South Lanarkshire Council Ash Dieback Action Plan (ADAP)

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1. Summary

This document lays out the Ash Dieback Action Plan (ADAP) for South Lanarkshire Council. Ash Dieback Disease (ADD) is the most significant tree disease to affect broadleaved trees in the UK since Dutch elm disease gained prominence in the 1960s. It has spread rapidly in South Lanarkshire, with only a small fraction of trees proving resistant due to genetic factors which give them disease tolerance. We plan for a scenario that it will lead to the decline and death of 50%-75% of ash trees in Scotland over two decades.

Our trees and woodlands represent an essential element of the character of South Lanarkshire and are a fundamental part of the solution to some of the key challenges of our age, from peoples declining health and wellbeing to the climate and biodiversity emergency. To lose these wider services will mean a noticeable impact on the environment, far beyond the immediate visual change that will be observed. The landscape restoration programme (recovery) will be just as important as the felling works to reduce the risk from ash trees to acceptable levels.

Compared with other parts of the country, our assessments do not indicate an overall high coverage of ash trees but a steady population with pockets of high ash coverage. The disease is now present in all areas where ash was recorded. The extent of infection, rapid decline and early mortality of some trees suggest the disease is well established and endemic in the wider treescape. Current estimates for the 'best' and 'worst' case scenario suggest that the Council's potential financial costs over the long term associated with dealing with 50-75% ADD mortality only on land it manages or owns is estimated between £5.100m - £9.600m respectively. However, due to the unpredictability of the disease, and the very challenging and difficult questions associated with ownership, responsibility, and legal and financial liability of trees along our road network there are other unquantified financial implications.

If not effectively managed, ADD has the potential to lead to an increase in road network disruptions, the number of people harmed/killed by trees and a potential significant increase in vehicle/property claims as well as reputational damage. Additionally, long lasting changes to our landscape, tree populations, with loss of ecosystem services may have effects on flooding and reduced carbon lockup.

This document addresses the risks presented by the impact of ash dieback on people and property, and the ecosystems ash trees are found across South Lanarkshire. It prepares for a positive recovery phase to achieve a net biodiversity gain by 2034 and landscape recovery by 2054. It also recognises the need to work together with local landowners, land managers, homeowners, Local utilities, and infrastructure organisations. This planned approach will also help us all retain more ash trees for longer so that we can Identify individuals with genetic resistance, slow down the pace of landscape change and allow replacement trees time to grow before Ash becomes scarce.

Key Recommendations and Actions:

- Continued ash tree assessments and action, and the respective resources.
- Knowledge exchange, comunity engagment and communication Plan.
- Tree Risk-benefit position statement, bio-security, and a recovery plan.
- Evidence based systems of monitoring and recording ADD spread.
- Dynamic approach to ash tree management and monitoring of the ADAP delivery and incorporating ADD into our existing workload.
- Requirement for a Tree Canopy Cover Strategy to create greater resilience and ensure preparedness for future tree diseases and threats.

2. Introduction

Ash Dieback Disease has the clear potential to lead to long lasting changes in our landscape, tree populations and canopy cover, loss of ecosystem services and may potentially increase effects such as flooding and reduce carbon lockup. Not effectively managing could also translate into an increase in road network disruptions, the number of people harmed/killed by trees and a potential significant increase in vehicle/property claims. Failure to act could result in an increase in liability claims as well as reputational damage. This document addresses the risks presented by the impact of ash dieback on people and property, and the ecosystems ash trees are found across South Lanarkshire. It prepares for a positive recovery phase to achieve a net biodiversity gain by 2034 and landscape recovery by 2054.

A planned approach helps us all 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.

3. Ash Dieback Action Plan Aims and Objective

Aim 1 - Identify the risks from ash dieback disease to people, property and biodiversity across South Lanarkshire.

 Produce an overarching Action Plan to identify, communicate and manage the risks of Ash Dieback disease. Compatible with <u>The Tree Council's Ash Dieback: Action</u> <u>Plan Toolkit for Scotland</u>, and the collective working of the Scottish Tree Officers Group.

Aim 2 - Identify management actions for South Lanarkshire Council.

- 2. plan for a scenario where over 50-75% of ashes die or are clearly dying within a tenyear period.
- 3. Identify and manage the overall risks from the disease.
- 4. Prioritise actions to address risks related to the Council's land holdings and statutory duties.

Aim 3 - Develop a recovery plan to achieve net biodiversity gain by 2034 and landscape recovery by 2054.

