



# Ash Dieback Disease

## The Story so far

Jane Begg  
Tree & Woodland Officer

Wayne Murphy  
Ash Dieback Officer



# Ash Dieback Disease



- Aware of Ash Dieback Disease since publicity in 2012
- By 2019 was evident that it was moving from young trees to older ones
- Attended the Ash Dieback Risk Group January 2020
- Agreed to join a small pilot group, working with Scottish Forestry and Tree Council – gleaned a lot of information!

# Tree Safety Management in WLC

- Report from insurance brokers to Risk and Insurance
- Tree Safety and Management Plan agreed by the Council in 2017
- All trees and woodland owned by West Lothian Council now managed by the Tree & Woodland Team, within Operational Services, which also provides advice on private trees to Planning and Roads

## Parks & Woodland Manager

**Tree & Woodland Team Leader**

**Tree & Woodland Officer** **Ash Dieback Officer**

**2 Tree Inspectors** **5 Tree & Woodland Operatives**

**ADD Technician**

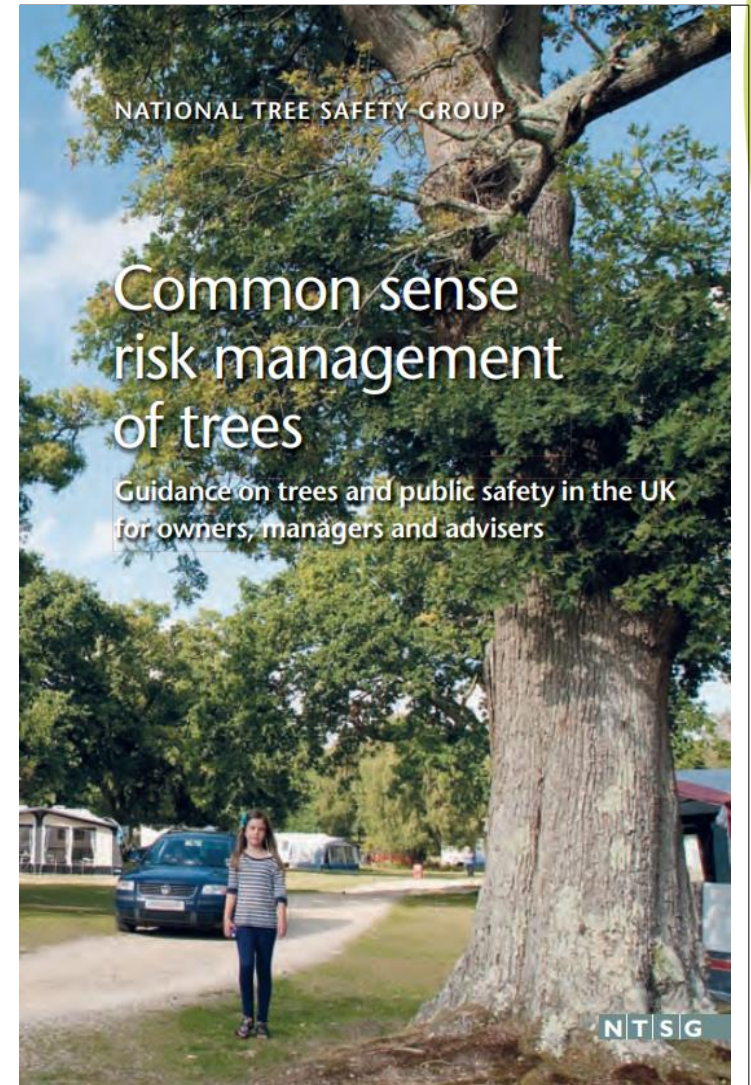
**2 Apprentices**

- Started working on the development of systems to allow us operate more pro-actively



# What are we dealing with ....

- Ash is a common tree in West Lothian but little information on population across the area
- Council has a **“duty of care”** for trees they own
- Also, under **Roads (Scotland) Act 1984**, to **ensure safe passage** of the vehicles, pedestrians etc along the road and path network maintained by the council
- Not all diseased and dying trees pose a significant risk
- Need data for the areas of highest usage eg next to public roads, school grounds etc
- **Zoning** areas of highest use by the public and others eg roads, school grounds etc – as per **Tree Safety & Management Plan**



# Drive by survey Summer 2020

- Sample survey of the areas most used by the public
- Used in-house Tree Inspectors and Operatives to do drive-by surveys along road network to assess condition of ash trees
- Survey done July-August when trees in leaf
- Covid 19 restrictions and risk assessment - hired larger vehicle for 2 man team
- Allocated 1 day for each of the 9 council wards
- Also - walk-by survey in other high use areas eg Greenways in Livingston, play areas – again 1 day per ward

