

South Ayrshire Council

**Report by Director of Housing, Operations and Development
to Cabinet
of 18 February 2025**

Subject: Ash Dieback – Update Report

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an annual report relating to the implementation of the Ash Dieback Plan and seek Cabinet approval for year 3 funding of the Council's Ash Dieback Plan.

2. Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1.1 approves the carry forward of £94,353 Ash Dieback allocated funds in the Neighbourhood Services budget to financial year 2025/26 for year 3 of the programme;**
- 2.1.2 approves funding of £180,000 from the Councils uncommitted reserves to supplement the funding carried forward for year 3 of the programme; and**
- 2.1.3 approves funding of £21,500 from the Councils uncommitted reserves for financial year 2025/26 to enable Ayrshire Roads Alliance to undertake a third year of managing trees that pose a risk to South Ayrshire Council roads.**

3. Background

- 3.1 Ash Dieback first came to notice in Europe some 30 years ago and has devastated the European Ash. It was first recorded in the UK in 2012 and spread prolifically throughout England. The disease is now established in Scotland and has been identified in South Ayrshire
- 3.2 The Cabinet approved the South Ayrshire Council Ash Dieback Plan in March 2023 and has allocated Neighbourhood Services and Ayrshire Roads Alliance funding for the past 2 years to implement the Plan.
- 3.3 The original survey of South Ayrshire Council public open space in 2022 included schools and cemeteries however, golf courses were excluded at that time. Golf Courses have now been surveyed. Below is a table showing the number of trees within each category.

Category	Total	Description
Category 1	50	100%-76% remaining canopy
Category 2	112	75%-51% remaining canopy
Category 3	124	50%-26% remaining canopy
Category 4	92	25%-0% remaining canopy

3.4 Since 1 April 2024 we have felled and removed 944 trees taking the total number of Ash trees removed to date to 1665 which is 22.52% as follows:

Category	Total	Description
Category 1	58	100%-76% remaining canopy
Category 2	274	75%-51% remaining canopy
Category 3	711	50%-26% remaining canopy
Category 4	594	25%-0% remaining canopy
Category unspecified	28	Between Category Status
Total Trees Felled	1665	Equates to 22.52%

3.5 The teams have continued to focus on Categories 3 and 4 as you will see from the table above.

3.6 Works were completed in Burnbank Woodland, Ayr and along the Old Alloway Railway Line, Ayr using specialist equipment.

3.7 Ayrshire Roads Alliance undertook survey work and has started on the process of managing the 51 high risk roadside trees identified within South Ayrshire.

3.8 Neighbourhood Services anticipate a total spend of £423,315 in financial year 2024/25 with Ayrshire Roads Alliance anticipating a spend of £25,523. Resulting in an underspend for South Ayrshire Council Neighbourhood Services of £ 39,876 and an underspend of £54,477 for Ayrshire Roads Alliance. Total underspend of £94,353.

3.9 To date there has still been no notification of any planned funding from the Scottish Government to Local Authorities to deal with Ash Dieback.

4. Proposals

4.1 There are now 1025 category 4 and 872 category 3 trees identified, this reflects that through this year's survey some trees that were category 2 or 3 have now progressed to category 3 or 4. This demonstrates the importance of re-surveying, to annually assess the progression / deterioration of the trees to the disease. In turn, determining the H&S risk posed.

4.2 It is proposed Cabinet approves the Neighbourhood Services underspend on Ash Dieback of £94,353 is carried forward into financial year 2025/26 and that Cabinet approves a draw from the Council's uncommitted reserves of £180,000. This would provide the funding to undertake a third year of implementing the South Ayrshire Council Ash Dieback Plan. Priority would be given to the Golf Courses to ensure public safety.

4.3 During 2023/24 Neighbourhood Services was not able to procure the specialist services required for the two locations detailed below. This was due to increased costs which meant we did not have the budget to complete all 4 sites as detailed in the 2024 Ash Dieback Report. It is proposed that the sites will be completed in 2025. The delay will not cause any significant health and safety risk.

- Potentially overhang from private trees into Queen Margaret Academy; and
- Doonfoot / Monument Road.

4.4 It is also proposed that Cabinet approves funding from the Council's uncommitted reserves for the continuation of the Ayrshire Roads Alliance works on managing affected trees that pose a risk to our road network as shown at 6.2.

5. Legal and Procurement Implications

5.1 If South Ayrshire Council were found not to have fulfilled its duty of care under the Occupiers' Liability (Scotland) Act 1960, the local authority could be held liable for injury or damage caused as a result. A failure to mitigate the risks posed by Ash Dieback could also result in criminal prosecution caused by a failure to adhere to obligations imposed by Health and Safety Legislation.

5.2 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 Neighbourhood Services and ARA require the projected £94,353 underspend for 2024/25 carried forward to financial year 2025/26.

