Ash Dieback Action Plan December 2019

Contents

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, manage the risks but also to ensure that we do all we can to repair 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.

In order to recover we will need to ensure that as a minimum we aim to replace the trees we lose where appropriate, but where funding can be identified we must seek to improve areas, replace trees with species which provide similar ecological benefits, or identify alternatives which improve the biodiversity of each area.

Ash dieback has arrived in West Sussex at a challenging time for the organisation. We endeavour to identify suitable funds to rise to meet that challenge, seek to develop collaborative relationships for the best ecological outcomes with the resources we have but 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.

We are taking the opportunity to renew our strategy for trees, enabling us to embed an approach which prepares us for landscape scale impacts and develops resilience for the future.

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

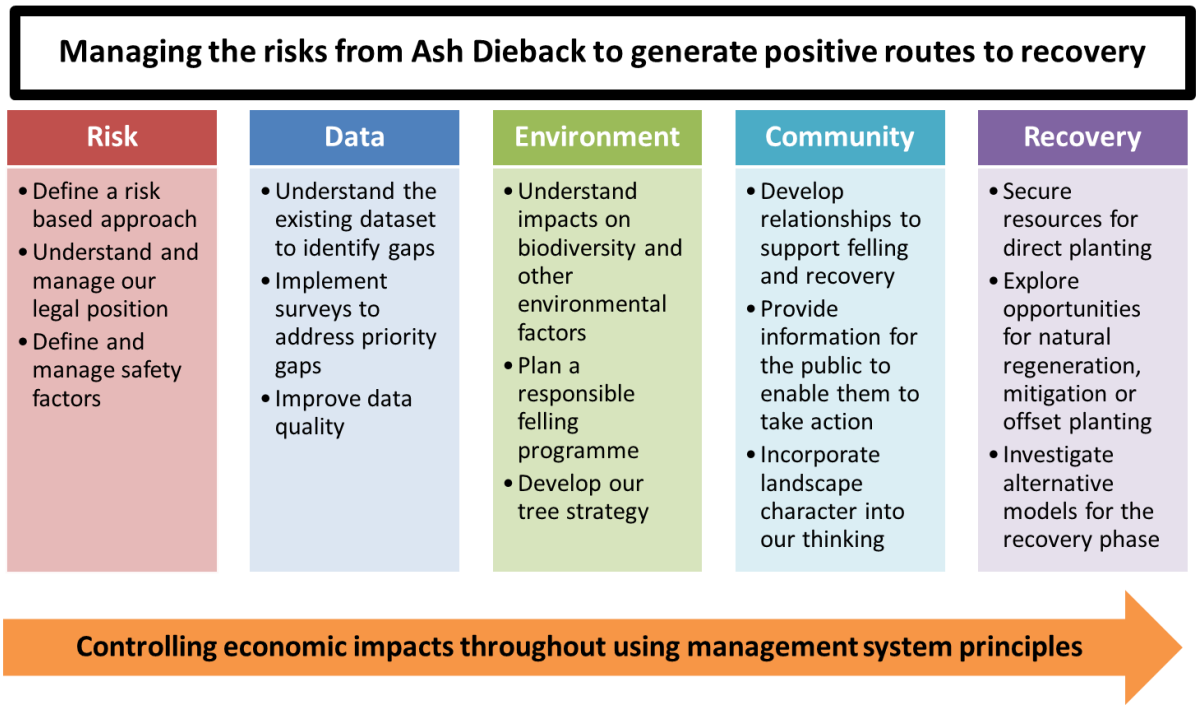

Figure 1: Action Plan Objectives

Ash Dieback Action Plan Aims and Objectives

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 10 years' time.

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.

The Action Plan is provided and the detailed day-to-day management of the project will be managed through the Ash Dieback Working Group which is now established.

We are recording everything we learn so that we can develop methods that provide a long-term improvement to our systems leaving us better equipped to respond to large-scale environmental impacts. (See Figure 2.)

