

Chairman's Announcements

Subject:	Ash Dieback
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Format: PowerPoint and video to be introduced by the CEM

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Date/consultation period: September/October

Summary:

Nationwide it is anticipated that Ash Dieback will affect 90% of woodland trees and 50% of trees outside woodlands within the next five to 15 years. Ash trees are likely to shed large limbs, with consequent safety implications.

Ash Dieback is already widespread in Wiltshire and poses serious safety, practical, environmental and financial risks **for all landowners**. Once infected trees decline quickly, often dying within two growing seasons. The trees rapidly lose timber strength and integrity and are prone to structural failure, leading to branches and trees falling, increasing the risk of death or injury to persons and damage to property. Unlike Dutch elm disease there is a significant risk in 'doing nothing' as the diseased trees become brittle and dangerous.

It is estimated that there are over 100,000 Ash trees growing beside Wiltshire's roads, and an equal or even greater number on the 6,000km of public rights of way in the county, as well as the estimated 140,000 Ash trees on council owned land.

The council has developed a risk-based plan for the monitoring and removal of unsafe Ash trees, prioritising trees on the highway, rights of way and in public spaces. The cost of surveying, monitoring and removing unsafe Ash trees is likely to be significant, with the cost to the Council of removing trees over the next ten years is likely to be at least £10 million and could be as much £50- £80 million.

Action required:

Some major landowners in Wiltshire are already removing large numbers of diseased trees or planning to do so. **It is strongly recommended** that all landowners in Wiltshire, including Town and Parish Councils act now to put in place a plan to identify, monitor and remove infected Ash trees on their land.