



## True cost of Ash dieback revealed



A recent research paper has revealed the true cost of Ash dieback disease in the UK, to be in the region of £15 billion, with half of this cost being over the next 10 years.

These figures were calculated following research led by Oxford University in partnership with the Woodland Trust, Fera Science and Sylva Foundation. This research takes into account the costs of clearing millions of dead and dying trees from roads and urban areas, as well as functions carried out by trees such as water and air purification, as well as carbon sequestration. However, it is the loss of these ecological services that is believed to be the biggest cost to society.

Dr Louise Hill, researcher at the University of Oxford said 'Nobody has estimated the total cost of a tree disease before, and we were quite shocked at the magnitude of the cost to society'. This research suggests the total cost of 15 billion will be a third more than the reported cost of the foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in 2001.

The research, which has warned the UK may face an additional cost of £1 billion if 47 other known tree pests and diseases arrive in Britain, has outlined the need for more investment in plant biosecurity measures. These measures suggested include a greater focus on and sourcing safe plant material, together with tighter controls on imports of all live plants for planting.

Ash dieback was first found in Britain during 2012, but may have been brought to the UK many years earlier on infected, imported trees. The disease is likely to be responsible for large-scale losses of ash trees, with estimates suggesting 95% - 99% of specimens will be lost in the long-term.

### Additional reading

Forest research document: Chalara Ash dieback

<https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/pest-and-disease-resources/chalara-ash-dieback-hymenoscyphus-fraxineus/>