

# Ash Dieback Action Plan (ADAP)





This Action Plan sets out the Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council approach to managing Ash dieback.

In creating this plan **The Tree Council Ash Dieback Action Plan Toolkit** format has been used to ensure that users can compare our response to national guidance and to other Local Authorities and Government Bodies.





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# Executive Summary

THIS ACTION PLAN SETS OUT THE LISBURN AND CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL APPROACH TO MANAGING ASH DIEBACK. IN THIS DOCUMENT THE TREE COUNCIL ASH DIEBACK ACTION PLAN TOOLKIT FORMAT HAS BEEN USED TO ENSURE THAT USERS CAN COMPARE OUR RESPONSE TO NATIONAL GUIDANCE AND TO OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND GOVERNMENT BODIES.

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 possible death of the majority of Ash trees across the British Isles. It has the potential to infect more than two billion Ash trees across the U.K.

Our trees and woodlands represent a key element of the character of Lisburn and Castlereagh, as well as providing a range of services in the natural environment. These include 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. The loss of these services will lead to a noticeable impact on the environment, far beyond the immediate visual change that will be observed. The recovery phase will be just as vital to the plan as the felling works to reduce the risk from Ash trees to acceptable levels.

A professional Toolkit has been developed by The Tree Council. This has provided local councils with a guide to use when planning their response to this issue. This Action Plan is based on that Toolkit. Given that Ash is widespread across our landscape, including alongside roads and streets, managing Ash dieback will lead to a shift away from 'business as usual' towards new demands and priorities for resources.

Ash trees are a fundamental part of the culture we have in the UK and Northern Ireland. They are a common tree in Lisburn and Castlereagh and make up a significant percentage of the total tree cover. Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council has a diverse range of Ash trees, from seedlings through to veteran trees. Our roads are lined with Ash in many places, and it is one of the key species our local wildlife depends upon.

Due to the number of Ash trees in the council area, their 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.

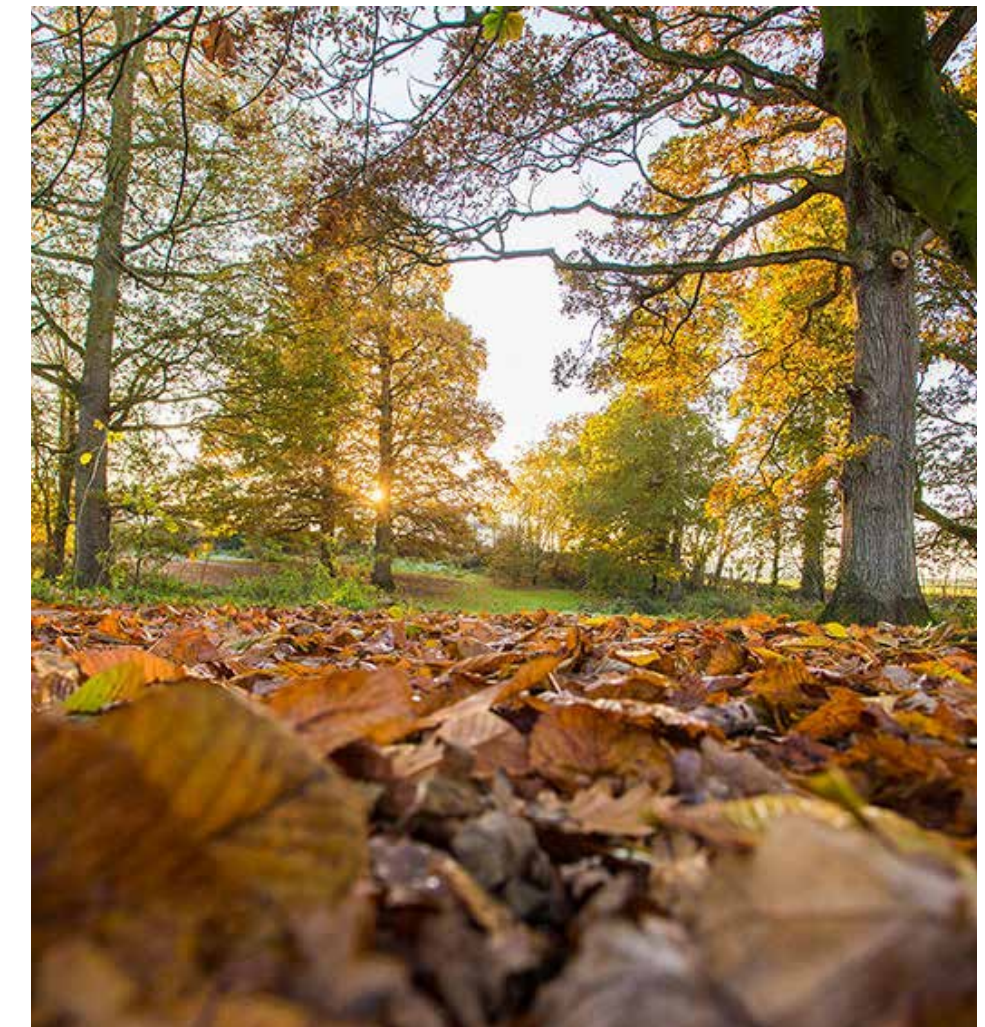
Our trees and woodlands represent a key element of the character of Lisburn and Castlereagh, as well as providing a range of services in the natural environment.

