

The National Trust and ash dieback in the Yorkshire Dales

By Peter Katic, Area Ranger, Upper Wharfedale

This summer, many of you will have seen the lack of leaves growing on ash trees in Wharfedale and the wider Yorkshire Dales. May's late frost and dry spring will have had an effect but the fungus *hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, or as it's more commonly referred to, Ash dieback, was the main cause of the poor growth. 80% of ash trees in the UK are expected to be lost as a result of the disease, and Dales woodlands, where ash is such a dominant species, will change significantly. It will also mean the loss of many of the magnificent individual trees that grow on field edges, roadsides and on the fell slopes.

All NT properties, including us here in the Dales, carried out a survey of ash trees this year, during July and early August. We related it to our Tree Safety Management process, focussing on those trees primarily in higher risk areas, around buildings and places with a higher usage by people or vehicles. We were assessing based on percentage leaf cover and the presence of dead branches and known symptoms of the disease. I also took pictures of most trees I surveyed so it will be informative to see how they look at a similar time next year.

The survey will be an ongoing process for the next few years, identifying those trees that need work and that present a risk. We're only removing trees where necessary for safety reasons; the majority will gradually die and fall, where it's safe for them to do so. In this way there will be some benefits to wildlife from the increase in dead wood habitat.

We will undertake some limited work on trees this winter, mainly next to the road in Upper Wharfedale; on Dubbs Lane, Boucher Gill bridge and Beckermonds. We're also removing two on Malham Tarn estate. Some trees will be removed entirely, while others will be reduced and made safe. The work will begin shortly.

The Wharfedale Naturalists have generously given us some money this winter, which will allow us to begin planting another generation of open grown field trees, in shelters, that will help to replace those ash lost in the landscape over the next few years. The intention is that this is just the beginning though and we will work with our tenants and others to plant many more over the next few years.

If you have any queries regarding this, please don't hesitate to contact me on my email

Peter.katic@nationaltrust.org.uk, or you could ring our Cray office on 01756 761539

I've included below a couple of links to further reading that may be of interest.

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/restoring-woodlands-affected-by-ash-dieback>

https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/tree-pests-and-diseases/key-tree-pests-and-diseases/ash-dieback/?gclid=Cj0KCQiA2uH-BRCCARIsAEeef3mtrERIDrPOIpIDFgTA1Em3Kcw2apBDyXZhiHQ4uY6ZMttWlu4HLiYaAjo6EALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds