

APPENDIX 1 - GENERAL MANAGEMENT ADVICE FOR LANDOWNERS ON ASH DIEBACK

- 1.1 This advice is aimed at the general public and land & property owners in the area that have ash trees on their land.
- 1.2 Having a planned approach to the problem may enable some of the ash population to be retained for longer which will help identify resistant individuals, slow the rate of landscape change, and reduce the impact on biodiversity. Assessing the extent of the problem will facilitate a cost-effective approach.
- 1.3 Trees are dynamic organisms, and the ultimate impact of the disease cannot be precisely predicted. It is important not to undertake unnecessary pre-emptive felling of ash. Some trees show considerable resistance to infection and these trees should be retained and recorded as they provide hope for the future of the species in the UK.
- 1.4 The key question is, at what point does a diseased ash tree become dangerous or present an unacceptable risk to the public or property? This depends on two main factors: the situation of the tree and the extent of dieback in the crown. A small degree of infection does not, normally, make the tree immediately dangerous. Ash infected with ash dieback can have other pre-existing fungal associations and structural defects which compound the risk posed by the tree. As the crown of an infected tree dies the tree becomes vulnerable to other wood decay fungi - for example honey fungus which can rapidly colonise and destabilise the tree. As a guide, using the Tree Council's classification system, trees in Class's 3 and 4 situated near areas open to public access and close to private property may need to be considered for removal on health and safety grounds.
- 1.5 If it becomes necessary to fell a badly infected tree the private owner should check with Peterborough City Council for Tree Constraints such as a TPO or Conservation Area. If trees are the subject of a TPO it will be necessary to make an application for the proposed tree removal. If the trees are in a Conservation Area, it will be necessary to give the Council six weeks advance notice of the proposed work. Only trees that are totally dead are exempt and even then, it is an obligation, if the tree has a TPO or in a Conservation Area, to notify the Council 5 days in advance of the intention to fell the tree or trees.
- 1.6 It is not recommended that, in most circumstances, remedial tree work is carried out on infected trees as there is a high probability the decline will not be halted, and money spent on remedial tree surgery may be wasted. However, for trees to be removed retaining the lower part of the stem of the tree as a conservation stump is good for wildlife conservation purposes.
- 1.7 For larger volumes of infected ash trees Felling Licence legislation, administered by the Forestry Commission (FC), may apply. Some exemptions from this legislation exist particularly for private gardens, churchyards, orchards and some public open space. Owners should contact the FC if in doubt as to whether a Licence is required. The FC will normally impose a replanting condition. Licences are valid for five years. Dead or dangerous trees are exempt from the Felling License Legislation and if a tree is considered immediately dangerous it should be felled without delay. However, the onus is on the owner to prove that that the tree or trees were an immediate problem and should take

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photographs of the tree or trees and / or get a professional arboriculturist's written opinion prior to felling.

- 1.8 The FC have grants available to help larger rural landowners. Full details are available from the local Forestry Commission Office or online at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/managing-ash-dieback-in-england>.
- 1.9 Unless resistant plants become available on the open market, replacement planting should avoid using European ash or any other ash species. Many native woody trees and shrubs will grow in the area and for woodland planting further guidance is available from the Forestry Commission FC Operation Notes. For ornamental planting there are a wide range of species that will grow well in the area. Consideration also being given to the suitability for growing in clay soils and tolerance of alkaline soil types. Native broadleaved species should be used in areas of high conservation value.
- 1.10 When planning the removal of diseased ash trees attention should be paid to ensuring that the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1994), Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) and the Countryside Rights of Way Act (2000) are adhered to. It must be ensured that nesting birds and protected species such as bats and reptiles are considered and protected. Clearances must be completed outside the bird nesting season to avoid disturbance to nesting birds. The potential for bat roosting must be considered and advice of a professional ecologist obtained if bats are suspected. If it is necessary to fell dangerous trees in the bird nesting season, ecological advice will be required.
- 1.11 Much of the dead ash timber will find a ready market as firewood. Ash burns well, either wet or seasoned. However, Government legislation requires that, when selling wood under a volume of 2 m³ it must be dried to a moisture content of 20%. Trees killed by ash dieback will already be partially dry making reaching the prescribed moisture content much quicker and the wood potentially more saleable. A high incidence of the disease could see reduced timber prices and possible shortages of skilled labour and equipment to deal with the problem.
- 1.12 The spread of ash dieback in timber and firewood is considered to be a low risk, so ash timber from infected trees can be moved without restriction within Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales). Brushing leaf and shoot material from logs, firewood and vehicles before they leave the site will help reduce spread. This will prevent unintentionally spreading spores with logs and firewood.
- 1.13 It is recommended that several quotes for removing dead trees are obtained as prices for tree work can show significant variation. The Arboricultural Associations approved contractor scheme provides some surety of professionalism. Details of approved contractors are available from <https://www.trees.org.uk>. However, there are many highly competent non-registered contractors. Felling ash can be dangerous as, if the wood is under tension, it can split without warning. Also dead branches in trees can rapidly become brittle and unsafe to climb hence the need for professional assistance. When commissioning tree work, it is important to see proof of public liability insurance cover (the

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recommend minimum level of cover is £5,000,000.00). Also certificates proving competence for the tasks been completed need to be provided.

- 1.14 For woodland owners with commercial quantities of timber it should be saleable and could be sold standing leaving the buyer to fell and extract the produce.

2. Further Information

- 2.1 Sources of further information and help are detailed below:

The Arboricultural Association:	www.trees.org
The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire:	https://www.wildlifebcn.org
The National Tree Safety Group	https://www.ntsgroup.org.uk
Forestry England	https://www.forestryengland.uk
Forest Research	https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk
The Tree Council	https://www.treecouncil.org.uk/
Peterborough Environment City Trust	https://www.pect.org.uk/
Joint Nature Conservation Committee	http://www.ntsgroup.org.uk
The Woodland Trust	https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/
DEFRA: environment...	https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment...
Natural England	https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england

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