This model will be enhanced as we progress through the project and will support the tree strategy which is one of our objectives. This will form part of a framework of guidance supporting our strategies for sustainability and the environment, building our resilience for the future.

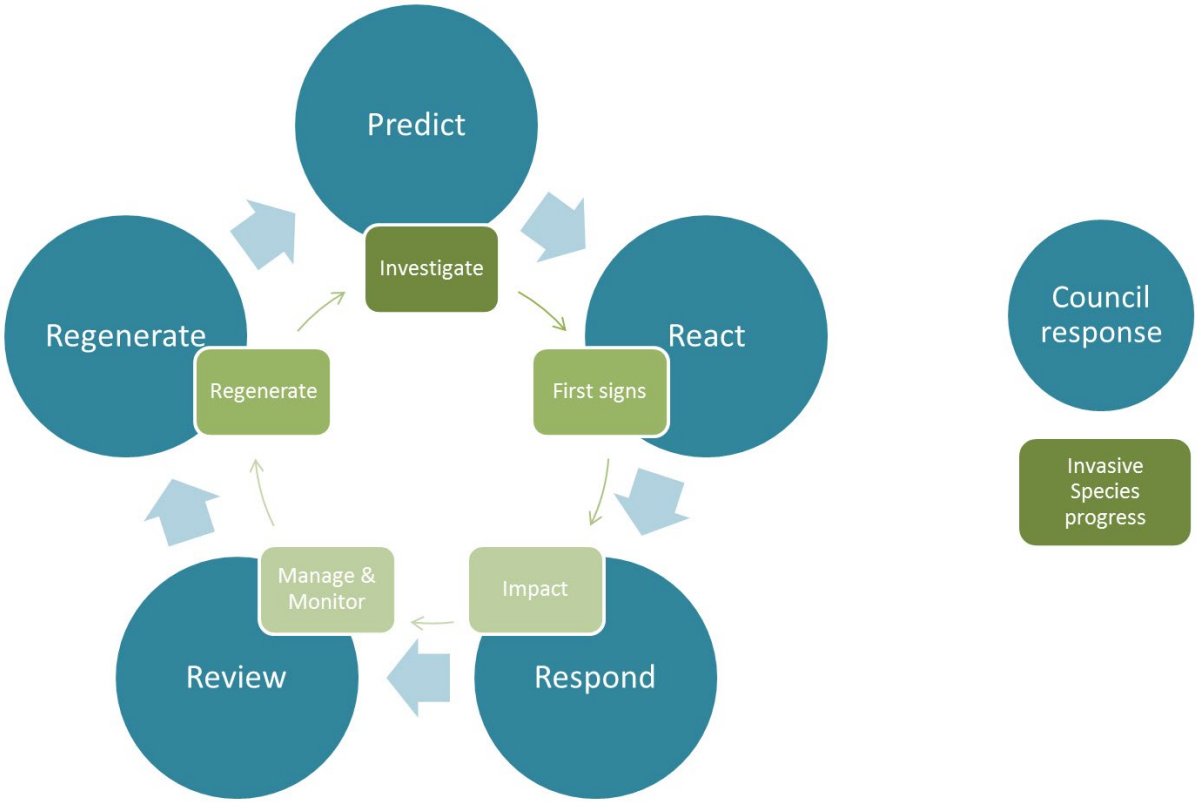

Figure 2: Invasive Species Response Protocol

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. Survivors can be used for breeding tolerant ash trees 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 to 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.

Our first 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 in itself 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 in the event of a major storm. Fortunately, such storm events are unusual in the UK, but we recognise the risk of weak trees falling onto the highway by giving this part of the work required the highest priority.

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, and fire stations, present a similarly high risk.

Countryside Parks 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.

