

# Strategic Ash Dieback Response

Invisible. Unstable. Inevitable.  
Act Now

18 June 2025

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# Background

2

Ash trees in public spaces, on the edge of churchyards, next to footpaths and at the back of playgrounds, often go unnoticed until something goes wrong. Unfortunately, Ash Dieback rarely gives us a second chance. As trees become infected, they weaken from the inside out, becoming brittle and liable to collapse with little or no warning. The risk isn't gradual, it escalates quickly.

If a branch falls and causes injury or damage, parish councils could be held liable under the Occupiers' Liability Act or Highways Act. Insurers and local authorities increasingly expect documented inspections and proactive management, especially for known threats like this.



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There's also the financial cost. Leaving infected trees too long can make them unsafe to climb or dismantle, requiring MEWPs or weekend emergency works. A tree that could cost £500 to remove early might cost three times that if left too late.

But this is also an opportunity. With the right plan, parish councils can manage risk, protect green space, and even improve biodiversity and community engagement in the process.



# Our Plan in Practice: What We're Doing and Why

## Our Objectives

Identify ash trees across parish-managed land

Assess condition and risk using a recognised system

Remove unsafe trees in a phased, planned way

Replant with suitable species to protect long-term canopy cover

Reduce future costs and uphold legal responsibilities

Maintain the character and safety of community green spaces

## What We Do

We've survey ash trees on parish land, including:

Village greens

Footpaths and public rights of way

Cemetery boundaries and memorial areas

Highway verges (where parish has responsibility)

Informal woodlands or nature areas

# How we do it

2

Each tree is assigned a risk category based on a nationally recognised four-stage model:

Class	Condition	Action
Class 1	Healthy	Retain and monitor annually
Class 2	Mild symptoms	Monitor more frequently
Class 3	Significant decline	Plan phased removal
Class 4	Severe decline / unsafe	Remove as priority

Priority is always given to trees near roads, paths, benches, schools, or gathering spaces (High occupancy areas)



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# What Happens Next

We recommend a phased approach to keep things manageable and cost-effective. This would include:

Immediate removal of any unsafe (Class 4) trees near high-use areas

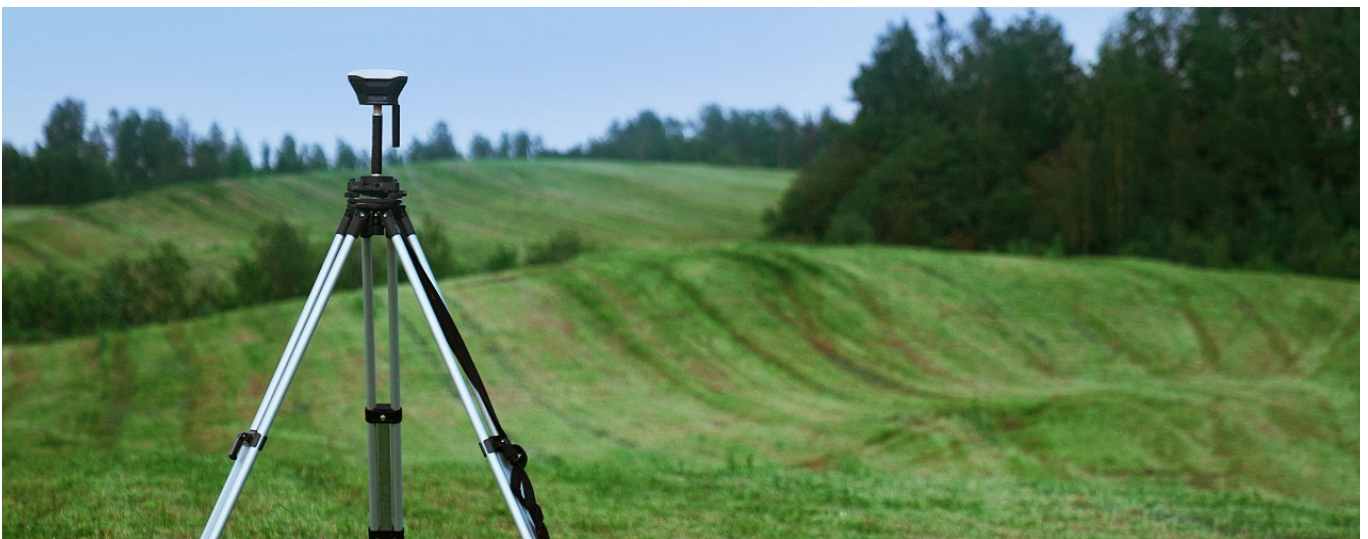
Planning for phased felling of declining (Class 3) trees over the next 12–24 months

Replacement planting with more resilient species to maintain tree cover and amenity

Routine monitoring of remaining ash and surrounding tree stock

Clear communication with residents so they understand why works are taking place

Exploring funding or partnerships to help support planting and delivery



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# Replanting the Right Way

Losing a tree is never easy, especially when they've shaped a space for generations. But with careful planning, replanting can actually enhance biodiversity, create better wildlife corridors, and future-proof our green spaces.

We recommend a mix of native and climate-resilient species such as field maple, hornbeam, wild cherry, and small-leaved lime, depending on site conditions.

Where suitable, parish-led planting days or school involvement can also turn a challenge into a community success story.



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# Funding and Support

There may also be funding available to support these works, including:

Local Authority biodiversity and climate schemes

Woodland Trust free tree packs

Partnerships with local contractors or environmental groups

Community grant funds

We're happy to help you explore these options and make the case for external support.



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# Conclusion

6

Ash Dieback is not something parish councils can ignore, but it's also not something to panic over. With a structured, well-communicated approach, the risks can be managed, costs kept under control, and the long-term value of your green spaces protected.

We're here to support you through every step of the process, from initial surveys to risk assessments, project delivery and public engagement. If you'd like to discuss next steps, walk your sites, or create a tailored action plan, just let us know.



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# How to get in touch

Should you wish to discuss how we can support you through survey work, risk evaluation, or site-specific ash management planning, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

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