

Ash Dieback Action Plan

October 2023

Contents

Executive Summary	3
Ash Dieback Action Plan Aims and Objective.....	7
WSCC, ash trees and ash dieback.....	9
What is ash dieback?.....	9
Identifying ash trees and ash dieback in West Sussex.....	9
Recognising the symptoms of the disease	10
Defining the scope of the project.....	14
Trees adjacent to land under WSCC responsibility	16
The Ash Dieback Working Group	16
Defining our project	17
Benefits of Trees and Woodlands.....	19
General management advice	20
Information for tree owners.....	20
Information for woodland owners	23
Tree works and traffic management.....	24
Public Rights of Way (PRoWs)	25
Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), trees in conservation areas and felling licences.....	25
Impacts of ash dieback.....	26
Introducing Decision Factors.....	26
Landscape and biodiversity.....	27
Local landowners, land managers and homeowners.....	27
Local utilities and infrastructure organisations	28
Potential impacts of ash dieback on West Sussex County Council.....	29
Health and Safety Impacts	29
Economic impacts	29
Reputational Damage	29
Environmental Impacts.....	30
Communication Strategy.....	31
The Action Plan	32
Useful Links	38

Executive Summary

This Action Plan sets out the West Sussex County Council approach to managing ash dieback. We have used the format set out by The Tree Council to ensure users are able to compare our response to national guidance and to other Councils.

Ash dieback, *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, (formerly referred to as *Chalara fraxinea*), is the most significant disease to affect the UK since Dutch elm disease which was first recognised in the 1960s. It will lead to the decline and death of the majority of ash trees in Britain and has the potential to infect more than two billion ash trees across the country.

Our trees and woodlands represent a key element of the character of our county, as well as providing a range of services in the natural environment including supporting and regulating ecosystems, cooling the air, slowing the movement of water, capturing carbon dioxide and pollutants, producing oxygen as well as bearing fruits and leaf litter which contributes to soil development. To lose these services will mean a noticeable impact on the environment, far beyond the immediate visual change that will be observed. The recovery phase will be just as important to the project as the felling works to reduce the safety risk to acceptable levels.

The Tree Council, working with a wide range of professionals from organisations across the UK, has developed a toolkit to support local authorities and other large organisations to prepare their response. This Action Plan is based on that Toolkit.

Ash trees are a fundamental part of the culture we have in the UK, particularly in the South with West Sussex being one of the most densely wooded counties. Ash features in many of our place names, with a historical importance for the part it has played in the industries that have grown here. It appears in literature, folklore, and artworks and is a feature of beloved woodlands which many of us walk through at leisure. Our roads are lined with ash in many places and it is one of the key species our wildlife depends upon.

It is estimated that nearly 21% of the trees in our county are ash, which means that the loss will lead to a major visual change. The loss of any tree will change the way nature behaves, from the flow of rainwater, to the local temperature and movement of noise too. Our residents will notice the change and they will want to see us respond to manage risks, but also to ensure that we do all we can to mitigate the loss as soon as we possibly can.

For local landowners, land managers and homeowners as well as the local authorities in the area there will be a financial impact as we all seek to find our best approaches to respond. Where possible there will be benefits in working together for the best outcomes for biodiversity but also for the most effective, efficient and economic solutions.

To aid recovery by the preferred initial method of natural regeneration, the Council will need to ensure that sites are cleared as sensitively and as practically as possible. In addition, final cuts are left to best industry standards, ground cover is clear of debris and inspections are carried out upon completion.

Officers will also routinely inspect these sites into the future utilising both internal and external resources to monitor many factors associated to natural regeneration. This will include but is not limited to re-growth from retained stumps, appearance of saplings or increase in species from within the seedbank that were otherwise out competed by the removed tree stock, increased diversity of ground level flora and fauna, increased canopy spread of retained trees and shrubs within the immediate area, and notable differences with wildlife usage.

Images below of short-term natural regeneration of Site (Beeching Way, East Grinstead) from 2022 – 2023 felling activities



1- March 2023



2 - July 2023

Although natural regeneration has been adopted for the initial recovery phase, where evidence suggests that this has not been successful, officers will continue to explore funding opportunities and collaboration with stakeholders. Where funding can be identified for viable locations, officers will also seek to replace trees with species which provide similar environmental benefits, or identify any alternative methods which can improve the sustainability and diversity of each area.

We must also responsibly plan and source funding for the required maintenance of these areas into the future for both natural regeneration and proposed planting or improvement.

Officers will continue to identify suitable funds to meet the objectives, seek to develop collaborative relationships for the best environmental outcomes with the resources available, and above all to ensure that we continue to serve our community with an approach that seeks to turn such a negative impact into a positive outcome.

Our **Action Plan Objectives** are set out in **Figure 1**.
Figure 1: Action Plan Objectives

Managing the risks from Ash Dieback to generate positive routes to recovery

Risk	Data	Environment	Community	Recovery
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Define a risk based approach• Understand and manage our legal position• Define and manage safety factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand the existing dataset to identify gaps• Implement surveys to address priority gaps• Improve data quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand impacts on biodiversity and other environmental factors• Plan a responsible felling programme• Develop our tree strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop relationships to support felling and recovery• Provide information for the public to enable them to take action• Incorporate landscape character into our thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Natural regeneration of sites• Seek to secure funding for planting where required• Investigate alternative models for the recovery phase

Controlling economic impacts throughout using management system principles

DRAFT

Ash Dieback Action Plan Aims and Objective

Our aim is to effectively address the risks presented by the impact of ash dieback, conserve the ecosystems ash trees are found in across our county and prepare for a positive regeneration phase with a net biodiversity gain in ten years' time.

We are developing a proposal to undertake a survey of sites prior to felling and for a set term of monitoring after works are completed to produce definitive and measurable outcome reports. This will in turn help advise us on improvement and or management plans for future sites, and whether compensatory planting may be required to mitigate the impact on ecology of the sites.

Our objectives are designed to support an iterative approach so we can build on the initial responses as our access to data improves. This means that we can develop our methods to provide an overarching plan to identify, communicate and address the risks of ash dieback in West Sussex and build a more resilient approach for the future.