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 is 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

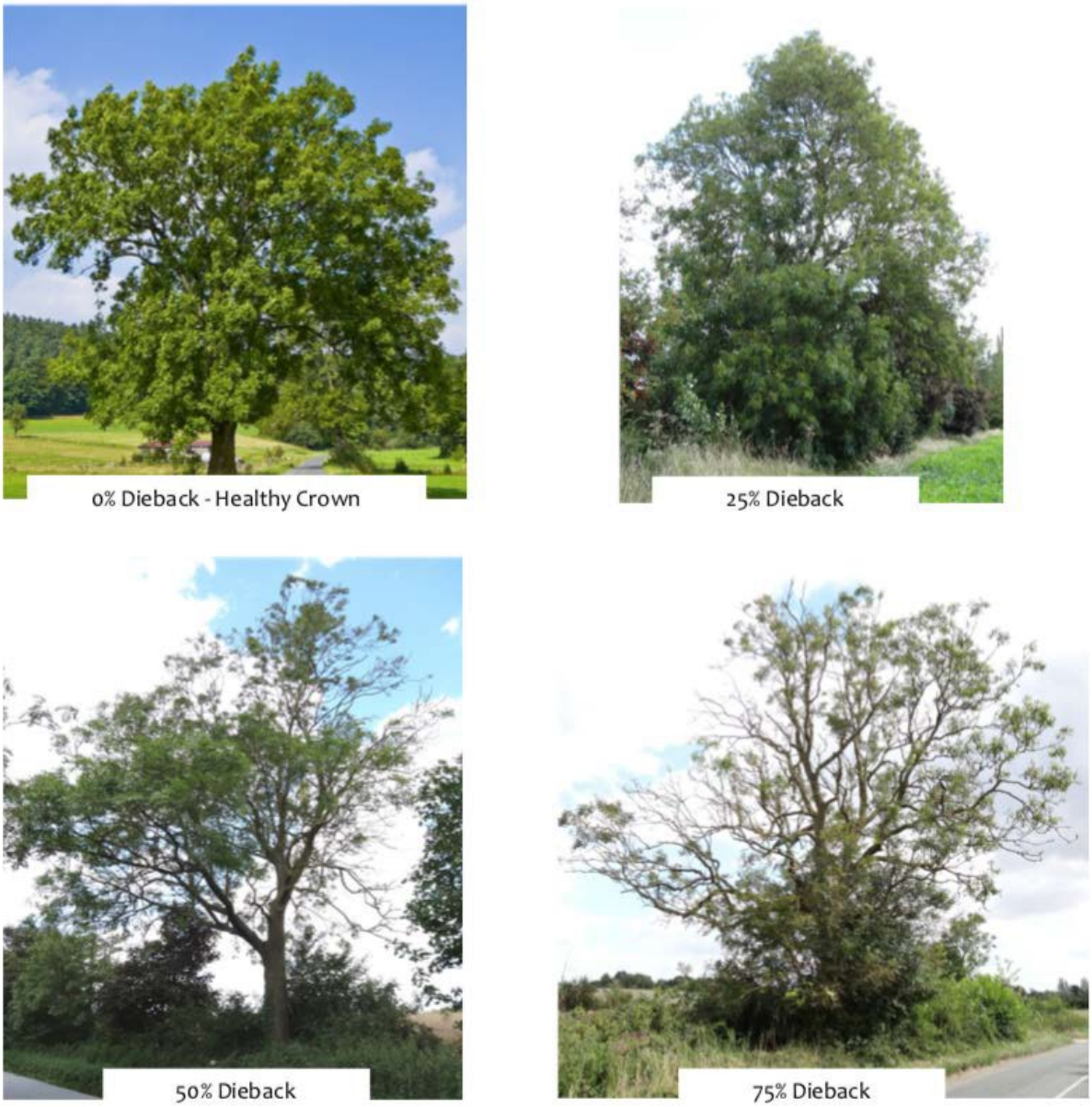

Figure 5: Anything above 50% dieback is of concern

Defining the 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 is scheduled to take place during the autumn and winter.

This enables the prioritisation process, based on road type and speeds and the condition of the trees found. This part of the process is scheduled to complete in January 2020 and will then enable development of a full programme which will inform the procurement of a contractor to undertake felling works.

