

CJ/MW/MBC

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12 April 2017

 Clare Moriarty
 Defra
 Nobel House
 17 Smith Square
 London
 SW1P 3JR

Dear Ms Moriarty

We are currently assessing the likely impact of Ash Dieback Disease (Chalara) to Norfolk County Council. Ash is Norfolk's second commonest hedgerow tree and survey work conducted last summer indicates **there are over 200,000 ash trees adjacent to public highways and many more on Council land.**

Norfolk County Council are actively working with other Councils, NGOs, landowning organisations and academia to develop an efficient and effective approach to ash dieback. We have developed a survey methodology that is being highlighted as best practice by the Tree Council to other local authorities which will enable us to formulate an evidence based ash dieback management strategy for Norfolk County Council. We have identified that financial support from Central Government will be key for implementing this strategy in both maintaining Norfolk's trees in a reasonably safe condition and investing in the recovery and resilience of our landscape.

We have grave concerns over the financial impact of dealing with ash dieback for Norfolk County Council and other Local Authorities, and to other tree owners who are affected. We are grateful that management information is being produced by the Tree Council on Defra's behalf however **Central Government support is required to deal with this national issue.** This will allow the Local Authority and its partners, including other Councils, NGOs, landowning organisations and academic groups, to formulate and implement a strategy to manage the disease over the coming years.

Given the significant number of ash trees in Norfolk, and across the whole Country, **there is a major issue building in ensuring the felling or other management of ash is carried out** to maintain them in a safe condition. Suffolk and Kent County Councils have recognised a similar order of magnitude to the problem, indicating management costs of £7 million and £16 million respectively to make infected roadside trees safe. In parts of Europe as many as 95% of ash trees have been infected by the ash dieback fungus, which kills mature trees over a period of several years, and during which time it is common for limbs to shed.

It is essential that a replanting programme is established both to regain ecological connectivity and maintain the treed character of this part of the United Kingdom. Norfolk County Council will be writing a 20 year strategy to enable us to manage the effects of ash dieback which will include recommendations on suitable species to replace ash in Norfolk. We advocate planting a wide range of species and genera to ensure long term landscape resilience to pests, diseases and climate change. Once resistant ash trees or varieties of ash are commercially available, these will be included in replanting specifications where site conditions are suitable.

We are working with the Woodland Trust to explore funding options for replanting, but ultimately the response will depend of the degree of support from central Government. We believe there is a timely opportunity to consider how **post-Brexit agri-environment support could address the issues exposed by ash dieback**. These include the restoration of hedgerows and replanting of lost roadside trees within wide buffer strips, which would help deliver important ecosystem services including mitigation of soil erosion and surface water flooding.

Ash dieback will result in a loss of trees not experienced since Dutch Elm Disease hit the country in the 1970's with the loss of at least 25 million trees. **Without increased support for the management of diseased trees and their replacement there is a real risk that the loss will be permanent.**

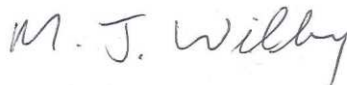
In summary we ask that you provide for Norfolk County Council and other landowners:

- **Financial support to deal with ash trees that require felling or pruning**
- **Financial support for landscape recovery**

Yours sincerely



Cllr Cliff Jordan
Leader of the Council



Cllr. Martin Wilby
Chair Environment,
Development & Transport Committee