

PHC2024/02: Developing resources for appropriate plant biosecurity assessments and implementation in natural habitats.

Background and knowledge gap: Statutory plant pests and pathogens (henceforth “pests”) have become a significant threat to biodiversity in recent years. Whilst considerable resource has been made available to the agricultural, horticultural and forestry sectors to manage these risks, the natural environment sector has somewhat lagged behind. Those carrying out plant conservation work often do not have access to in-depth biosecurity advice and information to help them carry out their activities in a biosecure way. Plants for habitat creation and restoration or for reinforcement of rare plant populations are often produced in an ad-hoc fashion within small community led groups or within commercial nurseries both of which can be a source of pests. In addition, contractors and those carrying out conservation work on the ground are often unaware of the importance of biosecurity when moving machinery and equipment. This is a significant threat to the sensitive habitats in which this work is undertaken because the inadvertent introduction of a new pest would have permanent, far-reaching impacts.

In order to address this knowledge gap, conservation practitioners require biosecurity advice which is relevant to the project to be undertaken so that they can a), understand the plant health risks associated with their work and, b), produce a specific biosecurity management plan to mitigate these risks. A practical resource is therefore required to present users with the biosecurity information that is relevant to their conservation project, this could include advice on plant provenance, plant production, plant/seed collecting, planting, and machinery use. This addresses one of the main knowledge gaps identified during the PHC funded '[Plant Health and the Natural Environment Fellowship](#)'.

Impact: This project is expected to have a significant positive impact on biosecurity in the wider environment. Currently, biosecurity risk assessments are not required to be routinely carried out for conservation projects. However, if a resource (e.g., a desktop tool) was available to users, they could include the outputs (i.e., a biosecurity management plan) in the project application to the relevant licence-issuing body (e.g., Nature Scot). This would ensure that the licence-issuing body can check that biosecurity is considered in advance of work starting and that appropriate pest risk mitigations are in place for work in the wider environment.

Objectives and research required for this call:

Objectives:

1. Create a prototype resource which provides specific, clear biosecurity advice to conservation practitioners so that they can produce a biosecurity management plan before a project begins.
2. Liaise with licence-issuing governmental bodies to ensure that outputs integrate into existing processes so as not to introduce a layer of additional work for conservation project applicants.

Research required:

1. A literature review (covering peer-reviewed and grey literature) which a) explores the plant health risks posed by conservation work, b) clarifies the biosecurity processes that are required to reduce these risks and c) identifies any national or international work on biosecurity risk assessment resources for conservation which could provide useful comparisons.
2. Development of a resource which can be used by practitioners to develop a biosecurity management plan for conservation projects.

Deliverables required from individual project:

- A fully functioning prototype resource which can be used to create a bespoke biosecurity management plan by a practitioner.
- The production of at least 2 case studies to show how such a resource could provide greater plant health protection to Scotland's important habitats.
- Final Report with executive summary on investigations, to contain key sources, analysis, findings and recommendations for implementation or further work. Reports should be a maximum of 20 pages of text (30 pages including figures but excluding appendices and references). Cover image(s) with associated photo credits should also be supplied.
- Brief policy summary (2 pages maximum) explaining how the work has contributed to filling evidence gaps and the context in which the findings can be used by policy makers and practitioners.
- Presentation at Scotland's Plant Health conference and any other relevant stakeholder meeting(s) to disseminate findings and contribution to other KE output such as the PHC virtual poster room or blogs.
- 200 word lay summary for project overview at outset, and of findings at completion (for website and newsletter).
- Slide deck of the key project findings.

Meetings

- Project meetings throughout project lifecycle to include PHC manager, PHC Sector Lead and Scottish Government policy contact/s.
- Meeting/s with relevant PHC Impact Officer and Communications Officer to plan dissemination of project findings and impact strategy.
- Attendance at briefing discussion with PHC Steering group to discuss findings and next steps.

Plant Health Centre

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Indicative key dates:

- Deadline for submission of applications: 12pm on 30th August 2024
- Project start: 4th November 2024
- Overview of plans and project start-up meeting with PHC Directorate: 22nd November 2024
- Final report and policy summary: 30th April 2025
- Project outputs signed off by PHC Sector Lead: 30th May 2025

Detailed milestones to be confirmed by bidder.

Date all work needs to be completed by: 30th April 2025

Maximum funding available exclusive of VAT (where applicable) and including any knowledge exchange activities: £30,000

Submitting an application form

Applicants should use the PHC Application Form when applying for projects and must ensure they are able to accept the [PHC Funding Terms and Conditions](#) before submitting an application.

Completed applications should be submitted to info@planthealthcentre.scot for evaluation by 12pm on Friday 30th August. Successful applicants will be notified by Friday 26th September, and we may request further clarification on any aspect of the application prior to contract award. You should highlight any potential conflicts of interest in your proposal.

Please contact the Centre Manager if you have any queries (info@planthealthcentre.scot). Answers to any non-confidential questions will be published on our website.

Review of application

Applications will be reviewed by a panel selected from the PHC Directorate, Scottish Government, PHC partners and/or commissioning stakeholder, as appropriate.

Expectations for section 1 of the application form:

Expectation	Descriptor
Duration	The proposed duration will align closely to the details provided in the anticipated timescales section of the specification.
Staff time and effort	The proposed allocation of staff time and effort is appropriate and includes all deliverables. The proposal must also provide a commitment that named staff members will be available to work on the contract if the bid is successful.
Project costs	The estimated breakdown of project costs is realistic and inclusive of all deliverables.

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Expectations for section 2 of the application form:

Expectation	Descriptor
Background	The proposal should include an introduction which demonstrates a clear understanding of the project requirements. This should include the need for this research; the project aim; and how the proposal will address this aim.
Proposed methodology and outcomes	The proposal should demonstrate a high quality and workable methodology, including: how the evidence will be identified, reviewed and assessed, consulting relevant stakeholders and/or experts where appropriate, to address the key questions and produce the deliverables in the timescales required.
Milestones	The project milestones are logical, practical and include all deliverables.
Project Management	The staff, resources and expertise are appropriate for conducting the proposed project. The proposal should name the project lead.
General and specific topic expertise and experience	The proposal should provide details of individual staff members who will work on this project and demonstrate how they will meet the project requirements, specifically: - general research experience and expertise - specific experience and expertise relevant to the call
Risk	The proposal should provide a risk assessment matrix detailing any risks identified in relation to the delivery of this contract, and proposed mitigation measures to minimise their probability and impact, focused particularly on risks to completion on time.

¹ Please note that costs should be submitted net of VAT recovered by the applicant. Applicants should seek advice on appropriate VAT treatment of proposed funding.