Whilst this provides a significantly improved set of data, we recognise that there are some weaknesses. The number of trees, circa 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 will be taken into account 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 will also be factored into the tender process to enable a further layer of data capture as we progress with works.

We were able to identify 1,002 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 Confirm, the system used to record highways jobs, which enables an indication of the presence of ADB to be recorded. Work has also been started 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 will be used to prompt further discussion to enhance data capture for future benefit.

202 trees were also identified on other Council properties from existing data but a survey of properties is to be included in the project, a list of properties is being compiled to enable this work to begin during 2020. The 202 identified trees will be included in the first phase of works along with the 1,002 trees at schools.

Trees adjacent to Land under WSCC Responsibility

Where trees are identified as presenting a risk to land under our responsibility, we will 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 Working Group (ADBWG) process, which we set out below. A multidisciplinary Legal Advisory Team has been brought together and briefed on the details of the project in preparation. In some cases, we will be required to pass the case on to District and Borough Councils to manage, others will be managed directly. All cases will be logged and followed through to conclusion, prioritising the risk to the public.

The Ash Dieback Working Group

We have appointed a Project Manager to oversee 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 has been compiled and agreed, setting out the required attendees and circulation for documents arising from the group. A SharePoint site has been set up to enable sharing of documents.

The group meets once a month, with a full reporting system as follows.

- A standard agenda is in place, which may be added to as needed.
- A monthly report which is structured in line with the agenda is compiled and circulated a week before each meeting.
- The report and any other key issues are discussed at the meeting.
- Sub-groups will address key tasks as needed, reporting back to the meeting.
- A Task Manager logs and monitors progression of tasks identified.
- A monthly quadrant summary report is compiled with key points for Executive overview.

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.

The group is responsible for developing the business case for the project, currently estimated to be a value of £5-7.5 million over five years, developing the data required to support that process, ensuring the effective delivery of the project and ensuring learning points are captured and interpreted into improvements throughout the project and beyond.

Whilst these documents are not published externally, they constitute our formal records of all decisions made and progress with the project.

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.

Further detail is set out in our Gantt Chart provided within the Delivery Plan section.

