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To: Communities Cabinet Committee

Date: 14 March 2013

Subject: **Ash Dieback (*Chalara fraxinea*) outbreak response**

Classification: Unrestricted

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| <p>Summary: To brief the Customer and Communities Cabinet Committee on the Ash Dieback (<i>Chalara fraxinea</i>) outbreak in Kent and the significant risk the disease presents and our ongoing response to manage the situation, with a particular focus on the response by services within the Customer and Communities Directorate. Members are asked to note, endorse and contribute through debate to this approach.</p> |
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1. Background

1.1 Following discussion of the potential environmental and financial impacts arising from the *Chalara* outbreak at Corporate Management Team on 4 December 2012 (and its proposed inclusion on the KCC Corporate Risk Register), it was agreed that Emergency Planning would present reports to meetings of the Environment, Highways and Waste (10 January 2013) and Customer and Communities (14 March 2013) Cabinet Committees.

2. Current Situation

2.1 Experience within the county of dealing with animal and plant health outbreaks, such as Foot & Mouth Disease and, more recently, Asian Longhorn Beetle, shows that robust and timely interventions can contain, slow and even prevent further spread of threats to plant and animal health. With this in mind, since the first cases were confirmed in Kent, KCC Emergency Planning has provided a direct link between the national response (led by Defra / Fera¹ and Forestry Commission) and a range of local partners, to ensure a consistent approach and single source of information.

2.2 This approach and, in particular, timely interventions to prevent the movement of potentially infected fallen leaves, has been endorsed by Martin Ward (UK Chief Plant Health Officer), who is leading the national response to the outbreak:

'Your approach and bio-security precautions look sensible. One of the key messages is that bio-security is actually rather simpler for Chalara than for some other diseases because there are no 'resting spores' in the soil. So as long as dead leaves aren't moved from site to site that pathway is dealt with. Unlike aerial spread, which is much harder to stop'.

¹ Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs / Food & Environment Research Agency

- 2.3 To date, more than 30 infection sites have been confirmed across the county, with the east of Kent hardest hit². Given this knowledge, our growing understanding of the threat and the publication by Defra of its 'Interim *Chalara* Control Plan' in December 2012, relevant KCC managers agreed that a Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) should be convened to build upon the good work already undertaken, to ensure that Kent is well-prepared.
- 2.4 Routinely, SCG meetings are chaired by Kent Police, but given the nature of this unfolding situation, it was agreed that KCC would be best-placed to take the strategic lead, with Emergency Planning and Planning & Environment acting as co-chairs.
- 2.5 The inaugural meeting was very well-attended (with >25 local partners and national agencies involved) and productive. The SCG agreed a multi-agency strategy (see *Appendix 1*) for managing the response in Kent, a command & control structure (managed from the County Emergency Centre), high-level risk assessment and the basis for a Local Action Plan to deliver the agreed strategy. A subsequent meeting (held on 14th December) was, again, very well-attended and focused upon implementation of the Local Action Plan. A further meeting is scheduled for 15th March where progress against agreed targets will be assessed.
- 2.6 On the 18th December the Forestry Commission and KCC staged a high profile regional Tree Health Summit in Kent, where Defra's 'Interim *Chalara* Control Plan' was launched. The event was attended by Mr. Jeremy Kite, Deputy Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities, providing opening remarks, and Mr. David Brazier, Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste, providing closing remarks. This is a testimony to the prominent role taken by KCC in relation to the response to the *Chalara* outbreak.
- 2.7 Emergency Planning have printed and distributed Forestry Commission *Chalara* public information notices to relevant KCC teams, including KCC Country Parks and Countryside Partnerships, and a range of other partners for installation at public open spaces across Kent. In addition, stocks have been supplied to parish clerks for display on notice boards.
- 2.8 Public Rights of Way (PROW), working closely with Emergency Planning, produced bio-security guidance in the Autumn which has informed a similar approach from Kent Fire & Rescue Service, as well as local personnel and contractors from the Environment Agency, Highways Agency and utilities companies who may be working in affected areas.
- 2.9 Emergency Planning has worked closely with colleagues in Property and Infrastructure and Education, Learning & Skills to develop innovative Ash dieback guidance for schools³. This approach is being rolled-out to cover other parts of the KCC estate. The guidance for schools has been cited as best practice by Department of Communities and Local Government and will be featured within their national 'REDistribute' newsletter.
- 2.10 The potential for rogue trading using Ash Die Back has been proved with one report received of a claim that a tree was diseased and therefore needed to be removed. A 'Trading Standards Alert' has been issued advising of the potential scam, the legal situation in relation to diseased trees and general doorstep shopping advice. This has also resulted in a radio interview with BBC Kent for the gardening programme. Listeners are likely to include our target audience for this advice, the vulnerable and

