

Coordinating Innovation for UK Horticulture – Scoping Project

Summary and Next Steps, 31st March 2026.

This document summarises the outcomes of the short project to explore whether a more coordinated approach to innovation across UK horticulture could add value. 3 months of conversations and a successful scoping workshop included a wide variety of stakeholder viewpoints across the sector, and the outputs have been shared more broadly since to gather additional views. It is intended as an outline of what was heard, some practical next steps, and should not be taken as a formal proposal.

What we heard

Current view: **“The system works well in pockets, but there’s no overall coordination”**

Strengths	Gaps
• Knowledge exchange is grower-led and peer-to-peer • Crop associations are active and well-organised • Issues are practical and shared (e.g. crop protection) • Collaboration is pre-competitive and trust-based • Regional networks and informal communication channels are strong	• Fragmentation across crop groups and organisations • Duplication of activity • Competition limiting collaboration • Short-term, fragmented funding • A disconnect between research, industry and policy • A lack of visible coordination at sector level

What is needed: **“We need coordination, but not duplication.”**

In practice:

- A clearer sector direction or growth plan
- Alignment of funding to agreed priorities
- Better visibility of “who is doing what”
- Sharing learning, including unsuccessful initiatives
- Building on existing structures rather than duplicating them

The approach would need to be:

- Grower-led and representative, including smaller growers
- Independent and trusted, with clear governance
- Transparent, particularly in relation to funding
- Practical and accessible, supporting real-world decision making

What to do next: **“Start simple but start.”**

There was broad agreement on the need to reduce fragmentation across the sector, alongside a strong appetite for greater coordination, particularly if it remains grower-led. Whilst participants recognised that parts of the system function well, they also noted the absence of an overarching structure. Overall, there was a clear desire to make progress, but in a measured and practical way. Discussions convened around a phased approach:

- Early phase: establish governance, structure and shared direction
- Medium term: align funding and coordinate activity
- Longer term: demonstrate impact in production, resilience and economic contribution

Some outstanding concerns and areas to resolve were raised:

- Funding (source, sustainability and structure)
- Governance, leadership and communication
- Representation across the sector
- How to avoid duplication of existing activity

The above summary reflects clear alignment on many of the challenges, alongside important questions still to address. The outputs from this process provide a strong foundation for continued discussion.

Next steps

Given the level of engagement and interest expressed in supporting the continuing process, the suggested next step is to convene a small, time-limited group to explore options for coordination in more detail, extending discussion on how to shape a possible structure.

This group would:

- Bring together those who have indicated an interest in contributing further
- Reflect a balance of perspectives across the sector
- Be exploratory rather than decision making at this stage

Its role would be to:

- Test whether a coordinated approach is both feasible and desirable
- Explore possible models, including building on existing structures
- Consider governance, scope and funding options
- Clarify whether there is a clear value proposition for the sector

This project has confirmed that there is a need for a framework to capture and communicate knowledge to respond as a collective on behalf of the sector for upcoming growth plans and subsequent funding.

We invite you to register your interest in being involved, or being kept informed, please share your thoughts and details in this form: [Coordinating innovation for UK Horticulture](#)
[- Register your interest – Fill in form](#)