Our residents will notice this change and they will expect to see us respond and manage the risks. They will expect us 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. A strategic and co-ordinated local response is required to deal with the multiple issues that Ash dieback presents.

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.

With the arrival of Ash dieback, the Council will endeavour to identify suitable funds to meet the challenge of managing the impact. We will 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.



A professional Toolkit has been developed by The Tree Council. This has provided local councils with a guide to use when planning their response to this issue. This Action Plan is based on that Toolkit.

# Ash Dieback Action Plan Aims and Objectives

OUR AIM IS TO IDENTIFY THE LOCAL RISKS FROM ASH DIEBACK AND TO DEVELOP A PLAN TO MANAGE THEM. WE WISH TO CONSERVE THE ECOSYSTEMS ASH TREES ARE FOUND IN ACROSS OUR COUNCIL AREA. WE WILL UNDERTAKE A SURVEY OF THE LOCAL ASH POPULATION AND ASCERTAIN THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH ASH DIEBACK AND FORMULATE A RISK-BASED APPROACH TO MANAGING AND RECOVERING FROM THIS.

We can develop our methods to provide an overarching plan to identify, communicate and address the risks of Ash dieback in Lisburn and Castlereagh, and build a more resilient approach for the future.

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 Lisburn and Castlereagh, and build a more resilient approach for the future.

We will identify the costs of Ash dieback management and secure budget to meet these costs. Tree works will be undertaken to ensure the safety of people and property.

The Action Plan is provided, and the detailed day-to-day management of the project will be managed through a dedicated Ash Dieback Working Group.

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 1.)

This model will be enhanced as we progress through the project and will support the Tree and Woodland 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.