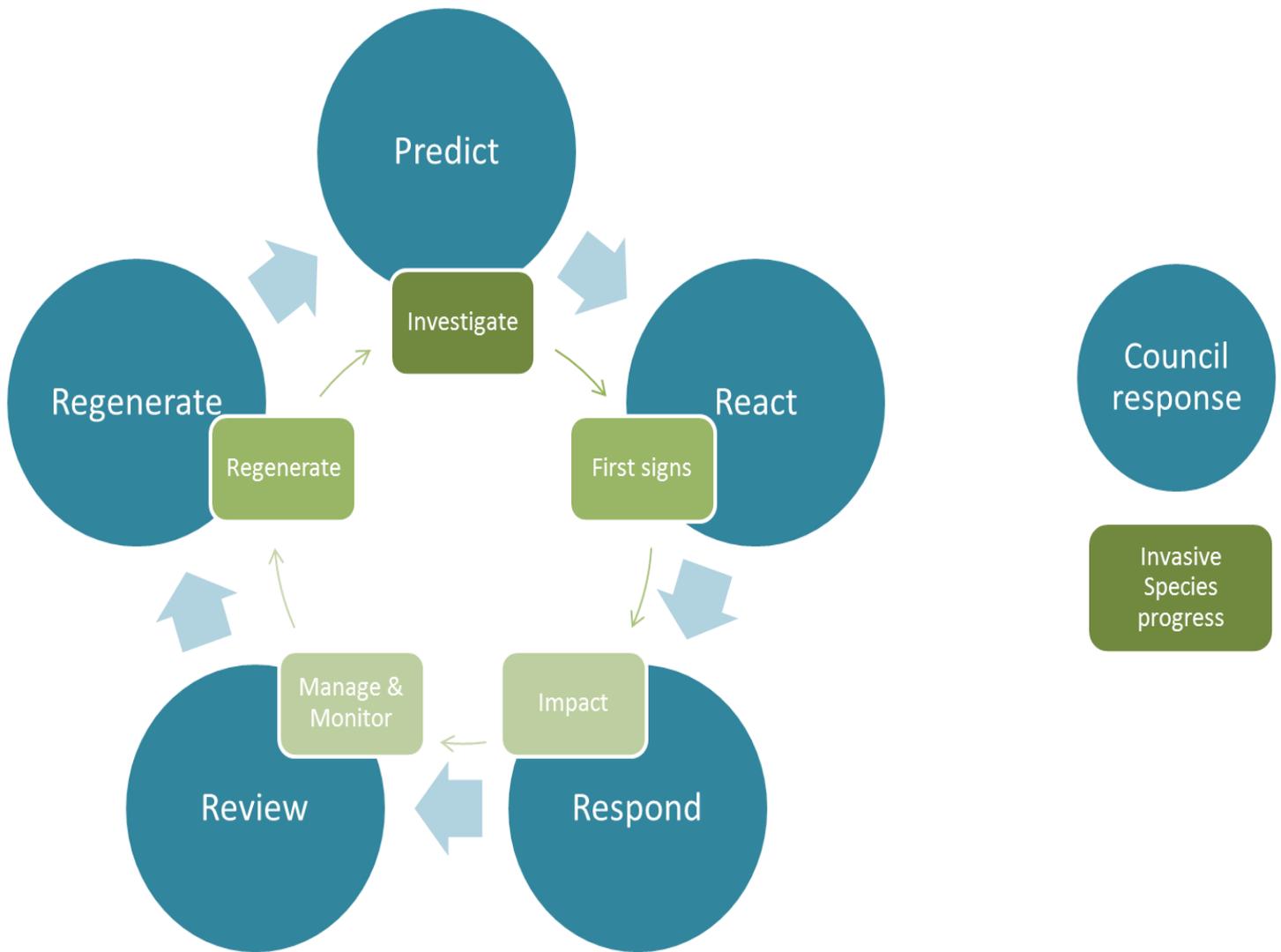
A dedicated Ash Dieback team has been established which comprised a Project Manager and Ash Dieback Arboriculturists and project support officers.

The Team is recording learning so that it can develop methods that provide a long-term improvement to our systems, so that the Council is better equipped to respond to large scale environmental impacts. **(See Figure 2.)**

Our approach will be enhanced as we progress through the project and will support delivery of the Tree Plan which is one of the council's objectives (*link to*

WSCC Tree Plan on Page 38). This will form part of a framework of guidance supporting our strategies for sustainability and the environment, building our resilience for the future.

Figure 2: Invasive Species Response Protocol



WSCC, Ash Trees and Ash Dieback

This section sets out the assessment we have made of our understanding of the trees under our responsibility, where we can make improvements and how we are using this information to develop our response to the disease.

What is ash dieback?

Ash dieback is a serious disease of native European ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) caused by the fungus *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, formerly known as *Chalara fraxinea*. The pathogen causes leaf loss and crown dieback weakening the trees and usually leading to premature tree death through secondary infection and / or environmental stress. European ash is most severely affected, although some exotic ash species are also vulnerable. Young trees usually succumb rapidly to infection. Although there is no treatment, a small percentage of ash may be resistant to, or tolerant of, the infection. Resilient ash is being monitored and used for propagation by various bodies and nurseries of ash tree stock for the future.

This is important because nearly 21% of all trees in West Sussex are ash; it is our most common and widespread tree. The disease has the potential to kill up to 95% of ash trees over the next 10-15 years. This will have a major impact on the county's landscape, the wildlife it supports and the other ecosystem services that trees provide such as:

- filtering the air
- storing carbon
- reducing flooding
- providing shade
- protecting soils.

The nature of the infection results in tissue death and branch failure, which in turn, may have health and safety implications. For more information, including how to recognise and report the disease, visit [Forest Research](#).

Identifying ash trees and ash dieback in West Sussex

There is no definitive register of trees under County Council management. This means that our first action was to understand the data we have available to us, identify the gaps, and develop our action plan to include improvements in the data.

There has not been a need to review trees under our management at a landscape scale and our findings reflect this. The focus within records has been very localised and notes relate to the specific work being carried out, limiting the amount of information being recorded. There has not been an inventory type exercise to record trees as an asset database.

The initial task was to identify the sources of data for trees under our responsibility which could inform our response. Records of trees exist only when a tree has been visited in response to an issue to be addressed, or as part of a

survey service where a Service Level Agreement had been put in place. Trees protected under a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) have been recorded in more detail. Trees which have been healthy, not subject to a TPO, or have not been part of any proposed development sites do not appear in any records.

Data that has been recorded might refer to an individual tree, a group of trees or a long stretch of mixed species. A lack of consistency in methods applied complicates the data further with a range of descriptors in use, species often not recorded, and condition assessments focused on specific issues which did not reveal useful information relating to ADB. In some cases, large areas of tree cover were either unrecorded or provided insufficient data for our needs.

This revealed significant data gaps which would require significant resources to address effectively rendering a one-off, uniform assessment approach unworkable. The action plan is therefore an iterative approach, with surveys key to identifying the trees to be included in the project, and projections which will be improved as data becomes available.

A risk-based approach will determine which locations should be addressed more urgently, based on the impact of a tree failure, with a second level of prioritisation based on tree condition. Trees on the highway present the greatest risk to a larger number of people, which when combined with the factor of the speed they could be travelling along the highway represents a potentially catastrophic risk.

Properties such as schools present a high risk due to the number of people likely to pass close to trees and remain close to them for prolonged periods of time. A falling tree could also potentially cause damage to buildings and other property.

Other council properties including offices, libraries, fire stations etc present a similarly high risk.

Countryside team have management plans in place which prioritise public safety along with preservation of biodiversity, these are to be managed separately from the project planned to manage trees on highways and other council property although where appropriate we shall collaborate with the Countryside and Public Rights of Way teams to enable an efficient cross department delivery programme.

Trees adjacent to highways and council properties which are not in the council ownership are also recognised as significant but require a different approach to identify ownership and ensure that action will be taken by those owners to reduce the risk to acceptable levels.