² [www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/UK_outbreak_map-13-02-25_Map2b.pdf/\\$FILE/UK_outbreak_map-13-02-25_Map2b.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/UK_outbreak_map-13-02-25_Map2b.pdf/$FILE/UK_outbreak_map-13-02-25_Map2b.pdf)

³ [www.kenttrustweb.org.uk/userfiles/CW/file/Policy/School_Emergency_Guidance/\(Rev3\)%20Ash%20Dieback%20leaflet.pdf](http://www.kenttrustweb.org.uk/userfiles/CW/file/Policy/School_Emergency_Guidance/(Rev3)%20Ash%20Dieback%20leaflet.pdf)

elderly, the usual victims of such rogue traders. This has also been reported on Kent Online⁴.

2.11 More broadly, information, advice and guidance has been shared with colleagues in Trading Standards and Community Wardens (as well the other service previously listed) so they may, in turn, share this with through their links with the farming / rural communities. Emergency Planning is working with colleagues in Communications & Engagement and other partner agencies to put in place a joined-up 'Media & Communications Strategy' to bring together under one banner, our various communications activities.

3. Next Steps

3.1 Much of our activity has been informed by the national arrangements outlined in Defra's 'Interim *Chalara* Control Plan'. However, the scale of the problem in Kent, the influence of specific local factors and our acknowledged pioneering position in dealing with the outbreak dictates that an effect local response be sustained.

3.2 Moreover, Defra will be launching its final '*Chalara* Control Plan' at the end of March, to coincide with the onset of Spring. This is likely to generate more media and public interest; in part because of the publication of this document, but also because, following the Autumn leaf-fall and the growth of new leaves in the Spring, the signs of *Chalara* infection will be more apparent to identify and new *Chalara* spores will be generated and potentially transmitted.

3.3 With this in mind, we need to be mindful that this is an ongoing and developing situation. We will therefore continue to co-ordinate activities of the SCG to implement our Strategy and Local Action Plan and to monitor the situation and effectiveness of these measures.

3.4 Additionally, we will, of course, continue to keep Members and Officers apprised of the situation as part of these arrangements.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Members are asked to :

- Note the potential serious consequences that the *Chalara* outbreak poses to the environment and economy of Kent;
- Endorse the KCC approach outlined within this report; and
- Contribute any related topics for further research and advice arising from debate by the Committee.

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Background Documents : N/A

⁴ www.kentonline.co.uk/kentonline/home/2013/february/22/rogue_traders_in_scam.aspx

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Multi-Agency Strategy¹

Background

In developing this Strategy consideration has been given to the COBR and Defra / Fera strategic guidance for the Ash Dieback (*Chalara fraxinea*) outbreak. In accordance with this, members of the SCG will seek to act and react positively and proportionately in managing the outbreak in Kent & Medway and seek to prevent wider infection, whether accidental or deliberate.

Strategic Aim & Objectives

Aim

We will work in partnership to protect the environment, by containing the outbreak, limiting the spread and mitigating its potential wider consequences.