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

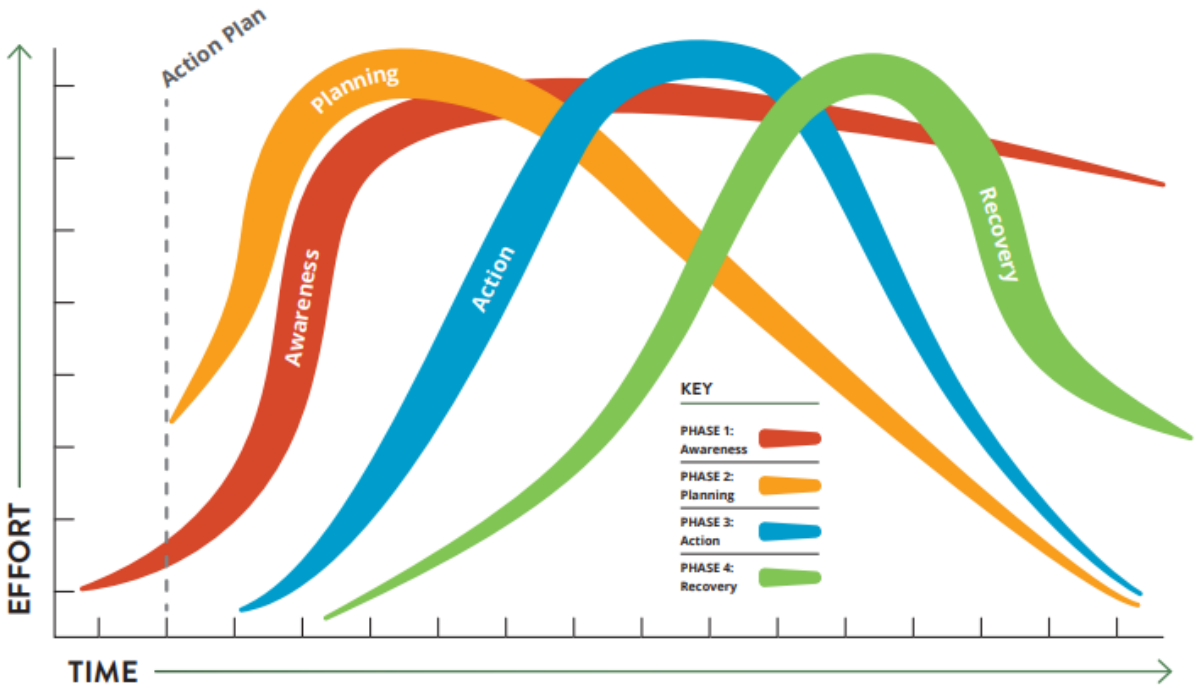

Figure 6: Phases of management of a tree pest or disease

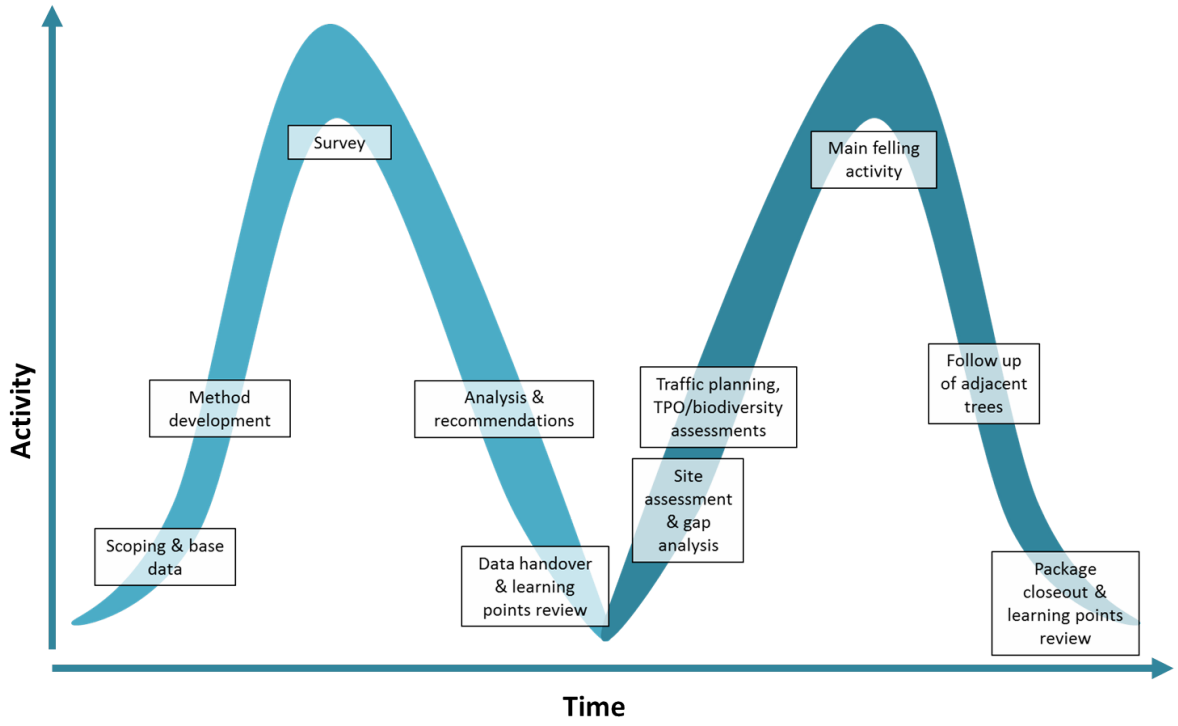

Figure 7: Projection of the expected progression within each package with expected stages for the survey and felling works

