



# Engagement with impact

Delivering knowledge to help industry develop, access and implement innovative technology, techniques and skills.







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## Introduction

The Horticultural Development Company (HDC) is a division of the statutory levy body, the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), which administers the collection of an industry levy to fund essential near-market research and development (R&D), knowledge transfer and other associated industry services.

Through effective knowledge delivery, HDC seeks to enhance engagement with levy payers and key industry stakeholders to drive business efficiency, competitiveness and sustainability for the horticulture industry.

HDC facilitates over 75 new projects each year, communicating results directly to growers. In fact, at any given time HDC oversees in excess of 150 projects and, in total, has funded over 1800 projects – all aimed at addressing industry issues, challenges and opportunities.

For industry to truly benefit from HDC-funded research and development, it is essential that practical results are communicated in an effective and timely manner and that the value of levy invested is visible.

HDC has worked closely with the Potato Council (PCL) to develop an aligned strategy and supporting knowledge delivery plan that promotes collaboration and delivers to both the potato and horticulture industries. This joined-up approach offers opportunities to share expertise, create campaigns that reach out to a wider audience and demonstrate value for money. HDC will work in partnership with AHDB divisions to develop and support cross-sector initiatives for the benefit of the levy payer.

HDC's aim is "to serve British growers by being a top-class, efficient and progressive facilitator of near-market horticultural research and development and the associated technology transfer."

### **Ruth Ashfield**

Head of KT & Communications

December 2013



# Aim of the Knowledge Delivery Strategy

HDC seeks to become the 'go to' industry knowledge hub providing practical, relevant information that strengthens growers' skills and knowledge. Information will be gathered from a number of sources, including HDC-funded projects, that focus on strategic priorities and Panel-led activity, AHDB research and development and from national and international science programmes.

The priority for HDC is to ensure that valuable knowledge and practical solutions are delivered to levy payers through accessible channels. In order to focus on the task, HDC must prioritise activities, work with others to help 'spread the word' and deliver against AHDB's corporate objectives.

This strategy presents how HDC will deliver knowledge derived from the priorities set out in its research, development and KT strategy 'Fit for the Future'. It ensures that HDC is focused on delivering relevant messages to the right person at the right time and provides the vital link between research, development, knowledge and the levy payer to achieve maximum business impact.

To raise the profile of the industry, HDC will communicate levy payer needs to industry influencers, government, research funders and stakeholders to ensure that the funding platform supports research that is both relevant and practical.

HDC must monitor, measure, review and assess the impact of knowledge delivered to levy payers. Considering impact assessment

from commissioning a project right through to knowledge delivery is crucial for HDC to demonstrate the value of the levy invested.

## HDC priorities

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1. Knowledge delivery.
2. Communications.
3. Industry profile.
4. Education, skills and careers.

## HDC audiences

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- Levy payers (growers, technical managers and extended workforce within the levy paying business).
- HDC Associates (consultancy groups, retail, consumer groups, etc.).
- Stakeholders (grower associations & trade bodies such as BGA, EA, HTA, NFU, HIP, etc.).
- Agronomists, advisors and consultants.
- Policy makers (such as devolved governments, BIS, DECC, NERC, Defra, etc.).
- Research funders and contractors (BBSRC, TSB, university departments and independent research associations/trusts).
- Farming and trade media.

## Selected AHDB objectives

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- Improve efficiency and productivity in the industry to help levy payers have thriving businesses.
- Improve ways in which the industry contributes to sustainable development.

# Delivering knowledge

## HDC Priority 1

Work closely with industry, research providers and stakeholders to develop and deliver targeted programmes to ensure that levy payers can put 'science into practice'.

### Industry status

Knowledge is a key component to business development. Access to information and the tools to develop best practice, address challenges and develop staff is essential if the horticulture industry is to thrive.