Objectives

We will achieve the above aim by putting in place an Action Plan to support the following strategic objectives:

- Establish robust Command, Control & Co-ordination (C3) arrangements (including relevant plans and protocols) to support effective & proportionate local, cross-border & national response arrangements;
- Provide a single-source of consistent Scientific & Technical Advice, to inform risk assessment and decision-making, including options for monitoring & treatment, containment / bio-security & disposal;
- Implement a rigorous Environment Management Strategy to support the effective implementation of relevant mitigating actions including monitoring, enforcement & treatment;
- Maximise public, media & stakeholder awareness & confidence through a joined-up Media & Communications Strategy; and
- Maintain continuity of the response & develop a long-term Recovery Strategy, covering business & economic confidence, cultural & amenity impacts and long-term environment management.

Definition of an 'emergency'²

1. Meaning of 'emergency'

(1) In this Part 'emergency' means —

(a) An event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the UK;

(b) An event or situation which threatens serious damage to the environment of a place in the United Kingdom; or

(c) War, or terrorism, which threatens serious damage to the security of the UK;

(3) For the purposes of subsection (1)(b) an event or situation threatens damage to the environment only if it involves, causes or may cause —

(a) Contamination of land, water or air with biological, chemical or radio-active matter; or

(b) Disruption or destruction of plant life or animal life.

¹ Agreed at inaugural meeting of the Ash Dieback (*Chalara fraxinea*) Outbreak SCG on Friday 16th November 2012

² As defined under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) - www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/36/section/1

**Kent Resilience Forum (KRF)
Ash Dieback (*Chalara fraxinea*) Outbreak
Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG)**

ACTION PLAN

Introduction

At the initial Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) Ash Dieback Outbreak Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG), held on 16th November 2012 it was agreed that an Action Plan would be drafted to provide clear direction to local, cross-border & national partners as to the response to be implemented across Kent & Medway in support of the agreed multi-agency Gold Strategy and the Interim Chalara Control Plan.

Four 'virtual' working groups, largely utilising email and teleconference facilities, will be established to oversee the implementation of the objectives outlined in the Gold Strategy as follows:

- **Scientific & Technical Advice Cell (STAC);**
- **Environment Management Group (EMG);**
- **Media & Communications Group (M&CG); and**
- **Recovery Advisory Group (RAG).**

Background

Media reports widely cite the impact of the fungus Ash Dieback (*Chalara fraxinea*) in Denmark, where a 2010 estimate stated that some 60-90% of ash trees were affected and may eventually die³. Since the announcement in October of confirmed cases in the UK, the outbreak has been reported widely by national and local media with much speculation as to the fate of our Ash trees. The latest reports⁴ quote Danish scientists as suggesting that up to 95% of UK Ash trees could eventually be affected.

Such headlines have generated significant local concern as Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) is the most widespread tree species found in Kent, with records from 930 of the county's 1,043 tetrads (or 2km squares)⁵. Some 111 invertebrates feed directly upon ash, and this figure increases significantly when associated predators and parasites are considered⁶. In addition some 255 lichens have an especial association with the alkaline substrate afforded by Ash bark⁷. The tree forms a component of high forest, coppice woodland and hedgerow habitats across Kent, and is also a prominent feature of our urban landscape, as street trees and within parks and gardens. Kent also supports the largest extent of surviving ancient woodland within the UK. If *Chalara* takes hold in the UK at the rate and extent experienced in Denmark, and elsewhere within Continental Europe, it will bring profound change for the landscape, ecology and rural economy of Kent.

Practical challenges are posed by the threat of unprecedented numbers of deteriorating trees, growing on private and public land, and to the safety of public spaces, pedestrian and bridle routes, the railway network and highways. The risk that 'rogue traders' will seek to profiteer from the outbreak is another key concern.

