Item 9

6th September 2024

Glasgow Community Planning Partnership

Canal Area Partnership

Report by Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Regeneration & Sustainability

Contact: Denise Hamilton

ASH DIEBACK UPDATE

Purpose of Report:

To update on the actions taken to address ash dieback affecting trees within the Canal Ward and across Glasgow.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Area Partnership note the content of the report.

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To provide information on the actions taken to address ash dieback affecting trees within the Canal Ward and across Glasgow.

1. Background

2.1 Ash dieback is a fungal disease estimated to affect between 75% - 95% of ash trees across Scotland in the next two decades. This disease is known to progress from branch dieback, and in many cases has resulted in the death of ash trees.

2.2 Trees and branches fall due to ash dieback, and this poses a risk to users of highways, parks, and open spaces.

2.3 The effects of the disease are more visible when ash trees are in leaf, typically between June to September, although this is dependent on environmental conditions.

2. High Risk Target Areas Across Glasgow

3.1 The diseased trees that present the greatest risk to the Council are those of sufficient size to cause harm should they fall in areas where members of the public access on a regular basis. In general, these areas are:

- Road network and streets.
- Education and Social Work properties.
- Sport and leisure properties (including Glasgow Life facilities).
- Parks and open spaces.
- Event spaces.
- High use areas within cemeteries.
- High use areas within woodlands.
- High use areas within allotments.

3.2 There are approximately 250,000 ash trees across Glasgow, under both Council and private ownership. Approximately 125,000 (50%) are on council land.

3.3 There are potentially 35,000 (28%) of the 125,000 council ash trees within the high-risk areas listed in 3.1.

3.4 The trees can only be accurately assessed when in leaf (late June to late September) and recorded under one of the four ‘Health Class’ categories. This is as recommended in The Tree Council Ash Dieback Action Toolkit 2019.

3.5 The four Health Classes are:

- Ash Health Class 1: 100% – 75% remaining canopy.
- Ash Health Class 2: 75% – 50% remaining canopy.
- Ash Health Class 3: 50% – 25% remaining canopy.
- Ash Health Class 4: 25% – 0% remaining canopy.

3. Response to Ash Dieback

4.1 Tree Inspections and removals

4.1.1 As part of our ash tree inspection programme, NRS Tree Officers have assessed 2,301 ash trees between January 2021 and July 2024 with areas of high footfall prioritised. These are across the GCC estate including parks, cemeteries, schools, roadsides and sports areas.

4.1.2 NRS Tree Officers will continue to assess areas, prioritise inspections and recommend works to be carried out as part of an ongoing delivery plan of remedial works.

4.1.3 The number of ash trees removed by NRS Arbor teams from priority areas including education, event spaces and park locations is 927 (February 2022 to September 2024) including 451 within Primary School grounds. Our teams also carry out business as usual duties across the city and remove approximately 800 trees, across all species, per year.

4.1.4 On completion of inspections, NRS Arbor operate a Risk Management process for all trees surveyed. This rates any proposed works into the following levels of prioritisation:

Priority	Status	Action
Priority 1	Urgent	Works required to make tree safe within 48 hours
Priority 2	Very High	Works required within 2 weeks
Priority 3	High	Works required within 12 weeks
Priority 4	Moderate	Works required within 12 months
Priority 5	Low	Works required are of the lowest priority
Priority 6	None	No works required

4.1.5 Ash dieback Class 3 and 4, as highlighted in section 3.5, are treated as priorities and if present within the areas listed in section 3.1, will be dealt with urgently.

4.2 Ward 16 Canal and Ruchill Park

4.2.1 Within the Canal Ward:

- 387 ash trees have been inspected.

- 183 ash trees were in Ruchill Park with 100 of those being recorded within Health Classes 3 and 4 and requiring removal on Duty of Care and for H&S reasons.
- The remaining 83 will be re-surveyed in 2024.

4.2.2 122 standard trees and 680 whip trees have been planted in Canal Ward 16 since 2022; 45 of the standard trees were planted in Ruchill Park.

4.2.3 NRS Ash Dieback and Greenspace & Biodiversity teams will continue to assess opportunities for replanting within the park which could include community and local school participation with these activities.

4.3 Ash Dieback Project Team

4.3.1 The priorities of the team are to:

- Achieve an accurate assessment of the citywide scale of ash dieback by December 2024.
- Undertake a full appraisal of the project requirements, including revenue support, required by December 2024.
- Refine a risk-based decision-making methodology detailing the plan for monitoring/removal of trees.
- Develop a programme for ongoing inspection of all ash trees, including those on private land, that may impact on our assets or their users.
- Introduce a process for dealing with trees on private land where the landowner is not known.
- Monitor a recovery/replanting programme, planting three trees for every mature ash tree removed.
- Prepare a communications plan to inform and raise awareness amongst internal and external stakeholders. This will include an ash dieback webpage, Working Group to disseminate information, and presentations to NRS teams, Friends of parks, Glasgow Life. Multi-member ward updates will be issued where significant removal works are scheduled to take place.
- Explore opportunities relating to external funding and potential partnerships.
- Ash dieback disease identification training.
- Establish and future proof a dedicated structure for Arbor Team management, inspections, re-inspections, and recommended safety works to GCC's tree stock.

4.3.2 Consultations are ongoing between GCC and different stakeholders, to explore alternatives to the current disposal arrangements of the timber generated from tree management operations. In principle, these alternatives offer the prospect of better outcomes in financial, environmental, and circular economy terms.

4.3.3 Reuse proposals are via hardwood sawmills, biomass, firewood, building material products, artists and architects.

4.3.4 The NRS Climate Ready Modern Apprenticeship scheme will also include placements with the Ash Dieback and Arbor Teams for an understanding of arboriculture and its important role in climate change mitigation.

4. Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that the Area Partnership note the content of the report.