- 5. Plan for recovery to mitigate biodiversity and landscape losses, that is both Nature Positive and aligns with the Clyde Climate Forest.
- 6. Promote biosecurity vigilance for potential risks to South Lanarkshire's tree and woodland from new emerging pests and diseases.



4. Ashes and Ash Dieback

4.1 What is Ash Dieback disease (ADD)?

Ash dieback disease is incurable disease affecting only ash species that is caused by the fungal pathogen Hymenscyphus fraxineus. The fungus overwinters in leaf litter on the ground and produces small white fruiting bodes during summer months which release spores into the atmosphere. Spores are carried by the wind allowing the disease to spread guickly across large distances. Spores land on and attach to the leaves of ash trees from where the fungus can spread through the tree. The fungus blocks the water transport systems of the tree causing leaf loss, lesions in the wood and on the bark. The crown of the tree suffers from gradual dieback and Infected ash trees display crown decline resulting in deadwood/dead stems at height that may be within striking distance of a target/road. This can often be accompanied by vigorous sprouting on the trunk or branches forming in bundles creating almost 'pom-pom' like clumps of crowded foliage. Infected trees can become unpredictably brittle in structure, and at a later stage more problematic and hazardous, and as a result more expensive to remove. Risks are site specific, and target based, but the trees viability is questioned at +/- 50% remaining canopy which is also the same point that climbing by arborists becomes unviable/unsafe. Tree death in less than four growing seasons is not unknown. Risk based, alternative management options may include pollarding, retrenchment and natural fracture pruning rather than felling.

Ash dieback disease is the most significant tree disease to affect broadleaved trees in the UK since Dutch elm disease gained prominence in the 1960s and 1970s. Since ADD was first recorded in the UK / South Lanarkshire in 2012, the disease has spread rapidly across South Lanarkshire. So far only a small fraction of trees appear resistant, possibly due to genetic factors giving them some disease tolerance.

Data from earlier infections across Europe suggests that it will lead to decline and death of 50%-75% (5% tolerance/immunity) of ash trees in Scotland over two decades and has the potential to infect more than 75 million ash trees across the UK. Please see our <u>frequently</u> <u>asked questions guide</u> for further information and guidance on ADD.

4.2 Where is Ash Dieback?

Scotland - An assessment of the potential impact of Ash Dieback Disease in Scotland (Dr Rick Worrell on behalf of Forestry Commission Scotland 2013) showed that there are approximately 13,500 ha (total) of predominantly ash woodland in Scotland, although ash is a component of some 150,000 ha of native woodland. The Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (2014) showed: ash makes up 4.2% of upper canopy cover in all native woodlands; ash comprises 25% of canopy in upland mixed ashwood priority habitat which covers 12,353 ha; and 16% of canopy in lowland mixed deciduous woodland priority habitat which covers 23,189 ha. Upland mixed ashwood is commonly found across South Lanarkshire, especially in the river and burn valleys. 15 of 32 local authorities have officers attending the Scottish Tree Officer ADD working group.

South Lanarkshire - In 2020, the council's

Ash Coverage Low Drait The Drait The

arboriculture team undertook a 'Google Street View virtual survey' of South Lanarkshire's A and B roads, and sampling of U and C roads, to understand the abundance of ash trees,

and their state of health. Compared with other parts of the country, the study area did not indicate an overall high coverage of ash trees but did indicate a wide distribution with pockets of high density i.e. East Kilbride. The disease was present in all sections of the survey area where ash was recorded. The extent of infection, rapid decline, and early mortality of some trees across the network suggested it had been well established for several years across the road network and in the wider treescape.

In 2022/23, the scale and impact of the disease on high use parts of the road network from the 2020 virtual survey, and other high use routes in high population settlements, were visually assessed. The abundance of ash trees, and their state of health on the councils remaining landholdings and woodland assets were then progressed and are still currently ongoing. <u>Ash Health Assessment System</u> illustrating the state of health are as follows:





Ash Health Class 1: 100%– 76% remaining canopy

Ash Health Class 2: 75%– 51% remaining canopy



Ash Health Class 3: 50%– 26% remaining canopy



Ash Health Class 4: 25%– 0% remaining canopy

4.3 How many ash trees are affected?

The Council's assessments have identified approximately 124,530 (85%) Ash trees from a best estimate population of approximately 145,977 that may impact on the Council's duties. These are trees either managed or owned by the Council, or in private ownership within falling distance of the road/public area. Below is the summary of the findings.