³ European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (2010)

⁴ Denmark's ash disease dieback toll poses warning to UK. Jeremy Cooke (BBC Rural affairs correspondent) – 20th November 2012

⁵ A New Atlas of the Kent Flora. E.G. Philp 2010

⁶ UK Biological Records Centre Database of Insects and their Food Plants

⁷ Pasture and woodlands in Lowland Britain and their importance for the conservation of the epiphytes and invertebrates associated with old trees. Nature Conservancy Council & The Institute of Terrestrial Ecology

Local Action Plan

Responsible Owners (Tactical Co-ordination): KCC Senior Emergency Planning Officer / KCC Senior Biodiversity Projects Manager

Reporting To (Strategic Co-ordination): KCC Director of Planning & Environment / KCC Emergency Planning Manager

| | Key Targets | Performance Measure | Accountability | Timescale | RAG |
|-----|--|---|--|--------------------------|-------|
| 1. | Command, Control & Co-ordination (C3): Establish robust C3 arrangements (incl. relevant plans & protocols) to support effective & proportionate local, cross-border & national response arrangements | | | | |
| 1.1 | Effective multi-agency C3 structure, Gold Strategy and Action Plan in place, being implemented, monitored and communicated. | Regular SCG and Working Group / Cell meetings to progress issues & flow of communications via Tactical Co-ordination leads Regular flow of communications between local, cross-border and national partners. | SCG Co-Chairs / Tactical Co-ordination Leads / All SCG Members | Ongoing | Amber |
| 2. | Scientific and Technical Advice Cell (STAC): Provide a single-source of consistent Scientific & Technical Advice, to inform risk assessment and decision-making, including options for monitoring & treatment, containment / bio-security & disposal. STAC will be largely 'virtual' in format, utilising email and teleconference facilities. | | | | |
| | Membership: KCC Emergency Planning (Tony Harwood [Chair]), Forest Research (Dr. Gary Kerr), Fera (Martin Ward), Forestry Commission (Jonathan Harding), Jacobs (Aubrey Furner), KCC Flood Risk and Natural Environment Team (William Moreno), KCC Property and Infrastructure Support (Lynn Keeley), Kent Downs AONB Unit (Nick Johannsen), UKC (Roger Fraser), Arboricultural Association (Jim Quaife), KMBRC (Tony Witts) | | | | |
| 2.1 | Compile detailed data set on Ash Dieback impacts within UK and Continental Europe, including better understanding of damage inflicted upon mature Ash trees and consequent health and safety implications to enable enhanced planning and response. | Report back to Strategic Co-ordinating Group | STAC Chair | 1 st May 2013 | Amber |
| 2.2 | Bio-security tool-kit / guidance to seek to contain level of <i>Chalara fraxinea</i> spread within county, with specific focus upon tackling spread from natural environment | Ash tree management guidance note produced | STAC Chair | 1 st May 2013 | Amber |

| | Key Targets | Performance Measure | Accountability | Timescale | RAG |
|-----------|--|---|----------------|--------------------------------|-------|
| | into parks, gardens and other urban green space. | | | | |
| 2.3 | Ensure measured, cost-effective systems in place for ongoing monitoring and assessment of Ash Dieback spread (informed by national policy). | Systems in place. | STAC Chair | 1 st May 2013 | Amber |
| 3. | Environment Management Group (EMG): Implement a rigorous Environment Management Strategy to support the effective implementation of relevant mitigating actions including monitoring, enforcement & financial safeguards. EMG will be largely 'virtual' in format, utilising email and teleconference facilities. | | | | |
| | Membership: KCC Flood Risk and Natural Environment Team (William Moreno [Chair] / Ruth Childs), Forestry Commission (Jonathan Harding), Maidstone Borough Council (Jason Taylor), Medway Council (Nigel Holman / Robert Lucas), Kent Highway Services (Alan Riley), Highways Agency (John Henderson), KCC Emergency Planning (Tony Harwood), Kent Tree Officers Group (Daniel Docker); Greenspace Forum Kent (Darran Solley), KCC Public Rights of Way (Graham Rusling) Environment Agency (Nick Paige), East Sussex County Council (Anthony Becvar), UK Power Networks (James Nicholl) | | | | |
| 3.1 | Ensure baseline asset and tree safety audit data for Ash on public land informing identification of required staffing / contractor / financial resources. | Audits in place. | EMG Chair | 1 st May 2013 | Amber |
| 3.2 | Project management i.e. confirm relevant partnership arrangements for assessing, monitoring and, where necessary, enforcement of bio-security and health and safety interventions (informed by Sussex Dutch Elm Disease Plant Health Order protocols) | Audits in place. | EMG Chair | 1 st May 2013 | Amber |
| 3.3 | Assess potential scale and cost of monitoring and felling (for safety purposes only) dead and dying Ash at public open spaces in Kent and Medway (including parks and gardens). | Reports back Strategic Co-ordinating Group. | EMG Chair | Updates at future SCG meetings | Amber |