Recognising the symptoms of the disease

There are a range of signs which can help identify infected trees:

- dead or dying tops of trees and abnormal clusters of twigs resulting from re-growth;
- wilting leaves visible in summer;



- lesions or wounds on the branches / stalks and sometimes at the base of trees;
- dieback of leaves which become dry and blackened;
- small white fruiting bodies growing on ash leaf stalks;
- staining of the wood under the bark

Figure 3: Healthy ash leaves – ignore the chewed leaflets by leaf cutter bees! Note the very dark buds which are characteristic of ash

Figure 4: Withered, blackened leaf





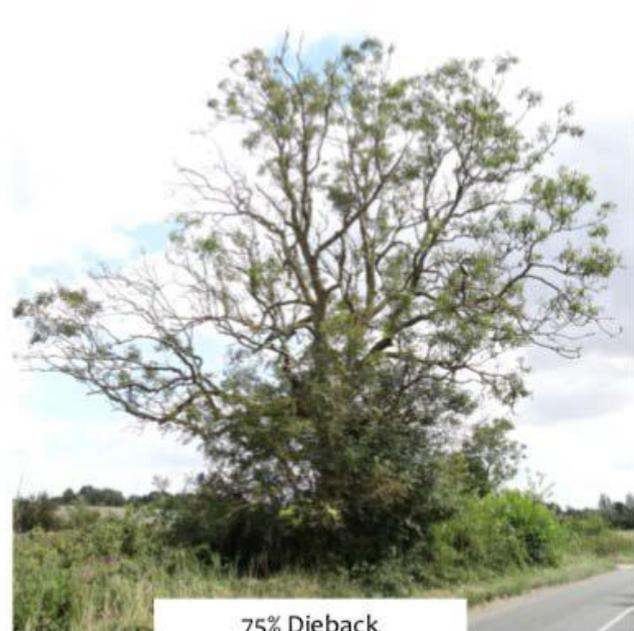
0% Dieback - Healthy Crown



25% Dieback



50% Dieback



75% Dieback

Figure 5: Anything above 50% dieback is of concern

Ash dieback is widespread across the UK, so it is not possible to completely control the spread; the emphasis now is about managing the impacts and risks caused by the disease.

For more information, including how to recognise the disease, visit [Forest Research](#).

Scope of the project

The initial assessment led to a decision that a project management approach to manage the disease would be appropriate, enabling an iterative cross-council response tackling the identified trees in initial works whilst preparing to improve available data for future work packages.

A small fund was released to survey the trees alongside A and B roads, i.e. those representing the most significant risk due to the speeds involved. This was carried out during the summer of 2019.

The methodology was to drive along each road at a slow speed with a Go-Pro camera set up with a trigger. Each time an ash tree was found, an image was taken, giving a snapshot of the location and state of the tree at the time of the survey. The data was then mapped using Google Earth to create a GIS layer and a tree count. The second stage was then to use the method set out in The Tree Council's ADB Toolkit to assess the condition of the tree, based on the visible canopy cover shown in each image. The analysis work took place during the autumn and winter 2019/20.

This enabled a prioritisation process, based on road type and speeds and the condition of the trees found. This part of the process was completed in January 2020 and enabled development of a full programme which informed the procurement of a contractor to undertake felling works.

Whilst this provided a significantly improved set of data we recognise that there are some weaknesses. The number of trees alongside A and B roads, around 11,500, includes trees not on highways land, but we also recognise that there will be additional trees not picked up on the survey. This was considered during the tender process. As the data represents a snapshot in the summer of 2019, we cannot predict the progression of the disease subsequent to the survey, so if any trees experience a rapid progression there could be an increase to the risk level, we would be unaware of. This was also factored into the tender process to enable a further layer of data capture as we progress with works.

In 2019, we were able to identify 1002 ash trees at schools which were signed up to the Service Level Agreement with the Highways Arboriculturists, which provides a three-year survey cycle. During 2019 a data field was created on our Highway Asset Management System (CONFIRM) which enables an indication of the presence of ADB to be recorded. Work has also continued to develop consistency in the descriptions recorded, using the term 'ADB' as a simple identifier within the dynamic data fields to support the fixed data field and this is now being used to prompt further discussion to enhance data capture for future benefit.

In June and July of 2021, the same methodology was utilised to capture over 1,255km of rural C and D category roads identifying a further 17,000 ash trees on or near the Highway which were again uploaded as a data field to the Highway Asset Management System (CONFIRM) to enable a complete overview



of the required works covering the Strategic Road network within WSCC. The net result was in the region of 30,000 impacted ash trees across the county.

In 2022, WSCC awarded the newly appointed contractor for all ADB works on the Highways a 4 year with an option to extend for a further 3 year period, this was mobilised during Year 1 April 2022 – March 2023.

During the planning phase officers developed a list of 2022 survey areas along specific routes following the risk rating strategy for prioritising.

The surveys covered over 90km of roads including A & B routes but also sporadic locations on C, D & G roads. During the survey season we also responded to many enquiries from stakeholders promoted by our communication strategy.

Felling Progress Updates

Progress on felling activity will be provided annually and detailed in Appendix 1

Trees adjacent to land under WSCC responsibility

Where trees are identified as presenting a risk to land under our responsibility, we will continue to use the legal mechanisms available to us to inform landowners of their responsibility to take action to make the tree safe. This presents a range of complexities which will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and managed through the Ash Dieback Team initially and supported by our Legal Team. All cases will be logged and followed through to conclusion, prioritising the risk to the public.

The Ash Dieback Working Group

The Ash Dieback Project Manager oversees the co-ordination of the project ensuring that we achieve our objectives and develop methods which will enable us to respond to future impacts more effectively.

The Ash Dieback Working Group is a collective group of key people from across the organisation who have responsibility for managing trees and our response to ash dieback.

Terms of Reference set out the required attendees and circulation for documents arising from the group. A SharePoint site has been set up to enable sharing of documents.

During the establishment phase of the project, the group met once a month. Now the project has progressed to the delivery phase, the group meet once a quarter with a full reporting system as follows:

- A standard agenda is in place, which may be added to as needed.
- A quarterly action log which is structured in line with the agenda is compiled and circulated a week after each meeting and recirculated before each subsequent meeting.
- The action log and any other key issues are discussed at the meeting.
- Subgroups will address key tasks as needed, reporting back to the meeting.
- A Task Manager logs and monitors progression of tasks identified.

The process is supported by a full Legislation Register and Risk Register which inform the activities of the project and ensure that any delegation to contractors is managed responsibly.

Defining our project

The approach we have taken has been informed by the research carried out by The Tree Council, which sets out the phases of management of a tree pest or disease, as shown in **Figure 6**, taken from the Tree Council's Ash Dieback Action Plan Toolkit.

We have combined this with our understanding of our current position to develop our own response and add further detail for the Action phase. The second diagram, **Figure 7**, shows a projection of the expected progression within each package with expected stages for the survey and felling works.

The third, **Figure 8**, shows our iterative approach showing how survey and work package phases combine to build the programme, with similar stages expected for each.

The recovery phase has been included in our objectives and will be defined as we develop data throughout the project.