Ash Health Class 1	Ash Health Class 2	Ash Health Class 3	Ash Health Class 4	Est. total regardles of risk category	^S Estimated statistics of assessment areas
8,374	5,902	2,836	3,969	21,081	Estimated number of ash trees in private ownership and within falling distance of the Road
9,213	7,063	3,622	4,375	24,273	Estimated number of ash trees managed or owned by the Council that are within falling distance of either a road or public area target
40,905	28,116	13,217	18,385	100,623	Estimated number of Council owned or managed woodland/group ash trees
58,492	41,081	19,675	26,729	145,977	Figures illustrate both assessed trees, and estimated trees that have not yet been assessed

The extent of the disease continues to steadily progress by tree size/age (see above). 60% of the identified ash trees have been assessed as Ash Health Class 2, 3 or 4, 32% as Ash Health Class 3 or 4 and 290 trees unaffected (100% alive). The precise speed of decline of any individual ash tree is currently impossible to predict and will be influenced by several factors.

5. Potential impact of Ash Dieback on the Council

The impacts of dying and dangerous trees resulting from ADD are a significant risk and recognised as such on our corporate risk register. This plan to manage these risks and the impact on our statutory and non-statutory duties outlines a clear approach to manage the problems posed by ADD. A summary of some of the risks we considered include:

- Health and Safety Impacts/ Environmental Impacts/Reputational Damage
- Financial Impacts
- Incorporating Ash Dieback Disease management into existing workloads

5.1 Summary of legal requirements -

Duty of care - Under the Occupier's Liability (Scotland) Act 1960, the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and common law. We have a duty of care to manage the risk from our trees. The duty also says we should be reasonable, proportionate, and reasonably practicable when managing the risk. That means there's a balance we need to strike between the many benefits trees provide, the risk, and the costs of managing the risk. By taking a balanced approach, we don't waste resources by reducing risk - and losing benefits - when the risk is already Acceptable or Tolerable. The council will develop a 'Tree Risk-benefit position statement' and systematic assessment regime.

Roads (Scotland) Act* – The owner of the land on which a tree is growing is responsible for the tree. Landowners have a legal duty of care to ensure that, as far as is reasonably practical, public safety is not compromised by the failure of tree branches or the whole tree.

The council has duties to have a sufficient assessment scheme for trees within falling distance of the road (and also under SLC ownership), has duties to address dangerous trees in a timely manner within falling distance of the road/land and that there may be liability if it fails to do so. The council has powers to serve a notice to landowners to remove or otherwise make safe, within 28 days, trees growing outside public roads boundaries that the council considers to be in such a condition that they are likely to cause danger by the tree, or parts of it, falling on a public road. If the danger posed by a tree is imminent, the council may dispense with the requirement to serve a notice and carry out the work. Financial liability lies with the owner of the land.

*Roads and Transportation Services and Legal Services have reviewed the very challenging and difficult questions associated with ownership, responsibility, legal and financial liability, and duties associated with ADD. Unfortunately, there is no simple or straightforward answer in terms of what is/is not a public road verge. Each case must therefore be decided on its own merits by the Roads and Transportation /Legal Services and the economic impact below must be mindful of these unquantified financial implications.

TPOs and Conservation Areas - ADD tree work is not exempt from the need for Tree Preservation Order (TPO) consent and Conservation Area notification. Applications/notices will therefore be submitted through the ePlanning portal in accordance with the standard procedure. Trees protected by TPO or in a Conservation Area which become infected by the disease will lead to an increase in applications and requests for advice. **Felling permission** - Many council sites/trees are exempt from the need for felling permission and the council will record this information on its asset management system. Where works are not exempt, we will consult Scottish Forestry and seek felling permission.

Biodiversity - The UK Forestry Standard requires the Council to manage its woodlands and wider landscape in a way that conserves or enhances biodiversity. Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 the Council also has a duty to consider biodiversity in all its work. This is affirmed as a priority in South Lanarkshire's Biodiversity Action Plan, which promotes the preservation and enhancement of the natural environment. Bats, birds, and badgers are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Any tree works undertaken by the Council will proceed in accordance with this legislation to minimise disturbance of these protected species.

5.2 Financial impact

Following the increased assessment work, estimates for the 'best' and 'worst' case scenario suggest that the Council's potential financial costs associated with dealing with 50-75% ADD mortality on land it manages or owns has now decreased, to between £5.100m - £9.600m respectively. There is no simple or straightforward answer in terms of what is/is not a public road verge. Additionally, there are significant numbers of ash trees not owned by the council within falling distance of the Road that could incur additional costs for the Council to remove if deemed dangerous and not removed by the owner. Due to the unpredictability of the disease and the varying impacts on our trees, the council will adopt a more dynamic approach to ADD management and budgeting, that will be informed by on-going research, data collection and the development of the councils Tree Risk-benefit position statement.

