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PHC Bulletin Newsletter



Updating you on recent activities of the Plant Health Centre

Issue 17, May 2025

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Welcome to Issue 17

Today is **International Day of Plant Health!**

The Plant Health Centre, together with the United Nations is raising awareness about the importance of protecting plant health. The theme this year is “one health” and focuses on the interconnectedness of human, animal and environmental health with plant health playing a vital role.

So if you do one thing today, make it a celebration of IDPH: reach out to international collaborators, engage with animal health colleagues, and tell someone about the work you do in plant health.

If you are on socials connect with the PHC [@PlantHealthScot](#) and [@planthealthscot.bsky.social](#) on #PlantHealthDay.

For further information please see [Plant Health Action](#)

Project call

We have 1 new [project call](#) available for you to apply to. This open call is for researchers keen to contribute to Scotland’s preparation for future plant health risks facing any of our sectors (agriculture, horticulture, forestry and the natural environment). Applications close on the **4th June 2025**

SPHC

The Plant Health Centre, along with the Horticultural Trade Association, SASA, Scottish Government and Scottish Forestry are pleased to announce that Scotland’s Plant Health Conference 2025 will be held at the DoubleTree Hilton Hotel at Edinburgh Airport on the **7th October**. Save the date! Tickets will be available soon.

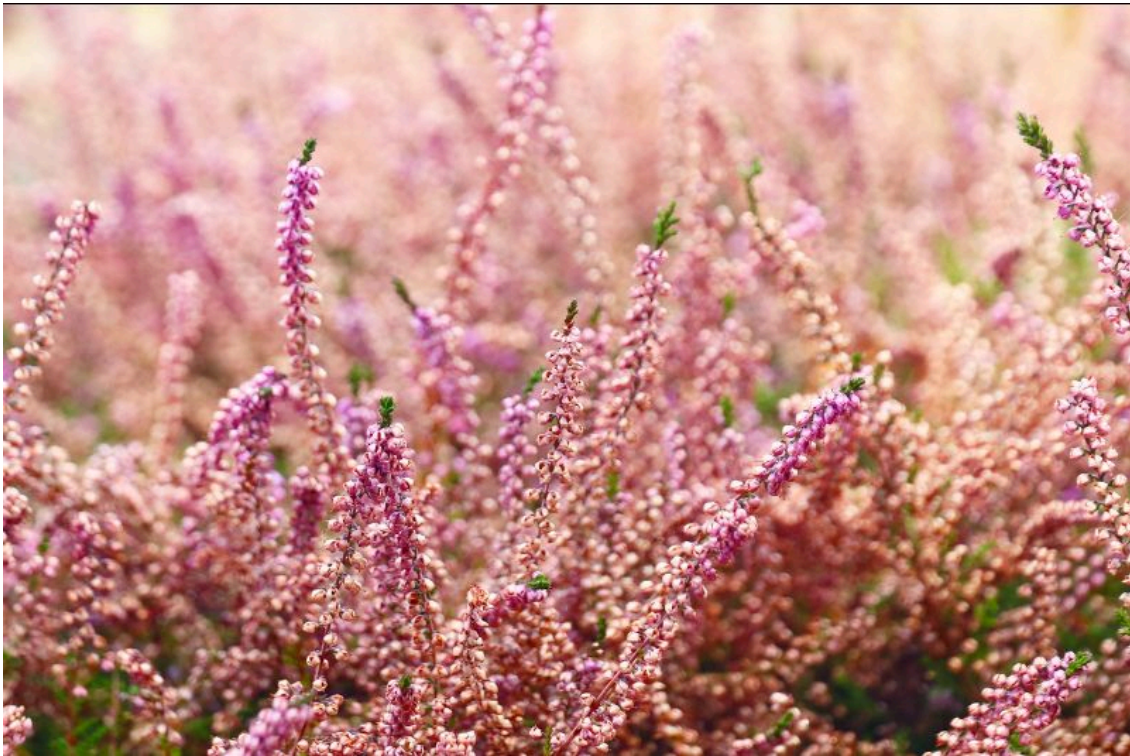
LinkedIn

A reminder to follow our LinkedIn page so that 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