6.2 The continuation of the Ash Dieback plan will require a draw from the Councils uncommitted reserves as outlined below:

Year 3 Routine Programme	£180,000
Ayrshire Roads Alliance	£21,500
Total	£201,500

7. Human Resources Implications

7.1 There will be a requirement to contract in an arboricultural team to assist in the delivery of the Ash Dieback Plan.

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8. Risk

8.1 *Risk Implications of Adopting the Recommendations*

8.1.1 There is a risk that the Council will not be able to fund the required action and recovery plan over the next 5 years without financial support from the Scottish Government.

8.2 *Risk Implications of Rejecting the Recommendations*

8.2.1 There is a risk that in rejecting this proposal the Council will fail to deal with a known health and safety risk within its assets that could have serious or fatal consequences breaching its duty of care. If South Ayrshire Council were found not to have fulfilled its duty of care under the Occupiers' Liability (Scotland) Act 1960, the local authority could be held liable for injury or damage caused as a result. A failure to mitigate the risks posed by Ash Dieback could also result in criminal prosecution caused by a failure to adhere to obligations imposed by Health and Safety Legislation

8.2.2 There is a risk that the Council would fail to manage one of the actions identified on the Council Risk Register.

9. Equalities

9.1 The proposals in this report have been assessed through the Equality Impact Assessment Scoping Process. There are no significant positive or negative equality impacts of agreeing the recommendations and therefore an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required. A copy of the Equalities Scoping Assessment is shown in [Appendix 1](#).

10. Sustainable Development Implications

10.1 ***Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)*** Given the urgency of situation from a Health and Safety perspective an SEA will be developed to mitigate the loss of the trees and the associated biodiversity and environmental loss.

11. Options Appraisal

11.1 An options appraisal has not been carried out in relation to the subject matter of this report.

12. Link to Council Plan

12.1 The matters referred to in this report contribute to the Council strategic objective of Spaces and Places 'Play Sport and Recreation' and Civic and Community Pride 'Pride in South Ayrshire'.

13. Results of Consultation

13.1 Consultation has taken place with Councillor Martin Kilbride, Portfolio Holder for the Environment and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

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14. Next Steps for Decision Tracking Purposes

- 14.1 If the recommendations above are approved by Members, the Director of Housing, Operations and Development will ensure that all necessary steps are taken to ensure full implementation of the decision within the following timescales, with the completion status reported to the Leadership Panel in the 'Council and Leadership Panel Decision Log' at each of its meetings until such time as the decision is fully implemented:

<i>Implementation</i>	<i>Due date</i>	<i>Managed by</i>
Undertake implementation of Ash Dieback Plan and report progress annually	January 2026	Service Lead – Neighbourhood Services/ Head of Ayrshire Roads Alliance

Background Papers **Report to Cabinet of 14 March 2023 – [Ash Dieback](#)**

Person to Contact **Fiona Ross, Service Lead – Neighbourhood Services**
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Date: 11 February 2025

1. Policy details

Policy Title: Ash Dieback Plan	Lead Officer Fiona Ross
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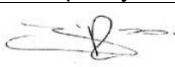
2. Which communities, groups of people, employees or thematic groups do you think will be, or potentially could be, impacted upon by the implementation of this policy? Please indicate whether these would be positive or negative impacts.

Community, Groups of People or Themes	Negative Impacts	Positive impacts
The whole community of South Ayrshire	N/A	N/A
People from different racial groups, ethnic or national origin.	N/A	N/A
Women and/or men (boys and girls)	N/A	N/A
People with disabilities	N/A	N/A
People from particular age groups for example Older people, children and young people	N/A	N/A
Lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual people	N/A	N/A
People who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process to change sex	N/A	N/A
Pregnant women and new mothers	N/A	N/A
People who are married or in a civil partnership.	N/A	N/A
People who share a particular religion or belief	N/A	N/A
Thematic Groups: Health, Human Rights, Rurality and Deprivation.	N/A	N/A

3. Do you have evidence or reason to believe that the policy will support the Council to:

General Duty and other Equality Themes	Level of Negative and/or Positive Impact (high, medium or low)
Eliminate discrimination and harassment faced by particular communities or groups	N/A
Promote equality of opportunity between particular communities or groups	N/A
Foster good relations between particular communities or groups	N/A
Promote positive attitudes towards different communities or groups	N/A
Increase participation of particular communities or groups in public life	N/A
Improve the health and wellbeing of particular communities or groups	N/A
Promote the human rights of particular communities or groups	N/A
Tackle deprivation faced by particular communities or groups	N/A

4. Summary Assessment

Is a full Equality Impact Assessment required? (A full EIA must be carried out on all high and medium impact policies)		YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rationale for decision: There are no equality issues relating to the Ash Dieback Plan.			
Signed :  Service Lead, Neighbourhood Services			
Date: 12 th December 2023		Copy to equalities@south-ayrshire.gov.uk	