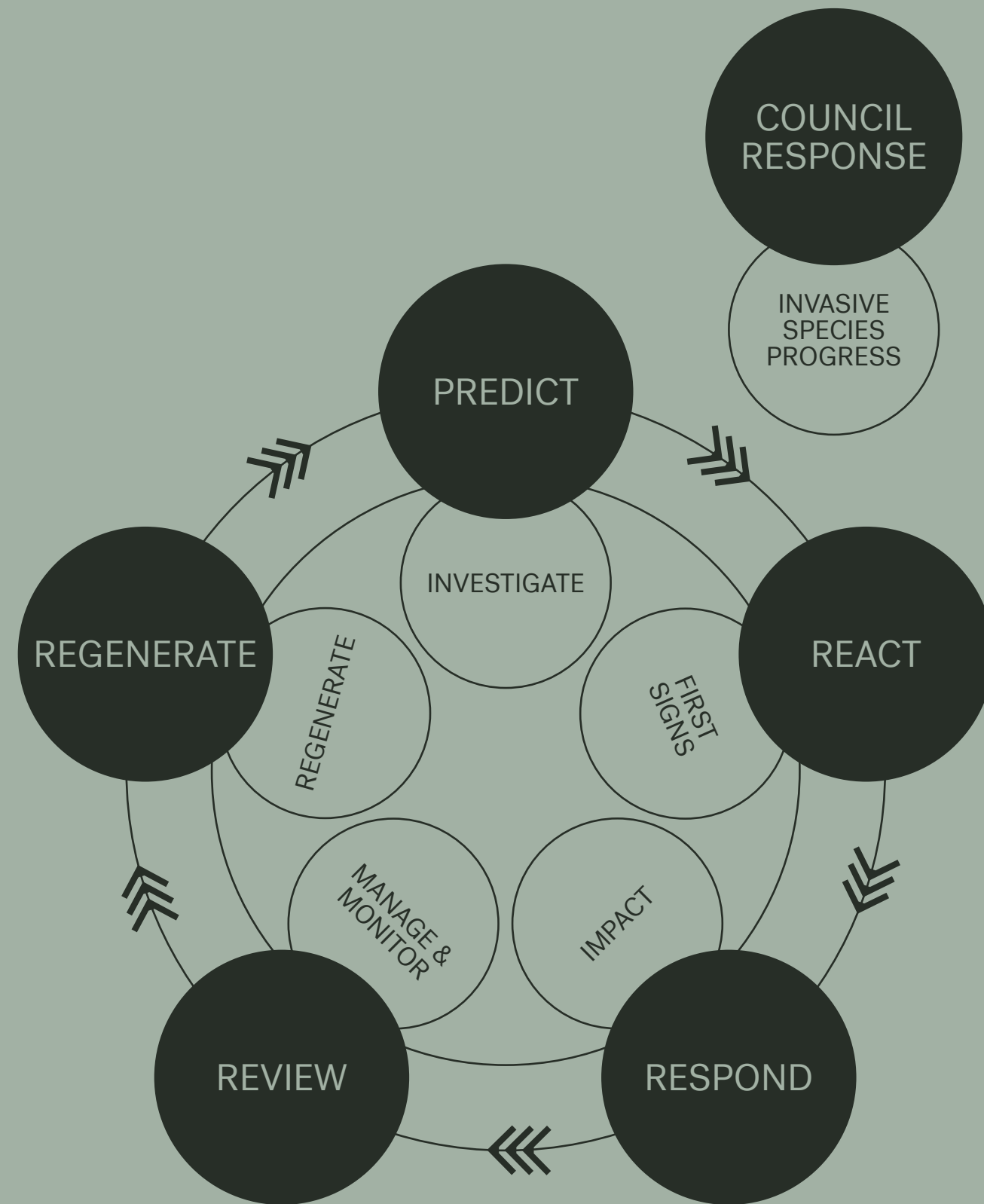


Figure 1  
Council Response Model



## 03

# Ashes and Ash Dieback in Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

THIS SECTION SETS OUT OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE TREES UNDER COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITY, WHERE WE CAN MAKE IMPROVEMENTS, AND HOW WE ARE USING THIS INFORMATION TO DEVELOP OUR RESPONSE TO THE DISEASE.

## 3.1

### What is Ash Dieback?

The Ash tree, *Fraxinus excelsior*, is a common native species of tree which is abundant throughout the UK. It is a deciduous broadleaf species which grows to a large mature size. Ash dieback is a serious disease of native European Ash caused by the fungus *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, formerly known as *Chalara fraxinea*.

Symptoms include dieback of shoots and branches, and withered, browned leaves that fall early. The dieback progresses through the crown and can kill a mature tree in two years. Young trees usually succumb rapidly to infection. The wood of affected trees often becomes brittle, making tree removal more difficult and dangerous than usual. The fungus originated in Asia, where it is a fairly harmless component of the woodland ecology, causing only minor damage to its host, *Fraxinus mandschurica*. It was transported to Poland in the mid-1990s, where it obtained access to *Fraxinus excelsior* and became extremely destructive.

The fungus spread rapidly throughout Europe and its presence was confirmed in the UK from 2012. In the next 5-10 years, 95-98% of British Ash trees are expected to become infected with Ash dieback. 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, however 75-90% are expected to die outright.

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, however 75-90% are expected to die outright.

This will have a major impact on the council'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.

#### SYMPTOMS OF ASH DIEBACK





### 3.2

#### Benefits of Trees and Woodlands

It is important not only to consider the management costs of Ash dieback but it is also crucial to look at the benefits associated with trees and woodlands and what will be lost in terms of ecosystem, landscape and biodiversity. 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.

### 3.3

#### The Environment

Trees have a strong positive impact on the local environment. They provide habitat for wildlife, including invertebrates, birds and bats, as well as supporting lichens, bryophytes and fungal species - key components of local ecosystems. Trees produce oxygen and filter pollution, improving air quality. They prevent soil erosion and keep sites stable. They act as long-term carbon sinks, slowing the effects of climate change. They also reduce the frequency and severity of flooding by intercepting rainfall above ground, absorbing it from below ground, and maintaining soil permeability.

### 3.4

#### Human Health

A healthy tree population is important for human health and wellbeing. The presence of trees is associated with improved mental and physical health, including faster healing from illness, healthier pregnancies and a reduction in the occurrence of the major non-communicable diseases. Trees encourage use of green space, which improves social cohesion, increases physical activity and enhances mental acuity.