The Council has invested in recent years to allow the incorporation of ADD into the existing workload and making a step change from a reactive to pro-active service delivery. There is still no additional external funding from Scottish Government to assist local authorities manage or mitigate ADD, despite this being registered as a high risk for the local authorities. Scottish Forestry also continue to advise that there is no statutory plant health duty to manage ADD and that the safe management of trees remains an existing statutory duty under Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act, and Roads (Scotland) Act. etc.

The action plan in **appendix 1** identifies the key actions required to address and mitigate the impact of ADD.

5.3 Incorporating Ash Dieback Disease into existing workloads.

To help inform this Ash Dieback Action Plan, a 2022/23 pilot project was completed with £0.100m additional budget. The scale and impact of ADD on high use parts of the road network from the earlier virtual survey and high use routes in high population settlements were also investigated.

Additional funding of £0.100m in 2023/24 and £0.200m in 2024/25 was included in the capital program to continue the assessment and operational work on ash trees posing the highest level of risk ('not acceptable') in high target areas. Operational work focuses on reducing the 'not acceptable' risks posed by Council ash trees to an 'acceptable' level with >700 removed/pruned. Other species trees posing an 'not acceptable' risk have also been identified as part of the process and incorporated into existing workloads.

The additional funding above has provided the opportunity to review current operational practices and incorporate ADD into the existing workload and move towards managing trees pro-actively. It is enabling the purchase of specialised plant, access machinery and specialist contractors. It has also allowed the appointment of temporary Assistant Arboricultural Officers, temporary 'grow our own' operational staff targeting the recruitment of young people through employability and apprenticeships. This has allowed the service to address

pre-existing recruitment challenges and will provide a level of succession planning in an aging workforce. This also goes someway to addressing market concerns as the general commercial arboricultural industry will not be able to meet the expected demand over the coming years.

In addition, there has been a broader restructure within the arboricultural service with the creation of a 'strategic' function to focus on ADD, proactive management, Woodland Management Plans, and the Clyde Climate Forest; and an 'operational' function focused on the day-to-day arboricultural service and tackling the current lengthy back log of reactive tree work. This has been delivered within the existing budget of the service. As the service modernises further opportunities to commercialise and generate income are also being actively pursued. The service is trialling a timber station to store and investigate potential revenue streams associated with timber and biomass products.

Tree Risk-Benefit Management & Assessment - approach is being developed to manage the risk from trees and branches falling, and to meet the Council's overall duty of care. This approach uses traffic light risk ratings and development of a proportionate and balanced 'Tree Risk-benefit position statement'. This asset management approach now being applied to trees uses costs, benefits, and alignment with council's overall objectives.

Red	'Not Acceptable' risks will be reduced to an 'Acceptable' level 'Not Tolerable' risks will be reduced to an 'Acceptable' level, but with a lower priority than 'Not Acceptable' risks
Amber	'Tolerable' risks will not be reduced, but may require an increased frequency of assessment than green 'Acceptable' risks
Green	'Acceptable' risks will not be reduced

Knowing our tree and woodland resource - The appointment of temporary Assistant Arboricultural Officers have significantly helped to understand the abundance and health of ash trees, and begin creating a record of the current condition of the council's wider tree and woodland resource, and identification of other pest and disease threats.

The <u>Tree Asset Management software</u> is key to managing and implementing this plan. This is an evidence-based tool that helps us accurately target and manage resources efficiently and risk to an acceptable level. It also enables us a better understanding of the resource, impact of current/future threats, directing of resources based on actual needs along with effective contract management and monitoring.

Communication and multi-agency structure - The Council is an active member of the Ash Dieback Risk Group (Scotland) that advises Scottish Government on associated policy and plans. As current Chair of the Scottish Tree Officers Group (STOG) the council hosted an ADD webinar and associated working group. This working group services practitioners from 15 Scottish local authorities and has developed a technical <u>Knowledge Hub</u> and STOG rebranding. The KHub now connects Tree Officers digitally across Scotland, shares knowledge, and collective ways of working.

Our customer enquires are now directed to our website <u>guidance</u>. This provides illustrative guide on <u>Obvious Tree Risk Features</u>, <u>general public online form</u>, Housing online form, and <u>Frequently asked questions guide</u> and 'general management advice' on ADD. This approach is more efficient in managing general enquiries and separating out specific trees needing management.

Biosecurity - A short biosecurity statement is also being drafted to promote implementation and understanding of good practices to help safeguard the future of our trees from the introduction and spread of other harmful organisms and build resilience.

