

REPORT TO: ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE – 10 JUNE 2013
REPORT ON: FORESTRY COMMISSION GUIDANCE ON ASH DIEBACK
REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT
REPORT NO: 254-2013

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To update committee on the action plan issued by Forestry Commission Scotland for ash dieback disease.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Elected Members note the contents of this report.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Surveillance and monitoring will be carried out within existing staff resources. Until such time as the scope of any need to remove and replant has been identified it is not possible to identify potential costs. However should this become significant the Council will investigate all potential external funding sources including that referred to in 4.7 below.

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 Reference is made to Article IV of the minute of meeting of the Environment Committee on 11th February 2013 advising that ash dieback had been found in the UK and a commitment to update this committee with further information when available.

4.2 Last year, the Forestry Commission advised that Chalara dieback is likely to have a serious impact on Scotland's ash tree stock over the next few years. At the end of March 2013, Forestry Commission Scotland published an action plan detailing approaches to Chalara dieback of ash, based on the best scientific advice and expert opinion available. Input to the plan has been given by the Scottish Tree Health Advisory Group which includes representation from the forestry, environmental, horticulture/ nursery and arboricultural sectors. The plan will be reviewed at least annually by Forestry Commission Scotland.

4.3 Key elements of the action plan issued by Forestry Commission Scotland include:

- Identifying ash trees with resistance to the disease;
- Wider awareness raising;
- Delaying the arrival and spread of the disease in the remoter north and west of Scotland;
- Continuing to develop management guidance, including the removal of young trees, as scientific knowledge of this diseases develops.

General information on behaviour of ash dieback and identification in the UK and an estimate of Dundee's Ash tree population can be found in Appendix 1.

4.4 Although ash dieback has not been found in Dundee, there are unconfirmed cases of the disease in Angus on trees along the Dighty near its emergence into the Tay. These have been reported to Forestry Commission Scotland. It is anticipated that the disease will be found in Dundee by the summer.

4.5 It is understood that the disease will affect younger trees in the short term, in particular those under 10 years of age and those which may already be affected by other stresses, such as honey fungus. For mature trees greater than 40 years old, there is no direct evidence of tree

deaths from ash dieback to date. Forestry Commission Scotland has recommended that infected mature trees are not felled immediately as they can continue to survive for a further 10 years. However, young trees which are infected should be removed. The advice is to remain vigilant, monitor tree health and promote the guidance on management of leaf litter and chipped material from infected trees.

- 4.6 In the short term, it is expected that the implications for Dundee City Council will be in terms of surveillance and control of infected young ash trees. If the removal of young and infected ash trees is considered to be part of the planned woodland/tree area, suitable replacement planting will be established. Environment Department staff will continue to inspect and monitor the city's trees throughout the summer and report any significant findings.
- 4.7 On May 1st 2013, the Scottish Government issued a consultation regarding the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) 2014-2020. This consultation includes a proposal for the provision of funding for restoring forests damaged by pests and diseases.
- 4.8 Forestry Commission Scotland has issued advice sheets and posters for the general public informing them of the simple precautions that can be taken to reduce the impact of ash dieback disease. The Environment Department will make this information available to the public via appropriate locations including Dundee City Council's website.
- 4.9 Forestry Commission Scotland has also issued guidance for other tree diseases which will affect Scotland's tree stock. Currently, these diseases are confined to the west and north of Scotland and it is difficult to anticipate their arrival in Dundee.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This Report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management. There are no major issues at present.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 6.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Director of City Development and Head of Democratic and Legal Services have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None

Ken Laing
Director of Environment

Gary Robertson
Head of Environmental Management

20th May 2013

Appendix 1

General Information

Ash dieback, caused by the fungus *Chalara fraxinea* (*C. fraxinea*), is an aggressive new disease affecting the UK ash tree population. In February 2012 ash dieback was found in the UK for the first time in Buckinghamshire, in a batch of trees imported from the Netherlands. On the 29th October 2012, a ban was imposed in the UK on all movement of ash trees (including seeds) to try and prevent further spread of the disease. Following this action, a survey was carried out in November by the Forestry Commission. As of 27th March 2013, 91 confirmed cases of *C. fraxinea* have been identified in Scotland. Cases have been confirmed in nurseries, new plantings and at locations in the wider environment.

Estimate of ash trees in Dundee

It is estimated that the city has around 7000 Ash trees in planted woodlands / tree areas. Of these, 90% will be common European Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). The remaining 10% will include Manna Ash (*F. ornus*), Narrow Leaved Ash (*F. angustifolia*) and White Ash (*F. americana*). These figures will be supplemented by self seeded trees, as Ash can easily propagate itself especially onto derelict and unmanaged areas of land.

The age classes:

<u>Age</u>	<u>Estimated Ash tree no.</u>
Young (0-10 years)	2000
Immature (10-30 years)	3000
Mature (30+ years)	2000

Ownership breakdown:

<u>Owner</u>	<u>Estimated Ash tree no.</u>
Dundee City Council	3000
Private	4000