### 3.5

#### Benefits to the Council

**Trees in cities are known to improve the local economy by encouraging visits to shops, increasing property prices, increasing the productivity of workers, and decreasing spend on healthcare and storm water management.**

Trees in cities are known to improve the local economy by encouraging visits to shops, increasing property prices, increasing the productivity of workers, and decreasing spend on healthcare and storm water management. They enhance the landscape, providing visual screening, windbreaks and the reduction of noise pollution. Trees form landmarks throughout the council area and their loss will most certainly have a huge impact.



3.6

General Management Advice

Having a planned approach may help us to retain more Ash trees for longer so that we can:

Identify individuals with genetic resistance to the disease

Slow down the pace of landscape change, allowing replacement trees time to grow before Ash becomes scarce

Reduce the impact on biodiversity and associated species

Budget time and costs more effectively

Advice might need to be tailored to:

Contractors

Employees

Local amenity users

Others

Phase 01 Awareness Phase 02 Planning Phase 03 Action Phase 04 Recovery

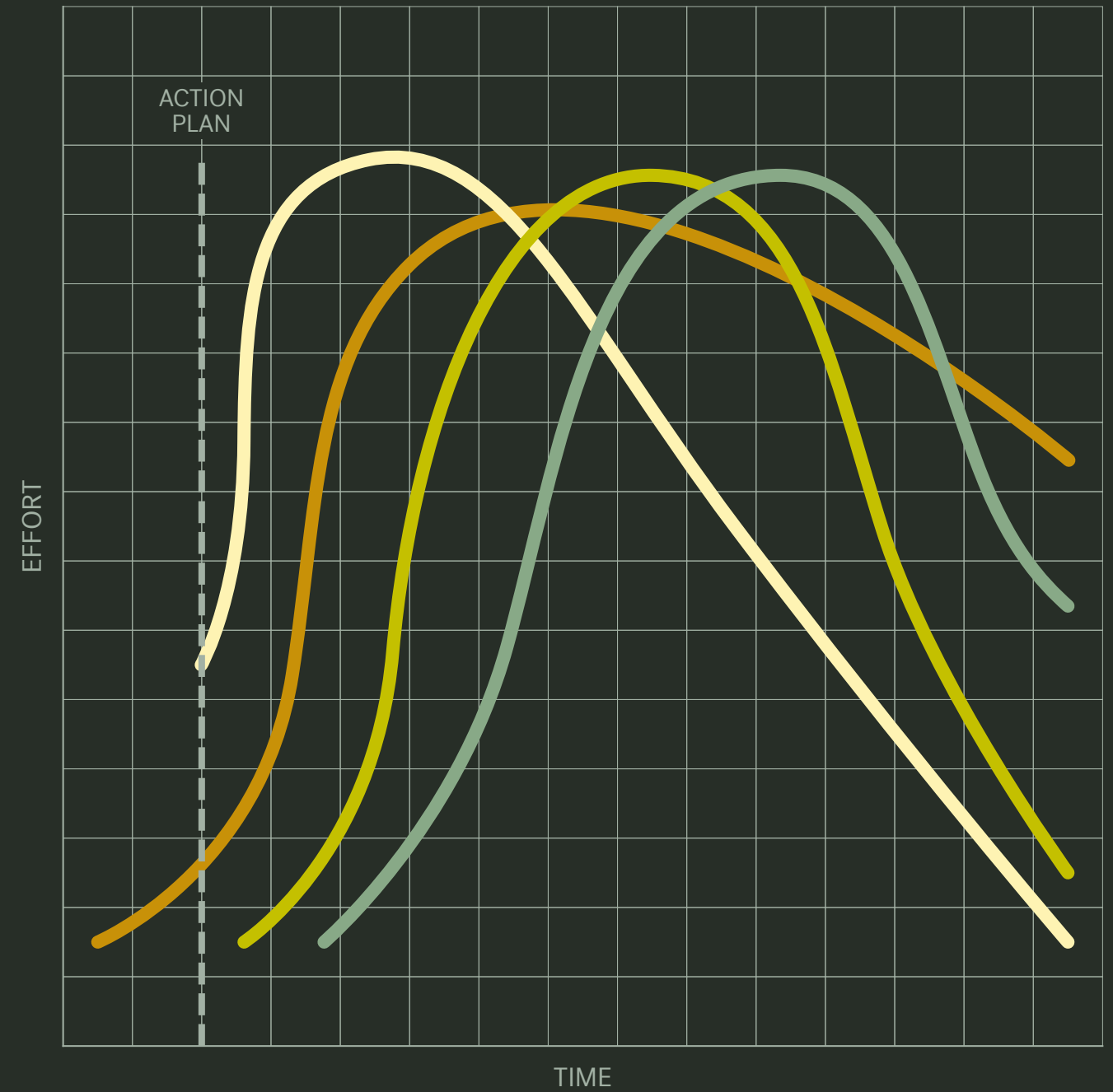


Figure 2 Phases of management of a tree pest or disease







## 04

# Potential Impacts of Ash Dieback on Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council Area

## 4.1

### Health and safety

The most significant risk of Ash dieback is to the safety of residents and colleagues. Trees affected by Ash dieback quickly become brittle and may drop branches or fall over. This can cause injury, property damage, road traffic accidents and fatality. Arborists working on diseased Ash, whether Council's staff or for contractors, face an increased safety risk due to the brittleness and unpredictability of the timber. The Council has a duty of care to take whatever steps are reasonably practicable for trees causing foreseeable harm. The Council must take action to manage the safety risks presented by Ash dieback. Private tree owners also have a duty of care, and residents with Ash trees on their land will also need to take appropriate action.

## 4.2

### Environmental damage

Ash is a native tree which supports many invertebrate species which in turn support bird and mammal populations. Several dozen invertebrate species are obligate on Ash and cannot survive without it, and several dozen more have a strong preference for Ash as their habitat. The crown shape, late flush and early leaf fall of Ash allows a number of ground cover species to grow underneath it in woodlands, and these species in turn support additional invertebrates. Some fungal species exist exclusively or preferentially on Ash. The loss of Ash trees will therefore significantly damage UK biodiversity. There will also be a loss of other ecosystem services provided by Ash. Some sites are likely to see an increase in noise pollution, air pollution, wind exposure, soil erosion, and flooding. Large numbers of Ash lost on slopes or riverbanks will damage river ecology and may lead to destabilised ground.

