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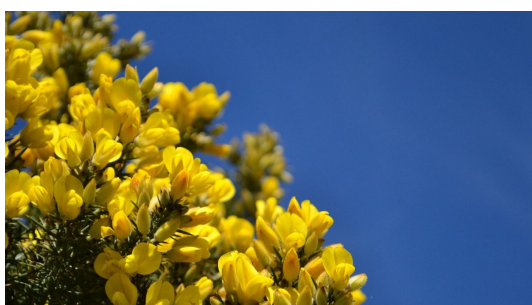
PHC Bulletin Newsletter



Updating you on recent activities of the Plant Health Centre

Issue 14, March 2024

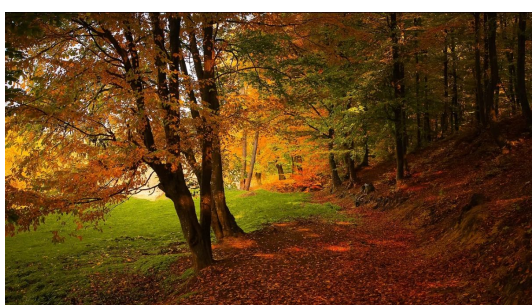
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Welcome to issue 14

Finally it seems that spring has sprung as we bring you the March edition of our news bulletin!

In this issue we will update you on some upcoming events we are excited about, including Scotland's Plant Health Conference and our plans for a community benefit partnership with Lauriston Agroecology Farm. We bring you project reports from our recently completed projects on Action research and *Phytophthora* spread in Scottish forests. We end with two blogs, looking back at the last 5 years of the PHC and recent work on a new health threat to Scots Pine.

Linkedin

There are now more ways to stay connected with the work of the Plant Health Centre. The PHC has recently joined LinkedIn. By following the page you can keep up to date with our latest project calls, publications and events.

Follow the page

-Katherine O'Donnell Plant Health Centre Communication Officer

Events



Supporting Community Farm Biosecurity

The PHC is committed to providing opportunities to support community projects within the area of Scottish Plant Health. In 2024 the PHC is partnering with Lauriston Agroecology Farm in Edinburgh to support their biosecurity practices. Lauriston farm is an urban farm growing food for people and wildlife with 50 community allotment spaces. Funding from the PHC will be used to run workshops during the growing season and develop plant health biosecurity protocols based on the [PHC Key Principles](#).

Each of the 4 workshops will have fun practical activities for plot-holders, visitors and volunteers and will be accompanied by a written protocol for farm staff with an abbreviated "how to" for other farm users.

The whole project will be celebrated toward the end of the growing season with the unveiling of a mural on one of our farm buildings by a commissioned artist.



Scotland's Plant Health Conference 2024

We are excited to announce that the 2024 Scotland's Plant Health Conference will take place on the 4th of June. The conference is co-organised by Scottish Government, the Plant Health Centre and Scottish Forestry. This one day conference connects industry, research and government in discussions on how to protect the health of Scotland's plants with stakeholders from forestry, horticulture, natural environment and agriculture. Venue and speaker details will be shared soon.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Royal Society of Biology Plant Health Series: Australia's plant health and

biosecurity system

Wednesday 20 March, 09:30-10:30 GMT (20:30-21:30 AEDT) Via Zoom

The Royal Society of Biology is hosting a Plant Health Series event focusing on plant health in Australia. Keynote speaker Dr Gabrielle Vivian-Smith, Australia's chief plant protection officer, will be discussing the policies that are in place to protect Australia's plant health and biosecurity. This will be followed by an opportunity for an audience Q&A and discussion. Register to attend this free event at www.rsb.org.uk/OZplanthealth and direct any queries to Ellie Barrand at events@rsb.org.uk or on 020 3925 3444.

Publications



Action Research to gain a deeper understanding of large-scale biosecurity risks to Scotland

This project has successfully implemented a systems approach to address plant health biosecurity risks across various sectors such as retail, infrastructure landscaping, and natural environments. By engaging in mixed method and participatory action research, including workshops and interactive exercises, the project has identified key organisations and leverage points where interventions can have a significant impact on the system. Noteworthy interventions highlighted include providing plant health training and education for accreditation, continuing professional development (CPD), broader education and awareness initiatives, as well as interventions related to practices and policies, often focusing on key checklists or certification schemes.

Project recommendations

- the importance of collaborating with plant health organisations and key individuals within targeted sectors to ensure that interventions are co-designed and integrated into professional processes effectively.
- the final report provides specific recommendations tailored to different types of activities and businesses, outlining the necessity for cross-border solutions and partnerships to enhance the overall effectiveness of plant health initiatives.

Read the Report

Assessing spread of *Phytophthoras* in Scottish forests by recreational and harvesting activities using comparative qPCR and metabarcoding techniques

Pathogens belonging to the genus *Phytophthora* present significant threats to tree health, with their prevalence expected to rise in the UK due to a warmer and wetter climate. A recent project utilised DNA metabarcoding to assess *Phytophthora* species diversity in soil samples and materials from timber harvesting and recreational activities.

The study compared methods for detecting potential pathogens and found that *P. ramorum* and other *Phytophthora* species can be transported via boots, bike tires, and harvesters, potentially leading to the spread of tree-killing pathogens to new areas. The study highlights the importance of biosecurity practices, emphasising the need for measures like those promoted by campaigns such as '[Keep it clean](#)'.

Project recommendations

- thorough cleaning of boots and machinery before relocating
- forests frequented by the public should promote biosecurity messaging encouraging visitors to clean their boots and bike tires before and after entering.

Moving forward, further research on pathogen viability and the potential for initiating new infections is crucial. These findings underscore the significance of proactive biosecurity measures in preventing the spread of harmful pathogens, ultimately safeguarding tree health and forest ecosystems.

Read the Report

All PHC publications can be viewed on our [website](#) and also on the Zenodo [Scottish Plant Health Community](#)

Blog Spot



Cultivating Scotland's Plant Health Expertise: The achievements and future of the Plant Health Centre

As we begin the second phase of the Centre, our Director, Ian Toth looks back at the achievements of the Plant Health Centre. The PHC has commissioned 45 projects to tackle plant health challenge over the past 5 years bringing together all sectors of plant health in Scotland. Our projects have been delivered by 120 researchers from 23 organisations and our reports have been downloaded over 3,000 times. In the recommissioned PHC we look forward to building knowledge and working together to lessen the threat of plant pests and pathogens across Scotland.

[Read the Blog](#)

The Iconic Caledonian Scots Pine: A New Health Threat and its Implications for Management

The Forest Research's Sarah Green and the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh's Jo Taylor share their findings on *Curreya pithyophila*, new health threat to the Caledonian Scots Pine. The project investigated the geographical distribution of symptoms on Scots pine, identified and described the causal agents, and used historical, ecological and genetic information to shed light on this new health threat. Several recommendations for Scots pine management are proposed.

[Read the Blog](#)



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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



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