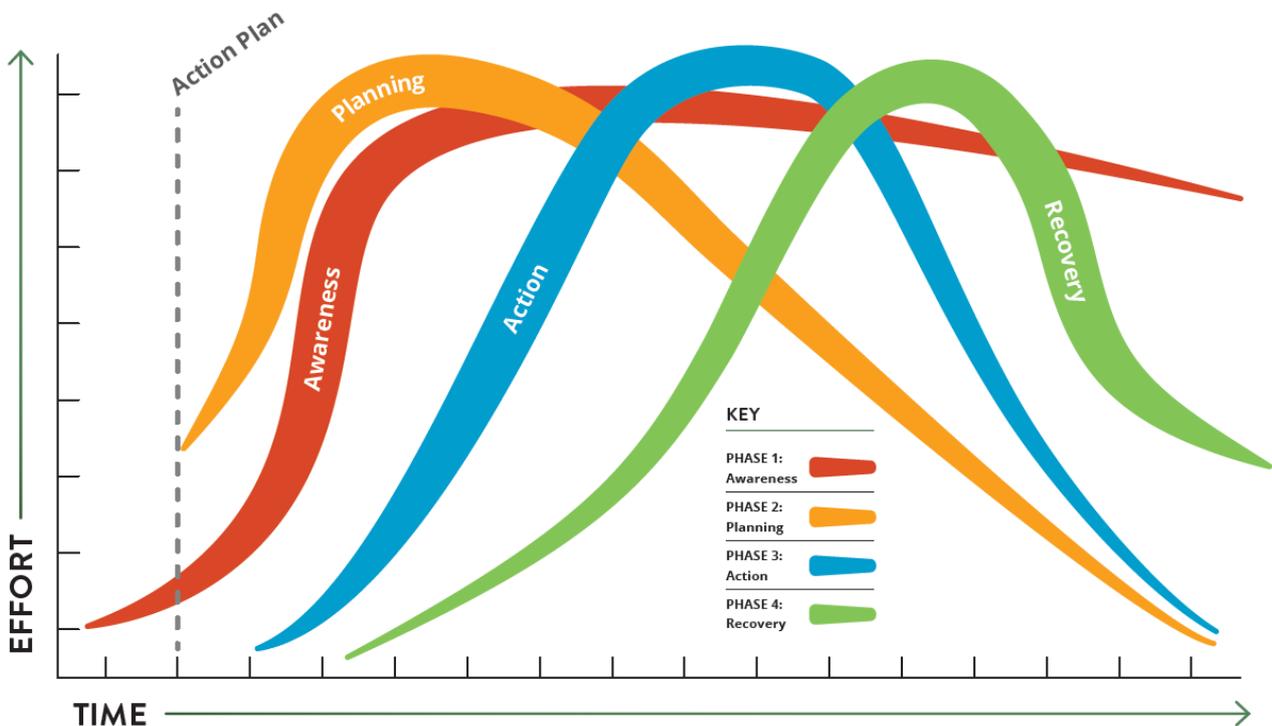


Figure 6: Phases of management of a tree pest or disease

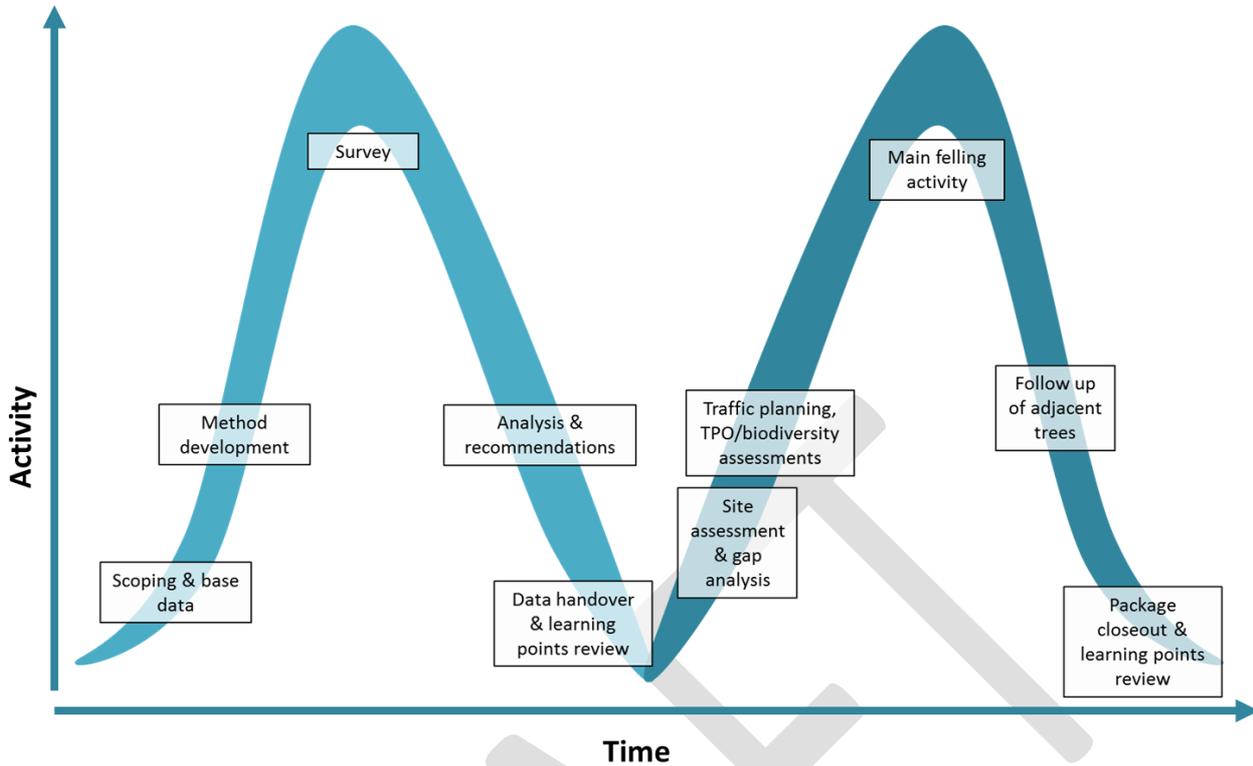
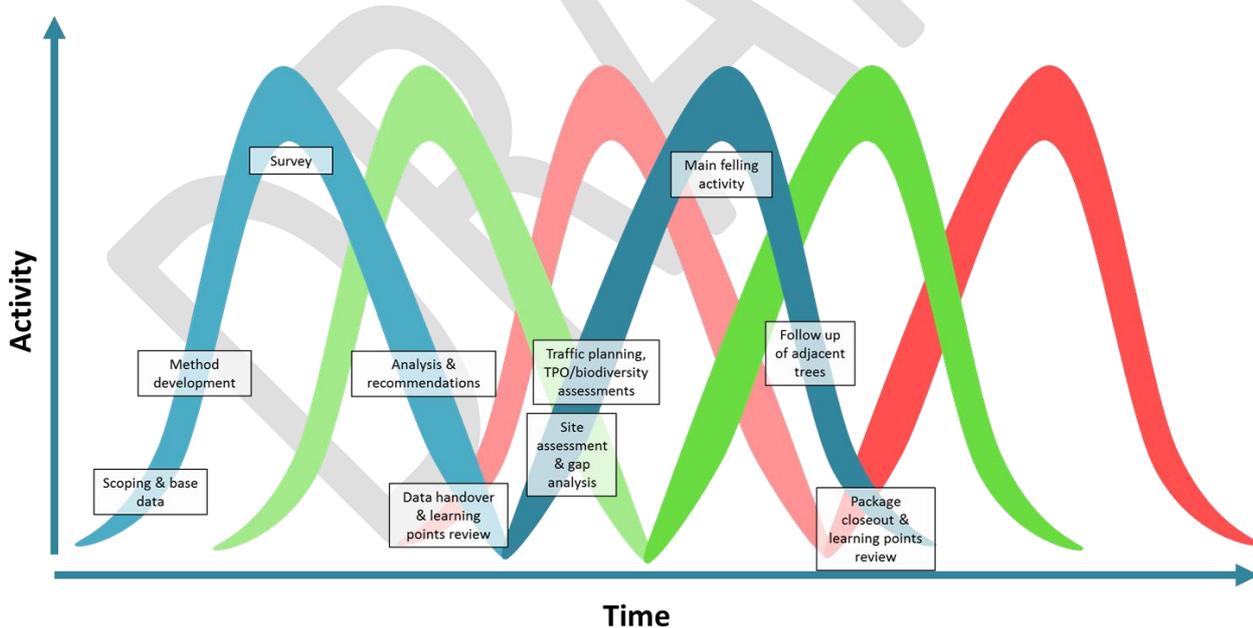


Figure 7: Projection of the expected progression within each package with expected stages for the survey and felling works



Blue – Phase One

Green – Phase Two

Pink – Phase Three

Figure 8: Our iterative approach showing how survey and work package phases combine to build the programme, with similar stages expected for each

Benefits of Trees and Woodlands

It is essential that we recognise the significance of the loss of our ash trees. In this section we look at the benefits that these trees provide, as part of our wooded landscape and the ecosystems across our county and the strategic approach we are taking with West Sussex County Council.