The Council has a duty of care to take whatever steps are reasonably practicable for trees causing foreseeable harm. The Council must take action to manage the safety risks presented by Ash dieback.

## 4.3

### Loss of landscape value

Ash is a significant component of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council's tree population. The loss of Ash trees will mean major visual changes to the landscape and to the character of our parks, woodlands and other green spaces.

## 4.4

### Financial impact

There will be a need for significantly more tree health and safety surveying, and due to brittleness caused by Ash dieback, felling operations will be more complex and costly than usual. This will add substantial cost to the Council's tree management budgets. There will also be a cost for the replanting needed to mitigate the losses. There will be an economic impact on private landowners who need to fell Ash trees, and this cost may be difficult for some residents to meet.

## 4.5

### Reputational damage

Ash dieback and associated tree works are likely to cause disruption when infected sites need to be closed to public access. Residents may be resentful of the Council removing diseased trees and its impact on their neighbourhood. If Ash trees fall and cause harm this may reflect badly on the Council and potentially lead to legal action and insurance liability claims.

## 4.6

### Human health implications

There is no scientific evidence at this stage of any detriment to human health as a result of ash dieback..

The loss of Ash trees will mean major visual changes to the landscape and to the character of our parks, woodlands and other green spaces.



ARBORISTS WORKING ON DISEASED ASH



FELLING OPERATIONS WILL BE MORE COMPLEX AND COSTLY THAN USUAL



TREES AFFECTED BY ASH DIEBACK QUICKLY BECOME BRITTLE AND MAY DROP BRANCHES OR FALL OVER



# The Delivery Plan



## 5.1

### Aims

We aim to manage and reduce the risk to the people and property of Lisburn and Castlereagh with minimum disturbance to the conduct of public experience and activities. In addition to this we aim to reduce the impact on biodiversity, canopy cover, city treescape perspective and any detriment to the council's appearance of good management.

## 5.2

### Objectives

We aim to reduce the impact on biodiversity, canopy cover, city treescape perspective and any detriment to the council's appearance of good management.

Gather statistical information on our Ash tree stock numbers and update our existing database by plotting and updating the council's tree inventory.

Assess the geographical distribution of the disease and identify areas where it is most prevalent.

Make an assessment of the health and condition of the council's Ash population.

Identify and quantify potential risk posed by trees that already have or are likely to succumb to the disease and prioritise works accordingly.

Monitor the spread and effects of Ash dieback over time to gain a better understanding of the disease.

Increase levels of tree planting to help mitigate the loss.