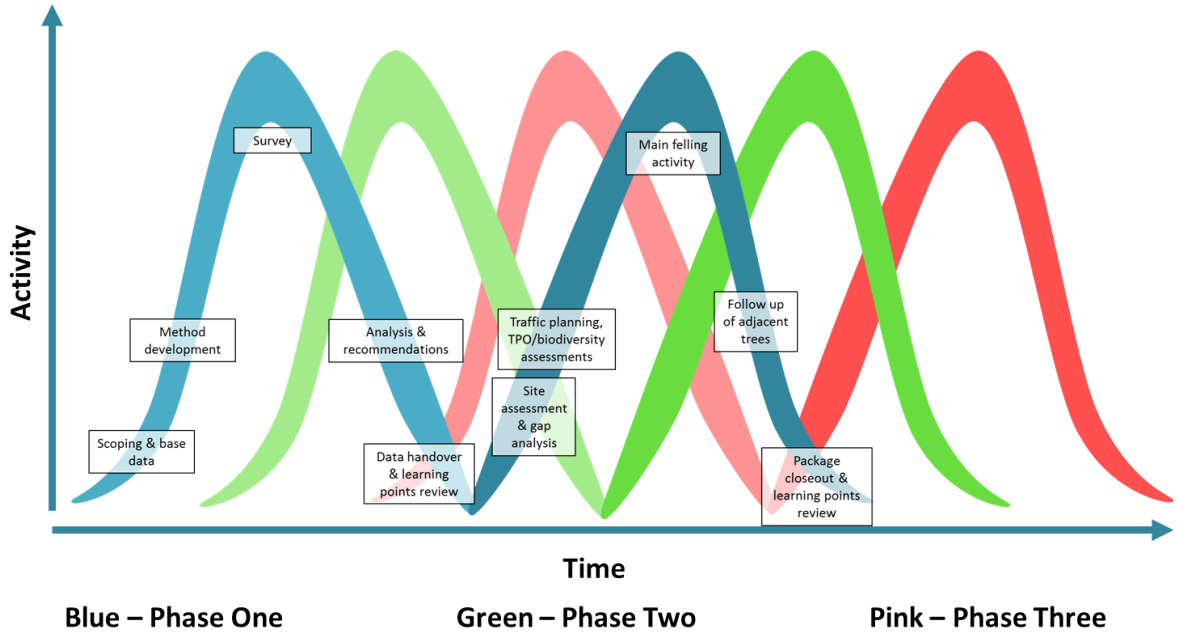

Figure 8: Our iterative approach showing how survey and work package phases combine to build the programme, with similar stages expected for each

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 when scientists are demonstrating that we are experiencing significant biodiversity losses and starting to see impacts of climate change 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 are taking the opportunity to develop a tree strategy, 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 strategy will develop 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 will include the 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 by 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.

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.

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.

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.

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 five-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 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 are developing our tree strategy 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.

Decision Factor	Details
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. The development of our tree strategy 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.

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, bridle paths, and footpaths.
- 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 to provide additional resource, however there will also be impacts on existing roles.
- Increasing prices as a result of market competition for a limited pool of skilled tree contractors.
- Increased expenditure from direct and indirect costs as a result of ADB.
- Additional costs of the disposal of waste products from felled, diseased ash.
- 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/shedding branches.
- Drop in market prices for ash wood products due to excess ash on the market.

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, e.g. loss of bat breeding/feeding sites.
- 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.

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 in Figure 10 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 and we begin to appoint contractors, 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 monthly report and outcomes minuted as required.