### Industry need

To drive business forward, levy payers need access to the latest technology, techniques and knowledge. HDC will bridge the gap between technical development and science into practice through relevant, timely and accessible knowledge delivery. Knowledge delivery activity includes:

- **Knowledge Transfer (KT)**  
Extracting relevant information from research and development and translating it into practical solutions.
- **Knowledge Exchange (KE)**  
Develops and draws on dialogue with industry and stakeholders to exchange ideas, evidence and expertise to encourage take up, drive impact and feed into further strategic development.
- **Communications**  
The delivery of knowledge through accessible and innovative channels

### How will HDC deliver?

HDC will continue to provide problem-solving research for industry through the development of strategic campaigns and panel-led activity as per the priorities set out in its 'Fit for the Future' strategy, launched in May 2013. HDC has a dedicated team and structure to focus on delivering knowledge from HDC-funded programmes along with the ability to scour the worldwide

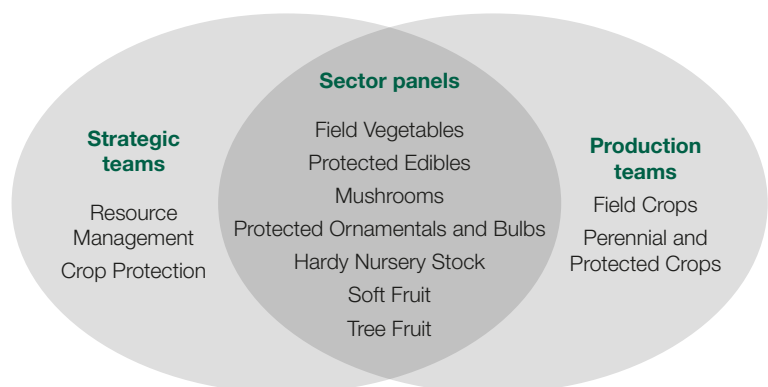
science-base to ensure that the horticulture industry has access to the latest technologies.

### HDC strategic R&D and KT priorities

- **Crop protection**  
Producing crops reliably and consistently with minimal pesticide use.
- **Precision tools**  
Increasing productivity and efficiency.
- **Soil, nutrient and water management**  
Efficient use of key resources.
- **Responsibly sourced substrates**  
Resilient and sustainable production systems.
- **Impact assessment**  
Value for money from HDC activities.
- **Capacity building**  
Increasing the ability to exploit market opportunities and technologies.

Working in production teams, HDC can focus on getting value from research by collaborating on common issues and disseminating results to appropriate audiences across all crop panels.