### 5.3

#### Intended method of operation.

A full survey of the Councils Ash population will be undertaken in 2023.

Walkover surveys will be used on general site visits as a quick method of assessing for hazardous trees that require urgent attention. Where defects are noted a more detailed inspection and tree risk assessment will be undertaken.

Inspect and risk assess all known Ash trees and plot any unrecorded Ash in a dedicated database system.

Ash trees will be risk assessed so that re-inspection's and the priority of remedial works can be prescribed accordingly.

Standard tree inspection and plotting methods are not likely to be cost effective, appropriate or practical for the assessment of large populations of trees such as those in woodlands. In order to overcome this we will use sample plots to gain an estimate of the distribution of Ash, the number of trees effected and the severity of the disease. Boundary trees that could affect targets such as roads and property will be plotted separately as detailed above.

A national standard assessment will be used which identifies 4 recognisable stages of dieback according to the percentage of crown that remains.



### 5.4

#### Stakeholders and Working Group

There are a number of key Council services and other organisations that will be affected by Ash dieback and its management. Internal stakeholders are Assets & Estates, various Facilities Management, Cemeteries, Planning, Lagan Valley Regional Park, Elected Members and Communications. External stakeholders include the Council's arboricultural contractors and organisations such as The Woodland Trust and Forest Service. An Ash Dieback Working Group to implement and review implementation of the Ash Dieback Action Plan will be established from stakeholder representatives; others will be kept informed of its delivery.

### 5.5

#### Communication Strategy

The removal of trees is an emotive subject for many. Public awareness of Ash dieback and the actions necessary to manage its impacts are therefore important considerations. The following communication approaches will therefore be initiated:

A public information campaign – social media, local press, Council website, public signage etc - will inform the public about the Council's Ash dieback action plan.

An Ash dieback management guidance note - to be circulated on social media and sent to any resident who is found to have a diseased tree.

Political communications - keeping Councillors, MLA's and MPs informed of issues and progress.

An Ash Dieback Working Group to implement and review implementation of the Ash Dieback Action Plan will be established from stakeholder representatives; others will be kept informed of its delivery.







## 06

# Action Plan

A HIGH-LEVEL SUMMARY OF THE ACTION PLAN IS SHOWN IN THE TABLE OPPOSITE.

The day-to-day activity will be managed by the Tree and Woodland Team with key monitoring and reporting being delivered by Parks management.

Progress will be monitored quarterly by the Working Group and overseen by the Project Manager who is the Parks Manager, with an escalation process in place should any key tasks be delayed.

The delivery of the Ash Dieback Action Plan is key and will be monitored through that process by the council.

Short term/ to be completed by end of 2023

Medium term/ to be completed by end of 2025

Long term/ to be completed by end of 2030

Ongoing/ some areas of work will be continuing throughout the period of the action plan



## MANAGING THE RISK FROM ASH DIEBACK TO GENERATE POSITIVE ROUTES TO RECOVERY

RISK	DATA	ENVIRONMENT	COMMUNITY	RECOVERY
Define a risk based approach	Understand the existing dataset to identify gaps	Understand impacts on biodiversity and other environmental factors	Develop relationships to support felling and recovery	Secure resources for direct planting
Understand and manage our legal position	Implement surveys to address priority gaps	Plan a responsible felling programme	Provide information for the public to enable them to take action	Explore opportunities for natural regeneration, mitigation or offset planting
Define and manage safety factors	Improve data quality	Develop our tree strategy	Incorporate landscape character into our thinking	Investigate alternative models for the recovery phase
Enhance guest appreciation, engagement and participation on site and in the local area, the 'more than' accommodation experience				

Controlling economic impacts throughout using management system principles



## 07

# Recovery From Ash Dieback

WE WILL PUT PLANS IN PLACE TO INCREASE OUR PLANTING NUMBERS AND AIM TO NOT ONLY SUSTAIN BUT ALSO INCREASE THE COUNCIL'S CANOPY COVER.

