

## Annex A The UK implications of ash dieback for the National Trust



A) The National Trust is a leading conservation charity, with a core purpose of protecting special places, for everyone, forever. The land we own extends to over 270,000 ha of countryside and includes 25,500 ha of woodland. Our open spaces are highly valued and attract more than 100 million visits per year. We are also responsible for many hundreds of gardens and parks of historic or cultural significance, as well a diversity of landscapes rich in their diversity of wildlife.

B) This scale of ownership means that the National Trust is major enterprise, with a turnover close to £500 million, some 5,500 employees, over 60,000 volunteers and a membership of c. 4 million. We typically harvest and market 15,000 – 20,000 cubic metres of timber and woodfuel each year from our woodland, with an increasing amount used as woodfuel in the many boilers we have installed in our properties.

C) The National Trust also retails plants through plant stalls at National Trust properties, and we also propagate some plants for use in our own gardens, woodlands and landscapes as well as for retail sale. In response to the threat from Phytophthora to our garden plant collections we recently established our own plant conservation centre to safeguard plant collections and our genetic assets.

D) The health of plants and trees is thus fundamentally important to our charitable purposes, our commercial enterprises and our conservation work. We therefore have a very strong interest in plant health policy, controls and practices, and considerable experience of working within the plant health regime. As a reflection of the importance of the issue to us several years ago we appointed our own in-house plant health specialist.

E) The most recent tree health issues we have faced are Phytophthora, acute oak decline and ash dieback. We estimate that dealing with Phytophthora alone has cost the Trust around £1million pounds over the last five years. If ash dieback is allowed to spread across the country we anticipate the following main impacts:

- Loss of an important component of our native woodland, and we estimate constitutes around a quarter of the canopy of the 25,000 ha of woodland we own
- Threat to the thousands of ancient ash trees in our parkland, woodland and wider estate, which are historic features, natural sculptures, rich wildlife habitats and refuges for many rare species.
- Loss of the hundreds of thousands of hedgerow and field trees, giving irreversible change in many landscapes where ash is a characteristic feature
- Reduction in the growth of ash timber of around 20,000 cubic metres per annum from our woodland.
- A huge increase in tree surgery needed to ensure public safety.
- Major investment in replanting to replace lost ash trees in gardens, parkland, hedgerows and in woodland.

F) We cannot put a figure on the environmental and heritage cost of losing our ash trees. But we have made an initial estimate of the economic costs of managing this disease. These calculations indicate a figure of £1.5m per annum, recurring for at least the next ten years. This would total £15million, and finding this funding will mean reducing other conservation work and acquisitions by the Trust. We are very aware that if the plant health regime had been more robust this devastating cost would have been avoided.