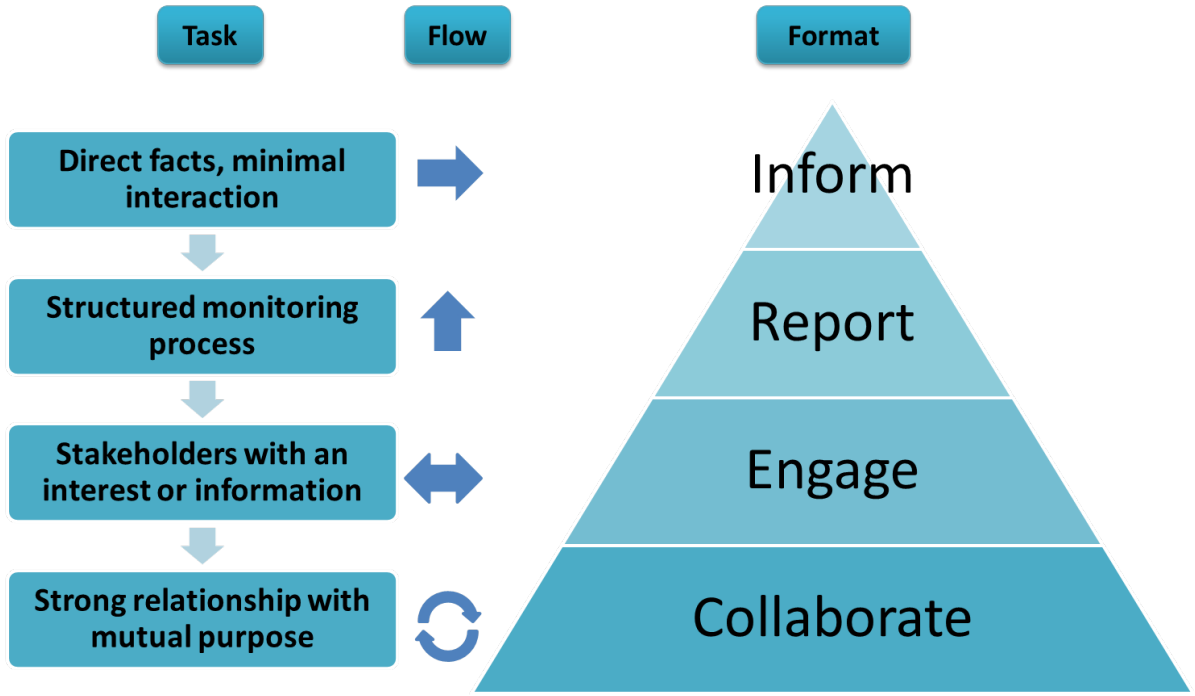

Figure 10: Main communications groupings

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 Working Group 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. Individual tasks contributing to the delivery of the objectives will be managed through the Task Manager, with an escalation process in place should any key tasks be delayed for any reason.

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

Further details about the objectives is provided in the tables below.

