

Ash Dieback

Hymenoscyphus fraxineus (previously *Chalara fraxinea*) is a fungal pathogen killing large numbers of ash trees across the UK.

The disease was first recorded in nursery stock in Britain 2012, before being found affecting trees in the wider environment in 2013. The disease has now spread throughout much of the country and is well established in Somerset. Evidence from Europe suggests we could lose over 90% of our ash trees to the disease.

Symptoms

- As disease takes hold, foliage decreases and canopy looks thin
- Ends of branches die off leaving dead wood
- Smaller branches break off, leaving gaps
- Foliage looks dense in the middle of the canopy with dead ends to branches
- Foliage may wither and become black
- New growth/branches appear straight from the stem
- Diamond shaped lesions may be visible, which can dry out forming cracks in the bark

Useful contacts

You can write to or email your local Somerset Highways Office, or visit in person. We are open from 08:30 to 16:30 weekdays (16:00 on Friday)

Mead Avenue, Houndstone Business Park,
Yeovil BA22 8RT

✉ countyroads-southsom@somerset.gov.uk

Wells Road Glastonbury BA6 9AS

✉ countyroads-mendip@somerset.gov.uk

County Hall Taunton TA1 4DY

✉ countyroads-tdeane@somerset.gov.uk
countyroads-westsom@somerset.gov.uk

Dunball Industrial Estate Bridgwater TA6 4TP

✉ countyroads-sedgemoor@somerset.gov.uk

📞 The following teams can be contacted via the SCC Contact Centre on 0300 123 2224

- Highway Trees
- Area Highway Offices
- Rights of Way

Ash Dieback



Information for Landowners



Ash Dieback Significance

Ash dieback can now be found across much of the county, with many trees in areas such as the Mendips already dead or dying. Somerset has a high density of ash trees, so the impact from ash dieback will be very significant, with big changes to our landscape and negative impacts on our environment & biodiversity.

What is Somerset County Council Doing?

Our core aim is to deal with the risk posed from a large population of dying trees, as effectively as possible, keeping our road networks safe and limiting disruption to the public.

Somerset County Council are working with external organisations and have developed an Ash Dieback Action Plan. This plan identifies issues raised by the disease and will develop as a more thorough understanding of ash tree numbers is established.

Landowners' Liability

Under the Occupiers Liability Act 1957 & 1984 you have a Duty of Care to ensure visitors or trespassers are safe on your property and that the general public are safe from either falling branches or trees on your land/property.

If you own or manage land where ash trees adjoin highways, public spaces or may be accessed by the general public, it is vital you monitor the health of these trees and act whether through branch removal, tree reduction or felling, if and when it becomes necessary.

Should landowners fail to act in a timely fashion to ensure risks from dead/dangerous trees are dealt with, SCC as the Highways Authority may issue a Section 154 notice under the Highways Act 1980 compelling owners to carry out required works within 14 days. If work is not carried out in this time SCC may then carry out the necessary work, in which case all reasonably incurred costs will be pursued by the council. In the event of an accident landowners/occupiers may find themselves liable for a substantial compensation claim which may not be covered by their insurance policy.

Highways Act 1980

The Highway Authority has a duty under Section 154 (ii) to protect the rights of the public to use the highway and to ensure that any dead, diseased or loosely rooted vegetation is removed if it is likely to cause danger by falling on to the highway.

Road Safety Advice When Working on the Highway

All works on the highway should be undertaken safely and in accordance with the recommendations contained in Chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs Manual. The necessary warning signs must be in place before you start working on the highway, and must be removed on completion of the work. Signs should be put in place well in advance of the work and be clearly visible on every approach to the affected areas.

It is important to make sure you have Public Liability insurance to cover work on the highway (including putting out signs). Please check with your insurance provider.

On high speed roads, or where bends make visibility particularly difficult, you should ask the advice of the Area Highway Manager who can be contacted via the SCC Contact Centre on 0300 123 2224.