

NTSG Statement

January 2015

The impact of new pests and diseases on the National Tree Safety Group's guidance on trees and public safety in the UK for owners, managers and advisers.

In response to the increasing number of pests and diseases, especially *Chalara fraxinea* threatening the UK's trees, the National Tree Safety Group (NTSG) at its re-reconvened meeting in October 2014 considered whether any changes were required to the "Common sense risk management of trees" guidance published by the NTSG in 2012.

The group decided that the principles outlined in the guidance were still current and valid and that no amendments were required.

The Group recognises that an increase in the number and geographic spread of tree pests and diseases, which have an impact on the structural integrity of trees, could result in more tree failures and that this could translate into an increase in the number of people harmed by trees.

However the Group believes that the principles contained within the document are still valid and no amendments to these principles are required. In respect of public safety, the new pests and diseases affecting our trees are different from existing pests and diseases only in that some of them eg *Chalara fraxinea* will infect large numbers of trees and may cause a more rapid decline in their tree health and structural stability including a large number of roadside trees.

Therefore the Group noted that the reasonable and prudent landowner or manager endeavour to be aware of new pests and diseases affecting their trees and the likely impact of these upon the structural integrity of their trees.

When a new disease threat arises, it would be sensible for the landowner or land manager to appropriately adapt their tree management regime to take account of these circumstances. This could include:

- carrying out more frequent inspections of affected or potentially affected trees in high use zones, such as alongside roads
- changing the season of inspection to one where the symptoms of the disease or pest are more evident

- existing inspection zones may need to be reviewed and additional zones created to account for the level of disease-affected trees at risk of infection in areas of high use
- taking account of the impact of the pest or disease on the structural integrity of the trees and manage risks to public safety accordingly
- implement reasonable risk assessment that takes account of the speed and progression that a disease or pests impact upon the structural integrity of the tree and prioritise remedial actions accordingly

The NTSG believes that by reviewing the condition of their trees, including those affected by new pests and diseases, risk of public harm can be reasonably managed by the landowner/manager sufficient to meet their legal responsibility for public safety.