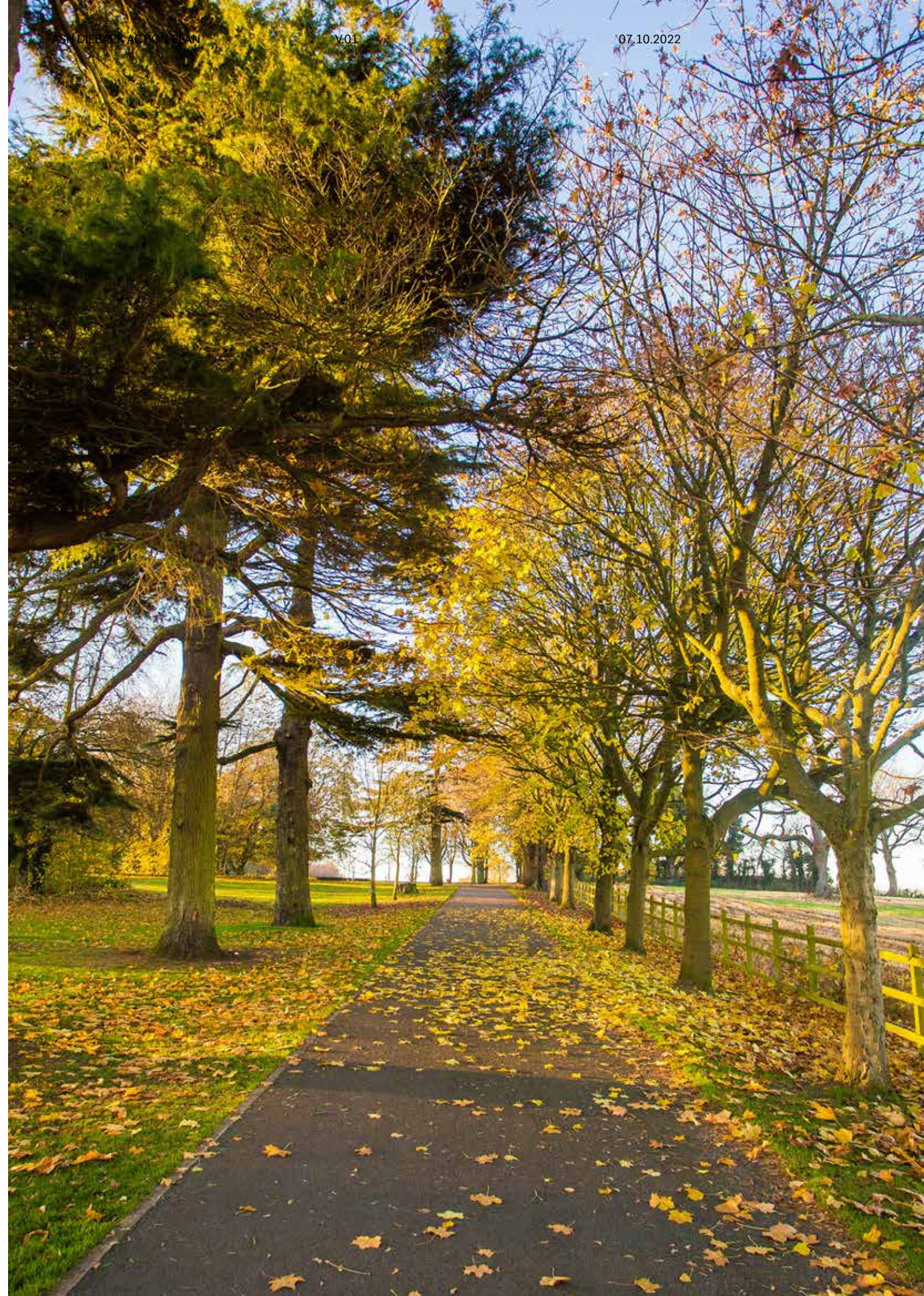
We will put plans in place to increase our planting numbers and aim to not only sustain but also increase the council's canopy cover.

We aim to do this by replacing the lost trees with a diverse mixture of species that are selected for their site suitability to ensure they are appropriate for their setting and have the best possible chance to succeed.

Efforts will need to be made to encourage people who are willing and have the space, to play their part in the recovery and enhancement of the city's urban forest. We will do this by increasing public awareness of the problem and offer free tree planting advice to the public as well as looking at opportunities to donate trees to homeowners who have the space. Increasing diversity and the planting of indigenous tree species will go some way to speed up the recovery of the ecosystems that have been impacted by the loss of Ash.

We will develop a Woodland Management Plan for all of the council's woodlands to ensure that they are managed in a holistic and sustainable manner that seeks to maximise their benefits to wildlife, biodiversity and the surrounding community. Because Ash is a large component of the cities woodlands it is expected that the impacts will be significant, and good management and investment will be required to aid with the recovery.

Increasing diversity and the planting of indigenous tree species will go some way to speed up the recovery of the ecosystems that have been impacted by the loss of Ash.





08

# Priority Actions, Estimated Costs and Lead Delivery Partners

08—01.