Project call

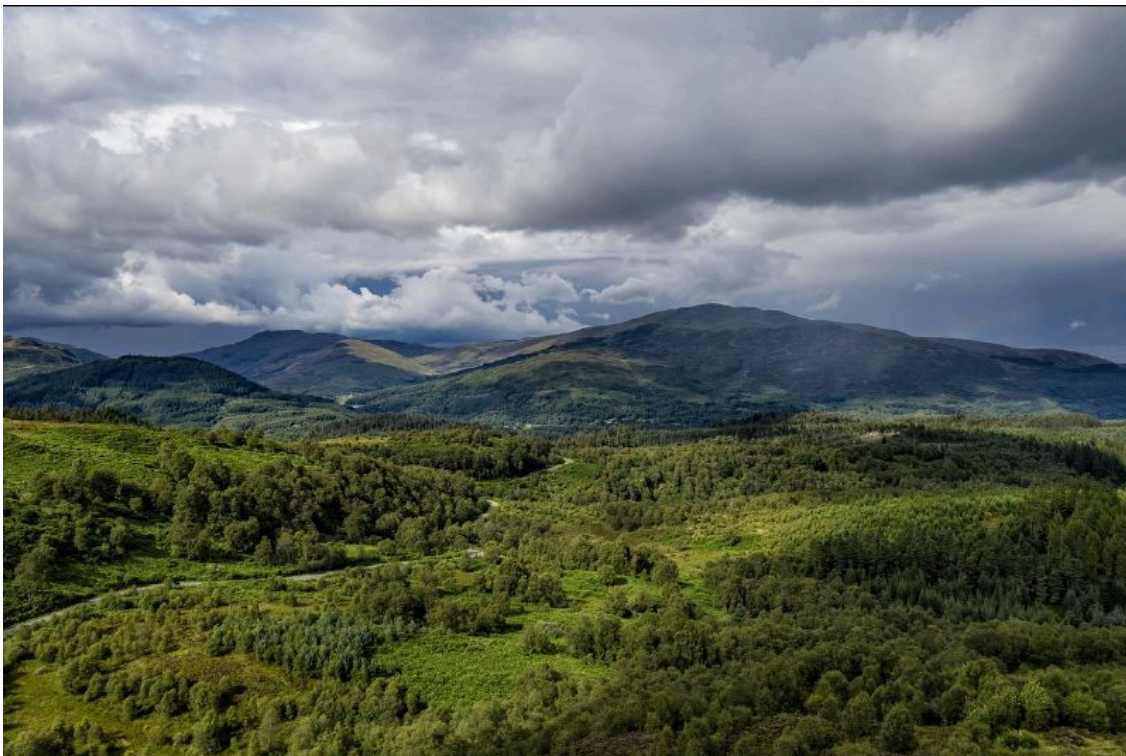


Do you have an idea that will contribute to the future of plant health in Scotland? The Plant Health Centre have an open funding call currently being advertised on our [website](#). This funding is for short duration projects, with final delivery required by end of January 2026.

PHC2025/01: The Future of Plant Health in Scotland (Maximum funding available: £50,000) - this is an open call to help contribute to Scotland's preparation for future plant health risks facing any of our sectors (agriculture, horticulture, forestry and the natural environment), be it through horizon scanning, better identification and quantification of risks, guidance on technological implementation, delivery of behavioural changes that improve biosecurity, or understanding how the plant health opportunities resulting from changing policy landscape can be maximised, and risks minimised.

Full details, including how to apply, can be found on the [Projects Page](#) of the PHC website. Deadline for applications is 5pm on 4th June 2025.

Publications



Identifying key questions and leverage points for plant health in the natural environment

This project addressed the growing risks to plant health from non-native pests in Scotland's semi-natural habitats. Despite increasing threats, plant biosecurity remains under-recognised in the conservation and natural environment sectors. Using a systems thinking approach, the project sought to identify leverage points—strategic areas where small changes can drive significant improvements in behaviour and policy—to strengthen plant health and biosecurity practices across projects, organisations, and systems.

Project recommendations

- Assign a lead organisation with responsibility for plant health in the natural environment, ensuring clarity and adequate resourcing. This recommendation has already been taken up by the Scottish Government and embedded into [The Plant Health Strategy for Scotland 2024-2029](#), Section 3.9
- Embed biosecurity awareness and accountability into best practice guidance for conservation and habitat restoration and include biosecurity requirements in grant schemes
- Create a UK-wide coordinated implementation plan, in collaboration with devolved administrations and initiatives such as JNCC's "Plant Health for Biodiversity" group.

[Read the Report](#)

The impact of peat free growing media and the emergence of sciarid flies (Sciaridae) as a pest or just a nuisance in Scotland

There are concerns about sciarid flies (fungus gnats) in horticultural environments, especially with the growing use of peat-free media. Peat alternatives have an unclear biosecurity status. Stakeholders reported issues with sciarid flies in glasshouse settings, often attributing infestations to the purchased growing media.

The study conducted a literature review, interviewed horticultural stakeholders, and engaged biological control suppliers.

Project recommendations

- Conduct studies to determine which sciarid fly species are present in Scotland and assess their individual pest potential
- Clarify the most effective horticultural management strategies in the glasshouse context in Scotland (e.g., watering regimes) to lower sciarid fly populations.

[Read the Report](#)

The impact of agricultural policy reform on plant health risks in Scotland guidance on maximising plant health benefits

The new Agriculture Bill in the Scottish Parliament supports farmers to adopt measures that aim to restore nature, increase business efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This project looked at whether the effects of these measures could have unintended consequences on plant health.

Project recommendations

- The changes are not predicted to have a significant effect on plant health and so there is no evidence that additional regulations need to be applied following the adoption of new management practices. However, monitoring of pest and pathogens should continue to ensure this is the case.

[Read the Report](#)

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

Blog



Over the past year we have developed a collaboration between the Plant Health Centre and Lauriston Farm in Edinburgh to improve biosecurity on the farm. This partnership involved workshops, resources, and established protocols to enhance plant health practices.

Key aspects of the Lauriston Farm and Plant Health Centre partnership:

Improved Biosecurity:

The partnership aimed to strengthen biosecurity measures on the farm, preventing the spread of plant pests and diseases.

Workshops and Resources:

The Plant Health Centre provided workshops and resources to help Lauriston Farm implement best practices for plant health.

Community Involvement:

Lauriston Farm has community allotment spaces available for local groups and organisations, fostering a sense of community engagement in food production.

Focus on Plant Health:

The Plant Health Centre's expertise will be used to address challenges and promote healthy plant growth on the farm.

Our colleagues at the farm have written a [blog](#) on the journey to engage their community on plant health.

[Read the blog](#)



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

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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