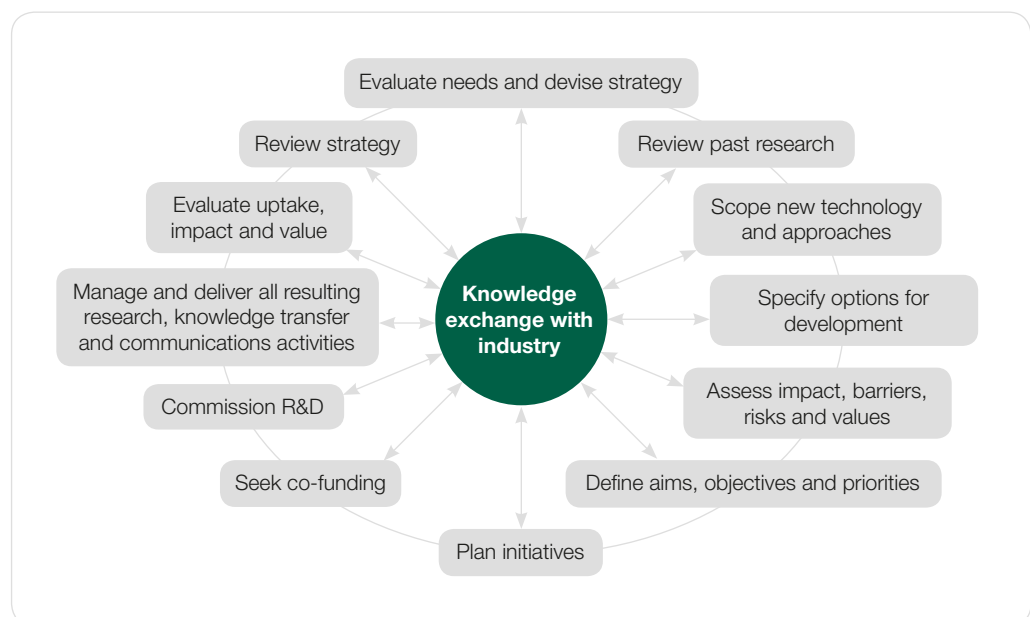
### HDC teams and panels



**HDC will:**

1. Follow the HDC strategy development and implementation process (see figure 1), to capture knowledge and assimilate to this knowledge base through mining of the worldwide scientific and technical literature to deliver practical results and evaluate the impact of R&D.
2. Based on the knowledge identified in 1), develop a rolling 12-month knowledge delivery plan that captures all knowledge delivery and communications activity to effectively manage, maximise awareness of and improve the impact and take-up of knowledge through innovative communication channels.
3. Ensure that knowledge delivery gives growers access to the very latest technology and know-how, so that industry is able to make continuous improvement in efficiency, resilience and sustainability.
4. Through dialogue with industry, continually identify and address gaps in knowledge and need to develop and deliver practical support through the HDC knowledge hub.
5. Raise the profile of and deliver outputs from AHDB cross-sector research, developments and KT activities.
6. Develop innovative KT and communication campaigns that encourage take-up and implementation of new technologies.

**Figure 1. The strategy development and implementation process enables HDC to effectively identify and address industry needs in direct dialogue with levy payers and wider industry.**



# Communications

## HDC Priority 2

To become the industry knowledge hub by developing channels and activity to ensure knowledge is accessible, targeted, relevant and has real impact.

### Industry status

The way we access information has changed dramatically over the last few years and the instruments we use to access and deliver messages will continue to develop. These changes force the need to constantly evaluate communication channels and increase awareness through new tools that meet the needs of the audience.

### Industry need

The horticulture industry needs access to the HDC knowledge hub that provides practical and current advice along with information on innovation and technical developments to help them apply best practice and develop their business.

### How will HDC deliver?

#### HDC will:

1. Develop a rolling 12-month communications plan that captures HDC delivery activity and contributes to identifying and addressing knowledge gaps and focus on collaborative opportunities for cross-sector working.
2. Develop and maintain a consistent HDC brand so levy payers recognise where their levy investment has delivered back to industry.
3. Carry out audience segmentation activity to ensure we produce targeted material for a tiered group of profiled levy payers.
4. Develop mechanisms to enhance levy payer engagement. This activity will be carried out in a number of ways:
  - One to one: ie personal visits on farm or nursery.
  - One to few: ie technical workshops, training sessions and focus groups.
  - One to many: ie cross-sector, cross-divisional conferences and workshops.
5. Develop mechanisms that encourage grower take-up, feedback and interaction.
6. Assess impact, review relevance and develop communication channels (Apps, social media, online learning, E-media etc.) that underpin knowledge delivery.
7. Review and improve levy payer perception, knowledge and views of levy investment and the activities that HDC undertakes.
8. Identify and develop new routes to facilitate dialogue and better communicate with levy payers, by setting up and interacting with industry contributors. For example, regional advisers, grower champions, agronomist groups, consultancies and industry ambassadors.





## Industry profile

### HDC Priority 3

Represent industry and ensure levy payers' needs are captured and addressed through strategy development, funded research programmes and knowledge delivery.

### Industry status

The horticulture industry and potato industry makes a vital contribution to the nation's economy, jobs, food security, nutrition, health and well-being and accounts for farm gate sales of around £3.4 billion, employing 100,000 workers. Occupying 5% of the (non-grass) cropped land area, it produces 40% of total farm gate crop sales (Source: Defra (2011) and AHDB MI (2011)). It is important that this contribution is recognised and that HDC supports the industry by communicating the need for continual innovation.