At a time of biodiversity and climate crises we now find that we will lose a large proportion of our trees to ash dieback. Whilst we are not able to accurately predict exactly how many trees will be lost, we can start to understand the connections with the services that trees provide within the natural environment.

It is widely known that trees are appreciated by the public as part of the green space which is characteristic of the county. We know that our tourism economy depends on this, with the choice many make to set up their lives here shaped around the environment they can find homes in.

But beyond the aesthetic appeal, trees are key to supporting wildlife, providing shelter, structure within the ecosystem, food and playing a key role in the water and nutrient cycles which keep the environment healthy by regulating movement of carbon, nitrogen and other particles which are in the atmosphere.

Within this, our air quality and local climate are affected by the presence of trees, noise is absorbed by trees, particularly in the summer months when tree canopies are at their most resplendent phase.

The roots of the trees help to stabilise soils and contribute to slowing water movement down which can help to prevent flooding.

We have taken the opportunity to develop a [tree plan](#), aligned with our sustainability and environment strategic direction which includes aspects such as supporting our pollinators, responding to the climate emergency and biodiversity losses. The plan has developed our approach to managing trees within our landscape, enabling us to build on the improvements that will be made in our database and develop the ways we work with these important assets.

This work includes the continual development of our recovery plan to ensure that we are able to make effective use of our limited resources to follow up from the work to fell the trees affected with the disease.

General management advice

Landowners, leaseholders and property managers have the responsibility to manage the trees on their land. Below we provide some basic advice, you can find links to more detailed guidance and other organisations who may be able to help you on our website. We are also producing guides for some groups such as schools.

Information for tree owners

Tree owners have a legal duty of care and must maintain their trees in a reasonably safe condition. We are only responsible for trees growing on council property, including adopted highway verges.

In almost all cases, trees that are next to roads and public rights of way are the responsibility of the neighbouring landowner. Where a tree on private land poses a danger to the highway users, we may contact the landowner and explain what work needs to be done and when it should be completed by. The tree owner is responsible for the cost of this work.

Below is an extract from a Useful information letter we send accompanying any notifications to adjacent landowners.

Landowners have a legal responsibility to ensure that the risk posed by any trees on their land is appropriately managed. Therefore, please continue to monitor all tree species on your land.

As landowner you may be liable for any damage or injury caused should the tree/s fall into the highway or other land.

Tree preservation orders

Before carrying out any tree work, please check with your district or borough council's planning department or tree officer to find out whether the tree is subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) and/or is in a conservation area. Find out more here: <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/planning/tree-preservation-orders/>

Felling License

It is also important to be aware of the possibility of requiring a felling licence for tree removal although there are some exemptions - you can read more about this here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tree-felling-getting-permission>

Appointing a professional:

The Arboricultural Association has an approved contractor and consultant directory available. Please contact on 01242 522152 or visit their website: www.trees.org.uk/ARB-Approved-Contractor-Directory

An approved contractor will be able to provide quotes for the works required and advice on what traffic management will be needed while the work is carried out.

One Network:

This website <https://one.network/> enables you to search by road or area and see what road events are planned on a given date or time period. You can also register for a free



account and set up an alert for a section of road that you would like to be kept informed about.

Traffic Management & Road Closures:

If you need to close a road or install a temporary traffic regulation such as a lower speed limit to manage traffic while work is being carried out on a tree, you will need to apply for a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order Visit - www.westsussex.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/traffic-regulation-orders/about-tros/apply-for-a-temporary-road-closure/

If you need to use other forms of traffic management such as traffic lights, please apply for road space. Visit- www.westsussex.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/highway-licences/apply-to-work-on-the-highway/

Please note: For the purposes of felling diseased roadside ash trees only, there will not be a charge for the Temporary Traffic Regulations Order (This is where the road needs to be completely closed with a diversion route put in place). This is the cost of the application itself (standard cost £432.70).

To ensure you are not charged, please ensure you state clearly on your application form within the works description that the works are for felling ash trees infected with Ash Dieback.

You will still need to pay for a traffic management company to provide their service (equipment, set up and management of any form of closure eg temporary traffic signals, lane closures etc). Your chosen contractor should be able to provide the traffic management service or recommend a separate traffic management company to use.

Tree works and public rights of way:

If works are required near to or on public rights of way, please contact the Public Rights of Way Team via PROW Reporting page - www.westsussex.gov.uk/land-waste-and-housing/public-paths-and-the-countryside/public-rights-of-way/report-a-problem-with-a-right-of-way/ at the earliest possible stage to discuss your proposals. These paths are public highways as much as public roads, and you have a duty to keep them open for safe and convenient use until such time as a formal closure is agreed with the County Council.

If path closures are required, you will need to apply for a temporary closure - www.westsussex.gov.uk/land-waste-and-housing/public-paths-and-the-countryside/public-rights-of-way/request-a-change-to-a-public-path/temporary-path-closures/

We will assess each application on its merits and expect applicants to minimise any closure period - it may be possible that paths can be kept open by adopting a different work practice. It would be helpful to supply a copy of your felling plan and timetable. We will need to be satisfied on the standard of reinstatement, which is required to be no lesser a standard than existed prior to works.

Please note: For the purpose of felling diseased ash trees alongside a public right of way only, you will be eligible for a courtesy closure for up to 5 days free of charge. To be eligible, please clearly state on your application form within the works description that the works are for felling ash trees infected with Ash Dieback.

Tree Health Pilot Scheme:

On the 31st of August 2021, the Forestry Commission announced a new tree health pilot scheme. The pilot will run for three years until August 2024 with a rolling application, so there is no deadline for application submissions. Individual landowners and groups are eligible to apply, and if successful, you will receive a grant to help pay back some of the costs of carrying out ash dieback felling works and for replacing diseased trees. Please see the table for ash dieback below which has been copied from the website:

Type of grant	Payment rate for trees in woodlands	Payment rate for trees outside of woodlands
Road closure and traffic management	60% of the actual costs of partial or full road closure and traffic management	60% of the actual costs of partial or full road closure and traffic management
Facilitation time (leading the application)	£24 per hour (up to a maximum of £4,200 per month)	£24 per hour (up to a maximum of £4,200 per month)
European protected species surveys	80% of actual costs	80% of actual costs
Restocking and capital items	Up to £6,000 per ha for ancient woodland sites. Up to £4,720 per ha for other sites	£270.44 per large tree, £3.79 for feathers, £2.29 for whips
Maintenance (per year for 3 years)	£350 per ha	Up to £189 per large tree or £0.14 per feather or whip

If you are interested in taking part, you will need to fill in an expression of interest form and submit to the Forestry Commission. Further details and a link to the expression of interest form can be found on the website www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-health-pilot-scheme

For most landowners, the first step will be to contact a tree surgeon. They will be able to provide quotes for the work required and advice on what traffic management will be needed while the work is carried out. The [Arboricultural Association](#) has an approved contractor and consultant directory which we include links to on each information letter we send out.