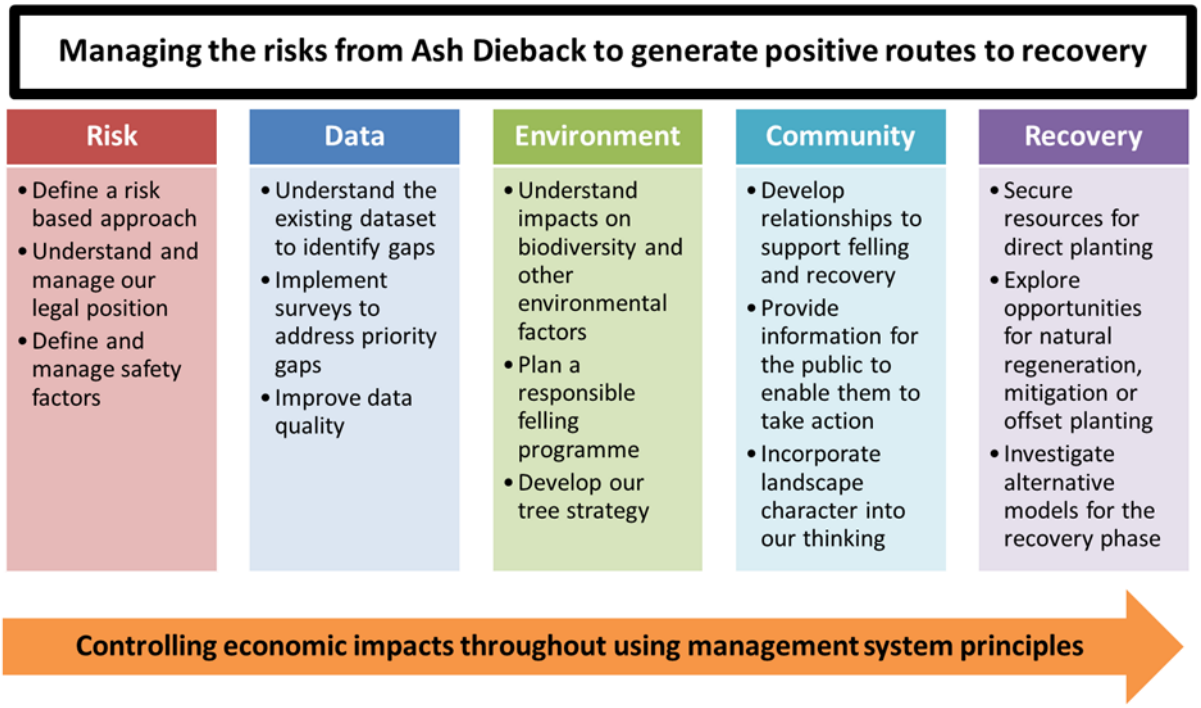

Figure 11: High-level summary of the Action Plan

Risk

Objective	Details
Define a risk-based approach	▪ 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	▪ 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	▪ 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. ▪ Prepare information for the tender process for felling on safety responsibilities our contractors must manage and report on.

Environment

Objective	Details
Understand impacts on biodiversity and other environmental factors	▪ 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	▪ 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.
Develop our tree strategy	▪ Use learning arising from the ADB project to inform our tree strategy. ▪ 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	▪ Identify available data sources. ▪ Evaluate quality of data held in those sources. ▪ Determine where gaps exist.
Implement surveys to address priority gaps	▪ 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	▪ 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	▪ 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	▪ 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	▪ 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.

Recovery

Objective	Details
Secure resources for direct planting	▪ Include direct replacement planting in our project proposal. ▪ Investigate opportunities for additional planting on our own land. ▪ Develop resources to encourage decision makers to consider planting in their own projects.
Explore opportunities for natural regeneration, mitigation, or offset planting	▪ Determine where sites may be improved using alternative planting options – is direct replacement the best method? ▪ Where planting is preferable but difficult to implement identify mitigation options. ▪ 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	▪ Build a log of all sites where direct planting is not practically achievable. ▪ Investigate options for sponsorship programmes or donations. ▪ Research alternatives in use in other settings, e.g. Community Rail Partnership model. ▪ Build all models identified into the tree strategy for a long-term embedded recovery.

Useful Links

Below are all the links referred to in this document.

WSCC Ash Dieback – our web page.

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

Arboricultural Association: Find a Professional – directories of registered consultants and approved contractors

Arboricultural Association: Ash Dieback – Practice Guidance – guidance for tree owners, tree contractors, and consultants.

Ash Dieback Toolkit – prepared by The Tree Council on behalf of DEFRA and Fera.

District and borough councils – tree officer contacts.

Countryside stewardship – information on available grants.

Forestry Commission – information on grants, tree felling licences, regulations, and managing private woods and forests.

Forestry Commission: Office Access and Opening Times – Local Office contacts for Forestry Commission.

Forestry Commission: Operations Note 46 – Managing Ash in Woodlands in Light of Ash Dieback.

Forestry Commission: Operations Note 046a – guidance on the management of individual ash trees.

Forest Research: Ash Dieback (Hymenoscyphus fraxineus) – identification of ADB, reporting, etc.

Highway trees – reporting problems

National Tree Safety Group: Guidance and Publications – guidance on trees and public safety.

Protected species – government advice on protected species.

Royal Forestry Society: Reports – case studies on managing ash dieback.

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

Tree Felling Licence – guidance for when you need to apply.

Tree Health Resilience Strategy – the government's approach to protecting England's trees from pest and disease threats.

Tree Pests and Diseases – identify, report, prevent, and minimise the introduction, spread and impacts of tree pests and diseases in the UK.

Tree Species Selection for Green Infrastructure – a guide for specifiers.