Landscape level recovery – With 2022/23 Climate Emergency Funds of £0.100m an initial ADD – Recovery and adaptation project was progressed. Alongside other drivers such as <u>Clyde Climate Forest (CCF)</u>, a total of approx. 23,700 trees have been planted 2022-24 on council land, many with community engagement. The kickstarting of the 'ADD Landscape level recovery' has gained notable and growing community support. A 3/2/1 mitigation formula is being used: outside woodlands at least 3 new trees for loss of a large tree, 2 for a medium tree and 1 tree for a small tree.

In partnership with the council, in 2023 <u>CCF</u> undertook a high-level study that aimed initially to identify outline opportunities for tree planting on the Councils owned or controlled land. The opportunities identified involve various scales of planting, all of which could positively contribute to an increase in canopy cover. The tree planting opportunities identified will be subject to a more detailed investigation and review at a future date. This will not only help to develop a structured approach towards CCF tree and woodland planting, but also inform off site planting as part of our ADD landscape recovery plan.

Across South Lanarkshire schools are beginning to use the Tree Council's <u>Young Tree</u> <u>Champions scheme</u>. There is support from the Tree Council to develop the <u>Tree Warden</u> <u>scheme</u> across the CCF.

Developing a Tree Canopy Cover Strategy – The council is developing a Tree Canopy Cover Strategy to 'protect, enhance and manage' a <u>benefit-generating</u> canopy cover. At the centre is a shared vision to build greater ecological value and resilience into its canopy cover for future generations that is in tune with their needs and aspirations and responds to the challenges of our times. Furthermore, the strategic approach will help better understand and address significant threats to our tree cover, such as ash dieback, while maximising the diverse benefits tree cover brings to our community. Whilst the developing strategy will aim to reduce the risks of new pests and diseases affecting our tree population, it equally recognises we can never eliminate them. The strategic approach will therefore provide a framework to work with a wide range of partners to ensure that South Lanarkshire's canopy cover and economy are more resilient to the new pests that will inevitably arrive from time to time.

6. Wider Impacts of Ash Dieback Disease

ADD has the clear potential to lead to long lasting changes in our landscape, tree populations and canopy cover, loss of ecosystem services and may potentially increase effects such as flooding and reduce carbon lockup. Not effectively managing could also translate into an increase in road network disruptions, the number of people harmed/killed by trees and a potential significant increase in vehicle/property claims. Failure to act could result in an increase in liability claims as well as reputational damage.

6.1 Local landowners, land managers and homeowners

We recognise that the people living and working alongside our own sites and road network will be managing the impacts of ash dieback too. Where possible we will aim to:

- ✓ Maximise the opportunity for appropriate tree works during road closures.
- ✓ Provide information to enable our neighbours to take action.
- \checkmark Develop joint mitigation and tree planting 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.

6.2 Utilities and infrastructure organisations

We are working closely with our colleagues in other organisations and local authorities through the Ash Dieback Risk Group (Scotland) and Scottish Tree Officers Group. 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.
- ✓ Develop our relationships to ensure we have the correct contacts in organisations.
- ✓ Where possible we will aim to work together to develop joint mitigation plans.
- ✓ 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.

6.3 Landscape and biodiversity

Trees are a fundamental part of the solution to some of the key challenges of our age, from declining health and wellbeing to the climate and biodiversity emergency. Ash trees form a significant proportion of old, large trees that are important for hole nesting birds and provide roosting and hibernating places for bats. Ash is important for lichens, mosses and liverworts and is also one of the most significant trees for invertebrates, supporting a rich diversity of beetles, hoverflies, and moths, including uncommon or declining species. In woodland affected by ADD, where trees don't pose an unacceptable level of risk, a significant proportion of dead and dying trees should be left to provide alternative habitat for the specialist species.

Ash trees and ash-dominated woodlands are biodiverse supporting a large number of other species. At least 955 species using ash trees has been collated, of which 45 are only known to occur on ash trees and a further 62 are highly associated with ash (being rarely found on trees other than ash).

Pests and diseases like ADD pose a significant threat to Scotland's biodiversity. Plant health issues can have a direct impact on biodiversity and nature's ability to mitigate climate change. The loss of ash would significantly impact woodland diversity and would leave significantly impoverished native woodlands and the <u>urban forest</u>.

Ash loses its leaves when they are green, meaning the leaf litter contains high levels of nutrients and the leaf litter breaks down quickly. The ground flora within an ash woodland is also unique as ash casts a very light shade meaning many species can grow underneath it. If ash is replaced by tree species with a darker shade / closed canopy, some ground flora species may decline, and this would have a negative effect on plant communities. Replacement species should be with less shading trees such as willows, hazel, oak, silver, and downy birch. Upland mixed ashwoods are included on the <u>Scottish Biodiversity List</u>.