Check the standing advice for [protected species](#) before any work starts.

Information for woodland owners

If you own woodland which contains ash you should be aware of the following:

- It is recommended that you create or update a management plan to take account of the current or likely future impacts of ash dieback. [Countryside](#)

Stewardship grants are available for new management plans on woodland areas over 3ha.

- Markets for lower grade timber are available which may help reduce the cost of felling.
- Grants are available under **Countryside Stewardship** which can contribute towards the cost of restocking and ongoing management. Parish councils are also eligible to apply for Countryside Stewardship.

Specific guidance on managing woodland containing ash is available in **Forestry Commission Operations Note 46**. Comprehensive guidance is available on the [Managing ash dieback in England](#) webpage.

To find out about Forestry Commission grants, tree felling licences, regulations and managing private woods and forests, visit [GOV.UK](#) or contact your [local area office](#).

Tree works and traffic management

If you need to manage traffic while work is being carried out on a tree, you will need to [apply for a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order](#).

DRAFT

Public Rights of Way (PRoWs)

If you have Public Rights of Way on your land, you should be aware of the following:

- Trees alongside the route are the landowner's responsibility.
- Works should be carried out in a way that allows use of PRoW where possible.
- If the work you are planning will endanger people using the PRoW then you will need to [apply for a Temporary Closure Order](#).
- To enable landowners to take action fees for a 5 day closure may be waived, however fees will apply for longer closures, please check the website for current rates.
- Applications for closures will need to meet the legal test that there is a risk to the safety of users.
- You will need to provide details of your planned works and how you will prioritise trees that might impact any PRoW i.e. to minimise closures and inconvenience to users.
- Any damage caused to the surface of the path through the delivery of the works will need to be repaired and applicants will be required to reinstate to no lesser a standard than that at the time of the application.

Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), trees in conservation areas and felling licences

To check whether the tree requiring work is subject to a TPO, or in a conservation area, contact the tree officer at your relevant [district or borough council](#) before starting any work.

Under the Forestry Act 1967 as amended, a licence is required to fell most trees. Details of how to apply for a licence, and any exemptions which may apply, are outlined in the [Tree felling - getting permission](#) document, available on GOV.UK.

See our Useful Links section to find where further information is available online.

Impacts of ash dieback

We have prepared a detailed risk register for the project. Here we summarise some of these risks, which may help others to consider the impacts on their own organisation. We will seek to mitigate losses where possible during the recovery phase.

Introducing Decision Factors

We have developed our tree plan to support an educational approach which provides a set of decision factors to enable users to consider the opportunity to mitigate losses and offset the impacts of ash dieback.

This will support the recovery plan and any direct action we take by encouraging positive choices in all our activities.

This approach is intended to support individuals to make decisions based on considering the risks and opportunities of their actions. The Ash Dieback Project is a useful scenario to test the approach and develop it for long term use.



Figure 9: Decision Factors

Decision Factor	Details
Available Resources	All decisions are subject to allocation of available resources, whether internal or external. This may include collaborative relationships, grant applications, or sponsorships as well as direct resources such as release of funds or staff time.
Safety	Prioritise the safety of members of the public, residents on our estate, our staff, and all workers contracted to work on or near our trees. Safety is central to all decisions and will take priority where risk levels are high.
Biodiversity	As long as the tree is safe, we will prioritise its value to wildlife and the services it provides within the ecosystem to

	support our response to climate change, biodiversity loss, and loss of pollinators.
Green Infrastructure	Trees provide a range of services which support our daily lives including contributions to air quality, slowing the movement of water in the landscape, cooling the environment, providing shade, and much more. Consideration will be given to the value of trees where the safety priority is met.
Amenity and Character	The lush green character of West Sussex is shaped by the trees in our landscape and this aspect will be considered in our decision-making where the safety priority is met.

The key risks identified include: landscape and biodiversity; local landowners, land managers, and homeowners; and local utilities and infrastructure organisations.

Landscape and biodiversity

We recognise that the loss of so many trees of a single species will have a detrimental effect on the wildlife species which depend on ash. We will endeavour to ensure that any replacement planting carried out, or alternative mitigation measures, will consider providing for those species as far as resources allow. Implementation of our tree plan will incorporate supporting the recovery, which may include alternative planting methods, natural regeneration as well as direct replanting where resources can be identified.

We will investigate opportunities to collaborate and explore relationship to develop alternative schemes where direct replanting is not practical and seek to entwine our approach within the sustainability and environment strategy.

Areas we will focus on include:

- Air quality
- Flood management
- Noise and visual impact
- Habitat conservation and development
- Carbon
- Pollinators

Consider the potential impacts upon your organisation and the services that you deliver.

Local landowners, land managers and homeowners

We also recognise that the people living and working alongside our own sites will be managing the impacts of ash dieback too. Where possible we will aim to work together to:

- Maximise the opportunity when road closures will be necessary
- Provide information to enable our neighbours to take action
- Develop joint mitigation plans where feasible
- Ensure neighbours are kept informed when our project will impact on them
- Respond to enquiries effectively to ensure trees that present a risk are addressed

Local utilities and infrastructure organisations

We are working with our colleagues in other organisations, including District and Borough Councils across the county. There are many crossovers with roads, rail, rivers, canals, wildlife sites, parks and other properties. To manage these effectively we will:

- Ensure we use a consistent approach to managing our own activities for clarity
- Develop our relationships to ensure we have the correct contacts for each organisation
- Inform them when trees are identified as being under their responsibility
- Respond promptly when we receive notifications from others
- Monitor progress on referrals to us, and referrals from us
- Use these developments to continuously improve our methods.

DRAFT

Potential impacts of ash dieback on West Sussex County Council

Our comprehensive risk register approach has identified potential impacts on our own organisation. The key impacts are summarised here, and our approach has been developed to respond to these risks and manage them effectively.

Health and Safety Impacts

- Potential for death or injury as a result of ADB related accidents
- Increased health and safety issues due to declining ash trees on roads, county parks, housing estates, schools, cycleways and public rights of way
- Risks to statutory functions or service delivery such as retaining safe schools, public open spaces or highways
- Risks to staff and user community from trees on adjacent land falling into our estate
- Risks from falling ash to our own properties and infrastructure

Economic impacts

- Increased liabilities in cases of death or injury as a result of ADB related incidents
- We have appointed a Project Manager, Support officers and Arboriculturists to provide additional resource
- Increasing prices as a result of economy and interest rates.
- Increased expenditure from direct and indirect costs as a result of ADB
- Increased direct/indirect costs due to increased flood risk due to the loss of water retaining ash trees
- Costs of replanting needed to retain ecosystem services provided by ash e.g., flood reduction, urban shading, carbon storage and habitat for biodiversity
- Increased liabilities as a result of risks to adjacent land and 'third party' property from our trees falling/dropping branches reputational damage
- Potential for disruption as a result of ADB management e.g., widespread road closures to deal with potentially dangerous trees
- Political and reputational risks as a result of negative press over ADB management and public pressure and/or anxiety
- Potentially strained relationships with landowners and managers as ADB spreads and increased costs fall on the private owners

Environmental Impacts

- Landscape changes with impacts on tourism and recreational opportunities
- Losses to ecosystem services such as reductions in air quality, potential for increased flooding, biodiversity losses, increases in noise levels adjacent to roads, losses of visual screens
- Risks to protected species/sites through alteration of habitat structure, stability and composition
- Losses of carbon storage and sequestration

The risks related to ash dieback are regularly reviewed and discussed at senior levels within the organisation. The Working Group has been structured to provide an escalation process, so that as the project progresses issues can be raised when needed. This provides certainty that we will be held accountable for our actions, that our key decision makers are kept fully informed and that the pathways for the future recovery phase are being created.

