Item 4

22nd August 2023

Glasgow City Council

Environment and Liveable Neighbourhoods City Policy Committee

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ASH DIEBACK UPDATE

Purpose of Report:

To provide an update on the actions to address and mitigate Ash dieback affecting trees across Glasgow.

Recommendations:

That Committee notes:

- the contents of the report
- that an annual update report will be presented to this committee outlining progress.

Ward No(s): Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐ No ☐ consulted: Yes ☐ No ☐

***PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING**:*

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1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To provide an update on the actions to address and mitigate Ash dieback affecting trees across Glasgow.

2. Background

2.1 A paper was previously presented to the Environment Sustainability & Carbon Reduction City Policy Committee on 5 October 2021 informing of Ash dieback and the potential implications for Glasgow. The committee report can be found here:
https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/councillorsandcommittees/submissiondocuments.asp?submissionid=102295

2.2 Ash dieback is caused by the fungus Hymenoscyphus fraxineus (more commonly known as Chalara fraxinea). It was first detected in the UK in 2012 and has steadily spread north since then. It will be the most significant tree health issue affecting the UK since Dutch elm disease in the 1970-80s. Industry experts predict similar catastrophic affects and high tree mortality rates.

2.3 Ash dieback is mainly spread by the infected tree's pathogenic infectious spores via the wind and can be distributed for many miles across a relatively short period of time.

2.4 Further details on the detrimental impacts can be found on page 24 of The Tree Council Ash Dieback Action Plan Toolkit 2019 using the following link.
Ash Dieback Toolkit

2.5 The Tree Council Ash Dieback Action Plan Toolkit, published in February 2019 predicts a figure of 75% for projected mortality rate (PMR) of ash trees across the UK. However, other industry experts are now predicting a PMR above 90% in the next ten years.

2.6 NRS continue to engage with key stakeholders including the Tree Council, UK Parks Core Cities and the Greenspace Scotland Parks Managers Forum in addition to gathering best practice in relation to inspection, removal, potential reuse of wood and funding sources from Local Authorities across the UK including councils in southern England and Wales where the disease is at a more advanced stage. Officers also attend regular Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) seminars relating to Ash dieback to maximise our opportunities to shape delivery and to engage with and learn from industry experts.

3. High and Medium 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 and egress from 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 The Glasgow I-tree eco report (2015) estimated that Glasgow contains approx. 2 million trees, which is in the top ten most populated tree cities in the UK and the ash tree composition is estimated to be 12.5%. This equates to approximately 250,000 ash trees across Glasgow under both Council & private ownership. Approximately 125,000 (50%) are on council land.

3.3 Extrapolating the figures in the 2015 Glasgow I-tree eco report, potentially 35,000 (28%) of the 125,000 council ash trees could pose a high risk within the areas listed in 3.1.

3.4 The trees are assessed when in leaf 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.

4. Response to Ash Dieback

4.1 Tree Inspections

4.1.1 The inspection of ash trees is currently included within our estate inspection programme that includes all varieties of trees. Across various areas of the GCC Parks estate, as part of our Ash inspection programme NRS Tree Officers have carried out assessments of 1,777 ash trees between January 2021 and March 2023 with areas of high footfall prioritised.

4.1.2 All figures are from 1st January 2021 to present and have been taken from the Council's electronic tree management system.

Location	Date of Inspection	Number of Ash Trees Inspected

Queen's Park including Recreation Ground	Summer 2021	545
Glasgow Green (Events area & approaches)	March/April 2023	108
Bellahouston Park	March/April 2023	129
Cardonald Cemetery	2020/22	63
Alexandra Park (Majority of park)	2021/2023	137
Kelvingrove (partial survey)	Various	52
Peat Road roadside verges	Summer 2021	60
Ruchill Park	Summer 2021	183
Springburn Park	2021/2022	111
Other Areas (less than 50 Trees)	Various	389
Total		**1,777**

Current Status		
No sign of disease	465	26%
Showing signs of disease	1,312	74%
Total	**1,777**	**100%**

Action		
Recommended for Reinspection	483	37%
Recommended for Pruning or Removal	829	63%
Total	**1,312**	**100%**

Action		
Recommended for Pruning	73	9%
Recommended for Removal	756	91%
Total	**829**	**100%**

4.1.3 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.

4.1.4 The number of ash trees removed by NRS Arbor teams from priority areas including education, event spaces and park locations is 218 (April 2022 to May 2023). Our teams also carry out business as usual duties across the city and remove approximately 800 trees, across all species, per year.

4.1.5 The following locations, as part of the high to medium risk areas highlighted within 3.1, will form part of the ongoing ash inspection programme.