They are also protected under the European <u>Habitats Directive</u>. Woodlands are one of the six priority ecosystems within South Lanarkshire's <u>Biodiversity Strategy 2024-2030</u>. The <u>Clyde Valley Woodlands National Nature Reserve</u> is an important example of ash woodlands.

<u>Scottish Biodiversity Strategy 'Tackling the Nature Emergency'</u> proposed vision by 2045 is that we will have restored and regenerated biodiversity across our land, freshwater and seas. Where forest/woodland management will have led to sustainable natural regeneration; greater diversity of woodland species; increased woodland cover with healthy understorey, enhanced woodland connectivity; and improved integration of trees into other land uses.

7. The Delivery Plan

The plan in **appendix 1** identifies the key actions required to address each of seven major issue or risk areas (see right). Risks to public safety and communication networks are considered short term risks (i.e. likely to be faced within a decade), those to the environment longer-term risks.

For each action, an assessment is made of its priority relative to others.

Section 1: Plan delivery, communication, and strategic planning Section 2: Short term risks, to public safety and communication networks Section 3: Longer term risks, to the environment Section 4: Assessments and monitoring, and biosecurity Section 5: Training Section 6: Regulation Section 7: Wood-based businesses

7.1 Resources – existing

Additional funding of £0.500m was allocated for 2023/24 and this has been used to target the recruitment of young people through employability and apprenticeships (Grow our Own) and for the recruitment of two temporary assistant Arboricultural Officers. As a direct result of the initiative, one outstanding trainee has been permanently employed as a Council Arborist. This has also allowed the service to address succession planning concerns. The additional funding is also enabling the purchase of specialised plant and access machinery and specialist Arboricultural contractors.

As a result of funding and broader restructure within the arboricultural service, it is now modernising from a reactive 'firefighting' service managing circa 2.4 - 2.8m trees, to a proactive asset managing service with a clear vision and 'Strategic' and 'operational' function.

Strategic	
Arboricultural Officer (2x temporary post)	

Operational	
Arboricultural Officer, Assistant Arboricultural Officer,	
Arborists (10x)	1

Long-term resources for monitoring the health of ash trees and will require continued funding focusing on those trees with severe symptoms, including root and stem decay, in higher risk locations.

7.2 Continues monitoring and service improvement.

The Action Plan will be reviewed in 2026/27 and it is expected the plan will extend to at least 2034/35. The council will monitor implementation through regular service improvement meetings, quarterly Key Performance Indicators and reporting back to the Climate Change and Sustainability Officers Group. A vital part of the management of the disease will be tree assessments, monitoring, and preparedness for the decline of the ash trees ensuring that works and recovery are undertaken within the appropriate timeframe. The monitoring process will ensure we have successfully included all the trees we are responsible for, where they currently present an acceptable or tolerable level of harm but have the potential to

become an unacceptable risk of harm within the next 3 years. 'Strategic' monitoring of the disease will enable us to prioritise where, when, and how we need to carry out tree works.

7.3 Communication plan

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 and will also provide advice to owners of ash trees.
- ✓ ADD guidance to be circulated on social media and sent to any resident who is found to have a diseased tree.
- Political communications keeping Councillors, MPs and MSPs informed of issues and progress.

7.4 Landscape recovery plan

We fully 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 and the benefits we receive from trees. We have already started developing and implementing a proportionate and long-term ash tree recovery plan. This plan aims to mitigate biodiversity, landscape and environmental losses, and aligns with the council's commitment to the <u>Clyde Climate Forest (CCF)</u>, and aims to achieve both a net biodiversity (ecosystem services) gain and landscape recovery. Progressing community involvement through the Tree councils <u>Young Tree Champion</u> and <u>Tree Warden scheme</u> can make a significant contribution to the recovery plan. The Tree Canopy Cover Strategy will help provide a framework to continue to work with a wide range of partners to ensure that South Lanarkshire's canopy cover and economy are more resilient to the new pests that will inevitably arrive from time to time.

