

Operations Note 031

Date 30 April 2013

## Plant Health Woodland Improvement Grant - Chalara Dieback of ash

### Purpose

This note provides information on the new Woodland Improvement Grant to help fund and support the removal and disposal of recently planted ash trees which have been infected by *Chalara fraxinea* and their replacement with alternative species. The grant is available where the existing planting has been funded via the English Woodland Grant Scheme and is aimed at reducing the rate of spread of the disease and building the resilience of woodlands.

### Background

Full supporting information on *Chalara fraxinea* (history, symptoms, distribution, silvicultural advice, scientific facts etc) can be found on the Forestry Commission's [Chalara webpage](#). Silvicultural guidance for '[Managing ash trees](#)' is likely to be particularly relevant.

The Government's overall approach to managing the disease can be found in the [Defra Chalara Management Plan](#). This guidance has been produced as part of the commitment in this plan to publish further information on grant funding measures to fund removal, disposal and replanting of infected ash trees in recent plantings in higher priority areas.

### Eligibility and rates of payment

Grant support will be available to those sites that are, or have been, within an English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) agreement. We cannot currently support sites established through the Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS), other funding routes or non-grant aided sites.

Eligibility criteria are related to priority areas which indicate where interventions are likely to have the greatest impact in reducing the spread of the disease. Priority areas are described in [Table 1](#) and grant allocation in [Table 2](#). For further details on priority areas please refer to Map 3 on page 16 of the [Defra Chalara Management Plan](#).

**Table 1 – Priority areas (identified by Categories)**

<b>The following counties are classed as being ‘Category B’. This list will be subject to change as our understanding on the spread of disease develops:</b>
Lincolnshire, Rutland, Norfolk, Suffolk, Buckinghamshire, Greater London, Berkshire, Surrey, Kent, West Sussex, East Sussex
<b>English counties not in the list above are classed as ‘Category A’.</b>

**Table 2 – Grant allocation**

	<b>Category A</b>	<b>Category B</b>
<b>Removal and disposal payment £1000/ha</b>	Available on infected sites	Not available
<b>Restocking payment £2000/ha</b>	Available on infected sites	Available on infected and un-infected sites

Payments will be pro-rata according to the amount of ash originally planted on the site. For example on a 5 hectare site where ash had originally been planted on 20% of the area, a payment for one hectare will be made.

## Replanting – building resilience

The Government wishes to support the replanting of alternative species on sites funded by EWGS that are already infected or imminently likely to become infected. The aim is to improve the resilience of these young woodlands and to secure the future of sites already funded by Government. Improved resilience will be achieved by ensuring adequate stocking levels and increasing species diversity. We would expect much of this replanting to be completed next winter (2013/2014) wherever possible.

Support will be available on **all** EWGS sites where ash is a component of a scheme within counties classed as Category B. It will also be available on **all infected** sites within Category A counties. In Category A counties evidence of infection will need to be provided as described in the next ‘removal and disposal’ section.

Replanting will be funded at £2000 per net hectare.

For future resilience we will require replanting action to result in three species present on site, i.e. if originally oak/ash then two new species will need to be planted. If you are considering replacing Chalara infected ash with oak then please refer to the latest [Forest Research guidance](#) on where oak should be sourced.

Use of other native species (see FC native species list at [appendix 1](#)) will, where possible, be agreed without further consideration. Selection of a non-native broadleaf or

conifer species will likely require further consideration by a woodland officer and may take longer to approve. For sites in receipt of Farm Woodland Payment that have, following restocking, a changed overall composition of 50% or more conifer species the Farm Woodland Payment will be reduced from a 15 year to a 10 year period.

Advice given to Forestry Commission staff for species and choice of provenance for use on the Public Forest Estate can be found on the [Tree Species Diversification](#) page.

### Removal and disposal – reducing the rate of spread

The Government believes that in Category A counties there is value in removing ash that is showing evidence of infection (i.e. symptomatic). This is intended to help slow the spread of *Chalara* from those areas in the east, where it is well-established in the wider environment, to the west of the country.

We will therefore provide grant support for the removal and disposal of all ash plants on sites where there are trees symptomatic of Chalara infection and that have been planted under EWGS in Category A counties. Support for removal and disposal **will not** be available in Category B counties.

