

PHC2020/03: Plant Health Fellowship

Global trade, land-use change, international travel, habitat fragmentation, and climate change are all contributing factors to an increase in the diversity and impacts of plant pests and pathogens. Plant pests and diseases have wide reaching detrimental impacts, with outbreaks and losses spanning multiple sectors including agriculture, forestry, horticulture and the natural environment. The Natural Environment sector underpins Scotland's landscapes, biodiversity, rural industries and recreational activities, but the growing number of plant pest and diseases pose a significant threat to this sector and the rural economy. **Therefore, this Fellowship aims to further our understanding of the challenges posed by plant health threats to the natural environment in Scotland in order to protect this valuable resource.** The Plant Health Fellowship requires someone ambitious to lead on an evidence-based review of the threats to this sector to inform future policies aimed at mitigating these risks. The successful candidate will be based at NatureScot and supported by Scotland's Plant Health Centre.

Impact to be delivered by the Fellowship:

- Increased understanding of current and future plant health threats to the natural environment in Scotland
- Key knowledge gaps identified
- Practical steps and actions to minimise risks and negative outcomes in this sector
- Provide evidence-based advice to inform future policies to help safeguard this sector

Objectives and Outcomes:

We are looking for applicants to come forward with outline proposals (500-750 words) which meet the broad ambition of the Fellowship as set out below. The final work programme will be shaped by sector priorities and agreed between the successful Fellow, the Plant Health Centre and NatureScot.

Examples of the types of Objectives the Fellow may cover include:

- An assessment of which pests and pathogens are likely to be future threats to which plants in Scotland's natural environment in light of the most recent climate change projections
- Assessing the likely threats to Scotland's dwarf-shrub heath communities from plant pests and diseases
- Developing best-practice biosecurity guidance for species reintroductions, rewilding, or other habitat restoration projects
- Evaluating the needs and availability of base-line data to monitor plant health threats to the natural environment in Scotland

The Fellowship will also involve:

- Engaging with other stakeholders in the natural environment sector to promote a sector-wide understanding of plant health threats and best practice and contributing to relevant meetings as the Fellowship progresses

Specific objectives will be agreed at the start of the Fellowship, but the primary output of the Fellowship will be a written report, outlining findings, policy advice and key recommendations.

Plant Health Centre

C/o James Hutton Institute, Invergowrie, Dundee DD2 5DA

Phone: +44 (0)1382 568 905

Email: info@planthealthcentre.scot; Web: www.planthealthcentre.scot

Applicant Information:

- The maximum funding available for the Fellowship is £50, 000 and it can be undertaken on a full-time or part-time basis, but must be completed by April 2022.
- Applicants must have the support of their employing organisation before applying. If you are currently on a fixed term contract, this secondment opportunity should not exceed the end date of your current appointment with your employing organisation.
- The Fellowship is suitable for a scientist with a PhD or equivalent experience, and expertise in one or more of the following areas: plant pathology, biosecurity, plant ecology, conservation, environmental change, biodiversity science.
- The Fellow will need to communicate effectively across disciplines and with colleagues from a range of backgrounds including conservation practitioners, scientists, policy makers, and land managers.
- The Fellowship will be Managed by Duncan Stone/Jenny Park within NatureScot, and Peter Hollingsworth at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (Sector Lead for the Natural Environment at Scotland's Plant Health Centre)
- The Fellow will be initially expected to work remotely given the current social distance requirements due to COVID19. Visits to NatureScot offices may be possible during the Fellowship should social distancing and personal circumstances allow.
- Applicants should submit a covering letter, CV and completed PHC2020/03-specific application form, that includes a section for an outline proposal for the Fellowship, plus project costs, to info@PlantHealthCentre.scot by 12pm on Wednesday 3rd February 2021. The covering letter should include why you are interested in this opportunity, what you would hope to get from it and what skills and experience you bring to the role.

Indicative Key Dates:

- Deadline for submission of covering letter, CV and PHC2020/03-specific application form (containing 500-750 word outline proposal): 12pm on Wednesday 3rd February 2021
- Proposed Interview Date: week beginning 22nd February 2021
- Project start: April 2021

Fellowship Duration: up to 12 months if required.

Maximum funding available (including overheads and VAT where applicable): £50,000

NatureScot

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NatureScot is Scotland's nature agency who work to improve the natural environment in Scotland and inspire everyone to care more about, and benefit from, nature. Scotland's nature and landscapes are among our greatest assets. Nature gives us food and drinking water, energy and timber. It contributes to a clean and healthy environment. And it improves our well-being and quality of life. Yet the overuse of natural resources since the 1950s – especially for certain types of farming, forestry and fisheries – has resulted in less space for nature and its associated benefits. NatureScot is the lead public body responsible for advising Scottish Ministers on all matters relating to the natural heritage.

Our purpose is to:

- promote, care for and improve our natural heritage
- help people to enjoy nature responsibly
- enable greater understanding and awareness of nature
- promote the sustainable use of Scotland's natural heritage

We also advise local authorities and work with the Scottish Parliament and public, private and voluntary organisations towards shared aims. Working efficiently like this is part of our commitment to [delivering a high-quality public service](#).

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 brings the plant sectors for forestry, horticulture, environment and agriculture together to co-ordinate 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 most. The Centre Directorate is headed up 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).

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

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE)

The [Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh](#) (RBGE) is a leading international research organisation delivering science, education, and plant conservation action around the world. Its mission is “*To explore, conserve and explain the world of plants for a better future.*” RBGE works with partners in more than 35 countries on projects tackling the biodiversity crisis and the climate emergency, with the overriding aim to:

- Secure a nature-rich future in the face of global environmental change

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- Develop nature-based solutions to climate change
- Support the sustainable utilisation of the planet's natural resources

The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh also holds internationally important botanical collections. Collections held at RBGE include a world class herbarium of 3 million preserved plant specimens, a globally important living plant collection of 13,500 species, and an extensive botanical library and archive.

RBGE has responsibility for the Natural Environment and Horticulture, within the remit of Scotland's Plant Health Centre.

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