# Information collected

Location	No trees in group	Age (size) class	Condition Score	Ownership
QField on tablet (Field version of QGIS)	Estimate	Sapling Semi-mature Mature Veteran	0 – No disease 1 – Good < 25% canopy lost 2 – 25-49% canopy lost 3 – Poor 50-74% canopy lost 4 – V poor >75% canopy lost	Back in the office – trees plotted over Council ownership layers  a) WLC owned b) Roadside verge c) Within private field, garden etc



# Tree Condition Scores



**Class 1**  
(100%- 76% canopy)  
100 -95% would rate as  
exceptionally healthy



**Class 3**  
(50%- 26% canopy)



**Class 2**  
(75%- 51% canopy)



**Class 4**  
(25%- 0% canopy)

# Results from 2020 Survey

## Numbers of roadside trees across West Lothian

- Approx. 20% of 1043km road network covered
- Approx. 5k ash trees (excluding saplings) counted, which when extrapolated gives **26k ash trees** – majority of these are semi-mature trees approx. 20-30cm in diameter on both council and private land
- Numbers of ash trees and also affects of ADD were spread across the area
- 41% were on council owned land and 59% in private ownership –

NB West Lothian is a semi-urban area with lots of roadside planting undertaken during the development of the new town of Livingston and other landscaping schemes



## Condition of trees excluding small saplings

Condition	Age Class					20% Sample Totals	Total SM, M and V in survey	Estimated Total SM, M & V Trees across road network	%age SM, M & V trees
	Sapling	%age Saplings	Semi-mature	Mature	Veteran				
1 (76-100% crown alive)	344	13%	170	26	1	541	197	985	4%
2 (51-75% crown alive)	700	27%	848	136	1	1,685	985	4,925	19%
3 (26-50% crown alive)	910	35%	2663	275	5	3,853	2943	14,715	<b>57%</b>
4 (0-25% crown intact ie dying / dead)	676	26%	756	310	1	1,743	1067	5,335	<b>21%</b>
	2,630		4,437	747	8	7,822	5,192	<b>25,960</b>	

72% of roadside trees (excluding saplings) were Condition Score 3-4 ie had lost >50% canopy

## Implications for the Council and Others for Tree Safety along Roads

- Estimated **10,700 trees >10cm**, on land owned /maintained by the council, are at risk of **failure** within next few years
- These are already likely to be difficult to remove due to their brittle condition
- In addition - estimated **15,300 such trees are in private ownership** but their failure could impact on safe passage along Council maintained roads

## Other High Use Areas Owned by the Council



- Walk-by survey of other high use areas eg play areas, schools, active travel routes produced similar results to the drive-by survey
- Don't have easily measurable areas, so a rough guesstimate was made
- Suggests that a **further 9k medium/large trees** already significantly affected by ADD



# Raising Awareness

- Results of initial sample survey and cost estimates were used as one of the case studies in the Ash Dieback Toolkit for Scotland
- [Tree-Council-Scotland-ADB-Toolkit-DIGITAL-280x210-March-21-2022.pdf](https://www.treecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Tree-Council-Scotland-ADB-Toolkit-DIGITAL-280x210-March-21-2022.pdf)  
([treecouncil.org.uk](https://www.treecouncil.org.uk))
- Formed the evidence of the local situation required to raise the issue within the council
- **Already raised by a Member** which meant that the issue was already **on the radar of the Executive Management Team**

**‘Catastrophic’ impact of ash dieback means over 30,000 trees must be felled, says National Trust**

Climate crisis means cost of dealing with tree diseases is soaring

Harry Cockburn Environment Correspondent • Tuesday 14 December 2021 19:30



# Reports and budgets

- **Management Engagement**  
Attended on-line seminar and the on-line meeting with Tree Council  
Reported back to Deputy Chief Executive Officer
- **Risk and Governance Committee**  
**ADD on Corporate Risk Register – this is key!**
- **Short Term Working Group**  
Head of Operational Service called together a short term working group to prepare an outline ADD Action Plan for the Executive Management Team
- **Advice from Legal Services**  
For discussion later – probably for SCOTS to review?
- **Report to EMT**  
Short report and just a tabular ADD Action Plan with cost estimates
- **Budget**  
Initial budget approved for 2021-22 and 2022-23