### Industry need

Representation of levy payer issues, challenges and opportunities with government, the media, key stakeholders and the research and development platform to influence, challenge and steer.



### How will HDC deliver?

#### HDC will:

1. Develop industry information and evidence streams to raise awareness of the role, impact and image of the horticulture industry.
2. Facilitate networks, generate debate and work with partners to raise the profile of the challenges and opportunities ahead to ensure the funding platform is well placed to address them.
3. Provide robust evidence that responds to government consultations and management of wider issues relating to, for example, water availability, pesticide legislation and stewardship activities, plant health issues and climate change.
4. Engage in dialogue between policymakers and industry to inform evidence-based policy development and ensure that levy payers are aware of future developments that may have impact on their business.
5. Develop and work with networks that focus on addressing the barriers of converting science into practice. For example, HDC and PCL are fully engaged with the Horticulture Innovation Partnership (HIP), where stakeholders across the commercial horticulture and potato supply chain have joined forces with the research and knowledge community to unlock potential for innovation and growth.
6. Develop an issues management system to monitor and respond to industry issues. Work closely with industry bodies (such as NFU and BGA) to ensure that issues that may impact on levy payers are managed in an effective and joined up approach and that messages are communicated consistently.

# Education, skills and careers

## HDC Priority 4

Develop, steer, and support education, skills and career programmes that build capacity, educate the next generation and up-skill the industry.

### Industry status

The trend towards highly specialised and capital-intensive enterprises is likely to continue. To be competitive, the UK horticulture industry needs state-of-the-art production systems, a well-trained professional workforce and a community of scientists, technologists and growers to drive innovation and development. Growers are encouraged to balance efficiency and sustainability; producing more while using less land, water and energy to meet consumer demands in a growing population.

### Industry need

Industry must demonstrate that commercial food and ornamental production is an exciting and forward thinking industry that will only thrive by attracting individuals with skills in agriculture, horticulture, science, business management, marketing, engineering, design and technology.

To do this, industry must have access to and introduce new technologies, and have the skills necessary to exploit new systems, facilities, research and development.

#### • Education

HDC's focus is on funding educational activity aimed mainly at tertiary education through the funding of PhD studentships, post doctoral Fellowships, summer school undergraduate placements, knowledge transfer partnerships (KTP's) and participation in advanced training partnerships (ATP's). HDC's involvement in primary and secondary level education is limited to supporting activity on a case-by-case basis, where there is a clear benefit to the levy payer.

#### • Skills

HDC provides a wide range of skill-enhancing and training activities delivered directly to levy payers. These include factsheets, grower guides, practical workshops and DVDs. The focus for HDC is to ensure that growers have access to the latest technologies to up-skill current staff and new entrants.

#### • Careers

HDC recognises the shortfall of new entrants coming into industry; be it in the science arena, commercial arm, in the field or on-farm. It is important that the industry profile is such that the new generation see the potential and are encouraged to view a career in horticulture as an exciting and innovative one.

### On behalf of levy payers, HDC must:

- Support the industry by addressing the shortage of skilled people choosing a career in commercial food and ornamental production.
- Ensure that existing growers, farmers and horticulturists have the skills necessary to develop best practice and train those coming into the business.
- Support activities that encourage the recruitment of future scientists and technologists, to ensure that the sector specific research knowledge base is maintained.

## How will HDC deliver?

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### HDC will:

1. Address the shortfall in investment in the next generation of scientists, by promoting the AHDB/HDC-funded studentship schemes.
2. Promote the impact and value of HDC-funded studentships and post doctoral Fellowships, that partner new scientists with more established researches to encourage the transfer of knowledge and skills.
3. Where there is a clear benefit to the horticulture levy payer, support AHDB education activity aimed at primary and secondary schools to raise the profile of food, farming and the environment.
4. Support industry-led initiatives that raise the profile of career opportunities in horticulture. For example, this includes support given to the development of promotional material and collaboration with organisations like Grow Careers ([www.growcareers.info](http://www.growcareers.info)) and Bright Crop ([www.brightcrop.org.uk](http://www.brightcrop.org.uk)).
5. Raise the profile of the horticulture industry through activities and publications that put the industry in front of policy makers, researchers, funders and the general public.
6. Ensure that HDC delivers skills and training initiatives that levy payers demand and are consistent with the AHDB Skills Strategy.
7. Sponsor and support industry-led initiatives such as 'Open Farm Sunday' that raise awareness through visits on-farm, on nursery and practical demonstrations.



