

January 2024. Meeting re Ash Die Back in the parish with:

- Cllr Oppenheimer
- Dave Collins (Assistant Arboricultural Officer, Highways)
- James Lovegrove (Senior Project Manager, Ash Dieback Team, Hampshire Countryside Service)
- Cllr D Large
- Clerk

Summary:

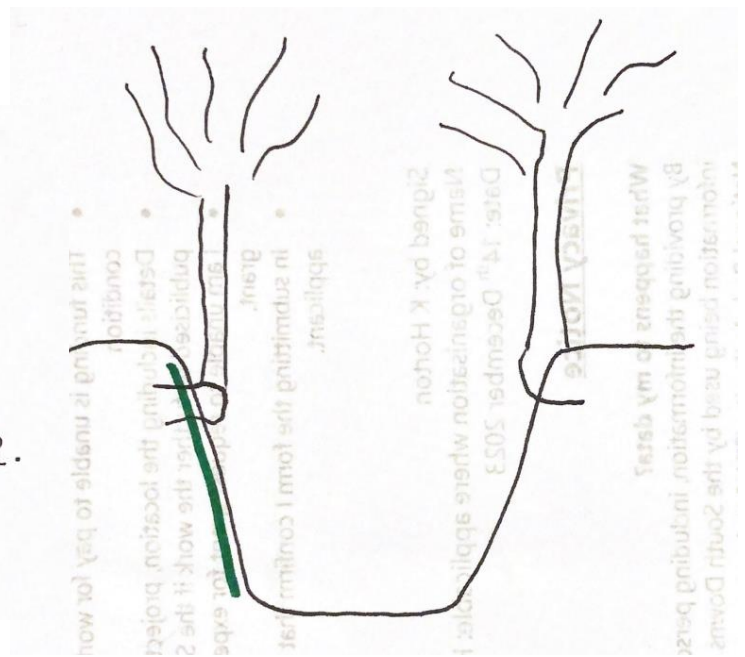
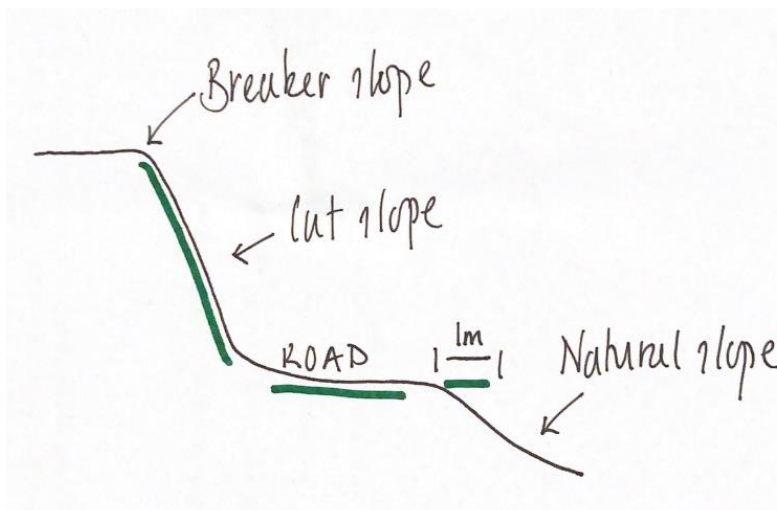
A very useful meeting re Ash Die Back with guidance provided by Hampshire Countryside Services and Hampshire Highways). It was made crystal clear that trees affected with Ash Die Back will not be cut down to pre-empt possible future falls. In fact, the latest guidance is that Ash should not be cut down to allow time for any natural resilience to kick in and/or to allow habitat to adjust to the loss of the tree if it is not resilient.

HPC were advised that a tree will not be considered for a watch list unless at least 50% of its crown has died back. This is considered the marker for a tree being likely diseased. This will not be possible to assess until the late summer.

Clerk's notes of meeting:

The group walked/drove Mill Lane, the road from Lower Green to the back of Empshott Green and the road down to Oakshott from Upper Green

- HPC were advised that the following depts in HCC (Countryside, Highways and Properties) all have interests working on trees and to date £3.3million has been spent re ash die back.
- Hampshire Countryside Services are going to bid for further funding
- Cllr Oppenheimer is going to have the matter raised at a Full HCC meeting for discussion.
- Highways has a Duty to keep highways accessible and will always remove a tree that is causing a blockage regardless of whose land it has fallen from
- Highways will also take action if there is a "significant or unacceptable risk"
- Felling licences are not required if the tree is dead or dangerous
- If a tree blocks a highway HPC were advised that Highways should always be called rather than a LO or resident – they have liability cover, can contact Utility companies and will assess whether further tree work is required to make an area safe eg. The oak tree on Mill Lane – just one limb originally came down but Highways assessed it and decided the whole tree needed to be attended to
- Highways are responsible for "cut" banks and a border between the road and natural banks of 0-2m. The attached pictures hopefully illustrate these details with green line representing Highways remit. In relation to Mill Lane, the LH side (heading to Empshott) is considered cut and the RH natural



- The trees that may be harder to make a call are those growing out from the lip of the sunken lane. The Highways Officer advised that if the roots grow back to the LO's patch, it will likely be their responsibility
- Landowners should be surveying their own trees to understand which might need attention and are liable for any damage caused by trees falling on their land
- Emily Roberts at Forest Partnership can advise on replanting grants

The Officer from Highways also provided the following information in a follow up email. **Information from Highways team**

Ash dieback information – Forestry Research [Ash dieback \(Hymenoscyphus fraxineus\) - Forest Research](#)
 Ash dieback guidance – Tree Council [Tree-Council-Ash-dieback-tree-owners-guide-FINAL.pdf \(treecouncil.org.uk\)](#)

Tree management information – National Tree Safety Group [The National Tree Safety Group has publications produced by the Forestry Commission to provide guidance on trees and public safety in the UK \(ntsgroup.org.uk\)](#) – 3 documents – leaflet with basic info for a tree owner, summary which is aimed at estate and smallholding owners, main document which is a national guidance document and source of information for the other two. I would suggest the leaflet and summary are the documents you would be most interested in.

HCC webpage for reporting highway issues - [Roads and road maintenance | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](#)

Conclusions:

- There is no benefit to logging every Ash tree on Highways system as there is no budget to carry out preventative work and the guidance they are following does not recommend this in any case
- Any trees blocking Highways access should be reported to the Highways team
- Clarity provided on how to distinguish what is LO vs Highways area of responsibility

Details of report and findings shared and noted at HPC meeting on 7th February 2024:

- **Agenda item 8) Ash die back. Further to the meeting with Cllr Oppenheimer, the Hampshire Highways Senior Arboricultural Officer and Hampshire Countryside Service (Project Manager of the Ash Dieback Team), to receive an update from Cllr Large and agree any further action.** Summary report was circulated ahead of the meeting. Thanks were noted to Cllr Oppenheimer for arranging the meeting which both Cllr Large and the Clerk found useful in clarifying who is responsible for the verges and tree management around the parish. It was noted that responsibility does not sit with the Parish Council for monitoring affected trees. It was made clear that residents should raise concerns to Highways who will attend fallen trees and/or assess trees residents believe are dangerous.