

Report

Report to:	Community and Enterprise Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	14 March 2023
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources) Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Ash Dieback Disease Programme – Arboriculture Operatives (Trainee)
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ update the Committee on a programme of work required on Ash Dieback Disease (ADD) following allocation of capital funding
- ♦ seek approval for 3.0 FTE Arboriculture Operatives (Trainees) to be added to the Resource's establishment for a fixed-term of 12 months

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the contents of the report be noted; and
- (2) that it be approved that 3.0 FTE Arboriculture Operatives (Trainees) be added to the Grounds Services establishment for a fixed-term of 12 months, as detailed in section 5.

3. Background

3.1. 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, with only a small fraction of trees proving resistant due to genetic factors which give them tolerance to the disease. This incurable disease is caused by the fungal pathogen [*Hymen scyphus fraxineus*](#) and affects just ash species. Data from Europe suggests it will lead to the decline and death of 50% to 75% of ash trees in Scotland over the next two decades and has the potential to infect more than 75 million ash trees across the country. ADD was first recorded in the UK and South Lanarkshire in 2012.

3.2. The national cost of managing trees with ash dieback (which could include monitoring, pruning and, where necessary, felling) is difficult to calculate but it has been estimated that is likely to exceed £2.5 billion across the UK in the next 10 years. As part of that, Scotland's costs could potentially be in the region of £200 million. This disease will cost more than just lost habitats for wildlife and treasured woods for recreation. A new estimate of the economic cost by APSE, puts the price tag at £14.8 billion, which is around 3 times as much as estimates for the Dutch Elm disease crisis in the 1960s and 1970s, largely because there are far more ash trees.

- 3.3. Ash trees infected with ADD 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. The 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 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 4 growing seasons is not unknown.
- 3.4. Current guidance is that given the scale of health and safety risks caused by ADD alone will mean that it will '*not be business as usual*' for any organisation who manage ash trees. The management of Ash Dieback is proving a real challenge for tree managers as to whether trees should be felled, or allowed to stand, in order to develop resistance to the disease and protect species which are reliant upon the Ash for their home.

4. Investment Proposals

- 4.1. South Lanarkshire Council through the Arboriculture team has participated in a number of national initiatives with key stakeholders such as The Forestry Commission, the Tree Council and the Scottish Government to develop policy and processes in the country's response to the ADD problem. The Council has also now included ADD in the corporate risk register as well as the Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy.
- 4.2. A pilot investigation has now been undertaken following allocation of funding over the last year and this has identified an initial programme of work to further quantify the scale of the issue and respond to immediate concerns. The Council has allocated a £0.500 million in the 2023/2024 Capital Programme and this will be utilised to deliver that programme of work.
- 4.3. This will require additional resources and given the challenges in the arboriculture sector it is intended to establish 3 temporary trainee positions that will allow the team to reprofile current workload and address succession planning concerns by "growing our own".

5. Employee Implications

- 5.1. If approved, the following posts will be added to the Grounds Services establishment as detailed below for a 12-month period:

Post	FTE	Grade/SCP	Hourly Rate	Annual Salary	Gross Cost (inc on costs)	Total (12 months)
Arboriculture Operative (Trainee) – Temporary	3.0	Grade 1, Level 2, SCP 22 - 23	£11.41 - £11.55	£22,011 - £22,282	£28,681 - £29,033	£86,043 - £87,099

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. Funding of £0.500 million has been allocated from the 2023/2024 Capital Programme to deliver this programme of work. Around £0.087 million will be utilised on staffing costs and the remaining £0.413 million on vehicles, equipment, materials and other contractor costs.

7. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 7.1. If not effectively managed, Ash Dieback 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.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1. There are no other significant implications as result of the contents of this report

9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 9.1. There are no equality impact assessment implications arising for this report.

David Booth

Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Paul Manning

Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

24 February 2022

Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes

- ◆ We will work towards a sustainable future in sustainable places
- ◆ We will work to recover, progress and improve
- ◆ Caring, connected, sustainable communities
- ◆ Good quality, suitable and sustainable places to live

Previous References

- ◆ None

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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