Plan delivery, communication and strategic planning

08—02.

Short term risks, to public safety and communication networks

08—03.

Longer term risks, to the environment

08—04.

Survey and monitoring, and biosecurity

08—05.

Training

08—06.

Regulation



## 08 — 01. Plan delivery, communication and strategic planning

ACTION POINT NUMBER	TOPIC	KEY PEOPLE / BODIES AFFECTED	ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COST Low <£10K Medium £10K - £100K High >£100K
1	Action plan delivery	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council	Establish a working group to coordinate and promote this action plan, and to monitor it, revising the plan as necessary.	High	Low
2	Communication	All sectors, including plan delivery bodies, general public, farmers and other land managers, garden centres, agricultural	Assist in promoting awareness and in providing information and guidance to farmers, foresters, woodland owners, other landowners and managers, tree professionals (especially those not in professional associations), government and agency staff, colleges, the general public	High	Development: Low Delivery: Low
3		Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council	Consider establishing a LCCC website for the disease- Living/ working document page	Low	Low
4	Knowledge exchange	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council	Exchange knowledge with other authorities, Forest Service, Woodland Trust etc.	High	Low
5	Strategic planning	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council	Revise and update strategic plans.	Medium	Low
6		Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council	Make more detailed assessments of likely costs and seek funding as appropriate.	High	Low







## 08 — 03. Longer term risks, to the environment

ACTION POINT NUMBER	TOPIC	KEY PEOPLE / BODIES AFFECTED	ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COST Low <£10K Medium £10K - £100K High >£100K
19	Biodiversity impact	LCCC, Council employees, members of the Public, Volunteers, Lagan Valley Regional Park.	Identify sites or individual trees with species specific to ash, or highly associated with it and under threat in N.I, and Ash trees with exceptionally important veteran features.	High	Low
20			Take action to conserve these key trees, including remedial work, and any important linked species.	High	Medium
21			Countryside management with focus on the disease.	Medium	Medium
22			Promote the healthy, sustainable, management of hedges, woods, etc to increase their resilience to ash dieback and other diseases.	High	Medium
23	Landscape restoration	LCCC, Council employees, members of the Public Volunteers, Lagan Valley Regional Park.	Identify parts of the council area where loss of ash from hedges, etc, will have landscape impact.	Medium	Low
24			Provide National Character Area specific advice on suitable replacement trees.	High	Low
25			Develop and deliver a scheme to encourage land managers to plant/ encourage replacement trees, in advance of the disease.	High	50K?

## 08 — 04. Survey and monitoring, and biosecurity

ACTION POINT NUMBER	TOPIC	KEY PEOPLE / BODIES AFFECTED	ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COST Low <£10K Medium £10K - £100K High >£100K
26	Survey and monitoring	LCCC, Council workers, Contractors, members of the Public, Lagan Valley Regional Park, Volunteers.	Track and map the spread of disease across LCCC estate, monitor fate of selected individuals and populations, and in particular identify high- resistance trees. Encourage Citizen science.	Medium	Low
27			Establish a baseline of frequency and distribution of ash trees in LCCC	Medium	Medium
28	Biosecurity	Professionals and advisers visiting infected woods and then returning to the tree nursery	Keep up to date with and implement latest best practise.	Medium	Low



## 08 — 05. Training and communication

ACTION POINT NUMBER	TOPIC	KEY PEOPLE / BODIES AFFECTED	ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COST Low <£10K Medium £10K - £100K High >£100K
29	Training	Tree professionals (surgeons, surveyors etc), tree officers, volunteers, LCCC Employees, Lagan Valley Regional Park.	Provide guidance and training opportunities (e.g. workshops) for those involved in surveys, inspections, giving advice, tree felling, etc.	High	Medium
30			Assess availability of professionals to deal with issues in worst case scenario.	Medium	Medium

## 08 — 06. Regulation

ACTION POINT NUMBER	TOPIC	KEY PEOPLE / BODIES AFFECTED	ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COST Low <£10K Medium £10K - £100K High >£100K
31	Regulation	LCCC, contractors	Clarify the need for Felling Licences, TPO permissions, road closures and introduce fast track application procedures, backed by adequate staff resources.	Medium	Low
32			Ensure adequate staffing for TPO, Conservation Area, etc, consultations and notices.	Medium	Low
33			Ensure tree professionals are aware of the protection afforded to bats and of necessary procedures. Issue licences rapidly where appropriate.	Medium	Low
34			Clarify other protected wildlife issues.	Medium	Low



For more information.

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