticulture) information on plant health was widely available, but that the quality and relevance to Scotland was often not clear. Therefore, in 2019, Joanne and I were again commissioned by the PHC ([PHC2019/07](#)) to expand this online Knowledge Bank to the Agriculture, Horticulture, and Forestry sectors, to signpost users and practitioners to relevant and reliable information, and to address a broad spectrum of plant health topics from diagnostics and control to outreach and education. We compiled and evaluated information sources for each of these three sectors, and compiled them into new sections of the Knowledge Bank, all of which are now online on the PHC website. Together with the original Natural Environment knowledge bank, these make up a comprehensive and unique signposting resource for plant health information with relevance to Scotland:

<https://www.planthealthcentre.scot/knowledge-bank>

Resources include 150 unique, reliable sources drawn from governmental, non-governmental/charitable (NGO and private sectors, as well as other knowledge networks such as news media and research extension hubs). While each section of the Knowledge Bank was tailored to a sector, common information sources were shared between them. The Knowledge Bank represents a direct response to stakeholders' priorities: a source for reliable plant health information. It also offers a structure that can be populated with new information from the PHC, and within and across sectors, as it becomes available.

As part of the industry event “Arable Scotland” (2nd July 2020), I created a short screencast on how to use the knowledge bank, with the Agriculture sector as an example. Please take a look at [this video](#) if you would like a personal guided tour of this resource!

-Katy Hayden, RBGE



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