



Date: 12th October 2018

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www.surreywildlifetrust.org
Patron: Dame Judi Dench

Dear Member, Councillor, Parish Clerk

I am writing to let you know about our concern over the impact of Ash die back disease on Sheeples.

You may be aware that Ash die back disease (Chalara) is now prevalent throughout Surrey and the wider country. The disease has been spreading rapidly since it was first identified in the UK in 2012. Research highlights that over 95% of Ash trees are likely to be affected. Infected trees unfortunately succumb to the disease from the canopy downwards. They can drop branches without warning during this process. Trees also become more susceptible to honey fungus which is capable of destroying root systems with the risk of sudden and unexpected tree failure. This year Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) has already removed 80 failing Ash trees across the estate we manage.

This means that Ash dieback is now creating an enhanced health and safety risk within our woods. We need to deal with this situation and keep people as safe as we can. Therefore I am writing to let you know that woodland operations will need to take place this winter on Sheeples.

The work is being organised by SWT in consultation with Natural England, Forestry Commission (FC) and Surrey County Council. The works on this site will remove Ash trees within 30m each side of Rights of Way, permissive paths, car parks and road verges.

These works will be predominantly undertaken with forestry machinery designed specifically for woodland works of this nature. This is the safest and most efficient way to carry out these works given the complexity of removing dead and dying trees and the risk to chainsaw operators of falling branches.

The selected contractor undertaking this work has a proven track record of delivering sustainable and conservation sensitive woodland management. Ecological surveys have been undertaken and works will conform to FC best practice.

Once work is underway, pathways will only be closed if it is required for health and safety reasons and signage will be clearly displayed during this time. They will be reopened as soon as possible after the works. The contractor has been instructed to ensure safe passage of visitors when using any shared access routes.

We are hosting a guided walk for residents and members of the public to talk through the planned work and the impact of the disease in more detail. A walk for residents and councillors will be held on Saturday 3rd November at 13.00 – 13.45pm. This will give local people the opportunity to ask any questions. If you would like to attend the walk please let us know in advance by contacting us on countryside@surreywt.org.uk and we will be happy to provide you with the details.

Local residents who may be affected by the operation will also be contacted by letter to inform them of the work and the walk. We will also be holding a second walk for site users i.e. members of the public who may not live nearby.

For more information on Ash dieback please look at the Forestry Commission website:

<https://www.forestry.gov.uk/ashdieback>

If you have any questions, please contact countryside@surreywt.org.uk or call 01483 910 087.

Yours sincerely

James Adler

Director of Land Management

Surrey Wildlife Trust