Area for Inspection	**Ash Trees Present**
A82 (Great Western Road)	92
Arrochar Street Open Spaces	41
Carmunnock Road S/Verges	38
Castlemilk Park/Woodlands	To be assessed
Croftfoot Road & Drive S/Verges	89
Education Estate (Primary Schools)	505
Elder Park	To be assessed
Darnley Mill Country Park	To be assessed
Hogganfield Park	41
Lambhill Cemetery	104
Linn Park	182
Linn Cemetery	41
Linn Crematorium	28
Nether Pollok	70
Pollok Country Park	292
River Kelvin Walkway	209
Sandyhills Park	75
St Kentigern's Cemetery	23
Thornliebank Road Open Spaces	To be assessed
Tollcross Park	118
City Wide Total	**1,948**

4.2 Additional Survey Works

4.2.1 In addition to NRS Tree Officers assessing areas for disease, NRS commissioned a study in July 2022, with data submitted in January 2023, which utilised the latest technology available to assess the wider road network and to trial the use of drone footage to assess selected parks. The study included areas of high footfall and parks used for events such as Glasgow Green.

4.2.2 The areas surveyed were:

- 350km of our road network - Category A, B, and unclassified roads.
- 111 hectares of parkland including Rosshall, Glasgow Green and Tollcross Park.

4.2.3 The road network was surveyed using a multi camera vehicle with GPS/GNSS location to take a 'snapshot' survey of the network.

4.2.4 The parks survey was carried out in Glasgow Green, Rosshall and Tollcross Parks and Kelvin Walkway. The methodology involved a 'grid flight' over the whole park area, supplemented by low level flights to give detailed imagery of the trees and classification.

4.2.5 The data was then analysed as part of a desk-based review by trained arboriculturists in conjunction with computer software, which is used to first extract ash trees, classify their health as defined within the four health categories listed in 3.5, relative height and to calculate basic risk metrics. This information was then input to the council's GIS mapping system for further analysis, verification, and work planning (Appendix 1 – Park Maps). Early use of this information allowed for priority works to be carried out within Glasgow Green.

4.2.6 The data has provided the following results:

Road network survey:

- 8,844 Ash trees identified.
- 6,780 with disease identified -76%

Parks areas survey:

- 983 Ash trees identified
- 540 with disease identified – 55%

4.2.7 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

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.

4.2.8 To allow NRS to quantify and grade affected trees, an additional tree survey is being commissioned. This will capture the areas not included in the survey of July 2022 and will be prioritised via the risk categories highlighted in section 3.1. Supporting inspections will also be carried out by NRS Tree Officers. This

in turn will inform the resources required to address Ash Dieback by our target time frame of October 2023.

4.3 Establish a Project Team

4.3.1 NRS are in the process of creating a project team. The recruitment process to appoint an Ash dieback Project Manager to lead on all aspects of the project has begun and we will seek to conclude this at the earliest opportunity.

4.3.2 The priorities of the team are to

- Achieve an accurate assessment of the scale of Ash dieback by October 2023
- Undertake a full appraisal of the Project requirements including revenue support required by November 2023
- Refine a risk-based decision-making methodology regarding the need for, and prioritised timing of, monitoring/removal or remedial works.
- Develop an appropriate programme for ongoing inspection of all ash trees, including those on private land that may impact on our assets or their users.
- Introduce an appropriate process for addressing trees on private land where the landowner is not known.
- Commence 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 also include multi member ward updates where significant removal works are scheduled to take place.
- Explore opportunities relating to external funding and potential partnerships.

4.3.3 To support the anticipated number of trees requiring to be felled, NRS is considering procuring the services of a specialised contractor. Such contractors have machinery similar to that used in the forestry industry to remove a large number of trees with minimal disruption to the road network or accessibility to high footfall areas. This has been trialled within Kelvingrove Park, with minimum disruption and is being used successfully by other local authorities such as West Lothian where up to 1,200 trees are removed each week depending on the location and accessibility.

4.3.4 In general and as part of any contract award process, NRS are assessing opportunities to generate income such as repurposing timber or offsetting the value of the timber against the contract cost for removal.

5. Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial: Yes, to be confirmed

Legal:	Yes, to be confirmed
Personnel:	Yes, to be confirmed
Procurement:	Yes, to be confirmed

Council Strategic Plan:	Grand Challenge 3 Become a net zero city by 2030 Mission 2: Deliver increased tree planting across the city as part of a comprehensive Tree Plan for Glasgow, including measures to support replacement when trees are lost to damage or removal, and responding to Ash Dieback disease, and develop a Forestry and Woodland Strategy for the city.

Equality and Socio Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.	N/A
What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?	(no significant impact, positive impact or negative impact) None – every group will be affected.
Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.	N/A

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:	The removal of mature trees will impact negatively on Climate Plan actions. This will be mitigated by the implementation of a tree replacement programme for every tree removed.
What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?	As above
Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?	As above

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:	
	N/A
Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report	
If Yes, please confirm that a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has been carried out	

6. Recommendations

6.1 That Committee notes

- the contents of the report
- that an annual update report will be presented to this committee outlining progress.

Appendix 1: Park Maps

Rosshall Park
Tollcross Park
Glasgow Green
Kelven Walkway