# Impact assessment

## HDC must demonstrate value for money to the levy payer.

Through research, development, knowledge delivery and communications, HDC must meet the needs of the industry, drive strategy and plan campaigns that tackle future challenges and opportunities.

In order to demonstrate the value of levy invested, it is imperative that HDC monitors, measures, reviews and assesses the impact of the knowledge delivered to levy payers.

In January 2013, the AHDB Board and Senior Executive Team developed five core priorities that future corporate and sector plans would be structured around to support levy payers over the 5 – 10 years.

In addition to demonstrating value to levy payers, HDC must also deliver against AHDB's priorities.

## How will HDC assess impact?

- HDC will set up an information and impact assessment group that will capture, analyse and disseminate industry information. HDC will work with AHDB divisions to share best practice and demonstrate value across the agriculture and horticulture industry.
- HDC will benchmark current awareness of brand, products and services and develop campaigns to improve awareness.
- HDC will evaluate the efficiency of communication channels and use this information to develop new channels or improve existing ones.
- Carry out impact assessment campaigns to measure the level of uptake and implementation of knowledge received from HDC.
- HDC will produce case studies to demonstrate and encourage uptake of science and innovation.
- Progress reports will be issued at the end of each year and priorities will be reviewed in consultation with industry. A complete review will be conducted at the end of 2018.



## Impact assessment

To demonstrate value for money to the levy payer, HDC must set industry relevant priorities and deliver against AHDB's core priorities.

		HDC priorities			
		1. Knowledge delivery	2. Communications	3. Industry profile	4. Education, skills and careers
AHDB priorities	<b>1. Help levy payers improve productivity and cost management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource management</li> <li>• Climate change</li> <li>• Soils and water</li> <li>• Managing market volatility</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<b>2. Help levy payers prevent and manage disease</b>	✓	✓		✓
	<b>3. Help levy payers with market development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Export development</li> <li>• Promoting quality products to differentiate against imports</li> <li>• Market information and analysis</li> </ul>		✓	✓	✓
	<b>4. Help levy payers understand and respond to the regulatory and policy development</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<b>5. Help levy payers with the labour market and skills development</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓



## The HDC team

HDC has a small team of highly skilled individuals passionate about the horticulture industry. Their aim is to work closely with growers, associations, trade bodies and other stakeholders to ensure that strategy development, projects, knowledge delivery and communications are carried out for benefit of the levy payer and wider horticulture industry.

For information on the team, visit our website: [www.hdc.org.uk/hdc-team](http://www.hdc.org.uk/hdc-team)



Commercial horticulture in the UK is a dynamic, innovative business that faces many challenges. Against this backdrop, the challenge for HDC is simple: we must continue to deliver work that provides levy payers with a genuine return on their investment. In simple terms, we will continue to deliver the problem-solving applied research that has served growers well over the last 27 years but we will now do it in a way that 'joins the dots' between different crop sectors more effectively so that everyone gets more 'bang for their buck'. At the same time, we aim to help growers 'de-risk' the future by using the pooled resource the levy provides to deliver answers to problems that are too big or too risky for individual businesses to tackle.



In the face of significant changes in the government funding research base in recent years, HDC resources are increasingly being stretched in a number of different ways and it is therefore essential that we have a clear vision of what we are trying to achieve.

This strategy enables HDC to focus on delivering the outcomes from the 'Fit for the Future' research strategy, prioritise non-R&D work and provide levy payers with solutions to their challenges through clear knowledge delivery.

**Bill Parker**

Director of horticulture, HDC



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HDC is a division of the  
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