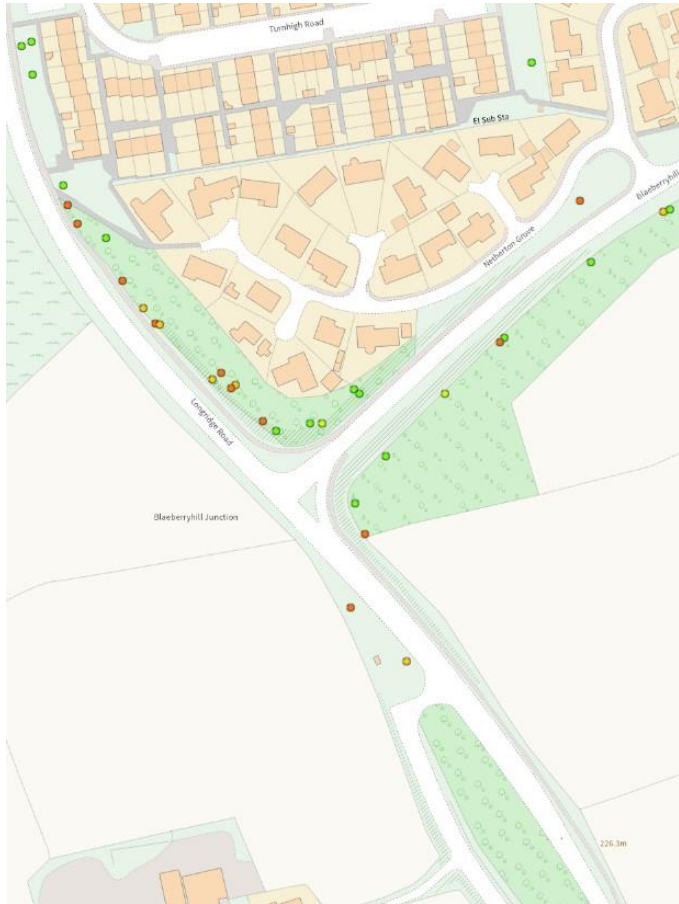
# Researching information

Researched information from

- **Other councils** eg found ADD Action Plan and website info for Ceridigion Council in Wales
- **Contractors** who have or are beginning to gear up with suitable machinery to deal with ash and / or who have experience of large scale work along roads
- **Arboricultural Association and FISA** briefing on felling diseased ash trees and safe use of equipment such as tree shears and grapple saws
- **Tree Council Website** – hoping to get a section for useful information



