



Managing our trees in response to ash dieback

Our tree risk management approach

Trees under the management of Cornwall Council are monitored through a program of professional survey and inspection by a team of tree specialists. The frequency and level of professional assessment depends upon site use. The central role of these inspections is to assess the potential hazards posed by trees and to recommend appropriate works to reduce risk.

Further detail around our approach is set out in Cornwall Council's Tree Risk Management Framework (TRMF)¹. Tree risk management and tree works are implemented on behalf of Cornwall Council by Cormac.

Ash dieback

We expect that you may be familiar with Ash dieback, the tree disease now affecting ash trees within Cornwall. If not or you wish to learn more - related information and guidance is available at our webpages here:

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment/trees-hedges-and-woodlands/tree-and-woodland-management/ash-dieback/>

We have undertaken a number of surveys of ash and are monitoring disease progression. This work confirms that we have a large proportion of ash across our public estate (and adjacent to the maintained highway), and that the disease is now fairly advanced within this tree stock.

The presence and progress of the disease, without appropriate management, has the potential to impact significantly upon tree safety, for the public, our staff, neighbours and the operators undertaking tree works.² There is a need to replace canopy (lost as a result of the disease) and all its public benefits (e.g. landscape, ecology, amenity) .

With this in mind Cornwall Council seek to manage its significant ash populations proactively (moving away from a purely risk-based approach).

Management of the disease – a proactive approach

Our approach identifies sites where a proactive package of works is appropriate. In these instances we will address not only 'actionable defects'³, but also undertake work on other ash trees with decisions being informed by their wider value, condition and location.

¹ shortly to be published upon CC webpages and available on request

² as the trees decline, become brittle and less safe for tree surgeons to work on.

³ as defined by our TRMF

The tree works recommended and undertaken shall accord with best practices, with our team of tree specialists giving careful consideration to ecology, amenity and landscape character, seeking to minimise the adverse impacts of any tree works. Further detail of our approach is available on request.

On some sites⁴, necessary tree removals will particularly impactful and significantly alter the character of the area (in the short-medium term). We recognise this may cause some concern to communities using and living near these sites. Cornwall Council and Cormac are committed to forewarning and informing communities of these necessary works.

Mitigation

A key element of our approach is to ensure that we appropriately mitigate the effects of the disease and canopy loss replacing trees with particular consideration of the amenity, ecological and landscape character impacts of tree losses. This will be achieved through a combination of replanting, natural regeneration and encouragement of existing smaller establishing trees. We intend to implement this approach⁵ across the breadth of Cornwall Council's sites and responsibilities.

Continued surveillance

We continually review our approach to surveillance of this disease and its impacts. Where issues/concerns are brought to our attention ahead of survey we will continue to respond appropriately, addressing issues as they arise.

Considering your responsibilities in relation to tree risk and Ash dieback

We are taking this opportunity to raise this with you, being aware that Towns & Parish councils may manage land and tree stocks (to a greater or lesser degree) and knowing that many of you already act proactively to inspect trees and take action where appropriate.

It is good practice to regularly review your approach to tree risk management and the impacts of current pests and diseases. In light of the progression of ash dieback, you may wish to consider undertaking such a review at this time.

Information around our approach to tree management is available on our webpages here:

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment/trees-hedges-and-woodlands/tree-and-woodland-management/>.

With additional useful information and links available at:

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment/trees-hedges-and-woodlands/tree-and-woodland-management/managing-your-trees/>

⁴ particularly those with mature ash populations

⁵ tree works and mitigation