| | Key Targets | Performance Measure | Accountability | Timescale | RAG |
|-----|--|--|----------------|--------------------------------|-------|
| 3.4 | Assess potential scale and cost of increased workloads around enforcement, applications for works to TPO trees / trees located within Conservation Areas, notifications of works as exception to regulations and Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 | Reports back Strategic Co-ordinating Group. | EMG Chair | Updates at future SCG meetings | Amber |
| 3.5 | Draft strategy for monitoring and felling (for safety purposes only) dead and dying Ash adjacent to transport routes in Kent and Medway (including footways, bridleways, road and railway network). This can be part of a wider Tree Strategy for Kent. | Key stakeholders (Highways Agency, Medway Council, Kent County Council, and Network Rail) to confirm that threat is being considered internally and report back to future SCG meetings with 'for information' updates. | EMG Chair | Updates at future SCG meetings | Amber |
| 3.6 | Assess potential scale and cost of monitoring and felling (for safety purposes only) dead and dying Ash within privately owned sites with public access (including zoo parks and heritage sites). | Key stakeholders (private landowners and land managers, commercial and relevant charitable organisations) to confirm that threat is being considered internally and report back to future SCG meetings with 'for information' updates. | EMG Chair | Updates At future SCG meetings | Amber |
| 4. | Media & Communications Group (M&CG): Maximise public, media & stakeholder awareness & confidence through a joined-up Media & Communications Strategy. M&CG will be largely 'virtual' in format, utilising email and teleconference facilities. | | | | |
| | Membership: Maidstone Borough Council (Roger Adley [Chair]), KCC Communications (John Todd), Forestry Commission (TBC), KCC Emergency Planning (Fiona Gaffney), KCC Flood Risk and Natural Environment Team (William Moreno), DCLG RED (Chris Innes), Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre (Hannah Cook) | | | | |
| 4.1 | Develop a local Media & Communications Strategy for the outbreak, to support the national strategy led by Defra & Forestry Commission, using a range of channels | Strategy developed & joined-up communications being co-ordinated across multiple channels and partners. | M&CG Chair | 1 st May 2012 | Amber |
| 4.2 | Forestry Commission public information signs installed at entrances and on notice | 2,500 Forestry Commission Public Information Signs circulated to key | M&CG Chair | Signs installed by end of | Green |

| | Key Targets | Performance Measure | Accountability | Timescale | RAG |
|-----|--|---|-----------------------|--|--------------|
| | boards at publicly accessible wooded sites across Kent and Medway. | stakeholders and installed at wooded sites. | | calendar year 2012 | |
| 4.3 | Link to Forestry Commission Ash Dieback page posted on all Kent and Medway Local Authority websites. | All Local Authorities comply with target. | M&CG Chair | Link posted by 31 st January 2013 | Green |
| 4.4 | Develop on-line Ash Dieback forum for sharing best practice. Create links with European forums on tree and plant health. | Forum and links established. | M&CG Chair | 1 st September 2013 | Amber |
| 4.5 | Link to Defra Interim Chalara Control Plan distributed to all KRF partners to inform relevant activities by their personnel and contractors. Partners to utilise their networks and partnerships to optimise extent of distribution e.g. key service users, associations, trade bodies, land-owners, community groups, businesses etc. | Defra Interim Chalara Control Plan distributed. | M&CG Chair | End of calendar year 2012 | Green |
| 4.6 | Engage with Fera 'train the trainers' initiative aimed at developing a plant health network of trained personnel to support official surveillance and detection. | Local personnel signed-up to initiative. | M&CG Chair | Ongoing | Amber |
| 4.7 | Trading Standards teams to produce and publicise guidance (in co-operation with arboriculture trade) addressing risk from 'rogue traders' profiteering from outbreak. | Guidance produced and publicised. | M&CG Chair | 1 st April 2013 | Green |