DRAFT

Communication Strategy

We have carried out an analysis of key stakeholders and identified key internal reporting requirements. External communications include informing the public about the disease and notifying tree owners of their responsibilities. We will endeavour to collaborate where relationships will support our objectives. All other enquiries will be on a response basis.

The diagram below sets out the main communications groupings, which has informed the development of our reporting framework for the Ash Dieback Working Group.

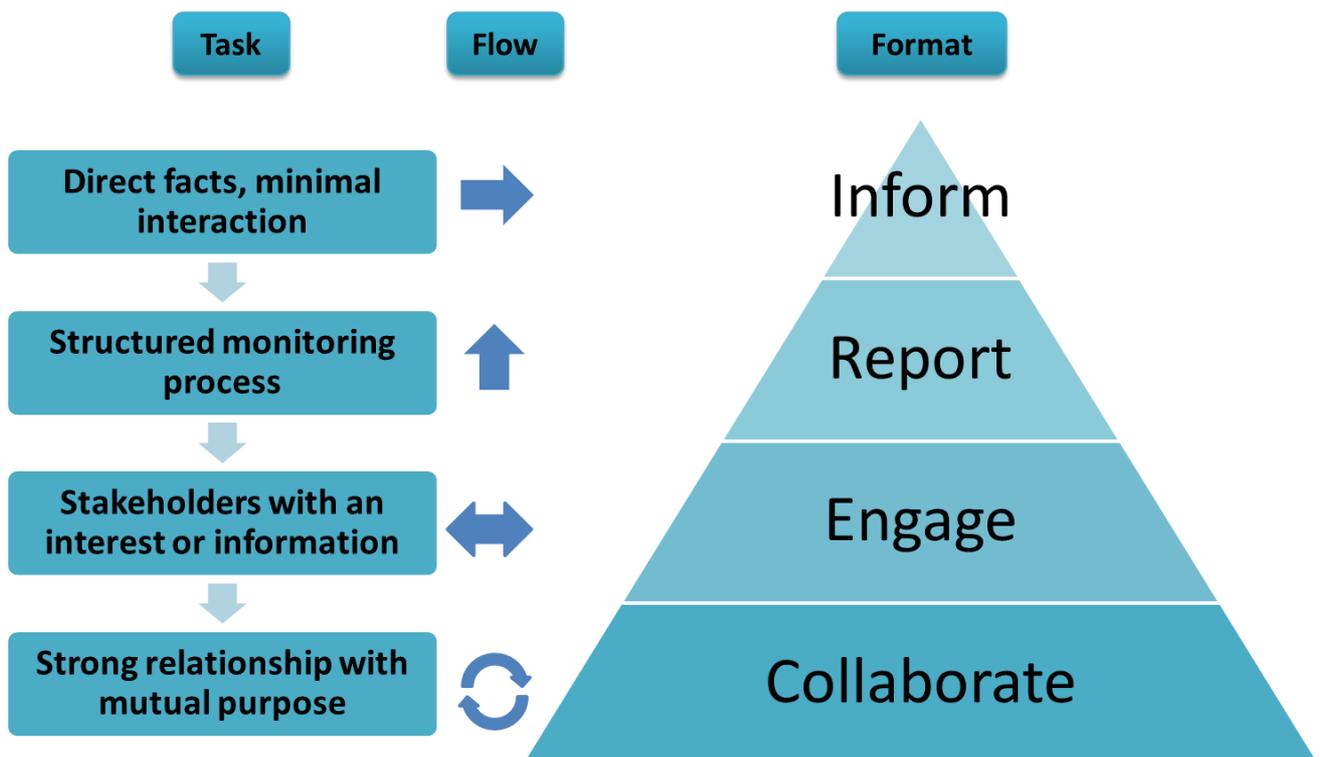
Where communication is required with tree owners, we seek to engage to ensure works are completed.

Where deeper collaborations will enable a significant improvement to our recovery objectives, we will work to develop those relationships and build on these for the long term. Many such relationships do already exist, and we aim to keep developing our approach for the benefit of all stakeholders.

As the project progresses, we will update our records and manage these through the Working Group to ensure a consistent approach.

All key staff for the project have been included in the Working Group, either as regular attendees, through the circulation process or as consultees where professional advice is required. Tasks arising will be logged and monitored through the Task Manager process with updates included in the quarterly action log and outcomes recorded as required.

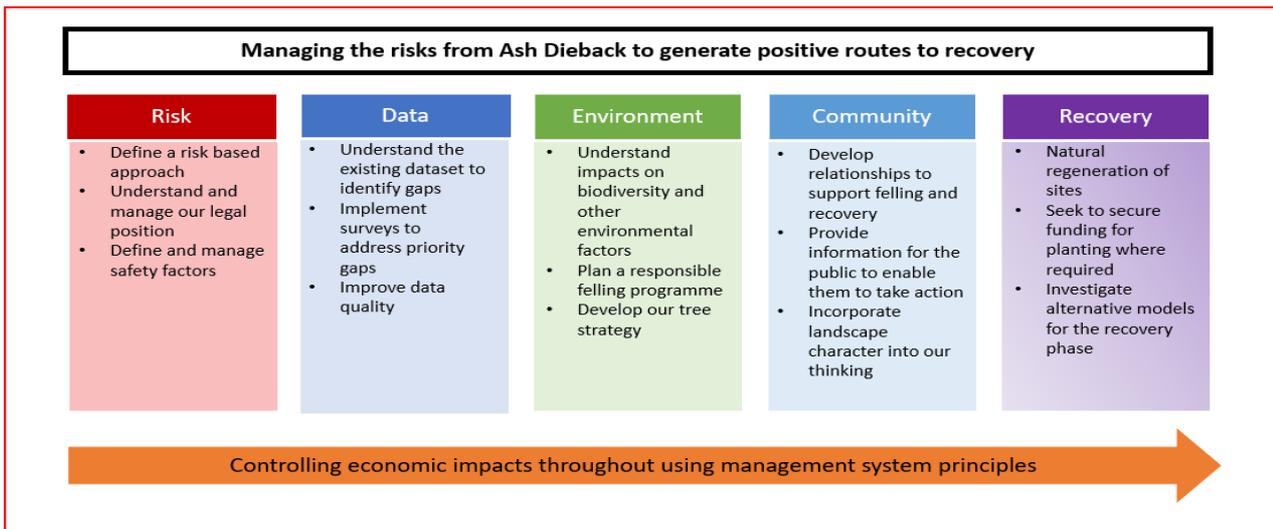
Figure 10: Main communications groupings



The Action Plan

A high-level summary of the Action Plan is shown in **Figure 11**. The day-to-day activity will be managed through the ADB project team with an annual review of this document. Progress will be monitored on a monthly basis by the group, with daily management by the Project Manager and project team.

The objectives set will be part of the annual review to ensure that they remain relevant and achievable, and our approach has been embedded in the Tree Plan to enable the development of our recovery process to achieve the objectives set.