Appendix 1 - Action

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Section 1: Plan delivery, communication, and strategic planning
Section 2: Short term risks, to public safety and communication networks
Section 3: Longer term risks, to the environment
Section 4: Assessments and monitoring, and biosecurity
Section 5: Training
Section 6: Regulation
Section 7: Wood-based businesses

AA - Arboricultural Association ADRG - Ash Dieback Risk Group (Scotland) STOG - Scottish Tree Officers Group ATO - Association of Tree Officers CAG – Countryside and Greenspace CT- Communications Team WT – Woodland Trust AO/-AO(S)- Arboricultural Officer (Operational /Strategic) HoS - Head of Service CCSOG Climate Change and Sustainability Officers Group SEA - Strategic Environmental Assessment Corporate Working Group

#	Торіс	Key people/ bodies affected	Section 1 Actions: Plan delivery, communication, and strategic planning	Priority	Lead	Timescale
1	Plan delivery	CCSOG, AO,	Incorporate the ADAP into existing workloads	High	HoS,	Ongoing
2	Communicati on	CT, CAG, stakeholders	Develop and deliver an ADD communications plan	High	AO(S), CT	Ongoing
3	Knowledge exchange & multi-agency	AO, STOG, ATO, ADRG, AA, CAG	Continue to contribute to the STOG, ADRG and ATO. Develop methods that provide a long-term system improvement leaving us equipped to other large-scale environmental impacts.	High	AO(S), BO	Ongoing
4	Working together	CAG, Grounds, landowners/ managers homeowners	Provide information for the Local landowners, land managers and homeowners to enable them to act. Where appropriate, work closely utilities and infrastructure organisations on ADD	High	Roads, CT	2025
5	Tree/woodla nd Strategy	SEA, stakeholders	Develop a Tree Canopy Cover Strategy that helps reduce the risks of new pests and diseases affecting our tree population.	Med	AO(S) Planning, SEA, CT	2025
6	Strategic planning	Roads, CAG	Ensure that emerging policies, strategies, and management plans consider the implications of ADD and other serious pests and diseases. Carry out an audit of existing policies and processes that may need to be reviewed. Promote the recognition of trees as benefit generating assets.	Med	AO(S) SEA	2024/25
7	Financial planning	Finance, AO, AO(S)	Secure additional funding for dealing with ADD	High	HoS	Ongoing
8	Potential - rogue	Comms Team, STOG, AA, AO,	Promote guidance on how tree owners can appoint professional tree	Med	AO(S), Trading	2024

2	traders taking advantage of situation		contractors and expected standards . Alert Trading Standards to any reports of rogue tree contractors linked to ADD and work to resolve/ minimise issues as appropriate		Standards	
9	Woodland management	All stakeholders	Incorporate ADD, progress good woodland management practices and the development of woodland management plans for council landholdings.	Med	AO(S), CAG	Ongoing
#	Торіс	Key people/ bodies affected	Section 2 Actions: Short term risks, to public safety and communication networks	Priority	Lead	Timescale
10	Risk-benefit based approach	AO, Housing, CAG, Grounds Education, Planning, Property	Establish and implement a 'Tree risk-benefit position statement' to manage the risk from trees (including Ash) and branches falling, and to meet the Council's overall duty of care.	High	AO(S), Roads,	Ongoing
11	Prioritisation of tree works	AO, CAG	Develop, maintain, and monitor, processes to ensure that any resulting action as a result of tree assessments are untaken within an appropriate timescale. <i>Tree removals will be undertaken using a risk-based approach to prioritisation. There may be circumstances that merit the pre-emptive felling of healthy ash trees, although this will be minimised.</i>	High	AO(S), AO, Roads	Ongoing
12	Tree Work framework	AO(S), Contractors	Develop a Tree Work contractor framework along with Contractor access to SLC tree management software	Med	Procurem ent	2025
13	Ash on private land adj. Roads	Roads, Legal, AO, contractors	Where appropriate the council will use its powers under the Roads (Scotland) Act. Council has powers to deal with private trees and enforce their removal where they pose an unacceptable level of risk to the Road network. The council will also recover reasonable costs.	High	Roads, AO(S),	Ongoing
#	Торіс	Key people/ bodies affected	Section 3 Actions: Longer term risks, to the environment	Priority	Lead	Timescale
14	Community involvement	The Tree Council, AO (S), stakeholders, Community team, CT, Education	Create a wider stakeholder group for tree and woodlands through development of a <u>Tree Warden scheme - The Tree Council</u> , promotion of the existing <u>Young Tree</u> <u>Champions - The Tree Council</u> and <u>Clyde Climate Forest</u> .	High	Communit y team, Education	Ongoing - 2024
15	Promote best practice to enhance biodiversity	All stakeholders, SEA, Planning	Liaise with owners and managers of designated wildlife sites to assess impact of ADD and assist in developing strategies to minimise. Promote the healthy, sustainable, management of hedges, woods, etc to increase their resilience to ash dieback and other diseases.	Med	AO(S), CAG	2024/25

