



Plant Healthy Certification Scheme and CV-19 – 1st March 2021

End of the Pioneer Phase

On 20 February 2020, the Plant Healthy Certification Scheme (PHCS) was soft launched to horticultural businesses at the Plant Health Alliance Conference at Kew Botanic Gardens. The early stages of running the scheme continue to require much planning, agreements, fundraising and technical work. Multiple parties from a range of backgrounds are working together, often for the first time.

The achievements of all concerned include:

- Plant Health Management Standard
- Plant Healthy Self-assessment tool
- Detailed scheme documentation and auditing protocols
- Continued checking and testing of the above
- Formation of a governing body and appointment of the certification bodies
- Launch of Plant Healthy E-learning training modules
- Training and validation of auditors

Following the soft launch, an initial pioneering cohort of engaged and innovative horticultural businesses, several of whom contributed to the development of the Plant Health Management Standard, have become certified or are in the process of becoming certified.

The Alliance would like to thank these businesses for respecting the spirit of the soft launch, which enabled businesses to sign up without the first businesses promoting the news widely that they had become certified. This period was named the pioneer phase and ended on the 28th February 2021.

From the 1st March 2021 onward, the scheme will be promoted by the Plant Health Alliance, e.g. with press releases to update the sector on scheme progress, or by the businesses that have become certified should they choose to do so. Currently a promotional plan for the scheme is being drafted for the Plant Health Alliance Steering Group. Details of planned events will be promoted on various social media channels: Twitter: [@beplanthealthy](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

Unfortunately, CV-19 continues to hamper audits. However, over the last year, with the restrictions on travel, remote auditing techniques were developed, allowing some businesses to receive a partial audit, with a site visit planned for a later date to complete the certification process. Even with the extraordinary efforts of auditors and site managers, the pandemic has undoubtedly slowed progress.

Additionally, 2020 saw some horticultural businesses experience considerable negative economic from the impacts of CV-19. This has resulted in some horticultural businesses being affected more than others, in some cases this is due to the seasonality of the crop types they grow or trade or the closure of their premises for extended periods.

This left the scheme and the sector in a challenging situation, in that many businesses that had planned to be audited early on will, understandably, need to delay their audits (e.g. due to movement restrictions and/or finances). To manage this situation, we will continue keep an up-to-date registrant/ applicant list on the Plant Healthy website of all business that are (i) certified, or (ii) have officially applied to a certification body to become certified.

The list will enable businesses to demonstrate to specifiers and purchasers of plants that they are committed to adopting high voluntary plant health and biosecurity standards and to enable their commitment to be visible whilst the sector continues to deal with the consequences of CV-19.

At the appropriate point in time it will be decided by the Plant Health Alliance to only provide details of certified businesses on the list. The Plant Health Alliance will provide a three-month notice period of this change and it will be posted on the Plant Healthy website.

Date	Issue No.	Written By	Review date
1 st March 2021	0.1 DRAFT	AY	22 nd May 2021