| | Key Targets | Performance Measure | Accountability | Timescale | RAG |
|-----|---|---|----------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| 5. | Recovery Advisory Group (RAG): Maintain continuity of the response & develop a long-term Recovery Strategy, covering business & economic confidence, cultural & amenity impacts and long-term environment management. RAG will be largely 'virtual' in format, utilising email and teleconference facilities. | | | | |
| | Membership: Kent Downs AONB (Nick Johannsen [Chair]), KCC Flood Risk and Natural Environment Team (Elizabeth Milne), Forestry Commission (Jonathan Harding), Shepway District Council (David Sephton), Maidstone Borough Council (Deanne Cunningham / Nick Gallavin), Kent Tree Officers Group (Daniel Docker), Kent Wildlife Trust (Lynn Keeley), Kent Local Nature Partnership (Linda Davies), Greenspace forum Kent (Darran Solley), KCC Emergency Planning (Tony Harwood), Kent Economic Development Officers Group (Jeremy Whittaker), KCC Regeneration and Economy (Alan Turner) | | | | |
| 5.1 | Work in partnership to minimise direct & secondary impacts of the outbreak on the local economy and cultural amenity, by maintaining consumer / public confidence, supporting businesses with relevant insurance & legal advice and providing a strong voice for Kent & Medway in negotiations with central government. | Ongoing commitment. | RAG Chair | Ongoing | Amber |
| | Advocate for the development and adoption by all Kent councils of a tree strategy for Kent and Medway. | Action included as a priority in the Kent Environment Strategy. | RAG Chair | 1 st April 2014 | Amber |
| 5.2 | Incorporate a 'Kent & Medway natural regeneration and dead wood retention (saproxylic wildlife) policy' into existing Local Authority / government agency landscape strategies and guidance and circulate across wider landowner / land management community - to maintain biodiversity and engender good bio-security and a resilient natural environment. | Draft policy drafted and circulated to key stakeholders. | RAG Chair | 1 st April 2014 | Amber |

| | Key Targets | Performance Measure | Accountability | Timescale | RAG |
|-----|---|--|-------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| 5.3 | Incorporate a 'Kent & Medway tree planting / landscaping bio-security policy' into existing Local Authority / Government agency landscape strategies and guidance and circulate across wider landowner / land management community, predicated upon excellent bio-security, genuinely local provenance stock and optimising species diversity (Kent Design Guide approach). | Draft policy drafted and circulated to key stakeholders. | RAG Chair | 1 st April 2014 | Amber |
| 5.4 | Ensure a multi-agency replacement policy for ash trees lost from formal street plantings, parkland gardens and other locations (where natural regeneration is impossible), predicated upon excellent bio-security, genuinely local provenance stock and optimising species diversity. | Draft policy drafted and circulated to key stakeholders. | RAG Chair | 1 st April 2014 | Amber |
| 5.5 | Identify opportunities for woodland extension and creation at species-poor sites, utilising naturally Ash Dieback resistant local provenance Ash seed / saplings. Formulate bid for project funding. | Number of woodland extensions / new sites achieved. | Kent Local Nature Partnership | 1 st April 2014 | Amber |
| 5.6 | Address financial recovery implications of outbreak for responding agencies, including financial record keeping and investigation of Bellwin scheme and other potential reparation options. | Financial recovery strategy agreed. | RAG Chair | Ongoing | Amber |