Where symptomatic ash trees are present on a site we will support removal and disposal of both symptomatic and non-symptomatic ash trees. Removal and disposal will be funded at £1000 per net hectare. To support a removal and disposal payment we will expect:

- Photographic evidence of symptomatic trees and photographic evidence linking the symptomatic tree to recognisable feature(s) on the site or, if one has been issued, a letter from the Forestry Commission or Fera confirming infection on the site;
- Where practical we would expect all non symptomatic ash trees to also be removed and have the same treatments applied (on very large sites we may accept ash trees being removed from only those sub compartments containing symptomatic trees);
- Removal should follow the methodology at Q2 of the [guidance](#) to landowners and managers on the removal and disposal of Chalara infected ash trees. Arisings from this work must be disposed of in a manner which prevents any risk of infection spread, usually by burning on site;
- Biosecurity measures such as cleaning footwear and tools are to be observed to help prevent further spread of the disease further details are available in the FC [biosecurity guidance](#) document.

### Natural regeneration

We will support the replacement of infected ash natural regeneration, with planted stock of alternative species, where the regeneration was supported using EWGS. We will not support removal and disposal of infected ash regeneration on the basis that if natural regeneration has become infected then disease is likely to be present in the wider environment, in which case the value of removing infected trees is diminished.

## Applying for grant

This grant is being administered and delivered through a Plant Health Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG), funded through the Rural Development Programme for England. Current EWGS agreements will be amended to include this WIG. This will need to be done using a web-form via the following link [PH WIG Chalara](#). Where an EWGS agreement has closed, a new application will need to be completed via the following web-form [EWGS1](#).

The land concerned will need to be registered on the Rural Land Register and the applicant will need a current Single Business Identifier, further details are in [Operations Note 19 Customer and Land Registration](#).

The current closing date for grant applications is 31 December 2013.

We would anticipate receipt of claims by the 31 March 2014 in respect of the claim year 13/14. At our discretion, a later claim year for replanting may be agreed.

The amendment will normally be completed by administrative action and is unlikely to result in a visit from a woodland officer. Claims will be subject to normal risk-based selection criteria which may result in an inspection to check that the work has been completed satisfactorily.

All applications and amendments for this grant type will be handled through the East and East Midlands Admin Hub. Contact: [adminhub.eem@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:adminhub.eem@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

## Higher Level Stewardship Scheme

Defra and Natural England are continuing to look into how they might support the removal and disposal of Chalara infected ash trees and any potential alternative re-planting options under Higher Level Stewardship Scheme. This scheme was not initially designed to address this, so they are actively examining what may be possible within the rules and should have an update on this later in the spring.

## Sources of further advice

The [Grants and Regulations website](#) contains all the information you need to apply for grant support. Alternatively, you can request this information from your local [Forestry Commission office](#).

The Chalara Management Plan is available via the following link [Defra Chalara Management Plan](#).

## Versions

Version 1.0 issued – 30 April 2013

Appendix 1 – List of Native Tree Species

alder, common	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>
apple, crab	<i>Malus sylvestris</i> spp <i>sylvestris</i>
aspen	<i>Populus tremula</i>
beech	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>
birch, downy	<i>Betula pubescens</i>
birch, silver	<i>Betula pendula</i>
cherry, bird	<i>Prunus padus</i>
cherry, gean	<i>Prunus avium</i>
hornbeam	<i>Carpinus betulus</i>
lime, small-leaved	<i>Tilia cordata</i>
lime, large-leaved	<i>Tilia platyphyllos</i>
maple, field	<i>Acer campestre</i>
oak, common	<i>Quercus robur</i>
oak, sessile	<i>Quercus petraea</i>
pine, Scots	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>
poplar, black	<i>Populus nigra</i>
poplar, grey	<i>Populus canescens</i>
rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>
service tree	<i>Sorbus torminalis</i>
whitebeam	<i>Sorbus aria</i>
willow, crack	<i>Salix fragilis</i>
willow, goat	<i>Salix caprea</i>
willow, white	<i>Salix alba</i>
yew	<i>Taxus baccata</i>

Please note this is not a full list of native English woodland tree species but those that are considered as reasonable alternatives to ash as a high-forest tree. There may be specific reasons for not accepting some of the above as replacements (e.g. alder near water courses due to *Phytophthora*, bird cherry, and Scots pine on a regional basis).

Alternatively there may also be occasions when the use of native shrubs or small trees such as elder and holly may also be suitable. If you wish to use species not on the above list these should be discussed with your Woodland Officer before applying. Species will generally be accepted in the proportions specified by the current EWGS [Woodland Regeneration](#) and [Woodland Creation guides](#). Any alternatives to shrub/honorary-native/exotic percentages will be assessed as per the guidance in the Ancient and Native Woodland Practice Guide.

Research is being carried out on alternative tree species that can directly benefit wildlife predominantly associated with ash and this list may alter accordingly.