Further details about the objectives are provided in the tables below.
Figure 11: High-level summary of the Action Plan

Risk

Objective	Details
Define a risk-based approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the risk levels both internally and externally, using a PESTLE* model. • Work with the Corporate Risk Management process to manage internal risks. • Record all risks in an ADB Project Risk Register. • Develop an Ash Dieback Working Group (ADBWG) to manage the project effectively.
Understand and manage our legal position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a register of key legislation which is relevant to the project and our stakeholders. • Assemble a Legal Advisory Team to support the ADBWG throughout the project. • Develop standard processes and templates where feasible. • Develop a response mechanism to support cases where land ownership is unclear. • Understand liabilities relating to ADB and use the systems we develop to manage them.
Define and manage safety factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Risk and Legislation registers to define our safety responsibilities to the public, staff, and contractors working on the project. • Develop ADB guidance for the public to ensure they can understand their responsibilities. • Inform staff and our leaseholders of ADB and provide guidance to enable their response. •

* Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental factors.

Environment

Objective	Details
Understand impacts on biodiversity and other environmental factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider impacts relating to ecosystem health and habitats. • Consider impacts relating to climate change, air quality, flood resilience, and related strategies. • Evaluate opportunities for recovery phase to support a positive outcome.
Plan a responsible felling programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the ADBWG manage the risks identified in the risk and legal registers. • Through the ADBWG ensure we fully evaluate and where feasible identify resources to embrace opportunities to enhance biodiversity. • As a minimum standard ensure we mitigate losses.
Implement our tree plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use learning arising from the ADB project to inform implementation of our tree plan. • Develop approaches to move to a strategic approach to managing our trees. • Recognise trees as assets. • Create a strategy which enables collaborative approaches across departments and with external stakeholders.

Data

Objective	Details
Understand the existing dataset to identify gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify available data sources. • Evaluate quality of data held in those sources. • Determine where gaps exist
Implement surveys to address priority gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use risk register to determine priority areas. • Design survey methods where data is not available. • Design analysis methods for data collected in surveys. • Use learning points to develop methods for the long term.
Improve data quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how data is collected. • Evaluate opportunities and areas for improvement. • Work with primary sources of data to enhance data entry, recording, and analysis or reporting methods. • Develop reporting methods for the ADBWG.

Community

Objective	Details
Develop relationships to support felling and recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify stakeholders and carry out a RACI* analysis. • Ensure all key internal stakeholders are involved in the ADBWG. • Design a reporting and communication framework to support development of relationships. • Work with external stakeholders to align approaches where feasible.
Provide information for the public to enable them to take action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop articles for the general public to inform about ADB. • Develop our web page to provide links to advice and guidance. • Develop our Action Plan to ensure the public is aware of the work we are doing. • Engage with neighbours when works are planned where they have ash trees
Incorporate landscape character into our thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include landscape character aspects in our assessment. • Consider heritage aspects in our risk assessment and legislation review. • Ensure contractors are instructed to incorporate identified risks into their works planning. • Ensure landscape character is a factor in our recovery planning.

* Responsible, accountable, consulted and informed

Recovery

Objective	Details
Monitor and measure natural regeneration of a broad range of sites over the county	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on measurables including retained trees, diversity increase in ground level vegetation, habitat and ecosystem stability. • Report on carbon usage required to replant against natural regeneration of established root structures and existing seedbank of areas cleared. • Commission specialist consultancy organisation to undertake initial and multiyear surveys, annual and final reports.
Explore opportunities for improving success rates of natural regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine where sites may be improved using alternative methods during survey and felling activities. • Consider whether offset options are required and where they are feasible. • Identify resources for all proposals, which may include alternative funding sources.
Investigate alternative models for the recovery phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design a brief to monitor sites left to naturally regenerate. • . • Research alternatives in use in other similar settings • Research funding opportunities for diverse • Build all models identified into the tree plan for a long-term embedded recovery.

Useful Links

Below are all the links referred to in this document. If you are reading a pdf copy you can click on the blue type for a hyperlink to the webpage. We have provided the address of the page for those reading a print or disabled copy.

WSCC ash dieback - our web page

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/land-waste-and-housing/public-paths-and-the-countryside/ash-dieback/>

WSCC Tree Plan – our web page

[West Sussex Tree Plan - West Sussex County Council](#)

Apply for a temporary road closure – How and when to apply for a temporary traffic regulation order

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/traffic-regulation-orders/about-tros/apply-for-a-temporary-road-closure/>

Arboricultural Association – directories of registered consultants and approved contractors

<https://www.trees.org.uk/Find-a-professional>

Arboricultural Association – guidance for tree owners, tree contractors and consultants

<https://www.trees.org.uk/Trees.org.uk/media/Trees.org.uk/Documents/eBooks/AshDieback-GuidanceNote-web.pdf>

Ash dieback toolkit – prepared by The Tree Council on behalf of DEFRA and Fera

<https://www.treecouncil.org.uk/Press-News/Tree-Council-launches-national-plan-to-tackle-threat-to-millions-of-Britains-trees-facing-ash-dieback-disease>

District and borough councils – tree officer contacts

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/about-the-council/your-other-local-councils/district-and-borough-councils/>

Countryside stewardship – information on available grants

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/countryside-stewardship-get-paid-for-environmental-land-management>

[Forestry Commission](#) – information on grants, tree felling licences, regulations and managing private woods and forests

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forestry-commission>

[Forestry Commission Area Offices](#) – Local Office contacts for Forestry Commission

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forestry-commission/about/access-and-opening>

[Forestry Commission Operations Note 46](#) – Managing ash in woodlands in light of ash dieback: operations note 46

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-ash-in-woodlands-in-light-of-ash-dieback-operations-note-46>

[Forestry Commission Operations Note 046a](#) – Guidance on the management of individual ash trees

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-ash-trees-affected-by-ash-dieback-operations-note-46a>

[Forest Research](#) – identification of ADB, reporting etc.

<https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/pest-and-disease-resources/ash-dieback-hymenoscyphus-fraxineus/>

[Highway trees](#) – reporting problems

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/maintaining-roads-verges-and-pavements/road-and-roadside/tree-and-hedge-maintenance/#report-problems-with-trees>

[Managing ash dieback in England](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/managing-ash-dieback-in-england>

[National Tree Safety Group](#) – guidance on trees and public safety

<http://ntsgroup.org.uk/guidance-publications/>

[Protected species](#) – government advice on protected species

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-species-how-to-review-planning-applications>

Royal Forestry Society Research Reports – Case studies on managing ash dieback

<https://www.rfs.org.uk/about/publications/rfs-research-reports/>

Temporary Path Closure – How to apply to close a Public Right of Way to allow for works to be carried out safely.

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/land-waste-and-housing/public-paths-and-the-countryside/public-rights-of-way/request-a-change-to-a-public-path/temporary-path-closures/#overview>

Tree felling licence – Guidance for when you need to apply

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-felling-licence-when-you-need-to-apply>

Tree health resilience strategy – the government's approach to protecting England's trees from pest and disease threats

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tree-health-resilience-strategy-2018>

Tree pests and diseases – Identify, report, prevent and minimise the introduction, spread and impacts of tree pests and diseases in the UK

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tree-pests-and-diseases>

Tree species selection for green infrastructure – A guide for specifiers

<https://www.tdaq.org.uk/tree-species-selection-for-green-infrastructure.html>

Appendix 1

ADB Appendix 1 - 2022-2023 Felling season

	Sites	Trees
Highways	344	4000
Public Rights Of Way	N/A	>50
Countryside Sites (Fairmile Bottom, Downslink, Forest & Worth Way)	3	200
Corporate Estate	114	9