16	Ancient, Vet trees	All stakeholders, CT, STOG, WT	In addition to designated sites Identify veteran and ancient trees, ancient woods with ash on council land. <u>Ancient Tree Inventory - Woodland Trust</u>	Med	AO(S), CAG	Ongoing
17	Tree diversity and size	CAG	Monitor SLC individual tree diversity using the 10-20-30 rule (suggests 10% of any one species, 20% of any one genus, or 30% of any family) and SLC individual tree size distribution using industry standard.	Med	AO(S),	Ongoing
18	Landscape restoration programme	AO, Housing, CAG, Grounds Education, Roads, Planning, Property, CCF, STOG, Scottish Forestry	 Favour direct replacement planting wherever felling occurs dependant on site suitability. Mitigate tree loss by the 3/2/1/ formula (minimum of at least 3 new trees for loss of a large tree, 2 for a medium tree and 1 tree for a small tree (excluding woodlands)). Develop and implement a longer-term ash tree recovery plan to mitigate biodiversity, landscape and environmental losses that aligns with the council's commitment to the <u>Clyde Climate Forest</u> and aspires to a net biodiversity gain (by 2034) and landscape recovery (by 2054). 	Med	AO(S), Roads Comms Team	Ongoing – 2026
#	Торіс	Key people/ bodies affected	Section 4 Actions: Assessments, monitoring, and biosecurity	Priority	Lead	Timescale
19	Establish pro-active assessments	AO, Housing, Grounds, Education, Planning, Property, CAG	Based on the Tree Risk-benefit position statement, establish a proportionate and balanced assessment regime to understand the abundance and health of ash and other trees the council has duty towards.	High	AO(S), Roads,	2024
20	Action plan delivery	CCSOG, AO,	Monitor ADAP's delivery. Embed the delivery plan into monthly Arbor service improvement meetings, quarterly Roads Team meeting, report KPI's quarterly to HoS and yearly to the CCSOG.	High	AO(S), HoS,	2024
21	Biosecurity	SEA, Landscape team, CAG,	Develop a biosecurity statement - promote implementation and understanding of good practices to help safeguard the future of our trees from the introduction and spread of other harmful organisms	High	AO(S), CT	Ongoing
#	Торіс	Key people/ bodies affected	Section 5 Actions: Training	Priority	Lead	Timescale
22	Tree Risk- benefit statement	AO, CAG, Grounds, Roads,	Undertake Tree Risk-benefit position statement and Tree plotter training for core staff . <i>Provide training for all relevant staff to identify ash dieback, when a tree has become a significant risk and how to report.</i>	High	AO(S), Roads	June/July 2024

23	Tree Asset Management	Contractors, AO, Arb chargehands	Undertake training on the use of Tree plotters for 'Contractor' access.	High	AO(S), Roads	2024
#	Торіс	Key people/ bodies affected	Section 6 Actions: Regulation	Priority	Lead	Timescale
24	Protected trees	Planning	Ensure adequate staffing for the administration of ash dieback related applications for Tree Preservation Orders, Conservation Area, and Planning Conditions etc.	High	Planning	Ongoing
25	Felling permissions	AO, Contractors	We will establish a process for obtaining permission for each relevant site. We will note exceptions for a felling notice on Tree Plotter, where they apply.	High	AO(S), AO	2024
26	Duties to tree safety	AO(S), AO, CAG, Roads, Education, Planning, Housing, Grounds, Legal	We will comply with our duty of care to manage the risk from our trees. We will be reasonable, proportionate, and reasonably practicable when managing the risk. We will strike a balance between the many benefits trees provide, the risk, and the costs of managing the risk.	High	Hos	Ongoing - 2025
27	Ash on private land adjacent to Roads	Roads, Legal, AO, contractors	Establish a communication/serving of notice protocol, reporting, and monitoring system along with cost recovery process. Develop a process for identifying and responding to ADD on land where ownership is private or unclear. Develop a site notice specific for ash dieback with advisory information which can be attached to trees on private land adjacent to the network. Each case will be decided on its own merits by the Roads and Transportation Services.	High	Roads, AO(S),	2025
#	Торіс	Key people/ bodies affected	Section 7 Actions: Wood-based businesses	Priority	Lead	Timescale
28	Explore use of products of ash felling	Grounds, CAG,	Investigate further opportunities to commercialise & generate income from tree arisings. Investigate the development of a timber station and revenue streams associated with timber and biomass products. Also explore outlets for wood & arising other than fuel (Biomass and firewood) which reduce the rate of loss of stored carbon. Including strategies for deadwood	Med	AO(S), AO	2025