# Further surveys Summer 2021 and 2022

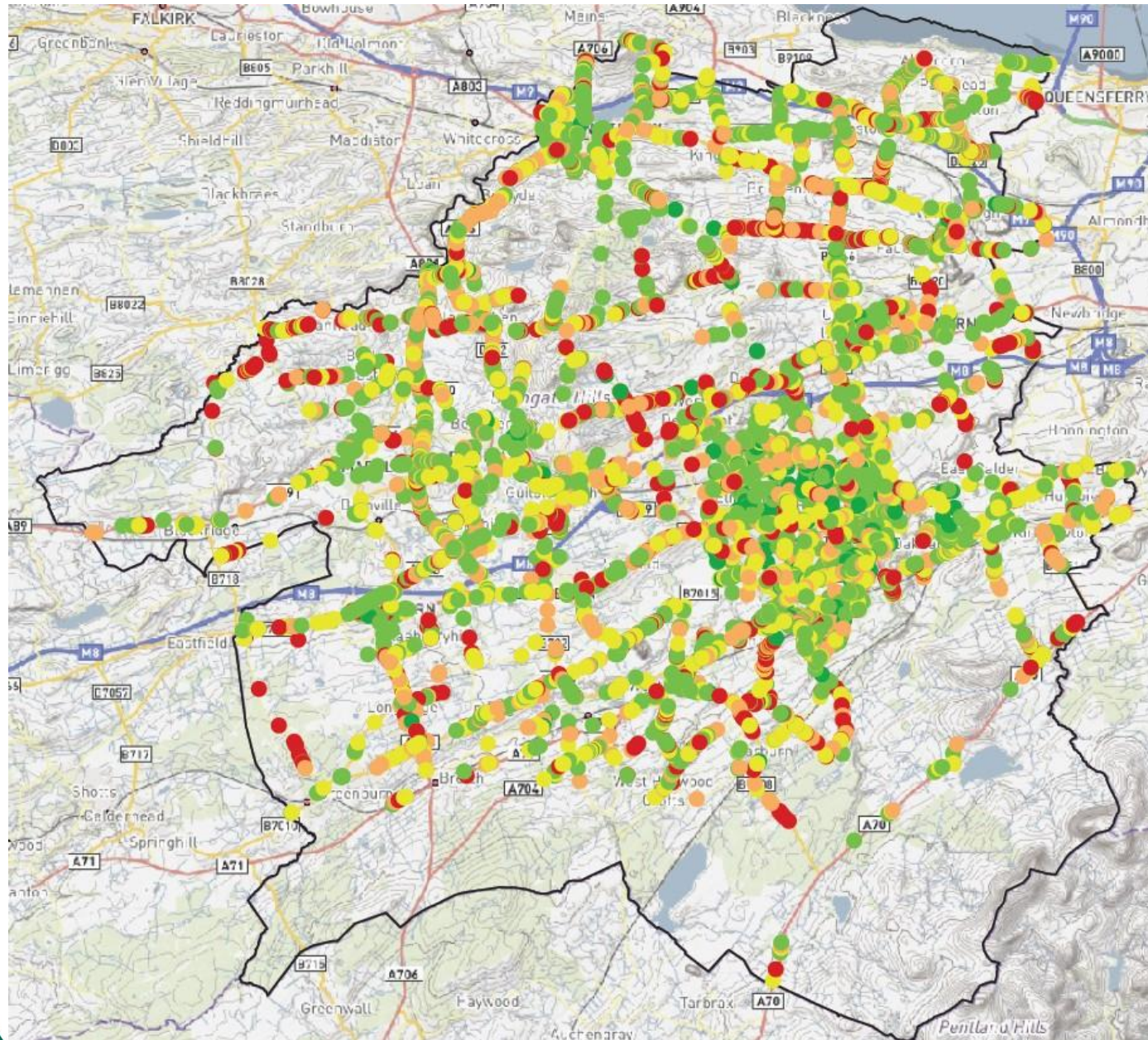


**Estimated cost of survey work  
and analysis £30/km**

- **New software for tree inventory and management**  
Has made management and interrogation of data to produce information for reports possible
- **Further roadside surveys**  
100% road network now completed
- School trees inspected as part of 3 years cycle
- All play areas, more of active travel routes and other well-used parts of parks
- **Updated data** – 10,090 trees on WLC owned and maintained land – tallies quite well with original estimate



# Distribution of Ash along road network – All classes



# Resources

- **Existing resources** – WLC had some!

- **Additional Resources Required**

Ash Dieback Officer -

Wayne Murphy, TI who has organised the survey work and pilot contract, has recently appointed as ADD Officer

Ash Dieback Technician

Additional arborists -

Requested by members

Having difficulty filling posts

Investigating training apprentices

- **Budget for contractors - with suitable machinery and experience**

Felt that most of work will need to be undertaken by contractors

- **Capital budgets** – currently being prepared for the next 10year programme



# Pilot contract



- **Sample of work selected**
  - 6 sections of road selected, marked up and recorded in size classes
  - Constraints eg o-head cables, bat roost features
- **Contract out to mini-competition**
  - Edinburgh and Lothians Arboricultural Framework specifying work be done by mechanical means
- **Traffic Management**
  - Included in contract but WLC did not charge fees for Road Closure Permissions etc
- **Contractors Access to plotted tree data**
- **Communication**
  - Press releases put out and back ground information put on website

# Analysis and lessons learned

- **Results still being analysed**

- **Cost estimates**

Less than originally estimated using machines in a co-ordinated manner dealing with many trees under one section of road closed or with traffic management

Very much higher costs when dealing with large trees in difficult to access location

- **Lessons learned**

Traffic management is tricky – need for close working with Roads Management Officer .... appointment of additional technical help should assist

Early information on constraints so that:-

Utilities companies can be contacted

Initial inspections of trees with bat roost features, badger setts etc can be undertaken

**Don't underestimate the amount of work involved!**

## Next Steps

- **Contract for Winter 2022-23**

Planning to use existing Arb Framework until it expires in 2023

- **Future Framework Contract**

May be specifically for ADD or may use opportunity of road closures etc to undertake much needed thinning work (with top up from the Woodland Management Budget)

### **Opportunities for collaboration with other councils**

- **Engaging with private landowners**

Hope to be able to help co-ordinate work where private trees are adjacent to roads and other well-used public areas in order to minimise disruption and encourage work to be done in an efficient and **SAFE** manner!

### **Communication will be key!**

**Internal** - particularly with Planning, Legal and Property Services and Council Members

**External** with landowners and the general public



# Thanks for listening

Happy to share information where we can

For any specific questions: Wayne Murphy, Ash Dieback Officer

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